

Human Relations... as Taught by the Army to the Navy ...and Received by the Marines

By Dick Culver

My introduction to the fine art of political correctness came as something of a surprise. It was during my final exam week, following two and a half years of study at the United States Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. We were notified that we would be required to attend a new class being presented by an Army Major to ensure that we were exposed to a new discipline being introduced to the United States Armed Forces to guarantee fair treatment of all minorities. The fact that we were going to be required to take time from our exam studies was not a welcome piece of news.

We were assembled in a large classroom. Apparently both Navy and Marine Corps Officers were to be told by an Army Major how to exhibit proper leadership within our services towards the minority personnel assigned to us. Huh? We had some Army character attempting to teach basic leadership to a Marine? Dear Allah, I was NOT amused!

Our uniform of the day at the school was civilian coat and tie, I assumed to render all students subordinate to the various Navy instructors, many of who ran from Ensign to Lieutenant Commander, with a few civilian professors thrown in. Most of us were too busy trying to get a handle on such things as Quantum Mechanics, Linear Algebra and other arcane subjects to swap rank comparisons with our professors. It was an unnecessary affectation, but not having to keep several sets of Greens ready for class was a welcome time saver. It worked well for both sides of the aisle.

The chairs for this "training evolution" were arranged in a large, more or less circular configuration, in no particular order. The students were randomly seated with the Army Major located in the same pre-formed circle of chairs (actually a sort of horseshoe shaped configuration). At the far end of the slightly incomplete circle were two black "no class" Navy "deck snipes"¹ dressed in their "middy-blouse and bell bottomed uniforms" – the only individuals in the classroom dressed in military garb.

The Army Major (a minority of course) introduced himself and informed us that he had recently graduated from a course designed to prepare "Class Moderators" for the new "*love your local minorities*" brain-child of some undisclosed civilian consultant group! The moderator's (or class leader's) niche in the Human Relations Programs was to encourage interaction of the students and to guide the direction of the ensuing threads of discussion. The entire effort was designed to ensure that all hands understood the plight - and extremely sensitive psyche - of the downtrodden! Egad! Gag me with a spoon!

During this first thrust of Political Correctness into the Naval Service, the Major kicked off the class by having each individual introduce him or her self to the person on their left, with the idea that the introducer would receive his/her introduction from the one to whom you had just given your life story. I simply informed my fellow "cog in the wheel" that I was a professional Marine Infantry Officer whose politics were slightly to the right of Attila the Hun. The Naval officer to my left grimaced a bit and didn't seem to be as terribly amused as I had

intended – obviously this guy’s sense of humor needed some tweaking. I got the impression that my fellow guinea pig thought I was not taking the program seriously – au contraire, I was dead serious, he just didn’t realize it yet! Our introductions were to be presented just before we gave our two cents worth to the group, when called upon by the Major. I waited with baited breath for the class to start.

The first two called on to expound upon the subject were the two deck snipes. The first one seemed bent upon using foul language to impress the group that he had a free “reign of mouth” in front of a group of officers. The second one gave a presentation more to the point.

“We demands mo black officers,” this clown expounded, “we cain’t rap wid deese Honkey Mudder F- -ks (using the full translation of ‘MFs’ of course)”.

“*Rap wid deese Honkey MFs?*” Excuse me! I could see how this was gonna’ go, and I was not amused! *You’ve GOT to be \$hi++ing me!* I was looking for a plank for these two douche-bags to walk!

While my personal experience with the Navy over the years has led me to believe that the Navy is considerably more prejudiced than the Marine Corps, the individual responses from the Navy folks in the circle made me feel like I was sitting in a NAACP meeting! These clowns seemed to be urinating down their legs to give the impression that they truly understood these two @\$holes! Holy Catfish, Batman, had I been whisked away to the land of Oz by some unseen twister? I was both astounded and dismayed, to say the least.

Each individual seemed to be trying to outdo the previous one, only a small step away from breaking out a hankie to dry their eyes. I got more and more irritated as the charade progressed. The only thing I could do was roll my eyes and look at the overhead when it got really disgusting. But my time was approaching...

When it became obvious that it was Culver’s time in the barrel, the guy to my immediate left got up and gave the “Attila the Hun” routine that I had hoped would give him a chuckle. He did the required song and dance and sat down leaving the floor (deck?) to me. My first move was to ask the Army Major if he *REALLY* wanted to know my opinion of the proceedings?

“By all means,” the moderator said, “give us your real feelings and observations.”

Hoo boy, well he asked for it!

“Major, I think the entire group is missing the point here!” I started. “The point of the entire exercise is that what we have here is a simple leadership problem, not truly one of prejudice. If one of my troops has a problem finding proper housing for his family, I will personally go out and investigate the problem and see that it’s corrected! I do this because it’s my job to take care of my troops regardless of their skin coloration. As far as I’m concerned, they can be red, white, black, green or polka-dotted – to me they are all Marines and will be treated as such, because that’s what I’m paid to do! If I find them proper housing, or solve any personal problems related to their treatment aboard a base, or in the unit, they become ‘*Happy Marines*,’ and I’ve found that a *Happy Marine* is a much more efficient killer. We are in the business of killing or subduing the enemies of our country, and I’ll do whatever it takes to make them more efficient. To answer the ‘unasked question,’ I personally don’t CARE if the individual feels that the entire world is prejudiced, that simply ain’t my problem! I don’t CARE if it advances the ‘*Black Cause*’ or for that matter the ‘*Woman’s Cause*’ or the ‘*Hispanic*

Cause! I simply don't care, I want happy and contented Marines who feel that they are being well cared for by their unit and their leaders. Such well led Marines will be more than willing to kill for their country because I order it done! How does this fit in with the proffered description of my persona? Don't forget, I described myself as being slightly to the right of Attila the Hun. I kill for a living, but I leave social reform to the bleeding heart liberals! Have I made myself clear?"

Needless to say, you could have heard a pin drop! The entire gathering sat there with their mouths open waiting for some sort of lightening bolt to come down from out of the blue and smite the obnoxious Major hip and thigh! When nothing happened, they started sneaking sideways glances at one another. The Shore Patrol didn't come and pick me up, nor did the local gendarmes come to haul away the clown who had essentially spoken heresy.

The Army Major politely cleared his throat, and said, "that's a very interesting viewpoint, Mr. Culver² (reading my name from my nametag), do you have anything else to add?"

I allowed as how that pretty well summed up my personal feelings on the subject, and settled back to listen to what the guy who had introduced me had to say. It didn't happen.

The Army Major said, "Well Mr. Culver if you have nothing else to say, you are free to leave anytime you want!"

I grinned to myself and told the Army Major that it had been a very enlightening session, and I had enjoyed his presentation (lying in my teeth). I picked up my briefcase and headed to my next class. The interesting point was that absolutely no one else in the class was given permission to exit stage left! Score one for the Corps. The Army's answer to the Reverend Al Sharpton had no doubt been warned concerning his hi-powered course to get rid of potential troublemakers rather than discuss political fine points.

Strangely enough, not one word was said concerning my discourse, not from the Army or the Navy. I'm not sure whether they were in shock or simply thought I was beyond salvation! My Marine Corps compatriots grinned and left it at that. I was not subjected to any more such idiocy until I wound up in the Third Division following graduation.

I have no idea if the two deck snipes ever got "mo black officers to rap wid" or they had to continue to serve with their "Honkey Mudda F - -ks." What a ship that must have been! Dear Allah...

Shades of Archibald Henderson³, sometimes I think we are our own worse enemies!

Semper Fi,

Dick

...And you folks wondered why I didn't make Commandant? Ha!

End Notes:

¹ A “deck snipe” is an unofficial term for an “unrated sailor,” or one who has not reached NCO status, normally this will be a Seaman 3rd, 2nd, or 1st Class. In the Naval Service, a 1st Class is senior to a 2nd Class, who is senior to a 3rd Class, etc. The term “*Deck Snipe*” in the Navy is roughly equivalent to the term “*Snuffy*” in the Army or Marines.

² Since we were not wearing uniforms, the title of “Mister” was an understandable assumption since it is (or was at the time) permissible to refer to Naval Officers as Mister up through the rank of Lieutenant Commander, the equivalent rank of Major in the Army or Marine Corps. It used to be great fun to refer to a “rank conscious” Naval Officer as “Mister” even though he was wearing gold oak leaves. They used to take great umbrage at such reference since you could only refer to a Marine or Army Officer as “Mister” thorough the rank of First Lieutenant.

³ Archibald Henderson was the Corps’ longest serving Commandant having held the post for 39-years.