



10 November 1998

Two hundred and twenty-three years ago, the Second Continental Congress created a Corps of Marines to defend the American colonies and to fight for the rich blessings of liberty and democracy. Since that day, Marines have protected the cherished ideals of our Founding Fathers and defended our Nation's interests around the globe. In their blood, they have authored our Corps' glorious history and punctuated it with legendary tales of honor, courage, and commitment -- with our Touchstones of Valor.

Today, as we reflect upon these Touchstones, we stand in awe of the invincible will and selflessness of the men and women who defined the very character of our Corps. We are steeled by the courageous Marines who attacked across the wheat fields and into the cauldron of Belleau Wood. We are emboldened by the brave Marines of Iwo Jima -- where "Uncommon Valor Was A Common Virtue." We are strengthened by the fierce determination of the Marines who fought through seven enemy divisions and the misery of frostbite, placing the Chosin Reservoir among the most honored of American battles. We are inspired by the tenacious Marines who endured weeks of savage street fighting to reclaim Hue City. We are humbled by the Marines who have served anonymously throughout our history ... their fortitude and sacrifice known only to their closest comrades and their God. These valiant Marines have defined the Corps' enduring ethos and, on this hallowed day, we renew our commitment to the standard they so dearly set.

Through the long march of history, few military organizations have been held in such high esteem as the United States Marine Corps. Marines epitomize America's greatest demands for her warriors and loftiest aspirations for her citizens. As we reflect upon our past and fortify ourselves for the future, we also commemorate the character of today's Marines ... the men and women who keep faith with our Corps' timeless spirit through their dedicated service. This is ultimately your day Marines -- celebrate with pride! Happy Birthday, may God bless you, and

Semper Fidelis,

C. C. KRULAK

General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps