

**Feature Article - Interview of Brian B. Parker by Lyndsay Danielle Cribb, April 2, 2021**

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**Good Dudesmanship: The Legacy of Captain Brian B. Parker**



**“You have the opportunity to make yourself immortal as a Marine. The things you teach your Marines; they will teach their Marines on down the line... good or bad. The advice you give and your impact will far outlast you and live on through your Marines after you’re gone.”**

After sitting down with Captain Brian Parker, it is evident to see why he found so much success within the military ranks. Captain Parker embodies the Marine Corps’ institutional core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment, and this is reflected in his demeanor, his attitude, and his accolades as a professional military leader. It is easy to see why this Marine not only

decided to stay in all of these years, consistently excelling to higher levels of leadership and responsibility, but also why the Marine Corps decided to keep such a selfless figure within their ranks. Listening to Captain Parker, a qualified servant leader, tell his personal life story on how he was raised and how the essence of the Marine Corps and its mission captured his attention at the ripe age of eighteen, it became clear that attaining the title of



United States Marine was his destiny.

Having a strong family connection to the military and the motivation to give back to our country in the wake of the September 11th attacks on America, Brian Parker possessed a strong desire to serve following high school, and more specifically, serve in the most elite fighting force in the nation: “I wanted to go over and I wanted to fight – and I understood that the Marine Corps was the fastest way to be able to do that.” It is difficult to pinpoint what it is about this highly revered organization that stands out to the very individuals that choose to take on the challenge of earning the distinguished Eagle, Globe, and Anchor – but, in Captain Parker’s words, “To me, the Marine Corps is the American ideal of military virtue.”

Captain Brian B. Parker is a native of Huntsville, Alabama, where he grew up surrounded by close family and his love of the outdoors as a young child. He enlisted in the Marine Corps as

an Infantryman immediately following his high school graduation in 2003 and graduated from MCRD Parris Island in December of 2004 with a meritorious promotion. Following recruit training, Captain Parker attended Infantry Training Battalion follow-on training and received his Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of 0352, Anti-Tank Guided Missileman. “That’s when it got real,” he says. Because of the strong presence of combat veterans from Afghanistan who would become his

instructors at the School of Infantry East, their personal experiences overseas in combat zones aided in his training and the overall understanding of what he had chosen for his future.



Six months after reporting to the fleet and his first unit at Twenty-Nine Palms, California, in 2005, Captain Parker deployed to Iraq as a Scout in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 4-06. “I turned 20 on the plane ride over to Iraq,” he tells me. He goes on to describe his experiences in Iraq as a pendulum swing. “That first deployment we really didn’t experience combat, but going back for the second time, the pendulum had swung the other direction.” As a newly promoted Corporal, and just 21 years old, Captain Parker served in a Squad Leader billet for OIF 5-07 where he controlled High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles as a Section

Leader. “Things kicked off pretty quick... on our first patrol we got into a three-hour-long firefight. That was the first time I had ever seen combat.” While the initial high of the deployment was evident to Captain Parker and his Marines, the lows came just as quickly. “The next day, we lost Corporal Josh Watkins to an ambush. That was a tough deployment.”

Although Captain Parker and his team of men experienced considerable loss in Iraq, he chose to prevail and make the best of the situation, temporarily setting aside the pain of losing his fellow Marines for the sake of continuing on with the mission while simultaneously developing as a small unit leader. “For me, seeing how I react under the most stressful situations



I was put in, with rounds flying down-range, sending rounds down-range, civilians in the area, and some of the decisions I had to make... still to this day some of the Marines I served with don't agree with those decisions. Just knowing that I'm capable of making hard decisions like that – it gave me a lot of confidence.”

After coming home from his second deployment to Iraq in 2007, Captain Parker was faced with the difficult decision of whether to continue on with his career in the Marine Corps or get out of the military altogether. “The Marine Corps is much better now than it was then in regard to dealing with Marines who experience Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury,” he explained. In the wake of the losses his unit endured, Captain Parker came home to find himself lost and turning to alcohol to numb the effects of his combat experience in an effort

to deal with his problems. “After coming home from that second deployment, I went to a tough physical course called Infantry Squad Leader’s Course completely unprepared. What I learned about myself through this course is that I didn’t have to follow down the same path a lot of my friends had gone down, and that I could make a life for myself in the Marine Corps.” This is the



turning point in Captain Parker’s career where near the completion of this arduous feat called Infantry Squad Leader’s Course, he was notified of his acceptance into the Marine Enlisted

Commissioning Education Program (MECEP) for Calendar Year 2009. Which, he says, “set me back on the right path.”

The MECEP program within the Marine Corps is a highly-competitive Enlisted to Officer program reserved for the top percentage of Marine Corps Non-Commissioned Officers and Staff Non-Commissioned Officers, who are chosen by a board of members based on their Marine Corps experience, their personal and professional record, and their promise to attend and graduate college and Officer Candidates School successfully. These chosen individuals go on to serve as Commissioned Officers in the Fleet Marine Force. “On that second deployment especially, I saw both the positive effect that a good officer can have on a small unit, and the negative effect. I wanted to take those experiences and try to put that into being a good officer.” Captain Parker reported to The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, in August of 2009 as a

History major. “For me, there wasn’t another (college) choice. I love the school, love the atmosphere, and I knew that if I didn’t come some place where I was still a Marine, I could go feral. It was a great decision coming here.” During his time at The Citadel, Captain Parker graduated magna cum laude and met the woman who would become his wife just two years later. “Ten months prior to leaving The Citadel, I met my wife, and about halfway through my tour



here I knew I wanted to come back as a Marine Officer Instructor one day.”

Following his graduation from The Citadel, Captain Parker attended Basic Officer’s Course and later went back to the Fleet Operating Forces as a Second Lieutenant with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion in Camp Pendleton, California. This time, his wife Kelly went with him. With a smile, Captain

Parker talked about the dynamic of his biggest support system and the crucial role his family fills in his life and his career. “The Marine Corps issued me a wife. We met in 2012 and got married right here at Summerall Chapel in 2014. The Marine Corps itself is a family... The difference between the Marine Corps and the other services is that we are a Corps of Marines. So family, and the values of being a family man and a family woman, they allude themselves to the Marine Corps much more than people would think. Meeting Kelly and knowing that we share the same values... it’s been fantastic.”

Captain Parker and his wife Kelly share two children together, Henry and Caroline.

Looking back on the interview now, these specific moments where Captain Parker was talking about his family and sharing the strength of his wife and the traits of his children, I could see just



how proud he is to be a husband and a father. Add the component of being a United States Marine with seventeen years in service to that though, and there are bound to be difficulties that the average job just doesn't encounter. Captain Parker's wife Kelly gave birth to their son Henry when he was still deployed and because of his dedication to duty, he didn't meet his first born child until six weeks later. "Being deployed when you're young and single is a lot different when you have a spouse and

children back home. There are so many different stressors. Now, going through those stressors myself... it makes it easier to identify with my Marines." Even now, in the face of uncertainty and strain, Captain Parker takes an optimistic approach and hones that energy into his leadership style.

In August of 2015, Captain Parker deployed as a Platoon Commander with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion in support of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) 1-16. His platoon conducted operations across Anbar Province and Baghdad, Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) 16.1. Upon re-deployment, Captain Parker served as the

Executive Officer for his Company, and later held the billets of Assistant Operations Officer and Officer in Charge of the Sapper training cadre. Following his promotion to Captain in February of 2017, Captain Parker completed his tour with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion as the Bravo Company Operations Officer.

When asked how he would describe his leadership style, Captain Parker replied, “The difference in being a Military Manager and Professional Military Leader is building that consensus. That’s what I try to do in my personal leadership style. There are intergenerational issues, cultural issues, and it’s very important to get to know your people. The military is a cross-section of society... tailoring your leadership style and peppering it with lots of humility is important.”

In May of 2017, Captain Parker reported to the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Unit, The Citadel, as the Marine Officer Instructor, where he is currently located. “The Citadel is cool because everyone here wants it so bad. Just knowing that I have the opportunity here to mentor the volume of people that we have is incredibly rewarding. I wouldn’t want to go anywhere else.” He talks of how rewarding of a duty station this has been for him, how the



professional courses he has attended while here has allowed him to further develop his leadership approach, and the new and exciting things on the horizon for the Marine Corps. “The late millennials and Gen Z-er’s are much smarter than any of us ever

were. You all are in for the right reasons too. When I say I was a pissed off teenager after 9/11 and that's why I joined the Marine Corps, that's not me bragging. That might not be the best reason to join the military, and it's definitely not why I stayed in the Marine Corps. When we get into an inter-war period like we are now – you get people who really just want to serve their country, not knowing whether or not they're going to go to combat. The quality of individual that we're getting today is going to make us a lot better as a fighting force.”

To conclude our time together, I thanked Captain Parker for his time and prepared to ask him one last question. “If you had just one piece of advice to leave your Marines with, what would it be?” He responded by saying, “Just be a good dude. Treasure it. There are going to be some tough times, but just being around Marines makes it all worth it.” I can say with full confidence that Captain Parker is an outstanding Marine and human being. He leads from the front and does so with vigor and passion. He prioritizes health and family values and will fight to ensure his Marines are genuinely cared for. The way he talks about his service, his experiences, and most importantly his love for his Marines is awe-inspiring. I am privileged to know this servant leader who selflessly chooses to dedicate his life to continually building up those around him in order to shape the next generation of military leaders who will one day fill his shoes. My challenge to you as the reader is this: Incorporate traits and principles of Captain Brian Parker into your life. Show up for your people, work hard, and remain humble, and ultimately choose to always serve others and become a part of something greater than yourself.