

"PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR HEALTH SERIES"

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"VICTORY THROUGH ESPRIT DE CORPS"

Dr. Forrest C. Allen  
Director of Physical Education  
Varsity Basketball Coach  
University of Kansas.

The chief menu for our youth of America today has been turkey and football. Through unnumbered years the oncoming crop of youthful American athletes will fight for their schools, will attempt to excel some old star's record, and will attempt to right some wrong -- in all, a triple prayer of conquest to dream true. For this is the never-changing and immortal spirit of youth.

It is altogether fitting that institutions of learning should keep alive the stories of their greatest games and the exceptional feats of skill and sacrifice of their own heroes. To add dynamic punch to the athletic days ahead and to match the courage of today with that of yesterday, true athletic esprit de corps must march militantly forward with its long procession of grim-visaged sports warriors ever passing in review. Esprit de corps means simply "the spirit of the corps", or group. It is the French for an association of ideas with effective group effort. A dictionary may define the phrase as "loyalty to one's comrades, spirit of solidarity or group morale". However, with a more universal usage of the phrase this definition has become incomplete. For esprit de corps has come to mean a spirit of sympathy and pride and enthusiasm - a feeling of oneness that makes the whole corps akin.

Like the slogan of "The Three Musketeers" athletic esprit de corps means "all for one and one for all" - a jealous regard for the honor of the group as a whole.

The Canadian Mounted Police and our own United States G-Men have undoubtedly esprit de corps. They are deadly in earnest concerning their objectives. They stick together and literally go through hell to get their man. They shoot it out when necessary. Their own personal welfare does not matter. It is the esprit de corps that carries them through.

At the battle of Thermopylae, King Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans had this spirit of complete solidarity. It took courage for those ancient Greeks, fighting with spears, to advance against the Persians fighting with arrows. Esprit de corps, personal discipline, idealism, or call it what you will, forced them through the blood and torture of the arrows of the first ranks of kneeling archers in order that they might use their spears.

Napoleon's Old Guard knew how to die but not how to surrender. Wellington's Britishers with their thin, red and unyielding line evinced esprit de corps at Waterloo. Washington's frozen and starving men had it at Valley Forge. Memories of the Civil War still flow crimson because both the Blue and the Gray had esprit de corps. Our American soldiers had it at Chateau-Thierry and in the Argonne Woods. These are the words for it - unyielding sacrifice of self for what seems a worthy cause, which in its ultimate analysis means immortality.