

Marine Corps service helped shape career of S.F. attorney



By Brian Cox

At the heart of effective leadership is caring for those who follow you.

The personal precept is central to how San Francisco attorney Edward Tugade approaches his practice.

“I always ask myself am I truly caring for the people I lead,” says the decorated Marine combat veteran. “I think caring as a leader is the hallmark of a good leader.”

As the eldest of four siblings, it could be argued that Tugade was born into a leadership role. His mother worked as a certified public accountant for several municipalities, and his father opened what may have been the first Filipino-American bookstore in the country. His father’s bookstore was in downtown San Francisco and was called the Philippine and Asian Book Center. Tugade says his father liked to claim he originated the concept of selling coffee to patrons and that Barnes & Noble got the idea from him.

“I spent a lot of time there as a child helping him package books for delivery to our customers,” says Tugade. “I attribute much of my life skills to my parents. They taught me, through their determination and tireless work ethic, the value of resilience and the ability to overcome obstacles through persistence and grit.”

The lessons Tugade’s parents taught him through their example

helped with his transition into the U.S. Marine Corps, where he honorably served over 10 years of active duty service.

“Joining the Corps was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made,” says Tugade. “I think the military was a good fit for me. I didn’t join the Marines for college money or for it to be a job. Like most Marines, it was a calling, something I felt I was drawn to.”

Having survived the Crucible of boot camp and the rigors of infantry training, Tugade excelled in the Corps. He developed “the ability to first follow before I learned to lead.” He eventually became a drill instructor, a challenging and demanding job that required waking up well before the crack of dawn and always setting an example by being in tip-top condition. He found the work highly rewarding.

“There’s nothing like the challenge of building those young recruits into Marines and seeing how much they develop,” he says.

Tugade also led Marines in combat as a platoon leader during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. His combat experience, which left an indelible mark on his perspective on life, instilled in him an aptitude for thinking on his feet without panicking.

“Under extreme pressures, Marines are trained not only to adapt and overcome, but also to be decisive – to relax, look around, and make a call,” says Tugade. “I don’t make haphazard decisions.”

Tugade still adheres to the 14 Marine Corps Leadership



Attorney Ed Tugade with his wife, Anna (right) and former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California Tani Cantile-Sakauye at his recent induction as president of the Association of Defense Counsel.



Ed Tugade and his wife Anna (left) met in law school. She is an environmental lawyer. They have two daughters, Audrey, 14, and Katherine, 10.

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Ed Tugade's two daughters, Audrey and Katherine.

Traits that were engrained in him during his military career and which are represented by the acronym JJDIDTIEBUCKLE: Justice, Judgment, Dependability, Initiative, Decisiveness, Tact, Integrity, Endurance, Bearing, Unselfishness, Courage, Knowledge, Loyalty, and Enthusiasm.

"Those are the cornerstones of what I live by," he says. "They cut across everything I do."

Just before being deployed overseas at the outset of the Gulf War, Tugade was assigned to work alongside a JAG officer, who was impressed with his work ethic and encouraged him to go to law school. When Tugade returned from the war, he took the officer's advice.

"I was young, green, and eager," says Tugade. "I am forever grateful to all my mentors and all the leaders who believed and invested in me."

He was the lone Marine at UC Hastings College of Law (now the University of California College of Law, San Francisco), where he discovered an interest in litigation and enjoyment in the excitement of the courtroom. He clerked as an extern with Judge Phyllis Hamilton of the U.S. District Court and Judge Leslie Tchaikovsky of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

After earning his law degree, Tugade returned to the Corps to join the Marine Judge Advocate Division, where he supervised the JAG Law Center and helped Marines with their legal affairs prior to deployment.

In 2002, after serving several years of active duty in the Marines, Tugade decided it was time to settle down, return to civilian life, and to pursue private practice. He joined the San Francisco law firm of Sedgwick, an international trial and litigation

firm where he was introduced to insurance and transportation defense.

He was with Sedgwick for five years before moving on to Bledsoe, Cathcart, Diestel, Pedersen & Treppa and then to Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith.

In 2015, Tugade joined Primerus member Demler, Armstrong & Rowland, LLP, which was established in 1979 in Long Beach, Calif., a firm that focuses on the defense of general liability and catastrophic injury lawsuits, construction litigation, insurance coverage disputes, and insurance bad faith claims. Tugade takes pride in helping his partner John Brydon open the firm's offices in San Francisco as the firm continues to expand throughout California.

"Demler has been extraordinary to me," says Tugade. "It's not only a place to work but it's also a family. We are tight knit. We know what we're doing. We're well respected and hardworking trial attorneys."

An adjunct professor of law at Golden Gate University School of Law where he teaches legal analysis and writing, Tugade has written and lectured on a range of legal topics. He is currently the president of the Association of Defense Counsel of Northern California and Nevada and is active in the organization's Toxic Torts and Diversity Committees. In addition to the Defense Research Institute and Primerus as well as other bar associations, Tugade is actively involved with the Marine Corps Association.

Tugade has been happily married for 15 years to his law school sweetheart, Anna, who is a partner at the environmental law firm Wactor Environmental Law Group, P.C. Passing on his leadership qualities, Tugade says their two daughters are "the light of our lives": Audrey, 14, is a freshman and cheerleader in high school, and Katherine, 10, is a fifth grader and the Sports and Recreation Director for student council.



Ed Tugade and his family - wife, Anna, and daughters, Audrey and Katherine - at the Louvre in Paris.