



**Stanley J. Beach**  
**PCA VETERAN OF THE YEAR**  
June 2008

Stan Beach grew up in Michigan on a farm that had been in his family for three generations. He recalls little church contact, but was grateful that his parents were very caring and moral. Certain lessons learned from them have stayed with him, such as learning to plow a straight furrow: “Set your sights on where you would be at the other end, and keep your eyes on it as you plow”. He heard the Gospel clearly for the first when he was a college freshman. He was a student of automobile engineering and design for General Motors, and resided in a rooming house operated by a Christian widow. As the only “non-Catholic” among the tenants, he was designated the “duty driver” for driving the widow to church each Sunday. Through her prayers and the witness of her church, he came under the conviction of the Spirit that led him to faith in Christ. His future wife, Ellen, then a Christian college student, had also been praying for his conversion.

Within six months he sensed a spiritual struggle that he later came to understand was his resistance to God’s call to the ministry. During Navy duties at Great Lakes, he began visiting the base chapel alone in the evenings to pray. It was there that he surrendered to the call to ministry, and enrolled at Taylor University (TU) to prepare for the Lord’s service. At TU he played three years as a varsity starter on the football team that won their conference championship in 1957. He also became the regular preacher at a community church near the campus in his final year at TU. During this time, he came to the reformed faith through Professor Art Ruppert, a graduate of Westminster Seminary. Stan, along with several others, began to search for an evangelical and reformed theological seminary. His search led him to Covenant Seminary – followed the next year by two others who shared that search with him. Stan and Ellen, during their final year at Covenant, were appointed as “dormitory parents” for several wild Covenant College students: David and Robert Peterson, Jim Conrad, and the three Fiol brothers.

Stan’s earlier Navy experience led him to the Chaplain Candidate program. But when he was ordained and applied for active duty, he was rejected on the basis that Covenant was not “approved” by the Navy. Diligent efforts by Dr. Robert (Bob) Rayburn and Bill Leonard resolved the issue, confirming for Stan that the chaplaincy was where the Lord wanted him to be. His first assignment was at the Marine Corps Base at Camp Lejeune. It was also at Camp Lejeune, twenty seven years later, that he concluded his active duty chaplain ministry.

After a tour at sea, Stan was assigned as the first chaplain at the Naval Air Station in Minneapolis, MN in January 1964, and in January of 1966, he received message orders to proceed immediately to the Third Marine Division in Vietnam. There, during his seven months in the combat zone, he distinguished himself as a “Chaplain of Marines”, as citations report:

*“During Operation Ottawa, when a Marine was overcome by heat exhaustion and unable to keep up with the unit, LT Beach remained behind with the man until he could be evacuated. The Marine later rejoined the unit as Stan carried the Marine’s load of mortar rounds for the remainder of the operation”. (Bronze Star Citation)*

*During Operation Prairie, the forward elements of the battalion came under extremely intense automatic and small arms fire, continuously exposed to the withering enemy fire, LT Beach courageously administered aid and comforted the wounded. Exhibiting daring initiative, he heroically carried several casualties to the reed for evacuation”. (Navy Commendation Medal Citation)*

A Stars and Stripes reporter there wrote: *“We couldn’t get any food or water, but the chaplain gave me a little can of apricots, even though he didn’t have any food for himself. He was great – carrying the wounded and doing everything until he got badly hit.”* Stan was seriously wounded, and spent fourteen months recuperating in military hospitals, separated from his family the entire time. He and his family reflect on that time as a great experience of God’s providence of strength and provision. Stan continues his ministry to those Marines from Vietnam as their Marine Association Chaplain.

In a later assignment at the Naval Hospital Portsmouth, VA, he was cited for his innovative and effective ministries: *“You established the first bereavement recovery groups: and, with medical staff, established an Oncology group therapy. Your lectures to Nursing Service personnel, your leadership of two medical and religious symposiums, and your initiation of spiritual study programs for staff and patients led many to seek new goals in their lives”*.

As the Chaplain Coordinator for the Coast Guard, Stan implemented the first service-wide lay leader ministry, arranged for circuit riding chaplains, and gained additional chaplain billets while carrying on an active chapel ministry program at Governors Island, NY. During his two overseas assignments, he was actively involved with local missionaries. When typhoons struck the Philippines in 1970, he organized volunteers and materials to quickly rebuild the missionary boarding school, Faith Academy. He and others involved in this humanitarian effort were awarded the PI Presidential Unit Citation.

At his every assignment, chapel attendance was significantly increased and Bible Studies flourished under his ministry. Two ruling elders in our PCA churches today came to faith in Christ under his ministry. Another four men entered the ministry, three of which became Navy Chaplains, and two attended the Navy Chaplains School while Stan was its director. During his leadership at the Chaplains School, the largest classes since WWII were graduated, and the senior courses were significantly improved. In his concern for ministry to warriors, he developed a combat/crisis ministry course for chaplains that was later implemented at Camp Lejeune as part of the Marine Indoctrination Course.

Upon retirement from the Navy, Ellen and he served with Overseas Christian Servicemen’s Centers, and assisted in local churches. Several years later, Bill Leonard asked him to serve on the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission. He later became an associate director, where he serves now. Stan and Ellen have resided in Leesburg, FL since 1989. Their son, Randal, is a PCA ruling elder in Georgia, and their daughter, Laurie, with her husband live in North Carolina. The Beach’s have four grandchildren: Adam, Sarah, Matthew, and Moriah.

In 2007, Stan was also honored in two very special ways:

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the Military Chaplains Association (MCA) announced that Chaplain Stan J. Beach was chosen as only the third recipient of the annual **DAVID E. WHITE LEADERSHIP AWARD**. Annual nominees for the award from among senior leaders of military chaplaincies are considered in terms of the following values as a chaplain who: 1. Sees their calling as a “Chaplain for Life.” 2. Is committed to serving the spiritual welfare and religious free exercise of all our Troops and their family members. 3. Provides mature and pro-active leadership on a wide variety of platforms within or on behalf of the military institution. 4. Energetically cultivates professionalism as both clergy-person and military officer. 5. Exhibits the Military Officer Association of America’s objectives of care for the welfare of military personnel at all stages of life and career.

Stan was honored again last year, when The US Navy Chaplain School established **THE CHAPLAIN STANLEY J. BEACH STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARD**. This is a very significant sign of respect, appreciation and recognition of the tremendous contribution made to the US Navy, and more specifically to the US Navy Chaplain Corps, during Stan's career. This award is presented by the Commanding Officer of the Naval Chaplain School, upon the recommendation of the students and staff, to the graduate who most exhibits exceptional potential for leadership in ministry to the Sea Services. The recipient is so honored for the enviable traits of stellar personal example, an ability to motivate others, outstanding military bearing, academic excellence, infectious enthusiasm and mature judgment.