

**THE BATTLE WINNING FOUNDATION OF
GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE:**

**THE MARINE CORPS BATTLE WINNING FOUNDATION OF GOOD ORDER AND
DISCIPLINE: JOHN ADAMS' CODE OF EXEMPLARY CONDUCT,
DWIGHT EISENHOWER'S CODE OF CONDUCT & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE,
THE MILITARY OATH AND THE MARINE'S HYMN**



Remarks of Colonel Ronald D. Ray, USMC (Ret.)
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

Marine Corps Birthday Ball Celebration
Crowne Plaza
Louisville, Kentucky
Saturday, November 7, 2009

Salutation to Major General and Mrs. James Milano
Col. and Mrs. David Teaples

Marines mark their birthday on November 10 each year. As you know, on that date in 1775 the first official call went out for the formation of a Corps of Marines to serve on Continental Navy ships during the early days of America's War for Independence.

However, what really shaped the foundation of the Corps. It wasn't the call from Tun Tavern in Philadelphia on November 10, but rather THE RULES FOR THE REGULATION OF THE NAVY OF THE COLONIES OF NORTH AMERICA. These RULES approved on November 28, 1775, by the Continental Congress became our Honor Code or "Code of Exemplary Conduct."

These Rules and Regulations are the foundation of The Corps' unique good order and discipline which is essential for success in Battle. This 234 year old foundation has been renewed since that time by various Acts of Congress and is also found in our oath and The Marine's hymn. The Corps' high standards are what distinguishes the American Corps of Marines from other militaries around the globe. But I did not know the history and origin of this foundation, the Code of Exemplary Conduct, as a Vietnam combat Marine, as a military lawyer, and Defense Official in the Reagan and Bush Administrations. Like you, I picked up the Code of good order and discipline from the examples of many great Marine heroes and leaders.

I first learned of the origins of our Code from one of those heroes Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, former Chief of Naval Operations and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs during the Vietnam War.

In the 1990s, when many of you were still very young, he was the first to teach me about the founding principles and our Code of Honor as Marines. You see, before 1993, I had wasn't aware of the Marine Corps' First Principles until Admiral Moorer:

Admiral Moorer, as a young Navy Lieutenant at Pearl Harbor was one of the few naval aviators to get his fighter plane into the air to answer the Japanese assault, he taught that which sets us apart as Marines; the Admiral taught me the first principles of our Honor Code also known as "Exemplary Conduct."

So to you as young Marines, in the fighting Spirit of Admiral Tom Moorer, I want to introduce you tonight to the high standards of Exemplary Conduct for all of us in the Naval Service and Marine Corps.

It all began with John Adams, who later became our second President. Adams authored the Exemplary Conduct code. There were 40 "RULES FOR THE REGULATION OF THE NAVY OF THE COLONIES OF NORTH AMERICA" while serving as Chairman of the Marine Committee during the summer of 1775. Adams was a visionary champion for the Navy and Marine Corps at a time when many thought the Colonies should only and could only support a Continental Army.

The first RULE leads off with the vital nature of Virtue and Honor:

Commanders...are strictly required to shew in themselves a good example of honor and virtue to their officers and men, and to be very vigilant in inspecting the behaviour of all such as are under them, and to discountenance and suppress all dissolute, immoral and disorderly practices; and also, such as are contrary to the rules of discipline and obedience, and to correct those who are guilty of the same according to the usage of the sea.

Admiral Moorer informed me the Code was not generally taught after WWII and it didn't take long for disorder and failures to result. During the Korean War, for the first time, Communist psychological warfare or brain-washing broke down even battle-hardened American POWs captured and imprisoned in North Korea and China. Too many U.S. servicemen failed under this new soul robbing warfare.

After the Korean War was over, several Pentagon study groups looked to pinpoint the hole in our military training. Combat veterans were chosen like former Korean War POW and enlisted helicopter pilot Duane Thorin (whose heroism was the subject of books and a movie) looked at just where did our training fail the troops?

They found among other things, the services needed to reconnect with America's first principles, including Exemplary Conduct. Under the extreme brain washing used against our POWs, too many could not differentiate between the U.S. Constitutional Republic, officially "One Nation Under God," and the Godless totalitarian communist systems they were sent to fight.

In 1954, President Eisenhower, a former 5 star Army general, with his considerable WWII experience, set about to reinforce and act to establish good order and discipline. First Eisenhower began by adding "Under God" to our Pledge of Allegiance to differentiate the American Way of Life from Communism. Then in 1956, President Eisenhower signed the bill passed by Congress to create the Code of Conduct for the United States' Fighting Forces:

Paragraph VI declares: "I will never forget that I am an American fighting man, responsible for my actions and dedicated to the principles which make my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America."

This Code of Conduct required servicemembers keep good order and discipline and faith with their country under any and all circumstances of combat, including capture by the enemy. Also in 1956, John Adam's First Principles in 1775 as the foundation of Good Order and Discipline known as Exemplary Conduct was considered so important by the Secretary of the Navy and the US Congress that in 1956, the Congress codified Adam's first principles in virtually the same language Adam used with one very important difference.

President Eisenhower's new Code of Exemplary Conduct for the Navy and Marine Corps now was intended to reach all the way to the Corporal and the E-4s, not just Commanding Officers of ships of the line and commanding officers on shore duty. All Navy and Marine Corps leaders were held to this high standard.

Reinforcing the Code of Exemplary Conduct again became a focus of Congress to address the growing sexual misconduct crisis in the military. In 1997, the Congress adopted the very same 1956 Navy and Marine Corps standard of Duty, Honor, Country for the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force.

That brings the Code of Exemplary conduct down to each one of us today. But let me ask you, when do you become a United States Marine? Obviously when you graduate from Boot Camp, you're "proud to claim the title of United States Marine" because you've passed a very demanding test, whether you're a future officer or enlisted. The very best staff NCOs are the ones who train and test every Marine's rigorous initial training. They determine who will become a U.S. Marine, including who will be a commissioned officer or warrant officer in the Corps.

But when do you make the real commitment. When each of us took what a recent Secretary Defense soon after 9/11 called the "Sacred Oath" we all took upon original enlistment. That's when we committed ourselves to faithfully serve as so many have before us. We freely give up certain liberties and freedoms that those we defend enjoy. Our oath is always worth repeating and is followed with a prayer, "so help me God:"

"I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear truth faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

Our commitment is not to follow a man or an office; our commitment is to America's fundamental documents of Civil Government which rest upon the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and The U.S. Constitution.

The Code of Exemplary Conduct again came front and center right after the 9/11 crisis, the Inspector General of the Department of Defense and the Secretary of Defense were both concerned too many military recruits didn't seem to understand the nature of the oath they were taking. Many had never read the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence in school, at home or in church.

In 2002 the Secretary of Defense established a website and sent the word throughout the Department of Defense and the military services on March 16, 2002, the birthday of President James Madison, who is known as "the **Father of Our Constitution.**" The Secretary's worldwide proclamation "**encouraged all who serve to examine the foundation of the oath in the words of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution**" because he said, "**they form the very basis of our freedom and prosperity.**" This is who we are as Americans fighting to defend our Way of Life. This is what you and I fought for.

In 2005, the Inspector General reported the military's first principles of Exemplary Conduct tied to the Oath, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, or Adams' founding principles of the American Military were still not being taught across the Services. These great military and political leaders strove to bring these fundamental principles down to us over 234 years.

Finally, The Marine's first principles - our Code of Exemplary Conduct - is woven into The Marine's Hymn compiled over the years and copyrighted on August 19, 1891. Therefore, when we sing Our Hymn, "first to fight for right and freedom and to keep our honor clean," remember that these principles are our Honor Code we as Marines are held to by Congress, "so help me God." Our commitment to Virtue and Honor rests on the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, recognizing our Creator, with a firm reliance on His Divine Providence, to defend the American way of life with liberty and justice for all. Thus we freely accept the limitations our Code proscribes on our personal freedom to serve and defend others, to serve a higher cause, to serve a higher calling. "To keep our honor clean" means that we willingly submit to the standards of Exemplary Conduct, to show in ourselves the highest degree of virtue, the highest degree of honor, the highest degree of subordination, and the highest degree of patriotism, and specifically from each Corporal and up the chain of command to the Commandant, all are charged "to guard against and suppress immoral and dissolute behavior" anywhere, anytime, 24/7. Not just when you're on duty. E-1s, E-2s, and E-3s begin by developing personal good order and discipline according to our Code of Honor, to prepare to lead as Non Commissioned Officers, Staff Non Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, and Commissioned Officers.

With Adam's direction to Virtue, Honor, and Patriotism we do more to truly become a Force in Readiness enabled by good order and discipline to deal with anything that comes our way, any mission, any challenge, but only if we're truly self-governing, if we live 24/7 according to that Exemplary Conduct Code, which is what you do when no one is watching. That guiding Spirit, our Esprit de Corps "so help me God," enables us uniformly to adhere to our Code and uphold the principles of our oath, which truly binds us together as a Band of Brothers. So as our Hymn says, to keep your "honor clean" is fundamental to your service as guardians of our liberty "in every clime and place / Where we can take a gun / In the snows of far-off Northern lands / And in sunny tropic scenes; / Yes you will find us always on the job -- / The United States Marines." Happy Birthday, Marines!