The Maersk Alabama, an unarmed container ship, was hijacked in 2009 by Somali pirates and subsequently rescued through the efforts of several United States Navy units—including my own, the USS Bainbridge (DDG-96). While the events of that month have quietly drifted out of the general public’s view, they remain as fresh to me today as the day I stepped onto the Maersk Alabama as a member of its newly organized security detachment.

I had been serving as the gunnery officer on the Bainbridge, responsible for maintenance and operation of the ship’s guns. Already deployed for two months off the coast of Somalia, we were now in the slack period that inevitably comes after the initial thrill of heading overseas. The long, uneventful watches were catching up with the crew. Memories of home grew rosier as the weeks dragged by.

It was my first deployment—far different than merely venturing away from home as I’d done before. Key among the differences was the absence of a “real church,” the kind that I grew up with. A lay leader directed church services on Sundays, but it seemed like I could never attend for one reason or another. Sometimes I was on watch. But for the most part it was a willful decision from a faltering relationship with God. I was a modern-day Jonah trying to escape the grasp of God rather than make Him my priority and obey Him.

A few weeks before the pirate attack on the Maersk Alabama, my wife asked me how I was coming along in my Bible studies. To my shame, all of the Bible studies I brought with me were stuffed into a cabinet. I was resigned to leafing through the Bible from the beginning.

I didn’t sleep very much during that week with all the activity of phone calls to the Bainbridge or the U.S. State Department, working with the crew, and drills preparing us for other possible pirate attacks. While I didn’t always have time for a nap, I did have time to pray—and that’s what I did whenever I felt exhausted, frustrated, or doubtful about the future.
as if reading a novel. Nonetheless, God spoke to me in my sluggishness, catching my attention with the book of Joshua, “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.” It was enough for me, and I felt God’s presence as much as I ever had before.

The “Alabama Eighteen” group of technicians, specialists, and other sailors carried out their duties with uncompromising professionalism and diligence, manning their weapons stations around the clock, and keeping a vigilant eye out for the pirate boats as the cargo ship steamed towards Kenya. I prayed constantly for wisdom during the transit. The grace of God lay thick upon us as we traveled towards the Port of Mombasa.

Once safely in port, we spent the next few weeks in Mombasa waiting for the crisis to end. It came on Easter Sunday when Navy SEAL snipers effected the rescue of Captain Phillips. Our “Alabama Eighteen” made a loud scene when we heard the news—extremely happy for having a part in one of the best-coordinated rescues ever conducted at sea.

Our voyage was a blessed one. I feel everyone knew that it could have turned out very differently. And as I reflect back, I see that in those extraordinary circumstances the Lord prompted me to spend more time with Him. God promised me He would be with me wherever I went. And He was with me—on the Indian Ocean, in Mombasa, and at the furthest reaches of my wandering heart.

**LTJG Steven Rho** currently serves as the First Lieutenant on the guided missile destroyer **USS Bainbridge (DDG-96)**. He lives in Virginia Beach with his wife, Kristin, and is a proud member of the Virginia Beach OCF group.

Photo inset: Capt. Phillips, former Captain of the container ship MV Maersk Alabama, publicly thanks sailors assigned to the guided-missile destroyer USS Bainbridge (DDG 96) for his dramatic rescue at sea. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class David Danals
Have you ever thought of killing yourself? I have. And even though I’ve been a Christian for over thirty years, I continue to wrestle with depression. Maybe that surprises you. Maybe depression and thoughts of suicide have never crossed your mind. But it is something someone around you might be facing today.

Everyone’s story is different, but the pain can be very similar. For me, even though I was adopted as an infant and raised by wonderful parents, the rejection and abandonment of my birth parents still hurts. My thoughts are, I’m afraid that who I’m supposed to be and what I’m supposed to do will not be good enough. And the most important people in my life will reject me and my efforts, leaving me all alone with no hope.

Even after his great victory over the 450 false prophets of Baal, when hearing that Jezebel was after him, Elijah prayed that he might die, saying, “I have had enough, Lord…. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors” (1 Kings 19:4).

Admiral Jeremy Boorda, Chief of Naval Operations, killed himself in 1996 because of the erroneous accusation that he was wearing two medals he was unauthorized to wear. Elijah and Admiral Boorda were two great men motivated to end their lives because of shame.

We inherited shame and fear from Adam and Eve, hiding from God and each other since that painful day when Adam chose to disobey God (Genesis 3:6-10). But through Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection, we are reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21) and the war has been won through Jesus.

But until the fullness of that victory comes, we are engaged in spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12). Our enemy, the devil, is the father of lies (John 8:44) who seeks to devour (1 Peter 5:8), and kill and destroy us (John 10:10). He wants us to believe we are easy prey for his schemes—that we are alone and isolated without worth, hope, or help.
Jesus came to give us abundant life—lived one day at a time.
L.I.F.E. = Living In Faith Every day.

That spiritual battle is also within us, between our old and new natures. Our flesh always wants to be in charge, but as Christians with the Holy Spirit living within us, God gives us the power to overcome and win.

Wearing our country’s uniform, or being a family member of one who does, can be stressful. The sacrifices, separations and situations we face can change us. I recently heard Chaplain (Major General) Douglas Carver, U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains, say that three of the indicators of suicidal behavior among soldiers stem from issues dealing with personal shame, failed relationships, or isolation from their family or a community support group.

Honesty is a common value of all the services. In the seasons of “everything under the sun,” there is a time to drive on and a time to ask for help. Acknowledging that your spirit, soul, or body is in pain is the right thing to do whether you’re junior enlisted, NCO, officer, or family member.

A close friend of mine saw a doctor because of a sharp stabbing pain he felt in his foot while running. There was a stress fracture in his foot, which sidelined him from running for a season so it could heal. Had he ignored the pain, the fracture could have led to a broken bone or to other problems that might have become permanent.

Broken bones and broken emotions are similar. The sooner we seek help, the sooner we will recover. Things may not be like they were before—which may mean that we need to learn how to live under a “new normal.” God doesn’t cause all things, but “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). There is no shame in being in pain. It’s a gift from God to let us know something is broken and needs healing.

Are you in pain? Sometimes depression and suicidal thoughts are chemically based and can be effectively treated with drugs. But sometimes they are caused by traumatic events or damaging words a significant person has said to us or about us. Here are some thoughts to keep in mind when faced with depression.

* Get help. Spend time with a counselor, minister, chaplain, or medical doctor.
* Remember God’s promise that you will never be alone, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.... I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16–18).
* Stop focusing on what not to do, and turn your efforts towards doing the right things.
* Let go of the “shoulds” that are self-imposed or from others.
* Be honest about who you are and the struggles you face.
* Ask for forgiveness and forgive others. It lightens your load!

When I think I am worthless, helpless, and hopeless, our Heavenly Father reminds me I was worth the death of His Son on the cross. God loves me more than I can imagine—and He will never reject me or leave me alone.

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Michael Weiss served thirty years as a U.S. Army Chaplain Assistant, retiring in 2007. He served as the enlisted advisor to the Executive Council of Officers’ Christian Fellowship. His vision for ministry is to train, equip, and encourage chaplains and chaplain assistants globally.
We live in a society where more and more individuals and groups are attempting to limit public religious exercise and expression.

Protecting free exercise of religion is particularly important in the Armed Forces because it is a key component in developing and strengthening the Warrior Ethos, an indispensable factor in fighting and winning our nation’s wars. Therefore, we are compelled to examine a number of issues of concern regarding free exercise of religion and religious expression in the Armed Forces.

Separation of Church and State

When discussing free exercise of religion and its limits in the U.S. Armed Forces, one quickly encounters arguments citing the phrase, “separation of church and state.” Yet, that phrase does not come from the U.S. Constitution. It comes from a letter written in 1802 by President Thomas Jefferson to members of a Baptist association in Danbury, Connecticut.1 Those making separation of church and state arguments often use that phrase when what they are really referring to is the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.”2

Hence, dissecting the phrase “separation of church and state” is a waste of time from a legal standpoint. Time is better spent determining what the drafters of the First Amendment meant by “an establishment of religion,” a phrase that does exist in the Constitution.

One of the methods used by the U.S. Supreme Court for interpreting the meaning and legal reach of the First Amendment is to examine how early Congresses acted in light of the Amendment’s express terms. One can begin to understand what the Establishment Clause allows (and disallows) by examining what transpired in the earliest years of our nation during the period when Congress

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1. "The Religious Rights of Those in Uniform

Part 3: Legal Principles

“Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; But we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.”
Psalm 20:7 (NASB)
drafted the First Amendment and after the states ratified it. For example, “the First Congress, as one of its early items of business, adopted the policy of selecting a chaplain to open each session with prayer.” Additionally, the First Congress—the same Congress that drafted the First Amendment—established the tradition of clergy-led prayer at presidential inaugurations (which, in truth, constitute military change-of-command ceremonies, where the Nation’s new Commander-in-Chief assumes office from his predecessor). These practices have continued to this very day.

Early national leaders also acted in ways that some today argue expressly violate the Establishment Clause. For example, President Washington issued proclamations of thanksgiving to Almighty God during his presidency, and President Adams called for a national day of fasting and prayer. During his presidency President Jefferson developed a curriculum for schools in the District of Columbia which used the Bible and a Christian hymnal as the primary texts to teach reading, and he signed the Articles of War which “earnestly recommended to all officers and soldiers, diligently to attend divine services.” Moreover, when Congress appointed the first Navy chaplain it also enacted legislation directing the holding of, and attendance at, divine services aboard U.S. Navy ships.

As one honestly examines governmental acts contemporaneous with the adoption of the First Amendment, it is difficult to deny that, in the early days of our Republic, church and state existed relatively comfortably (and closely) together, with contemporaries of the drafters of the First Amendment showing little concern that such acts violated the Establishment Clause. Further, more recent court decisions have confirmed that strict separation between church and state is not required by the Constitution. In fact, the Government must often yield what it might otherwise be able to do to ensure that free exercise rights are protected. The U.S. Constitution proscribes Congress from enacting any law prohibiting the free exercise of religion. The Department of Defense places a high value on the rights of members of the Military Services to observe the tenets of their respective religions. It is DoD policy that requests for accommodation of religious practices should be approved by commanders when accommodation will not have an adverse impact on mission accomplishment, military readiness, unit cohesion, standards, or discipline.

The United States as a Nation of Laws

The United States is a nation governed by the rule of law. We are also a nation with a robust, yet diverse, religious heritage. That religious heritage is reflected throughout our society—including within the U.S. Armed Forces. In Zorach v. Clausen, the Supreme Court noted that “we are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.” The Court has also aptly noted that “the First Amendment’s Religion Clauses mean that religious beliefs and religious expression are too precious to be either proscribed or prescribed by the [Government].”

The Military in American Society

Another key legal principle to keep in mind concerns the uniqueness of the military in American society. The Department of Defense has chosen to strongly support free exercise of religion by the men and women in uniform. In DoD Instruction Number 1300.17, DoD lays out its policy on free exercise:

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The Military Services concur in the DoD policy. In Air Force Policy Directive 52-1, the Air Force acknowledges free exercise of religion as “a basic principle of our nation” and then declares that “the Air Force places a high value on the rights of its members to observe the tenets of their respective religions. In addition, spiritual health is fundamental to the well being of Air Force personnel . . . and essential for operational success.”

Similarly, the Department of the Navy (DON) is fully committed to accommodating the religious practices of Sailors and Marines: “DON policy is to accommodate the doctrinal or traditional observances of the religious faith practiced by individual members when these doctrines or observances will not have an adverse impact on military readiness, individual or unit readiness, unit cohesion, health, safety, discipline, or mission accomplishment.”

In Army Regulation 600-20, the Army recognizes the importance of an individual’s spiritual state for “providing powerful support for values, morals, strength of character, and endurance in difficult and dangerous circumstances.” The Army “places a high value on the rights of its Soldiers to observe tenets of their respective religious faiths.”

Though not part of DoD, as a uniformed service, the U.S. Coast Guard also supports the free exercise rights of its personnel: “It is Coast Guard policy that commanding officers shall provide for the free exercise of religion by all personnel of their commands.”

In conclusion, the free exercise of religion and free expression of religious sentiments are consistent with our history and fully in accord with the Constitution and laws of the United States.

Robert Weston Ash is an assistant professor of law at Regent University School of Law in Virginia, from which he received his Juris Doctor degree. He is also the senior litigation counsel for national security law at the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ). Robert served twenty-two years active duty in the military after graduating from West Point.

Editorial Note: This is the third in a series of articles about the religious rights guaranteed to and enjoyed by members of the U.S. Armed Forces under the Constitution and laws of the United States with respect to free exercise of religious sentiments. Subsequent articles will examine the specific rights and responsibilities of military commanders, chaplains, and individuals. The extensive footnotes in this series of articles are integral to the author’s intent and research, and are therefore included in their entirety.

(Footnotes)

1 Letter from Thomas Jefferson, President of the U.S., to Danbury Baptist Ass’n of Conn. (Jan. 1, 1802), in The American Republic: Primary Sources 72, 75 (Bruce Frohnen ed., 2002).
2 U.S. Const. amend I (emphasis added).
3 Most agree that, at a minimum, the Establishment Clause was intended to prohibit the creation of a national church for the U.S., such as existed in England. Nevertheless, one must keep in mind that the First Amendment did not preclude individual states from adopting a state church or a state religion. See Carl Zollman, American Church Law 2-4 (W. Publ’g Co. 2d ed. 1933) (1917). In fact, Massachusetts was the last state to disestablish its state church, and it did so of its own accord in 1833, more than forty years after the ratification of the First Amendment. Kelly Olds, “Privatizing the Church: Disestablishment in Connecticut and Massachusetts,” 102 J. Pol. Econ. 277, 281-82 (1994).
7 Proclamation of President John Adams (Mar. 6, 1799), in 1 A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1789-1897 284-86 (James D. Richardson ed., 1899).
8 John W. Whitehead, The Second American Revolution 100 (1982) (citing 1 J. O. Wilson, Public School of Washington 5 (1897)).
10 Act of March 2, 1799, ch. XXIV, 1 Stat. 709 (requiring commanders of ships with chaplains on board “to take care that divine service be performed twice a day, and the sermon preached on Sundays”); Act of March 23, 1800, ch. XXXIII, 2 Stat. 45 (directing commanders of ships to require the ship’s crew “to attend at every performance of the worship of Almighty God”).
12 Id. at 335 (quoting Hobbie v. Unemployment Appeals Comm’n of Fla., 480 U.S. 136, 144-45 (1987)).
13 Id. at 338.
15 Id.
20 Id. at para. 5.
21 Dep’t of the Army, Army Regulation 600-20: Army Command Policy para. 3-3.b.(4) (2009).
22 Id. at para. 5-6.a.
23 Commandant of the Coast Guard, Commandant Instruction M1730.4B: Religious Ministries Within the Coast Guard para. 5.a (1994).
When I was on the faculty of the Army War College one of my favorite questions to ask of visiting senior leaders, especially general officers, was “What are you reading right now?” That open-ended inquiry was usually quite telling as to how engaged those leaders were in their own continuing growth and professional development. Those who said they were too busy to read had let the tyranny of the urgent capture them. The ones who were engaged impressed me with the breadth and depth of what they were reading. Some even suggested that it was imperative that senior leaders make time to read.

One area of study and practice that has always been important to me is the topic of leadership. I have an entire bookshelf devoted to the subject. Many of the books are dog-eared, highlighted, and well worn from frequent review. All have influenced my understanding and practice of the art and science of leadership. In more recent years I have become increasingly interested in the topic of Christian servant leadership.

I believe there are at least three reasons why few servant leaders exist. First, most leaders do not spend sufficient time studying leadership—and many still subscribe to the concept of being born as a leader (or not). Second, servant leadership is hard work and involves significant time and investment in the development of those you lead. Finally, to be truly successful as a servant leader requires deep humility and the intentional suppression of ego and pride. This is particularly difficult for senior leaders who are afforded significant privileges, deference, and accolades—especially in our results-driven culture.

I believe it would be well worth your time to grab at least a few of the following recommended books and study them carefully. You will certainly see things in them that you already know, but I suspect you will find a new perspective, informed by Scripture, and modeled in Jesus’ life that will allow you to grow as a Christian leader. In doing this, I trust you will be even more successful in the terms that others commonly think of as those of a leader. The difference will be leadership for God’s glory, service to the Lord, and service to those you lead.

**Leadership Library for Christians**

A stay at White Sulphur Springs around the start of the last century represented a dramatic departure from noisy, congested city life where mills and factories belched clouds of coal smoke which often delayed the dawn and brought an early dusk. The change was immediately apparent to the weary traveler upon arriving at the Sulphur Springs station, which was situated deep in a picturesque valley whose hillsides were dotted with dairy farms. After enduring many hours—perhaps even days—aboard a succession of non-air-conditioned trains, guests would gratefully disembark from their sooty coaches. Amidst clouds of steam, trunks and suitcases were hoisted from the baggage car to the ground as excited children released pent-up energy by running around the little depot or getting acquainted with the team of horses waiting to take them on the final leg of their long journey. The hissing steam locomotive with its little train would soon labor off through the valley toward Huntingdon, Altoona, or Cumberland, the sound of its whistle growing ever-fainter, and the new arrivals would leave behind them thoughts of the city house they had shuttered for the summer, along with the hustle and bustle of Pittsburgh, Chicago, New York, or Philadelphia.

Guests found their tensions continuing to evaporate as they relaxed on the swaying carriage ride up the hill and through the deep woods, the journey punctuated by occasional sunny openings in the canopy of trees. They found themselves enveloped by a silence interrupted only by nature, with Milligan’s Cove serving as a home to scarlet tanagers, indigo buntings, wild canaries, cardinals—and, in season, the spectacle of majestic Monarch butterflies. The visitors’ reasons for coming to this oasis were many and varied, ranging from the peace and quiet to the fresh air, the good food, or perhaps the hope of finding a cure for a persistent ailment. A half-hour later, they were being warmly greeted at the hotel’s front door by the Colvin family. After they signed the large guest register book and shook off the dust of the long train ride, they quickly felt at home. Soon friendships were being renewed or forged, in
animated discussions at the dinner table or during quiet conversations on porch rockers which often continued long after darkness had surrounded the cozy, softly lit hotel and the mysterious forests echoed with the soothing sound of crickets, owls, and tree frogs.

Accommodations at the hotel were not luxurious. Guest rooms were simply furnished, and the dining room floor was made of plain wide boards. The elegant front staircase likewise had no carpeting, and electricity was not introduced until well into the twentieth century. And yet visitors were satisfied with these relatively modest surroundings, focusing instead on the spectacular natural setting of the resort.

A decade after the Colvins took over ownership, a relative of John P. Reed, the original co-owner of White Sulphur Springs, made a visit to the resort and took away vivid memories: “The location of the hotel to me was charming and pretty, presenting a picturesque appearance, with a dense grove of large and spreading evergreen trees, and near a spring of odorous sulphur water of medicinal value, from which the place derives its name. When I awoke from my slumbers in the morning I found the weather delightful and refreshing, and the air filled with the song of numerous birds; particularly above all the others was the plaintive cry of the whip-poor-will.

All this charmed me so that I have never been able to forget the impression made by the night’s stay and the visit with the Colvins.”

Where Cares Refuse to Stay is available in the bookstore at White Sulphur Springs, through the OCF office, or on our website for $18 (includes shipping and handling).

**Heritage House**

More than spring flowers came up at White Sulphur Springs this year. The new Heritage House is rising up on its foundations despite a rough winter for construction.

This new facility will effectively double the capacity for the WSS Conference Center with forty-four guest rooms and two support staff bunk rooms on the top two floors. The main floor will have dining and gathering rooms that will accommodate 220 people each. In between will be a lobby/living room area with a gas fireplace, business offices, and restrooms. The walkout basement will have five classrooms, an infant care room, toddler room, fitness room, game room, laundry room, facilities maintenance shop, and additional support offices and restrooms.

The entire facility will be air conditioned with updated furnishings and equipment—but will still reflect the country charm of WSS. The front porch will offer a sweeping pastoral view with the familiar bentwood rockers. The guest entrance area will be covered for protection from the elements while unloading or loading cars on arrival and departure.

Although new, Heritage House will continue to be our place apart . . . a place of the heart.
OCF Announcements

- **OCF Council Voting**: We will conduct the OCF Council ballot voting by e-mail again this year. Please be certain we have your current e-mail address. If you do not have an e-mail address, you may request a hard copy of the ballot from Shana Adler (shana.adler@ocfusa.org), since there will not be a ballot mailing.

- **Annual Report Now Available**: The OCF 2009 annual report is now available to those who want to learn more about OCF’s most recent fiscal year and ministry accomplishments. The report can be downloaded from our website at www.ocfusa.org or a hard copy can be requested through ocfdenver@ocfusa.org.

- **Best of COMMAND**: OCF is celebrating the first decade of this new century by publishing a very special issue of “The Best of COMMAND Magazine”—available in December this year. Nominate your favorite COMMAND magazine article today by contacting Barb at barb.beyer@ocfusa.org with the name of the article, the author, and/or the issue of COMMAND it was published in.

- **Newly Commissioned Officers**: OCF wants to honor our members who are being commissioned this year! You are encouraged to participate by sending your information to the OCF publications department to be mentioned in the August issue of COMMAND magazine. The form can be downloaded from our website at www.ocfusa.org or you may call the office at 800-424-1984 to give us your information over the phone. Deadline is 15 May.

- **National Day of Prayer**: Thursday, May 6. This year’s theme, “For Such a Time as This,” is based on Nahum 1:7.

**OCF Updates**

Air Force pilots Capt Donna and LtCol Slick Douglass are trading in their military aviation wings to work as missionary pilots in Africa. Donna was the first of three women ever to pilot Stealth aircraft.

Cadets and mids attended the Minnesota OCF’s fourth annual dinner to hear featured speaker Col Dick Tolliver, USAF (second from right). Col Tolliver, a long time OCF member and author of An Uncaged Eagle, was a “Top Gun” fighter pilot who flew over 400 combat missions in Southeast Asia.
Births

Tristen Canete, born and adopted 23 February 2009, son of CDR Ken and Roanna Canete, USN, Coronado, CA.

Timothy James Dennis, born 25 November 2009, son of Maj Andrew and Nancy Dennis, USAF, Abilene, TX.

Zoe Noelle Douglass, born 29 August 2009, daughter of LtCol Richard “Slick” and Capt Donna Douglass, USAF, Dalzell, SC.

Hannah Laura Foxworth, 3 February 2010, daughter of Capt Russell and Jenn Foxworth, USA, and granddaughter of LTC Tom and Cheri Austin, USA (Ret.).

Jordan Josiah Grose, born 15 January 2010, son of MAJ Chris and Jacqueline Grose, USA, Burke, VA.

Lauren Faith Harris, born 8 August 2009, daughter of Capt Kristofer and Alison Harris, USMC, Yuma, AZ.


Audrey Grace McKeen, born 3 December 2009, daughter of Mike and Kallie McKeen, Buena Vista, CO.


Zoe Kate Rohrer, born 9 November 2009, daughter of Capt Alan and Kelly Rohrer, USN, Pensacola, FL.

Gideon and Evelyn Toth, born 24 September 2009, son and daughter of CPT Kevin and Kristen Toth, Fort Campbell, KY.

William Everett Wainwright, born 3 February 2010, son of MAJ Ryan and Mary Wainwright, USA, Shaw AFB, SC.

Weddings

LT James Fletcher, USN, married Jill Ruchte, 21 November 2009. Their home is Washington, DC.

Taps

BG Gordon Cauble, USA (Ret.), December 2009, husband of Suzanne Cauble, Tucson, AZ.

COL Harry Fraser, USA (Ret.), 29 January 2009, husband of Marilyn Fraser, Guntersville, AL.

COL James W. Love, USA (Ret.), 14 October 2009, Williamsburg, VA.

Capt Daniel Wieland, USAF (Ret.), 15 November 2009, Corvallis, OR.

Lcdr Edward W. Young, USN (Ret.), 18 January 2010, husband of Mary C. Young, Chevy Chase, MD.
A Decade of Service:
Bruce and Melissa Fister Retire from the OCF Staff

LtGen Bruce and Melissa Fister, USAF (Ret.)

OCFers gathered in Denver, Colorado to celebrate LtGen Bruce and Melissa Fister’s ten years of service to the Lord through Officers’ Christian Fellowship as Executive Director.

It was a gathering of friends and co-workers, but what made it special was the fellowship of believers and especially OCF members. Bruce and Melissa enjoyed the evening of story telling, gift remembrances, and recognition of a work well done.

It was a fun night enjoyed by all as hearty thank-yous and good-byes were expressed.

Council member COL Aaron Zook and his wife Joyce enjoy their time with Bruce Fister.

Melissa Fister (left) shares a special moment with Marty Thomas.

Bruce with Mike Martin (center) and Clay Thomas.

Melissa Fister (right) smiles alongside Bobbie Simpson.

Arnie Ahnfelt (left) chats with Jim Karr.

Photos by Karen Fliedner
During the past seven months, nearly every time an OCF member spotted the Space Shuttle or International Space Station (ISS) in the night sky, they were seeing more than they might have known. Fellow OCFers were aboard those space vehicles.

The odyssey started back in September of 2009 when COL Jeff Williams, USA, began a 167-day stint aboard the ISS as the Expedition 22 Commander. Additionally during that time frame, three consecutive space shuttle missions were piloted by OCF members. CAPT Barry Wilmore, USN, piloted Atlantis in November, followed by Col Terry Virts Jr., USAF, who flew Endeavour in February. Also, astronaut Col Jim Dutton, USAF, former OCF Council member, piloted Discovery into orbit on 5 April 2010.

As a NASA astronaut on space shuttle and ISS missions, COL Williams has spent nearly a full year total—362 days—in space. From his inimitable perspective in the heavens, he has taken more photographs of Earth than any other astronaut in history. Readers can look through the lens of Jeff’s camera at the wonders of God’s vast creation through his soon-to-be-released book, *The Work of His Hands*.

**Champions—Every Hero Needs Them**

by Dave Rowland, OCF Director of Resource Development

Do you remember the story of Moses, Joshua, and the Amalekites in Exodus 17? The Amalekites came out to attack the Israelites, so Moses sent Joshua to fight them. He said, “Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”

It continues, “As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. . . . Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.”

Joshua was the hero, but he needed champions. Without Moses and the staff of God, there was no victory. Without Aaron and Hur holding up Moses’ arms, there was no raised staff. You get the point. Aaron and Hur were champions, too. God’s work through OCF is the same. There are front line heroes—hard-working Bible study leaders, gifted retreat speakers, and faithful field staff—all needing support. That’s where OCF champions come in.

OCF is blessed with very generous donors, but I particularly admire one group—OCF’s monthly donors, giving by credit card, electronic funds transfer (EFT), or mail. Over 500 give monthly through EFT or our website, and many more send checks or use payroll deduction (e.g., CFC). They do it because they know OCF operates on a tight budget, ministering to stressed out military members and their families. They know monthly giving is simple and efficient—and such a blessing to OCF. They are champions!

What do OCF champions get? Certainty that their part in this work of God will be there when it’s needed. Confidence that they’re part of a great team holding up the arms of heroes at home and on the battlefield. Satisfaction that they’re supporting families left behind by deployment. So if you already give monthly, thank you so much, and if you don’t, why not start today? Every hero needs champions.
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Making Memories that Last a Lifetime…

Spring Canyon, Colorado
• Week-Long Family Programs
  Adults    Teens
  Children
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