



10 November 1996

A Message From The Commandant Of The Marine Corps

Our hearts should soar on this day, which calls to memory the founding of our Corps. Our heritage as Marines springs from the misty wheat fields of Belleau Wood, the gritty beaches of the Pacific, the snowcapped mountains of Korea, the sweltering jungles of Vietnam, the parched desert sands of Southwest Asia, and hundreds of other places where Marines have sacrificed for Country and Corps. Our heritage was formed by Marines who knew the fellowship of shot and shell; who knew the fellowship of heartache, miles from home and loved ones; and who knew the taste of smoke, the sting of wounds, and the grief of loss. They were a gallant few, comrades in arms, who were hammered into shape in the same forge, hardened with the same fire, and who carried within them, as we carry within us, the soul of a warrior. These Marines -- men and women of character -- stood then, and stand now, for all that is good about this great Nation: honor, courage, and commitment.

This record of service, this history of sacrifice -- purchased with the sweat and blood of those who have gone before -- are the spirit of our Corps. You can't touch it or explain it, but it's there. That spirit is in each of us. It is a sense of values, a sense of courage, a sense of quiet, steadfast character that transcends all others. It is about the belief, shared by all Marines past and present, that there is no higher calling than that of "Marine," and that being a Marine is more than excellence in combat. It is also excellence in character. That spirit is our legacy and our guide; it is the touchstone that binds us together -- former Marines, present Marines, and future Marines. That spirit is our lantern, fueled with physical and moral courage, that lights our way to the future.

As we bring to a close another year in the illustrious history of our Corps, we face the future unafraid and undaunted by the challenges ahead. Serving within our Corps are men and women who are smart, tough, dedicated, and faithful -- truly the best America has to offer. Together with their families and our civilian Marines, they are an unbeatable team. As we turn together toward the future, with a firm understanding and reverence for our past, our legacy remains our motto -- *Semper Fidelis* -- always faithful, to our God, to our Country, to our Corps, and to each other. We have been, are today, and will remain a breed apart.

Happy Birthday Marines. God bless you and,

Semper Fidelis

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "C. C. Krulak".
C. C. KRULAK
General, U.S. Marine Corps