
Leading Marines



U.S. Marine Corps

MCCDC (C 42)
27 Nov 2002

E R R A T U M

to

MCWP 6-11

LEADING MARINES

1. For administrative purposes, FMFM 1-0 is reidentified as MCWP 6-11.

143 000129 80

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
Headquarters United States Marine Corps
Washington, D.C. 20380-1775

3 January 1995

FOREWORD

The most important responsibility in our Corps is leading Marines. If we expect Marines to lead and if we expect Marines to follow, we must provide the education of the heart and of the mind to win on the battlefield and in the barracks, in war and in peace. Traditionally, that education has taken many forms, often handed down from Marine to Marine, by word of mouth and by example.

Our actions as Marines every day must embody the legacy of those who went before us. Their memorial to us—their teaching, compassion, courage, sacrifices, optimism, humor, humility, commitment, perseverance, love, guts, and glory—is the pattern for our daily lives. This manual attempts to capture those heritages of the Marine Corps' approach to leading. It is not prescriptive because there is no formula for leadership. It is not all-inclusive because to capture all that it is to be a Marine or to lead Marines defies pen and paper. Instead, it is intended to provide those charged with leading Marines a sense of the legacy they have inherited, and to help them

come to terms with their own personal leadership style. The indispensable condition of Marine Corps leadership is action and attitude, not words. As one Marine leader said, "Don't tell me how good you are. Show me!"

Marines have been leading for over 200 years and today continue leading around the globe. Whether in the field or in garrison, at the front or in the rear, Marines, adapting the time-honored values, traditions, customs, and history of our Corps to their generation, will continue to lead—and continue to win.

This manual comes to life through the voices, writings, and examples of not one person, but many. Thousands of Americans who have borne, and still bear, the title "Marine" are testimony that "Once a Marine, Always a Marine" and "Semper Fidelis" are phrases that define our essence. It is to those who know, and to those who will come to know, this extraordinary way of life that this book is dedicated.

C. E. MUNDY, Jr.
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine

Corps

Leading Marines

Introduction

Chapter 1.

Our Ethos

The U. S. Marine — Every Marine a Rifleman — Soldiers of the Sea — The Marine Tradition

Chapter 2.

Foundations

The Unique Obligations of Marine Corps Service — Establishing and Maintaining Standards — Setting the Example — Individual Courage — Unit Esprit — Being Ready

Chapter 3.

Challenges

Friction — Moral Challenge — Physical Challenge — Overcoming Challenges: Adaptability, Innovation, Decentralization, and Will — Fighting Power and Winning

Epilogue

Appendices

Marine Corps Manual, Paragraph 1100 — Core Values —
Leadership Traits — Leadership Principles — The Oaths
— Trust

Notes

Introduction

Leading Marines describes a leadership philosophy that reflects our traditional strengths as an institution and attempts to define the very ethos of being a Marine. It is about the inseparable relationship between the leader *and* the led, and is as much about the individual Marine—the bedrock upon which our Corps is built—as it is about any leader. There is less a line between the leader and the led than *a bond*. It is also about the Corps; about that unspoken feeling among Marines that is more than tradition or the cut of the uniform. It flows from the common but unique forge from which Marines come, and it is about the undefinable spirit that forms the character of our Corps. It draws from the shared experiences of danger, violence, the adrenaline of combat, and the proximity to death. All of this is based upon certain fundamental traits and principles of leading. Marines are not born knowing them, but must learn what they are and what they represent.

When teaching Marines, we have always drawn from a wealth of material that lies in our heritage and in our traditions. To capture some of that legacy, this manual

begins with a chapter on *our ethos*, a chapter that attempts to identify just what it is that makes Marines. Being a Marine, after all, is different, and, therefore, leading Marines is different from leading in any other walk of life. It must be different because of who and what we are and what we do. It is different because of the character of our Corps—a character that lies at the very foundation of individual camaraderie, unit cohesion, and combat effectiveness. It is this character—our ethos—that gives Marines the pride, confidence, and hardness necessary to win.

Winning means victory in daily life as well as in combat. If a Marine fails to uphold our standards and dishonors oneself or our Corps in peacetime by failing to support fellow Marines, by failing to do his or her best to accomplish the task at hand, or by failing to follow ethical standards in daily life, how can we expect that same Marine to uphold these critical foundations of our Corps in the searing cauldron of combat?

Thus, the most fundamental element of leading Marines is to understand what it is to be a Marine, and it is on this understanding that we begin.

The second chapter focuses on the *foundations* of Marine Corps leadership—our core values, and the leadership traits and principles that are taught to every Marine. These are

the ethical standards by which all Marines are judged. They are, ultimately, why Marines fight.

The third chapter helps Marines understand some of the *challenges* to leading and discusses how Marines can overcome them. It relies on the stories of Marine heroes—some well known, others not so well known—to serve as anchors that show Marine character and vividly depict, through action, what is required to lead Marines.

Our leadership style is a unique blend of service ethos and time-tested concepts that support Marine leaders in peace and war. The *epilogue* summarizes our discussion of leading Marines and asks Marines to spend time in reflection, looking closely at their legacy, at who and what we are, and at who and what they are.

Inescapably, this manual is based on the firm belief that, as others have said in countless ways, our Corps embodies the spirit and essence of those who have gone before. It is about the belief, shared by all Marines, that there is no higher calling than that of a United States Marine. It is about the traditions of our Corps that we rely upon to help us stay the course and continue the march when the going gets tough. It is about a "band of brothers"—men and women of every race and creed—who epitomize in their daily actions the core values of our Corps: *honor, courage, commitment*.

It is about Marines.

Chapter 1

Our Ethos

"Marine human material was not one whit better than that of the human society from which it came. But it had been hammered into form in a different forge, hardened with a different fire. The Marines were the closest thing to legions the nation had. They would follow their colors from the shores of home to the seacoast of Bohemia, and fight well at either place."

*"A Marine Corps officer was still an officer, and a sergeant behaved the way good sergeants had behaved since the time of Caesar, expecting no nonsense, allowing none. And Marine leaders had never lost sight of their primary—their only—mission, which was to fight."*⁴

— T. R. Fehrenbach

Being a Marine is a state of mind. It is an experience some have likened more to a calling than a profession. Being a Marine is not a job—not a pay check; it is not an occupational specialty. It is not male or female, majority or minority; nor is it a rank insignia. Stars, bars, or chevrons are only indicators of the responsibility or authority we



hold at a given time. Rather, being a Marine comes from the eagle, globe, and anchor that is tattooed on the soul of every one of us who wears the Marine Corps uniform. It is a searing mark in our innermost being which comes after the rite of passage through boot camp or Officer Candidates School when a young man or woman is allowed for the first time to say, "I'm a United States Marine." And unlike physical or psychological scars, which, over time, tend to heal and fade in intensity, the eagle, globe, and anchor only grow more defined—more intense—the longer you are a Marine. "Once a Marine, always a Marine."

"Among Marines there is a fierce loyalty to the Corps that persists long after the uniform is in mothballs. . . . Woven through that sense of belonging, like a steel thread, is an elitist spirit. Marines are convinced that, being few in number, they are selective, better, and, above all, different."