

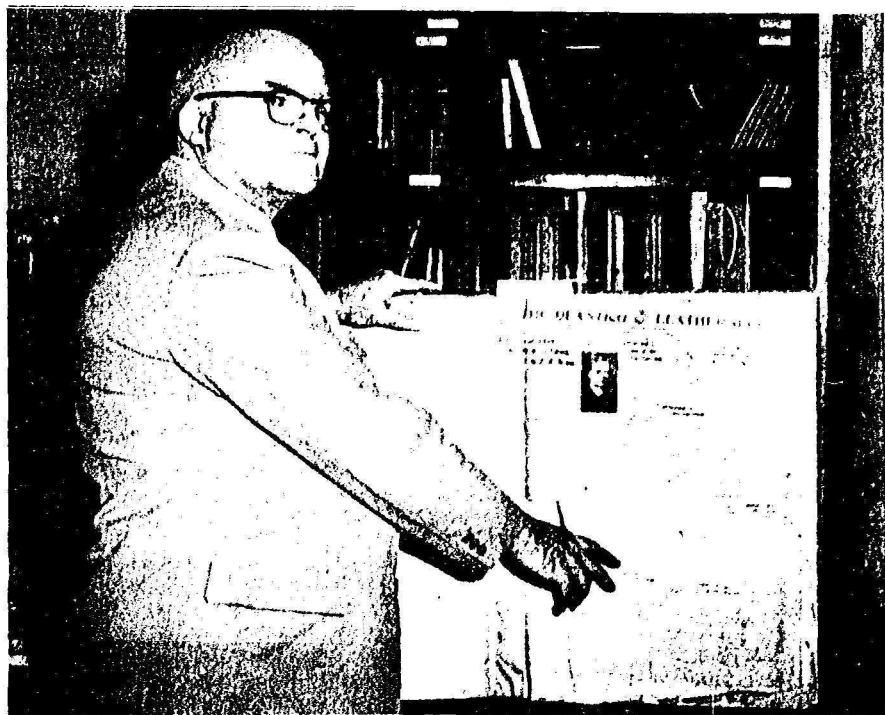


Colonel C. W. Harrison, head of the Historical Branch, and Lynn Montross, historical writer, discussed one of Korea's major battles

by TSgt. Allen G. Mainard
Leatherneck Staff Writer

Photos by
SSgt. Woodrow W. Neel
Leatherneck Staff Photographer

They Chronicle The Corps



Mr. Joel Thacker, of the Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, would like to obtain old copies of Marine Corps periodicals

MODERN MARINE CORPS history is a far cry from the academic volumes of past glories. Today it is not necessarily the general or medal-winning enlisted man who gives the greatest insight into the combat and peacetime chapters of the Corps.

Official records are necessarily dull reading. Only the bare bones of events are contained as they chronicle the movements of various units through combat.

The official report, for instance, on the D-plus-Two action of the 2nd Battalion, First Marines, supported by Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, tells of the move from Ascom City to Sosari. Enemy resistance was heavy. But the action report said nothing of Second Lieutenant Bryan J. Cummings' M-26 stalling in the midst of the enemy, nor did it mention the claustrophobic rifleman pulled inside to save him from small arms fire. It said nothing about the tank crew's efforts in the crowded space to beat off the enemy attack and handle the berserk rifleman at the same time. It probably did little more than mention that three men in the tank were wounded when they opened the vent port for air only to have a grenade

TURN PAGE

pop in. There was no account of Sergeant Marion C. Alataire moving in at close range and "scratching the back" of Cummings' stalled M-26 with machine gun fire to rid him of enemy soldiers.

This incident, pointing up the tactics of combined infantry and armored attack, never would have been known in detail if the Historical Branch hadn't been able to interview Lt. Cummings and Sgt. Alataire. The full account of the action is contained on pages 175 and 176 of U. S. Marine Operations in Korea, Volume II.

What good is history? Lynn Montross, one of the Corps' best known historians, says that the best answer, perhaps, is that history is our insurance against making the same mistake twice. And mistakes in war, needless to add, are likely to be reflected in casualty lists.

But as proud as the Marine Corps is of its past, it wasn't until the 133rd year of its existence that it got around to forming a historical branch. The beginning of the Historical Division's tangled history is September 8, 1919, when Major General Commandant George Barnett signed Marine Corps Order 53. The original group was assigned to the Adjutant and Inspector's Department. Prior to that date only unofficial historians, such as Metcalfe and Thomason, were chronicling the Corps.

During the early days, lack of personnel, professional archivists and interest handicapped the force. Progress was made through the efforts of Mr. James F. Jenkins, the chief clerk, who tried to exploit and collate the early Marine Corps records in the National Archives. Another civilian, and still a member of the Branch, ferreted out information on Marine units attached to the AEF during World War I. Mr. Joel Thacker, who succeeded Jenkins in 1944, spent some 10 years on the project, saving valuable material and information that would have been lost otherwise.

History became more and more important to the Marine Corps in the passing years. By 1942, the section had achieved the status of a "division," and some were prone to refer to the unit as the "Hysterical" Division. But it plugged along, answering the questions and building a solid foundation of factual history. Even so, the lack of a comprehensive program and the fact that combat units were more interested in fighting than recording the war, saw the loss of thousands of photographs and irreplaceable action reports simply because no one had space to preserve

WANTED—OLD ISSUES OF MARINE CORPS PUBLICATIONS

The Marine Corps Historical Archives and Library would like old copies of Marine Corps periodicals, particularly the following:

Walla Walla, all issues, particularly those of 1929, 1930, 1931 and 1932.

Marine Corps Gazette, any early issues.

Correspondence from readers who may have copies of the above periodicals should be addressed directly to Mr. Joel D. Thacker, Historian, Historical Branch, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington 25, D. C.

In addition, *Leatherneck Magazine*, Box 1918, Washington 13, D. C., is also interested in obtaining old issues of *Leatherneck*.

In demand are issues prior to Volume 5 (1921), particularly Vol. 1, No. 1.

We would also like to hear from readers who might have available copies of the June, 1940, September, 1940, October, 1940, or December, 1940, *Leathernecks*.

them in the field. It wasn't until 1945—the Okinawa campaign—that the Historical Division was able to send combat historical officer and enlisted personnel into the field.

The end of the war paralyzed the program. Two people were left—a clerk who did the day-to-day looking up of facts and a so-called historian. On hand also were some 30 tons of records which had been hastily boxed up by field units and dumped into their laps. But from this mass came the monographs of all the actions fought by Marines during WW II. In addition to the 15 monographs, the division compiled a number of historical studies covering such subjects as the call-up of Marine Reservists during the Korean conflict and Marine training in WW II.

Historical activities within the Marine Corps now center in the Historical Branch, G-3 Division under Colonel C. W. Harrison. Three basic groups are incorporated: Writing, Records and Research, and Administrative and Production. Lieutenant Colonel F. O. Hough heads the writing section.

From this group have come Volumes I, II and III of U. S. Marine Operations in Korea, co-authored by Captain Nicholas A. Canzona and Mr. Lynn

Montross. Two other "teams" are also active. One current, long range project is the preparation of a history of Marine Corps Operations in WW II. This will utilize the basic research of the original monographs, plus material which has come to light since the original publications, especially from Japanese sources. Errors of fact or interpretation will be corrected and the monograph texts will be extensively re-written. This work will cover five volumes and the first book is nearly complete.

The Administrative and Production Section, under Captain D'Wayne Gray, handles all administrative matters and clerical work, and prepares the finished manuscripts for the printer.

The Records and Research Section maintains the official historical documents for ready reference and is building up a collection of unofficial material such as letters, diaries, old photographs and personal papers, as well. The Section furnishes reference services and prepares short historical studies as directed. It also maintains a military library, available to all Headquarters personnel, specializing on books on amphibious warfare and books by and about Marines. Mr. Joel D. Thacker,

CONFIDENTIAL NAVY DEPARTMENT,
28790-3 WASHINGTON, August 4, 1917.
MO

My dear Mr. President:

Under date of May 29, 1917, in accordance with your instructions, I directed the Major General Commandant to organize a force of Marines, to be known as the Fifth Regiment of Marines, for service as a part of the first expedition to proceed to France in the then near future.

The Major General Commandant now reports that an equal force, to be known as the Sixth Regiment of Marines, is to be organized and will in the very near future be ready for service in France; and as it is the desire of the Army that the Marines be brigaded and as this regiment is necessary to organize such a brigade, it is requested that you authorize me to direct the Major General Commandant to organize such additional regiment and attach it for service with the Army.

Cordially yours,

John D. Dineen



Headquarters U. S. Marine Corps,
Washington, D. C., January 10, 1898.

Sir:
1. You will detail from your command and hold in readiness for orders from the Commandant of the Station to transfer to New York, for duty with the Marine detachment which is to sail for the Island of Guam about February 1st, in the U. S. S. Yosemite, 18 Privates.
These men will be fully fitted out, including new equipments, Lee rifles, web belts, white belts and cartridge boxes and must have over two years to serve.

Very respectfully,
Charles H. Brown
Colonel, Commandant.

The Commanding Officer,
Marine Barracks, Navy Yard,
Washington, D. C.

Documents such as these are invaluable

who probably knows as much about Marine Corps history as any man alive, heads the section.

The handling and preservation of the records of the past have always been a major headache of the historians. From 1919 to 1934, the section kept all the records it took in. But space limitations created an increasing problem. When the National Archives appeared in 1934 it accepted unclassified material of "historical value." Classified material was not authorized for storage in the Archives until 1944. It was not until 1949 that official understanding of the problems of archival work resulted in the Corps acquiring its first professional archivist. The deluge of material which came in during and after WW II and the loss of personnel almost paralyzed the programs. One result of the deluge was the formation of five centers being set up to house Navy and Marine Corps records until their value could be determined.

Because of the interest and numerous requests from the field and former Marines, the Historical Branch is beginning a series of regimental and air squadron histories. The purpose is to give members and former members of the units a chance to learn of the achievements of their outfits in peace and war. The histories will inform members of unit traditions and customs,

United States Corps of Marines.

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to Certify That James Koch *is* Private
of Marines, who was enlisted the 17th *day of* January *1874 at* Wilmington Mass
being over about 42 *years of age* 5 *feet* 11 1/2 *inches high, having*
110 *lbs* 12 *years* of service *with the* Light *company, and by certificate*
when enlisted, it is declared that he was born in Island *is being*
DISCHARGED *from the service of the UNITED STATES, having received his full soldier's*
honors, Excellent Voluntary Reprint January 17th 1898

UNREGISTERED *Chas. L. Johnson*
 Major U. S. Marine Corps, Adjutant and Inspector.

J. L. Brown
 Captain, Commanding Post.

Headquarters of the Marine Corps,
 Washington, D. C., 28790-3, 1898
 This is 17th January 1874

C. H. Brown
 Colonel Commandant Marine Corps.

and the Historical Branch feels that it will also foster *esprit de corps* in each unit.

The histories will also serve as reference works. If, for instance, you want to know who commanded the Fifth Marines in WW I, which regiments are entitled to campaign streamers for the Boxer Rebellion, Nicaragua or Haiti; how many Medals of Honor have been awarded to members of the Seventh Marines—the histories will provide the answers.

They will also make a valuable contribution to general Marine Corps history. There is no current plan for writing histories of operations prior to World War II and the unit histories will be the only official accounts of Marine achievements in WW I, the Latin American, Philippine and China campaigns. The history of the Fourth Marines should be completed during this fiscal year. It is being written first because it was the first to be requested. Planning for (continued on page 93)

the States was the same man who rattled to the Chinks in prison camp."

If the book has any fault, I'd say it was in the first few chapters covering the period before Pate got in the Army. Most of it reads like the average sea stories a Marine hears in the Corps. At that, I suppose it was done that way for a purpose, to show the background and character that made up the man who fought the enemy to a standstill on his own ground.

I would recommend that every Marine read this book and that at least every Staff NCO own a copy of it. It would come in handy innumerable times and could be used to pick up what ordinarily might be a dull instruction period.

Based on my experience in prison

camp, everything Pate has to say is valid and to the point. Had a book like his been written before the Korean incident and widely read by troops, many more men would have come back in operation "Big Switch." And some who came back dishonored might have been saved the disgrace.

B. J. Cutler, who wrote the book for Pate, has been with the New York *Herald Tribune* since 1951, doing general news, politics and features. He is now a correspondent for the *Herald Tribune* in Russia. As a parting shot to Mr. Cutler, I'd like to say that if he is interested in doing another along the same line, I'd like to read the story of Pate's opposite number, some Chinese Communist soldier, who was incarcerated in Wolmi-Do. I'd

like to know how strongly the enemy held to its tenets under the common sense, UN treatment of prisoners of war.

Fred Stolley

Chief Warrant Officer Fred Stolley was taken prisoner when Corregidor was surrendered in 1942. He spent two years at the Japanese Prison Camp at Cabanatuan, P.I. and then was sent to Japan where he worked in a Japanese copper mine at Hitachi. Later, he was on a construction project, building a dam on the Tonryu River.

Recently, CWO Stolley served on the panel of a forum held at Senior School, MCS, Quantico, on the present POW Code and participated in discussions on how to implement the Code. Ed.

CHRONICLE

[continued from page 53]

the histories goes through fiscal 1960 on the following units:

- 1957 Fourth Marines
- 1958 Second Marines
- 1959 Third Marines
- 1960 Sixth Marines

The First Marine Division regiments have been postponed until after 1960 since that is the year the current Korean operations series will be finished.

The official history can be dredged up from the records, but the *real* history—the individual actions and impressions of the Marine—is needed to make these reports complete. Some of the Corps' brightest history follows the words, "Do you remember . . . ?" This is the information the Historical Branch is seeking.

Personal adventures are history: Corporal George Amyotte, Recon Company, First Marine Division, continued to fire his BAR after an enemy grenade exploded squarely on his back. He was probably the first Marine to be saved in Korea by modern body armor. His story came from the Marine Corps Equipment Board.

Corporal James Morgan saved his CO's life when his group was discovered swimming the Han River and mortar fire knocked the officer out.

Pfc Alphonse O. Ledet, Jr., listed as MIA for a time in the same action, made the enemy shore. Later, he gave

valuable information on enemy moves when the Fifth Marines made their crossing.

Their stories came to light after interviews with a captain, two lieutenants, a master sergeant and a technical sergeant.

This is history.

And so is the experience of the men of the 2nd Battalion, Seventh Marines at Hoengsong when they had to carry in supplies nearly three miles under enemy fire up the mountainous ter-

rain—and hand-carry their wounded out the same way.

This is the history that the Marine Corps desires. Col. Harrison, head of the Branch, has stated that *all such contributions are solicited* and will be gratefully received.

Were you in the "Old" Fourth in China, the Sixth in France, Cushman's Pocket on Iwo, Shuri on Okinawa, Haiti, or Noumea? Do you have personal accounts, photographs and letters? Do you remember . . . ? **END**

Leatherneck



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Answers to Corps Quiz on Page 57

- 1. (b); 2. (b); 3. (b); 4. (b);
- 5. (c); 6. (a); 7. (b); 8. (a);
- 9. (c); 10. (c)