

By Captain Jeff Papaleo at his change of command ceremony on March 28, 2006

Colonel MacWillie, CSM Patton, Distinguished Guests, Brothers in Arms;

Thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to help us celebrate this time honored tradition.

I truly appreciate being given the opportunity to command such a fine company.

Twelve days ago, a man that I have known for over two decades passed away. His name, was Frank Devito. I met Frank at a small camp in Upstate New York where he had been a camper and a counselor almost every year since 1927. I often asked myself why would a man continue to return to a Boy Scout camp for so many years? The answer was simple; he has found his life's passion there.

As I read through his obituary and reflected on his journey through life, which took him into the Pacific during WWII, to Europe to study languages at some of the most prestigious universities in the world, and to the classroom to teach what he had learned, an indisputable pattern jumped out at me. Eagle Scout, Camp Counselor, Student of Humanity, Serviceman, Teacher, Mentor, Husband, Scout Master.

Frank had indeed found his life's passion that first summer and he donated himself completely to it. Servitude; The act of completely giving of oneself, to a cause greater than oneself, for the betterment of life, itself.

The idea of leadership and the expectations placed on leaders has evolved to something more holistic over the years. Gone are the days of 9 to 5 leadership. Our citizens and our culture in its evolution has come to demand more. Corporate leaders are no longer being held only accountable by shareholders but by its labor pool and for its ethical practices and our military leaders are not only being held accountable by their chain-of-command but by the men they lead and the citizens they protect. I believe this idea of "servant leadership" is what will fuel our future successes as a nation.

Since early July of 2004 I have had the honor to lead good men. I have been given the privilege of commanding a company charged with the task of recovering from sustained combat operations, refitting, retraining, redeploying and fighting again.

Together we did each of those. We organized, we trained, we fought, we killed, we bled.

We have worked together as a team, each contributing ourselves to a cause greater than ourselves for the betterment of lives of people we do not know. Servitude. I am reminded of my old friend by the actions I have seen displayed in each member of my company and those who have served on my right and left.

As I stand here looking at this fantastic company and at all of you who have already given so much, I wonder, is there a Frank Devito among us. Someone who will continue to give fully of themselves, continuing the tradition of servitude that you have demonstrated here.

I hope that there is.

I thank each of you standing here today for your service and your sacrifices and I am grateful for those made by your families.

While she is not here today, I am thankful for having shared this life changing experience called command with my wife, Melissa. Without whose patience, strength and support my efforts would be hollowed.

CPT Caine. Today you take command of a fantastic organization. Give yourself to these men and their families and your command will be as rewarding and life changing as mine has been.

To my Raptors. Thank you.

To the two soldiers who deployed under my command but who will not be going home with us. You will forever be in my thoughts; your dedication and personal sacrifice a mantel lending light to life's hardest decisions.

Thank you all for coming.

Iron Horse
Iron Eagles
Attack
Kick Ass!