

MARINE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

1. Being a major unit of the Navy, and due to the fact that the most of the first Marines were volunteers from the navy, many naval customs and traditions have been carried over and practice in the corps today. Likewise, since the birth of the organization almost five decades ago, Marines have evolved their own peculiar customs and traditions. These customs and traditions include the following:

a. Like Navy personnel, Marines always in the affirmative acknowledge that they understand the instructions of their officers by saying “Aye-Aye, Sir or simply “Aye, Sir!”

b. Marine Officers and NCOs ascend to positions of command and responsibility in the corps only after strictly going through progressive billets, in the same manner as navy officers and the Petty Officers do in their shipboard and shore duties. Hence, a Marine NCO can never be designated as a Battalion Sergeant Major if he has not served earlier as Platoon Sergeant and later as a Company First Sergeant. This tradition is necessary to ensure that every Marine is professionally prepared to assume any higher position that he may be tasked to perform.

c. Certain ceremonies in the Corps are variations, if not faithful copies of some enduring naval ceremonies. These include the parade for retiring Marine Officers, the commissioning of major weapon systems and equipment, the de-activation of a Marine unit, the welcome and send-off ceremonies for arriving and departing Marine Units, and many others. The Marine practice of providing sideboys to honor visiting high civilian and military officials, is also an adoption of the ship side honors normally rendered to high-ranking visitors to Navy vessels.

d. Marine’s work hard to retain in their vocabulary many naval terms to constantly remind themselves that they have come from the navy. They for example, insist in calling the toilet as “head”, the floor as “deck”, and the right side and the left side of any structure as “starboard and portside” respectively.

e. Marine units adapt the prescribed format of a “Naval Letter” when communicating either with Navy and Marine Headquarters and other Marine Units outside of the Navy and the Corps.

2. Marines regard their Commanding Officers with high respect and reverence in the same manner, as the crew would respect their ship’s Captain. The CO’s staff and immediate subordinates are sensitive to his wishes and generally try to unburden him of routine nuances and concerns in order that he may fully concentrate on the more important task of running the unit. A ware of the pivotal role of the Commander during dangerous combat operations, his men ensure that he is well secured against enemy action at all times. They know that by protecting their Commander, they are also protecting themselves and are ensuring the accomplishment of the mission of their unit. Both in the garrison and the field, the Commanding Officer is traditionally assigned orderlies and aides to assist him in his personal needs and official functions.

3. Through the years, the Marine Growl “ AOOOOOWHA! “ has evolved many meanings in the different context that it is used in the Corps. It was originally intended by Marines undergoing strenuous fitness exercises to clear their lungs of stale air as they chant along during their morning road runs. The practice also became a way for Marines to “ psych “ themselves up, as long-distance runners or wrestlers would do, in order to get their adrenaline hormones flowing in their systems before a physically demanding any dangerous activity. The marine growl has become an expression of the Marines “esprit-de-corps” and state of high morale, of their enthusiastic approval of the words of a speaker, of their affirmation of their trust and confidence for one another and their commitment to perform any task to the best of their abilities and efforts. In a gesture of cheerfulness and good humor, Marines among an audience often do the growl whenever the words “ **Philippine Marine Corps “ are spoken by the speaker.** The Marine growl is even said to be an effective psychological weapon to unnerve a less resolute enemy to loose his fighting spirit and to take flight “ **AOOOOOWHA “** therefore is also the abbreviation of the traditional battlecry, “ **LETS GO MARINES!**”

4. Members of the Marine honor guard, sideboys and plane side honor guards, when rendering honors to an arriving VIP visitor or Guest of Honor in Military Ceremonies, shout “ **KARANGALAN “** upon their execution of the command of the Honor Guard Commander to present arms. This traditional gesture aims to impress on the guest that the troops warmly welcome him and are greatly honored by his visit. During the departure honors, they also shout “ **SALAMAT PO! “** upon their execution of present arms.

5. Most Marines have served in the land of our Muslim brothers in the Southern Philippines and have been exposed to their custom and traditions. One of their traditions that Marines admire is the sincerity with which our Muslim brothers extend their hands in a handshake. Many Marines after years of observing their gesture during their assignment in Muslim Mindanao, have developed the habit of practicing it wherever they go. After firmly clapping the hand and looking directly at the eye of the person they meet, Marines now customarily bring their right hand to their chest, close to their hearts, as a sincere expression of goodwill. This peculiar form of handshake has become one of our trademarks as Marines, which distinguishes as from the other members of the AFP