

Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps

Heywood Hall Dedication Ceremony

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

June 1, 2012

COLONEL DALE ALFORD: Good afternoon.

And good afternoon, General Amos, Bonnie, General Gray and General Laster. And our distinguished guests, all the general officers that grace us here today, friends and family of the Basic School.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you enter the foyer out front, which we'll do shortly, of this fine building, you'll look up and you'll see a sign in the main hallway before you go down the passageway. That sign hangs there to remind every instructor of this great institution the reason they're here.

And that sign reads: "In every war, Marines have borne a heavy burden far out of proportion to their limited numbers. Their success stands as a silent tribute to their leaders. Today's Basic School students will soon be leading Marines. Your mission is to educate these officers, thereby making them worthy of this privilege."

If you're a Marine here today, regardless of the area that you serve, you'll know the truth of these words. Every officer sitting here today came to the Basic School. He can attest to the fact that if every Marine is a rifleman because of our boot camps, then every Marine officer is a rifle platoon commander because of Camp Barrett and the Basic School.

I believe that this is the premier leadership and ethics academy in the world, and it puts its stamp on every officer who comes through this great place. This institution has been molding fine citizen soldiers since its inception. And now, as you see around you, we have a building that is equal to that sacred mission. This building of this new Heywood Hall began with then Colonel James Laster, the CO of the Basic School at the time, realizing that the Marine Corps needed to upgrade its facilities, that its main facility was crumbling around them, that for years it was deteriorating and the training and education that was going on here needed to be upgraded and needed to be rebuilt.

And he stepped forward, and this is a great story that hopefully he'll tell again today over a couple beers of how he did that. And the story is a story of the moral courage to step forward when he wasn't sure if the leadership above him was quite in step with it.

So hopefully, sir, you'll tell that story today.

Through his perseverance, this monumental project that we're sitting in today was transformed, and the new Camp Barrett began. And as you can see, the most important result is what we're sitting in here; the classrooms, the world-class training facility that we now have for this world-class school.

It's humbling and sometimes awe-inspiring to walk down the hallway of this main hallway and the pictures of the former Basic School COs looking back at you, because I know that we owe each of them the best possible Marine officer that we can produce.

For those of you who haven't been back for a while, I can tell you that we're still doing it right and we're still training lieutenants and making great Marine officers every single day. You

don't have to look any further than the performance of the lieutenant that's executing his duties right now as we speak in Afghanistan to see proof of that.

Each commander of this school has held this sacred trust to build upon the previous commanders' successes. And before I move on and introduce our guest of honor, I'd like to recognize our former commanders of Basic School in attendance here today.

As I call your name, please stand as I recognize you.

Major General James Laster.
Brigadier General Edwin Kelley.
Brigadier General George Smith.
Colonel Robert Fawcett.

Thank you for being here today. (Applause)

And my very best friend -- one of my very best friends in the entire world, Colonel Royal Mortenson. Thank you. (Applause) One of my true mentors and someone I'll call a brother for the rest of my life.

Now, it's my privilege to introduce our guest of honor for today's ceremony, my Commandant, the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos.

(Applause)

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Thanks, Dale.

I've got my trusty staff just like all Commandants have done. In fact, Brett Clark's hiding back there. I've got all kinds of stuff in here, and it's all good. But I've taken -- as I've walked in here and saw some of my mentors in here, General Gray and General Mundy, thank you for being Commandants here. You know how important this is. It was important to you during your tenure.

I was a young Lieutenant Colonel down here and working for then Colonel Kelley and we had this little short guy running around here in his cammies all the time sneaking in, it was Commandant Al Gray. And we had all kinds of things going. I mean, we had Bill Lynn here and the instructors. It was like antibodies, you know, trying to push back on Bill Lynn and maneuver warfare. And think about where we are today. Think about this institution. I looked at the Basic School commanders, Colonel Kelley -- General Kelley and Jim Laster and George Smith and Royal Mortenson, and I just -- and I looked at the new breed. Of course, Dale, who I -- who is like a son to me. And then I look at the new breed and I look at, you know, Todd [Desgrosseilliers], he's in the on-deck circle. And he's excited about it, and this really has been -- Colonel Fawcett, this has been the strength of our Officer corps for all these years.

I was at dinner last night at our home, and I just was talking to Dan Yurkovich up there. And I'd met Dan -- and I tell this -- I used to tell this story for a couple years. And he was a 2nd

Lieutenant, and it was on one of my trips early on when I was Assistant Commandant. I landed up in the northern part -- it's not even Helmand. It's up in the mountains of Afghanistan, up in Golestan. And we don't own that piece of the turf anymore, but really bad guy territory. And so I landed there in a CH-53E helicopter, and this 2nd Lieutenant comes up, butter bars, brand-new kid, he still looks like he's about 18. And there's bad guys all around this place. I mean, this was -- they were in the middle of a valley surrounded by Taliban.

And I sit in this CP lined with Hesco barriers, and this 2nd Lieutenant Dan Yurkovich is briefing me like he's a seasoned briefer down at J3 at the National Military Command Center. And I remember looking. He had two agency guys; ball caps, beards. And they were up there with him. And I think Dan had, I don't know, 85 Marines up there with him, something like that. 2nd Lieutenant. I asked him, "Why wouldn't you have done it out of the Basic School?"

He said, "Well, sir, I went to TBS and I went to IOC." And then he was kind of a last-minute fill-in for the battalion. So he joined the battalion way towards the end of PTP and they deployed. It was one of those late-deploying training battalions and then straight into Afghanistan. So you did the math, and it was something like six or seven months after he began his commission, he's up there alone and unafraid with his young Marines, one corpsman and two agency guys. And the two agency guys looked at me, while he was halfway through the brief, and I kind of looked at them to make sure the quality of brief I was getting was actually true. And they both looked to me behind his back and they went (gesturing). And that's what we produce here. They leave here, they go to IOC, then they go to their various MOS schools and they're ready to rock and roll.

We've got the instructor staff in the back. General Kelley, then Colonel Kelley, was stuck with Lieutenant Colonel Amos as the chief instructor here. We lived -- we thought the Basic School facilities were terrible then. That was 1988. The windows were being replaced. The air conditioners were broken down. General Gray came down for mess night. We were just laughing about it. He came down for mess night, and it was the late summer. The air conditioning historically was not working in the chow hall. So the mess night -- and I can't remember what company it was -- sweat pouring off us in there. They lit the cigars. And, of course, nothing was moving the air. So the smoke slowly lowered down. And he said that famous speech.

Probably the best speech I ever heard you give, General Gray. You said, "Lieutenants, it's too hot in here. If you'll invite me back to speak to you, I won't make a speech tonight." The place erupted into applause. (Laughter) They went, "You're the greatest Commandant we've ever had," and off we went into the -- then the gold carpet area, which was any number of carpets between now and then. But this is a magic place.

And General Laster, you have -- you really -- we owe you a great debt of gratitude. I mean, all the commanders before you, the training has never been in question, but our facilities just began to just decay. Fifty-three years old, the old Heywood Hall. Fifty-three years old. And this Heywood Hall will be here for another 50 years the way the Marine Corps does -- probably another hundred years. (Laughter)

So this is an exciting day. I wish we were outside. Dale Alford promised me that he would have sod out there instead of straw, and it did. It looked to me like it was -- I was impressed. But we've got a couple partners here we need to say thank you to. I didn't mention -- these are our construction -- okay, here's -- I've got some names here. We've got the -- Who's here from NAVFAC? Okay. We don't care about NAVFAC. (Laughter)

You're here from Harkins, right? Okay. Here's what I've got: I've got Mike Ebrahimi, vice president of construction. Mike, thank you very much. Mike Mallow, the project manager. Okay. And Jeff Mallow, the construction site manager. So, is this like the Redskins football team where the coach hires his son and his brothers and his sisters? Is that what's going on here? (Laughter)

Listen, you have done a masterful job here, and I just want to say thank you on behalf of us. It's a business deal. We understand it. But it's also personal for us. We waited an awful long time for buildings and facilities like this. And we don't get them very often in the Marine Corps. So if you would tell your employees and tell everybody that put hammer to nail that the Marine Corps says thank you very much. We're very proud of the facility that you've built. How about a round of applause. (Applause)

We've got a bunch of generals here. General Draude is here. General Mills, I don't think -- maybe -- he's probably still stuck in traffic trying to get out here. Rusty Blackman is here. Sergeant Major Barrett, did you make it down here? He's stuck over there. We were over there talking to all the Officers and Staff NCOs. But last but not least, the First Lady of the Marine Corps, my bride Bonnie. (Applause)

I just want to take a minute here to talk about this guy. When you come to the Home of the Commandants, you come out of our bedroom and you make a left-hand turn and you just kind of start up the ladder to go up to the third deck, and here is General Heywood. And I was looking at that mustache every time I see it, and I was trying to imagine who the Commandant was that changed the regulations. (Laughter)

It wasn't you, was it, General Gray or General Mundy? It wasn't you. What a gnarly looking mustache. The father of the School of Application. I mean, this is where it began. He's the Commandant that had that vision. He did several other things. First of all, he was a 19-year-old 2nd Lieutenant. So he was younger than you, Dan Yurkovich. He probably looked like it, too. But he did a whole host of things as he was growing up in the Marine Corps. I mean, he quelled riots. He began to appreciate the value of non-commissioned officers, and he put his efforts into training them. As Commandant, he put his faith into action and made the -- this is pretty neat -- made the senior sergeant of coordinates and gunnery a part of our rank structure. Because of his efforts, we have the rank of Gunnery Sergeant today. It was him. He was the guy that, because of his interest in marksmanship and gunnery, both cannon gunnery and hand-held weapons gunnery, we have what we call today rifle ranges and pistol ranges. He's the guy that set up the first table of qualifications for our weapons. It was General Heywood.

He also designed the Good Conduct Medal, which I found absolutely fascinating. If you look at the medal on its front, it features a 19th Century Marine who is manning a Naval cannon.

Civil War experience, as a Union officer aboard warships, tested his mettle in the chaos of battle. He did perform admirably. Heywood developed an understanding of early maneuver warfare that would later become what we call expeditionary operations. He applied his knowledge as Commandant ultimately ensuring the readiness for the Spanish-American War. Prior to the turn of the century when competition among military services was high, Heywood effectively reorganized and grew the Corps to four times its size before he became the Commandant.

Major General Heywood's career spanned 45 years. His contributions were many, but none greater than his School of Application was now the Basic School. General Heywood would no doubt feel pretty fulfilled if he were here today at TBS. If he could see the kind of lieutenant that is born in this institution, the very lieutenants that you see in Afghanistan and you saw in Iraq and around the world, one who selflessly, courageously, smartly and ethically leads Marines during any mission and any crime against any foe to certain victory. Of these men and women of great character, I know our 9th Commandant would be more than proud.

I want to close today by publicly thanking the officers and the staff, the warrior scholars of the Basic School for what you've contributed to our Corps. Your work here cannot be measured. I see the fruits of your labors throughout the Corps as Sergeant Major Barrett and I travel across the globe. The spirit in the word 'Marine' and the clarity of officership you give our lieutenants is almost spiritual. Thank you for being uncompromising with our standards as you develop our officer corps, and thank you for viewing the indomitable spirit that resides in our young officers today.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a wonderful occasion. It's historic. The buildings -- or this hall is, of course, complete. Dale and his instructors and his staff have been using it now for many, many months. But this is only part of it. The rest of the construction will continue. And those barracks where our young lieutenants are living, it's a far cry from what they lived in when you were Commandants and you were COs of the Basic School. These are pretty neat barracks.

The chow hall we'll eventually get. We're going to get a new armory. I don't know if it's open yet or not. It is? A new motor transport facility where we take care of our vehicles. One day, this place will be absolutely stunning, and it will be a worthy place to train our brand-new lieutenants. Jim Laster, thank you for your vision. This last Saturday, Bonnie and I were at United States Naval Academy. And we commissioned 267 brand-spanking-new 2nd Lieutenants. And I will tell you this: They are hungry to come to Basic School. They're ready to go. So stand by because we've got a good crop coming out of Annapolis this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. Commandants, thank you for being here today. It's raining. It's tornadoing. You've got no better place to be than out here. (Laughter) And to the leadership of this school and for the commanding officers that have been here before, for Chris Stillings, Commanding Officer of Officer Candidates School, thank you for being here and God bless you. For Harkins, tell your employees that we give them a hearty "oorah."

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. (Applause)

(END)