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President's Notes

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“In short, I admire the professionalism of the Marine Corps. . . . [Being] a Marine is a way of life. It’s a commitment to being the best. . . . That’s why there aren’t any ex-Marines, and why ‘First to Fight’ isn’t a motto but a sacred pledge.”

President's Notes

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, the Naval War College has benefited from the contributions of officers from other services assigned to Newport as faculty members and students. In 1886, our second class at the College included two Marine Corps officers among the twenty-one students; and over the years, the Corps has sent many of its finest leaders to learn and to teach about naval warfare. We are much the better because of them.

The *Naval War College Review* is the scholarly professional journal of all three sea services, so it is appropriate that this issue's cover features Charles

Rear Admiral Stark was commissioned in 1965 at the U.S. Naval Academy, studied at the University of Vienna as a Fulbright Scholar, and earned a doctorate in political science at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. He has served on the Navy Staff, the National Security Council Staff, and as Executive Director of the Chief of Naval Operations Executive Panel. His sea service has included command of USS *Julius A. Furer* (FFG 6), USS *Leahy* (CG 16), and, from 1994 to 1995, the Nato Standing Naval Force Atlantic, deployed in the Adriatic Sea. He assumed the duties of President of the Naval War College in June 1995.

Waterhouse's painting of a Marine on the black sand beach of Iwo Jima, and that several of its articles address Marine Corps topics. The Marines have been our brothers-in-arms since the birth of our services more than two centuries ago.

I come from a big family that included one brother a year older than I and another a year younger. I know what brothers are like—and I've got the scars to prove it. But even though we spent a lot of energy trying to beat the tar out of each other, we always stood together against the kids up the block or any other outsiders. That's a pretty good description of how the brotherhood of the Navy and the Marine Corps operates too.

Let me recount an incident with one of my "brother officers" just after I had been selected for flag rank but while I was still a captain. I had to go to the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia, to hear a lecture, and I was late when I drove onto the Marine Corps base that surrounds Quantico. Passing the rifle range, I got stuck behind a car poking along at twenty-five miles per hour even though the speed limit signs authorized thirty-five miles per hour. At the first stretch of dashed road-stripes, I accelerated and passed that car.

As soon as I pulled back into the right lane, this driver went nuts! He immediately hit me with his high-beam headlights, began honking his horn, and tailgated me all the way through the gate at the FBI Academy. When I parked, his car whipped in next to me, and a very agitated Marine major jumped out, introduced himself, and got right up in my face, chewing me out for speeding.

I tried to point out that I had obeyed the posted signs, but he was hearing none of that. What particularly galled him was that I had directly disobeyed the commanding general's written order that forbade driving faster than twenty-five miles per hour in the area of the rifle range. He was neither amused nor appeased by my remark that I had not spotted the lance corporal handing out copies of the general's instruction when I got off the I-95 exit ramp. Indeed, as you might imagine, the conversation quickly went downhill into an argument about my lack of leadership and his lack of a brain. We parted no closer to agreement than when we began.

Later (and calmer), I reflected on this incident. It occurred to me that my brother officer's actions might be understandable if I saw them from his background, which expects everyone to know and obey orders, rules, and instructions—with no exceptions or excuses. While I might disagree about whether my driving had broken any rule, I had to admire the major's tenacity and insistence on high standards by someone he thought had exceeded the speed limit by ten miles per hour.

I like the fact that Marines set high standards for themselves and those around them, and that they consider nothing less as acceptable. I see this on base, where

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Marines insist on proper salutes and happily provide lessons if a subordinate needs them, and where Marines *always* have properly fitted uniforms that they wear with great pride.

I like the way Marines march. Sailors don't march very well, but Marines do—*always*—because of how they are trained. When Marines complete basic training at Quantico, Parris Island, or San Diego, they can march, they can shoot, and they have a pride in themselves and the Corps that is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. The Marine Corps does this by concentrating on what is important: discipline, drill, knowledge of the service rifle, and understanding the history and tradition of the Corps.

George Will once wrote that Marines “cultivate an ethos conducive to producing hard people in a soft age.” I like the sound of that phrasing, and it's true. Marines stay in shape. They work hard at physical readiness, and if there are one or two Marines who are overweight, they have been well hidden.

Marines are also tough organizationally. They have only one boss, the Commandant, so they speak with one voice: what the Commandant says, goes. Before meeting with any outsiders, the Marines always get together, decide what their position is going to be, and never break ranks in the bureaucratic battle. Some people might portray this as intellectual rigidity, but I can attest to its effectiveness.

Equally, the Marines are direct to the verge of bluntness. When the Commandant put out his Planning Guidance, he didn't ignore or talk around problems, he didn't put off tough decisions, and he didn't say “Let's study it some more.” He said he was *tired* of studies, so where he could he *gave* the answer as to what should be done. He also named who was responsible and stipulated the date for that person to report back on how the job would be done. I *like* that.

The Commandant also can count on the fact that Marines obey orders. They don't whine, or ask why, or do a little “Mother may I?” dance: give a Marine a job to do, and he goes out and does it. And they are *stubborn*—whether in combat, where, once committed, they fight *forever*, or in Pentagon budget battles, where they just make it feel like forever to all the rest of us. But it works! The V-22 Osprey program has had a stake driven through its heart more times than Bela Lugosi, yet it's rising out of the coffin.


The Marine Corps also makes the most of the press. They knew a long time ago that the press could be enormously useful in bringing their story to the American public, and that the enlisted troops are any service's greatest public relations asset. So the Marines put their people out front with all the media, where the reporters and camera crews can see them in action, and it pays off.

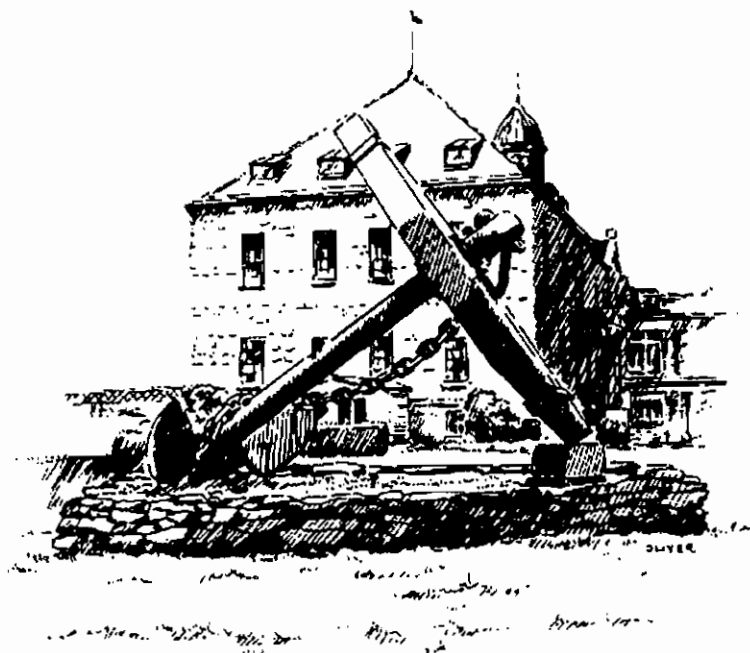
In short, I admire the professionalism of the Marine Corps. It is more than working hard and doing your job well—all of the services do that. Rather, being

a Marine is a *way of life*. It's a commitment to being *the best*, to dedicating yourself to the Corps and its ideals. That's why there aren't any ex-Marines, and why "First to Fight" isn't a motto but a sacred pledge.

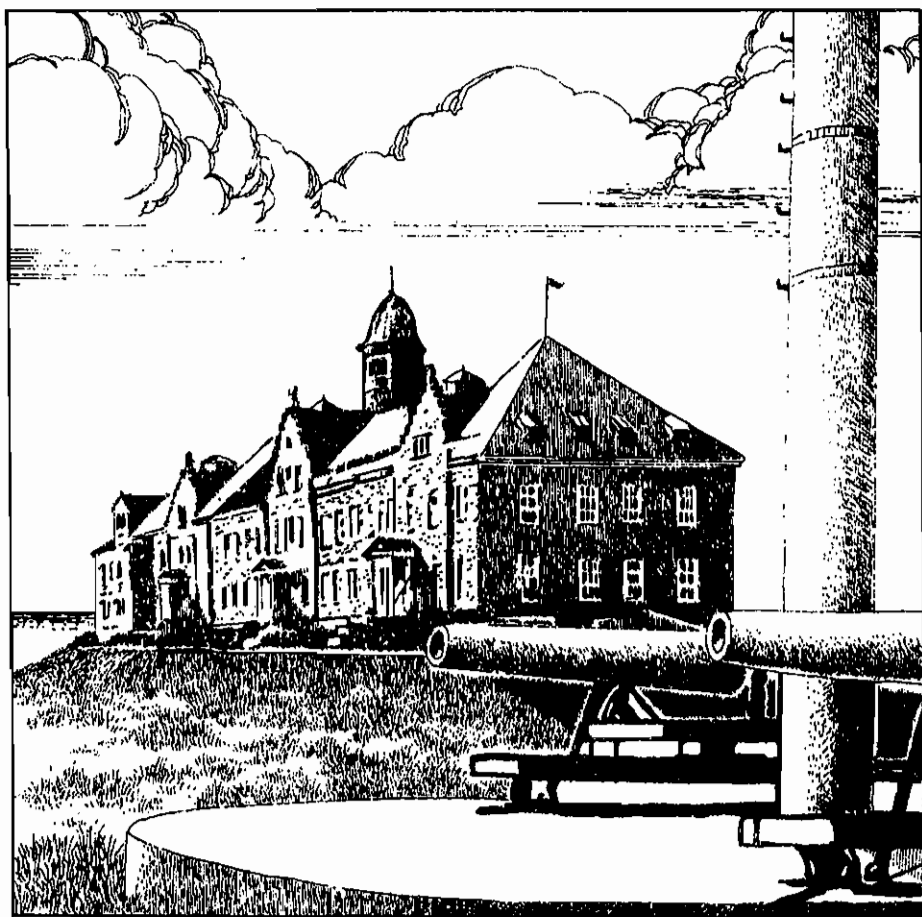
Whether afloat or ashore, on famous battlefields or unnamed skirmish grounds, in heat or cold, Marines have distinguished themselves by their bravery, tenacity, love of country, and loyalty to one another.

Here at the Naval War College, Marines have made their mark in setting high standards and fighting for the truth as they have seen it. They have been our brothers in the quest for intellectual excellence for more than a hundred years, and I am pleased to see their contributions acknowledged in this, their scholarly journal, as well.


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President, Naval War College



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