



United States Marine Corps
Lejeune Leadership Institute



LtGen John A. Lejeune: Kindly and Just

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Commandant of the Marine Corps
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TO THE OFFICERS OF THE MARINE CORPS:

I feel that I would like to talk to each of you personally. This, of course, is impossible for me to do. Consequently, I am going to do the next best thing by writing letters from time to time which will go to all the officers. In these letters, I will endeavor to embody briefly some of the thoughts which have come into my mind concerning our beloved Corps.

In the first place, I want each of you to feel that the Commandant of the Corps is your friend and that he earnestly desires that you should realize this. At the same time, it is his duty to the Government and to the Marine Corps to exact a high standard of conduct, a strict performance of duty, and a rigid compliance with orders on the part of all the officers.

You are the permanent part of the Marine Corps, and the efficiency, the good name, and the esprit of the Corps are in your hands. You can make or mar it.

You should never forget the power of example. The young men serving as enlisted men take their cue from you. If you conduct yourselves at all times as officers and gentlemen should conduct themselves, the moral tone of the whole Corps will be raised, its reputation, which is most precious to all of us, will be enhanced, and the esteem and affection in which the Corps is held by the American people will be increased.

Be kindly and just in your dealings with your men. Never play favorites. Make them feel that justice tempered with mercy may always be counted on. This does not mean a slackening of discipline. Obedience to orders and regulations must always be insisted on, and good conduct on the part of the men exacted. Especially should this be done with reference to the civilian inhabitants of foreign countries in which Marines are serving.

The prestige of the Marine Corps depends greatly on the appearance of its officers and men. Officers should adhere closely to the uniform regulations, and be exceedingly careful to be neatly and tidily dressed, and to carry themselves in a military manner. They should observe the appearance of the men while on liberty, and should endeavor to instill into their minds the importance of neatness, smartness and soldierly bearing.

A compliance with the minutiae of military courtesy is a mark of well disciplined troops. The exchange of military salutes between officers and men should not be overlooked. Its omission indicates a poor state of discipline. Similarly, officers should be equally careful to salute each other. Courtesy, too, demands more than an exchange of official salutes between officers. On all





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occasions when officers are gathered together, juniors should show their esteem and respect for their seniors by taking the initiative in speaking to and shaking hands with their seniors. Particularly should this be done in the case of commanding officers. The older officers appreciate greatly attention and friendliness on the part of the younger officers.

We are all members of the same great family and we should invariably show courtesy and consideration, not only to all other officers, but to the members of their personal families as well. Do not fail to call on your commanding officers within a week after you join a post. On social occasions, the formality with which all of us conduct ourselves on strictly military occasions should be relaxed and a spirit of friendliness and good will should prevail.

In conclusion, I wish to impress on all of you that the destiny of our Corps depends on each of you. Our forces, brigades, regiments, battalions, companies and other detachments are what you make them. An inefficient organization is the product of inefficient officers, and all discreditable occurrences are usually due to the failure of officers to perform their duties properly. Harmonious cooperation and teamwork, together with an intelligent and energetic performance of duty, are essential to success, and these attributes can be attained by cultivating in your characters the qualities of loyalty, unselfishness, devotion to duty, and the highest sense of honor.

Let each one of us resolve to show in himself a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism and subordination, and to do all in his power, not only to maintain, but to increase the prestige, the efficiency, and the esprit of the grand old Corps to which we belong.

With my best wishes for your success and happiness, I am, as always,

Your sincere friend,

/s/ John A. Lejeune

Major General Commandant

