Happily proven wrong

By Chaplain Norbert Karava

Of all obvious and self-evident truths, one of the most obvious and self-evident is that human beings are not born wise. Even as we mature and advance in knowledge and various intellectual skills, many years pass before we begin to suspect that we have many unexamined philosophical presuppositions of which we have not been aware.

In the hot, heady, halcyon days of youth, not only are we indestructible, but the script of our weltanschauung (a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint) seems to have been taken from "The Man of La Mancha," and we all too eagerly "dream the impossible dream."

And then something happens, a catastrophe perhaps, a life-altering sickness to be suffered by ourselves or others we love more than ourselves, a soul-embittering injustice visited upon us, the devastation of a divorce or an excoriation (severe criticizism) wreaked upon us by someone we passionately love, without whom we could not imagine life, and there we are, at the gate of wisdom, sitting at the bar, looking at the sweating mug of beer, flirting with the despair of the seeming irrelevance of life.

Even for those who have not have had the fortune of misfortune early in life, there is the eventual withering of erstwhile passions and joys, the greening of the soul that brings us all to the same wisdom-question, which admits of various packaging: "Does life support my agenda?"

It never occurred to us to ask the question. It was the implicit assumption of our confidence, enthusiasm, bravado, optimism, wonderful wildness, charm and spontaneity.

But of course, the world was my oyster, life was my opportunity, the day was my carpe diem.

We thought we could make our lives be about whatever we wanted them to, but in thinking this, we probably did not realize that we were buying into a truly far-reaching philosophical thesis, into what turned out to be a completely wrong answer to a wisdom-question: Human beings can determine the agenda of life, or so we implicitly thought. Oh they can, can they? The very cosmos seems to smile at our mortal folly.

It was upon this foundation that we were taught to build the edifice of ourselves: This was our kool-aid of life, the mead of our mirth. Yet, the inevitable evaporation of our joy in the waxing shadow of Weltschmerz (mental depression or apathy caused by comparison of the actual state of the world with an ideal state) is the indictment that, whatever, if anything, our life was about, it certainly wasn't about what we wanted it to be. And, if we would have the courage to go yet a little further, we would see that it couldn't possibly be.

It is this experience, the experience of wisdom, that makes many people susceptible, often for the first time, to religion, which most often begins with the fundamental truth that as clever and correct as we might have been with our reading, writing and arithmetic, and lately, our string theory, we were fools. Not only were we laboring under a gross misconception, but we, busy bees, in a relentless, strategic pursuit of our pot of gold under the rainbow of life, were blind to that level of reality where a wisdom-question was to be contemplated in the first place. We assumed that reality could be cast in terms of the Armerican Forces Network "Science Chicken" under whose auspices all problems could be solved and all woes banished.

All we had to do was try hard enough. And this, I argue, is one of the perennial reasons why religion will always be the companion of man: Science Chicken, on a lucky day, can speak knowledge, but never wisdom, which simply is not enough for this mysterious, lonely, pining, never-fulfilled and elusive being known as a "person."

The emergence of Christianity, following in the wake of the proclamation of the resurrection of Christ, dramatically highlights this general tendency of religion. Yes, there is a story about a man Jesus who rose from the dead, but the empirical shock of a vivified once-dead body is overshadowed in the moral revolution it unleashes, something called "repentance," a divinely given gift for people who have allowed themselves to be penetrated by the truth that they are wrong on more levels than they can realize or even imagine.

In the Gospel narrative of Luke, the risen Christ proclaims,"Thus it was written that Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached..."

In other words, Christianity made its debut on the stage of history telling the Archie Bunker, dog-eat-dog world that it was fundamentally wrong, not about subject matter of the Science Chicken, but about human life, that self-centered emptiness was not inevitable.

It is here that many of us have the experience of something like a hovering, a presence most gracious, most gentle and kind, casting the matter-of-fact sterility of life-about-me, into stark contrast with itself and revealing its falsehood in the most wonderful of manners – through liberation from it.

For Christians, no, life isn't about our silly purposes, but, yes, the Father's. Then, they take their breath, perhaps for the first time, of life.

For Christians, together with the devout of most religions, the liberation at least in part consists of being made able to let the poisonous illusion go, the illusion being that human beings can make life be about their agenda, something that at first looks like unlimited freedom but what eventually reveals itself to be the essence of all bondage and the architecture of Hell. The joyous, common experience has been this: How wonderful it is to have been shown to be so completely and utterly wrong.

CFAY Consumer Confidence Report: Drinking water systems 2011

From Naval Facilities Engineering Command Far East Public Affairs

The Navy is pleased to provide you with this annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) of Drinking Water Systems that support Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), including Yokosuka, Ikego, Negishi, Nagai, Fleet Mail Center, Urago, Hakozaki (Azuma), and Tsurumi. This report meets Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Policy Letter 5090, Ser EV/10011, July 6, 2010 and reflects monitoring data collected in 2011.

This report provides information about the water delivered to us in 2011. It describes where our water comes from, what it contains, and how it compares to standards for safe drinking water. The drinking water at CFAY is safe to drink. Our goal is, and always has been, to provide safe and dependable drinking water.

Source of Water: Our drinking water comes from the following surface water sources: Sagami Lake, Tsukui Lake, Miyagase Lake, Tanzawa Lake, Doushi River, Sagami River, and Sakawa River. Hashirimizu Spring is also an emergency water supply for Yokosuka City. Drinking water at *CFAY* is purchased from the Yokosuka City Waterworks and Sewerage Bureau, the Yokohama Waterworks Bureau, or the Kanagawa Prefectural Waterworks. These waterworks filter and chlorinate the drinking water provided to us.

Water Distribution Systems: The Naval Facilities Engineering Command Far East (NAVFACFE) Public Works Department (PWD) operates the water distribution system servicing our area. In Yokosuka and Ikego, purchased water is temporarily stored in tanks. The water provided to the housing areas at Yokosuka and Ikego is fluoridated prior to distribution. Ikego housing area has a chlorine feeding facility for emergency use. Negishi's water is provided directly from the Yokohama Waterworks Bureau.

Water Quality: This year, as in years past, our drinking water met all criteria established in the Japan Environmental Governing Standards (JEGS). The JEGS are Department of Defense (DoD) self-governing standards intended to ensure DoD activities and installations in Japan protect human health and the natural environment through the promulgation of specific environmental compliance criteria. Drinking water standards in the JEGS are derived from the same standards used in the U.S. to ensure safe drinking water is available to all installation personnel. It requires us to monitor and test our water for contaminants on a regular basis, ensuring it is safe to drink.

Possible Source of Contaminants: As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally-occurring minerals. It can also pick up other contaminants resulting from the presence of animals or human activity. Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain trace amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or visiting the EPA website at http://water.epa.gov/drink/.

Potential Contaminants:

• **Lead –** Elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. This year, as in years past, our tap water did not exceed the lead drinking water health standards requirements set forth in the JEGS. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can further minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to two minutes before using the water for drinking or cooking. Information on lead in drinking water is available at http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/lead/index.cfm.

• **Nitrate/Nitrite –** Nitrates are naturally present in soil, water, and food. They are used primarily to make fertilizer. Nitrates themselves are relatively nontoxic. However, when swallowed, they are converted to nitrites that can react with hemoglobin in the blood, creating methemoglobin. This methemoglobin cannot transport oxygen, causing shortness of breath and blue baby syndrome. This year, as in years past, our tap water did not exceed the Nitrate/Nitrite drinking water health standards requirements set forth in the JEGS. Information on Nitrate in drinking water is available at http://water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/basicinformation/nitrate.cfm.

• **Arsenic –** Arsenic is odorless and tasteless. It enters drinking water supplies from natural deposits in the earth or from agricultural and industrial practices. People who over a period of many years drink water contaminated with arsenic in excess of the drinking water standards could experience skin damage or problems with their circulatory system, and may have an increased risk of getting cancer. This year, as in years past, our tap water did not exceed the arsenic drinking water health standards requirements set forth in the JEGS. Information on Arsenic in drinking water is available at http://water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/basicinforma tion/arsenic.cfm.

Drinking Water Monitoring: We use Japanese and EPA approved laboratory methods to analyze our drinking water. CFAY monitors its drinking water for the following constituents and at the prescribed frequencies. The water samples were collected from multiple locations and faucets at schools, offices, quarters, and community facilities. For example, for Total Coliform, we monitor 36 locations a month. The collected samples are not pooled. They are analyzed individually.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: My water doesn't taste/smell/look good. What's wrong with it?

A: Even when water meets standards, it still may have an objectionable taste, smell or appearance. These are aesthetic characteristics that do not pose health risks. Cloudiness is typically caused by air bubbles. A chlorinated taste can be improved by letting the water stand exposed to air. Rust-colored water and metallic tastes are due to iron in the water; they are not a health risk and can be improved by running the tap until the water clears. If you wish to improve the taste, smell or appearance of your water, you can install a home water filter.

For more information on this report, please contact Masato Nakamichi, of CFAY PWD Environmental Division at DSN 243-6460 or Masato.Nakamichi.JA@fe.navy.mil.