

A Farewell to the Corps



From my earliest days, I was always awed by the character of the Marine Corps, by the passion and love that inspired the sacrifices of Marines like my father and his friends. As a young boy, I admired the warriors and thinkers who joined our family for a meal or a visit, Marines like "Howlin' Mad" Smith, Lemuel C. Shepherd, Gerald C. Thomas and Keith B. McCutcheon. I wondered about the source of their pride, their selflessness and their sense of purpose.

Now, at the twilight of my career, I understand those Marines. I know that they were driven by love for the institution to which they had dedicated their lives and by the awesome responsibility they felt to the Marines who shared their devotion and sacrifice.

Today, that same motivation burns deep within the heart of each of us. The ethos of our Corps, purchased so dearly by these heroes of old, reaches into our souls and challenges us to strive tirelessly for excellence in all that we do. It profoundly influences the actions of every Marine who has ever stood on the yellow footprints at our recruit depots or taken the oath as an officer of Marines.

The ethos of our Corps is that of the warrior. It is defined by two simple qualities: our two touchstones. The first is our Touchstone of Valor. When we are summoned to battle, we don our helmets and flak jackets; we march to the sound of the guns; we fight and we win—guaranteed. The second is our Touchstone of Values. We hold ourselves and our institution to the highest standards, to our core values of honor, courage and commitment. These two touchstones are inextricably and forever linked. They form the bedrock of our success and, indeed, of our very existence.

Our Touchstone of Valor is the honor roll of our Corps' history. Bladensburg, Bull Run, Cuzco Well, Belleau Wood, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Inchon, the Chosin Reservoir, Hue City, Kuwait—the blood and sacrifice of Marines in these battles, and countless others, have been commemorated in gild-

ed script and etched forever on the black granite base of the Marine Corps War Memorial.

The names of these places now serve as constant reminders of our sacred responsibility to our nation and to those whose sacrifices have earned the Marine Corps a place among the most honored of military organizations. The memory of the Marines who fought in these battles lives in us and in the core values of our precious Corps.

To Marines, honor, courage and commitment are not simply words or a bumper sticker slogan. They reflect our deepest convictions and dramatically shape everything that we do. They are central to our efforts to make Marines men and women of character who can be entrusted to safeguard our nation and its ideals in the most demanding of environments. We imbue Marines with our core values from their first moments in our Corps because we know that Marines, not weapons, win battles. We also know that success on the battlefield and the support of the citizens whose interests we represent depend on our ability to make moral and ethical decisions under the extreme stress of combat or in the conduct of our daily lives.

As an institution, we have had to fight hard to maintain our standards. To some, they may seem old-fashioned, out-of-step with society or perhaps even "extremist," but we know that our high standards are the lifeblood of the Corps, so we have held the line!

In this regard, what individual Marines are doing everyday counts far more than anything that is done in Washington. The standards of our Corps are not simply maintained by generals, colonels and sergeants major, but, far more importantly, by leaders throughout the Corps at every level.

The Marine conviction that "Semper Fidelis" is a way of life, not just a motto, speaks powerfully to the citizens who we serve. It also unites us with our fellow Marines, past and present—inspiring us to push harder, to reach further and to reject the very notion of failure or compromise.

Sustained and strengthened by the ethos of our Corps, you have accomplished a great deal during the past four years. I have been humbled to have been a part of your achievements and witness to your selfless devotion. Time and again, Marines





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distinguished themselves in contingencies around the world and across the spectrum of conflict. Marines from across the total force were the first to fight, the first to help and the first to show America's flag—consistently demonstrating our resolve and readiness to win when called to action.

With the involvement of the Fleet Marine Force and input from the entire Corps, the Warfighting Laboratory has looked hard at the 21st century strategic environment. Marines “stole a march” on change by testing new concepts and emerging technologies, exploring new tools for developing leaders and decision makers and experimenting in the “Three-Block War.”

Our recruiters, drill instructors and small-unit leaders have implemented the transformation process and are recruiting, training and developing the “Strategic Corporals” for tomorrow’s conflicts. Led by Marines at the Combat Development Command, we have deepened our understanding of Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS) and its enabling concepts and technologies as well as its many challenges.

The men and women serving in the many thankless billets at Headquarters Marine Corps and in the joint arena have developed and articulated our requirements for the future and have secured the resources to translate OMFTS into a reality. Our supporting establishment, at every post and station, has epitomized selflessness and dedication while providing for our readiness requirements.

All these things are important, and they are the accomplishments of every Marine. None of them, however, is as signifi-

cant as maintaining our hands on the twin touchstones of our Corps.

The words of my father ring as true today as when he first wrote them more than 50 years ago. “We exist today—we flourish today—not because of what we know we are, or what we know we can do, but because of what the grassroots of our country believes we are and believes we can do....”

“The American people believe that Marines are downright good for the country; that the Marines are masters of a form of unflinching alchemy which converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant stable citizens—citizens into whose hands the nation’s affairs may safely be entrusted.... And, likewise, should the people ever lose that conviction—as a result of our failure to meet their high—almost spiritual—standards, the Marine Corps will quickly disappear.”

May God bless each and every one of you, and may God bless our Corps!

Semper Fidelis,

C. C. Krulak
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps