

Dave & Bonnie Lambert

JULY 2021

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Two Marines with very different stories. One, Riley, who hails from eastern Oregon; the other, AJ, who calls Alabama home. Both arrived on Okinawa and were assigned to Camp Hansen about the same time. The Marines made them suitemates.

Riley wandered into the base chapel not long after arriving on the island and noticed that there was a drum set on stage. He also noticed that the majority of the other Marines that attended the chapel seemed to be a tight-knit group who were all connected to the Hansen Christian Center (HCC), Cadence's hospitality house out in town. When he asked to play the drums, the answer he received was that if he plugged into the group, he could join the worship band. That started a life-changing experience for him. Little did he realize how being disciplined would impact him. He learned that being in Christian community is not about sitting back and being a consumer, but leaning in. He grew in his walk with the Lord and became passionate about his faith. Oh, and he started to play the drums in the worship band.

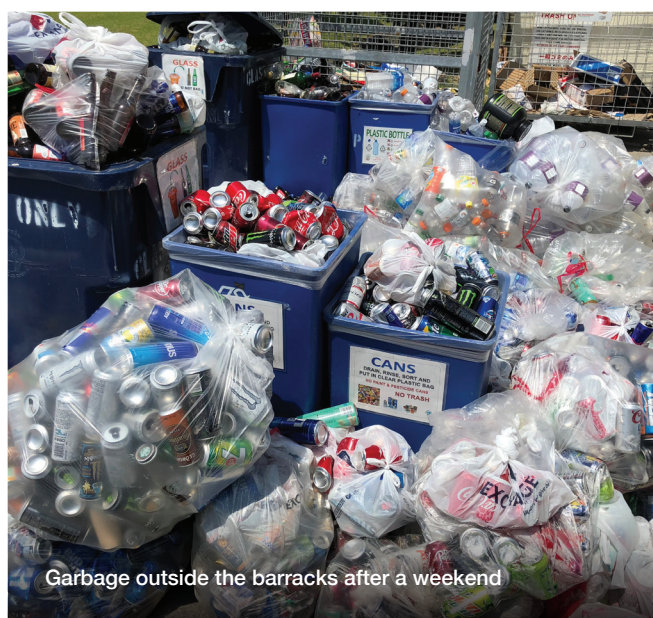


Riley (left) and AJ (right)

AJ, on the other hand, did what so many Marines do when they arrive at their first duty station. His weekends were spent getting drunk and hanging out with others who did the same. So, while Riley was spending all his free time with other believers, AJ was staggering back to his room to sleep off his latest binge. That is, until Riley was able to convince AJ that there was more, so much more, to life on Okinawa than the bottom of a bottle. AJ agreed to go with Riley to HCC one Friday and, as they say, the rest is history.

Now, Riley and AJ spend every weekend together at HCC. They attend a Bible study at the chapel on Wednesdays. They have become much more than suitemates; they are best friends. What are the odds that a young man from Oregon would become best friends with a young man from Alabama? In the Marines, it is not uncommon.

Bonnie and I met Riley and AJ when we covered ministry at HCC this past fall. What a privilege to be able to pour into them each week—there were lots of great conversations and lots of great hugs. (Yes, Marines know how to give great hugs!) This past week they called and asked us if we would go to breakfast with them. Both are due to leave Okinawa soon. Riley is heading to a new duty station, and AJ is getting out of the Marines and heading back to Alabama.



Garbage outside the barracks after a weekend

It was so good to sit around the breakfast table and hear both tell in their own words how life has changed for them here on Okinawa—how they are different men than when they first arrived. What joy for us to know that we got to see a little bit of that change happen before our very eyes. It once again reaffirms in our minds why we love what we get to do. It is a perfect example of I Thessalonians 2:8: “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our very lives as well because you had become so dear to us.”

And we want you to know that it is because of your faithful partnership with us that we can do just that. Thank you for standing with us, we could not do it without you!

Partnering with you,
Dave and Bonnie



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Dave & Bonnie Lambert
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