How much land does a man need?

By Chaplain Donald Moss

Have you ever seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul? We don't see people hiring a moving company to transport the deceased and all of the deceased's belongings to the cemetery. We all tend to accumulate a lot. To a certain extent, it is perfectly fine to accumulate what we need. It is a matter of justice that we be paid a just wage, that we are able to save for the future and that we try to leave something to our children. The richer we become, however, the more responsibility we have to share with others.

I read a story about a man who made a pact with the devil. The author was Leo Tolstoy. The story was titled, "*How much land does a man need?*" This is a short version of the story:

The devil made a pact that he would give as much land as a man could walk in a day. They would meet on a hill at sunrise and the man could claim all the land he could walk. The only requirement was that he must return to the same spot before sunset. So the man began to walk and rejoice in the beautiful land he would possess. He crossed a beautiful valley and climbed the hill on the other side. The sun was high in the sky. It must have been close to noon. If he would start back, he could have easily made it back in time. But, as he looked to the other side of the hill, he saw even more beautiful, productive land. So, he decided to walk to claim that land too. He could still make it back, if he hurried.

So, he went on to claim more and more land and his greed got the best of him. Finally, he turned back. He ran as fast as he could, but he could see he was not going to make it. He pushed himself harder and harder. Finally, he made it back just as the sun set. All that land could have been his, but he didn't claim it. He had pushed himself so hard that he dropped dead from a heart attack. They buried him in a grave six feet deep, six feet long and three feet wide. And that is how much a man needs, just enough to bury him.

This is an extreme story, of course. But it does make me ask how much stuff I need and how much I need to share for the benefit of others. I can't take it with me, but I can look forward to a much better life without stuff.

There is a story about an old lady who asked that a fork be placed in her coffin. When asked why she wanted the fork, she replied, "All my life, whenever I go to church dinners, they always say, 'keep your fork.'"

That would mean there was still something very good coming. In this life, we only need so much stuff. In the next life we won't need even that. There will still be more good things coming.

Kinnick students compete in West Point Bridge Builders contest

By Vicki Boehler, Nile C. Kinnick High School Public Affairs

Engineering students from Zama High School, Nile C. Kinnick High School (KHS) and international schools of the Kanto Plain competed to literally construct new bridge building designs using the latest Web cam technology during the West Point Bridge Builders contest sponsored by the Japanese Engineering District (JED) at Camp Zama.

According to KHS instructor Jim Rowell, the local contest, which was held Feb. 19, is an on-going partnership encouraging students to pursue careers in engineering.

"The West Point Bridge Builders contest is an international contest for middle and high school students to learn about engineering, design process applications and using the computer as a problem-solving tool," said Rowell.

Students compete in local contests to gain experience using the software, and then submit their designs before the March 5 deadline. Rowell said he was impressed with the ability of his students on such short notice for the competition.

"We had to install the software just one week before the contest," he said. "[We] only had four class periods to practice. Some of my students used the software for the first time on the day of competition."

Joining Rowell via Web cam in the West Point Bridge Builders contest was Zama High School instructor Jay Ruetten.

"Following the early March deadline, teams and individuals are selected as semi-finalists and go on to compete in a final round May 8, at West Point in New York," he said.

Both Rowell and Ruetten used the Defense Connect online service to run the contest at each school enabling JED Engineers Marc Murashige and Brad Scully to introduce the bridge scenario.

According to Ruetten, students had 50 minutes to engineer the least expensive design that would support 255 kilonewtons at an elevation of 20 meters above a river that also included a supporting pier.

"Students then selected the correct building materials, made changes and then tested their design," Ruetten said. "During the contest, other schools were allowed to log in to see all the action. [It's] pretty cool technology."

Competition was fierce as the new lowest costs were posted on the board and relayed among schools with a little encouragement.

The leading builders for Kinnick High School during the competition were Ken Passwaters, Adam Cason and Neil-Patrick Villamora.

"I was really surprised at how well they all did only using the software [during] the limited time we had in class," Rowell said. "All in all, it was a great way to show our students how to use technology in both the competition and in the way our competition was viewed via the internet."

JED judges awarded the top three finishers, all from Zama, with certificates and prizes.