

**MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY BALL
9 NOVEMBER 2011
ADMIRAL J. C. HARVEY, JR
[AS DELIVERED]**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARINES!

WHAT AN HONOR TO BE WITH ALL OF YOU TONIGHT.

GENERAL PAXTON, THANK YOU SIR FOR INVITING ME TO BE
A PART OF THIS CEREMONY AND TAKING THE NOT
INSIGNIFICANT RISK OF INVITING A NAVY ADMIRAL, AND
ONE FROM THE U.S. NAVY AT THAT, TO SPEAK AT THIS
VERY IMPORTANT EVENT.

IT IS INDEED A RARE PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO BE ABLE TO
CELEBRATE THE 236TH BIRTHDAY OF THE UNITED STATES
MARINE CORPS WITH THE FINEST MARINES IN THE MARINE
CORPS, THE MARINES OF II MEF, AT THE VERY HEART OF
THE MARINE CORPS, CAMP LEJEUNE.

NOW BEFORE WE GO TOO MUCH FURTHER TONIGHT, I'D
LIKE TO ASK THE MARINES AND SAILORS PRESENT TO
STAND AND JOIN ME IN RECOGNIZING YOUR SPOUSES,
THOSE WHO STOOD THE LONELY VIGIL WHILE YOU WERE
FORWARD DEPLOYED.

THEY REMIND US EVERY DAY OF WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT
AND THEY BRING OUT THE BEST IN ALL OF US. (LEAD
APPLAUSE).

TONIGHT WE CELEBRATE AMERICA'S CORPS OF MARINES, A
FIGHTING ORGANIZATION WITHOUT EQUAL IN THE WORLD,
AN ORGANIZATION WHOSE PROUD HISTORY PRE-DATES
THAT OF OUR NATION AND WHOSE VERY EXISTENCE IS ONE
DRIVEN NOT BY MILITARY NECESSITY, BUT BY THE
DEMANDS OF THE CITIZENS FOR WHAT THE MARINE CORPS
REPRESENTS.

AND THAT IS WHAT WE MUST FOCUS ON TONIGHT.

IN ADDITION TO RECALLING YOUR STORIED HISTORY, THE BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS FROM CHAPULTEPEC TO HELMAND PROVINCE THAT HAVE FOREVER FIXED THE IMAGE OF THE MARINE CORPS IN THE MINDS OF OUR CITIZENS,

WE MUST FOCUS ON WHY THIS NATION HAS ALWAYS WANTED A MARINE CORPS, BECAUSE THAT IS THE REASON WHY THIS NATION WILL ALWAYS HAVE A MARINE CORPS.

WHAT MAKES THE MARINES SO DIFFERENT, SO UNIQUE AND SO EXTRAORDINARY? WHAT SEPARATES YOU BY SUCH A WIDE MARGIN FROM THE OTHER ELITE FIGHTING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WORLD'S MILITARIES?

ALL OF YOU CERTAINLY HAVE YOUR OWN ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION; I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU MINE, DEVELOPED OVER MY 38 YEARS SERVING ALONGSIDE YOU.

MY ANSWER BEGINS WITH THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE—YOUR UNIQUE EXPEDITIONARY MIND-SET AND YOUR AMPHIBIOUS NATURE ACCOUNT FOR THE QUALITIES THAT TRULY SET YOU APART:

- THE AGGRESSIVENESS INHERENT IN AN ELITE ASSAULT FORCE;
- THE VERSATILITY AND AGILITY ACQUIRED BY OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MARINES WHO MUST STAND READY TO LAND AND FIGHT AND WIN ANYWHERE, AT ANY TIME, ON VERY SHORT NOTICE;
- AND, THE HIGH PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF A FORCE THAT MUST UNDERSTAND GROUND, NAVAL, AND AIR OPERATIONS EQUALLY IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSIONS.

AGGRESSIVE, VERSATILE, AGILE, AND SUPREMELY PROFESSIONAL.

WHEN AMERICANS LOOK AT THE ICONIC JOE ROSENTHAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THOSE FIVE MARINES AND THEIR NAVY CORPSMAN RAISING THE FLAG ON MT SURIBACHI, ON IWO JIMA, THEY SEE THOSE CHARACTERISTICS THAT DEFINE THE MARINE CORPS . . . AND THEY LIKE WHAT THEY SEE.

GIVEN THOSE CHARACTERISTICS AND QUALITIES THAT MAKE THE MARINE CORPS SO UNIQUE, A UNIQUENESS THAT MAKES THE MARINES SO VALUABLE TO OUR NATION; THE QUESTION THEN BECOMES, HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN IT?

FOR THAT IS YOUR ESSENTIAL DUTY, ON THIS DAY AND ON EVERY DAY THAT YOU SERVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR CORPS.

- YOU MUST KEEP THOSE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS (AGGRESSIVENESS, VERSATILITY, AGILITY, AND PROFESSIONALISM) REAL, FRONT & CENTER FOR EVERY MARINE;
- YOU MUST BE MOST READY WHEN THIS NATION IS LEAST READY;
- YOU MUST HAVE A LASER-LIKE FOCUS ON YOUR ASSIGNED MISSIONS;
- YOU MUST BE EXPEDITIONARY IN ALL THINGS, DOWN TO THE VERY MARROW OF YOUR BONES;
- AND YOU MUST ALWAYS BE MAKING MARINES, ALWAYS STAYING FOCUSED ON PASSING DOWN THE QUALITIES THAT DEFINE THE VERY HEART AND SOUL OF THE MARINE CORPS, FROM ONE GENERATION OF MARINES TO THE NEXT.

WITH YOUR SINGULAR FOCUS ON YOUR DUTIES,
PERFORMING AS WE EXPECT MARINES TO PERFORM, YOU
WILL CARRY THE MARINE CORPS THROUGH WHATEVER
TURBULENCE LIES AHEAD.

WE'RE IN ONE OF THOSE PERIODS OF TIME THAT
ROUTINELY OCCUR IN A DEMOCRACY SUCH AS OURS,
PARTICULARLY AFTER A PERIOD OF PROLONGED CONFLICT.

THERE WILL BE A GREAT DEAL OF HAND-WRINGING;
THERE WILL BE MUCH TALK OF BUDGET CUTTING;
THERE WILL BE CRIES OF "WE'LL NEVER DO THAT AGAIN."

THOSE WHO COULDN'T PREDICT WHAT HAPPENED IN THEIR
OWN HOME YESTERDAY WILL CONFIDENTLY PREDICT,
WITH ASTONISHING DETAIL, THE FUTURE OF ARMED
CONFLICT FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS,
AND SO ON.

DON'T LISTEN TO ALL THE NONSENSE—STAY FOCUSED ON WHAT MAKES THE MARINE CORPS UNIQUE AND ON YOUR ROLE IN EVERY STEP OF THAT INCREDIBLE PROCESS OF MAKING MARINES; STAY FOCUSED ON PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MARINES, BECAUSE KEEPING THE CORPS STRONG AND READY TO FIGHT WILL TAKE EVERY MARINE WORKING HARD EVERY DAY, HERE AT CAMP LEJEUNE OR WHEREVER YOU MAY BE DEPLOYED.

FOR WHEN THE BUDGETS ARE CUT, WHEN PEOPLE SAY “NEVER AGAIN” AND ASSUME THAT PEACE WILL BREAK OUT AT OUR COMMAND, IT IS YOUR HARD WORK AND STEADFAST PROFESSIONALISM DURING THE LEAN TIMES BETWEEN CONFLICTS THAT MAKES POSSIBLE WHAT YOU DO DURING THE HARD TIMES IN THE INEVITABLE CONFLICTS TO COME OUR WAY, BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU'LL BE THE FIRST WE CALL.

THE BEST EXAMPLE OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT COMES FROM YOUR HISTORY. IN MAY AND JUNE, 1918, AMERICAN FORCES FOUGHT THEIR FIRST BATTLES IN WORLD WAR I AGAINST THE GERMAN ARMY.

AMONG THE VERY FIRST UNITS TO ENGAGE IN THE FIRST BATTLES AGAINST THE GERMANS WAS THE 4TH MARINE BRIGADE, MADE UP OF ELEMENTS OF THE 5TH AND 6TH MARINES, WITH THE MISSION OF RECAPTURING BELLEAU WOOD. THE WORLD WAS WATCHING—COULD THE AMERICANS FIGHT AGAINST THE BEST OF THE GERMAN ARMY? THE FIGHTING WAS FEROCIOUS AND THE CASUALTIES WERE EXTREMELY HEAVY, BUT THE MARINES CARRIED THE DAY. THE ELITE GERMAN STORM TROOPERS THE MARINES FOUGHT AGAINST GAVE THEM A NAME YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF—“DEVIL DOGS.”

AND THE MARINES NOT ONLY GOT THE GERMANS' ATTENTION, BUT THAT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AS WELL. THEY SAW WHAT IT MEANT TO “SEND IN THE MARINES.”

SO NOW LET'S FLASH FORWARD 24 YEARS, AND GO TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLOBE.

IT'S AUGUST, 1942, AND THE MARINES HAVE JUST LANDED ON GUADALCANAL.

AGAIN, AS IN WORLD WAR I, AMERICA LAUNCHES ITS FIRST OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGN OF WORLD WAR II WITH THE MARINES, AND AGAIN, THE FIGHTING, THIS TIME IN DENSE JUNGLE, IS FEROCIOUS AND THE CASUALTIES EXTREMELY HEAVY. AND AGAIN, THE MARINES TRIUMPH AGAINST THE ODDS; THEY HOLD ONTO HENDERSON FIELD, HOLD ONTO THE ISLAND, AND FORCE THE JAPANESE TO WITHDRAW, DEFEATED. THE TRIUMPH AT GUADALCANAL, COUPLED WITH OUR VICTORY EARLIER AT MIDWAY, MARK THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE JAPANESE EMPIRE.

AND ONCE AGAIN, THE MARINES GOT THE ATTENTION OF THEIR ENEMIES AND REMINDED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE OF WHAT THEY COULD DO.

SO HERE WE HAVE TWO DESPERATE BATTLES, FOUGHT BY TWO DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF MARINES, BOTH TRAINED AND EQUIPPED ON SHOE-STRING BUDGETS IN PEACETIME FOR MANY YEARS BEFORE THESE BATTLES WERE FOUGHT AGAINST TWO VERY DIFFERENT ENEMIES.

SO MANY DIFFERENCES, BUT THE ESSENTIALS WERE THE SAME—THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VICTORY AND DEFEAT CAME DOWN TO THE FIGHTING QUALITIES, UNSHAKEABLE RESOLVE, AND COURAGE OF THE MARINES ON THE GROUND WHO CLOSED WITH THE ENEMY.

HOW DID THE MARINES GET FROM 1918 TO 1942, THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION, THE MINUSCULE BUDGETS, THE FORCE DOWNSIZINGS AND UNCERTAINTY, AND STILL BE READY TO FIGHT AND WIN WHEN AMERICA WAS SO UNREADY AND STILL REELING FROM THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR AND THE START OF ANOTHER GREAT WAR, AND ALL THIS AFTER EVERYONE SAID, “NEVER AGAIN” IN 1918 AND THE END OF THE WAR TO END ALL WARS?

HOW DID THE MARINES OF 1942 PERFORM AT THE SAME LEVEL AS THE MARINES OF 1918?

I THINK THE ANSWER TO THAT VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION BEGINS WITH THOSE MARINES IN THE 1920s AND 1930s, WHO FOUGHT THE DIRTY LITTLE WARS IN HAITI AND NICARAGUA, WHO KEPT THE FAITH WITH EACH OTHER AND THE CORPS, WHO LOOKED TO THE FUTURE AND PREPARED FOR THE NEXT CONFLICT WHEN MOST PEOPLE STILL COULDN'T DEAL WITH THE LAST ONE.

THOSE ARE THE MARINES WHO KEPT THE CORPS READY AND ITS VALUES STRONG.

THOSE ARE THE MARINES WHO MADE READINESS A RELIGION, A PERMANENT STATE OF MIND, AT THE HEART OF THE MARINE CORPS ETHOS.

IT WAS THOSE MARINES ON CHINA STATION IN THE 1930s WHO FIRST STUDIED THE JAPANESE MILITARY AT WAR, AND IT WAS THOSE MARINES IN QUANTICO IN THE 1920s WHO STARTED WRITING THE BOOK ON AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS.

THOSE WERE THE MARINES WHO PROVIDED THE BRIDGE FROM 1918 TO 1942, WHO ENSURED THE FIGHTING QUALITIES OF THE CORPS WERE SAFEGUARDED AND PASSED TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF MARINES, ENSURING THEIR READINESS TO FIGHT AND WIN WHEN THE NATION DESPERATELY NEEDED A VICTORY.

AND THUS OUR ESSENTIAL LESSON, THE MARINES WHO FOUGHT IN ANBAR, AND WHO FIGHT TODAY IN HELMAND PROVINCE, WERE MADE BY THE MARINES WHO CAME BEFORE THEM . . .

- THE MARINES WHO FOUGHT IN BELLEAU WOOD AND CHATEAU THIERRY IN WORLD WAR I;

- THE MARINES WHO FOUGHT AT WAKE ISLAND, GUADALCANAL, TARAUA, GUAM, PELELIU, IWO JIMA, AND OKINAWA IN WORLD WAR II;

- THE MARINES WHO FOUGHT AT PUSAN, INCHON, AND THE CHOSIN RESERVOIR IN KOREA;

- THE MARINES WHO FOUGHT IN I CORPS, KHE SANH, AND HUE CITY IN VIETNAM;

- THE MARINES WHO LANDED IN LEBANON

- THE MARINES WHO FOUGHT IN THE PERSIAN GULF.

IT IS YOUR HISTORY, YOUR SHARED STORY OF WHICH EVERY MARINE WHO EVER WORE THE UNIFORM IS AN INTEGRAL PART, YOUR UNBLEMISHED RECORD OF VICTORY IN DESPERATE BATTLE AND OF READINESS FOR BATTLE WHEN THE NATION'S GAZE IS TURNED ELSEWHERE,

IT IS THAT GLORIOUS HISTORY, MADE IN PEACETIME AND IN WAR, THAT BINDS ONE GENERATION OF MARINES TO THE NEXT, AND ENSURES THE BRIGHT FUTURE OF OUR CORPS OF MARINES, OUR EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN READINESS.

I AM UNBELIEVABLY PROUD TO SHARE THIS EVENING WITH YOU, JUST AS I HAVE BEEN UNBELIEVABLY PROUD TO SERVE WITH YOU, FOR SO MANY YEARS.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES, AND HOLD YOU CLOSE.

OUR NATION NEEDS YOU TODAY AND NEEDS YOU TO BE READY FOR TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES, WHATEVER AND WHEREVER THEY MAY BE.

AND I KNOW YOU WILL BE READY, NO MATTER WHAT. YOU ALWAYS HAVE BEEN, AND YOU ALWAYS WILL BE.

AFTER ALL, YOU'RE THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS.

SEMPER FIDELIS AND HAPPY BIRTHDAY!