

*This paper is dedicated to Lt. Joe Montoya and LCPL Alfred Herring who were killed September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1970 while defending the freedom of the South Vietnamese people. They represent all that is good about Semper Fi-ism. In 1997 Alfred Herring was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism that night.*



**JOE HERMAN MONTOYA**

1LT - O2 - Marine Corps - Reserve

Length of service 6 years  
His tour began on Jul 16, 1970  
Casualty was on Sep 20, 1970  
In QUANG NAM, SOUTH VIETNAM  
HOSTILE, GROUND CASUALTY  
MULTIPLE FRAGMENTATION WOUNDS

**ALFRED JIMMY HERRING JR**

LCPL - E3 - Marine Corps - Regular

Length of service 1 years  
His tour began on Feb 15, 1970  
Casualty was on Sep 20, 1970  
In QUANG NAM, SOUTH VIETNAM  
HOSTILE, GROUND CASUALTY  
MULTIPLE FRAGMENTATION WOUNDS



## Semper Fi - ism by Tom Gillespie

Some religions exist, are named, and fit into a specific category of belief systems. On the other hand there is a “religion” which exists, which has not been named and fits only into its own category. Since only one organization in the world can lay claim to this belief system, I have chosen to give it a name, as I am a member in good standing within the organization. It shall from this point forward be known as Semper Fi – ism. It is an abbreviation of the Latin words Semper Fidelis meaning Always Faithful, and belongs solely to the United States Marines. One might argue that this is not, and cannot be, a religion. Those words would be uttered by someone who has never worn the uniform and gone into combat. Once you have completed reviewing this paper there will be no doubt in your mind that for Marines at least, Semper Fi – ism is truly a “religion.”

Having been established on November 10, 1775, Semper Fi –ism is the youngest of all religions and is linear in nature, as we know it will be in existence for a specific period of time, at least based on the quote of James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, upon the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima. “The raising of the American Flag on Iwo Jima means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years.” By its sheer existence this choice will result in a greater significance accorded to human history.

The foundation of Semper Fi-ism is based upon three pillars, God, Country, and Corps. Semper Fi-ism makes no distinction which god can be worshiped, as this religion accepts all belief systems which subscribe to their beliefs of Courage, Honor, and Commitment. Whether your belief system is in monotheism, polytheism, or henotheism you are welcomed, if you have what it takes to be one of us. In fact some are atheists who mumble the words when needed, just to belong to this “religion.” Regardless of a god preference, Marines are neither non-dualism nor dualism. They are self orientated; in so much as what truly matters to them down to their core is the mission at hand.

The human dilemma faced by each person striving to worthy of earning the symbol of this religion, the eagle, globe, and anchor, is basically ignorance, not basically good nor inherently bad, but rather not qualified. Many religions have a form of suffering that defines the religion. Semper Fi-ism redefines that suffering, magnifying it tenfold, and labels it “boot camp.”



This human dilemma is addressed by the top one percent of the followers of Semper Fi-ism, and they are reverently referred to as Drill Instructors, who teach the “maggots” who dare to believe they have what it takes to be a United States Marine, the meaning and history of their beloved Corps.

Salvation in Semper Fi-ism is not found through jariki, tariki, or a Messiah figure but instead through the accomplishment of each mission, living a life aligned with and defined by the dimensions of Semper Fi-ism and being an example to others. The following are the dimensions of Semper Fi-ism and what makes a United States Marine.

- The Crucible is a ritual dimension in which a “recruit,” after enduring 12 or more weeks of “boot camp,” endures a 54 hour experience in which he or she hikes 20 miles in full battle gear, just to begin the process of overcoming multiple obstacles, which can only be navigated through teamwork. During this period of time they will be afforded minimal sleep and rations. The Crucible is the defining period of becoming part of the “religious” sect known as Marine.
- Semper Fi-ism is filled with mythology and narrative writings. The mythical aspect stems from the legendary men and women who have preceded them having performed heroic feats one can only aspire to be like. Men like Chesty Puller, who earned five Navy Crosses during his time, and provided inspirational quotes such as “We’re surrounded. Good, now we can kill the bastards in any direction.” Enemies of this religion have given them their own names to describe them such as Devil Dogs due to the ferocity of their efforts against them. These foes have only made the mistake of not respecting their abilities once.
- The philosophical dimension of Semper Fi-ism is best outlined in a page from About.com which lists the definitions of each of the Marine Corps values.

### **U.S. Marine Corps' Core Values**

Generation after generation of American men and women has given special meaning to the title United States Marine. These same men and women live by a set of enduring Core Values which forms the bedrock of their character. The Core Values give Marines strength and regulate their behavior; they bond the Marine Corps into a total force that can meet any challenge.

## **Honor**

Honor guides Marines to exemplify the ultimate in ethical and moral behavior; to never lie cheat or steal; to abide by an uncompromising code of integrity; respect human dignity; and respect others. The quality of maturity, dedication, trust and dependability commit Marines to act responsibly; to be accountable for their actions; to fulfill their obligations; and to hold others accountable for their actions.

## **Courage**

Courage is the mental, moral and physical strength ingrained in Marines. It carries them through the challenges of combat and helps them overcome fear. It is the inner strength that enables a Marine to do what is right; to adhere to a higher standard of personal conduct; and to make tough decisions under stress and pressure.

## **Commitment**

Commitment is the spirit of determination and dedication found in Marines. It leads to the highest order of discipline for individuals and units. It is the ingredient that enables 24-hour a day dedication to Corps and country. It inspires the unrelenting determination to achieve a standard of excellence in every endeavor.

Doctrinal aspects of Semper Fi-ism also play a huge role in outlining the traits and leadership aspects of every Marine. Such as the following listed at:

<http://classes.engr.oregonstate.edu/eecs/fall2007/ece507-003/LeadershipPrinciple.pdf>

### **Marine Corps Leadership Traits**

**Dependability:** The certainty of proper performance of duty.

**Bearing:** Creating a favorable impression in carriage, appearance and personal conduct at all times.

**Courage:** The mental quality that recognizes fear of danger or criticism, but enables a man to proceed in the face of it with calmness and firmness.

**Decisiveness:** Ability to make decisions promptly and to announce them in clear, forceful manner.

**Endurance:** The mental and physical stamina measured by the ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress and hardship.

**Enthusiasm:** The display of sincere interest and exuberance in the performance of duty.

**Initiative:** Taking action in the absence of orders.

- Integrity: Uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles; includes the qualities of truthfulness and honesty.
- Judgment: The ability to weigh facts and possible solutions on which to base sound decisions.
- Justice: Giving reward and punishment according to merits of the case in question. The ability to administer a system of rewards and punishments impartially and consistently.
- Knowledge: Understanding of a science or an art. The range of one's information, including professional knowledge and an understanding of your Marines.
- Tact: The ability to deal with others without creating offense.
- Unselfishness: Avoidance of providing for one's own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others.
- Loyalty: The quality of faithfulness to country, the Corps, the unit, to one's seniors, subordinates and peers.

### **Marine Corps Leadership Principles**

- know you and seek self-improvement.
- Be technically and tactically proficient.
- Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates.
- Make sound and timely decisions.
- Set the example.
- Know your Marines and look out for their welfare.
- Keep your Marines informed.
- Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.
- Ensure assigned tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished.
- Train your Marines as a team.
- Employ your command in accordance with its capabilities.

### **In addition there is the creed of the Non-Commissioned Officer:**

*I am the backbone of the United States Marine Corps; I am a Marine Non-Commissioned Officer.  
I serve as part of the vital link between my commander (and all officers) and enlisted Marines.  
I will never forget who I am or what I represent.  
I will challenge myself to the limit and be ever attentive to duty.  
I am now, more than ever, committed to excellence in all that I do, so that I can set the proper  
example for other Marines.  
I will demand of myself all the energy, knowledge and skills I possess, so that I can instill*

*confidence in those I teach.*

*I will constantly strive to perfect my own skills and to become a good leader.*

*Above all I will be truthful in all I say or do.*

*My integrity shall be as impeccable as my appearance. I will be honest with myself, with those under my charge and with my superiors.*

*I pledge to do my best to incorporate all the leadership traits into my character. For such is the heritage I have received from that long, illustrious line of professionals who have worn the blood stripe so proudly before me.*

*I must give the very best I have for my Marines, my Corps and my Country for though today I instruct and supervise in peace, tomorrow, I may lead in war.*

The ethical dimension each Marine swears to are the articles of conduct, taken from a collection of articles from [www.SgtGrit.com](http://www.SgtGrit.com).

I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and to aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information nor take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them in every way.

When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country or its allies or harmful to their cause.

I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free.

I will trust in my God and in the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The social and institutional dimensions make Semper Fi-ism unique in that we follow the military code of justice, which has 174 articles outlining jurisdiction, behavior and punishment, and can be viewed on the internet through Google, by typing in Uniform Code of Military

Justice. This would normally be considered an ethical dimension, but since it also outlines multi-dimensional issues it is listed here. In Semper Fi-ism there are several positions which fall into a hierarchy, just below God. These would be the Commander in Chief, the President of the United States, followed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Although there are other layers in between, they recognize these two positions to be the most sacred. Faith and allegiance to these "god-like" leaders is shaped by the mutual experiences in the Corps. From boot camp to fulfilling the last mission, we are brothers and sisters and have never, ever, knowingly left a Marine behind in combat. Traditions are interpreted by officers who lead men and women in their daily activities. In addition, enlisted personnel ranging from Sergeant Major to Private make up the ranks of the Corps and execute orders, handed down from above. These traditions are ceremonial in nature at times, such as celebrating the Marine Corps birthday every November 10<sup>th</sup> where the youngest and oldest Marine present, ceremoniously cut a birthday cake, symbolizing the handing off of the reins of the Corps from one generation to the next. As with any organization there is a need for policies and conflict resolution. In the Corps policy is set by the Commander in Chief. In regards to conflict this is handled at the unit level, by Corporals and Sergeants as needed. In addition, each Marine is obligated to resolve any issue which arises on their own, should the need arise.

Experiential dimensions arise from one true fact. Every Marine is a rifleman and no matter where you are in the world, meeting a fellow Marine for the first time, there is one known fact between you. Each experienced and passed the test to become one of the Few, the Proud, a Marine. This kinship lasts a lifetime and only grows stronger and bolder as time passes, and your time has come and gone when you were able to fulfill the duties of being a United States Marine. Upon leaving the Corps its legacy is left to another generation to not only to live up to, but to enhance in value and esteem. The lessons and experiences learned last a lifetime and guide a Marine in their daily living, being it raising a family to be good, honest and loyal people of society, or embarking on a career where they will excel at what they do, regardless of how others around them react and handle the circumstances. And one thing is a constant. Whether they are a freshly minted Marine, or an old withering Marine, you will be there for them in their time of need, because Semper Fi-ism has nothing to do with self. It is about the brotherhood and sisterhood you belong to forever.

Many religions have gowns and clothing which are identifiable to their belief system. Semper Fi-ism is no different. Perhaps the most noted garments worn are called Dress Blues, and are identifiable anywhere in the world, and are viewed by those unblessed enough to wear them with respect, and in some cases fear, for they have been known to bring help and aid to those in need, and death to those who might bring harm to their way of life. This is perhaps best described by the epitaph of Lucius Cornelius Sulla, famous general and legendary dictator of ancient Rome. "No friend ever served me, and no enemy ever wronged me, whom I have not

repaid in full." Today we utilize the term "no better friend, no worse enemy." [www.answer.com](http://www.answer.com) lists the definition of this phrase this way:

**No better friend:** someone who will kill to protect you; someone who will give their life for you; someone who will be right there in your times of trouble and, thinking of you and your problems, will sacrifice so that you might get through your problem.

**No worst enemy:** someone who will not hesitate to destroy you even if that means destroying himself in the process; someone who will chase you down to the ends of the earth to extract revenge; someone who will cause you blood and tears and smile when it happens.

In addition music plays an important part in Semper Fi-ism as there is a sacred score titled the Marine Corps Hymn, which all members can at least recite the first stanza. The longer a Marine has practiced Semper Fi-ism, the more likely they can recite every verse. Perhaps the most cherished symbol is the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, as it signifies who we are and is recognizable from just about any distance, if you have worn it. In addition, head dress is a key characteristic of this "religion" and comes in many forms depending on the uniform of the day. Upon completing your time of "active" duty in our religion, most Marines begin to wear articles of clothing and head dress which celebrates, and reinforces the tradition of the Marine Corps. In many cases it has been reported by spouses of these amazing creatures, that they just wish they owned something that didn't have that damn emblem plastered on it.



And lastly, to demonstrate that yes Marines take their "religion" very seriously, but there is still a little boy or girl inside just itching to get out, they have created a set of Murphy's Law that apply to our craft which is listed at:

<http://www.barkingmoonbat.com/index.php/forums/viewthread/30/> and is as follows:

### **Marine Corps Rules of a Gun-fight**

Bring a gun. Preferably, bring at least two guns. Bring all of your friends who have guns.

Anything worth shooting is worth shooting twice. Ammo is cheap. Your life is expensive.

Only hits count. The only thing worse than a miss, is a slow miss.

If your shooting stance is good, you're probably not moving fast enough nor using cover correctly.

Move away from your attacker. Distance is your friend.

(Lateral and diagonal movement are preferred.)

If you can choose what to bring to a gunfight, bring a long gun and a friend with a long gun.

In ten years nobody will remember the details of caliber, stance, or tactics. They will only remember who lived.

If you are not shooting, you should be communicating, reloading, and running.

Accuracy is relative: most combat shooting standards will be more dependent on "pucker factor" than the inherent accuracy of the gun.

Use a gun that works EVERY TIME.

Someday someone may kill you with your own gun, but they should have to beat you to death with it because it is empty.

Always cheat; always win. The only unfair fight is the one you lose.

Have a plan. And have a back-up plan, because the first one won't work.

Use cover or concealment as much as possible.

Flank your adversary when possible. Protect yours.

Don't drop your guard.

Always tactical load and threat scan 360 degrees.

Watch their hands. Hands kill.

(In God we trust. Everyone else, keep your hands where I can see them).

Decide to be aggressive ENOUGH, quickly ENOUGH.

The faster you finish the fight, the less shot you will get.

Be polite. Be professional. But, have a plan to kill everyone you meet.

Be courteous to everyone, friendly to no one.

Your number one Option for Personal Security is a lifelong commitment to avoidance, deterrence, and de-escalation.

Do not attend a gunfight with a handgun, the caliber of which does not start with a ".4"

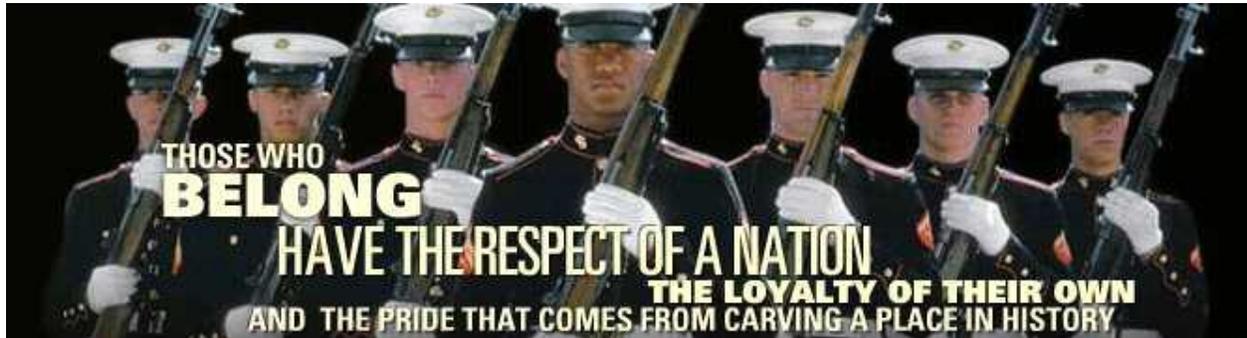
### **Navy Rules to Gun-fighting**

Go to Sea

Send the Marines

Drink Coffee

I hope you now have a better understanding of Semper Fi-ism, its belief system, its core values, principles and traits and why we exist.



## When the Lord was creating "Vietnam Vets"

By Bob Scheyer © 1989 [Adapted from the original written by Erma Bombeck]

When the Lord was creating Vietnam veterans, He was into His 6th day of overtime when an angel appeared.

"You're certainly doing a lot of fiddling around on this one."

And God said, "Have you seen the specs on this order?"

A Nam vet has to be able to run 5 miles through the bush with a full pack on, endure with barely any sleep for days, enter tunnels his higher ups wouldn't consider doing, and keep his weapons clean and operable.

He has to be able to sit in his hole all night during an attack, hold his buddies as they die, walk point in unfamiliar territory known to be VC infested, and somehow keep his senses alert for danger.

He has to be in top physical condition existing on c-rats and very little rest. And he has to have 6 pairs of hands."

The angel shook his head slowly and said, "6 pair of hands....no way."

The Lord say's "It's not the hands that are causing me problems....It's the 3 pair of eyes a Nam vet has to have."

"That's on the standard model?" asked the angel.

The Lord nodded. "One pair that sees through elephant grass, another pair here in the side of his head for his buddies, another pair here in front that can look reassuringly at his bleeding, fellow soldier and say, "You'll make it" .....when he knows he won't.

"Lord, rest, and work on this tomorrow."

"I can't," said the Lord. "I already have a model that can carry a wounded soldier 1,000 yards during a firefight, calm the fears of the latest FNG, and feed a family of 4 on a grunt's paycheck."

The angel walked around the model and said, "Can it think?"

"You bet," said the Lord. "It can quote much of the UCMJ; recite all his general orders, and engage in a search and destroy mission in less time than it takes for his fellow Americans back home to discuss the morality of the War, and still keep his sense of humor."

"This Nam vet also has phenomenal personal control. He can deal with ambushes from hell, comfort a fallen soldier's family, and then read in his hometown paper how Nam vets are baby killers, psychos, addicts, killers of innocent civilians."

The Lord gazed into the future and said, "He will also endure being vilified and spit on when he returns home, rejected and crucified by the very ones he fought for."

Finally, the angel slowly ran his finger across the vet's cheek, and said, "There's a leak...I told you that you were trying to put too much into this model."

"That's not a leak", said the Lord. "That's a tear."

"What's the tear for?" asked the angel.

"It's for bottled up emotions, for holding fallen soldiers as they die, for commitment to that funny piece of cloth called the American flag, for the terror of living with PTSD for decades after the war, alone with its demons with no one to care or help."

"You're a genius," said the angel, casting a gaze at the tear.

The lord looked very somber, as if seeing down eternity's distant shores...

"I didn't put it there," he said.

May God bless the Vietnam Vet