

COMMANDANT'S MESSAGE

August 2008

Fellow Marines:

This past month we lost a member of our Detachment, Virgil A. Tracy, Master Gunnery Sergeant, USMC (Retired). There have been other people who have passed away recently who are close to us, like family members and friends. That is why this newsletter is dedicated to Virgil in memory and celebration of his life. It is also an opportunity to reflect on important matters concerning our own mortality.

Very few of us will ever know the exact time, date and place the Supreme Commandant will call us to our final duty station. The question then will be, are we prepared for these orders. We know we should live life as though every day is our last so that we can get the most out of it and even more importantly so we can give of ourselves to others through love and understanding. But what about the cold realities of preparing for death? Do we wait until the doctor gives us some magic time frame of when he expects us to die due to illness? Most will die with little or no warning? So how do we prepare?

The only way to ensure things go the way we want after we are gone is to properly plan for our departure. How do we do this? We start by talking with our loved ones now, if we haven't already done so. We need to tell people how we would like to leave this world. If we become ill or seriously injured have we decided how we choose to die with dignity; what type of funeral service would we like; how do we want our earthly remains to be disposed; how will we continue to provide for the welfare of our loved ones once we are gone? These are all important questions that may sound morbid, but are necessary. It will reduce your stress should something happen and moreover help your loved ones reduce their stress in an already stressful time, knowing what you wanted them to do.

Here is a simplified plan to consider. First, prepare a will to ensure your loved ones are taken care of properly after you are gone. It is never too late to have a will and it is always a good idea to review that will on a regular basis, because things change in our lives and these changes need to be addressed. Second, consider having a living will so that if you become unable to make decisions for yourself due to illness or physical injury, your family will know what your wishes are concerning extraordinary means of keeping you alive. Nothing can be more devastating to families than to make decisions about life support for a loved one, especially if that person has never expressed an opinion on their personal preference or beliefs. Third, talk about how you would like to be remembered and how others should celebrate your life. The people left behind need to have their time and place to grieve and remember. Your proper planning for these events; wakes, funerals and burial, will greatly enhance their ability to become involved and to respect your wishes. Fourth, get all your documents in order to ensure your wishes can be fulfilled properly without complications. Let family members know where all your documents are; try to keep them in one central location with easy access. What types of documents should you have filed? Lets start with the most obvious; latest version of your will, any living will, copy of your DD-214, copies of all life insurance certificates, a copy of your financial portfolio, donor cards if you have decided to leave vital organs to help others or advance scientific research, and a list of important points of contact to assist them in fulfilling your wishes. Who are such points of contact? They can be an executor, VA representatives, insurance agents, financial advisors, pastors or spiritual advisors, funeral directors, doctors, to mention just a few.

One important point of contact you may want to consider is the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) within the Detachment. This person can help point you and your family in the right direction concerning your VA benefits, especially death and burial benefits. Our current VSO is James Maroon and he will be only too happy to assist you in any way that he can, as will any other officer or staff member in the Detachment.

Remember, it is never too late to start making your plans; the sooner the better. You will be surprised how much of a burden will be lifted off your shoulders if you do so. In the meantime, here's wishing you all long life, good health, prosperity, and happiness.

Semper Fi

Joe Goodrow
Commandant
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