Be what we are

By Chaplain Donald Moss

There is an old story about a stonemason who wasn't happy about what he was. He didn't like the hard work and the long hours. He didn't like the stone dust and the ringing sound in his ears. He dreamed of the day he could be a rich man and not have to do the same old, hot and dirty work.

"I wish I were a rich man," he said to himself. Immediately a voice came to him and said, "You are what you say." He was, instantaneously, a rich man living in a wonderfully rich house. He loved the rich food and beautiful surroundings. As time passed, however, he began to be bored. Being rich, there wasn't much to do.

One day, he heard the sound of trumpets and drums. He went to the window to see what all the commotion was about. What he saw was a king passing by. The man immediately wanted to be a king because kings are rich and have something to do. He said, "I wish I were a king." Again a voice came to him and said, "You are what you say." Instantaneously, he was a king.

He loved being a king. Everyone treated him with great respect and his every wish was obeyed. As time passed, however, the constant need to attend to business was getting to be too much for him. He was getting tired of being pestered all the time.

One day, he noticed beautiful clouds drifting by. He noticed how peaceful the clouds were and wanted to be a cloud. So, a voice again came to him and said, "You are what you say." Immediately, he became a cloud drifting along without a trouble in the world. Before long however, the temperature began to change and the cloud began to condense into rain. Our man began turning into rain falling to the earth. He began to splash against a beautiful boulder of marble. As he splashed against the marble, he began to wish he was a stone. The stone was so solid, so permanent, unlike a cloud. So, he began to wish he were a stone. Immediately, a voice came and said, "You are what you say." He was turned into a beautiful boulder of marble.

He was happy for a long time. One day, however, a man came to look at him. The man had a hammer and a chisel. The man began to chip away at him. So, he began thinking he would like to be like the man. Being a stone was not so permanent after all. A man could break him up into a hundred pieces.

So, he decided he wanted to be like the man. Immediately, Once again, a voice came and said, "You are what you say." And so, he once again became a stonemason. This time, however, he was happy. He was happy because he became what he was supposed to be all along, himself.

We all should be grateful for whom and what we are. Our faith teaches us that we are special to God. We are all equally special, as we are. We are all infinitely valuable and precious to God, as we are.

Shoppers turn coupons to cash

Story and photo by MCSN Mike Mulcare, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka's (CFAY) commissary presented gift voucher prizes ranging from $25 to $100, to five families March 22.

Holly Varner accepts $100 worth of gift vouchers from Commissary Store Manager Mike Crippen at the commissary on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka March 22. The prize was part of a contest held to see who could save the most money using coupons during the Military Saves Campaign.

The winning households took part in a contest held during the Military Saves Campaign week, rising to the challenge of purchasing commissary items using coupons as part of a way to educate service members and their families on how to save money.

"I ended up saving a total value of $129 with coupons," said Vonnita Murray, the first place winner. "After I saw the advertisement for the campaign going on, I went to Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) and picked up a few coupons."

The coupons, received from more than 400 United States donors, provide FFSC with more than 100 pounds of coupons a week.

After receiving the coupons, FFSC volunteers sort and bag them, where they are available to community members at the commissary and in FFSC.

Murray said she enjoys not having to clip her coupons; all she has to do is sort through which ones she needs, which in turn saves her money.

"It's amazing how much money you can save with coupons and they're right at the source - outside the commissary," said Michael Spiltener, a FFSC financial counselor. "If your grocery bill is cut by $50 a month by using coupons, that's $50 more you can use as a down payment on a house, new car, vacation or towards retirement."

Service members interested in the Military Saves Campaign can fill-out the Saver's Pledge online at www.militarysaves.org.

The campaign will send automated e-mails with ideas and tips for saving money, new Thrift Savings Program updates, and reminders on financial goals.

Sullivans teacher receives local VFW Teacher of the Year honors

By VFW Japan District Public Affairs

The Sullivans Elementary School Teacher Michael E. Applegate was presented a check for $500 and The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Teacher of the Year Award by VFW District II Commander Bernie Kenna at the Yokosuka VFW Post Home March 1. Applegate had previously won at the local and state levels and is now in the running for the Teacher of the Year Award at the national level.

In addition to being a teacher, Applegate is a retired U.S. Navy master chief and a life member of local VFW Post 1054. Underscoring his commitment to the VFW, he teaches social studies lessons, in which he regularly incorporates traditional American values. Recently, Applegate invited two uniformed Navy recruiters into his classroom to give a lesson on the importance of staying in school and getting good grades.

Combining school and VFW activities, Applegate personally arranged a Flag Folding Ceremony for Veteran's Day 2009, which included a five-man color guard, a military bagpiper, and five members of the local VFW and FRA. The ceremony was conducted in front of more than 500 students from 20 classes embracing the 4th and 5th grades and was reported to be the highlight of the day. The ceremony was attended and presided over by the school principal and his staff.

Applegate also arranged for and coordinated 10 teachers, who were veterans of the Navy, Army, Marine Corps and Air Force, at The Sullivans School, to perform a Flag Raising Ceremony in honor of both Veteran's Day and the half-masting of the U.S. Flag to recognize the victims of the Fort Hood tragedy. In the past, he has arranged for his class to participate in study trips with patriotic and civic lesson themes to various ships, which visited or are currently forward-deployed to Yokosuka, such as *USS The Sullivans* (DDG 68), *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) and *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19).

Applegate is also a semi-professional magician and regularly donates his time visiting hospitalized patients at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, where he does close-up magic and makes balloons for children. While recently hospitalized himself, he entertained the patients at Japan's Uwamachi General Hospital in Yokosuka City by doing magic for the patients and staff, including five retirees who were undergoing medical treatment.