Flying over the Cuckoo's nest

By Chaplain Norbert Karava

It is becoming increasingly more difficult for him to wake up in the morning. When he finally does wake, he finds it increasingly difficult to pry his body out of the bed. Opening his eyes and gazing at the ceiling, the thought of where he must go fills him alternately, with a sense of emptiness and then the coldness of dread. Which is worse? Hmm… probably the cold dread; at least that is an emotional response with a certain color on the easel of the soul, and not a mere lack. Nearly everything he looks forward to with his few remaining scraps of enthusiasm happens outside of or after work.

At work, when he is able to resist the burden of his body crying out for sleep, he finds himself glancing compulsively at his wristwatch, jumping back and forth from Facebook to Outlook, and then, at other times, sitting-swiveling in his chair, lost in the torpid listlessness of a daydream. Looking further into the future, his attention is riveted on a square of the calendar – the beginning of leave. In the meantime, there is the present, permeated with the dull pain of futility, giving rise to a multi-dimensional psychology of escapism and aversion. Sometimes it is escapism of a more positive sort: his girlfriend, the gym, the bike, some fishing, but often, alas, it becomes a matter of prowling the on-line dumpsters of virtual pornography, or the Honch, which yes, although admittedly real and not virtual, nonetheless affords a sweet but transient relief, making the inevitable return to reality all the more daunting.

His is a sad state of affairs that is part of a first world social malaise: Research conducted by Time Magazine in 2010 indicated that that less than half of American workers (45 *percent*) are satisfied with their jobs, which is the lowest percent since 1987. In 2010, the Associated Press reported that on 51 percent of workers polled found their work interesting and that in the demographic of workers under 25, 65 percent reported that they were "unhappy at work." And, perhaps more poignantly, a 2011 Gallup poll reported that 72 percent of workers polled responded that they were "not engaged in their work" which was defined as "essentially sleepwalking throughout the work day."

This downward spiral can continue for years, especially at first, when the vigor of youth affords us the psychosomatic wherewithal of cogent escape-activities – until the slave discovers that he is wasting life, or worse, that he has wasted a life. Having to suffer a daily existence as a necessary evil to enjoy a few brief moments of whatever it is that truly brings us joy, is, by any honest reckoning, a waste of life.

Of course, there are innumerable obvious possible reasons that would make our life at any job or profession intolerable: addictions, dysfunctionalities, criminal propensities and behaviors, sociopathic and narcissistic tendencies, and even simple, old fashioned laziness, to mention but a few.

But aside from moral and/or psychological defect, it happens often enough to innocent and "normal" people that they discover too late that the job they have committed themselves to takes them away from the things that define their existence with value. They might not describe the experience so succinctly, but what they come to discover is that that since their job removes them from the things that define their existence with value, their jobs are leaving them with a life that is simply not worth living. In the language of water-cooler office talk, they have gotten themselves into a "soul-sucking job." And yes, this is one of the ways how, I think, we start flirting with, not so much suicidal ideations, but the suicidal sentiments that are the matrix out of which the ideations can emerge.

And thus, it often happens that the experience of having our souls sucked out of us by a job we have foolishly and vainly chosen reveals not only those things that actually define our existence with value, those things that make life worth living, but also our true hitherto motives which we probably have hidden even from ourselves, in all their cheapness and embarrassing tawdriness. But what is to be done?

The answer is seemingly simple: Let us gratefully cut our losses and move on, or disembark the ship of our stupidity before it sinks and takes us with it. Yet, many people, it seems, choose to continue walking through that terrible tunnel in which the light at the end grows ever more distant, not near. Why? Admittedly, the circumstances of life can make such simplicity not only very frightening, but unrealistic, especially if a man has responsibility for lives other than his own. On the other hand, it is all too easy to style what actually is "frightening" as "unrealistic:" It is frightening for us to admit to ourselves and others than not only were we wrong, but foolishly wrong (oh you were Richard Gere in "*An Officer and a Gentleman*" were you?). It is frightening to have our motives revealed in the excruciating candor of failure, which is almost always something more painful than failure itself. It is frightening to lose the affirmation and respect of our peers, entering the ranks of the "quitters" even if it was had at the cost of a fundamental dishonesty on our part. It is frightening to let go of the security, material and otherwise, of the present poisonous state of affairs and embrace the insecurity of the unknown. And, at least as I can plausibly testify: The older we become, the more frightening these frightening things are.

We could never reach the end of the list of frightening things by way of specifying them all, (there is no end of the possible ways in which we can make ourselves cowards) but we can reach the end of this endless list by capturing the truth they all share in common: It is a frightening thing to be free. A wonderfully strange thing happens to people who have the courage to choose to be free – something called "happiness."

***"Action Line"* Cont. from Pg.2**

Energy Conservation Reminder - All office and residential and AC units should be turned off while CFAY is still in the "shoulder" season. The shoulder season is the time between heat turn off and AC turn on. This duration is dependent upon the daily temperatures. As per COMFLEACTINST 11300.2G, individuals in spaces with self-controlled A/C units are to secure their units until the building/system ACs have been turned on officially. A special thanks to all of you that are already in compliance, CFAY Energy Team.

Japanese (Language) Summer School Sessions – Nile C. Kinnick High School (KHS) is scheduled to hold two Japanese summer school sessions. The first, session "A" runs from June 25 – July 4. Session "A" times are as follows:

- Adult (beginner level) 8:00 – 9:15 a.m. and 9:30 – 10:45 a.m.
- KHS Students 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm.

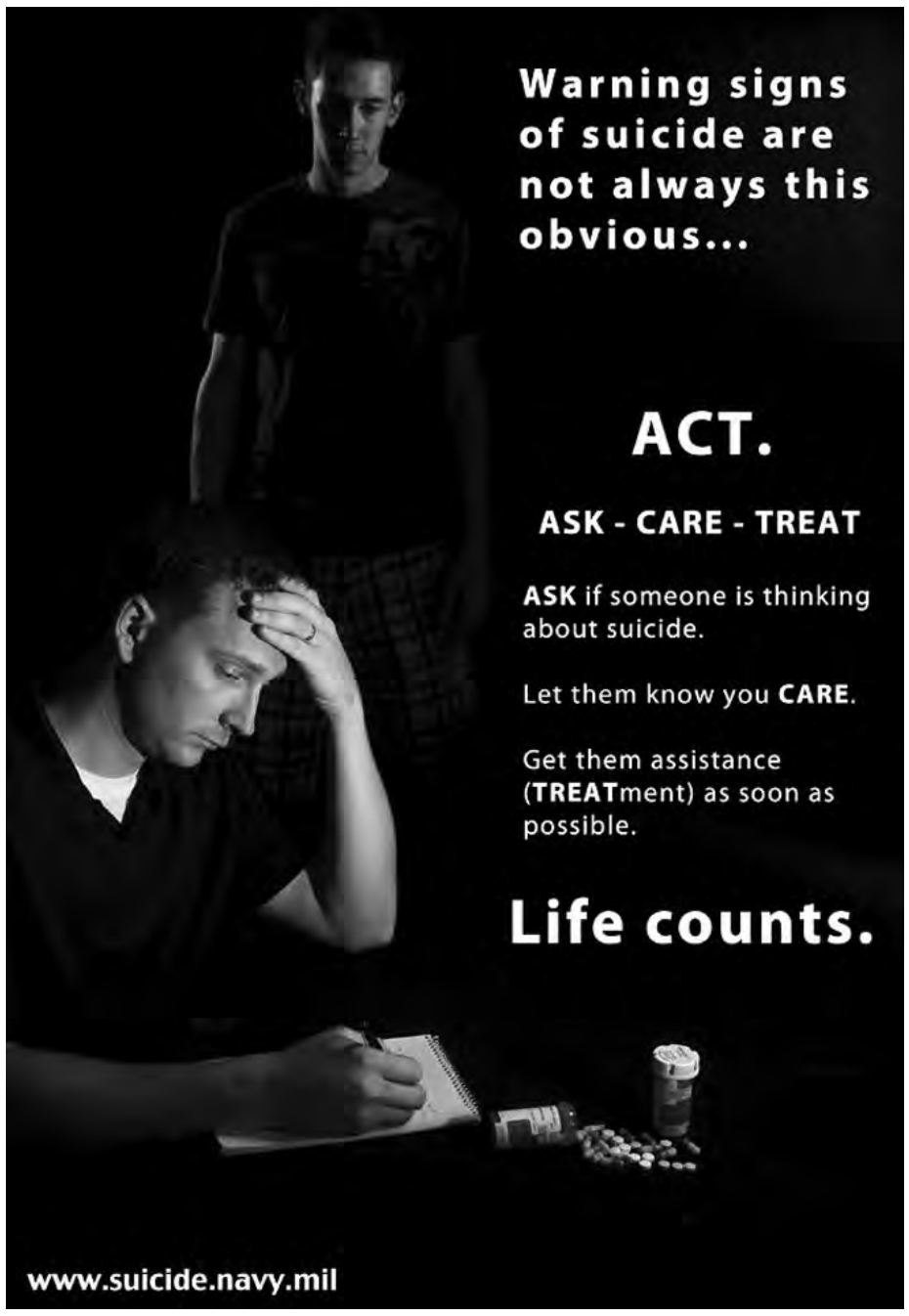
The second session, "B" runs from July 9- July 20. Session B times are as follows:

- Adult (beginner level) 8:00 – 9:15 a.m.
- Adult (intermediate level) 9:30 – 10:45 a.m.
- KHS Students 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Smoke Alarm Testing Reminder – Smoke alarms are an important part of a home fire-escape plan. When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. Working smoke alarms give you early warning so you can get outside quickly. Roughly two thirds of home fire deaths happen in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. Here are some tips to help keep you safe:

- Test smoke alarms with your children every month using the test button.
- Replace the battery no less than once a year.
- Replace smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.

CFAY Base Communications Office (Bco) Temproary Closure - CFAY BCO will be closed May 24 from noon to 4 p.m. due to a Command Function.

Volunteer Knitters Needed – The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) is ready to teach you everything you need to know about knitting. The knitted baby blankets will be donated to your fellow service members' newborn children as part of the Budget for Baby program. For more information NMCRS Yokosuka 234-7905 (on base) 046-816-7905 (from off base).

BZ: I would like to give a resounding BZ to Takumi Chiba and his crew at the Ikego Housing Detachment. Chiba-san is an utmost professional who never seems to mind helping others, and his positive attitude permeates through to his people. Just the other day, Chiba-san had one of his people spraying for bugs around our home; that individual found that the screen of our screen door had ripped and fixed it - without a question or even a mention of it to us. We were pleasantly surprised! These individuals are unsung heros - thank you for your great work.