

THE 31ST MEU'S LETTER



Commander's Greeting

As this will be my last newsletter, I want to thank everyone for their support to the MEU. No other military or other service does what 31st MEU can do. It is through the hard work and accomplishments of your spouses, sons, and daughters that we are capable, proficient, and always ready.

This month is a month of many changes. The Ground Combat Element will be returning from Exercise Balikitan in the Philippines and with the Advance party of the next battalion, they turn over their accounts. As in every summer, the Aviation Combat Element will change out with some new aircraft and new Marines and Sailors. The Logistics Combat Element and the Command Element will also go through the usual summer rotations that account for up to 50% of a new staff.

I wish those leaving the best of luck in their new endeavors and for those about to be joining us who may find this newsletter online, I welcome you to the family.

Semper Fi,

Col MacMannis

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Family Readiness Officer: 011-81-80-1385-7132
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Sergeant Major's Message

As you read this newsletter our advance parties (ADVON) from our Battalion Landing Team (BLT) and Air Combat Element (ACE) detachments are no longer with us. They are at this time preparing for the main body back in CONUS while the ADVONs from 2nd Bn 1st Marines, *The Professionals*, and the aviation component are on deck awaiting their inbound Marines and Sailors for the summer turnover.

As the transition occurs between the ACE and the BLT, so initiates the long awaited reunions and lengthy well wishes of good-byes from family members who recently PCSed. Part of the reason why our MEU is so proficient and successful is that we are the most diverse, rehearsed and exercised MEU in the Corps. Having the label of being the only continuously forward deployed MEU does come at a hefty price tag of always being busy and away from our loved ones. The family support is never taken for granted and we appreciate your devotion to family and your loved ones while they are with us.

**“For the hand that rocks the cradle, is the hand that rules the world.”
- William Wallace**

Mother's Day is rapidly approaching and with it comes the celebration of honoring mothers and celebrating motherhood, recognizing the maternal bonds and the influence of mothers in our society. I'd like to take this time to personally recognize and honor all the mothers by thanking them for the services they impart for the benefit of their individual child and consequently to the development of mankind. Happy Mother's Day!

Here in Japan, the end of April through early May is called "Golden Week". There are many national holidays during this period and many local offices close for about a week to 10 days. May is also an important month for many Americans as we celebrate our fallen warriors and the amazing Mothers in our lives.

With the upcoming 96, I would encourage everyone to please be safe, enjoy the time shared together as a family, and for the single Marines and Sailors take this time to explore the beauty of this amazing island. While enjoying your Memorial Day 96, please take the time to remember and honor the many American men and women who have died in military service. God Bless these warriors and their families.

I'd be remiss without if I failed to mention the huge turnover of Marines, Sailors, and families who are departing the MEU in the coming days, weeks, and months. We thank you for your hard work and dedication. We will forge forward in your absence and carry a part of you with us in our pending journeys. Fair winds and following seas!

Be Safe, God Bless, and Semper Fidelis!
Sergeant Major G.A. "Butch" Vasquez



The DSTRESS Line was developed by the Corps to provide professional, anonymous counseling for Marines, attached Sailors, and families when it is needed most. Initially started on the West Coast as a pilot program, the DSTRESS Line is now available Marine Corps-wide. The DSTRESS Line counselors are either certified civilian clinical workers or trained Marines, Sailors, and Military Spouses.

Call today to speak with one of your own.

Dial 645-7734 from any DSN phone.

Dial 098-970-7734 from any Local Japanese cell phone or Local Japanese landline telephone.

Dial 1-877-476-7734 from any regular U.S. based phone line or U.S. based VOIP Line (*Vonage, Skype, Magic Jack, etc.*).

Chaplain's Corner

Happy Mother's Day!

Yes, this is a reminder for all of you who, up until now have forgotten that Mother's Day is right around the corner. Hopefully, you have already made plans to honor your mothers. (By the way gentlemen, having mom cook her own special Mother's Day meal doesn't count as doing something for her).

This year as Mother's Day approaches, I'm reminded of all that military spouses and mothers of service members do for each of us. Married service members whose spouse remains behind taking care of the kids and watching over the house know well the sacrifices their spouse makes for their military career. From helping with homework, to laundry, meals, groceries, and school projects at 2:00 AM, spouses on the home front do a service that can be performed by no other. In like manner, our mothers back home worry about us, put up with infrequent phone calls, often from strange sounding locations; they send us care packages and make sure everyone back home knows the latest news in our lives.

The Bible describes in detail value of mothers in Proverbs 31, as it describes a wife of noble character: "Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is more precious than rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. ... When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness. ... Her children stand and bless her." (NLT)

For all that each of your mothers do, please make sure this month, that you take time to honor them.

God Bless You,
Chaplain Hamilton

Okinawa Adventurer:

Hey Okinawa Adventurers!

We're hoping to include a compilation of Okinawa Adventures for our inbound MEU families in the June 2012 newsletter. Send your Okinawa adventures to Rich by 4 June.

Families in the United States: send us shout outs for your Marine/Sailor by 4 June and we'll try our best to include them in the June newsletter as well.

Resource Spotlight: Roth TSP

By now you have probably heard that the TSP is adding a Roth TSP feature in the coming months. When you make Roth contributions, you will pay taxes on them as they go into your TSP account. This is very different from traditional pre-tax TSP contributions, which come out of your pay before your income taxes, but which are taxed (along with their earnings) at withdrawal. Roth contributions, when withdrawn, will be tax-free. The earnings on Roth contributions will also be tax-free, as long as you meet certain IRS requirements.

How will you get Roth money into your account?

There are only two ways:

- From your future pay — you'll notify your agency or service that you want to make Roth contributions
- Transfer Roth money into your account directly from eligible plans (Roth 401(k)s, Roth 403(b)s, or Roth 457(b)s only).

You will not be able to transfer money into the TSP from Roth IRAs. Also, you will not be able to convert money that is already in your TSP account into Roth money. Along the same lines, agency automatic and matching contributions will always be traditional, tax-deferred contributions, even if your own contributions are only Roth. You will not be able to convert any agency traditional contributions into Roth contributions.

Who is eligible to take advantage of Roth TSP?

Check for your eligibility below:

| Participant Group | New Roth Contributions? | Roth Transfers into TSP from eligible plans? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Active employees | | |
| FERS | Yes | Yes |
| CSRS | Yes | Yes |
| Uniformed Services | Yes | Yes |
| Separated employees | No | Yes |
| Retirees | No | Yes |
| Beneficiary participants** | No | No |

* Roth earnings will be tax-free if 5 years have passed since January 1 of the year you made your first Roth contribution AND you are age 59½, permanently disabled, or deceased.

** Beneficiary participants may not add new Roth contributions to their accounts, but their accounts may contain Roth contributions made by the deceased spouse.

Additional information, such as details of how your Roth TSP will work with your money, the requirements for Roth TSP and required minimum distributions, as well as Roth IRAs can be found on the TSP Website, www.tsp.gov; the ThriftLine, 1-TSP-YOU-FRST (1-877-968-3778), Outside the U.S. and Canada: 404-233-4400; TDD: 1-TSP-THRIFT5 (1-877-847-4385). As you begin to consider the Roth TSP option, keep your tax considerations in mind.

Source: Thrift Savings Plan Highlights, April 2012

From the FRO

SUMMER IS HERE!! First I would like to say goodbye and it was a pleasure to the families who will be leaving the MEU this summer and WELCOME to those who are arriving. We will continue to march forward and do good things.

So if you are here this summer please be sure to get out of the house and off base to see what this beautiful Island has to offer. Check out our eMarine site for suggestions and directions to many wonderful places. Speaking of eMarine, if you have a suggestion or an idea to make it better please let me know. I know that there is still a lot of work to be done on the site and a few pages are still blank, I should hopefully have it up and running by mid next month.

Remember to give me a call or send me an email if you should ever need assistance. Enjoy the summer while your loved ones are here and see you on the beach.

Rich



31st MEU Moments: May Barracks Bash



Find more pictures and updates on our [eMarine](#) page!

Editor's Corner: Getting to Know You

Today's military spouse seems to be caught in a cycle. What cycle do you ask? Compare it to the chicken and the egg conundrum. Which came first? As a military spouse here on Okinawa, I often hear comments that essentially boil down to "I'm not going [to the event/gathering/workshop etc.] because I don't know anybody." Whether the proposed event is social or educational, today's military spouse is quick to dismiss the prospect either due to past negative experiences, scheduling conflicts, or just plain old brushing it off. While I find myself guilty of these "I don't know anyone" thoughts, I can't help but wonder if the reason we find ourselves reverting to that one liner is the mere fact that we don't participate and take an active part in what is offered.

In this shared experience that is military living, I think we all understand how our multiple roles can pull us in so many directions that we feel as if we're barely holding it together. I like to think of this plethora of social/educational opportunities as time for us to take to reinforce our own elasticity. Semper Gumby, right? When our active duty members head off on their next mission, we are left with each other. Why not take advantage of the opportunities to meet some of your fellow MEU spouses before the next mission heads out? They'll likely be sharing similar experiences throughout the deployment, so it may definitely be worthwhile to start connecting. The same thought process can be applied to the educational opportunities; build your resiliency while you have the support of your spouse so that when they head out again, you have the tools needed to keep it together.

So dear readers, this month I'm throwing down the gauntlet. Come out to the next MEU event and meet the people who are sharing experiences much like those that you are going through or have already conquered. Let's network and make the most of our Marine Corps experiences. Go team and go spouses! Ready? Break!

Typhoon season is just around the corner. Prepare your kit today. Stay tuned to eMarine and your Family Readiness Officer for typhoon preparedness tips and things to think about in case of any emergency.

Upcoming Events

May

2012

“That first peak is the best place to pause and look back, to see if you took the easiest route, to learn the lessons from the first climb. And it is the best place to examine the terrain ahead, to change your plans and goals, to take a deep breath and begin climbing again.”

- Michael Johnson

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------------------|---|---|--|--|----------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner  | 18 Welcome to the USA (Foster Bldg. 439, 0900-1300) | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 Federal Job App. (Hansen Bldg. 2339, 1300-1600) | 23 Blended Families (Foster Bldg. 5667, 0900-1100) | 24 Social Networking (Courtney Bldg. 4225, 1100-1300) | 25 | 26 |
| 28 | 29 Memorial Day | 30 | 31 | | | |
| | | | | | | |

Click any  MEU-hosted event to send in your response if you would like to attend.

If you would like to contribute an informational article, an Okinawa experience, or any military experience, send your submissions to the FRO by the third Friday of the month.