What will we have for dinner tomorrow?

By Chaplain Douglas Vrieland

He spoke with a strong Dutch accent, a constant reminder that he had immigrated from the Netherlands to America more than 60 years ago. Yet his wisdom and insight held all our attention as he spoke. At 87, he had seen and experienced much in life. It was clear he lived life well, though he and his wife lived very simply.

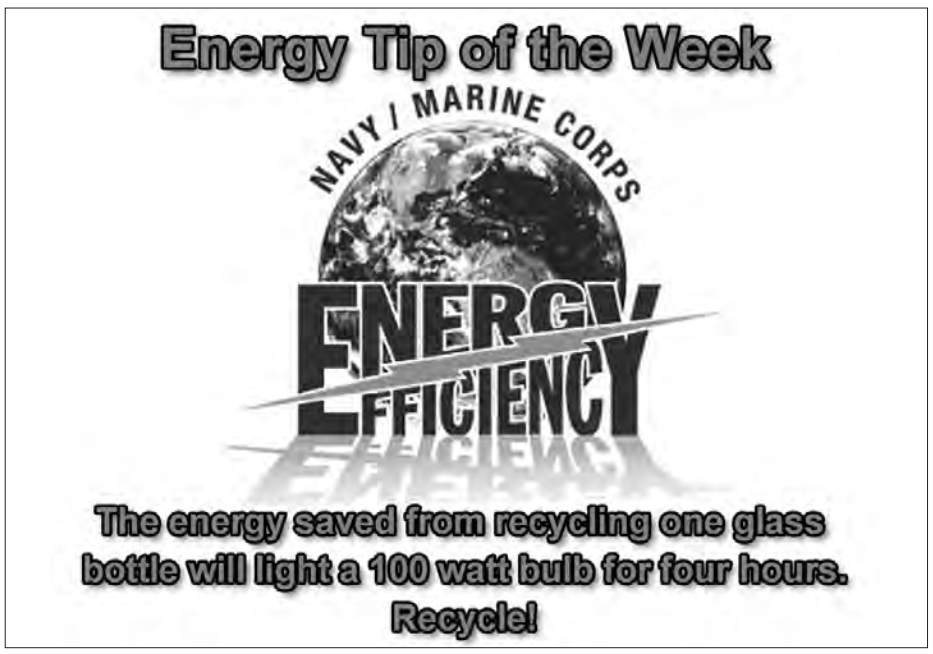
"My wife made a wonderful meal the other day," he said. "A typical Dutch meal: meat, potatoes, vegetables, and rice pudding for dessert. As we ate, we sat and talked. We asked ourselves the question: 'What will we have for dinner tomorrow?' You know, its just the two of us. Sometimes it's hard to make a meal for just the two of us."

"But you know," he continued, "later I reflected on that question. A couple of years ago we were backpacking in Nepal. We met so many people who have so little. There are so many people in this world who have nothing. They put all their food—a few beans, a little rice—into a pot, cook it, and serve it to their children. They are asking the same question we were asking: 'What will we have for dinner tomorrow?' But for them those same seven words have a completely different meaning. They were not asking how to choose from their abundance, but how they are going to meet their need."

That homey little story, and my Dutch friend's attitude, made a deep impression on me. His reflections did not come from guilt. There was nothing wrong with their conversation about tomorrow's dinner menu. His reflections came from a heart filled with gratitude. A heart that sees an ordinary meat and potatoes meal with rice pudding for dessert as an undeserved feast, a gift from a God that chose to bless him over an equally deserving family half a world away.

Jesus often spoke of the danger of wealthy. "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed," he said. "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15). That is the very real danger we face as Americans. We have so much. Our temptation is to allow our abundance to define us, to develop an attitude that we have somehow earned all that we have. The result is a heart filled with greed.

People who live out of a greedy heart cling tightly to their possessions and believe they deserve even more. Contrast that with the heart of gratitude, one that is formed by an awareness of God's grace and the multitude of God's undeserved blessings. Those with a grateful heart are free to give to others, because they know the source of every good and perfect gift. They are able to appreciate life in a deeper way. They see tomorrow's dinner as an extravagant gift from a loving God. For them the seven words that are the title of this article become a prayer filled with all the excitement of a child at Christmastime: "What will we have for dinner tomorrow?"



(Left) MA1 Christopher P. Clanor and (Right) CS1 Kevon D. Henry, both assigned to Afloat Training Group Western Pacific on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, take the Navy-wide chief petty officer advancement exam. Sailors are given three hours to answer 200 questions that test their knowledge of their rating and basic military requirements.

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Matthew Cole

Online records ease Sailors' selection board preparation

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. (NNS) -- With the 2012 Navy-wide advancement exam for chief petty officer complete, first class petty officers hoping to advance must now focus on reviewing their record and preparing a package for the board, officials said Jan. 20.

"The advancement process for chief petty officer is twofold," said Navy Personnel Command (NPC) Force Master Chief (AW/SW/NAC) Jon Port. "Our first class petty officers must take an advancement exam and then, if they score high enough to become selection board eligible; their record will be reviewed by a selection board at Navy Personnel Command."

Approximately 33,000 active duty and Reserve first class petty officers participate in the exam annually. Last year about 20,500 first class petty officers were selection-board eligible and after a thorough review of the candidates records by a selection board of master chiefs and senior officers, 3,700 active duty and Reserve Sailors were selected for chief.

When the selection board convenes, its members are given quotas for each rate and a precept containing guidance on factors to consider when reviewing records from the candidates' official military personnel file (OMPF). It is up to the board to score each record based on those factors, which in the past has included leadership, education, personal and professional development, competency and skill expertise, overseas and arduous duty, and collateral duties.

"Your record represents you before the selection board and that is why, if you want to be competitive for selection, you need to make sure your record is as complete as possible. Because if you have a college degree or a recent award or significant qualification and it is not in your record, the board isn't going to know it," said Port.

Sailors should review their OMPF for completeness and accuracy. The OMPF consists of digital images of official documents amassed over the course of an individual's career by categories including fitness reports/performance evaluation, awards, professional history, personal data, orders, privileged information, and enlisted records. Sailors may access their OMPF online by selecting "My Personnel Info" link on the NPC website at www.npc.navy.mil.

"It is the responsibility of every Sailor to ensure their official military personnel file is up to date; they do this by regularly reviewing their official record to spot discrepancies or missing documentation," said Port.

Sailors who find items missing from their OMPF or discrepancies may submit a letter to the board and include the missing document or explain discrepancies for the board to consider. Sailors can confirm their package has arrived by clicking on the "Selection Board Status" link on the NPC web site, or by calling the NPC Customer Service Center at 1-866-U-ASK-NPC.

Letters sent to a selection board for consideration will not be permanently added to a service member's OMPF. Bupers Instructions (BUPERSINST) 1070.27 outlines all items that should or should not be submitted by officer and enlisted personnel and how to submit those documents.

Correspondence to the board for the Fiscal Year 2013 E-7 Selection Board must be received by the NPC Customer Service Center by April 30 for the Reserve chief selection board and June 4 for active duty chief selection board. Communication to the board must originate from the individual candidate. Correspondence from the command to the president of the board will not be accepted or considered.

Sailors may submit correspondence through traditional mail or by email. Mailing instructions and detailed information can be found in Naval Administrative Message (NAVADMIN) 349/11. The Reserve chief selection board convenes May 14. The active duty chief selection board convenes June 18.

The active duty chief selection board is the largest selection board conducted in the Navy. The board typically lasts five weeks, with their results forwarded to the chief of naval personnel for final approval.

For more information read NAVADMIN 349/11 and visit the "Boards" section at www.npc.navy.mil.