

MARINES OF ECHO COMPANY BALL

San Francisco, 8 Nov 09

FINAL, 8 NOV 09

**OORAH, MARINES, AND HAPPY 234TH MARINE CORPS
BIRTHDAY!**

**YOU MAY BE 234 YEARS YOUNG, MY FINE YOUNG
INFANTRYMEN, BUT MOST OF YOU DON'T LOOK OLD
ENOUGH TO BUY A BEER!**

I WONT TALK FOR LONG WHILE MARINES ARE:

-STANDING AT PARADE REST,

-WHILE WE ARE WAITING ON DINNER,

**-AND WHILE WE'RE HOPING TO SPEND INFORMAL
TIME WITH EACH OTHER,**

**CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY OF THE TOUGHEST
WARFIGHTING OUTFIT IN THE WORLD,**

THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS.

**TONIGHT IS AN OCCASION WHEN RANK
DISAPPEARS,**

WHEN WE STAND TOGETHER

AS EMOTIONAL CO-EQUALS

**ALL OF US UNITED IN OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR
CORPS.**

**FROM THE MOST JUNIOR TO THE MOST SENIOR,
FROM THE YOUNGEST TO THE OLDEST MARINE
PRESENT.**

**I'M HERE TONIGHT BECAUSE I OWE THIS
BATTALION,**

-OWE THIS COMPANY,

-AN IRREDEEMABLE DEBT....

**-AND MARINES DON'T FORGET THEIR DEBT TO
EACH OTHER!**

**GO BACK WITH ME TO THOSE TUMULTUOUS DAYS
AFTER 9-11, WHEN YOUR BATTALION WAS
ACTIVATED WITHIN MONTHS, READY TO DEAL
WITH ANY ADDITIONAL ATTACKS ON OUR
NATION.**

**I RETURNED HOME FROM FIGHTING IN AFG TO TAKE
COMMAND OF THE 1ST MAR DIV—THE BLUE
DIAMOND—WITH ITS 25K SAILORS AND
MARINES.**

**YOUR BATTALION HAD WON WIDESPREAD RESPECT
ACROSS THE GRIMLY TRAINED 1ST MAR DIV:
-FOR YOUR COHESION,
-AND FOR YOUR DEMONSTRATED COMBAT
SKILLS IN INFANTRY TRAINING.**

**ASSIGNED THE MISSION TO ATTACK INTO IRAQ AND
OFFERED ANOTHER BATTALION, IT WAS THE
CONSENSUS OF THE BLUE DIAMOND'S SENIOR
ENLISTED AND SENIOR OFFICER LEADERSHIP
THAT IF WE WERE GOING TO ADD A BN, WE
WANTED IT TO BE THE 2/23,
-AND SO YOU WENT TO WAR WITH
1ST MAR DIV,**

**-EARNING RESPECT AS YOU WENT:
NO ONE TOOK ON A GREATER
SHARE OF THE ROUGH WORK AND
DANGER THAN WE DID TOGETHER
IN OUR DIVISION.**

YOU EARNED:

**-RESPECT FOR YOUR SKILL,
-RESPECT FOR YOUR SPIRIT,
-AND RESPECT FOR YOUR FAMILIES'
FORTITUDE,
-AS YOU KEPT THE FAITH WITH US, YOUR
LEADERS, THAT WE KNEW WHAT WE WERE
DOING.**

**AND FOR YOUR FAITH, I OWE YOU MORE THAN MY
PRESENCE HERE TONIGHT CAN SIGNIFY:**

**-FOR IT HUMBLED ME TO MARCH
ALONGSIDE YOU,
-IT HUMBLED ME AS ONCE AGAIN I WENT
INTO A FIGHT ALONGSIDE MAGNIFICENT
YOUNG MARINES,**

-VOLUNTEERS ALL,

**-PATRIOTS WHO LOOKED BEYOND THE
HOT POLITICAL RHETORIC AND
ANSWERED THEIR COUNTRY'S CALL.**

SINCE RETURNING HOME IN JUNE 2003, THIS

COMPANY OF MARINES HAS:

**-TRAINED IN CAMP FUJI, CAMP ROBERTS, THE
SIERRAS, CHILE, AND BACK AGAIN TO
PENDELTON AND 29 PALMS, THEN ONCE MORE
TO IRAQ—A VERY DIFFERENT IRAQ AS THE
BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS OF OUR MARINES
HAS TURNED NEARLY AN ENTIRE ARAB
POPULATION AGAINST OUR ENEMIES FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN THIS WAR.**

YOU HAVE ANSWERED YOUR COUNTRY'S CALL,

YOU HAVE REMAINED READY, AND

YOU HAVE REMAINED STRONG, AND

YOU HAVE PROVIDED AND OPERATIONAL SHOCK

ABSORBER,

TO YOUR NATION AND TO YOUR CORPS.

(PAUSE)

**WHEN YOU ENTER THE MARINES, WE CANNOT AND
WILL NOT PROMISE YOU SAFETY OR COMFORT;
RATHER WE PROMISE YOU HARDSHIP, FRUSTRATION,
WEARINESS, AND DANGER.**

**BUT, IN DEALING WITH THESE CHALLENGES, YOU
ACHIEVE A LEVEL OF SATISFACTION DENIED SO
MANY OTHERS,**

**AND IF STORMS CREATE STRONG SAILORS,
THEN THE STORMS ECHO COMPANY HAS SAILED
THROUGH HAVE CREATED STRONG CHARACTER
IN YOU FINE YOUNG MEN,
-MADE YOU MEN FOR ALL SEASONS.**

**HAVING BEEN TESTED, YOU HAVE LEARNED THINGS
ABOUT WORKING FOR A TEAM—THE GREATEST
TEAM—THAT WILL STAND YOU IN THE FRONT
RANK OF PATRIOTS, AND YOU LEARNED MUCH**

**ABOUT YOURSELVES AS WELL THROUGH
MEETING THESE CHALLENGES.**

**ALSO WE MUST RECOGNIZE THE LOVELY LADIES
HERE TONIGHT,**

**-MANY OF WHOM HAVE STOOD LONELY VIGIL
WHILE YOU MARINES HAVE BEEN TOGETHER
OVERSEAS;**

**-LADIES WHOSE BEAUTY REMINDS US ALL
WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR-----**

**GENTLEMEN: A STANDING OVATION FOR THE LADIES
HERE TONIGHT**

**-TO THOSE WHO ADD ELEGANCE AND
MEANING TO OUR LIVES!**

NOW I'D LIKE TO PROPOSE A TOAST...

**A TOAST TO CHEATING, STEALING, FIGHTING, AND
DRINKING:**

**IF YOU CHEAT, MAY YOU CHEAT DEATH (SGT
PACHECO),**

IF YOU STEAL, MAY YOU STEAL A WOMAN'S HEART,

**IF YOU FIGHT, MAY YOU FIGHT ALONGSIDE A
BROTHER,**

AND IF YOU DRINK, MAY YOU DRINK WITH ME!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ECHO COMPANY.

THANK YOU, AND SEMPER FI!