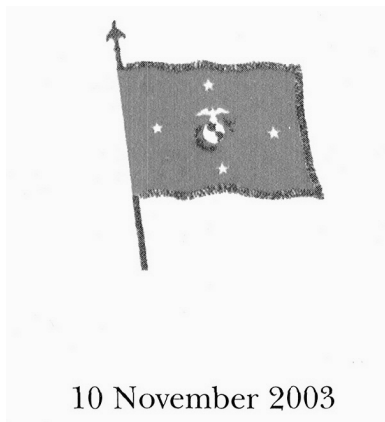


As the Corps
prepares to
celebrate its
228th Birthday, the
Gazette salutes all
who have earned
the title "Marine."



A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

This year we celebrate the 228th anniversary of the founding of our Corps. As always, it is an occasion for remembrance, proud traditions, and joyful camaraderie. The events of the past year have called for great sacrifices from many Marines and their families. While the global war on terrorism will continue to demand the best from each of us, it is important that we join with our fellow Marines, families, and friends to celebrate our Corps' special culture and unique warrior ethos.

This past year, Marines demonstrated once again that they are the most important entity on any battlefield. Lethal weapons and advanced technologies provide us unique advantages, but educated warriors ultimately determine victory in combat—not machines. During Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM, our small unit leaders' skills, adaptability, and flexibility produced victory on uncertain and at times chaotic battlefields. We proved once again the power of integrated ground-air-logistics teams as well as the importance of every Marine being first and foremost a rifleman.

Our special spirit is evident not only in battle; it is evident in the faithful performance of demanding duties by countless Marines at home and abroad. Every Marine makes a vital contribution to the ability of our Corps to project and sustain credible combat power. Moreover, the willingness and readiness of all Marines to accept and accomplish any mission is central to our success and a hallmark of our warrior ethos.

The culture that defines the Marine Corps is nurtured by our traditions. In celebrating our heritage, we strengthen the linkages to a glorious history and recommit ourselves to upholding the standards and values given to us by past generations.

In commemorating our 228th anniversary, remain true to the spirit of the occasion. Reflect on our fallen with deep respect, observe our traditions with justifiable pride, take care of one another and, of course, celebrate those special bonds that exist among United States Marines.

Happy Birthday Marines, Semper Fidelis, and keep attacking!

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. W. Hagee".

M. W. Hagee
General, U.S. Marine Corps