

Thank you, Don

For your kind intro and for sponsoring so many of these dinners, Marine!

Long time since we served together in Brigade, cruised the West Pac

Or since I drank one of your Cokes on the March up to Baghdad.

General Gray, General Conway, General Pace, General Amos, General Paxton –

Marines whose very goodness put ambition out of context.

Sergeant Major Barrett – a Marine's Marine. Colonel Harvey Barnum who for so many years – your valor inspired us all to be better men.

Ladies – The wonderful ladies who exemplify grace & courage

Who represent our better angels and what we fight for.

Thank all of you for coming out tonight – A night that celebrates our Corps' values, its legacy and its mission.

A special note of appreciation for President of the Marine Corps University Foundation

Gen Tom Draude

Valiant combat leader who brought a Vietnam Vet's reassurance to us as we filed into our Desert Storm attack positions

And earned our everlasting respect & affection

We have Ambassadors present,

Whom Marines have stood beside in foreign lands

And members of Congress and staffers,

To whom we owe our survival when short-sighted bureaucratic efforts challenged our existence, combined, they remind us our Corps carries more than our own hopes forward.

General Conway & General Amos spoke about this Foundation – I'll add a few words.

Between Commandant's Reading List and the Marine Corps University Foundation's enriching the education of our warrior leaders – I have never been bewildered for long in any fight with our enemies – I was Armed with Insight. In the worst of surprises we found our training and education had prepared us well.

I am a very average Marine- at this podium tonight because I repeatedly was at the right place, at the right time to gain warfighting positions. I recall a Fleet Commander asking if I could bring Marines from the Mediterranean together with a West Coast Marine Expeditionary Unit and strike 350 Nautical Miles into Afghanistan. I could, thanks to the Marines who went before me

My immediate response was, “Yes”!

Thanks to our Corps’ legacy of audacity

Thanks to our Marines in 1950 who brought in KC 130 aircraft.

Thanks to our Amphibs, which our Navy-Marine-Corps Team funded.

Thanks to our Marines of the 1960 -1970s who put air refueling probes on Heavy Lift Helicopters.

Thanks to our Marines who brought in Light Armored Vehicles in 1980.

Thanks to our Recruiters who brought in High –Quality Marines.

Thanks to our Commandant who extended boot camp and toughened it.

None of this started with me – most of the thinking was done in Quantico. And for me – so often in the right place at the right time I have an enormous sense of gratitude for a Corps that gave me such capability when destiny called on our Corps to fight.

Images flash through my mind– and I speak from my heart: of an Eighth & “I” parade in honor of John Glenn who remarked that night:

He had been a Marine for 23 years...but not long enough.

That was from a man fought in WWII & Korea and was the first American to orbit the earth,

His wingman in Korea, baseball legend Ted Williams, put it well when asked which was best team he ever played on. Without hesitation he said, “The U.S. Marine Corps”.

On evenings like this most of us will remember the tragedy of losing comrades

Beautiful Marines whose rambunctious spirits gave us what F. Scott Fitzgerald called “Riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart.”

And we remember them, everyone, who gave their lives so our experiment called America, could live.

And for us who live today...

We do so with a sense that each day is a bonus and a blessing.

To the Veterans who brought up the current generation of Marines who imbued in us the spirit “such as Regiments hand down,”

**Thank you!**

You raised us well for our grim tasks!

During our apprenticeship you coached us and honed our skills with a sense of humor in a tough school..

And when the time came for us to stand and deliver, we never feared the enemy. We only feared we might somehow disappoint **you.**

But with good NCO’s the outcome was never in doubt,

And the NCO’s were superb, Sergeant Major Barrett

And all Marines, regardless of rank,

Stood shoulder –to-shoulder

Stood co-equal in our commitment to mission

Co-equal, from boot private to General

Smiling to one another, even as we entered Fallujah

Knowing the enemy could not stand against the Corps you Veterans honed.

Because every Marine, if he was in a tough spot – whether a bar fight, or tonight in Helmand River Valley,

our fellow Marines would get to us, or die trying.

So long as our Corps fields such Marines, America has nothing to fear from tyrants, be they Fascists, Communists or Tyrants with Medieval Ideology. For we serve in a Corps with no institutional confusion about our purpose:

To fight!

To fight well!

As we say out West where I grew up, “We ride for the brand”, and hold the line until our country can again feel its unity.

From our first days at San Diego, Parris Island or Quantico, NCO's bluntly explained to us that the Corps would be:

Entirely satisfied if we gave 100%

And entirely dissatisfied if we gave 99%

And those NCOs taught us the great pleasure of doing what others thought impossible.

As General Amos summed it up so well in his Marine Birthday message: "The iron discipline & combat excellence" of our Marines:

Marines who never let each other down, never let the Corps down, never let our country down...

Those are the Marines who define our Corps.

A Corps whose old-fashioned values protect a progressive country.

Marines who can do the necessary "rough work", but without becoming evil by doing so, despite an enemy who has opened apocalyptically the aperture for who they target, to include even women and children.

It's all the more important today that we hold to our precious legacy of ferocious, ethical combat performance

For in a world awash in change, Americans need to have confidence in the everlasting character of our Marines

And to those Maniacs, the ones who thought that by hurting us on 9-11 that they could scare us, we have proven that the descendants of Belleau Wood, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Chosin, Hue City & more,

We don't scare

And we proved it in Fallujah & Ramadi and in the Helmand,

Where foes who had never reasoned their way into their medieval views and could not be reasoned out – found that American Marines could fight like the dickens,

And for the enemy it proved to be their longest and worst day against us.

Now from a distance I look back on what the Corps taught me:

To think like men of action,

And to act like men of thought!

To live life with intensity,

And a passion for excellence,

Without losing compassion for mistakes made,

by hi-spirited young patriots who looked past hot political rhetoric and joined the Corps – which taught me to be a “coach” in General LeJeune’s style,

Summoning the best from our troops

The Father to Son, Teacher to Scholar bond bringing out the vicious harmony when together, we closed on the enemy.

We were taught that the strongest motivation we all have,

Whether an FA-18 pilot or a Huey door gunner

Whether a “cannon cocker” firing a mission or logistics Marine hurrying supplies forward,

The motivation that binds us is our respect for and commitment to a 19 year old Lance Corporal infantryman upon whose young shoulders our experiment called America ultimately rests....

Now this award can never be mine –

And because we are members of the same tribe,

every one of you knows what I will say next....

For I am grateful & humbled to be singled out with you tonight:

An average Marine who always had good fortune to repeatedly be in the right place at the right time

A “limited duty officer” as Commandant of the Marine Corps Jim Jones put it – who only knew what to do with me when there was a fight.

But this award is truly not made to a man, to an individual,

it is made through me

For my work with those who shouldered Rucksacks,

Work that was carried forward by our Grunts,

And I will hold it in trust for those lads whose unfailing loyalty we celebrate tonight, who chose to live life fully – more than they wanted longevity. Even when I made mistakes they saved the day.

And I made plenty –

Like the time I got my Battalion surrounded in open desert, with

My mortar Platoon spilling out and

Setting up 4 tubes pointing north, and 4 tubes pointing south and, they restored the situation...

Yes, even in a jam of my own making –

The lads' spirit, skill and good humor carried us through when danger loomed.

So on behalf of such lads

I hold this award in trust –

For the lads who prove Hemmingway was right when he said, “There was no one better to have beside you when the chips were down than a U.S. Marine.”

For to Marines, love of liberty is not an empty phrase... Rather it's displayed by blood, sweat and tears for the fallen. I was humbled that our Corps allowed me to serve over four decades,

Yet as Colonel John Glenn – a fighter pilot, astronaut and Senator put it –

*It wasn't long enough –*

Semper Fidelis and May God hold our lads close.

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***Remarks By General James N. Mattis, USMC (Ret) on February 22, 2014, As the MCUF Semper Fidelis Award Recipient.***