



**OBSERVATION POST**

# INTRODUCING The Observation Post

Based on guidance from Gen James N. Mattis, USMC(Ret) we are re-establishing a department that appeared in the Gazette from 1956 to 1963. Professional debate during that interwar inflection point between the peer-on-peer war of fire and maneuver in Korea and the yet-to-come guerrilla war in Vietnam prompted the creation of a feature dedicated to short articles that presented “new, constructive and often controversial ideas.” An example of a classic OP article follows on page 17: “A Modest Proposal” by then-1st Lt A. B. Krongard, originally published in May 1962.

**Today we will re-establish The Observation Post.**

## A CALL TO ACTION

“Marines, today we need you to bring your ideas to the Gazette in order to refresh Marine Corps thinking. We need the intellectual risk-takers, the ‘Mavericks’ whose critical thinking and creative problem-solving can disrupt the bureaucracy and challenge intellectual complacency. We need nonconformists and innovators whose disciplined but unregimented ideas can lead to solutions that outpace adaptive enemies and a dynamically changing world.”

—Gen James N. Mattis, USMC(Ret)



## Submission Guidelines

Frank opinions, rebuttals to published articles, and imaginative ideas are all welcome. Subject matter is unconstrained and may be controversial, but the article must be short. Submit essays of 800–1000 words to <mailto:gazette@mca-marines.org>. Microsoft Word documents are preferred. No pictures or charts. Author biographies are limited to rank, full name, and MOS. The authors of OP articles selected for publication will receive an award of \$50 courtesy of the donors of MCAF.

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This department is for new, constructive ideas. They may be controversial; they must be short. Payment at regular rates on publication.



## A Modest Proposal

By 1stLt A. B. Krongard

THE EARLY 1700's FOUND IRELAND in the midst of a terrible famine; hunger was general, starvation frequent. While the Irish withered, the rest of the world remained unconcerned and oblivious. It remained for a man of vision, Jonathan Swift, to devise a solution to the problem of the famine while others merely nodded and pshawed. In his "Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burden to their Parents or the Country" (by fattening and eating them) Swift analyzed the problem and offered a sound, pragmatic solution. Unfortunately, there were several unimaginative men in positions of authority who lacked the prescience to appreciate Swift's idea. Because of these men, countless others continued to go hungry.

Today, nearly 250 years later, the Marine Corps is suffering a fate similar to Ireland's if a bit more subtle. While the Irish starved from a lack of food, we starve from a lack of good training. As they needed food to restore their energy and stamina, we need training to restore our pride and prestige of which everyone speaks with reverence and nostalgia. More important, we need such training in order to maintain our reputation as the most efficient fighting men on the face of the earth. This is our mission, our purpose for existence. A decline in the ability of today's Marine can be blamed on a "softer" America, the difference in today's recruits, or any number of things. However, the intrinsic capabilities of the individual are beside the point; if he is below par, it only means that his training must be better and more concentrated so that we may compensate for such deficiencies. This must be done; to do it, I offer this "Modest Proposal."

Every year the Marine Corps will allocate one hundred lives for training purposes. This means, simply, that we shall be in a position to kill off these men in whatever manner we choose. By simple multiplication, we find that we have at our

disposal one thousand lives for every 10 year period, which for practical reasons will be the basic temporal element of the scheme. Beginning each year with one hundred lives already credited to training accidents, we may rigorously pursue a new type of schooling with an emphasis on live fire problems, forced marches, and strenuous obstacle courses. There will be no easing off or watering down for fear of Congressional interference or bad publicity so long as the number of deaths does not greatly exceed one hundred. Some years, there will be more deaths, some years less, and S-3 officers will make alterations accordingly.

After much thought, I conclude that although the death rate might exceed one hundred for the first year or two, it will soon subside due to the increased proficiency of the troops developed out of a newly acquired, deeply rooted interest in field problems. This, then, might create a problem of dealing with the remainder of the troops and lives owed the Corps every tenth year. However, the problem is easily solved in any number of ways, all of which would be beneficial. For example, if we had only used up 790 lives at the commencement of the "jubilee year," we might choose to eliminate 210 captains, thereby alleviating the promotion hump at that level. After the elimination board (acting much like a promotion board in reverse) met and had made its decisions, those selected could be used to test new body armor designs. On the other hand, think of the possibilities for bigger and better JCOE demonstrations. For their share in the festivities, all concerned would be immortalized in Marine legend and guaranteed a niche in Tun Tavern. In effect, we would be doing those selected a favor. Is it not better to be dead than passed over for a second time?

Needless to say, there will be those who disagree with my plan. These Philistines will wish to quibble over unimportant de-

tails of the plan. Some will advocate a figure of more than 100 lives per year, some less. The statistically minded will want to create an obtuse formula based, no doubt, on that old warhorse, "the needs of the service," which will mathematically derive an equitable quota.

The hard-chargers will complain that it is criminal to limit the plan to only one thousand lives every 10 years. Doubtlessly, the "2" sections will balk at the idea entirely when the Russians claim that they thought of it first. Occasionally, an obstinate CO will, by means of close and careful supervision, go for an extended period of time without any accidents at all and through an unauthorized use of his influence, manage to keep his men from selection by the elimination board. There are always men like this, men who constantly resist what is best for the Corps, but under our plan we have a very efficient way of dealing with them. In every FMF unit of battalion size which does not produce at least one bona fide training fatality, we shall take the CO, XO, and S-3 and let them roll dice to see whose carcass gets raffled off, all proceeds, of course, going to Navy Relief. This would certainly make the brass take a strong, if distorted, interest in the welfare of their men. However, better a distorted interest than none at all.

Alas, none of the above is too important; what is important is that we all agree on the essence of the proposal. Do we remain the finest fighting unit in the world, or do we acquiesce to the fate of mediocrity? Do we stand as the last fortress against the juggernaut of "Momism," or do we, too, surrender to its influence? Do we flourish at the expense of one hundred lives per year, or do we languish at their survival?

USMC

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