

## Unconventional Thinking Defines Our Young Patriots

*By Irv Sternberg*

For most young people today, conventional thinking urges them to go to college, earn a degree, find a job or career path that will pay well while satisfying their interests. Some will pursue degrees in medicine, the law or business management. Others will become needed tradesmen like plumbers, electricians or auto mechanics. All are worthy choices, although I wonder if we need so many lawyers.

Occasionally, one hears about a youngster whose thinking is contrary. He envisions a different path—one definitely out of the box. Recently, I heard about one such youngster who is 17 and eager to graduate high school so he can pursue his passion. I learned from his dad that he is an excellent scholar, athlete and well-adjusted, popular young man. There are many doors he can pass through, but his eyes are on but one.

He wants to join the U.S. Marine Corps and become not just a regular Marine, but a special one. He has his eyes on a brand new elite force of Marines called MARSOC. That's short for Marine Corps Special Operations Command. Think of it as the Marine's version of the Navy's SEALs and the Army's Delta Force.

Many of the applicants come from the ranks of currently-active Marines, but young men like my friend's son are welcome to apply. If accepted, they'll face rigorous training to test their mental and physical fitness. The nine-month course will involve close quarter fighting, casualty care, survival evasion, resistance and escape, and something called "irregular warfare." I leave that to your imagination.

Unless we have family members currently in service in Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa or other remote parts of the world, we seldom give much thought to the brave young men and women serving in those outposts. After hearing my friend's story, I now know who they are. They are dedicated, passionate people determined to serve their country rather than themselves. We are blessed to have them.

A final word about MARSOC. Their motto is a quote from Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*: "The strength of the wolf is the pack."