

An outline of:

The Few and The Proud: Marine Drill Instructors In Their Own Words

By Larry Smith
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Part One: The Old Breed

1: Chuck Taliano, Drill Instructor, Poster: “We don’t promise you a rose garden”

- Being a Marine was the most rewarding thing of my life.
- Let no man’s ghost say, “If only you had done your job.”
- We were tough during Vietnam in order to save lives.
- When those recruits graduate, the feeling is much like fatherhood.

2: Iron Mike Mervosh, Sergeant Major

- I landed at Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima with 1st Battalion, 24th Marines. Thirty-one of us, out of 240 in the company, walked off Iwo Jima.
- Fear is loneliness, a lack of hope. But there is hope when Marines are around you.

3: SgtMaj Bill Paxton

- I was born in 1935. I lost my Dad on Iwo Jima as well as my uncle. I wanted to be a Marine.
- I almost lost two recruits as a DI in 1964. One was Ken Norton, the future heavyweight champion.
- Training during Vietnam shrank to eight weeks. That was insufficient.
- If you don’t get discipline in boot camp, it’s too late to get it in combat.
- The *Known Marine* DI Memorials at both recruit depots are a result of my efforts.

4: Ed Walls, Sergeant Major

- My DI, PFC Alvarez, broke all the rules in 1954. Ribbon Creek nearly sank the Marine Corps.
- In 1961, I was a DI. It was very satisfying to see the improvement and results.
- I never pulled any weird stuff on the recruits. Everything had to have a purpose.

5: SgtMaj Dave Robles

- In 1958, I was hit twice on the head the first day! There were DIs who were abusive or sadistic.
- The Marine Corps turned my life around. I tell the kids that.

6: Robert Mastrian, Colonel

- Human nature is key. The top 20% are good. The bottom 20% are bad. You’re in a constant battle for the middle 60%.
- In the fleet, a unit with 15% bad guys is paralyzed. Like 1972-1975.
- In 1975, General Wilson, CMC, discharged the bottom 10%.
- Boot camp needs to eliminate selfishness, emphasize tradition, cohesiveness, and discipline.
- Boot camp in 1958 was tough, but there was no brutality.

7: SSgt Eddie Adams**Part Two: Ribbon Creek**

8: SSgt Matthew C. McKeon. They were all good kids. Hurting them was the farthest thing from my mind.

9: Morton Janklow, Attorney for McKeon

- The Marine Corps was railroading this guy McKeon. Scapegoating him.
- But Marine Corps training was better. It needed to be done right, by the right people. Not McKeon. That's why their troops are so much better. In combat, I want to be next to a Marine Drill Instructor.
- Training needs to be tough in order to prepare for combat. That what the Marine Corps does.

10: James Wheeler, McKeon Court Reporter

- The way we left McKeon swinging changed my feelings toward the Marine Corps. Everyone did what he did. He was a scapegoat.
- 80% of my cases were maltreatment by DIs. Twelve or fifteen DIs were convicted *before* McKeon.

11: SSgt Gene Alvarez, Drill Instructor. I spent thirty years teaching college, but I never got the rewards I got as a DI, the best experience of my life. For a DI to build morale and spirit, he could not use cruelty.

Part Three: Marines and the Movies**12: R. Lee Ermey, Drill Instructor**

- Private Joker's slap in the face, done in the movie, was NOT done in the real Marine Corps.
- DIs are tremendous role models. Their leadership is second to none.

13: Colonel Mike Malachowsky, Chief of Staff

- We survived 1956 Ribbon Creek because we were honest: "We screwed up, but we're going to fix it."
- In the movie, "The DI," Jack Webb considered it an insult if he cannot make a recruit into a Marine. His focus was helping marginal performers. DIs have to have that attitude.
- In the 1930s there was little recruit abuse. Recruits wouldn't take it. By using PFC drill instructors, we started the trend.
- No one gets smacked around. Parents trust us. DIs are Marines who set the example.
- Letters are important to maintain motivation.
- Officers should have recruit training experience.

Part Four: Montford Point

14: Gene Doughty, Corporal, Iwo Jima. All in all, the DIs were fair and square.

15: Herman Rhett**16: Ellis Cunningham, 1stSgt, Iwo Jima - Vietnam**

17: David Dinkins, Mayor of NYC 1989-1993. In 1945, the best way to stay alive was to be better trained, and the way to be better trained was to be a Marine.

Part Five: Women Marines

18: SgtMaj Denise Kreuser, Drill Instructor. Being a DI was the best thing I ever did as a Marine. You're transforming lives.

19: Doris Kleberger, Lieutenant Colonel

20: Mary Sue League, Lieutenant Colonel

21: Jeanne Botwright, Lieutenant Colonel

22: SSgt Christine Henning

Part Six: The New Breed

23: SSgt Rudolfo Rodriquez. We're very conscious right now that we're training recruits who may go to Iraq. There is no time for misconduct.

24: SgtMaj Clint Kreuser

25: Josh Wylie, Sergeant Major. I'd like people to understand how much time and energy DIs put in and how much they care about their recruits. There's a lot of tough love down here.

26: Rob Bush, Sergeant Major

- Recruits must buy-in to the culture. Make him a believer! He believes. He has heart. Transformation.
- DIs must forget the old days.
- Recruits may forget 90% of what they learn, but they will never forget that they are Marines.
- These DIs are giving everything they've got. We're walking among giants here.
- DIs are the role models, the coach, not the referee, and not the devil.
- When forty-one guys screw up, fix them. Repeating something ten times makes Marines lose heart.
- Truth wins. No cover-up. No damage control. Truth enables fixes.

27: William Post, Sergeant Major

- The Marine Corps exists to kill people. You either pull the trigger, or you support the trigger puller.
- Peacekeeping is horseshit. Warriors fight for their tribe.
- The old Marines were not tougher. Our Marines are tremendous.

28: Major Keith Burkepile

- The DI must be in good shape. He must come to Parris Island to make an impact on the Marine Corps.
- The biggest challenge is getting recruits to believe.
- What does "Back in the old Corps mean?" World War II?

Reviewer's Comments

The Few and the Proud has great stories and insights from impressive Marines, but it reads very much like a collage, without a central unifying theme or lesson.