

MARSHALL TERRIN:

LEADERSHIP IN COMBAT, BUSINESS & THE VETERAN COMMUNITY



BY: ADAM WALKER

Everyone has an origin story. Your background doesn't have to define who you become, but it does have an impact. Its echo resonates today. Some people grow up in circumstances that demand a maturity which exceeds their years. They waded through the dichotomy of having to grow up fast while still having so much to learn. Such was the case with a young man by the name of Marshall Terrin.

Marshall grew up in Las Vegas, the son of working-class folks from the entertainment and service industries that dominate this city defined by tourism. There were two divorces in his childhood and several moves that accompanied such disruptive life events. He got into just enough trouble to realize that he needed to change his trajectory. The military seemed like just the thing to provide the structure, discipline, and ticket out of town. He initially spoke with the Navy and decided to follow that path but on his way out of the office a muscle-bound Marine in Dress Blues was walking by. The Marine Corps' approach was aggressive and the complete opposite than that of the Navy. The recruiter asked him "Why should I let you into my Corps?" Like generations of Marines before him Marshall Terrin accepted the challenge. Marshall didn't really attend his last year of high school, which was an alternative school for those who'd faced some adversity. He took mid-term and final exams, then received a diploma before reporting to boot camp at the age of seventeen.

Boot camp for the Marines is referred to as Marine Corps Recruit Training and is held aboard one of the two enlisted depots. Marshall, being from the west coast went to MCRD San Diego. The first few days are called receiving and include a rudimentary introduction to military customs and courtesies, drill, and a whole slew of administrative matters from uniform issue



to inoculations. The receiving Drill Instructors are authority figures, but they don't showcase the same ferocity that the platoon's Drill Instructors will once training commences. None-the-less during receiving, young Marshall was certain he'd made the wrong decision about joining the Marines. He knew the Marine Corps was elite and figured if he didn't want to be there, they would just send him home. When he spoke to the Drill Instructor, he received some fatherly advice. "It won't always be like this; you only have to make it through this one time. If you quit now, it will follow you the rest of your life." It's hard to be a man at seventeen, but Marshall got a little leadership to push him in the right direction.

Marshall turned eighteen in boot camp. He's always harbored a little resistance to authority and once involuntarily rolled his eyes in front of the Drill Instructor. The DI took him into an empty squad bay, removed his campaign cover and duty belt, then got in his face. "You want to take a swing at me Recruit Terrin?! You want to fight? No one is here. I'm not a Drill Instructor right now, it's just two guys. Take your best shot, I will destroy you!" This event was a turning point in the life of Marshall Terrin. When he speaks of it, he relates his thoughts at the time. "If I took a swing, not only would I get my ass kicked and I would get kicked out of the Marines. My whole life would be adversely affected and I'm just getting started." Marshall submitted and became a stellar recruit. Several weeks later he graduated, earning the title of United States Marine.

After a brief leave home, he reported to Camp Pendleton, California for Marine Combat Training. All Marines attend this month-long training package to learn basic infantry skills before reporting to their MOS school. His instructors would have included many NCO's who'd participated in 2003's combat operations in Iraq. Training was realist and highly relevant. A sobering memory was that of a live fire range where Marines to the left, right, and behind him were firing as he rushed forward toward the objective. This was getting real.

Upon conclusion of MCT, Marshall headed to the high desert of Twentynine Palms, California for training in communication. Marshall looks back on his time as a student there fondly for two reasons. He had an instructor who loved his job, and the enthusiasm was infectious. The bigger reason was because he could sneak off to Las Vegas every weekend. If you are familiar with Twentynine Palms, you know the nightlife leaves much to be desired. Marshall wasn't authorized to go as far as Vegas, which exceeded liberty bounds restrictions; but even at this age he showed signs of being a risk taker. This attribute would serve him well in the business world years later. After completing MOS training Marshall reported to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and was assigned to an artillery unit. He served at the battery level, and then eventually down with a Forward Observer Team. He preferred the small unit level where the camaraderie was richer, and each members' skills contributed to the competency of the team.

His first deployment overseas was to Okinawa, Japan as part of the Marine Corps' Unit Deployment Program (UDP). Directly across the street from Camp Hansen (named for Medal of Honor recipient Private Dale Hansen who lost his life during the battle of



Okinawa in 1945), is the village of Kin. Over the decades Kin leveraged the proximity of raucous young men and tailored their businesses to cater to this demographic. As such, many a young Marine has stumbled back through the gates intoxicated and subsequently been charged with underage drinking. In Marshall's case it resulted in being restricted to base for the remainder of the deployment. He made the most of the situation and spent his free time working out and reading. Continuing the pursuit of self-improvement became a hallmark in Marshall's character, contributing to his success in life.

His unit conducted training on the Japanese mainland aboard Camp Fuji. After training concluded the Marines were given three options for liberty. They could either go to Tokyo Disney, to Rappongi (where all the bars were), or go climb Mount Fuji. Given his liberty restrictions, Marshall's only option was climbing Mount Fuji. In classic Marine fashion they climbed straight up and back down in approximately eighteen hours. The only regret was not taking more pictures.

Marshall and his fellow Marines were forward deployed in support of operational requirements as North Korea intermittently test fired rockets generating unrest in the region. They would rather have been in the desert as part of the fight in Iraq. Their wish would soon come true.

Once back on Camp Lejeune the unit was slated to deploy for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The fight there transitioned from conventional warfare to counterinsurgency, a complex environment where use of force must be delicately balanced while operating amidst a civilian populace. As part of this method of employment Marshall's artillery unit would serve in the capacity as Civil Affairs.

The work-up for deployment included language training and a host of operational skills that seemed incongruent with combat operations. Developing a wide array of abilities would serve Marshall well later in life as an entrepreneur. Single dimensional businessmen rarely go far.

Before the Iraq deployment was over Marshall Terrin would be promoted to the rank of Sergeant, a notable feat on one's first enlistment. He often served as a vehicle commander while out on patrol in the city of Ramadi. His competency and maturity were such that he even took out a few patrols as the senior ranking man and convoy commander.

Iraq in 2007 was a strange place. One minute Marshall would be playing soccer with school kids, and the next reacting to sniper fire. An Army unit nearby was struck with a catastrophic IED (Improvised Explosive Device) killing several personnel. It was a sobering

event and reoriented Marshall's vigilance reminding him not to be complacent.

He began to think about his future and started taking college classes online while deployed. It was ironic to be sitting on the hood of an armored vehicle reading a textbook about world history while making history in an ancient land of conflict.

Though the Marine Corps actively pursued Marshall for reenlistment, he decided it was time to transition to civilian life. He returned to Las Vegas. He initially joined a Marine Reserve unit filled with highly skilled and motivated professionals. He found the environment invigorating. One day in formation, volunteers were solicited for a deployment to Afghanistan to augment an active-duty unit.

As the clipboard made its round, Marshall paused, reflected, then passed it down the line without writing down his name. Later, on the drive home while thinking about his combat deployment and his four-month-old daughter, he decided that if he was no longer willing to go forward and put his life on the line again; then it was time to take off the uniform. He resigned from the Marine Corps Reserve and focused his attention on a new direction.

Marshall enrolled at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. By age 21 he'd served four years on active duty as a Marine, including a combat tour in Iraq. Listening to the trials and tribulations of his 18-year-old fellow students was surreal. He didn't hold them in contempt, but his experience provided maturity and perspective on what really mattered. He understood things like the brevity of life, the value of relationships, and what truly constituted the definition of a bad day.

Marshall worked a few jobs during this season in life including in the service industry. The work wasn't bad, but it was frustrating to see coworkers competing for better tips at the expense of the other. Compared to the camaraderie from his time in the Marines, this was quite an adjustment. He sold cars for a while but left it after a situation where he was pressed by his employer to push the bounds of his integrity in the pursuit of a sale. Events were colliding that would lead Marshall to soon be his own boss.

The series of events that transpired stand as their town tale in the years between leaving the Marine Corps and Marshall's entrepreneurship today. It all started with an oxygen bar in a mall kiosk and today he is a thriving multifaceted business leader. There were some financial losses and hard lessons learned along the way. Marshall describes this as the cost of tuition for entrepreneurs. Some people go into debt obtaining a traditional education, others dive headfirst into the marketplace and swim as hard as they can.

There are several attributes Marshall possesses, some of which the Marine Corps honed, that contributed to his success. The risk taking once manifested as a Marine sneaking off for a long weekend out of bounds, is now analysis of a market followed by a calculated investment. Working in small teams characterized by people of different backgrounds who are united with one purpose is familiar terrain for Marshall. However, now as the leader he gets to create the workplace culture. He will often take a risk in hiring someone with a jaded past, recognizing their potential and is confident in his ability to lead them to their next level. He's learned that workplace culture is far more important than wages.

When many businesses were hurt by the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, Marshall leveraged several opportunities to expand, eventually relocating to Orlando, Florida where his business ventures continue to thrive.



At one point in his journey in the business world, Marshall met a Viet Nam Veteran at a tradeshow. The elder Marine asked Marshall if he'd been to the Veterans Administration and worked on his mental health since moving on from his experiences in combat. The old Marine boldly pressed in, though meeting him for the first time. Marines can be that way. Marshall told him how he'd gone once and after seeing several elderly Veterans (presumably Korean War and Viet Nam vets) he decided they needed help more than him, so he left. The Viet Nam vet, a towering man, placed a firm but gentle hand on Marshall Terrin's shoulder and replied, "How do you think I felt with those WWII vets in the waiting room?" The prompt, the encouragement, and the leadership displayed by this elder Marine Veteran were just what Marshall needed.

When he finally was screened for Post Traumatic Stress and displayed several symptoms, Marshall asked directly "How do I get better?" After being cautioned that he might not like the response, the counselor laid out a forthright approach. He first asked Marshall if he still showed tell tale signs of his military service. Was there still a uniform on a hanger in his closet, or combat boots staged? How about green skivvy shirts in the drawer or military stickers on his car? The idea is that many Veterans struggle to move forward because they've held onto their military experience so strongly, that it has defined their identity. Marshall accepted this perspective and then began a purge of all visible remnants of his time in the Marines. He likewise unsubscribed from all military related social media feeds he'd been following. Much of this breakaway was a reset not a permanent disownment, akin to a fast and cleanse.

This method isn't popular with all Veterans, but has worked well for Marshall Terrin. He realized there were parts of him and his experience in war that he needed to shed. Other attributes were assets. By finding the proper balance between the two, Marshall has been able to deal with some of the residue that lingers after combat. He's observed that many Veterans whose identities are dominated by their military experience unknowingly alienate others, which can hinder both business and personal relationships.

Marshall has the depth to be engaged in multiple projects simultaneously. The Marines, known for doing more with less, may have helped develop this capacity further. His activities are not only business ventures. As a leader Marshall wanted to contribute something to the Veteran community utilizing the skills and experience he's acquired as an entrepreneur.

In 2021 he acquired the Vetpreneur Tribe, a community that was started by another Veteran in 2017. Initially

it was a small group of Veteran entrepreneurs in a Facebook group. They recognized the value of community with entrepreneurs who have a military background in common. The Vetpreneur Tribe continues to grow, touching lives across the county, and the world.

The mission of the Vetpreneur Tribe as stated on their website (<https://www.vetpreneurtribe.com/>) is "... to support, elevate, collaborate with, and develop military Veteran entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs regardless of their circumstances or progress on their journey. This includes a commitment to professional and personal development." The Vetpreneur Tribe provides practical business advice on an array of things such as franchising, intellectual property, and real estate.

Within the Vetpreneur Tribe is a core group of Veterans who comprise the Warrior Council. They hold each other accountable in professional and personal development. This is done by mentoring and coaching addressing three main pillars essential to a Veteran's mental health. These include money, health, and relationships. Success cannot be achieved without a balance in each of these arenas. Through Marshall's leadership he helps others to find this balance in life, while plugging in to a network of folks who help him do the same. It fosters much of the same camaraderie and social support Veterans experienced in uniform.

Looking back over the years he's come far. The youth who grew up quick and was headed in the wrong direction took the reins in his own life to chart a new course. He subjected himself to challenge, authority, and war. He emerged with scars but remains unbroken. He is an example of what former Secretary of Defense General Mattis refers to as post traumatic growth. He continues to lead and influence Veterans while encouraging them not to glamorize their status as Veterans.

Marshall Terrin is a combat Veteran but is not defined solely by that brief season in his life. Being a Marine was formative but not definitive.



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“Opportunity
is missed by
most because
is it dressed
in overalls
and looks like
work.”

– Thomas Edison