

Christian Perspectives on Life in the Military

# COMMAND

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embolden

equip

encourage

engage



## STORIES OF **HOPE** IN THE MIDST OF WAR

comfort amid cruelty / the wounded healer / caregiver of the soul

## Encouragement: A powerful tool against the enemy

Once had the honor and privilege of hearing and meeting Roger Donlon, a retired Army colonel who regaled us with exciting and horrifying accounts of his military service. He was the Vietnam War's first recipient of our nation's highest award for valor—the Congressional Medal of Honor.



DAVID WARNER

Executive Director

My fellow attendees and I sat in awe of this hero, the very epitome of courageous leadership under fire, drinking in every word he uttered. In closing, he took a yellowed newspaper clipping out of his pocket. He captured our attention with a story about an enemy, one that continues to stalk and at times defeat him:

The devil decided to go out of business and offered all his tools for sale. He attractively displayed the entire evil lot—malice, hatred, envy, jealousy—marked with price tags. One higher-priced tool—wedge-shaped, yet worn-out—lay apart from the rest.

Someone asked the devil what tool that was.

“Discouragement,” he replied. “Why priced so high?”

The devil replied, “Because discouragement is my most useful tool. When I cannot get near a person with any other tool, I use discouragement to pry open and get inside the conscience. And once inside there, I can use that person in ways that best suit me. The tool of discouragement is so worn because I can use it with practically anyone. Few

*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 28:11



**OCF is here to encourage you as you run your race**

**Need prayer?**

<http://www.ocfusa.org/contact/request-prayer>

**Is there an OCF group where I'm being stationed?**

<http://www.ocfusa.org/find-ocf>

**How can my installation set up a marriage retreat hosted by OCF's family outreach, Spiritually Smart Family conferences?**

<http://www.ocfusa.org/resources/family-conferences>

**Want books—military issues, marriage, parenting, purity, leadership, faith?**

<http://www.ocfusa.org/resources/order-books>

people realize it belongs to me.”

COL Donlon's courage in admitting this struggle was very comforting to me. Does that story resonate with you as well? How many times in your life have you been told you wouldn't succeed? Are you tired of seeing others pass you by? Do life's perplexities make you feel like a modern-day Job?

Sifting through the ashes and rubble of what remained of their home after last summer's wildfires in Colorado Springs, friends of mine found pottery still intact despite the flames. It had been fired in a kiln, that necessary finishing stage which creates an enduring piece of beautiful art.

When the Master Potter refines us into the image of His Son, His most amazing work in reshaping the clay of our lives into lasting pottery often comes through the painful fires of testing.

Combating Satan's tool of discouragement requires confident faith in Jesus Christ, that unutterable trust of knowing He is always standing with us through all life's bewildering fires.

The apostle Paul speaks of a powerful tool that we, the Body of OCF in the Body of Christ, can use together in resisting Satan's attacks of discouragement when our faith is tested, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

If you have tasted the bitter pill of defeat and want to give up, I encourage you:

**Don't go it alone**

The Lord will never leave you. When you are tested, tempted, or tormented—go to your knees, go to Scripture, and surround yourself with loving, Christ-centered friends.

**Don't rely on your own strength**

Apart from the Lord we can do nothing. All self-efforts are in vain and will leave us frustrated. The Potter's kiln of testing is to develop His strength in us for the heat and struggles yet to come.

**Don't forget God's love and His best for you**

No matter what you're up against right now, lean heavily on the Lord as you continue to run your race. He has great plans for you and will use the difficulty to form unshakable faith in you:

“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 28:11).



The Waldo Canyon Fire as seen from the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in June.

DVIDS photo

## Waldo Canyon Fire tests the investments of our hearts

by COL PHIL EXNER  
United States Army, Retired

For two days we anxiously watched smoke billowing over the ridge from the other side of the mountains as the Waldo Canyon forest fire continued growing, now just a few miles from our home.

Then one afternoon, sixty-mile-an-hour winds gusted the flames across the firebreaks, crested the mountains, and headed straight down through several canyons toward Colorado Springs, Colorado. Over 30,000 people were immediately ordered to evacuate their homes.

Although we weren't yet among those being forced to leave, with the winds blowing the fire in our direction we started loading our cars with the possessions we considered irreplaceable—all while making a list of what we didn't want to remove unless absolutely necessary. We were thankful for having the time to do this without being rushed, contented that we had prayerfully pondered what to take or leave behind.

I thought of another fire, one that swept through the forest near our California home when I was in graduate school. A professor of ours had only five minutes to evacuate before the fire consumed his house, and he later bitterly confessed grabbing all the wrong things (bills, junk mail) while leaving behind the truly valuable ones (family photos). It was then that my wife

and I began contemplating what we would take with us if ever forced to do the same.

Packing the last item into the trunk, I was surprised by a question loudly invading my thoughts as I surveyed our motley collection of valuables, “How much of this will fit in my casket?”

The ever-encroaching fire forced us to decide what items were most important and what were now no longer worth the effort to save—things that just one day earlier had been “valuable.” Even our photos were only dear because of the stories they tell about God's faithfulness—stories that must be passed on if their value is to endure.

The fire was a poignant reminder to my heart of a truth I knew in my mind about worldly treasures, including homes—all of them will eventually burn up. But in heaven we have a home that will never be destroyed (2 Peter 3:1-13).

Although assured and comforted by this promise, a wave of conviction swept over me as I thought about all the items on my “expendable” list, embarrassed by how so much of my life had been spent saving to acquire, display, and protect them. I worried about them during PCS moves, and fixed them when broken. Contemplating the possessions I was now willing to abandon, my conscience considered yet another nearly audible question: “How much more of an eternal impact could I have accomplished if my money, time, focus, and

energy had been spent on things the Lord wanted?”

It was somber to realize that while my wife and I had several days to think about leaving before we actually packed, many people had only a few hours or mere minutes before departing. And others—such as David and Lori Warner, OCF's executive director couple—had no time at all because they were away from their home when the mandatory evacuations were issued.

Many people forced to leave their homes without time to prepare lost irreplaceable personal treasures. But how much worse it will be for those who fail to prepare—by turning to Christ, re-ordering their lives, and investing in what truly has eternal significance—for the day when they will leave this world?

The lessons we learned during the Waldo Canyon fire have prompted us to review our life goals and reassess the things in which we invest our hearts.

Phil, a thirty-year Marine Corps veteran, is now the executive director of the Association for Christian Conferences, Teaching, and Service (ACCTS), which trains international Christian military leaders and assists in establishing military Christian fellowships around the world.



# Comfort Amid Cruelty

by MAJOR ERIC AHNFELDT, United States Army

**A**s a Christian surgeon deployed to Afghanistan, some tragedies will forever be burned into my memory. One such experience happened during a mass casualty situation. A vehicle-borne IED detonated in a public place, killing several Afghans and injuring eight, including a six-year-old boy. Alerted we would soon receive these patients for care, we warmed up the emergency room, and like a NASCAR pit crew, we took our respective places.

Before long, the sound of two arriving Black Hawk helicopters thundered throughout the ER. The trauma teams quickly and skillfully began treating the incoming patients—securing airways, placing chest tubes, starting IVs, and taking X-rays while assessing injuries.

Among the eight patients brought into the operating room was a sixty-five-year-old male who had shrapnel wounds in his abdomen, chest, and neck. We explored his abdomen, looking for wounds and opening up the cardiac sac to make sure his heart wasn't bleeding. We then washed and closed the thirty wounds shredding his body from the

embedded glass pieces that had blasted out of the IED when it exploded.

When the boy was brought in, a chest tube was inserted to treat a wound from an apparent glass fragment that ripped through his chest, collapsing a lung before exiting out through his spine and severing his spinal cord in the process. He had collapsed helpless on the ground, unable to take a deep enough breath to yell for help, and started suffocating. By the time his nearby father rushed to him, oxygen deprivation had already caused the child's brain to swell, irreparably damaging it.

The father scooped up his bleeding, asphyxiating son, and rushed him to the casualty collection point. Not until receiving a chest tube and being hooked up to a ventilator did the boy begin to breathe again.

But the damage was already done.

Leaving the OR, I headed over to the intensive care unit. There in the middle of ICU—where American ICU and ER nurses quickly, meticulously attended to five

other bleeding and burned patients—the bewildered father sat beside his boy's bed, his traditional Afghan clothing soaked by his son's blood.

Still wearing my scrub cap and OR attire, I walked over to the young boy and placed my hand on his little foot. Fighting back tears, thinking of my own son, I bowed my head and prayed that God would care for this child, knowing that he was in His hands. My prayer continued with a request that the family would recover from such a devastating loss. The father still had no idea what was in store for his boy. With my hand still on the boy's foot, tears welling up in my eyes, I prayed for my family, that God would keep them safe. And I prayed God would help me recover from witnessing the cruelty of mankind that was afflicted on the little boy and his devastated father.

As I opened my eyes, the child's father looked up at me and slightly bowed his head, to which I returned the gesture. With that I turned and walked over to my other patients, made sure the ventilator settings were correct, and then left the room.

The rest of the night was a blur as I continued caring for the new patients we treated. Despite my fatigue and running on adrena-

line, I managed to call home about 2 a.m. Now mid-morning in Texas, my wife had just finished breakfast with our young children. I cried as I heard my son's little voice ask his mother if daddy was on the phone. I could barely speak when he said hello.

Even after two deployments, I still don't understand how mankind can be so cruel and thoughtless. My only comfort comes in this hope—knowing that God loves and cares for that little Afghan boy. And when that boy dies a week or two later after leaving the care of an American hospital, God will take his little hand, make his mangled body whole—and welcome him into glory. ✝

*Eric served our nation in 2010 as a trauma surgeon in Iraq and the following year in Afghanistan. He received his commission in 2000 through the Health Professions Scholarship program, attended Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, and did his general surgery residency at Fort Bliss, Texas. Assigned to Fort Hood, Texas, Eric and his wife, Kari, live there with their two children.*



# The Wounded Healer

by LIEUTENANT COLONEL TOM SCHMIDT, United States Army, Retired

**A** co-worker named Diana is a Gold Star mother. This remarkable woman lost her oldest son to combat action in Iraq, leaving behind a grieving wife, their baby, and other heartbroken relatives and friends. Despite her faith, and the support of family and community friends, Diana's wounds—pain, anger, denial, and fear for her son's young family—are profound, constant companions she will likely carry with her until her dying day.

Death—and the separation that ensues because of it—is the curse of Adam's sin. For Diana and her family—and countless families throughout the ages who have lost loved ones, particularly in combat situations—you can't help but wonder, can any good come from such an unspeakable tragedy?

However, it is in the strange economy of God where He does much of His greatest work through our suffering, such as the sorrow inflicted upon us by others. The apostle Paul recounted a season of overwhelming despair in his life as, "Great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself" (2 Corinthians 1:8). But in the Lord's hands, the pain served to teach Paul that it "happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead." And out of Paul's period of despair came this rich fodder of biblical truth, "to

live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Sometimes suffering occurs from our own sin. King David's iniquities of adultery and murder reaped generations of violence and betrayal in his family (2 Samuel 12:10). But after David came face-to-face with his scarred, miserable nature and repented, he penned marvelous words of God's mercy that have guided sinners for centuries, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1).

And sometimes suffering is simply the effect of living in a fallen world where evil can strike anyone. Yet none of the aspects of suffering limit God's capacity to use pain in a redeeming fashion. Isaiah's prophesy about the greatest Suffering Servant declares, "By His wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus' wounds and suffering are the venue through which we have been redeemed.

Believers can rejoice because through our own lives, God uses the mystery of pain and suffering through which His eternal work shines brightly.

The transformation in Diana over the years as she has dealt with her loss and pain is remarkable. Already a sensitive and compassionate woman, those qualities only deepened as she began reaching out to comfort countless others. Through her questions and grief she made room for action by organizing and leading the Kansas City area chapter of the American Gold Star Mothers, remembrance walks, and a local veterans' memorial to honor the sacrifices of soldiers and their families.

When others in the community lost loved ones in their service to our nation, Diana was the first and arguably the most effective person rushing to their side with support. She has become a cherished friend and the community's most productive healer to those who are alone, hurting, or suffering emotional wounds. We see in Diana what Henri Nouwen calls a "wounded healer." By embracing her wounds through the loving embrace of the great Suffering Servant, Diana has become His partner in the lives of others. Still carrying the scars of her wounds, Diana is a visible instrument of God's healing for others.

Can we do likewise? Acknowledge the pain

and suffering accompanying life, and cry out to God, the only One who can ever deliver us. In offering ourselves to Him, He will use the pain and suffering in our own lives and others for His divine purposes. We can even rejoice because we share in the suffering—and victory—of the Savior. ✠

*Tom is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, serving twenty-five years in the Army before retiring in 1995 as a lieutenant colonel. After the death of OCF stalwart Dr. George Kuykendall, a close friend and mentor, Tom and his wife, Jean, responded to God's call to "till the vineyard" at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as OCF field staff reps. Passionately encouraging and equipping lay military families for godly service throughout the military society, Tom and Jean have three children and eleven grandchildren.*



# Caregiver of the Soul

by **CHAPLAIN LIEUTENANT COLONEL BRIAN BOHLMAN**, Air National Guard

**A**s military members, it is important for us to “tell our story” as a healthy way of processing the emotional impact of serving in harm’s way, especially after returning from deployment. During my last week as a hospital chaplain in Afghanistan, I gave a behind-the-scenes tour of the facility to some public affairs staff members who later wrote an article about chaplains caring for the warrior’s soul. It was a divine encounter. Before they left, God used me to care for their own souls while using them to help me tell my story—which is hard to do at times.

I provided ministry to over 1,500 wounded warriors with many asking me to pray for them, their families, and especially the members of their unit they’d left behind. Regardless of their faith or beliefs, I always took the time to listen to their stories of grief and pain, and then thank them for the sacrifices they had made for freedom.

During this tour, my fifth deployment, I also had the privilege of ministering to and helping the devoted doctors and nurses who rendered their medical expertise to the injured. These caregivers are forced to keep their feelings and emotions out of their difficult work, often confronted by unique challenges such as providing the same level of care to both a prisoner of war and the very soldier the POW wounded. These medics sometimes just need to talk to someone.

As a Christian chaplain, my ministry model resembles Christ’s own—walking the road with grief-stricken men, asking them questions, taking time to listen to their pain, and offering comfort from Scriptures (Luke 24).

Combat zone ministry presented me with unique perspectives on faith and fear. My faith was tested every time there was indirect fire from an incoming rocket or mortar attack. I had to deal with my own fears that I could be severely injured—or never return to my family.

Beyond physical injuries, many wounded warriors I ministered to had hidden emotional, mental, and spiritual wounds deeply affecting them. As a caregiver of the soul, I learned that keeping a ministry journal helped me process the images and emotions I had from serving in a war-zone trauma hospital.

This is what I journaled on one of the most difficult days of my tour:

*A suicide bomber north of our location detonated himself near a playground, killing and injuring over thirty innocent victims, including three American soldiers. While assisting the medical staff, I noticed that much of the trauma floor was covered in puddles of blood, including the soles of my tan boots. It reminded me of a World War II photo of a chaplain kneeling next to a soldier with boots covered with mud. The photo caption described how chaplains must be willing to get dirty in order to bring ministry to service members wherever they are serving—in the field, the woods, or a tent. Or in a hospital trauma unit, covered with the blood of America’s bravest men and women who sacrificed themselves for freedom.*

Since returning from my tour, I am continually reminded of something I once heard, freedom has a taste to those who have fought for it, and almost died, that the protected will never know. Since the earliest days of our nation, every generation of Americans has answered the call to duty in times of peace and war. I may never again see the unsung heroes I served with, but I will always remember them and treasure the opportunity of ministering God’s presence, care, and hope to them as we walked our portion of the Emmaus road together.

*Brian is the wing chaplain at the 169th Fighter Wing, McEntire Joint National Guard Base, SC. He serves as an associate professor of chaplaincy ministries at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, and has written several books about the military oath and also the chaplaincy. He and his wife, Shelley, have a daughter. To contact Brian or for information about his own nonprofit military ministry, check “As Seen in COMMAND” at [www.ocfusa.org](http://www.ocfusa.org).*





**CHAPLAIN (MAJOR)  
STEVE SATTERFIELD,**  
Colorado National Guard

**Came to OCF:** Invited to LTC Colin Wooten's Bible study at Fort Carson, CO.

**Involvement in OCF:** OCF's Growing and Building fundraiser; Colorado Prayer Luncheon; COMMAND magazine contributor

**Why OCF for me:** Christian encouragement from officers

**Born:** Denver, CO

**Alma mater:** University of Colorado-Denver and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

**Hobbies:** I play keyboards for our Sunday night service for about fifty inmates at the Federal Correctional Institution in Florence, CO.

**Favorite flicks:** *The Passion, Jesus Film, Star Wars, Star Trek,* and the *X Files*

**What's on my iPod:** I'm old school, so I just bought The Desperation Band CD *Center Of It All*.

**Military branch and why:** U.S. Army/CO Army National Guard, since I already lived on a hospital ship for a year—and the Air Force wasn't looking in 2001.

**Why my military life:** It was the next open door for full-time ministry that the Lord opened up.

**On my bucket list:** Visit Israel

**Most memorable/exotic place you've visited:** The Canary Islands for a couple of weeks when I was with Youth With A Mission for two years.

**Favorite country/duty assignment:** Germany/2nd Military Intelligence Battalion, because I was able to travel through Europe and Iraq for three years.

**Favorite meal:** Jaeger schnitzel

**Best advice given you:** My Dad says, "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched." The biblical version is "Do not boast about tomorrow, for

you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1, NASB).

**Four people you'd dine with:** My parents and brother. And Jesus is there with us.

**Quirky habits:** Because I now work as a full-time federal prison chaplain, I always double check that I've locked doors behind me.

**Something I can't live without:** Food and water

**People I most admire:** John Wimber, the founder of The Vineyard and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With A Mission

**Bible life verse:** Romans 10:14 (NASB)—"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?"

**First person (other than Jesus) in heaven to chat with:** Prayerfully my grandfather on my mother's side made it.

**Jesus in a word:** Love



**COLONEL TIM  
WISEMAN,** United States Army, retired

**Came to OCF:** Primarily through OCF activities in Hawaii with a wonderful singles/young-married couples Bible study.

**Involvement in OCF:** Council member, Bible study group leader, and area coordinator.

**Why OCF for me:** OCF's been the thread of consistency, helping my family and me link up, develop deep connections, and remain in touch with other multi-service families despite multiple moves.

**Born:** Mountain Home, AR

**Alma mater:** University of Arkansas

**Hobbies:** Camping, outdoor exercise, family and church activities

**Favorite flicks:** *Officer and a Gentleman; Princess Bride;* the original *True Grit; Saving Private Ryan*

**What's on my iPod:** I don't have one.

**Military branch and why:** United States Army. I was offered a four-year Army ROTC scholarship!

**Why my military life:** I like the discipline, higher ideals, and values of the military life. Love the personal/professional accountability and sense of community the military offers.

**What's on my bucket list:** Return to Hawaii to see my first assignment location and the Schofield Barracks chapel where my wife and I married. Ski again in the Alps.

**Most memorable/exotic place visited:** Thailand back in the late '80s. The training exercise participation (Cobra Gold) and coordination with the embassy in Bangkok made lasting memories.

**Favorite country/duty assignment:** My Army Congressional Fellowship—working in a senator's office on Capitol Hill, seeing the interaction between different branches of government.

**Favorite meal:** The traditional Thanksgiving dinner—turkey and trimmings.

**Best advice given you:** Never do some-

thing once that you aren't prepared to do for the rest of your life.

**Four people you'd dine with:** My wife, George W. Bush, Billy Graham and Tim Tebow.

**Quirky habits:** Leaving my clothes in little piles; grabbing/eating cookies at what some claim are inappropriate times; overusing electronic communication devices.

**Something I can't live without:** Ice cream and desserts.

**People I most admire:** Billy Graham, my parents, and my wife, Penny.

**Bible life verse:** Lately it's been the question we must all answer, "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15). The answer is spoken by our behavior and life choices.

**First person (other than Jesus) in heaven to chat with:** Excited to someday meet the Bible's great figures, but I mostly want to chat with my Dad. He departed this earth sooner than expected and never got to see my children.

**Jesus in a word:** Savior



Fort Bragg OCF photo

### Fort Bragg OCF—North Carolina

*Praising God*—Fort Bragg OCF is growing! Eighty people, four new neighborhood Bible studies, and a kickoff picnic this past summer provided an exciting opportunity for that OCF community to fellowship together. Area coordinators are Jeff and Paige Robinson (far left).

## Join a dynamic group of fellow military believers

by **MICHAEL EDWARDS**  
OCF Director of Communications

Your local OCF group is truly the heartbeat of Officers' Christian Fellowship—a time for experiencing the love of Christ, for serving one another, and for growing in your faith. Together you share in the trials and challenges of military life, all in a supportive atmosphere of prayer, Bible study, and fellowship.

You likely have people in your OCF group already enjoying local fellowship, but are missing out on the benefits of membership because they are not actual OCF members. We're asking local leaders for your help in October during OCF Membership Month.

Here's what we're asking local leaders to do:

- Take a laptop to one of your regularly scheduled meetings in October.
- Ask each person if they've ever signed up online or sent in an application to be an OCF member.
- If they haven't signed up, have them check out the information online at: [www.ocfusa.org/join-ocf/join-form](http://www.ocfusa.org/join-ocf/join-form) and in-

vite them to join by filling out the online form.

### Share this information with your group:

You are a part of a dynamic group of fellow believers in the military society, helping build into the lives of Christian leaders, military families, and over 350 OCF Bible study fellowships. Our OCF community of over 16,000 active duty and retired officers, their spouses, and friends of the military, is going strong and we're steadily adding new members—over 500 this year!

Our OCF staff representatives serve at the military academies, education centers like Fort Leavenworth and Maxwell AFB, and larger military centers at Joint Base Lewis McChord plus Fort Hood and South Texas. Our ROTC partnership with Valor is thriving on college campuses, with several retreats this year.

Through OCF's Family Outreach program, Spiritually Smart Family conferences minister directly to families coping with the unique challenges of military life. And our conference centers in Pennsylva-

nia and Colorado served over 700 military families in 2012, providing rest, fellowship, and spiritual renewal.

In homes at our OCF neighborhood fellowships, individuals and families have opportunities to grow and bond with one another in prayer, Bible study, and mutual Christian support. Lifelong friendships start and are nurtured through these home and workplace studies. Our worldwide link-up program provides an easy way to locate OCF groups when you move.

The benefits of OCF membership include a free subscription to COMMAND magazine with Christ-centered, military-themed articles, photos of other OCF groups around the world, and information about OCF conference center events such as Allegheny Outback! or the Rocky Mountain High adventure program. OCF NewsWire provides immediate information and commentary related to breaking news or important OCF issues by OCF's Executive Director David Warner.

OCF local leaders—thank you for the impact you are making for the worldwide ministry of Officers' Christian Fellowship. 🙏



Kathy Kem photo

### Fort Leavenworth—Kansas

**Send Out Celebration**—Over 150 attended Fort Leavenworth OCF's spiritual commissioning ceremony and cookout earlier this year. Sara Hope, wife of Maj Ricardo Hope, USMC, spoke of God's work in their lives through the fellowship's many-faceted activities including Bible studies.

## MilitaryBeliever web portal launched

Interested in a social networking tool that allows you to interact with a Christ-centered military community? One where you can connect with fellow military believers, churches and ministries wherever you go?

Such a web portal is now available, thanks to the collaborative effort of Officers' Christian Fellowship with several other military ministries. MilitaryBeliever.com, a Facebook-like network, provides a community setting for military men, women, and their families to connect with others who understand the unique needs of the military believer.


It was designed to attract individuals who have questions about faith and military matters, or help groups—both local and global—stay in contact with their members.

Local groups, chapels, churches and ministries can post event information while individuals can find those items based on their

personal interest profile and/or location.

Ministries and churches can also list employment opportunities with appropriate position descriptors that are automatically matched against personal interest search criteria.

OCF local leaders can register as the Bible study group leader on the website. By affiliating with their team leader, regional OCF representative, or directly with global OCF, they and their group can "friend" other OCF groups and also avoid group subscription fees by a coupon code provided under the OCF subscription.

 **FOR MORE INFORMATION** about the MilitaryBelievers web portal, check "As Seen in COMMAND" at [www.ocfusa.org](http://www.ocfusa.org).

—OCF Home Office

### WEDDINGS

**Capt Matthew Edson, USAF**, married **Meghan Samek** 6 July 2012. Their home is Beavercreek, OH.

**Maj Erin Pringle, USAFR**, married **Dan Evans** 25 May 2012. Their home is Eagle River, AK.

### TAPS

**Louise Farmer**, 12 August 2012, wife of **Lt Col Darrell Farmer, USAF (Ret.)**, Pueblo, CO.

**William McCulley**, 5 November 2011, husband of **Eva McCulley**, Lewisville, TX.

**Dorothy Neuhauser**, 21 July 2012, wife of **Col Albert Neuhauser, USAF (Ret.)**, Montgomery, AL.

### Camp Lejeune OCF—North Carolina

**Dinner, dessert and Bible study**—Gathering for weekly fellowship and special BBQ and game nights, this OCF group is currently doing a Bible study on the book of John. The Bible study can be downloaded from the OCF website: [www.ocfusa.org/downloads/bible-studies](http://www.ocfusa.org/downloads/bible-studies)

Hilary Thomas photo



### Quantico OCF—Virginia

**This group will truly be ambassadors for Christ**—It was a pinnacle moment for Quantico OCF's ministry efforts earlier this year with the spiritual commissioning ceremony of OCFers who graduated from The Basic School. Comprised of the first-ever couples Bible study, this group experienced life-transforming changes in marriages and leadership, including a baptism.

Quantico OCF photo



### National Capital Region—Washington, D.C.

Through a variety of activities, National Capital Region OCFers have enjoyed camaraderie with one another, such as this group of kids who attended a retreat with their parents this past spring. Using Scripture and personal vignettes, Army chaplain LTC-P Marc Gauthier encouraged attendees about the unexpected blessings that can come from the rough roads of life.

For more information on the 26-28 October fall retreat at OCF's White Sulphur Springs Conference Center, go to [www.whitesulphursprings.org](http://www.whitesulphursprings.org).

NCR OCF photo





Race to the Summit photo

The Race to the Summit climbers reach the peak of Mount Harvard.

## Race to the Summit campaign goes over the top

by COLONEL R. MICHAEL TESDAHL  
United States Army, Retired

*“Truly it may be said that the outside of a mountain is good for the inside of a man.”*  
—George Wherry, *Alpine Notes and the Climbing Foot*, 1896

Why is it that some of our most powerful days begin with walking in darkness? Thursday morning, 2 August, high base camp on the shoulder of Colorado’s 14,420-foot Mount Harvard, 3:30 a.m. The morning was cold, damp and itself not fully awake as three *Rocky Mountain High* guides and nine climbers—average age fifty-one years—crawled out of their sleeping bags, cinched their bootlaces up tight and faced—up.

Christians ascend. You can learn a lot about the powers of this dark and broken world from a few hours traversing scree, that steep mass of loose and menacing debris on the side of a mountain. We just know that whenever we stop moving

forward and upward, we become unstable and begin to backslide and to endanger ourselves and others. So we fix our eyes on the goal and we climb—stretching ourselves to live the full and joyful and courageous life that God intended, growing more and more into the image of God, doing the work of the church in restoring a world that is lost and without hope.

Afterward, the youngest member of this team by almost half described “the trek”—four days of climbing, cooking, eating, worshipping, reflecting, remembering the Lord’s Supper on the summit, just living life together—as “epic.” Returning to Camp Buxton the day following the ascent, these representatives of eleven fundraising teams who had set out to raise \$250,000 for construction at OCF’s Spring Canyon Conference Center were honored at a barbeque banquet attended by over 150 camp guests and townspeople from Buena Vista. Their testimonies were inspiring and their examples compelling.

There is a necessary distance that must be achieved in time, testimony and life

### ABUNDANT BLESSINGS

**Tuesday, 21 August: Race to the Summit—Extreme Challenge surpassed its \$250,000 goal**

Thanks to the work of over forty fundraisers, prayer warriors and organizers and nearly 200 donors who chose to play a part in God’s plan for OCF and for Spring Canyon with retreats and programs in *building Christian leaders... families...fellowships for a lifetime.*

change before we can grasp the full impact of this Race. In the meantime, none of us involved are deceived into thinking that we alone did this. As the event coordinator, I look back over my shoulder and see the line of people and events and individual commitments and perseverance strung out in a train too perfect to be my doing: “Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man’s behalf!” (Psalm 66:5). 🙌

## RMH 30: Celebrating the past, looking to the future

by LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHRIS NICEWARNER  
United States Marine Corp, Retired

Some things just keep getting better with time, and the *Rocky Mountain High* wilderness leadership program at OCF’s Spring Canyon Conference Center definitely falls in that category. The 2013 season will mark the 30th anniversary of the program that has impacted the lives of future leaders for over a generation now.



RMH was originally conceived in 1983 by Spring Canyon’s then-director LtCol Tom Hemingway, USMC (Ret.), as a way to help future officers deepen their relationship with Christ and with fellow Christians in an impactful adventure environment.

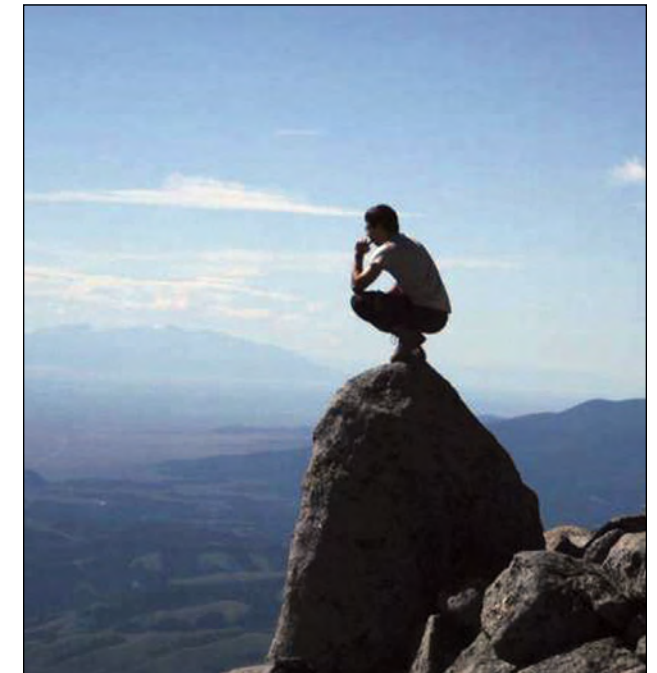
Some of the wilderness techniques and equipment may have changed over the decades, but today’s program continues along the same lines and purposes: deep personal and ministry connections forged by time well spent in the mountains, one of creation’s most beautiful settings.

With RMH’s anniversary approaching, we’re celebrating the past while looking to the future. This past summer’s program had many meaningful and significant moments, such as summiting 14,000-foot peaks with young leaders as the sun rose over the Arkansas River Valley, listening

to a group of international military officers worshipping God around a campfire, and enduring s’mores cooked over an MSR stove during a statewide fire ban.

We’re excited about RMH’s future! And thankful for the Lord’s continual blessings over the years upon the participants and guide staff, such as one who said: “Incredible! God, my fellow Christians, and creation made this one of the most profound experiences of my life. I feel armed as a Christian leader to go into the world with purpose and faith in Jesus Christ.” 🙌

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** on RMH and to join in the conversation on their Facebook page, check out “As Seen in COMMAND” at [www.ocfusa.org](http://www.ocfusa.org).



RMH photo

### COMING IN 2013

#### RMH 2013—More Ministry Opportunities

- 6 sessions, up from 4
- 1 couples-only RMH
- Promote/increase awareness among cadets, midshipmen, junior officers and college students.
- New “extreme” event: RMH-X for RMH alumni and supporters

#### RMH-X: A new “extreme” RMH

- Two-day event—July 4th weekend
- Individuals or two-person team race format
- Endurance and wilderness skills challenge
- Kayak, mountain bike, hike, run, climb, and rappel
- Sign-ups start in January
- Limited to 20 participants

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# OCF WINTER RETREATS

Join the family of God at an OCF conference center this Christmas or New Year's holiday! There's no better place to be than White Sulphur Springs and Spring Canyon. Both have excellent opportunities to be strengthened in our common faith in Jesus Christ.

## WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS WINTER RETREAT

**Winter Retreat #1: 21-26 Dec.**

**Speaker:** Pastor John Waldrop

**Topic:** The Rightful King Has Landed.

We'll see how Christ came to save sinners, calls us to join him in His work, and promises victory as we trust in Him.

**Winter Retreat #2: 26-30 Dec.**

**Speaker:** Dr. (CH) Mark Jumper

**Topics TBD**

**Winter Retreat #3: 30 Dec.- 2 Jan.**

**Speaker:** Pastor Keith Peck

**Topic:** Being Led by the Spirit into the New Year. Through the book of Acts, we'll explore what it means to rely on the Holy Spirit.

Activities include live nativity manger scene, communion service, caroling on the Cove, New Year's Eve celebration, talent shows, and square dancing.



[www.whitesulphursprings.org](http://www.whitesulphursprings.org)

## SPRING CANYON WINTER SPORTS RETREAT

**Winter Sports Retreat #1: 21-27 Dec.**

**Speaker:** CH(MAJ) Anthony Randall, USA

**Topic:** A Lifestyle of Faith, a Family of Love, a Season of Hope

**Winter Sports Retreat #2: 27 Dec.-4 Jan.**

**Speaker:** Danny Byram

**Topics TBD**

Hospitality, Christian fellowship, and good food make this a holiday season to remember by spending a week at OCF's Spring Canyon Conference Center. Enjoy great speakers and sessions with special Christmas Eve communion and New Year's Eve celebration on tap. Plenty of winter activities are also on hand, including tubing, skiing, ice skating, or just relaxing in soothing hot springs.



[www.springcanyon.org](http://www.springcanyon.org)