

# **Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps**

## **Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation Gala**

**General James F. Amos,  
Commandant,  
United States Marine Corps**

**June 2, 2012**

GENERAL JAMES F. AMOS: Thank you for the kind introduction, my friend and thanks for what you do... Thanks for what you do for this organization.

Congressman Wittman, Sir, thank you. We get a chance, actually APMC, Sergeant Major and I, really all the 3 stars here, get a chance to testify and work with you and the House Armed Services Committee. You are involved in Quantico; you are involved with our wounded Marines and thank you for your faithfulness. You are a great American patriot and we know your blood runs right through the United States Marine Corps. God bless you for that, thank you.

Chris, do me a favor and please tell Steve Ballmer how proud we are to be working with him and Microsoft. I had a whole list of things that my staff had put together that Microsoft has done, Chris, and you talked about them all tonight and it is monumental and I will tell you what, it is not going unnoticed by the Marine Corps so thank you very much and please pass that to Steve and tell him Marines are truly appreciative of his work., Thanks for the great fidelity.

Tonight we have in the audience also with us Lincoln Family Housing and I will tell you, we talked on Thursday night at my house about the transformation that is taking place across our Marine bases. We've always been certainly the greatest and most ferocious, but we have also been the cheapest when it came to military family housing and we've grown up that way. And that's not the way it is anymore. You go to bases and stations where Lincoln Family Housing has put their fingerprints -- and Bonnie and I have lived in those homes on two different occasions --you do not have to go very far to find smiling Marines. So thank you very much for all that you do.

You know what, I do have some folks here, even though they weren't recognized. You do not have to applaud for them, but these are friends of mine, folks that have done an awful lot for this wonderful institution. Al Sullivan from Lockheed Martin, Bob Stern from Sodexo -- You go to Marine chow halls today, and you might think, chow halls doesn't sound very appealing, but no, actually you go to chow halls run by Sodexo and they are really good... at Twentynine Palms and it's a gourmet meal... so we are very grateful for Sodexo.

Joe Dunford, the trusted Assistant Commandant, this is a real Commandant of the Marine Corps right here and his wife, Ellen. Thanks, Joe for all that you do for me and all the Marines out there. George Trautman who's sitting down there, George and Zoe. Ron Coleman is sitting - - Where are you Ron? Right down there, my old boss, Mike Ryan. Thanks Mike, good to see you again. Margaret and Drew Davis. 17th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major Michael Barrett, it's good to see you, my friend. Brian Battaglia, remember when you were with 8th Marines and we were strutting around Fallujah together, it's great to see you and your wife Lisa, Sergeant Major. The 14th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant McMichaels and his child bride, Rita. Barney Barnum, he's like a friend and really, a mentor to everybody he's around and everybody feels like they're his best friend. He's one of those unique personalities, he is the best friend of all of us and he is a mentor to all of us. Barney it's also good to have you here and, again, the first lady of the Marine Corps, the veteran of 41 years of the United States Marines, Bonnie Amos.

Listen, the truth of the matter is Bonnie and I, come here and I don't know if it's the

facility or because it's nice and cozy and then, of course, the drum and bugle corps rolls in here to begin with, but this is always a special night. It's done well, it's first class, and we just seem to have a light atmosphere. We look forward to this. This has been a big deal ever since, you know, I was a brand new Brigadier General and we moved back to Washington and this is all about fidelity here. It's about faithfulness, obligations and duties and it is really family business that we're here tonight, it's about our children.

On that line, I'm reminded of a story that I'd like to share with you tonight. I was thinking about this in preparation of making some comments. Back in February, Sergeant Major Barrett and I travelled to Afghanistan. We try to go every three or four months over there. In February, we were visiting our Marines and our Sailors. Our goal, of course, is to visit and see every single Marine. There are over 20,000 there and our goal is to see every one of them, shake every hand, talk to every Marine and, of course, it never works out that way. There are just too many and the area is a 100,000 square miles, but we start early in the morning and we finish real late at night. We go, I mean before dawn, and we go until 10 or 11 o'clock at night hopping around, flying V-22s, CH-53s, and Hueys, trying to see as many Marines as we can. My staff has affectionately dubbed this as the Bataan Death March and it just absolutely kills you to the point by the time you're finally on the airplane and flying home, everybody just collapses in the airplane and sleeps all the way back to Washington, D.C. But we try to see as many of our young Devil Dogs as we can. We take pictures. We write home to parents. We send emails when we get home.

But about midday in February on one of our day-long visits, we were with the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines who was operating in Marjah. Now you remember Marjah, it just wasn't two years ago, that Marjah was probably the most dangerous place on the face of the earth. We surrounded Marjah. The Taliban said that you will never take it from us. It was what they called their Alamo and we put three battalions of Marines, two battalions of Afghan Kandak, and a battalion of US Army soldiers and surrounded Marjah. This side of town is an agricultural area. It was build up just many, many years ago as a series of dikes and canals and it's really designed to be almost the Imperial Valley so to speak of Southern Afghanistan. But the Taliban had moved in and they controlled it. So we were there with the CO of 1/6 and he was sharing a story to Sergeant Major and I about great faithfulness and courage by one, actually several of his Marines. And it seems as he shared his stories, of last fall, a Marine rifle squad from Charlie Company 1/6 was operating in Marjah and was conducting a security patrol along with their Afghan army partners... when they were engaged by small arms fire. It was a typical occurrence at this point in Marjah and after slugging it out for awhile, the three to four Taliban fighters gave up and quickly vanished into the villages and the countryside. The squad meanwhile continued on its patrol. The point man in the patrol was a young Marine Lance Corporal on his very first deployment. And the young Lance Corporal noticed an odd object in a canal in line with the road along which they were patrolling and he picked up his rifle and he used his optic scope to determine that he was staring at a lifeless child that was floating face down in the water in the canal. And without hesitation, the young Marine jumped into the canal with full body armor and his full kit, ammunition and everything, and he gathered up the child and started rescue breathing on her. Finally, the squad's corpsman arrived and took over. Well, with a little luck and a lot of skill from the corpsman, the child started coughing up water, started crying and breathing on her own. The Marines of Charlie 1/6 realized that this was a great opportunity to put an Afghan face on such an incredible event. So they

handed the little girl over to the Afghan Army soldiers and said, "Find the parents and you deliver their daughter back to them alive." After a few minutes of searching nearby compounds and going around the village, they came across a distraught mother who was looking frantically for her daughter. The Afghan soldier explained the situation and delivered the little girl to her mother. Later that same day the father of the little girl showed up at the Marine's patrol base armed with gifts and an invitation for the Marines to come back to his home that afternoon for dinner in their honor.

What makes this story even more impressive is that on the way back to the patrol base after having a terrific dinner with the family, that the same rifle squad was again attacked by enemy fire and just like earlier in the day the Marines fought their way through it breaking the enemies will to fight and to stay in the area. And like before, the enemy disappeared into the countryside. So in less than six hours these young Marines, most of whom were teenagers led by their squad leader, a Marine Corporal, fought the enemy, saved a little girl's life, gave complete credit to their Afghan partners for all the right reasons, dined with a very grateful local family and again fought the enemy on the way back to their patrol base all knowing full well that tomorrow they might have to do it all over again. When the Sergeant Major and I heard that story, we were busting with pride as you might imagine thinking about the quality of young men and women that join our Corps today, the kind of men and women who in the heat of battle, in the midst of patrol can see the bigger picture. The chance to give credit and credibility to the nascent Afghan Forces, but also without hesitation or regard for self, jump into that canal to save the life of a child and to give her another chance to live. I tell you, it makes me proud to be a Marine and proud to wear the same cloth as our young men and women do today.

I spoke earlier about fidelity and actually, that's what tonight is all about, fidelity and family. Fidelity of the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation to our Marines and our families. We have that proof. We have seen it. We had Thomas Jefferson, III appear on stage and we have young men and women that were on the screen in the movies and the handouts and the brochures that are on your table and thousands more across America who will for years have been awarded scholarships by this wonderful foundation just like those who won tonight.

There are thousands of young students, young men and women, that are out there. Many in need of help, a chance to attend college. Some are still in school and countless others have already graduated and moved on into the working world with their visions and their dreams. With the average cost of college now, room and board at a public school, averaging \$20,000 a year, going to college and staying there is not easy. In fact, I suspect passing classes actually might be the easiest part of going to college these days rather than paying the bills. And that brings me back to the point where we began...it's about faithfulness. In Marine speak, that word is fidelity. *Semper Fidelis*. On behalf of all Marines, both active duty and reserves, and the hundreds of thousands of veteran Marines across our Nation, and most importantly of all, for the Navy and Marine Corps Team and on behalf of all our families and their children, thank you. Thank you for the scholarship foundation, for your many faithful donors, the boards of directors, the Scarlet and Gold Committee and lastly, but certainly not least, Margaret Davis. Thank you for your great fidelity and faithfulness for the children of our United States Marine Corps. Thank you for all that you do. God Bless the Marine Corps and *Semper Fidelis*.