

Our 168th Anniversary

A Message from the Commandant

ON November 10 we of the Marine Corps will pause to observe our 168th Anniversary. The day will be the same in spirit as bygone anniversaries, in that on this day we shall draw fresh confidence for the future from a proud review of the Corps' achievements of the past.

But this Anniversary has a measure of significance which no previous one has had; now at the greatest size in its history, our Corps in its 169th year faces a challenge of a scope and nature it has never faced before.

As the Allies drive forward to break through and overrun the enemy's desperate defenses, we shall continue to do our full share of the fighting. The task will grow increasingly severe, but we have not the slightest doubt of our abilities to see it through.

Our ranks today have swelled to approximately 325,000—more than four times as many Marines as fought in the heroic battles of World War I. We are now around six-and-one-half times as strong in numbers as we were on December 7, 1941.

Obviously, such sudden expansion was bound to put our training facilities under great strain. We had to go into mass production. But the basic element of Marine training has remained constant, and we are determined to keep it so. The emphasis still is on the *individual*. As always, each man is trained just as if the outcome of the entire war depended on *his personal success*—as indeed it does to a higher degree than he is likely to realize.

Such a program requires a maximum of time and effort, and puts the training staffs under great pressure. But they have met the test—they have kept the standards high. From our recruit depots to our most advanced training schools, they have not deviated from the traditional course of developing *every* man's abilities to the utmost.

As every Marine knows, the preparation for

service is not limited to the development of technical skills. There is also the development of an *esprit de corps* to assure that our men's native and acquired fighting skills will be vitalized by an indomitable determination to win, against any odds.

That spirit springs spontaneously within each of us from our first days in the Corps throughout our years of service. New members of our ranks—125,000 have joined us since November 10 last year—will rapidly come to learn that the high regard in which their countrymen hold them stems from more than approbation of the deeds of Marines in the present war, commendable as those deeds have been.

The tradition that inspires our common pride in, and devotion to, the Corps has evolved through 168 years of Marine service in every part of the world and in every one of our country's wars.

All that Marines have done to this day—every engagement they have fought, every act of heroism they have recorded, symbolizes the soldierly virtues we strive, individually and as a team, to uphold.

The perpetuation of those qualities is not a trust limited to men in combat. Men who have yet to reach the fighting lines have the privilege and the charge of living up to them daily by conducting themselves with Marine efficiency at their posts and with Marine integrity wherever they go.

The total for Marine personnel cited above includes approximately 10,000 members of the Women's Reserve. These women are to be complimented upon the service they are doing in releasing men for combat assignments. They are worthy members of the Corps.

On this 168th Anniversary I extend my best wishes to all Marine Corps personnel. The coming year, while it promises to be the most trying of our history, will find us equal to the test.

T. HOLCOMB.