

The view from his office is the envy of many. Marine veteran Sandy Alderson relaxes above Citi Field's home plate in 2010 after the New York Mets announced him as their newest general manager.



COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK METS

From Marine to "Maverick"

Mets' Sandy Alderson Visits Marines, Shares How His Corps Experience Shaped Him

By Sara W. Bock

Sandy Alderson has been a household name in the world of Major League Baseball for decades.

Baseball fans may recall Alderson's role in the "moneyball" approach—the trend of using statistical analysis of players to build teams—as the general manager of the Oakland A's during the 1980s. He served as an extremely influential mentor to his successor, the acclaimed Billy Beane, who is credited with developing the "moneyball" system and bringing it to fame.

Some may recognize Alderson as the former CEO of the San Diego Padres,

or currently as the New York Mets' general manager who took on the responsibility of leading the franchise during a tumultuous and challenging era. Alderson has revitalized the Mets through his transformative leadership and turned them into a team that is predicted to fare exceptionally well in 2015.

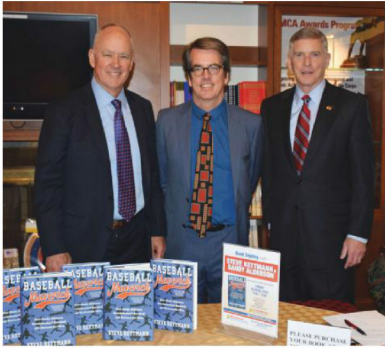
On the surface, the fact that Alderson is a Marine veteran may seem irrelevant to his success in baseball, or that the Corps was nothing more than a short stint after he completed his undergraduate degree at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H.

If you ask Alderson, however, he

will give you a much different account. Recently, a group of Marines at Marine Corps University, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., heard firsthand just how much his experiences in the Marine Corps prepared him for a career in baseball. As he told the Marines, the lessons he learned in the Corps molded him into the successful individual he is today.

On April 10, nearly 200 Marines attending the Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME) programs at MCU filled the auditorium in Quantico's Breckinridge Hall.

Colonel Daniel P. O'Brien, USMC (Ret), Chief Operating Officer, Marine



Above left: Sandy Alderson, left, author Steve Kettmann, center, and MCA&F COO, Col Daniel P. O'Brien, USMC (Ret), at the April 10 "Baseball Maverick" book signing at The MARINE Shop. Dozens of Marines and baseball fans showed up to meet Alderson and Kettmann and have their copies of "Baseball Maverick" signed.



Above right: Alderson grins as a Mets fan shows his level of dedication to the team during the book-signing event.

Corps Association & Foundation, introduced Alderson, along with Steve Kettmann, author of the newly released "Baseball Maverick: How Sandy Alderson Revolutionized Baseball and Revived the Mets." Alderson and Kettmann were in Quantico for a book signing at *The MARINE Shop*, and it was obvious that the opportunity to meet with and speak to Marines meant a great deal to them.

"The Marine Corps instills in us certain qualities, tendencies ... that you aren't going to find anywhere else," Alderson told the Marine students. As he expanded upon this idea, it was evident that he continues to adhere to many of the leadership traits and principles that were inculcated in him at The Basic School in 1969. He had the opportunity to put those values into practice during his tour as a platoon commander in Vietnam and again at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., as the commander of the Special Ceremonial Platoon.

"Baseball Maverick" primarily details Alderson's career in baseball, but author Kettmann rightfully begins the story with Alderson's formative years: his life experiences before a career in baseball was on the horizon.

The son of John Alderson, an Air Force pilot who flew missions in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, young Sandy moved frequently throughout his childhood and

Sandy Alderson shares his experiences and insights with Marines at MCU's Breckinridge Hall, MCB Quantico, Va., on April 10. The Marines, who were students in MCU's EPME programs, had the opportunity to ask both baseball-related and Marine-related questions of Alderson following his remarks. (Photo by Sara W. Bock)

quickly learned how to adapt. While a student at Dartmouth in 1966 during the Vietnam War, he visited his family in the Philippines and decided he wanted to see

Alderson has long been hailed as an out-of-the-box thinker and is considered by many to be one of baseball's most brilliant minds.

Vietnam for himself. Posing as a freelance journalist, he visited the war-torn country twice during his undergraduate years. His father was flying B-57B Canberras

in Vietnam during Alderson's first visit and, unafraid to break the rules, took his son up for a flight.

A few years later after graduating and commissioning as an officer in the Marine Corps, Second Lieutenant Sandy Alderson found himself back in Vietnam, that time commanding a platoon of Marines.

Alderson told his Breckinridge audience that his four years of experience as a Marine are foundational to who he is today and instrumental to his success. Long hailed as an out-of-the-box thinker, Alderson is considered by many to be one of baseball's most brilliant minds.

"The Marine Corps has been a fundamental identity of mine," he said gen-

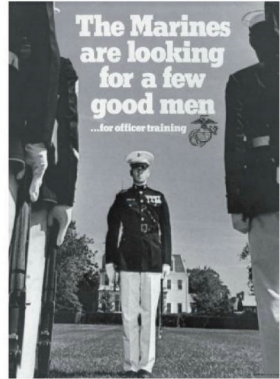


Below left: As a lieutenant in Vietnam, Alderson, right, and TBS classmate, Fred Alexander, reunited at III MAF HQ near Da Nang, Vietnam, in early 1971. Alderson was a platoon commander in 2/1 during his tour in Vietnam.

Below right: Following his tour in Vietnam, Alderson served at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., and was featured in this Marine officer recruitment poster.



COURTESY OF FRED ALEXANDER



COURTESY OF SANDY ALDERSON

uinely. When Alderson was a student at Dartmouth in the Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps (NROTC), he jumped on the opportunity to be a Marine option midshipman.

"There was just something about being a Marine option," he said, and the pride he has in today's Corps shows that he hasn't regretted that choice. In "Baseball Maverick," Kettmann writes that after opting to be commissioned as an officer in the Marine Corps, Alderson unearthed "a newfound motivation to study."

Alderson's words conveyed a powerful message for those Marines in the audience who plan to transition out of the Marine Corps into a new career path. With hindsight, he told them how important their days in the Corps will be to them throughout their lives, adding that "the experiences you have while in uniform never leave you," whether time in the service is four years or 40.

An affable speaker, Alderson easily engaged the Marines with anecdotes and insights. He credits his Marine Corps experience for getting him his first job in baseball, a sport he has loved and followed since childhood.

As Kettmann writes in "Baseball Maverick," after graduating from Harvard Law School in 1976, Alderson worked for a San Francisco firm, Farella Braun & Martel, where he became acquainted with

Sandy Alderson, right, visited his father, an Air Force pilot, in Vietnam in 1967 while an undergraduate student at Dartmouth. Although it was a violation of the rules, John Alderson, left, took his son up for a memorable flight in a B-57.

a fellow Marine veteran, Roy Eisenhardt. Eisenhardt became the president of the Oakland A's in 1980 after his father-in-law bought the team and brought Alderson along in 1981 as the A's general counsel.

His ability to adapt to leadership roles in new and changing environments is something he says he learned in the Corps.

By 1983, Alderson was named the team's general manager.

"Having the Marine Corps in common not only deepened the bond between them [Alderson and Eisenhardt], it also gave

them a lens through which to see many of the challenges inherent in building the A's franchise," says Kettmann of the relationship between the two.

So what is it that he learned in the Marine Corps that Alderson attributes to his success? The first thing, he told the Marines, is an appreciation for institutional culture. Similar to baseball, the Marine Corps has its own culture that all Marines subscribe to and function within. Inside that framework, Marines are encouraged to be as individualistic as possible, he recalled. "I've tried to take that to baseball," Alderson said.

"Leadership is a function of professional ability and personal attributes," he stated during his speech, adding that his time in the Corps taught him not only leadership,



COURTESY OF SANDY ALDERSON



COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK METS

Alderson answers the media's questions at the Mets' Citi Field in New York. He credits his Marine Corps experience with his ability to adapt to the wide variety of situations he's encountered in the baseball world.

but also the importance of reputation and integrity. Those qualities, he told them, are important both in the Marine Corps and in baseball.

In the variety of roles he has taken on in professional baseball over the past 34 years, his ability to adapt to leadership roles in new and changing environments is something he says he learned in the Corps. Alderson also noted the importance of mentorship, adding that his Marine mentors have had a real impact on what he's been able to accomplish over the years.

While many Major League Baseball general managers take over a new franchise and immediately "clean house," Alderson told the Marines that he only has fired two managers in the organizations he's taken over. "That's not how I operate," he said, and he believes his Marine Corps training has a lot to do with that. In the Corps, he told them, you don't get to choose which Marines you are responsible for; rather, you must adapt your leadership approach based on the situation.

If anything came across most powerfully that morning, it was the degree of respect Alderson has for the Marines in today's Corps. Alderson made sure to emphasize to his audience of Marines that the reputation the Marine Corps has

today "has mostly to do with the people in this room."

"The only reason I have pride in my service 40-some years ago is because of

your service now ... it's easy to live in the reflective glory of what you do," Alderson said with conviction.

Asked what Marines and professional baseball players have in common, Alderson didn't falter in his response. "Marines and professional athletes both have a predisposition," he said, adding that they also must have a deep-seated sense of motivation. There may be many differences between Marines and professional athletes, but to Alderson, both types are inclined toward greatness.

Through his remarks to the Marines that day, Alderson made it clear that his Marine Corps experience had a huge impact on the rest of his life and urged the Marines to never take their days in the Corps for granted. He urged them to truly take advantage of the opportunities, relationships and experiences they are offered while in uniform.

Alderson, a prime example of a Marine who has taken his experiences while in uniform and used them as a catalyst for great success beyond the Corps, affirmed that he hasn't forgotten his Marine Corps roots or his first lessons in leadership.



SAMARA BLACK

Following his April 10 visit with Marines at Quantico, Alderson autographs a photo for an MCU student and Mets fan. His advice to the Marines was to enjoy the opportunities offered to them during their active-duty years.

