"Reality"

By Chaplain Scott Shafer

This past summer I had the singular misfortune of watching "The Dark Knight." This was another Batman movie, but it was supposed to be grimmer and grittier than previous Batman movies. Some of the commentary seemed to equate grimmer and grittier with being "real." It seems that in our world today, if things are presented as more violent or sickening, then somehow this must be more realistic than a more sanitized presentation.

I can remember when I first got married. My wife and I had a cake, this wonderful ceremony, and hearts full of dreams. Admittedly, a lot of these dreams did not come to pass. We've had stomach viruses, car breakdowns, and all kinds of stuff to deal with. Our relationship has not been defined by little statues on a cake, neither is it defined by the misery of any one moment over any other moment. Our lives are not made more "real," through being grim or gritty…though they might be more sensational if someone is running through wearing a batman outfit.

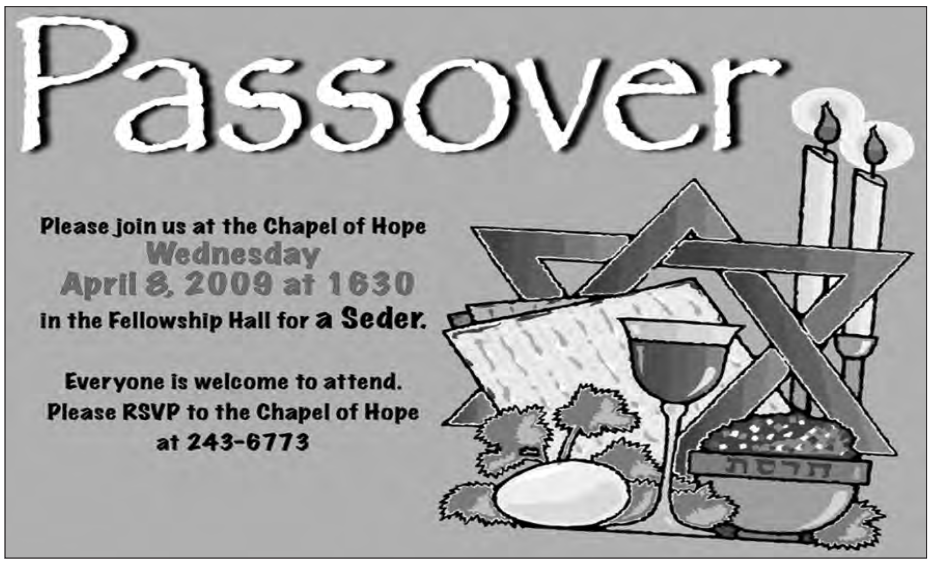
I've seen the film "It's a Wonderful Life" numerous times. This is not a grim and gritty movie. People weren't being shot in bank holdups, though there are moments when you wonder what will happen to the main character. What holds this movie together and what is most "real" to me are the relationships, like how someone can be sustained through hardship by their immediate and extended family.

We are coming up on the holy day of Easter. This is a day of great significance for Christians, because it is a reminder of when Jesus Christ came back from the dead. We memorialize this event by remembering the empty tomb that Jesus left behind. This is a moment of great hope, and it is not a time of grim despair. Does this mean that it is less real because it is grounded in hope?

Good Friday is the day when Christians remember the death of Jesus on the cross. This was a day of pain and despair for the disciples. In fact, we only label it "good" because we know the hope that we find at Easter. If it were not for Easter this would be a day of unrelenting pain. A time when we might remember when Jesus left and never came back. It would be a grim and despairing time. But the point is that Jesus did indeed come back! He was resurrected!

There are two sides of our lives. There are times when all can seem lost and we don't know what will happen tomorrow. I felt like that the day that my wife was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Still, there are other times when all seems right with the world and possibilities seem within our grasp that we never dared to imagine before. I felt like that at the birth of our daughters. It was a joy to be able to see someone face to face, whom I had loved for the past nine months!

So what is "real?" Is the cross more real than the empty tomb? They both are real. Hope is as much a reality as despair might be. Very often it is just what we choose to focus upon. What are you focusing upon this Easter season? Amen.



Annual road tax, 2009 decal issuance

Annual road tax for your vehicle is paid every spring. Payments, which must be made in yen, can be made at the Kanagawa Tax Office for regular sized cars and trucks. Payments for motorcycles and mini-cars can be made at the local city hall or ward office, starting April 1. In accordance with U.S. Forces Japan Policy Letter, vehicles are to be registered at the closest military installation of which vehicle owners are assigned.

Road tax will be collected at the Fleet Theater, March 24, 26 and 27 from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 2:30 p.m. and April 16 and 17 from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 2:30 p.m. This service aboard Yokosuka is also intended for Ikego residents. Road tax collection for vehicles registered in Negishi will be at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) classroom, Bldg. 19045, in Negishi Housing April 13 and 14 from 9 to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

The amount of road tax to be paid depends on the type of vehicle, which can be determined by the number shown on the top of the license plate. The respective tax amount is as follows:

• 44Y, 400Y, and 56Y, 57Y, 58Y, 500Y, 529Y plates	7,500 yen
• 33Y, 300Y, 329Y plates 4.5L and below	19,000 yen
4.6L and above	22,000 yen
• 11Y, 100Y plates	32,000 yen

Base decals must be affixed to the top center of the front windshield, next to the Japanese inspection sticker. The current Japanese inspection sticker, current base decal, installation sticker and rank decals (if applicable) should be the only decals affixed to the windshield. All other decals and inspection stickers from the previous years must be removed. Contact the Vehicle Registration office at 243-5011/5896 for more information.

Head's Up Yokosuka!

Community Announcements

March USO Events – The following is a list of upcoming March USO events:

• Sesame Street TV Special at the Benny Decker Theater for attendees will be at 10 a.m., March 28. Free popcorn provided.

• Every Wednesday night in March is board game night for the entire family with a large selection of board games to play.

• Every Saturday night in March is new DVD release night. Rent a DVD and enjoy some popcorn. Come out and see the movies you missed at the theater.

Contact the USO Yokosuka Center Operations Manager Danaë Hoekstra at 241-3030 or dhoekstra@uso.org for more information.

Yokosuka Schools Mandatory Spring Re-registration – Re-registration will be at Kinnick High School (KHS) April 21 - 24 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The following is the re-registration schedule:

Date:	Last name begins with:
April 21	A - D
April 22	E - K
April 23	L - P
April 24	Q - Z

If your family will be in Yokosuka during the next school year, you must re-register to guarantee the availability of appropriate staffing. Otherwise, your child's class schedule will not be issued on the first day of school. If you will be leaving the Yokosuka area, come in with your transfer orders and fill out a withdrawal form. Contact KHS or your child's school for more information.

USNH Yokosuka Health Care Consumer Council – The Commanding Officer, U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka, will host a Health Care Consumer Council April 23 at 5:30 p.m. in the hospital's command auditorium. The meeting is open to all beneficiaries and will address a variety of health care topics. Call USNH Yokosuka at 243-8740 for more information.

Month of the Military Child – Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) Yokosuka invites all Yokosuka, Ikego and Negishi school age children to enter the "What does it mean to be a Military Child" contest. You can write an essay, poem or a top ten list on what it means to be a military child. Entries must be received at FFSC, 2nd floor of Building 1555 by 4 p.m. April 22. If you are mailing in your entry, send it to: Fleet and Family Support Center, PSC 473 Box 116, FPO AP 96349-0116. The best entry and a first and second place runner up will be selected by a committee and will be announced April 24. Contact Bessie Smith at 243-9632 or Robyn Wilson at 243-7878 for more information.

Phishing e-mails – Recent reports of phishing attacks trying to entice users into providing personal login information have been noted. In addition, unsolicited e-mails asking users to click an embedded link that connects their computer to a hostile domain or malicious Web sites have shown up on Department of Defense networks. Navy Systems Administrators or legitimate businesses will never send you an e-mail message asking for your personal information. If you receive an e-mail such as the kind just described, do not reply providing the requested information, open any attachments or click on any links. Delete the e-mail and contact your network administrator immediately.

DoD, OPM to review NSPS

From the Department of Defense

The Department of Defense (DoD) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced March 16 that they will undertake a review of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS).

The decision by Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn was made after consultation with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

"This administration is committed to operating fair, transparent and effective personnel systems, and we are undertaking this review to assess whether NSPS meets these objectives," said Lynn.

With new leadership under a new administration, DoD and OPM will engage with key stakeholders in examining NSPS.

"We recognize that varying view points exist regarding NSPS, and given the scope and complexity of the system, it is important for leadership to conduct its own review of the program," Lynn added.

DoD will delay any further conversions of organizations into NSPS pending the outcome of this review. This affects roughly 2,000 employees in organizations scheduled to convert to NSPS this spring. Those organizations are adjusting their plans accordingly. During the review, organizations already covered by NSPS will continue to operate under current NSPS policies, regulations and procedures.

DoD and OPM leadership are engaged in discussions with key personnel in the administration to determine the overall framework, scope and timeline of the review, including identifying an appropriate individual to lead the review. It is expected to take several months for a review team to gather the necessary information and data, reach out to stakeholders and develop recommendations for leadership consideration.

NSPS implementation began in 2006, changing the way DoD civilians are hired, compensated, promoted and rewarded. The system currently covers approximately 205,000 DoD employees.