



Marines.

Years ago, General Leonard F. Chapman Jr., the 24th Commandant, wrote to all his general officers and commanding officers referencing a letter he received from a distinguished friend. His friend had encountered a Marine corporal in an air terminal who, by his appearance, differed from other travelers. Although others in the terminal presented a slovenly appearance, the Marine was squared away. When asked about the reason for the difference, the corporal responded, "Marines don't do that."

General Chapman went on to describe other things that Marines don't do:

Marines don't—wear a scruffy uniform.

Marines don't—slouch around with their hands in their pockets.

Marines don't—wear long hair.

Marines don't—fail to respond with a "Yes, or No, Sir" when speaking with a senior.

Marines don't—render a halfhearted or sloppy salute to the Stars and Stripes or to their seniors.

Marines don't—gang up on each other.

Marines don't—question lawful orders.

Marines don't—lie or cheat or break their word.

Marines don't—abandon a fellow Marine in time of need.

Marines don't—let down their fellow Marines by succumbing to drug temptation.

Marines don't—meet problems with "It can't be done" or questions with the easy answer "No."

Marines don't—knock the system without recommending appropriate change.

Marines don't—(the list is endless).

"Marines don't do that." A simple statement that speaks volumes about that special characteristic of Marines which differentiates us from others: commitment to higher standards—standards of dress, of conduct, and of excellence—which we were taught in boot camp or officer candidates school. Marines go the "extra mile" in taking care of ourselves, taking care of each other and taking care of our Corps.

What do Marines do?

Marines do—maintain their bearing.

Marines do—more with less.

Marines do—strive to improve themselves—physically, tactically, intellectually.

Marines do—honor their word.

Marines do—set the example.

Marines do—take the initiative.

Marines do—remain loyal to their families, fellow Marines, the Corps, and the Nation.

Marines do—respect each other.

Marines do—take care of each other.

Marines do—what's right.

Just after I became Commandant, I received a letter from an Air Force Reserve colonel who noticed two Marines polishing the USMC portion of the pentagonal brass base of the flagpole at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He was impressed not because these Marines were performing an *assigned* task, but because they had undertaken this task of their own volition. When he asked them why, they said that it was something that "should be done." This is a classic example of what Marines DO: take the initiative, set the example, and accomplish what needs to be done without being concerned about who gets the credit or what personal gain may result.

General Chapman also provided a summary for the basis for our behavior. His explanation is just as valid now as it was then:

"We are proud members of an elite Corps...as well trained as—if not better than—any military outfit, anywhere. We have led the way, in war and peace...and are ready—combat ready—to move out, any time, with the Navy, go anywhere, take on anybody, fight and win."

Our Corps has earned the confidence and respect of the American people because of the valor and unparalleled devotion to duty that we have shown throughout almost 220 years of service. They know that when they call for us, we are ready and we will respond. This confidence must not just be limited to our ability to deliver on the battlefield; they must be assured, each time they see a Marine that we are a force for good. We must honor their confidence in us; have the courage to live up to these standards and remain committed, even in the face of adversity, to the promises and obligations we made to ourselves, our families, each other and to our Corps.

Semper fidelis,



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