



## AL GRAY CIVIC INSTITUTE COMMANDER'S INTENT

For more than 2,000 years, thinkers in the West have understood that in order for a people to govern themselves, they must be virtuous. In this tradition there are four cardinal virtues that identify a well-developed person: wisdom, courage, prudence, and justice. Since 1775, the United States Marine Corps has been integral to the security of our country, and integral to the mission of the Corps are the virtues of honor, courage, and commitment. We find in the Marines' understanding of honor the fullness of the cardinal virtues that define not just a well-formed Marine, but a well-formed person and citizen.

The histories of the Marine Corps and of the United States Navy are graced with a wealth of examples of these virtues in action. This history is worthy of remembrance and respect, but in a time when there is a disagreement among Americans about what is virtuous, the example of our Marines and Sailors is particularly important. Carolina Museum of the Marine is dedicated to remembering and honoring the many achievements of Carolina Marines and Sailors, and to bringing those achievements to the American public as guides to the recovery of virtuous citizenship in America.

The English writer G.K. Chesterton famously wrote that "The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him." In recent years, long-standing problems in our society have become acute, causing some to question the meaning of America and its place in the world. While these problems are now widely discussed, their causes are in dispute. If we consider the seeming ease with which people of all political persuasions are made to accept as true ideas that are clearly not true, and try to trace this phenomenon to its source, we come face-to-face with the problems of education.

If we are preparing our young people to live responsible and rewarding lives that contribute to the well-being of our communities, we must teach them how to think. People who cannot think competently and critically are susceptible to errors that are all too prevalent and so easily identifiable. It is also the case that a people who do not honestly and accurately understand their history are like an individual who has lost his memory: they no longer know who they are.

While the problems of education do not capture completely the sources of our present troubles, they are important contributors. Unfortunately, study after study show that civics education in the United States has become both less available and less effective when it is taught. This is why the Al Gray Civic Institute at Carolina Museum of the Marine is committed to teaching Americans to think competently and to approach our history with honesty and care. Clear thinking and careful preservation of history are critical elements of a society worthy of devotion and defense, for these disciplines are necessary to the preservation of a shared and valued way of life. Disentangling errors in understanding can be difficult, but most things worth doing are challenging. We wish to see ever more Americans come together to restore mutual respect, civil political discourse and social cooperation that are defining marks of a people worthy of freedom.

Warm Regards and Semper Fidelis,

General Al Gray, USMC (Ret)

At-Large Member, Executive Committee, Institute Founder