

**OFFICE OF  
THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

**EUREKA COLLEGE DINNER**

**REMARKS BY  
GEN. JAMES F. AMOS,  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS**

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GEN. JAMES F. AMOS: [I went] to the University of Idaho, and [was] raised in a small town in southern Idaho.... There's some pretty tall cotton here tonight. Thank you for honoring a great 28<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps.

You know, I've been in the job now for about 18 days. ...During the days of preparation before taking it – this wonderful job that I've been blessed with – I spent time with every living Commandant.

And Gen. P.X. Kelley is our oldest and most distinguished living Commandant. And we spent an afternoon together. And it was like – my goal that evening was to pick his brain on all of those things that are unique to the office: those things that surprised him, those things that he felt very good about, those things, those pearls that he might want to pass on to me.

And as the afternoon went on, we quickly turned to sea stories, vignettes. Talked about friends that we knew, mutual friends that we've served together over the many decades. And sort of thank him for that time, it's a great affinity we have. I've come to understand it's almost a spiritual, religious bond between the former Commandant and the living Commandant. So Gen. Kelley, I'm honored to follow in your footsteps and be here tonight to pay tribute to you.

During this year which marks the centennial anniversary of President Reagan's birth, Eureka College has wisely chosen Gen. Kelley – or "P.X." as you'll all call him tonight, and how we call him fondly in the Marine Corps, his family – as the most faithful patriot and leader in service to our nation. His professionalism, values and leadership mirror the philosophy and deeds of our great 40<sup>th</sup> president under whom he so faithfully and diligently served as our 28<sup>th</sup> Commandant.

Come back with me momentarily please to the world of 1983 when P.X. Kelley first began leading our Corps as its Commandant. Détente had yet been achieved in the Soviet Union. We've talked a bunch about that this evening. The Cold War grew even chillier when within two months of P.X. taking command of the Marine Corps, the Soviet Union shot down a Korean airliner carrying 269 souls on September the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1983.

Less than two months later on October 25, as we talked briefly about earlier, the U.S. invaded Grenada, which was our military's first major ground offensive since Vietnam. P.X.'s Marines were critical to the success of that operation. He employed a Marine Expeditionary Unit of approximately 2500 Marines.

In other places around the globe, there was a counter-insurgency struggle in Northern Ireland, and the Falkland Islands campaign was still fresh in everyone's mind. The specter of terrorism began to germinate through the Middle East like never before. And domestically, we had another war on our hands, one focused on the growing epidemic of drugs across our great

country. Through these times, P.X. Kelley led our nation's greatest fighting force with distinction and courage.

In 1987, after reflecting on P.X.'s 37 years of honorable service to Corps and country, President Reagan penned a congratulatory letter to P.X. Kelley. In it, he wrote: "This great land of yours can never repay you for what you have given of yourself to defend and preserve our cherished traditions and ideals. Through courageous service in war and exceptional leadership in peace, you have made a difference. Your efforts as a warrior, peacemaker, have helped keep America free and strong. As your commander-in-chief, I cannot tell you how much I've appreciated your integrity, your forthrightness, an example and exemplary professionalism. You leave a legacy to your country of a Marine Corps ready to defend peace. You have been semper fidelis – always faithful. For this you have my heartfelt and lasting gratitude, and that of your country. Signed, Ronald Reagan."

Clearly, President Reagan knew his Commandant well. P.X. commanded Marines at every level to include command of a troop of British Royal Marines in Singapore, Malaya and Borneo – an accomplishment and privilege virtually unheard of since he took command in his days.

P.X. was not only a leader in our Corps, he was also a tested combat veteran whose heroic exploits in Vietnam were legendary throughout the Marine Corps. While in command of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines from 1965 to 1966, P.X. earned a Silver Star, the third-highest military decoration our nation bestows for valor.

P.X. was also the final regimental commander to be in command in Vietnam before the Marines left the country. Prior to becoming the 28<sup>th</sup> commandant, P.X. was selected in 1980 to serve as the first commander of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, what we've affectionately known as RDJTF. For any military aficionados in that room, that organization today is known as United States Central Command.

Finally, I would like to highlight that as Eureka College celebrates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of President Reagan's birthday, tomorrow we celebrate the birthday of the Marine Corps and recognize 235 years of faithful and honorable service to our nation. And P.X. will celebrate his own birthday the next day, as we talked about earlier, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November as he turns 82 years young. I'm guessing that P.X.'s mother waited for him to be born on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November out of pure respect for the Marine Corps' birthday.

Ladies and gentlemen, Gen. Kelley is an absolute hero to our Corps. We love him, we respect him, we revere him. He's a man of courage, a man of integrity and a great American patriot. Gen. Kelley, congratulations on behalf of 202,000 Marines and our 212,000 family members that love you and serve our Corps...God bless you...

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