



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20380-0001

IN REPLY REFER TO:

CMC
17 Aug 92

WHITE LETTER NO. 12-92

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officers
All Officers in Charge

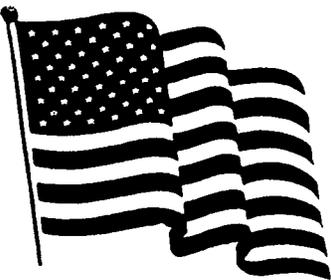
Subj: A LESSON IN VALUES

Encl: (1) Mr. James Hugh Powers letter of 31 July 1992

1. I recently received the enclosure and want to share its message with all Marines, Sailors and Civilians of our Corps. There are many lessons in it. Perhaps the best one is its testimony to the fact that even a Marine of fifty years ago still cares enough about his Corps and its values to offer advice and counsel to those of us currently entrusted with the legacy passed down to us.

2. Read it; learn from it; be inspired by it; and stand taller because of it. Semper Fidelis.


C. E. MUNDY, JR.



MARINE 8TH DEFENSE & ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY
BATTALION REUNION ASSOCIATION



31 July 1992

General Carl E. Mundy, USMC,
Commandant of the
United States Marine Corps,
Headquarters,
United States Marine Corps,
Washington, DC 20380.

Dear General Mundy:

Last evening, I turned my television set on to a news broadcast in time to pick up a "special" on the testimony of yourself and other members of the Joint Chiefs before a Congressional Committee in relation to the Tailhook Affair and problems of women in our armed forces.

I was impressed by the thoughtfulness, sincerity and depth of concern which characterised the presentations offered by you and your colleagues. And, in general, I share the views you all expressed.

As the testimony moved forward, my thoughts wandered back in time to the early weeks of June 1943, and to the Old Horse Soldier, my Granduncle, Sergeant Andrew Casey, USA (Ret). He was a wonderful Granduncle for myself and my two younger brothers to have had as small boys. He was living history, a reminder that we are the sum of history, and that most valued of all our treasures, a Keeper of the Tradition. He was an extraordinary old man.

He had joined the Army as an early teenager in the mid-1870s and had been assigned to the 7th Cavalry out in the Dakota Territory under the command of General George Armstrong Custer. He was fortunate to have been in one of the cavalry units left "back in the fort" when Custer left on his ill-fated march to the Little Big Horn. Uncle Andy was a storehouse of information about the Indians, the Indian Wars, and the Wild West in its glory. He had served in the Spanish-American War, retiring a little after the turn of the Century. He was timeless. He was adventure. And he was ours!

The Old Horse Soldier was tough as nails, yet a good-humoured elder, a gentle if firm disciplinarian when his grandnephews got a bit out of line. Even in his 80s, he was lean, proud and dignified in bearing, standing ramrod straight. Even though partially blind, he kept busy with carpentry at his work bench in the basement of our home and about our premises in Needham, surrendering nothing to the infirmities of age.

On that day in June of 1943, I arrived home from Parris Island after graduating from Platoon 266, 12th Recruit Battalion, on furlough transfer to New River. I received a joyous welcome from my parents and brothers. And hearing Uncle Andy at work in the basement, I laid below to confront him in all my Marine Corps glory, greens, sharpshooter's medal and all. Having survived P.I., I was a very cocky 20-year-old.

I found the Old Horse Soldier at his bench, his ample white hair reflecting the light from the lamp above. When he heard me, he turned around in his chair to survey this "boot". A slight smile crossed his stern, lined, ancient face. I awaited

his verdict. As nearly as I can recall, this is what followed:

"Hmph!", he snorted. "Well, the Marines have done a good job with you."

"Yes Sir!", I answered.

"A fine fighting outfit!", he observed. "Your chances of coming through are better in such an outfit. A good outfit doesn't have to say that it is good. It just is, and everybody knows it! Just see to it that you measure up!"

Spoken like a true veteran of a good outfit, the 7th Cavalry. In 1943, its horses were gone and it was mechanised. Its heritage remained.

As the Old Horse Soldier chatted, I realised that I was talking to a man who had been alive when the only states west of the Mississippi were those on its west bank, Texas, California, Nevada and Oregon. The rest of the map of the West, divided into territories, was simply inscribed "Indian Country".

The Old Horse Soldier now looked me squarely in the eye and said something I was never to forget, something as timely for officers and enlisted personnel of our armed forces today as in 1943.

"Young Fella, I have a little advice for you, some things I want you to keep at the top of your agenda.

"You are now wearing the uniform of the United States.

"You shall, at all times, remember that while you are wearing that uniform you represent the Government and the people of the United States as well as the branch of service in which you are enrolled. Whatever you do will reflect for better or for worse on our family, on your branch of service, and on the Government and People of the United States. They have entrusted to you the obligation of upholding the honour of that uniform and all that it represents. The whole World will judge you in terms of that uniform and your conduct while wearing it.

"You shall therefore comport yourself at all times, on all occasions and in all circumstances in such a manner as to reflect credit upon your branch of service, our Government and the American People. Your every act shall be such as to encourage confidence in all people and in that uniform and what these things represent.

"You shall be mindful that fine men have died wearing the uniform of the United States, Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. You are accountable to their memory. Be proud of your branch of service, but remember that no branch has a monopoly on courage, conviction and sacrifice. You best honour all by honouring your own.

"You shall remember that your rank and uniform do not excuse you from the responsibilities of behaving like a gentleman and a responsible member of society. You were not brought up to behave like a pig at home. The Marine Corps has not issued you a license to behave like a pig while you are in that uniform. Use common sense. Discipline is best served by common sense.

"That's it! Do I make myself clear? Is that all understood?"

These two questions were posed with a vigour which showed that the Old Horse Soldier still knew how to skin mules and recruits. I was addressing the ultimate D.I. who had had raised these issues in a manner in which they had never been raised by my D.I.s at P.I.

"YES SIR!", I replied.

"Good Lad!", he answered. "You will do just fine. Now, get on upstairs and help your Mother. She worries a lot about you."

I left him pattering at his bench after having imparted to me a legacy of military tradition and family values which carried me through the rigours of World War II and through later life. He was still training his troops with tough love, the true mark of a caring and competent leader.

The Tailhook events suggest that his values bear some repeating today at our armed forces academies, in OCS and armed forces boot camps. It appears that we have here and there in our forces some folks who have lost touch with our Country's values and traditions, and with common sense. These deficiencies in their education must be addressed in no uncertain terms, out of respect for the vast majority of our armed forces personnel who are doing their best to live decent lives and to function as real professionals. We cannot abide conduct which undermines discipline or the confidence of our people in our armed forces.

Whatever else happens, of one thing I am certain: That our Corps will not be found wanting in these matters! That it will fall on anyone who dishonours it as the Assyrians fell upon the fold. That the "word" will go out! When we remember that we are "family", we do just fine. It is when someone forgets that we are "family" that trouble enters our tent. "Family" means showing respect, respect of all for one and of one for all. It is that simple. Common sense is surprisingly simple!

Please feel free to quote from this letter in whole or in part in getting your "word" out to all hands, if this will be helpful.

Good luck, and God bless your efforts,
SEMPER FI!


JAMES HUGH POWERS,
Secretary.

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