



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

The Cult of the Warrior Monk

Marines are fanatical about two things: the Woobie, and General James Mattis.

The Woobie, for the uninitiated, is properly known as a poncho liner, issued in tandem with the otherwise worthless poncho. It is the finest piece of gear ever conceived of, manufactured, and issued to leathernecks.

The Woobie can be anything you want it to be: a blanket, a pillow, a good listener, a lovely camouflaged accent piece for snap gear-inspections or holiday dinners. It is light and portable and warm when you need it. It's silky smooth. Many millions of Internet gigabytes are dedicated to Woobie devotion. Check it out. You can join a forum, chat with experts, or watch heart-warming videos wherein grown men cry while discussing their Woobie separation anxieties.

Oddly enough, General James Mattis, recently nominated for Secretary of Defense, has earned equal devotion among the rank and file for essentially the same, and probably the most important, reason: he's versatile, he's sexy, and he can always be counted on.

The Cult of the Warrior Monk has grown, first inside the Marine Corps, and then beyond, because he has made a career demonstrating

the leadership principles others only talk and write about. In other walks of life that can be forgiven as a human failing, given our proclivity for following the path of least resistance. But in the Marine Corps incompetency and hesitation kill, and not putting your mission and your people first is inexcusable.

Stories of General Mattis, all true, standing watch in fighting holes with Lance Corporals in Afghanistan, encouraging cultural sensitivity classes, eating cold MREs in mudholes, relieving self-serving and underperforming commanders in the middle of firefights, or spending his holidays on duty so married Marines could be with their families begin to add up, and open a small window into his character. These aren't isolated incidents; they are the stuff of his career. And the tour he took, alone and unpublicized, driving across America to speak privately with the families of Marines killed under his command, tells us even more.

It's likely that Mattis, whose detractors are mortified, terrifies all the right people, but for all of the

wrong reasons. He is almost everything they say he is: occasionally foul-mouthed, a logistical genius, Jedi Knight in the realms of maneuver warfare. He is a gigantic and highly capable intellect.

But he is not a warmonger. Motivating speeches meant to inspire his Marines, to build confidence in those under his command and facing the overwhelming complexities of next-generation combat, have been presented by the Big American press with a wink at context, and used in some corners to build an image of an unthinking and homicidal pirate.

Mattis, better than most, and certainly better than the unremarkable list of milque-toast former SecDefs, understands the horrors of war too well and would rather avoid them altogether. We know this because he tells us so, and because he is also a student of Sun Tzu, who wrote, almost five hundred years before Christ: "Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting..."

That's a mantra and a

maxim close to Mattis' heart.

Marines believe General Mattis will counsel the President-elect with that in mind, and with a focused caveat: if we are to commit our uniformed men and women to battle, we must know what the mission really is, and we must give them the tools and the leadership to win decisively. Mattis is not a man who likes to fight the same battles twice, and Marines who have served under him know that while he would rather not fight at all, if he must, he comes like a singing roll of barbed wire.

In Iraq, Mattis' call sign, later made famous even as it was misunderstood, was Chaos. Fleet Marine Corps leadership guides describe the ideal Marine as one who performs effectively in the chaotic atmosphere of combat. Mattis chose his call sign as a nod to what he was creating for the enemy, not as a reflection of who he is. Whether the invasion of Iraq was a wise political decision is irrelevant to the discussion of how Mattis performed when ordered into battle.

It remains to be seen how well Mattis will adjust to a civilian role. But for a man

who has spent his entire life studying the importance of improvisation and adaptation both on the battlefield and in life, one suspects he will do quite well. He will speak truth to power, and take care of his people, which is the very least that those in military service could ever expect from their Secretary of Defense.

We don't know, from the available record, how the nominee feels about the Woobie. He's been largely silent on that topic. But he is a Marine, after all, and I suspect that while on a long, cold watch with his Lance Corporals in Afghanistan, a Brigadier standing-to in a sandbagged fighting hole, we would have found our MadDog with his Woobie close to hand.

FINE FURNITURE

DESKS

Adam Bronstein, Craftsman
By Commission
541-410-1309
SpringCreekWoodworking.com

REUSE : TIPS & TRICKS

HANDMADE HAPPINESS

Rethink about it! Give gifts you make yourself – they're sure to mean more. DIY toys, food presents, or upcycled gifts from holiday fairs will make your gifting unique and extra special. Wrap them all in newsprint, or your favorite paper from the last holiday! Check out our website for more reuse ideas.

RethinkWasteProject.org **RETHINKWASTE**

Happy Holidays!

Call now to schedule your complimentary consultation
\$300 discount for the month of December when you start a comprehensive treatment program. New patients only. Flexible financing.

THE BRACE PLACE
Central Oregon Orthodontic Specialists
541-382-0410
410 E. Cascade Ave., Sisters

Smile by Carmen and The Brace Place!

CentralOregonBracePlace.com

Professional Triathletes Linsey Corbin and Jesse Thomas at the Sisters Athletic Club Thursday, December 8

5 p.m. Reception with Refreshments
5:30 Talk, Q&A
Free and open to the public!

SISTERS ATHLETIC CLUB For more information call 541-549-6878
www.sistersathleticclub.com

The jolly old elf...



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE
Santa and baby Wyatt Mallett seem to understand each other.

Don't want to work in an office?

Become an Esthetician

- Help people look and feel better
- Freedom to be your own boss
- Build your own schedule
- Feel financially valued for your work

Esthetics classes begin January 2
Massage classes begin March 27

Sage School
of Massage Esthetics
ACCREDITED HOLISTIC TRAINING

541-383-2122
SageSchoolofMassage.com