



USAG-KA Commander's Corner

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COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Yokwe neighbors and members of "Team Kwajalein!" This is my first column since taking command in August, and on behalf of my family, thank you for a terrific first two months on island!

I'd like to use this column as a venue for discussing island current events and sharing my views from the Garrison Commander's perspective.

I have been quite impressed with the diverse and unique group of patriots on the island. Moreover, I feel that we are all here for the same reason – to contribute towards our national security. I think it is fair to say that in order to accomplish that mission we must all work together.

In honor of Mani Day, the garrison recently hosted the annual celebration at Emon Beach. At the celebration, some of our Ri-Katak students performed traditional Marshallese dances for the attendees. We captured some great photos from the event and have more about it in this issue of the Hourglass.

Last week we held a Hail and Farewell for DoD personnel on island, welcoming new members and saying goodbye to others. I would like to highlight the some of the folks that left or are leaving the team. Mr. Ray Drefus and his bride Joanie are leaving us in a few days to assume a new life and job in Texas. Ray's impacts on the youth in this community will have a lasting positive impact. We also said good-bye to, and retired, Mr. James "Mac" McGuire and his wife Judy that evening. This ended a third tour for them on Kwaj and we wish them the best in their well-deserved retirement home in New Mexico. Mac and Judy will forever be remembered as patrons of this island and great friends to many. Both the Drefus and McGuire families will be sorely missed.

We recently began publishing the 'Person of the Week' in the Hourglass. In this issue we are profiling a local teacher and volunteer whose actions directly impacted our Mani Day celebration this past weekend.

Highlighting outstanding people is very important to me. If you know of someone whose contributions to the Kwajalein community deserve recognition, please contact the Hourglass editor and give us an opportunity to publicize their contributions to our community.

I had the privilege of doing my first 'Welcome to the Island' briefing to our newcomers earlier this week. A portion of them were "Kwaj Re-treads" or what I like to amusingly refer to as "Repeat Offenders." It's inspires me to see so many people who are willing to return back to our isolated Island and continue the mission. Welcome to all of our new residents!

No matter who we are or where we work, we are one team here on Kwaj and Roi. As the garrison commander and your neighbor, I look forward to continuing to serve with you all.

Communication is important to me. I won't to know when there are problems (perceived or real). It is important to me that we resolve issues that negatively impact morale. I maintain an "open door policy." I define this as an individual being able approaching me regardless of where I am. If you have a serious issue for me to resolve, then let me know. I'll do my best to find a solution. I will also continue to use the Town Hall venue to update the community and identify friction on the island. However, I acknowledge the limited value of that technique for more sensitive issues. We will also soon begin using the official USAG-KA Facebook site to provide useful information to the community.

Take care and...I'll see you around the island.

Kommol Tata!

Col. Mike Larsen

(Note: Kommol Tata is Marshallese for Thank You)