

**Lt. Colonel Paul Joseph O'Leary, Jr.**  
*Battalion Commander,  
United States Marine Corps  
Class of 1978*



When Lt. Col. O'Leary reflects on his time in Needham, he is grateful for growing up in a community that provided him with the tools necessary for the great success he has achieved.

He cites the examples of success set by teachers, coaches, parents and peers that surrounded him here and grounded him in what he recognizes as a great town with a superb school system. In particular, Lt. Col. O'Leary remembers Arnold Almquist - teacher, coach, mentor and friend. Lt. Col. O'Leary sensed that Mr. Almquist enjoyed his life and career and sensed Mr. Almquist felt successful and enriched because of the positive influences he had on students.

Lt. Col. O'Leary was a member of the 1977 varsity soccer team that won the Baystate and Eastern Massachusetts Championships. He loved the sport and still does. In college he continued to play on the Fairfield University varsity soccer team for four years and was captain for the 1981 season. He enjoyed particularly the challenge, teamwork and camaraderie of sport which taught him the commitment, hard work ethic, and teamwork necessary for his later career with the Marines. He continues his activity in soccer as a coach of youth soccer.

Lt. Col. O'Leary is also a family man. He and his wife Bonnie have two children, Patrick who is 17 and Kevin who is 12.

Lt. Col. O'Leary's military career began after he graduated from Fairfield University with a B.A. in Economics and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in May 1982. By 1988, he rose in rank from second Lt. O'Leary to Captain O'Leary when he assumed command of Battery D, 2nd Battalion 12th Marines stationed in Okinawa, Japan.

In May 1988 he reported to the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA and earned a Masters Degree in Systems Engineering. In March, 1990 he was assigned to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Warfighting Center in Quantico, VA serving as a Tactical Systems Officer in the Requirements Division, which maintains an institutional mindset that is ready to respond instantaneously to world-wide crises, 365 days a year.

In June 1993 Captain O'Leary reported to I MEF Headquarters, Camp Pendleton, CA for duty as a Watch Officer in the G-3 Current

Operations. He was promoted to major in July of 1994. During his tour with I MEF he participated in Operation United Shield, the withdrawal of forces from Somalia. In March 1995, Major O'Leary was reassigned to 2nd Battalion 11th Marines where he served as the Operations Officer until July 1996.

Major O'Leary next attended the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, graduating in June 1997. He then reported to the Pentagon, where he served as the Senior Operations Officer for Operations Team One in the National Military Command Center. He was later reassigned as the Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director for Operations (Joint Staff-Pentagon). He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in May 1999.

In a moment's notice and in a matter of weeks, a Fleet Marine Force can be on the ground defending our great freedom anywhere in the world. Lieutenant Colonel O'Leary most recently was assigned as the N-5 Plans Officer and Force Marine for Amphibious Group One on Okinawa, Japan. At the time of his nomination for the Distinguished Career Award, Lt. Col. O'Leary was deployed in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Lieutenant Colonel O'Leary's personal decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, three Navy and Marine Corps commendation Medals which are received for specific acts of valor or actions above and beyond the call of duty, two Joint Service Achievement medals for outstanding performance of duty and meritorious achievement, and the Honorable Order of St. Barbara which links field artillerymen of the past and present in a brotherhood of professionalism, selfless service and sacrifice symbolized by Saint Barbara.

But the highest award Lt. Col. O'Leary has received, he says, is the great honor of being chosen to lead his fellow Marines into combat. This, he says, has been the pinnacle of his hugely successful military career. The Marines pride itself as the best fighting force in the world--being chosen to lead them is a most distinctive honor.

It is also a great honor and privilege to present the Distinguished Career Award to Lt. Col. O'Leary who has shown remarkable dedication, service and hard work from the soccer fields of Needham to the oil fields of Iraq.

M.H.