

He's a career Navy man

Frank Michael is a captain

The Pacific Ocean is a long way from the lush rolling hills of Luzerne County and a world away from the "heart of the Back Mountain." However, at 45, that's exactly where this Dallas native wants to be. As a career Naval officer, Captain Frank J. Michael, currently serving as the executive officer of the Wasp class amphibious assault ship USS BOXER (LHD 4), is second in command of a crew nearly half his age. In the spring of 2010 he will take command for the second time in his naval career.

"I knew I wanted to join the Navy, flying was second," Michael said. As a helicopter pilot, flight instructor and squadron commander, Michael has experienced the best of both. However, along with this privilege comes the serious responsibility for the orderly day-to-day operations of a modern day warship.

A tall, gentle but firm-speaking man with piercing green eyes, he exudes a quiet confidence that doesn't go unnoticed by his crew of nearly 3,000 Sailors and Marines. In strict military fashion, junior officers and the crew rise to their feet when he walks in the room.

"Carry on," he says with the seasoning of a judge about to hold court.

The third of six children born to Frank and Patricia Michael of Dallas, Michael credits his small-town roots and his parents for instilling in him those critical qualities the nation looks for in its military officers. Speaking of his father, he says he never met a more honest man who worked a harder day.

"My father taught me what a hard day's work is," Michael said. Just like the young boy who idolizes his dad, it's obvious his father is still his hero.

"He could do anything and if he couldn't, he taught himself," Michael added.

Of his mother, Michael recounts a woman of great love and compassion who, to this day, wells up with great pride of her

son's service.

"Her incredible emotional support and unconditional love are the first things that come to mind when I think about my mom," he said.

After serving as an assistant chief of an ambulance company and volunteering in emergency services, Michael heard the call of the sea as a junior in college. Graduating from College Misericordia in 1986, he reported to Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida for Aviation Officer Candidate School.

While Americans were captivated by the TOP GUN craze and the super cool "Maverick" character of Tom Cruise, Michael was introduced to another figure who would change his life forever — the legendary U.S. Marine Corps drill instructor.

"How quickly this man becomes the center of your universe," Michael said. At first, you are so confused and can't seem to do anything right or fast enough but soon, the respect you have for them is immeasurable," he added. "You quickly understand. I still think about him."

Out of a class of 45, only 30 made it through. Michael's wings of gold were pinned on in December 1988 and he hasn't looked back.

His assignments have taken him from Norfolk, Virginia to the islands of Indonesia with numerous deployments and plenty of family separations thrown in. Such is the life of a career military man. Through it all, he complet-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Captain Frank Michael, right, Executive Officer of the WASP class amphibious assault ship USS BOXER LHD 4, presents an award to a navy Chief Petty Officer.

ed his Masters degree and was selected to serve on the staff of the Commander of Naval Air Forces and the Operations Directorate of the Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

All the while, his wife of 18 years, Bridget, has stood firmly by his side.

"When I think about how she put her own aspirations on hold to raise three children and live a lifestyle of such uncertainty and anxiety, I marvel at how fortunate and blessed I am," Michael said.

He added of Bridget "her strength and courage is just remarkable." It is only when he speaks of his wife and children: John, 15, Mary, 13, and Elizabeth, 12, that you begin to see the softer side of the man.

"They are the center of my life," he says. "It is the military family that makes the great sacrifice," he said.

Michael's demeanor shifts markedly when asked what he thinks is the most serious threat to America today. Without hesitation, he says the threat of terrorism is what concerns him most.

"Since we have not had an attack, we get lulled into a sense of complacency," he said.

He leaves no doubt where he stands when called upon by the president to respond.

"This is our job; we are the ones who defend our country, our communities and our families," he added.

Michael's values were formed early in life and his deep sense of community comes from his small-town upbringing.

"Where I grew up, everyone knew everyone else and cared about everyone else," he said.

Michael offers this advice to today's young people: "Work as hard as you can. Don't ever let any door get closed. Don't lose opportunities because of something you didn't do." He is adamant about accepting challenges and viewing them as opportunities.

Michael says there are so many different things to do in the Navy that every assignment brings a new challenge.

"I try not to compare jobs," he said. "Each one is unique. The only constant from one duty station to the next is the incredible patriotism and purpose of the young men and women I'm privileged to serve with."

When asked about his best assignment, Michael just grinned and said, "I haven't had it yet."

GFWC HARVEYS LAKE HOLDS DINNER MEETING



The GFWC of Harveys Lake held its November dinner meeting at the Irem Temple Country Club recently. From left, are Karen French, Luzerne County president; Taryn Barrall, GFWC Harveys Lake president; Eloise Dwyer, Melanie Bigus, Jeanne Schineller, Vicki Martin, Adele Reilly, new members; and Linda Schuler, GFWC past president. Absent at the time of the photo was Barbara Ruda, new member.

G2G ORGANIZES CONCERT FOR MEADOWS RESIDENTS



Generation to Generation organized a special Children's Choir from the Shavertown United Methodist Church to sing at the Meadows Nursing Home recently. About 30 residents rolled their wheel chairs into the activities room to hear "The Christmas County Spelling Bee." Choir Director Deborah Kelleher and co-director Rebecca Oley led the children in song after which the children distributed Christmas ornaments and shared some time with the residents. Generation to Generation (G2G) is a not-for-profit organization founded by Eric Lee who believes people deserve respect from the cradle to the grave. Joseph DeVizia, Chairman of Generation to Generation, report that the mission of Generation to Generation is to enrich lives through intergenerational sharing, conversations, values, and fun. From left, first row, are Jack Andrews, Mia Angelicola, Lauren Chapple, Sarah Gurzynski, Matthew Oley, Allison Hrivnak and Chloe Miller. Second row, Courtney Moss, Emma Oley, Becky Andrews, Tessa Liskosky, Alysa Angelicola and Bridget Frame. Third row, Malik Kaleta, Dominic Angelicola, Ashley Kaleta, Michael Biesecker and Jake Miscavage.

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