

DRAFT

COMMENTS ON JOSEPH R. "BULL" FISHER
BRIGADIER GENERAL U.S. MARINE CORPS (RETIRED)
21 APRIL 2006

IT HAS BEEN A REAL TREAT SEEING SOME OLD FRIENDS AND FELLOW MARINES SOME OF WHOM I HAVE NOT SEEN SINCE THE BRIGADE LEFT HAWAII FOR OKINAWA AND THEN ON TO VIETNAM – WE HAVE ALSO WARMLY REMEMBERED SOME OF THOSE WHO COULD NOT BE WITH US TONIGHT AND SADLY WE REMEMBERED SOME OF THOSE WE LOST IN COMBAT IN VIETNAM. MAY GOD BLESS THEM ALL AND WE ARE ETERNALLY THANKFUL TO THEM FOR THEIR SACRIFICE.

SO WHY AM I STANDING BEFORE YOU TONIGHT? I WAS ASKED SEVERAL WEEKS AGO IF I WOULD TALK ABOUT COLONEL JOSEPH R. "BULL" FISHER. COLONEL FISHER WAS 2/4'S COMMANDING OFFICER IN HAWAII BEFORE WE LEFT FOR VIETNAM AND THEN HAD THE BATTALION FOR SIX MONTHS IN COUNTRY.

WHEN ASKED TO DO THIS, I ALMOST DECLINED BECAUSE I FELT INADEQUATE TO APPROPRIATELY HONOR A MARINE CORPS LEGEND SUCH AS BULL FISHER. WHEN I MENTIONED THE TALK TO ED GARR, HE ASKED HOW MANY HOURS DID I HAVE?

SO, THEN, WHO IS THIS LEGEND? LET ME TELL YOU SMALL BIT OF WHAT I KNOW:

THE BULL WAS FROM ALLISTON, MASSACHUSETTS, AND GREW UP AND GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN WESTWOOD MASSACHUSETTS. HE DID NOT HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE BUT HE CERTAINLY HAD A DEGREE IN MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP THAT WAS UNEQUALED.

HE ENLISTED IN THE MARINE CORPS IN 1942 AND SAW ACTION THROUGHOUT THE PACIFIC ISLAND-HOPPING CAMPAIGN WHERE HE ROSE TO THE RANK OF PLATOON SERGEANT FOR HIS "NOTEWORTHY LEADERSHIP SKILLS, HIS COURAGE, EXPERTISE IN MAP READING AND HIS PROFICIENCY IN USING THE BAYONET."

DURING HIS RETURN FROM A NIGHT RECONNAISSANCE PATROL THROUGH JAPANESE-INFESTED JUNGLE, HIS UNIT CAME UNDER HEAVY FIRE. ONE OF HIS MARINES WENT DOWN. SGT FISHER LIFTED HIM AND CARRIED HIS FELLOW MARINE TO SAFETY AS BULLETS ZIPPED CLOSELY PAST THEM. INCREDIBLY, FISHER WAS UNHURT.

FOR THIS ACTION HE EARNED THE NICKNAME "**OLD INDESTRUCTIBLE**," AND HIS PATROL'S SCOUTING PROVIDED VITAL INFORMATION FOR THE FOLLOW-ON PARENT UNIT ACTION UNIT ACTION.

THIS IS A MARINE WHO AS A PLATOON SERGEANT WAS AWARDED A **SILVER STAR** ON IWO JIMA FOR DESTROYING AN ENEMY MACHINE GUN BUNKER WITH HAND GRENADES. BECAUSE OF THE DIRE SITUATION, HE DID NOT ASK A PRIVATE TO DO IT, HE DID IT HIMSELF. IN THE PROCESS OF RUNNING TO THE BUNKER HE WAS WOUNDED BY RIFLE FIRE TWICE - ONCE IN THE CHEST AND ONCE IN THE SHOULDER. HE WAS STILL ABLE TO RISE TO HIS KNEES AND THROW TWO GRENADES INTO THE BUNKER SILENCING THE MACHINE GUN. THE DOCTORS AND NURSES WERE AMAZED THAT HE LIVED. THAT WAS VINTAGE BULL FISHER.

OLD INDESTRUCTIBLE" WAS FULLY RECOVERED BY JULY 1945.

WHEN THE WAR ENDED COLONEL FISHER RECEIVED A FIELD PROMOTION TO SECOND LIEUTENANT AND PARTICIPATED IN THE OCCUPATION OF JAPAN.

BETWEEN THE WARS HE CARRIED ANOTHER NICKNAME THAT WOULD STAY WITH HIM THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER, "**BULL**." THE TERM STUCK BECAUSE OF HIS STATURE. HE STOOD AT SIX-FOOT-TWO, WAS BROAD-CHESTED AND WEIGHED APPROXIMATELY 220 POUNDS. FROM MY PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE, I THINK THAT HIS AGGRESSIVE NATURE HAD AS MUCH TO DO WITH THE BULL NAME AS HIS FRAME.

FIVE YEARS LATER, FIRST LIEUTENANT BULL FISHER FOUND HIMSELF IN HIS SECOND CONFLICT, THE KOREAN WAR. AT THIS TIME HE COMMANDED, AS A FIRST LIEUTENANT, COMPANY I, 3D BATTALION, FIRST MARINES UNDER COLONEL LEWIS B. "CHESTY" PULLER. AFTER SEEING INTENSE ACTION IN THE BATTLE FOR SEOUL HE MOVED ON WITH THE FIRST MARINES TO THE CHOSIN RESERVOIR.

HE WAS AWARDED A **NAVY CROSS** AT HAGARU-RI ON 28 – 29 NOVEMBER 1950. HIS COMPANY REPULSED WAVE AFTER WAVE OF ASSAULTS FROM AN ESTIMATED ENEMY REGIMENT. THE ACTION WAS FOUGHT AT NIGHT IN SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURES OVER A PERIOD OF EIGHT HOURS. HE REPEATEDLY EXPOSED HIMSELF TO A HAIL OF ENEMY DIRECT AND INDIRECT FIRE MOVING FROM POSITION TO POSITION RE-DEPLOYING HIS MEN AND DIRECTING SUPPORTING ARMS FIRE. HE INSPIRED MEN TO HEROIC EFFORTS THUS INSURING THE DEFENSE OF A LARGE SEGMENT OF A PERIMETER VITAL TO THE WELFARE OF THE ENTIRE CORPS

HIS COMPANY ALSO FOUGHT THE REAR GUARD ACTION OUT OF THE CHOSIN.

HIS GREAT MENTOR WAS **GENERAL CHESTY PULLER** –. WHEN A JOURNALIST IN KOREA ASKED COLONEL PULLER WHY HE PLACED A LIEUTENANT IN COMMAND OF A COMPANY INSTEAD OF A CAPTAIN, PULLER BELLOWED, "LIEUTENANT JOE FISHER IS ONE OF THE BEST DAMNED COMPANY COMMANDERS WHO EVER LIVED. HE'S EQUAL TO THE TOUGHEST ASSIGNMENT. AS LONG AS I'M AROUND, HE'LL LEAD ITEM COMPANY."

AFTER THE HAGARU-RI ACTION, PULLER ASKED COLONEL FISHER HOW MANY OF THE ENEMY DID HE KILL AND HIS ANSWER WAS: "A WHOLE SHITPOT FULL." PULLER REPLIED THAT HE WAS "GLAD THAT HE HAD AT LEAST ONE OFFICER WHO COULD COUNT ACCURATELY." THIS WAS VERIFIED BY HIS WIFE, JEAN, WHO SAID THERE WERE SEVERAL OTHER SIMILAR STORIES THAT GREW FROM THIS – BUT THIS WAS THE ORIGINAL ONE.

COL CHESTY PULLER EVALUATED FISHER AS THE "BEST COMPANY GRADE TACTICIAN," IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS.

WHEN GENERAL PULLER RETIRED, HE SAID THAT THERE WERE ONLY TWO REAL MARINES LEFT IN THE CORPS, ME AND BULL FISHER. THIS WAS ALSO VERIFIED BY JEAN, WHO ATTENDED THE CEREMONY.

AS A MAJOR HE WAS A TACTICS INSTRUCTOR AT THE BASIC SCHOOL AND POSITIVELY INFLUENCED A GENERATION OF MARINE OFFICERS. ONE OF HIS SECOND LIEUTENANTS REMEMBERS HIS FINAL TALK BEFORE THEY GRADUATED.

"THE BULL STOOD IN THE TINY SAND AMPHITHEATRE AND QUIETLY LOOKED AT ALL THE FACES OF ALPHA COMPANY. 'GENTLEMEN, I HAVE TRIED TO TEACH YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT COMBAT. IF SOMEONE SAYS THEY ARE NOT AFRAID, THEY ARE EITHER STUPID OR CRAZY. IF THEY ARE JUNIOR TO YOU, GET RID OF THEM. IF THEY ARE SENIOR TO YOU, GET AWAY FROM THEM. AND REMEMBER GENTLEMEN, YOU HAVE A SACRED OBLIGATION: SPEND BULLETS NOT BOYS...GOD BLESS."

COLONEL FISHER WAS ASSIGNED AS THE CO OF 2/4 IN JUNE 1964. FOR TWO WEEKS BEFORE BULL TOOK OVER, EVERY DAY WE WERE WARNED THAT THE MARINE'S MARINE WAS TAKING OVER AS CO AND THAT WE HAD BETTER BE 'READY. WE WERE ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF WHAT SOME DESCRIBED AS A COMBINATION OF ATTLA THE HUN, A ROMAN GLADIATOR, BEN HUR AND JOHN WAYNE ALL ROLLED INTO ONE.

CAPTAIN ED GARR, HOTEL COMPANY'S GUNNY AT THE TIME, TOLD US HOW THE BULL TOOK OVER HIS COMPANY AS A CAPTAIN IN JAPAN IN 1954:

"WE WERE IN OKOBU JAPAN. I WAS A MACHINE GUN SECTION LEADER (LIGHT 30S) IN GEORGE COMPANY 3/9. WHEN HE TOOK OVER IT WAS LIKE A PALLET OF BRICKS FALLING ALL OVER THE PLACE, INSPECTIONS, ASS CHEWINGS, FALL OUT, FALL IN, FIELD DAYS, 20 HOUR DAYS, NO LIBERTY AND HIM IN THE BARRACKS ALL THE TIME SUPERVISING. KEEP IN MIND WE WERE ON UNACCOMPANIED 18 MONTH TOURS. THE OFFICERS AND STAFF NCOS WERE IN A STATE OF SHOCK AS HE NEVER LET UP AND MOST TROOPS WERE ACCUSTOMED TO THE EASY LIFE OF JAPAN.

HE WOULD HOLD SQUAD LEADER AND SECTION LEADER MEETINGS AT ALL HOURS OF THE DAY AND NIGHT. HE PREACHED COMBAT AND SMALL UNIT LEADERSHIP. ALL SERGEANTS AND ABOVE, EXCEPT OFFICERS, HAD SERVED IN KOREA. THE WEAK OFFICERS AND SENIOR NCOS WERE STARTING TO CRACK. IT CAME DOWN TO HIM LAYING THE GAUNTLET DOWN BY SAYING IF YOU CAN'T TRAIN AND SQUARE AWAY YOUR TROOPS - HE WOULD. HE ASKED FOR ALL TROOPS THAT PLATOON COMMANDERS AND PLATOON SERGEANTS COULD NOT OR DID NOT WANT TO LEAD AND TRAIN. HE WAS FORMING HIS OWN SQUAD. I DIDN'T HAVE AN OFFICER PLATOON COMMANDER BUT AN OLD TECHNICAL SERGEANT E-6 AND A STAFF SERGEANT E-5 AS PLATOON SERGEANT AND GUIDE. OUR PLATOON NCOS DECIDED THAT WE WOULD NOT GIVE HIM ANYONE AND THAT WE WOULD CLEAN OUR OWN HOUSE.

WELL, THE OTHER PLATOONS JOYFULLY TURNED OVER A FEW TROOPS AND FORMED A 13 MAN SQUAD WITH BULL AS SQUAD LEADER. ALL BULL'S TRAINING WAS DONE AFTER HOURS, WHICH CONSISTED OF A TRAINING SCHEDULE RUNNING FROM REVEILLE TO TAPS AND INCLUDED TROOP AND STOMP, FIRE TEAM AND SQUAD TACTICS, MAP READING, COMPASS, ETC. BUT THE BULL MADE THE SQUAD LEADERS, PLATOON SERGEANTS AND PLATOON COMMANDERS OF THOSE THAT THEY SENT ATTEND ALL AFTER HOUR INSTRUCTION.

THEY GOT THE MESSAGE IN A HURRY. AFTER THE FIRST WEEK OF TRAINING, SATURDAY AND SUNDAYS INCLUDED, WITH ALL LEADERS PRESENT NO ONE EVER SENT ANOTHER MAN TO THE BULL'S SQUAD. HE WAS TRYING TO, AND I GOT THE MESSAGE BEFORE SOME, THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD PFC - ONLY HIS NCOS AND OFFICERS WHO CANNOT LEAD PROPERLY."

AT THE JUNE 1964 2/4 CHANGE OF COMMAND, WE ALL HEARD HIS PRAISES OF THE CORPS, CHESTY PULLER AND THE EXITING BATTALION COMMANDER. HE GAVE HIS VOW TO BE ONE OF THE BEST INFANTRY BATTALION COMMANDERS THAT THE CORPS COULD GIVE US - IT WAS DURING THESE COMMENTS THAT HE MADE REFERENCE TO US AS HIS MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS. BUT EVEN PRIOR TO THIS, AS LT COL FISHER ENTERED THE PARADE FIELD, JEAN HEARD HIM SAY: "LOOK AT THESE MEN, THEY ARE MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS AREN'T THEY?"

ONE OF HIS FIRST ACTIONS WAS TO PUBLISH A BATTALION ORDER ADDING THE MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS TO OUR BATTALION CREST. HE TOLD ME SHORTLY AFTERWARDS THAT IT WAS HISTORICALLY LEGITIMATE. WHEN THE BATTALION WAS ON R&R IN NEW ZEALAND

AFTER ONE OF THE ISLAND BATTLES, THE LOCALS GAVE THEM THAT NICKNAME.

SEVERAL DAYS AFTER HE TOOK COMMAND, OUR CALL SIGN WAS CHANGED FROM BENDIX TO SUDDEN DEATH. IT WAS REPORTED TO ME THAT HE GRUMBLED THAT HE HAD A BATTALION OF MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS – NOT A WASHING MACHINE. I BELIEVE THAT BULL HAD A HAND IN THIS BECAUSE IT WAS PART OF HIS EFFORTS TO CHANGE THE ATTITUDE OF THE BATTALION AND GIVE US MORE OF A WARRIOR MENTALITY AND AN AGGRESSIVE POSTURE.

ALONG WITH THESE SYMBOLIC CHANGES, THE BULL CERTAINLY DID GET OUR ATTENTION IN MANY OTHER WAYS. HE HAD COME TO US FROM FMFPAC AND KNEW THAT WE WERE GOING TO WAR IN VIETNAM. HE WAS DETERMINED TO GET US READY. IT WAS JUST LIKE GUNNY GARR HAD WARNED.

HE CONCENTRATED ON INFANTRY BASICS LIKE WE HAD NOT SEEN SINCE BASIC SCHOOL. WE WERE IN THE FIELD CONSTANTLY UNDER HIS WATCHFUL EYE ENSURING THAT OUR TRAINING WAS REALISTIC AND EMPHASIZED THE BASICS:

- BATTLE SIGHTS
- SECTORS OF FIRE
- PRINCIPAL DIRECTIONS OF FIRE
- FINAL PROTECTIVE FIRES
- AIMING STAKES
- L SHAPED FIGHTING HOLES WITH GRENADE SUMPS AND NO ROCK PARAPETS

HE PUBLISHED A BATTALION ORDER THAT HE WROTE HIMSELF HE ENTITLED “TACTICAL TIPS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL MARINE.” IT CONTAINED THE WEALTH OF HIS COMBAT EXPERIENCE GAINED IN TWO WARS FROM PRIVATE THROUGH CAPTAIN. I STILL HAVE IT IN MY PROFESSIONAL FILES.

HE WAS OBSESSED WITH SMALL UNIT LEADERSHIP, TRAINING AND ENSURING EVERY MARINE IN THE BATTALION WAS TACTICALLY AND TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT. SO MUCH SO THAT SOME OF US LIEUTENANTS THOUGHT HE WAS BEYOND ECCENTRIC. LIKE, NO ONE COULD ROLL THEIR SLEEVES UP UNLESS THEY HAD BEEN IN COMBAT.

WE ALL HAVE OUR BULL FISHER STORIES, SO PLEASE INDULGE ME IF I TELL A FEW OF MINE IN THIS TALK. OUR ECHO COMPANY WEAPONS PLATOON HAD SIX MEN IN THE BRIG AND WAS A CONSTANT DISCIPLINARY PROBLEM. HE REPLACED THE PLATOON LEADERSHIP WITH STAFF SERGEANT SEABOLD AND ME. HIS INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO

SQUARE THE PLATOON AWAY. WE STARTED BY GOING TO THE BARBER SHOP IN PLATOON FORMATION AND GETTING EVERYONE A REGULATION HAIRCUT. THAT WAS FOLLOWED BY A VERY RIGOROUS TRAINING SCHEDULE THAT BULL LET US DEVELOP AND HE APPROVED. AFTER TWO WEEKS THE ENTIRE PLATOON REQUESTED MAST WITH BULL. I THOUGHT MY CAREER WAS OVER. BULL TALKED TO THE PLATOON ALONE FOR ABOUT AN HOUR. HE FOUND STAFF SERGEANT SEABOLD AND ME IN THE COMPANY OFFICE, SAID WE WERE DOING AN OUTSTANDING JOB AND TO KEEP LEADING AND TRAINING EXACTLY AS WE HAD BEEN DOING. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT HE SAID TO THE PLATOON BUT WE HAD NO MORE DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS OF ANY SIGNIFICANCE.

BUT THAT NEXT DISCIPLINARY PROBLEM WAS VERY MEMORABLE. WHEN BULL ARRIVED AT 2/4, WE HAD THE HIGHEST UA RATE IN FMFPAC. HE PROMISED GENERAL KRULAK THAT HE WOULD LOWER IT AND WOULD START WITH 30 DAYS WITHOUT A UA. WE DID THAT WITH GREAT PERSONAL ATTENTION FROM THE BULL. ON THE 31ST DAY, HOWEVER, ONE OF MY TROOPS, PRIVATE KATELY, WENT UA. THE COLONEL WAS FURIOUS. HE TOLD SEABOLD AND ME TO GET OUT OF HIS SIGHT AND NOT TO RETURN UNTIL WE FOUND KATELY AND BROUGHT HIM BACK TO THE BATTALION. AFTER THREE DAYS WE FOUND HIM IN AN UPSTAIRS GARAGE APARTMENT IN WAIKIKI. WHEN HE SAW US COMING UP THE STAIRS, HE JUMPED OFF THE TOP LANDING AND BROKE HIS LEG. THE COLONEL ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT WE HAD PUSHED HIM OFF THE STAIRS. HE SAID DAMM, I TOLD YOU TO BRING HIM BACK – NOT BREAK HIS LEG.

HIS EMPHASIS ON LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER, PAID GREAT DIVIDENDS. WHEN WE DID REACH VIETNAM, WE REALIZED THAT EVERYTHING HE DID WAS OF VALUE AND HAD ONE PURPOSE – GETTING US READY FOR COMBAT. HE IMPARTED HIS COMBAT EXPERIENCE IN WWII AND KOREA ON US WHETHER WE WERE WILLING OR NOT. HE FREQUENTLY REMINDED US THAT HE HAD LEAD A FIRE TEAM, SQUAD, PLATOON, AND COMPANY IN COMBAT AND WANTED TO LEAD OUR BATTALION SHOULD WE BE CALLED UPON TO FIGHT.

HIS OBSESSION WITH TACTICS AND DEMANDING THAT HIS OFFICERS BE TACTICALLY PROFICIENT WAS ONE OF HIS HALLMARKS. IT WAS PARTICULARLY INTENSE REGARDING THE ART OF THE NIGHT ATTACK. I SUSPECT IT CAME FROM HIS WWII AND KOREA EXPERIENCE WITH THE NIGHT FIGHTING PROPENSITY OF THE JAPANESE AND CHINESE.

I WAS STILL THE PLATOON COMMANDER OF ECHO COMPANY'S WEAPONS PLATOON WHEN IT CAME TIME FOR OUR ANNUAL COMPANY TACTICAL TEST. WE WERE ON AN OUTER ISLAND AND IT WAS COLD, WINDY AND RAINING. THE COMPANY HAD MOVED TO A NIGHT ATTACK PROBABLE LINE OF DEPLOYMENT AND WAS PREPARING TO CONDUCT THE FINAL

ASSAULT UP THE DESIGNATED HILL. THE COMPANY COMMANDER WAS NOT SURE OF OUR POSITION AND WENT OUT ON A PERSONAL RECON TO CONFIRM OUR LOCATION. HE BECAME LOST AND DID NOT RETURN BY THE TIME WE WERE SUPPOSED TO CONDUCT THE ATTACK. THE BULL WAITED ABOUT 30 MINUTES AND SAID I WON'T HAVE MY TROOPS SUFFER UNDER THESE CONDITIONS UNNECESSARILY. HE ASKED ME IF I WAS CERTAIN OF OUR POSITION. I ANSWERED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE AND HE SAID TAKE CHARGE OF THE COMPANY AND CONDUCT THE ATTACK. THANKFULLY, WE WERE SUCCESSFUL. COLONEL FISHER WAS VERY PLEASED AND TOLD ME TO FIND THE COMPANY XO AND TAKE THE COMPANY BACK TO THE BASE CAMP. I WAS A LUCKY LIEUTENANT WHO BENEFITED FROM WELL TRAINED TROOPS AND FLEXIBLE COMPANY OFFICERS. THE NEXT DAY WE HAD A NEW COMPANY COMMANDER.

WOE BE IT UNTO THE LIEUTENANT WHO DID NOT KNOW EVERYTHING POSSIBLE ABOUT HIS TROOPS. IF GOING TO OFFICE HOURS, YOU BEST KNOW WHAT THAT MARINE HAD FOR BREAKFAST, WHERE HE WAS FROM, HIS EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, WAS HE FROM A BROKEN FAMILY, HOW MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, HIS GCT, HIS RIFLE REQUALIFICATION SCORES, HIS BATTLE SIGHTS, ETC. OUR PLATOON COMMANDER'S NOTEBOOKS WERE VERY FAT AND CURRENT.

AT ONE OF THE FIRST BATTALION OFFICE HOURS UNDER BULL, UNFORTUNATELY FOR ME IT WAS FOR OF MY TROOPS. I FAILED HIS QUESTIONING BADLY. HE DISMISSED THE CHARGES AND ASKED EVERYONE TO LEAVE THE OFFICE EXCEPT ME. HE TOLD ME THAT I WAS THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE STANDING BEFORE HIM FOR OFFICE HOURS FOR LEADERSHIP FAILURE. HE INSTRUCTED ME TO GO BACK TO MY PLATOON AND LEARN WHO MY TROOPS WERE AND THEN I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HANDLE THEIR DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS BETTER.

HE PUT INTO PRACTICE HIS BELIEF THAT, WITH MINOR ECEPTIONS, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD MARINE - IT HIS NCOs AND OFFICERS WHO CANNOT LEAD PROPERLY. ONE OF HIS GREATEST ATTRIBUTES WAS BEING ABLE TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH ANY MARINE - PRIVATE TO GENERAL. THIS WAS BEST SAID BY A MEMBER OF THE BATTALION, JIM MAZY - A PRIVATE AT THE TIME.

"LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOSEPH BULL FISHER WAS, IN MY OPINION, ONE OF THE GREATEST LEADERS OF MARINES THAT I HAVE EVER MET. TO HIM IT DIDN'T MATTER IF YOU WERE A PRIVATE, A GUNNY, A FIELD GRADE OFFICER, ANOTHER LTCOL OR EVEN A HIGHER RANKING OFFICER - AS A LEADER HE KNEW HOW TO TREAT ANOTHER MARINE WITH RESPECT, KINDNESS AND ABOVE ALL, FAIRNESS. I SAY THIS BECAUSE WHILE STILL IN K-BAY, HE ORDERED A COURT MARTIAL FOR ME FOR A STUPID THING I DID. AFTER IT WAS OVER AND MY BRIG TIME WAS SERVED HE SAW ME WALKING PAST THE BATTALION CP JUST A FEW DAYS AFTER I WAS RELEASED. HE STOPPED TO TALK TO ME AND GAVE ME THE CO TO PVT

TALK. AT THE SAME TIME HE GAVE ME THE FATHER TO SON TALK, YOU KNOW THE ONE - THE STRAIGHTEN UP AND FLY RIGHT OR MY BOOT WILL BE PLANTED DEEP KIND OF TALK. IN A VERY SHORT TIME, HE SHARED WITH ME THE WISDOM OF HIS YEARS AS AN ENLISTED MARINE THRU BATTALION COMMANDER."

YOU ALL KNOW THE STORY OF OUR DEPARTURE IN MARCH 1965 SUPPOSEDLY FOR OPERATION "SILVER LANCE." WE WERE ACTUALLY HEADING FOR VIETNAM WITH AN IN ROUTE STOP IN OKINAWA FOR A MONTH OF TRAINING.

WHILE IN OKINAWA, I WAS ASSIGNED AS THE RANGE SAFETY OFFICER FOR AN 81MM MORTAR LIVE FIRE EXERCISE ON RANGE 5. THE BULL WAS OBSERVING AND WAS NOT HAPPY WITH THE PLATOON'S PROFICIENCY. IN A RAGE, HE RELIEVED THE PLATOON COMMANDER. HE LOOKED UP AND SAW ME AND SAID: "YOU, YOU ARE NOW THE PLATOON COMMANDER OF MY MORTAR PLATOON. I WILL BE BACK TOMORROW MORNING TO OBSERVE LIVE FIRE AGAIN. IF THE PLATOON IS NOT PROFICIENT, I WILL RELIEVE YOU TOO."

THERE WERE MANY PROBLEMS WITH THE PLATOON – NOT THE FAULT OF THE PREVIOUS PLATOON COMMANDER. THE ONE STAFF NCO IN THE PLATOON WAS A STAFF SERGEANT WITH LIMITED MORTAR EXPERIENCE. I RETURNED TO THE BATTALION AREA AND EXPLAINED THE SITUATION TO MY COMPANY COMMANDER AND THE BATTALION XO. THEY PROVIDED ME THE STAFF NCO LEADERSHIP AND MORTAR EXPERIENCE WE NEEDED. WE HAD INTENSE GUN DRILL AND WE FIRED THE REST OF THE DAY AND MOST OF THE NIGHT. WE REGISTERED THE ENTIRE RANGE. THE NEXT MORNING WHEN THE COLONEL CAME TO OBSERVE FIRING, WE WERE READY. WHEN HE ASKED FOR FIRE IN A CERTAIN AREA, ALL I HAD TO DO WAS CALL A CONCENTRATION NUMBER TO THE FIRE DIRECTION CENTER AND ROUNDS WERE ON THE WAY IN SECONDS AND ON TARGET. WHEN HE LEFT, HE SAID: "THAT IS THE WAY A MORTAR PLATOON SHOULD SHOOT. YOU HAVE A PERMANENT JOB." AGAIN, I BENEFITED FROM THE LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE OF SOME VERY PROFESSIONAL STAFF NCOS. I WAS HAPPY WITH MY RIFLE PLATOON AND APPEALED THE ASSIGNMENT – TO NO AVAIL. I TOOK THE MORTAR PLATOON INTO VIETNAM AND COMMANDED IT UNTIL I CONVINCED BULL TO SEND ME BACK TO MY RIFLE PLATOON.

BEFORE LEAVING OKINAWA, **BOB MORRISON** REMINDED ME, BULL ASSEMBLED THE BATTALION IN THE AUDITORIUM AT CAMP HANSEN AND GAVE US HIS VERSION OF PATTON'S SPEECH BEFORE HIS COMMAND DEPLOYED OVERSEAS FROM LOUISIANA. HE PARTICULARLY REMEMBERS THE LINE WHERE BULL SAID: "I DON'T WANT ANYONE DYING FOR HIS COUNTRY WE WANT TO MAKE THE OTHER SON-OF-A-BITCH DIE FOR HIS. WHEN YOUR GRAND SON IS SITTING ON YOUR KNEE AND ASKS WHAT YOU

DID IN THE WAR, YOU WANT HAVE TO SAY THAT I SHOVELED SHIT IN LOUISIANA.”

THE NIGHT BEFORE WE LEFT, WE HAD AN “INCIDENT” IN THE CLUB THAT I REMEMBER WITH SOME FONDNESS. THE KIND THAT IN THOSE DAYS WE COULD GET AWAY WITH AND NOT DESTROY OUR CAREERS. SADLY THAT IS NOT THE CASE IN TODAY’S CORPS. YOU CAN’T BE “COLORFUL” NOW AND HAVE YOUR CAREER SURVIVE. WE HAD HUNG OUR BATTALION CREST ON THE WALL BEHIND THE CAMP HANSON OFFICER’S CLUB BAR - AS ALL BATTALION AND SEPARTE COMPANIES DID BY TRADITION WHEN THEY ARRIVED AT THE CAMP. INTEGRAL TO OUR CREST, JUST ABOVE THE MAGNIFICENT BASTARD NOTATION WAS PRINTED “SECOND TO NONE.” LATE IN THE EVENING, AFTER CONSIDERABLE CONSUMPTION OF ADULT BEVERAGES, SOMEONE IN THE TANK BATTALION PLACED A “NONE” NOTATION ON THEIR CREST. “SOMEONE” IN 2/4 CHARGED FORTH TO SALVAGE THE BATTALION’S HONOR BY REMOVING THE NONE SIGN. A MINOR MELEE RESULTED AND YOURS TRULY MANAGED TO RESCUE OUR CREST. DURING ONE THE NUMEROUS ASS CHEWINGS THAT FOLLOWED THE NEXT DAY, I RETURNED OUR CREST TO COLONEL FISHER. HE TOOK IT AND A FEW MINUTES LATER GAVE IT BACK TO ME AND SAID TO KEEP IT UNTIL HE ASKED FOR IT BACK. IT HANGS IN MY DEN TODAY.

WE LANDED AT CHU LAI ON 5 MAY 1965 WITHOUT INCIDENT. THE SECOND NIGHT WE MOVED FROM THE BEACH BEYOND HIGHWAY ONE TO HILL 46. SHORTLY AFTER DARK, THE RECON PLATOON SHOT UP A HERD OF PIGS. THIS HAD TO BE REPORTED TO REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS, WHICH DID NOT MAKE BULL VERY HAPPY.

THEN ABOUT MIDNIGHT, HE CALLED ME IN THE FSCC AND ASKED FOR AN ILLUMINATION ROUND CENTER OF SECTOR TO THE WEST, AWAY FROM THE BEACH AND IN FRONT OF OUR LINES. WE WERE IN A PERIMETER DEFENSE. THE MORTAR PLATOON HAD ONLY LIMITED PRACTICE IN FIRING IN A PERIMETER DEFENSE, AND HAD ONLY DONE SO WHILE WE WERE IN OKINAWA. THIS WAS A HOLDOVER FROM KOREA WHERE TOWARDS THE END OF THE WAR THE SECTOR OF FIRE WAS ALWAYS 180 DEGREES TO THE FRONT. FIRING 360 DEGREES WITH OUR MODEL OF SIGHTS THEN REQUIRED AIMING STAKES TO THE FRONT AND REAR. IF THE FIRE DIRECTION CENTER SENT THE WRONG STAKE ALIGNMENT TO THE GUNS, THE ROUND WOULD FIRE 180 DEGREES FROM ITS INTENDED PATH. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED. THE ROUND BURST DIRECTLY OVER THE TENT OF OUR REGIMENTAL COMMANDER, COLONEL E. P. DUPRAS.

I WAS IN THE FSCC AND HEARD COLONEL DUPRAS CALL COLONEL FISHER ON THE TACTICAL NET AND TELL HIM THAT THE LIGHT WAS VERY NICE BUT THAT HE REALLY DID NOT NEED IT. THE BULL SHOUTED FROM HIS

TENT; “GET ME THE 81 PLATOON COMMANDER, PLATOON SERGEANT, SECTION LEADER, SQUAD LEADER AND GUNNER – IN FRONT OF MY TENT – NOW!” WE ALL MOVED ON THE DOUBLE AS HE ORDERED. WHEN WE WERE ALL STANDING AT ATTENTION, HE RELIEVED ME, THE PLATOON SERGEANT AND THE SECTION LEADER. HE THEN TOLD THE SQUAD LEADER AND GUNNER THAT THEY WERE BUSTED ONE RANK. AS WE STARTED TO LEAVE, ALL WITH CAREER ENDING VISIONS, HE CALLED US BACK. HE INVITED US INTO HIS TENT AND TOLD US TO BREAK OUT OUR CANTEEN CUPS AND FIND A SEAT. WE DID SO AND HE Poured US ALL A SHOT OF BOURBON FROM A BOTTLE THAT HE PULLED FROM UNDER HIS RACK. HE THEN VERY CALMLY ASKED WHAT HAPPENED. I EXPLAINED THE FRONT AND BACK AIMING STAKE PROBLEM. HE SAID IT WAS OK AND THAT IT WAS A GOOD LESSON AND HE WAS HAPPY THAT NO ONE WAS HURT. HE THEN BEGAN A LONG STORY ABOUT HOW GOOD THE JAPANESE AND CHINESE WERE WITH MORTARS AND HOW HE USED HIS IN THE PACIFIC AND KOREA. HE CLOSED WITH HOW IMPORTANT OUR 81s WERE TO THE BATTALION AND HOW MUCH HE DEPENDED UPON US AS HIS IMMEDIATE ARTILLERY. WE LEFT AND RETURNED TO OUR DUTIES – NO ONE WAS RELIEVED OR BUSTED. WE WERE BETTER EDUCATED REGARDING MORTARS AND HIGHLY MOTIVATED TO BE THE BEST 81MM MORTAR PLATOON IN THE MARINE CORPS. I OFTEN WONDERED WHAT HE TOLD COLONEL DUPRAS, BUT NEVER HAD THE COURAGE TO BRING IT UP AGAIN AND WAS HAPPY THAT HE NEVER AGAIN MENTIONED THE INCIDENT.

I WAS STILL HIS 81 PLATOON COMMANDER ON OPERATION STARLIGHT IN AUGUST 1965 – THE FIRST MAJOR US COMBAT OPERATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR. BEFORE WE LEFT FOR THE VAN TUONG PENINSULA, HE TOLD ME BE TO NEVER BE MORE THAN TEN FEET FROM HIS ELBOW.

WE LANDED IN LZ WHITE WITH ECHO COMPANY AND IMMEDIATELY CAME UNDER FIRE. I HEARD BULL SHOUT: “OK MARINES, THIS IS NOT HOTEL STREET AND THOSE THINGS WHIZZING OVERHEAD ARE NOT PIN BALLS THEY ARE THROWING AT YOU.” THE FIRE WAS COMING FROM A HILL ADJACENT TO THE LZ AND WE WERE TAKING CASUALTIES. ECHO HAD NOT GOTTEN ORGANIZED YET AND BULL JUST GRABBED THE NEAREST PLATOON COMMANDER AND TOLD HIM TO ATTACK THE HILL. WE HAD ONE MORTAR SET UP AND HE TOLD ME TO START FIRING BEHIND THE HILL. THE PLATOON TOOK THE HILL WITH SOME DIFFICULTY BUT THE ENEMY FIRING ONTO THE LZ CEASED.

I OBSERVED HIM FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE OPERATION AND RECEIVED A BULL FISHER LESSON ON HOW TO RUN A BATTALION IN COMBAT. I SAW HIS STUBBORN RESOLUTENESS AND ABSOLUTE HELL-RAISING WITH HIGHER HEADQUARTERS IN GAINING RESUPPLY AND FIRE SUPPORT FOR HIS COMPANIES IN CONTACT. COLONEL, PEATROS, THE COMMANDER FOR

THE OPERATION, LANDED AT THE CP THE SECOND DAY TO TRY AND CALM THE BULL DOWN. ALTHOUGH COLONEL FISHER HAD GREAT RESPECT FOR COLONEL PEATROS, BULL TOLD HIM THAT HIS TROOPS NEEDED WATER ON HELICOPTERS - NOT HIM.

BULL FISHER HAD SUCCESSFULLY LED HIS MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS THROUGH THEIR FIRST SIGNIFICANT BATTLE OF VIETNAM IN TYPICAL BULL FISHER STYLE. HE CONTINUED TO DO SO UNTIL OCTOBER 1965 WHEN HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE III MAF STAFF FOR THE REMAINDER OF HIS TOUR. HIS LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING IN HAWAII AND OKINAWA SAVED MANY 2/4 LIVES DURING OUR FIRST SIX MONTHS IN COUNTRY. COLONEL FISHER HAD CONTINUED HIS TRADITION AS A GREAT COMBAT LEADER AS OUR BATTALION COMMANDER.

I ONLY SAW COLONEL FISHER ONCE AFTER I LEFT VIETNAM. I WAS A 1ST LIEUTENANT COMPANY COMMANDER AT 2ND INFANTRY TRAINING REGIMENT AT CAMP LEJEUNE IN THE SUMMER OF 1966. HE WAS VISITING FROM HQMC G-3 TO OBSERVE TRAINING. HE ASKED ME TO COME TO THE REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS AND GIVE HIM MY OPINION OF THE QUALITY OF TRAINING AT THE REGIMENT. WHEN I WALKED IN THE HQ, HE GAVE ME A WARM GREETING AND TOLD THE REGIMENTAL COMMANDER: "THIS LIEUTENANT KNOWS HOW TO TRAIN MARINES – I TAUGHT HIM. YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS." THAT MADE ME SO PROUD THAT THE BUTTONS NEARLY BURST ON MY UTILITY JACKET. I GAVE HIM MY CANDID OPINION REGARDING THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS. HE LISTENED QUIETLY AND WHEN I FINISHED HE ASKED ME TO WRITE MY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE AND SEND THEM TO HIM. LATER, CHANGES TO THE TRAINING PROGRAM WERE MADE AND SOME OF THEM INCLUDED MY SUGGESTIONS.

SHORTLY AFTER THAT I WENT TO HQMC TO CHECK MY FITNESS REPORTS. I WAS APPROACHING THE END OF MY FOUR YEARS OF OBLIGATED SERVICE AND WAS STRUGGLING WITH MAKING A DECISION AS TO WHETHER I WOULD RESIGN OR MAKE THE CORPS A CAREER. SINCE I HAD MORE INCIDENTS WITH COLONEL FISHER THAN THE AVERAGE LIEUTENANT, I WAS CONCERNED THAT MY FITNESS REPORTS WOULD BE AN INDICATOR THAT PROMOTION TO CAPTAIN MIGHT NOT BE IN MY FUTURE. I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AND HUMBLED BY HIS LAUDATORY REPORT COVERING MY TIME WITH HIM IN VIETNAM. HIS LAST SENTENCE IN THE COMMENTS SECTION SAID: "THIS OFFICER HAS A STRONG DESIRE TO CLOSE WITH AND KILL THE ENEMY."

I REMAINED IN THE CORPS FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS.

THE BULL RETIRED IN 1968 TO WHISPERING PINES NORTH CAROLINA. I ASKED JEAN WHY AND SHE RELATED THE FOLLOWING:

“JOE HATED STAFF AND PAPER WORK. HE WAS AT HQMC AND WANTED TO GET BACK TO THE THING HE LOVED – BEING IN THE DIRT WITH HIS MARINES. THE COMMANDANT TOLD HIM THAT IF HE WANTED TO MAKE GENERAL, HE HAD TO GO TO THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE AND WAS ISSUED ORDERS THERE. WE WENT TO CARLYLE BARRACKS AND CHECKED OUT THE SCHOOL AND AREA. THE WORST SIX MONTHS OF HIS LIFE WAS AT THE ARMED FORCES STAFF COLLEGE AND HE DID NOT WANT A REPEAT OF THAT FOR NINE MONTHS AT CARLYLE. HE ALSO KNEW THAT HE WOULD BE A PAPER PUSHER THE REST OF HIS CAREER AND DID NOT WANT THAT. HE DECIDED THAT IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO RETIRE. SHE SAID HE LOVED RETIREMENT AND PLAYING GOLF AND RAISING FLOWERS – THE PEONY WAS HIS FAVORITE. FOR THAT, HIS FRIENDS IN RETIREMENT CALLED HIM FERDINAND.”

COLONEL FISHER DIED OF A HEART ATTACK IN 1981. ACCORDING TO JEAN, HE WAS ON THE WHISPERING PINES GOLF COURSE HOLDING THE FLAG AT THE FIRST HOLE – PLAYING THE GAME THAT HE LOVED SO MUCH.

HIS MARINES LOVED HIM. HE WAS A LEGENDARY LEADER. HE INSTILLED IN HIS MARINES A BROTHERHOOD THAT NOT ONLY SPANNED HIS THREE WARS BUT CONTINUES TO DO SO FOR ANY MARINE WHO HAS SERVED IN THE 2D BATTALION, FOURTH MARINE REGIMENT.

GOD BLESS BULL AND CHESTY.

THANK YOU