

Guest of Honor Sheriff Jim Alderden's speech at the 234<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps Ball on November 7, 2009 at the Ft. Collins Marriott

## **Happy Birthday Marines and Blessings to our Vets**

The United States Marine Corps turns 234 today. They look pretty good for their age. I had the distinct honor to attend the local Marine Corps Ball this weekend as their guest speaker. It was a delightful evening, filled with military pomp and ceremony, to include the cutting of the ceremonial cake with a sword to a vacant table in honor of those who have fallen in service to our country. I was impressed that so many of the Marine retirees could get into their dress uniforms.

With Veteran's day being tomorrow, let me take this opportunity to salute all of our service members and veterans. Our entire nation owes them a debt of gratitude.

I decided to publish my remarks to the Marines as this week's *Bull's-eye*, knowing that the other branches of service are equally deserving. Please know that I intend no slight to them.

I started my presentation with some appropriate bumper stickers and quotations.

### **Bumper stickers seen on a Marine Corps Base**

- U.S. Marines -- Certified Counselors to the 72 Virgins Dating Club
- U.S. Marines -- Travel Agents To Allah
- The Marine Corps -- When It Absolutely, Positively Has To Be Destroyed Overnight
- Marine Sniper - You can run, but you'll just die tired!
- What Do I Feel When I Kill A Terrorist? .... A little Recoil.
- Marines -- Providing Enemies of America an Opportunity To Die For their Country Since 1775
- Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Anyone Who Threatens It

### **Quotations**

*"The United States Marine Corps, with its fiercely proud tradition of excellence in combat, its hallowed rituals, and its unbending code of honor, is part of the fabric of American myth."*

Thomas E. Ricks; *Making the Corps*, 1997

*"The Marines I have seen around the world have the cleanest bodies, the filthiest minds, the highest morale, and the lowest morals of any group of animals I have ever seen. Thank God for*

*the United States Marine Corps!"*

Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the United States, 1945

*The wonderful love of a beautiful maid,  
The love of a staunch true man,  
The love of a baby, unafraid,  
Have existed since time began.*

*But the greatest of loves, the quintessence of loves.  
even greater than that of a mother,  
Is the tender, passionate, infinite love,  
of one drunken Marine for another.*

*Semper Fidelis*

General Louis H. Wilson  
Commandant of the Marine Corps  
Toast given at 203rd Marine Corps Birthday Ball

## **Introduction**

I want to tell you what an honor it is for me to speak with you tonight and be part of this event.

When I was elected Sheriff eleven years ago, I had to do a lot of introspection about what I wanted the Sheriff's Office to be. I decided that I wanted the Larimer County Sheriff's Office to be the Marine Corps of law enforcement agencies.

I came up with our department motto - Serving with PRIDE. PRIDE being an acronym for Professionalism - Respect - Integrity - Duty and Empowerment.

I wanted my deputies to reflect the pride and the *esprit de Corps* exemplified by the United States Marines.

In terms of their uniforms and appearance, I wanted them to stand out, as the United States Marines stand out.

I wanted my deputies to have a high level of training as demonstrated by the United States Marines.

Finally, I wanted them to have the discipline and courage of the United States Marines.

A while ago, I authored an article about my agency titled, "*The Few, the Proud... Oops, That One's Already Been Taken.*"

I just want you to know that you and your fellow Marines have always been an inspiration to me.

## **Speech**

I want to talk to you briefly tonight about FREEDOM and LIBERTY. I believe that the freedoms and liberties which we enjoy under the U.S. Constitution are under siege.

I don't mean for this message to be overly political, certainly not partisan political, but the Marines have shed blood to defend the Constitution. I fear what is happening in Washington DC, particularly with the over-reach of the federal government, intruding into areas beyond what is authorized in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

I see legislation being proposed that "infringes" on our right to keep and bear arms.

I see legislation being proposed that violate the people's rights to be secure in their homes.

I see legislation that authorizes the government to seize businesses.

I see places in our country that are considering allowing Sharia law.

I look at the growth of Muslim extremism, even within our borders, most recently demonstrated just a few days ago at Fort Hood, and I fear for our country.

My message to you is simple: be vigilant.

*"Once a Marine always a Marine."* - Your service is not over.

We in this room come from different backgrounds:

- different races
- different colors
- different religions
- different educations
- different jobs
- different political affiliations

- but despite our differences, we have something in common. We're Americans and we love our country.

We took a Pledge of Allegiance to our flag this evening - and to the United States of America - one nation - under God with LIBERTY and Justice for all.

From Article VI of the Marine Code of Conduct

- *I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free.*

Be vigilant. Your service is not over.

Citing from the Marine Corps Oath of Office:

- *I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic...*

Foreign - and domestic.

The United States military is the best in the world. We have the best equipment. We have the finest young men and women. If our country fails, it won't be because our military is defeated. It will be due to the complacency of the politicians in Washington D.C. and a failed educational system.

Marines. Be vigilant. Your service is not over.

Our great nation was founded by a group of men who risked everything - the Son's of Liberty.

From our Declaration of Independence:

- We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Patrick Henry:

- Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

The United States Marines have been defending our country and the principles of our founding fathers from the very beginning.

Defending liberty. Defending freedom.

The Continental Congress met in Philadelphia on November 10, 1775, and passed a resolution to raise "two Battalions of Marines" for service as landing forces with the fleet. The Continental Marines saw much action during the Revolutionary War, and have been defending freedom and liberty ever since.

The Revolutionary War officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in April, 1783, and the Continental Navy and Marines ceased to exist until the Marine Corps was re-established on July 11, 1798.

The Marines gained notoriety as a fighting force along "the shores of Tripoli" during the Barbary Wars in the early 1800's. Prior to that, Muslim pirates operating off the coast of North Africa plundered our ships and the U.S. government paid up to \$1,000,000 a year for 15 years as tribute to protect our shipping interests.

The Marines again saw action in the War of 1812, helping General Andrew Jackson defeat the British in the Battle of New Orleans - as memorialized in that great song by Johnny Horton.

U.S. Marines again distinguished the Corps during the Mexican-American War, fighting alongside General Winfield Scott to the "Halls of Montezuma" in Mexico City.

During the 19th Century, Marines served in the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902), and the Boxer Rebellion in China - continuing to defend American interests around the globe.

At this point in the chronology I want to mention one of my favorite flicks, the 1975 adventure film *The Wind and the Lion*. The movie is very loosely based on a real life incident that occurred in 1904. Candace Bergen plays an American woman, Eden Perdicaris, who along with her two children are kidnapped by a Berber brigand, Mulai Ahmed er Raisuli, played by Sean Connery. He demands an outrageous ransom, trying to provoke an international incident in order to embarrass the Sultan and the Bashaw and start a civil war. This prompts President Teddy Roosevelt, played by Brian Keith, to send an armed invasion and rescue mission to Morocco.

The US Marines and some Navy Corpsman, lead by Marine Captain Jerome, disembark from a ship and double time in formation down the streets of Tangier. The precision and determination they showed really exemplifies the fighting United States Marines. This scene is absolutely stunning. They ultimately charge the palace, killing the palace guards and capturing the Bashaw, forcing him to negotiate with Raisuli.

This is all really stirring stuff , but the real Perdicaris incident involved the kidnapping of a middle-aged male and his stepson and although ships were sent to the area, there was no battle and Perdicaris' release was negotiated. Historical inaccuracies aside, it is a great movie with a terrific depiction of the US Marines.

Jumping ahead to World War I, the Marines served with honor and distinction during intense fighting in France. More than 30,000 Marines served in France and more than a third were killed or wounded.

Between World War I and World War II, the Marine Corps really defined itself, developing its philosophy and structure in preparation for amphibious warfare. They proved themselves on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and other places that I can't

pronounce. Marines casualties of dead and wounded in World War II totaled nearly 87,000. Marines earned 82 Medals of Honor.

I have to pause again here to make mention of another great movie, a 1949 film by Republic, *Sands of Iwo Jima*. John Wayne was nominated for an Academy award for his role as Sgt. Styer. The movie has him taking a group of young Marines from training, through the invasion of Tarawa and ending with the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II.

Who can forget Sgt. Styer telling his troops to "lock and load" and to "saddle up."

The highlight of the film is the raising of the flag on Mount Suribachi by five Marines and a Navy Corpsman. This was captured in one of the most recognizable photographs ever taken.

I had the opportunity to attend the FBI National Academy a number of years ago, which incidentally is located on the Marine Corps base at Quantico. When my wife and daughter came out for the graduation ceremony, the very first place we went after picking them up from the airport was the Iwo Jima Memorial. Seeing that monument just fills one's heart with pride and I have to admit, it gave me goose-bumps.

The 1950's brought us the Korean War where the U.S. Marines valiantly fought to preserve the freedom and liberty of the South Korean people against a Communist regime. More than 25,000 Marines were killed or wounded during the Korean War.

1965. The Marines landed in Da Nang, Vietnam. No doubt, some in this room are veterans of that war, which cost over 13,000 Marines their lives. Another 88,000 were wounded. The price of freedom and liberty is high.

The Marines and the U.S. military didn't lose that conflict - the politicians did.

Panama. Granada. Iran. Somalia. Lebanon. Liberia. Kuwait. Iraq. Afghanistan. Wherever Americans are in jeopardy, wherever freedoms and liberties are threatened - the Marines are there.

Whether it be protecting our embassies, toppling dictators, or evacuating refugees - the Marines can be counted on.

Let me conclude with this quote from President Ronald Reagan:

- Some people spend an entire lifetime wondering if they made a difference in the world. But, the Marines don't have that problem.

Gentlemen. Ladies.

Leave here tonight knowing that you have made a difference.