
Chapter 1

Our Ethos

Resolved, that two Battalions of marines be raised...that particular care be taken that no persons be appointed to office or [e]nlisted into said Battalions, but such as are good seamen, or so acquainted with maritime affairs as to be able to serve to advantage by sea, when required...That they be distinguished by the names of the first and second battalions of American Marines.¹

—Second Continental Congress on 10 November 1775

For the mission's sake, for our country's sake, and the sake of the men who carried the Division's colors in past battles—"who fought for life and never lost their nerve"—carry out your mission and keep your honor clean. Demonstrate to the world there is "No Better Friend—No Worse Enemy" than a U.S. Marine.²

—General James N. Mattis



World War II-era Marine Corps Birthday Poster

Before there was a United States, there was a Marine Corps. The Marine Corps legacy began with a resolution of the Second Continental Congress on 10 November 1775 and continues through today. Our predecessors passed down the rich heritage that shaped each succeeding generation of Marines.

Knowing who we are as Marines is essential to understanding how we lead Marines. Marines come from all walks of life, but being a Marine transcends our differences. Being a Marine is not a job or a particular occupational specialty. It is a calling. It is a state of mind ingrained in the eagle, globe, and anchor tattooed on

the soul of everyone who has worn the cloth. It is a mark seared in our innermost being that comes after the rite of passage in boot camp, whether at Parris Island or San Diego, or initial officer training at Quantico—when young men and women earn the title *Marine*. Once they undergo the transformation, they become Marines for life.

Sergeant Major John Canley

The story of retired Sergeant Major John Canley, Medal of Honor recipient, illustrates the life-long impact of serving in the Marine Corps. Canley was awarded the US military's highest distinction in October 2018 for actions at the Battle of Hue City while serving as the Company Gunnery Sergeant of Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division. In multiple instances from January 31 to February 6, 1968, Sergeant Major Canley disregarded his



Sergeant Major John Canley

own welfare to ensure his Marines' safety and mission accomplishment. After his company commander was severely wounded, Canley took charge of the company and fought off numerous vicious enemy attacks. While under Canley's charge, the company took critical objectives in Hue City in a grueling, week-long battle. Despite being wounded, Canley rushed through

enemy fire to carry multiple wounded Marines to safety. He inspired courage in his Marines throughout the course of the fight. Sergeant Major Canley was awarded the Medal of Honor 50 years after his actions in Vietnam. After receiving the award, he traveled to Marine Corps installations worldwide to speak with Marines about his experiences and leadership.³

*You've got to take care of your Marines. If they come to you with a problem, you need to take care of that...if you take care of your Marines, they will do everything in their power to make sure the mission is accomplished.*⁴

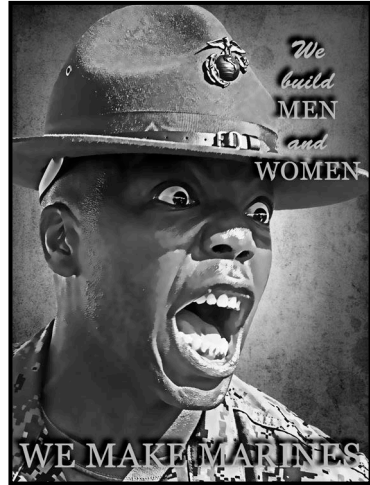
—Sergeant Major John Canley

Being a Marine is being part of something larger than oneself. There is a spirit—an *esprit*—that defines our Corps. To understand what it means to be a Marine, one must first understand how we make Marines, instilling and abiding by the core values of honor, courage, and commitment. As a Marine leader, we must also understand our naval character and expeditionary mindset, our philosophy that every Marine is a rifleman, and our commitment to selfless service, all of which are in keeping with Marine tradition.

MAKING MARINES: THE TRANSFORMATION

A sense of elitism has grown “...from the fact that every Marine, whether enlisted or officer, goes through the same training experience. Both the training of recruits and the basic education of officers—going back to 1805—have endowed the Corps with a sense of cohesiveness enjoyed by no other American service.”⁵

Every Service recruits young men and women from our society. The difference with Marines is we don't rely on bonuses and benefits to attract the best. We offer a challenge. We ask, "Do you have what it takes to be a Marine?" Not, "What can the Marine Corps do for you?" We then send those who accept the challenge to Parris Island, San Diego, or Quantico, where they receive more than just superb training; they are ingrained with a shared sense of service, honor, and discipline. The result is remarkable. Those who have what it takes undergo a personal transformation so incredible that often their parents have difficulty recognizing them. A mother of a Marine described it this way:



The Transformation is Tangible.

When my son left home, he had no motivation; he was lazy, sloppy, [and had] no pride, no self-worth. This is the boy that got off the bus March 18th at Parris Island. The man that I met on Thursday...is AWESOME. There is no way I can describe to you all the difference. He looks different, he walks different, he talks different, he has such a sense of bearing and pride all I could do was look at him in awe. Oh yes, the training is hard, what he went through is unimaginable to anyone that has not been there. They are definitely taught to

be Warriors. Let me tell you the surprise of what else they are taught. My Marine son has better values, better morals, better manners than [anyone] I know. It is so much more than Yes Sir; Yes [Ma'am] ...so much more. He cares about how he looks, he cares about what he does, and [it's] not a boastful, bad-ass thing. He is a true gentleman. I saw patience, and a calmness in him that I have never seen. I could never express my gratitude enough to the Marine Corps for what they have given my son.⁶

Those who make it through boot camp or initial officer training win our Nation's battles and return to society as better citizens. The Corps' history is full of tales of courage that exhibit the indomitable spirit of Marines in combat and in surmounting day-to-day challenges — Sergeant Major Dan Daly, Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, Lieutenant General “Chesty” Puller, Colonel John Glenn, Captain Vernice Armour, Private First Class James Anderson, Jr., Corporal Jason Dunham, Sergeant Dakota Meyer, Corporal Kyle Carpenter, Sergeant Major John Canley, Private First Class Oscar Austin, Sergeant Barbara Barnwell, and countless others. You, as a Marine leader, have the responsibility to sustain that transformation.

OUR CORE VALUES

Our motto is *Semper Fidelis*, Always Faithful. We are faithful to our Nation, the Corps, and to each other. This is not blind faith; it is a faith guided by our values. As Marines, we share the core values of honor, courage, and commitment. As much as anything else, our core values set us apart. They give us strength, influence

our attitudes, and regulate our behavior. They bind all Marines into a band of brothers and sisters who can meet any challenge. Living these values make us better citizens when we return to a society that sometimes questions our values. Many Marines realize this when they go home for the first time and notice they are different.

Honor. Honor is the bedrock of our character. It is the quality that guides Marines to exemplify the ultimate in ethical and moral behavior; to never lie, cheat, or steal; to abide by an uncompromising concept of integrity; to respect human dignity; to have concern for each other. The quality of maturity, dedication, trust, and dependability that commits Marines to act responsibly, to be accountable for actions, to fulfill obligations, and to hold others accountable for their actions.

Courage. Courage is the heart of our core values. It is the mental, moral, and physical strength the Corps engrains in Marines to carry them through the challenges of combat and mastering their fear, doing what is right in every situation, adhering to a higher standard of personal conduct, leading by example, and making tough decisions under pressure. It is the inner strength that enables Marines to take that extra step.

Commitment. Commitment is the spirit of determination and dedication in Marines that leads to professionalism and mastery of the art of war. It leads to the highest order of unit and self-discipline; it is the ingredient that enables 24-hour-a-day dedication to Corps and Country, pride, concern for others, and the unrelenting determination to achieve a standard of excellence

in every endeavor. Commitment is what establishes a Marine as the warrior and citizen others strive to emulate.

It takes time for Marines to internalize these values and it is a leader's responsibility to live, demonstrate, and instill them in their subordinates.

NAVAL CHARACTER AND EXPEDITIONARY MINDSET

Ours is a world ideally suited for employing warriors from the sea. Its past and potential future battlegrounds are mainly the coastal regions that comprise the world's littorals. Marines must be skilled and trained with an expeditionary focus that positions our warfighters to fight and win while persisting within striking distance of our enemy.

*We are a naval expeditionary force capable of deterring malign behavior and, when necessary, fighting inside our adversary's weapons-engagement-zone to facilitate sea denial in support of fleet operation and joint force horizontal escalation. Nothing could be more relevant to the [National Defense Strategy] and the certainty of an uncertain future than this.*⁷

—General David H. Berger

The Marine Corps' naval character has shaped the Marine Corps since the Corps' inception. Our naval character makes us different because it combines the characteristics of Soldiers and Sailors with the unyielding conviction that we exist to fight. The historic partnership between the Navy and the Marine Corps is a heritage that continues today. The anchor in our emblem symbolizes that

the individual Marine remains a soldier of the sea. Marine officers are “naval” officers, and our pilots are “naval” aviators. Marines have always served aboard ships, and the Marine Corps has been part of the Department of the Navy since 1834.

As early as 1798, the Secretary of the Navy noted the Corps’ missions were of an amphibious nature. Though early Marines served primarily aboard ships as part of the ship’s company, they always had a secondary role to serve as expeditionary forces, whenever or wherever needed. Marine Captain Samuel Nicholas’ amphibious expedition to New Providence Island in the Bahamas in 1776 and Marine Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon’s 1804 landing in Tripoli were the first deployments of US forces on foreign soil. Since then, Marines have conducted expeditionary and sustained operations ashore in Cuba, Panama, the Philippines, Haiti, China, France, the Pacific, Korea, Lebanon, Vietnam, Grenada, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq, and scores of other places.



Marines Landing on New Providence



Marines with Battalion Landing Team 3/5, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, depart from a CH-53E Super Stallion to conduct a maritime interdiction operation training exercise aboard the USS Germantown.

Although specific missions differ, what remains constant is our unyielding commitment to protect the lives of our citizens and interests of the United States. Our purpose, mandated by Congress, is to be the Nation's signature crisis response force. As such, we *"must be most ready when the Nation...is least ready."*⁸

As you read this, there are Marines stationed overseas and forward deployed. Some are guarding embassies, others are afloat, and still others are conducting operations ashore. To Marines, being expeditionary is more than the mere ability to deploy overseas when needed. It is an institutional imperative

that drives us to rapidly deploy and operate on arrival. Often deploying to austere environments, Marines bring whatever they need to accomplish the mission, including the means to fight if necessary.

This expeditionary mindset is the most critical contributor to the Corps' success in crisis responses and complex contingencies. Marine leaders have deliberately cultivated this mindset for generations. It is this mindset that generates combat power and the organizational flexibility to accomplish diverse missions around the world. It has created an expeditionary culture that emphasizes being fast, austere, and lethal.

EVERY MARINE A RIFLEMAN

The deadliest weapon in the world is a Marine and his rifle.

—General John “Black Jack” Pershing, US Army⁹

Our role as an expeditionary force in readiness requires making every Marine a rifleman first. Before we teach Marines to fly aircraft, drive vehicles, maintain equipment, or any of the other skills necessary in a combat-ready Marine Corps, we teach them to shoot accurately. Then we teach them basic infantry skills. During expeditionary operations, no Marine is far from the fighting; there are no “rear area Marines.” All units are capable of defending themselves and, when necessary, fighting as provisional infantry.

Captain Henry “Hank” Elrod

Every Marine a rifleman is not a new concept. The first Marine aviator to earn the Medal of Honor in World War II, Captain Henry “Hank” Elrod, was a fighter pilot with Marine Fighting Squadron-211, or VMF-211. He arrived on Wake Island 4 December 1941 and four days later was fighting the Japanese in the air. On 12 December, he singlehandedly attacked a flight of 22 enemy planes, downing two of them. Additionally, he conducted several low-altitude bombing and strafing runs on enemy ships. During one of these attacks, he sank the Japanese destroyer Kisaragi. When hostile fire eventually destroyed all US aircraft on Wake Island, he assumed command of part of the ground defense. In this role, he was responsible in large measure for the strength of his sector’s gallant resistance as he and his Marines valiantly repulsed numerous Japanese attacks. On 23 December, Captain Elrod was mortally wounded while protecting his men as they carried ammunition to a gun emplacement.¹⁰

Note: Nearly 71 years later, during an attack on Camp Bastion in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, the following three Marines from the same squadron (redesignated Marine Attack Squadron-211 or VMA-211) would once again prove every Marine is a rifleman.

Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Raible

On the night of 14 September 2012, fifteen heavily armed Taliban insurgents dressed in US Army uniforms breached the eastern perimeter of Camp Bastion. The insurgents split into three teams of five each and commenced a coordinated attack on the airfield. Realizing the flight line was under attack, the VMA-211 commander, Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Raible, armed only

with his pistol, organized his pinned-down Marines into fire teams for a counterattack. During the fighting, he was mortally wounded when a rocket propelled grenade detonated next to him.¹¹

Sergeant Bradley Atwell

During the attack on the airfield, Sergeant Bradley Atwell, an avionics technician, immediately directed his Marines to grab their rifles and accompany him. Leading his Marines, Sergeant Atwell ran toward the aircraft and structural fires visible along the flight line as tracer rounds ricocheted between him and his Marines. “While continuing to press forward along the edge of the aircraft parking area, [he] became separated from the others when a rocket propelled grenade exploded approximately three meters from his position, knocking him down with mortal injuries. Sergeant Atwell crawled to cover and returned fire in the direction of the enemy until succumbing to his wounds.”¹²

Major Robb T. McDonald

Meanwhile, the squadron executive officer, Major Robb T. McDonald, and two other officers maneuvered more than a mile on foot through an area exposed to enemy fire. When his commanding officer was mortally wounded, Major McDonald took command. While leading a small team to reconnoiter the flight line, he killed an insurgent with a rifle he had borrowed and then expertly coordinated two helicopter strikes. Additionally, Marines from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron-161, or VMM-161, killed one group of five insurgents with small arms fire as the enemy tried to advance along the flight line. After a four-hour firefight, Marine aviators and maintenance personnel, and personnel from Number 51 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment defeated the enemy.¹³

Marines fight as riflemen with such regularity that non-Marines are often surprised to learn there are any specialties in the Corps other than infantry. This perception is part of what makes the Corps exceptional.

FAITHFULNESS TO NATION, CORPS, AND EACH OTHER

There is almost nothing more precious to a Marine than a fellow Marine. This traditional bond flows from the rigorous training that all Marines receive and the shared danger and adversity inherent in combat operations. This bond and the sense of duty instilled in every Marine is not merely a trait Marines demonstrate during combat. Marines must remain true to our character when in garrison and on leave, and fight to keep our honor clean beyond the battlefield.

First Sergeant Bradley Kasal

First Sergeant Bradley Kasal demonstrated faithfulness to our Nation and to our Corps as the Weapons Company First Sergeant, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines during Operation Phantom Fury. On 13 November 2004, First Sergeant Kasal was assisting the Combined Anti-Armor Team (CAAT) Platoon in providing a traveling overwatch for 3d Platoon, Company K, while they cleared in zone.

While 3d Squad and the CAAT Squad were clearing a building, an explosion of gunfire rang out across the street, and they saw wounded members of an adjacent platoon racing out of a building to their immediate front. They quickly learned that other Marines were still pinned down in the house by an unknown number of

insurgents. Being short of sufficient personnel to make an entry and clear the structure, the 3d Squad leader asked the CAAT Squad for assistance with clearing the building. Without hesitation, First Sergeant Kasal volunteered. He led the squad into the house, suppressing and killing many of the enemy, who were fighting from hardened positions.

After clearing the first room, First Sergeant Kasal and two other Marines saw a wounded Marine two rooms away. Entering the first of the two rooms, First Sergeant Kasal immediately confronted, engaged, and killed an insurgent. The three Marines received heavy enemy fire as soon as they entered the second room. First Sergeant Kasal and another Marine were both struck in the legs, becoming urgent casualties. From above, the enemy began throwing grenades on the wounded Marines below.

Selflessly, First Sergeant Kasal rolled on top of the other Marine to shield him. After reinforcements arrived, First Sergeant Kasal, with seven gunshot and five fragmentation wounds, refused aid until the other Marines were extracted. He continued to shout words of encouragement to his Marines while he engaged the enemy. Seven wounded men were medically evacuated from the building before First Sergeant Kasal.

Later, as First Sergeant Kasal was put into the CASEVAC (casualty evacuation) helicopter, he grabbed his battalion commander by the flak jacket and implored him to take care of the Marines. First Sergeant Kasal could have remained outside the building, coordinating support and the medical evacuation. Instead, he chose to face the enemy alongside his Marines.¹⁴



Lance Corporal Chris Marquez, First Sergeant Bradley Kasal, and Lance Corporal Dan Shaeffer in Fallujah 2004. (Photo courtesy of photographer Lucian Read.)

Sergeant Austin Cox and Sergeant Michael Vura

On 1 October 2017, Sergeants Austin Cox and Michael Vura were attending the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas, Nevada when a lone gunman opened fire on the crowd from a nearby high-rise hotel. The helicopter mechanics and best friends from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Training Squadron 303 were celebrating Vura's pending end of active service when the shooting started.

The Marines' faithfulness to each other and to those around them was immediately evident as they ran toward the sounds of chaos. Both Marines exposed themselves to gunfire multiple times with

disregard to their personal safety as they gave first aid to multiple shooting victims and pulled victims from the line of fire where they could safely be treated.¹⁵ The actions of these Marines saved lives that day and for that they were awarded the highest non-combat decoration awarded for heroism by the Department of the Navy—the Navy and Marine Corps Medal.

*...being instilled in you from the get-go...as soon as you step on them yellow footprints...your whole mind-set...changes. And every day as a Marine, I think that you need to challenge yourself, find your purpose. And that day it just happened to be my purpose was to help others.*¹⁶

—Sergeant Michael Vura

First Sergeant Kasal and Sergeants Cox and Vura epitomize the Marine ethos of faithfulness to nation, Corps, and each other, which Marines continue to demonstrate in countless ways and in countless places. It is a part of who we are.

MARINE TRADITIONS

*There is nothing particularly glorious about sweaty fellows going along to fight. And yet they represent a great deal more than individuals mustered into a division. There is something behind those men: the old battles, long forgotten, that secured our [N]ation...traditions of things endured, and things accomplished such as regiments hand down forever...*¹⁷

—Captain John W. Thomason, Jr.

Marine traditions are an inseparable part of who we are as Marines. Ordinary men and women, who showed extraordinary leadership and physical and moral courage shaped and continue to shape our heritage. Separately and collectively, our traditions set us apart from other fighting forces and are the cement that bonds the Marine Corps together and gives Marines a common outlook regardless of rank, unit, or billet. Our traditions transcend the individual and are shared by all Marines.

Marines believe they should be where the fight is. In 1983, a Marine survivor of the terrorist bombing in Beirut stood amid the rubble, carnage, and despair surrounding his fallen comrades, barraged by questions from news reporters. “Should you be here? Should anyone be here? Should the United States pull out?” The young lance corporal’s answer was straightforward: “Where else should I be? I’m a United States Marine. If anyone must be here, it should be Marines.”

Lance Corporal Jeffrey Nashton

Lance Corporal Jeffrey Nashton had been gravely wounded during the Beirut bombing and was evacuated to a hospital in Wiesbaden, Germany unable to talk or see. He was visited by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Paul X. Kelley, who stooped beside the Marine to say a few words of comfort. The Lance Corporal reached up to feel the stars to make sure that the man talking to him was who he claimed to be. Unable to see or speak, weak from a concussion and other injuries, the young Marine motioned for something with which to write. He could have written anything; he could have asked for anything. Instead, he wrote, “Semper Fi”—Always Faithful. He was concerned more about his Corps and his fellow Marines than himself.¹⁸



Aftermath of Beirut Bombing, October 1983.

Individual Marines like these feed our Corps' spirit. Stories about the deeds of their predecessors are told to Marines from their first day of training to their first assignments, to their first celebration of the Marine Corps birthday and beyond. The spirit of the Marine Corps is sustained as today's Marines step forward to take their places. These Marines give meaning to the phrases, "Semper Fidelis," "uncommon valor," "every Marine a rifleman," and "first to fight."

Marine traditions manifest themselves in other ways as well. Our language reflects our naval heritage, while our birthday, hymn, and uniforms set the Corps apart from other military services.

Much of our distinct language comes from our naval roots. Marines refer to bathrooms as heads, floors as decks, ceilings as overheads, walls as bulkheads, and corridors as passageways. We respond to verbal orders with “aye, aye,” acknowledging that we both understand and will comply with the command. Other terms are also steeped in lore. The term *Leatherneck* comes from the stiff leather collar worn by Marines from 1798 to 1872.¹⁹

Every Marine knows the birth date of the Corps. November 10th is a day of celebration and reflection for all Marines, in and out of



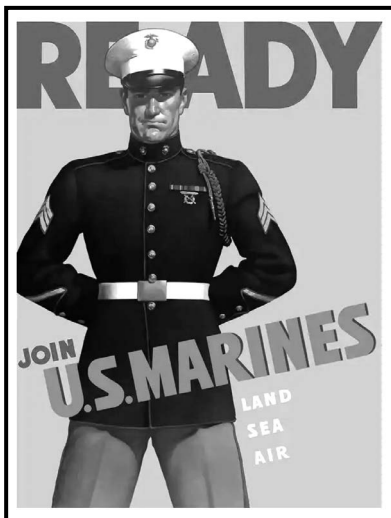
Korea, 10 November 1951. Battle weary Marines of the 1st Marine Division take time out to celebrate the Marine Corps' 176th birthday. The Leathernecks used a bayonet to slice the ceremonial cake.

uniform. For some, the day is celebrated with a special meal, the cutting of a cake, and the reading of Major General John A. Lejeune's message as part of a birthday ball. For others, the day is marked with the cutting of an MRE [meal, ready to eat] pound cake with a Ka-Bar fighting knife during a lull in the action. And for still others, it's phone calls and messages sent to former squad mates to wish them "Happy Birthday, Marine."

Among the nation's six Armed Forces, five have Service songs; only the Marine Corps has a hymn. Long before it became fashionable to stand for all Service songs, Marines always stood when the hymn was played. To this day, Marines stand at attention and sing as the hymn of their Corps is played.²⁰ There is a physical and emotional reaction as the Marines' Hymn is played or sung—the back straightens, the chest swells, shoulders move rearward, and a tingle runs along a Marine's spine—because Marines are different.

A moment in time at the Chosin Reservoir is a testament to the power of the Marines' Hymn. The 1st Marine Division had been embattled amid the snows from the moment the column struck its camp at Hagaru-ri. By midnight, after heavy losses through the day, the commanding general, Major General Oliver P. Smith, was alone in his tent at Koto-ri, mulling about it being his worst moment. The task ahead seemed hopeless. Suddenly he heard music. Outside some Marines, on their way to a warming tent were singing the Marines' Hymn. "All doubt left me," said Smith. "I knew then we had it made."²¹

Our uniforms are also rich in history and tradition. Marine officers carry the Mameluke sword, which the governor of Derna, Tripoli presented to Marine Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon in 1805. Our noncommissioned officers carry the next oldest weapon in our inventory, the Marine Corps noncommissioned officer's sword, which dates to 1859. Of course, there is no more distinctive uniform than dress blues.



From the *quatrefoil* on the officer's cover to the eagle, globe, and anchor on the collar to the blood stripes on the trousers, dress blues are steeped in history. It is not just the uniforms themselves that set Marines apart; it is the proud and disciplined manner in which we wear them. The 24th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr. received a letter from a friend of the Corps that described, as well as anyone could, the importance Marines place on their uniform and in setting the example:

Recently I was in an air terminal. Most military people there presented a pretty sloppy appearance—coats unbuttoned, ties loosened, etc. There was a Marine corporal in uniform who was just the opposite. I spoke to the Marine and pointed out the difference to him. I asked him why it was so. His answer was: "The Marines don't do that."²²

Whether it is our language, birthday, hymn, or uniform, Marine Corps traditions run deep. They are an integral part of who we are. Knowing who we are and what we represent is essential to understanding how we lead Marines.

Our history is filled with stories of Marine heroes and role models from every clime and place. Every Marine's unique capabilities and individual talents contribute to the Corps and make us stronger together. Civilians and members of the other Services know Marines as innovators who often do more with less. Marines like Captain Vernice Armour exemplify the kind of determination and dedication to service that amplifies our ethos, inspires others, and solidifies our common bonds.

Captain Vernice Armour

From the moment Captain Vernice Armour saw a woman in a flight suit, she became interested in aviation. After graduating college, she became a Nashville police officer, but she never lost



Captain Vernice Armour

her interest in flying. “I realized I could always be a cop” Armour said, “but I [wouldn’t] always have a chance to be a combat pilot.” She followed in the footsteps of her grandfather, a Monfort Point Marine and World War II veteran, and her stepfather, a Marine who served in Vietnam, and joined the Marine Corps to become a pilot. Captain Armour earned her wings in July 2001, graduating number one in her class, earning a spot on the Naval Air Station’s prestigious Commodore’s list, and receiving the Academic Achievement Award. Captain Armour then flew combat missions in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, making her the first African-American female combat pilot of all the Services. “My number one goal,” Armour said, “was to be the best pilot I could be up there in the air to protect and serve my brothers and sisters on the ground.”²³