

# FORTITUDINE

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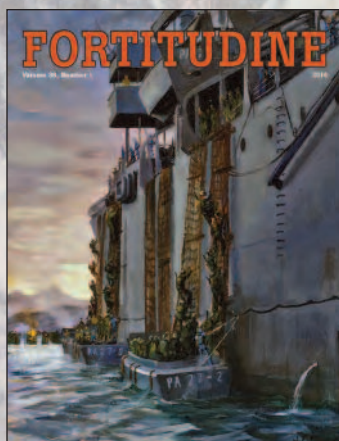




# FORTITUDINE

*Bulletin of the Marine Corps Historical Program*

- 3** **Operation Galvanic, “Tarawa”**  
*Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer*
- 6** **Origins of the Gator Navy: Amphibious Shipping in Support of Landing Operations, Part I**  
*Douglas E. Nash Sr.*
- 15** **The Flight Has Ended**  
*Gregory A. Macheak*
- 23** **General David Dixon Porter’s Quest for the Medal of Honor**  
*Major David W. Kummer*
- 28** **Faustin E. Wirkus: From “Breaker Boy” to King**  
*Beth L. Crumley*
- 32** **Oral History Interview: Dr. James E. Huger Sr.**  
*Dr. Fred H. Allison*
- 35** **The One Day Flight of Corsair 02270**  
*Captain Dorothy A. Prose, USN (Ret.)*
- 36** **Historical Reference Branch**  
*Annette D. Amerman*
- 37** **First to Write: Women Marines in Vietnam**
- 40** **Picture This: Ol’ Timey Recruiting**  
*Kara R. Newcomer*
- 43** **Eisenhower, the U.S. Marines, and the Korean War**  
*Robert J. Sullivan*
- 46** **Book Review: *Fighting for MacArthur***  
*Paul Westermeyer*



**Cover Art: “Down the Cargo Nets” by William F. Draper**

This painting by Navy combat artist William F. Draper, “Down the Cargo Nets,” depicts Marines disembarking from the attack transport USS *George Clymer* (APA 27), during the invasion of Saipan on 17 June 1944. While many Marines taking part in the Central Pacific drive went ashore in amtracks, the majority still went ashore the old-fashioned way—hand-over-hand down cargo nets slung over the side of the ship into awaiting landing craft, vehicle and personnel, bobbing dangerously alongside.

**Inside Cover Art: “Tarawa” by Cpl Harry Jackson**

This artwork was used for a recruiting poster during WWII.

**Back Cover Art: “Shoup, Medal of Honor, Tarawa”**

by Col Charles H. Waterhouse (Ret.)

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# Operation Galvanic, “Tarawa”

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**T**his past year in his annual birthday message to the U.S. Marine Corps, the Commandant, General James F. Amos, commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa. If the Guadalcanal campaign can be said to have defined the 1st Marine Division, the 76-hour struggle for Tarawa did the same for the 2d Marine Division. Known as Operation Galvanic (or D-Day, 20 November 1943), the operation envisioned the 2d Marine Division seizing the atoll's largest island, Betio, and the U.S. Army's 165th Regimental Combat Team of the 27th Infantry Division attacking the less well

*“Down the Nets,” by Richard Gibney who was a sergeant during World War II.*

U.S. Marine Corps Art Collection



defended Makin Island. Marine units were to also secure nearby Apamama, also part of the Gilbert Island chain.

So why should we study Tarawa? Several reasons come to mind. It was the first naval campaign to take place in the Central Pacific and placed the Navy/Marine Corps team firmly on the long road to Tokyo Bay. It was the first battle where the Marine Corps met with serious opposition to one of its amphibious landings. And finally, it was one of the few times in Marine Corps history where the landing ashore was described by its landing force commander, Colonel David M. Shoup, to be “in doubt.” While the 1st Division’s fight for Guadalcanal would be longer, the 2d Marine Division faced fanatical resistance from start to finish by more than 4,500 Japanese defenders, including the 6th and 7th Special Naval Landing Forces from Yokosuka and Sasebo, Japan, and otherwise known as “Imperial Marines.”

Intelligence reports showed that the Betio portion of the operation was likely going to be a nightmare. Betio’s biggest obstacle was a coral reef that surrounded the island. Planner and later overall ground force commander Colonel Shoup believed he had an answer to this conundrum in new landing craft known as an “alligator” or landing vehicle, tracked (LVT). The LVT was not a true armored amphibious tractor and was seen at the time as more of a logistical craft. However, the newer LVT-1s could, if required, be up armored and used as light assault vehicles. They could also physically climb over a reef whereas the traditional flat-bottomed, wooden landing craft known as “Mike” boats needed some amount of water under them to successfully enter an island’s lagoon. Betio was renowned for its “dodging” tides, and the amphibious planning staffs had been warned about them by New Zealand native Major Frank Holland, who declared that when the Marines try to land “there won’t be three feet of water on that reef.”

To make matters worse, the U.S. Army also needed LVTs for the European theater so the 2d Division received only half of what Colonel Shoup needed for his six Tarawa assault waves. The rest of his force would have to come ashore via wooden landing craft, and if the reef was exposed, these men would have to wade hundreds of yards in the open against intense enemy machine-gun and mortar fire. Further, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commanding all Pacific naval forces supporting Operation Galvanic, vetoed Colonel Shoup’s plan for a sustained prelanding bombardment. Concerned about







U.S. Marine Corps Art Collection

*"Tarawa, H-Hour, D-Day, Beach Red" by Col Charles H. Waterhouse (Ret.).*

the possibility of Japanese air and naval forces interdicting the operation (as they had at Guadalcanal), Nimitz authorized only three hours of preliminary bombardment. While Marine planners were stunned at his decision, many Navy officers remained confident that the preliminary bombardment was more than enough to allow the Marines to take Betio without too much trouble. They could not have been more wrong.

Marine casualties on the first day of fighting (20 November 1943) bordered on the horrific. As Major Holland had predicted, the reef was exposed, and the flat-bottomed landing boats of the later assault waves ground up against the coral and about one-half of the Marine assault waves had to wade ashore. Even if a Marine made it to shore unscathed, the island provided little cover. The Japanese seemed to be everywhere. The scout-sniper platoon led by First Lieutenant William Deane Hawkins, posthumous Medal of Honor recipient, had to repeatedly clear a pier that enfiladed the beach. Unable to establish command and control in such chaos, Colonel Shoup initially despaired that for the first time a Marine Corps landing force might be physically thrown back into the sea by the enemy. It would be worse than the 1915 British debacle at Gallipoli.

During the 1930s, the ghost of Gallipoli had loomed large in Marine Corps thinking. So large that Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General Ben H. Fuller, ordered the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Virginia, to study the Gallipoli campaign to determine how and why the British failed. General Fuller wished to uncover "lessons learned" for his Marine Corps. What resulted from the herculean effort of the students and faculty was the path-breaking 1934 *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*. This manual became the blueprint for follow-on Marine

Corps amphibious warfare doctrinal development. Tarawa, however, proved that there were some lessons that remained to be learned.

First and foremost, as had occurred during the Guadalcanal landing, shore party control needed to be immediately improved. Throughout the intense fighting ashore, Colonel Shoup and his Marines were beset by logistical shortages of all types. During the first 24 hours of combat, Marines were forced to scavenge ammunition, canteens, and first aid from the dead and seriously wounded. Lacking control over the landing of supplies, assorted equipment piled up on the beach, and no one seemed to be in charge. Furthermore, casualty handling became a problem too. Because so many of the original LVTs had been wrecked by enemy fire, casualties had to be ferried to ships beyond the lagoon, piled on board rubber boats or anything that would float. Hundreds of Marines were sent to the destroyer USS *Ringgold* (DD 500) whose captain had audaciously ordered it into the lagoon only to have its sickbay wrecked by a 5-inch enemy shell on the first day of fighting. Nevertheless, dead and injured Marines were ferried to this nearest naval ship, unaware of its inability to treat the growing number of casualties being sent its way. Eventually, the Navy was able to put together enough ad hoc medical teams ashore and on board the troopship USS *Doyen* (APA 1), and they finally got ahead of the flow of casualties overwhelming the *Ringgold*.

By the second day, momentum slowly began to shift toward the Marines as they cleared bunkers, blockhouses, and fighting positions of the enemy. It was a costly, bloody business, but the Marines were getting stronger and the enemy weaker due to steady attrition. Moreover, by the latter part of Day Two, the Marines were finally

able get intact follow-on reinforcements ashore—a situation that the Marines of the first day struggled with from the moment they came under fire. By Day Three, 2d Division Marines had largely overrun much of the enemy's defenses, and mop-up forces eventually cleaned out diehard Japanese survivors on Betio and other nearby islets.

The significance of Tarawa resonates down to this very day and many World War II historians believe that this single 76-hour battle became the primer for follow-on Navy/Marine Corps amphibious landings in the Central Pacific. More importantly, the Corps was not afraid to criticize itself and determine what went right and what went wrong.

Everyone agreed that transitioning the LVT from a logistical vehicle to a combat assault craft made the difference between victory and possible defeat. The Marine Corps just needed more of these versatile vehicles. The LVTs provided a modicum of protection necessary not just for the survival of individual Marines travelling ashore but also enabled units to arrive on the beach largely intact and with its leadership firmly in control. The wooden boat borne assault forces suffered a greater loss of unit cohesion as compared to their armored brethren. Next, it was clear to everyone that the supporting fires provided by the Navy needed immediate improvement. The Navy overestimated its ability to reduce enemy defenses during its preliminary bombardment, and the accuracy of their shore-fire bombardment plan was questioned. At Tarawa, everyone regretted the premature termination of supporting fires on D-Day. This decision alone greatly added to the chaos created by the enemy in the initial hours of

Tarawa. Communications on nearly every level left much to be desired. Amphibious commander Major General Julian C. Smith was dismayed to discover that every time the task force flag ship and Pearl Harbor survivor, USS *Maryland* (BB 46), fired its 14-inch main guns, all communication between the senior leadership at sea and the ground element ashore were temporarily knocked out. Betio also showed a need for beach and tide analysis performed by experts in advance of the operation.

For the 2d Marine Division, Tarawa became its defining battle as Guadalcanal was for the vaunted 1st Marine Division. Despite the errors made, the Battle of Tarawa proved in blood the efficacy of Marine Corps amphibious warfare doctrine. After Tarawa, the Japanese recognized that even their strongest bastions remained vulnerable to a determined Navy/Marine Corps team in the Pacific. The loss of such a heavily defended fortress spelled their doom and many in Tokyo now knew it.

Tarawa demonstrated that a malfunctioning Navy/Marine Corps team was never a good thing. Once the casualty lists were released, many Americans were shocked at the carnage and urged the War Department to ensure that there were “no more Tarawas.” While some took this to mean that the United States should get out of the amphibious assault business, the Marine Corps took the opposite view. For the Marines, Tarawa validated amphibious warfare doctrine. Despite the best efforts of the Japanese, the Americans had taken on one of their strongest bastions—and won. Nonetheless, it was also very clear to both the Navy and the Marine Corps that the devil was in the details as far as future amphibious operations were concerned. •1775•

*An LVT-2 comes ashore on Green Beach, Tarawa, on approximately D+2.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 63646





# Amphibious Shipping in Support of Landing Operations

## Part I

Douglas E. Nash Sr.

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General James F. Amos, in his *35th Commandant of the Marine Corps 2010 Planning Guidance*, directed that the U.S. Marine Corps pivot back to its roots and focus once more on being “America’s Amphibious Expeditionary Force in Readiness.” In this defining document, he sought to redirect the focus of the Marine Corps away from the land-based counterinsurgency campaigns of the first decade of the twenty-first century and back to its traditional role as a naval service by stating,

We are a maritime nation with global responsibilities, requiring ready, sea-based forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct operations in the littorals—from humanitarian assistance to major combat and “such other duties as the president may direct.” This has been, and will remain, the Marine Corps’ primary role in providing for the Nation’s defense . . .

Although the Marine Corps is reemphasizing its historic function as the tip of the nation’s expeditionary spear, it cannot get there by itself; it will be the Navy that will carry the spear, just as it has for the past 235 years. The Commandant recognized this fact in his guidance, when he stated that “as part of the Joint Force, the Marine Corps and the Navy work together to leverage the significant advantages that amphibious forces provide a maritime power like the United States.”

This awareness is not limited to just the Marine Corps or Navy; then-Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates recognized this as well, when he declared in a 12 August 2010 speech to the Marine Corps Association that “ultimately, the maritime soul of the Marine Corps needs to be preserved.” Current doctrine certainly reinforces this. As stated in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*, “Marines are ‘soldiers of the sea,’ an integral part of the Naval Service . . . organized, trained, and equipped to conduct naval campaigns on and from naval platforms, or to fight in protracted campaigns ashore.” So it is self-evident that, without the Navy’s amphibious fleet to carry Marines to and from the world’s various hotspots, there would not be any means for maintaining, let alone preserving, its maritime soul. (Within the naval service, the amphibious fleet is referred to as the “Gator Navy.”)

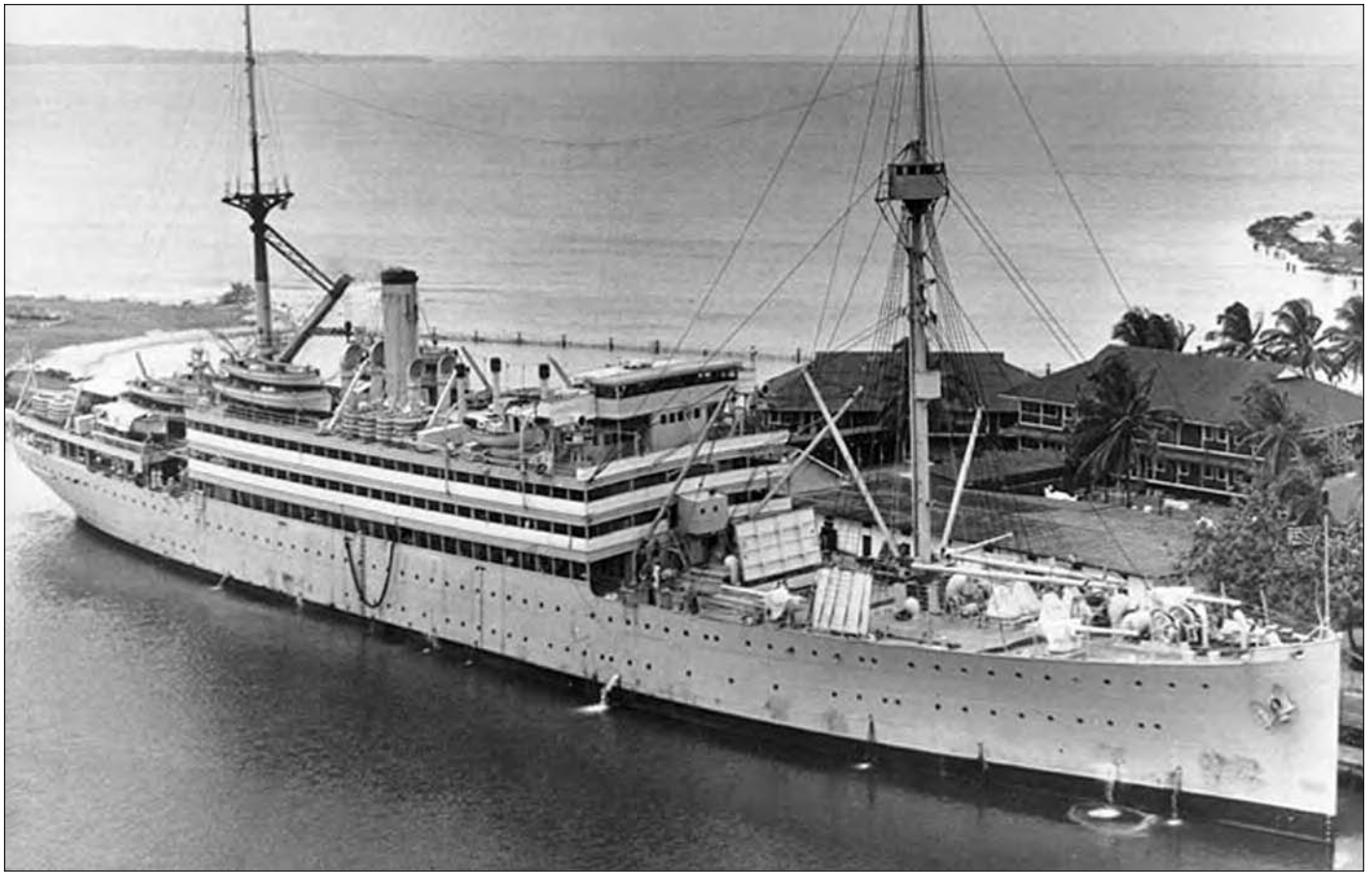
The amphibious fleet, including amphibious assault

ships (LHD or LHA), amphibious transport docks (LPD), amphibious dock landing ships (LSD), and amphibious command ships (LCC), provide the means to deliver Marines to foreign beachheads, command and control them, sustain them, and bring them back. However, after 12 years of continuous warfare conducted far inland, very few Marines, except those who have served briefly on board ships as members of Marine expeditionary units, have any real appreciation of life afloat. When they encounter it, most Marines will discover the maritime environment a completely new experience and will not have any appreciation of the realities of the Navy/Marine Corps partnership at its most basic level until they do. So, for the many Marines who have never stepped foot on board an LHA, an LPD, or LSD, but who are preparing to rediscover their maritime roots, the knowledge of the historical development of the nation’s amphibious warfare capability, especially the events that occurred during the mid-twentieth century, is particularly timely.

The Marine Corps has been an amphibious force since its inception; by continuous service on board ships and by the furnishing of landing parties for the fleet, it has always been driven to find better ways to get Marines ashore more expeditiously, whether they were conducting unopposed landings or seizing contested beachheads. The fact that technology did not change appreciably between 1775 and the early 1930s limited the Marine Corps and Navy to tried and true, if slow and cumbersome, methods—climbing over the sides of a troop ship on nets, embarking on small boats, rowing (or sailing) ashore, then climbing over the sides of the small boats and wading the last few yards to the beach.

The advent of steam ships did little to change this. Though steam-powered launches became common by the end of the nineteenth century, they only shortened the trip from the troopship to the shore, an advantage negated by their heavier weight that caused them to beach farther from the shore. Yet there was no other method available at the time; airplanes, much less helicopters, had yet to be invented. To complicate matters, most troopships of the time were either conventional Navy warships or short-term leased civilian transports, neither of which had the capacity to adequately house and feed hundreds of embarked Marines and their equipment for prolonged periods.

During World War I, the thousands of Marines and soldiers who fought in France were ferried across the Atlantic using dozens of converted civilian passenger liners controlled by the Navy or U.S. Army. Life on board these ships was crowded and uncomfortable, since most



Official U.S. Navy photograph, U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command

*USS Henderson (AP 1), Old Number One, at Coco Solo, Panama Canal Zone, on 6 January 1933, photographed from an aircraft based at Naval Air Station, Coco Solo. The open cargo hatch is directly forward of the bridge. During World War II, it was converted into a hospital ship.*

of them were carrying twice as many troops as they did passengers in peacetime.

No requirement to conduct opposed landings was envisioned, so no amphibious capability was needed. The disastrous outcome of the British amphibious campaign at Gallipoli only reinforced this belief. Marines simply landed in French port cities, such as Saint-Nazaire and Brest, and traveled from the port of debarkation to the front lines. After the war, these ships reverted to civilian control except for a few kept in service by the Army or Navy to ferry troops to overseas possessions, such as Guam or the Philippines. A few troopships were mothballed, but since they were not preserved with materials or techniques commonly used today, recommissioning them at a later date would prove to be a long and costly process.

The only exception was the USS *Henderson* (AP 1), a purpose-built troop transport commissioned by the Navy for the Marine Corps on 17 June 1916. Though not an assault transport per se (it lacked the facilities to launch landing craft), it was designed to carry 1,695 Marines and 24 mules, and could carry as many as 2,700 passengers in a pinch, as it did to Nicaragua on several occasions in the 1920s. Its primary shortcoming was that it relied on standard dockside facilities to embark passengers and

cargo. Yet the *Henderson* was the only ship in the Navy set aside for the Marine Corps' sole use during and after World War I until converted civilian transport ships began to appear in the fleet beginning in 1940. Converted into a hospital ship in late 1943, "Old Number One" was scrapped in 1947 after 31 continuous years of service.

Between wars, when the Marine Corps was involved in a number of police actions in the Caribbean in such places as Haiti and the Dominican Republic, there was little need for a true amphibious warfare capability. During the 1920s and 1930s, there was no viable threat and money was tight during the Great Depression. Yet, there were visionaries who saw that the time would soon arrive when the Marine Corps would have to prepare itself to conduct much larger amphibious assault operations against defended areas, while avoiding the mistakes made at Gallipoli. One of these visionaries was Lieutenant Colonel Earl H. "Pete" Ellis, who saw that the primary threat was going to be Imperial Japan, which in the early 1930s had begun to extend its Asian empire, placing it on a collision course with the United States. Ellis, among others, did not fail to notice Japan's establishment of for-



tified bases on key islands in the Central Pacific, ceded to it as mandates following World War I, and proposed a strategy for using them as advanced naval bases, requiring that the Marines take them by amphibious assault.

Visionaries such as Ellis realized that advanced bases would be needed to provide for the logistical sustainment of the fleet for it to execute a naval war against Japan. This strategy would require these bases be seized by force, since the Japanese could not be expected to let them go without a fight. However, any amphibious assault against a fortified objective, defended by an enemy using machine guns and rapid-firing cannon, would be no easy proposition; a force stalled at the waterline while trying to seize a beachhead from a determined opponent would suffer enormous losses. Therefore, it was important that the attacking force, backed up by naval gunfire and air support, get as many men ashore as quickly as possible. While informal agreements between the Navy and Marine Corps to carry out these tasks existed, none of it was codified or written into doctrine and the necessary amphibious shipping capability and landing craft were not available.

Another visionary who was keenly aware of this deficiency was Major General Ben H. Fuller. Shortly before stepping down from his duties as Commandant of the Marine Corps on 30 October 1933, he directed the faculty and students at the Marine Corps School in Quantico, Virginia, to write a doctrinal manual describing how the Navy and the nascent Fleet Marine Force should conduct amphibious warfare. This work, encapsulated in the 1934 *Tentative Landing Operations Manual*, laid out the overar-

ching doctrine as well as the tactics, techniques, and procedures governing the planning and execution of Navy/Marine Corps landing operations against defended beaches. With few changes, the manual was adopted by the U.S. Navy in 1938 as *Fleet Training Publication 167*, a document that served as the blueprint for how the Navy and Marine Corps would cooperate throughout the Pacific during World War II. Copied by the Army a year later, this publication described in detail how such operations would be conducted, a huge step ahead at the time, but the technological and logistical means to carry out these large-scale amphibious operations had not kept pace or were entirely lacking.

When war began in Europe in September 1939, the Navy and the Marine Corps had no ships dedicated to supporting amphibious warfare. While there were some promising landing craft and tracked amphibious vehicles under development, such as the Higgins boat and Roebling's amphibious tractor, the ideal means to deliver these craft from the transport area to the line of departure did not yet exist. With war on the horizon, the Navy, working through the U.S. Maritime Commission, obtained 20 civilian passenger liners from various shipping companies and had them hastily converted into troopships, beginning 9 December 1940. After a request was made by Major General William P. Upshur, commanding general of the Fleet Marine Force, six of these ships were earmarked for Marine Corps use.

Some of these reactivated ships were ancient; for example, the troopship USS *American Legion* (AP 35, later

*USS American Legion* (APA 17) at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, 25 October 1941. This ship was one of the earliest transports used by the Marine Corps, seeing its first action during the amphibious landings at Guadalcanal. Though obsolete by 1940, the *American Legion* was one of the few ships available to serve as an attack transport until more advanced ships were constructed.

Official U.S. Navy photograph no. 19-N-25715





APA 17), launched in 1919, had been laid up in the Patuxent River reserve fleet when acquired by the Navy on 22 August 1941. A period of extensive rehabilitation and conversion at the Atlantic Basin Iron Works in Brooklyn, New York, was necessary to make it operational again, but also included adding more berthing spaces, protective armament, and modern navigational aids to bring it up to late-1930s standards. At 535 feet in length, the *American Legion* was capable of carrying up to 1,644 Marines and 115,200 cubic feet of cargo and could maintain a respectable speed of 17 knots. Redesignated as an attack transport (APA 17), a fresh coat of paint could not cover up its age, and a cruise in support of the Army to Iceland had not improved its condition.

Regardless, after a voyage to New Zealand, she was redirected on 18 July 1942 to support the upcoming campaign against the Solomon Islands. As described in August 1942 by passenger Richard Tregaskis in *Guadalcanal Diary*, the *American Legion* was

an ancient angular horror . . . with a black dirty hull and patches of rust on her flanks . . . the deck was black with slime and grit. For as I was to discover later in the day, the ship had no modern apparatus for pumping water. The Marines cramming the deck were just as dirty.

Though these ships were spartan compared with some of the luxury liners of the day, more importantly, they lacked the space on their decks or in their cargo holds to carry many of the new landing craft (e.g., landing craft, tank [LCT]) or the handling equipment, such as cranes and booms, to rapidly load and transport the embarked Marines and their supplies to shore. In addition to the attack transports, attack cargo ships were needed to haul all the different classes of supplies required by the landing force as well as additional landing craft. A number of civilian cargo ships were thus procured by the War Shipping Administration and made available to the Navy, though these too were less than ideal but would have to do until more modern, purpose-designed or modified ships were manufactured.

The final addition to this early-war amphibious fleet was a number of fast transport ships created by converting World War I-era four-stack, flush deck destroyers; these ships could carry up to 148 Marines, launched from four landing craft, vehicles and personnel (LCVP). These destroyers, obsolete for their intended role by 1940, were ideal for landing Marine raiding parties, especially for missions of two days or less. The ships' 27-knot speed (even after eliminating two of the four boilers to provide more troop berthing space) gave them a degree of survivability and provided naval gunfire support with their remaining 4- or 5-inch batteries. Despite their shortcomings, these improvised "amphibs" were all that was available and would

soon prove sufficient for the first real test of the Marine Corps and Navy's new amphibious warfare doctrine (Battle of Guadalcanal).

For the invasion of Guadalcanal and Tulagi Islands on 7 August 1942, 13 old troop transports, 6 cargo ships, and 4 small, high-speed transports would carry 19,000 men of the 1st Marine Division to their objectives. LCVP were used to bring the assault troops ashore, a long and laborious process that took up to four hours to complete before the initial assault wave was ready to begin the landing, thus spoiling the element of surprise. The long time frame to unload the LCVPs was due to the lack of better equipment; because the older ships lacked the new Welin davits, each capable of unloading up to three craft at a time, the LCVPs were unloaded into the water, one-at-a-time, using ship booms. (The Welin davit was a lift mechanism or hoist whose function was to pick up an "assault boat" from the deck of the transport ship and place the boat into the water.) After the LCVPs were in the water, the troops climbed on board the 36-foot craft via cargo nets.

Organized into assault echelons, the LCVPs closed in toward shore, taking as long as an hour. The landings from the fast transports were carried out more quickly, but each of these old destroyers carried only four LCVPs

*An M3 Stuart light tank being loaded on board a landing craft, mechanized from the USS Alchiba (AKA 6) during the invasion of Guadalcanal, 7 August 1942.*

Official U.S. Navy photograph no. 80-G-10973







Official U.S. Navy photograph

*The triple Welin davit, shown installed here on board the assault troopship USS Hamblen (APA 114) on 13 June 1945, allowed up to three landing craft to be carried on each davit instead of the single-boat davits used at the beginning of the war. Usually, up to four Welin davits were mounted on such troopships, enabling 12 LCVPs (carrying up to 36 men each) to be launched in less than 30 minutes. The assault troops still had to board landing craft using cargo nets thrown over the side, but the davit was a marked improvement over the previous system, which had been the mainstay for the previous 50 years.*

and a reduced-strength infantry company. While a number of landing vehicle, tracked (LVT-1, the military version of the Roebling amphibious tractor or “amtrac”) were available at Guadalcanal, they were used for resupply, and like LCVPs still had to be hoisted over the side of cargo ships using ship equipment. Though LCVPs and LVT-1s were new and particularly useful additions, practically everything else about the landing operation from the standpoint of the shipping involved was carried out virtually the same way it had been 50 years earlier. Fortunately, the landing beach at Guadalcanal was undefended. The situation would be markedly different the following year for Operation Galvanic, the invasion of the Gilbert Islands.

While the Fleet Marine Force was making do with what was available in the southwest Pacific, new ships came off American production lines in increasing numbers. The



Official Marine Corps photograph no. 209471

*Troops of the 2d Marine Division disembark from the USS Ormsby (APA 49) into LCVPs using cargo nets during the invasion of Tarawa in November 1943. This was the slow, traditional method used to board landing craft and was used until the end of the war.*

Navy’s Bureau of Ships (BuShips), working with the War Shipping Administration, modified a number of passenger and merchant ships into troopships, attack troopships, and attack cargo ships. The new troopships were between 523 and 608 feet in length and could carry up to 3,000 troops from point to point, but were not suitable for assaults. Rather, these larger, deep-draft ships were used to land reinforcements using a variety of small boats or pierside once the assault waves had secured a lodgment area. These ships were primarily employed for their troop-carrying capacity, rather than the speed of offloading, though in a pinch they could be pressed into service as attack transports.

The more suitable attack troopships and attack cargo ships were modified while still in the shipyards. Most of these vessels were of similar size, usually between 455 to 492 feet in length. The most significant modifications were the addition of heavy-lift booms capable of hoisting tanks or LVTs and up to four Welin davits capable of carrying three LCVPs each. The Navy added additional safety features, such as greater compartmentalization in the cargo holds to increase survivability (not a standard feature of War Shipping Administration-designed ships) and heavier defensive armament ranging from multiple





Official Marine Corps photograph no. 94712

*An LVT-2 amphibious tractor being unloaded from the USS Monrovia (APA 31) during the invasion of Tarawa, November 1943. Once an LVT had been lowered into the water, the assault troops would board it from an LCVP tied alongside. This slow and dangerous method took just as long to organize an assault wave as the cargo net and LCVP boarding method.*

20-millimeter anti-aircraft guns to dual-purpose 5-inch guns.

A typical ship of this class, the USS *Monrovia* (APA 31), could carry a battalion landing team of 1,237 men as well as 2,700 tons of cargo a distance of 15,500 nautical miles at 17 knots. To do this, it carried a complement of 20 LCVPs and 4 larger landing craft, medium (LCMs or “Mike” boats) that were suitable for carrying tanks or other heavy cargo. These ships, ungainly and unglamorous though they were, would prove to be the workhorses of the Navy/Marine Corps/Army amphibious fleet around the globe. Though they were not true “amphibians” as they are known today, no major operation after Guadalcanal would take place without them.

This assortment of old and new ships would not be the only ones supporting the invasion of the Gilberts. They would be joined by eight entirely new purpose-designed ships that would forever change the way the Navy and Marine Corps conducted amphibious operations. Ironically, these first true amphibians in the Navy inventory—the landing ship, tank (LST) and the landing ship, dock (LSD)—were British inventions. Both designed in 1941, the LST and LSD were destined to revolutionize amphibious warfare. The 327-foot LST was characterized by its flat bottom, floodable compartments, and large doors that opened on the bow and enabled it to beach itself and discharge its cargo directly onto shore, thus eliminating the immediate need for piers and loading docks.

The 457-foot LSD was built with a well deck that would allow the aft portion of the ship to be flooded so that small craft, such as LCTs or LCMs, could float out the stern gate and be driven ashore with needed tanks or cargo. Two LSDs and six LSTs would be employed in the Gilberts, split evenly between the assaults on Makin Island and Tarawa. They would join the 21 attack transports and attack cargo ships earmarked for the operation to carry V Amphibious Corps, composed of 18,088 Marines of the 2d Marine Division and approximately 6,500 soldiers of the U.S. Army’s, 27th Infantry Division, 165th Regimental Combat Team.

The assault on Tarawa and Makin differed in one major respect from previous amphibious assaults and set the pattern for all that followed—the use of LVT-1s and LVT-2s in the initial assault waves. Due to the reefs surrounding both atolls, the commander of V Amphibious Corps, Major General Holland M. Smith, decided to have LVTs carry the first three echelons of the assault force instead of LCVPs, which heretofore had been the preferred means to get troops ashore quickly. Having shown itself capable of negotiating coral reefs in trials carried out three months earlier, the 125 LVTs in support of 2d Marine Division tipped the balance in favor of Smith’s troops at Tarawa when they proved to be the only craft to get ashore after the LCVPs became hung up on the reefs. Overlooked in the battle was the fact that 50 LVT-2s were launched directly into the sea from three LSTs of Task Group 53.3.



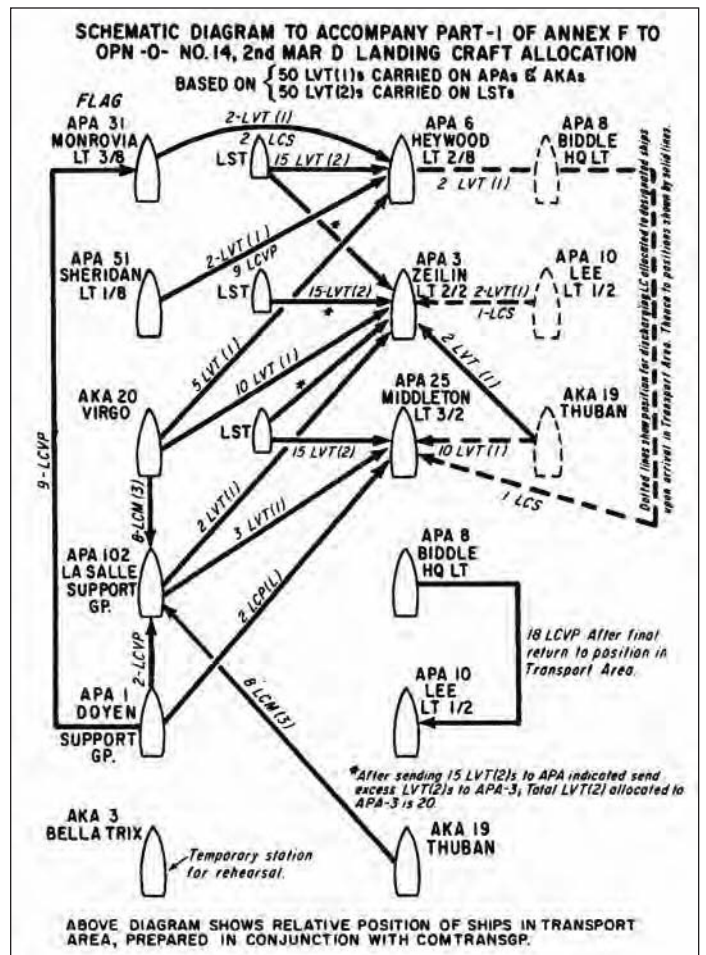


Gen Julian C. Smith Papers, Series 9 (Photographs), Box 25 (Tarawa, Official); USMC Archives, Gray Research Center

LVT-2s were placed on top the USS Monrovia's no. 5 cargo hatch during the invasion of Tarawa. Additional LVT-2s would be stored inside the ship's cavernous cargo holds. LCVPs are arrayed alongside the hatches, making for a very complex and time-consuming launching operation.

This was a significant tactical development, though little remarked on at the time in official publications. Although neither was originally intended to be complimentary, pairing the LST with the LVT was a masterstroke of improvisation that would significantly impact the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific. It was as much luck as improvisation, because the LVT-2s that had been shipped from San Diego to the South Pacific had been placed on board the LSTs simply because they were the only ships available on the West Coast to transport the LVT-2s at that time. They joined the Tarawa assault force at 0330 on 20 November 1943, only hours before the assault was to commence, leaving no time to transfer the LVTs on board cargo ships per the usual procedure. So instead, the decision was made at the task group level to simply drive them straight out the bow of the LSTs while still at sea, a task which took 15 minutes.

While the other 75 LVT-1s on hand, all battered veterans of Guadalcanal, were placed into the water alongside troopships and cargo ships, using the slow and tedious boom-and-winch method, running LVTs out of the lower hold or tank deck of an LST proved a more efficient method, as opposed to the four hours or more required to



Vadm George Carroll Dyer, USN (Ret.), *Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner* (U.S. Marine Corps: FMFRP 12-109-11, vol. 2) 695

The complexity of linking LCVPs launched from the various troopships carrying Marines with their designated LVTs is illustrated by this diagram from the Tarawa operations order, which shows where each wave of landing craft was to rendezvous with the amphibious tractors before the assault. This process would require up to four hours to complete, compared to minutes when LVTs were launched from LSTs.

perform the same task from a troopship. Despite this advance, the assault troops from the transports still had to be mated with their assigned LVTs while at sea, a risky task accomplished by tying LCVPs alongside the amphibious tractors. Except for this complication, the LSTs only other disadvantage was its slow speed of 12.1 knots, leading crews to call them "Large, Slow Targets" in jest; accordingly, the amphibious force commander had them set sail separately at an earlier date in order to meet up with the rest of the invasion fleet prior to the assault. After-action comments were unanimous in the opinion that launching from LSTs was the most preferable way to deploy LVTs during the conduct of amphibious assaults; all subsequent assaults in the Pacific followed this example.

The LSD proved itself to be equally capable. These ships were able to carry as many as three LCTs apiece, each carrying up to five M4-A2 Sherman medium tanks,





Official Marine Corps photograph no. NH 96879

*The USS Gunston Hall (LSD 5) photographed in the late 1940s. The British-developed landing ship, dock was ahead of its time, presaging the amphibious assault ships developed in the 1950s. When its well deck was flooded, a mix of landing craft, mechanized and landing craft, tank, as well as LVTs, could be rapidly launched through its stern gate. The postwar addition of a mezzanine deck allowed it to carry additional cargo as well as helicopters.*

or 14 LCM, each carrying one tank, or a mix of both craft. The LSDs ability to flood its aft well deck and launch LCTs or LCMs out the stern gate in a matter of minutes, compared with the much slower launching speed of the attack cargo ships, meant that badly needed tanks could get ashore much more quickly. The employment of the 14 tanks from the 2d Tank Battalion launched from the USS *Ashland* (LSD 1) tipped the balance in the Marines' favor during the Battle of Tarawa by enabling them to destroy Japanese bunkers and other defensive positions with point-blank 75-millimeter cannon fire. Without these tanks, the seizure of Betio Island would have taken more time and cost more lives. In addition, the well deck of the LSD could be used to repair damaged landing craft once the water was pumped out. Due to their proven success in places like Tarawa and Makin, BuShips placed orders for more LSDs, with 27 finally being launched before the war ended.

With both the LSD and LST having proven themselves at Tarawa, the final evolution would work itself out during the next two campaigns. During the invasion of the Marshall Islands, 1–23 February 1944, all of the approximately 340 LVTs used at Kwajalein and Eniwetok were launched from LSTs, with the assault troops transferring into them from LCPVs alongside. This operation still proved slow and dangerous. When the invasion of the Marianas took place five months later, not only were all 773 LVTs launched from 47 LSTs, but the assault troops were transferred on board the LSTs as early as six days prior to the invasion. Once the command, “away all boats” was given, the assault troops

would simply climb on board their LVTs lined up inside the LST's lower hold and await the command to launch. At Saipan, up to 17 fully loaded LVTs were launched from each LST within 10 minutes at less than 1,000 yards from the line of departure, limiting their exposure to enemy fire and ensuring that nearly all of the assault wave reached the beach without suffering any casualties. This greatly improved the speed of operations, since LVTs could simply drive off the ramp of the LST with its cargo

*A Coast Guard-crewed landing ship, tank (LST 831), with its bow doors opened, lowers its ramp while at sea to discharge its cargo of 17 LVTs during the invasion of Iheya Shima, 26 June 1945. Once it was discovered that the LST was the ideal platform for launching LVTs for the initial waves of an amphibious assault, the conduct of amphibious warfare was never the same.*

Official Marine Corps photograph no. 4703





of troops, supplies, and vehicles instead of being lowered by davits from assault transports. Details were worked out between the Navy and Marine Corps regarding when and how assault troops were loaded on board LSTs, since these ships were not designed with berthing spaces for that many troops. In essence, LSTs became another form of assault transport.

Just as importantly, this development facilitated the control of the ship-to-shore movement, since the LSTs could approach within 6,000 yards of the beach before discharging their cargoes. The LVTs would simply exit the LST and execute a right or left turn. Once in column, the LVTs would be given the command by a nearby control ship to turn left or right, forming them into precise assault waves. Neighboring LSTs with their LVTs would do the same. Instead of spending hours unloading and forming up for the assault, this new technique enabled the amphibious force commander to put thousands of troops ashore in a matter of minutes, even when assaulting a defended shoreline. It also made achieving surprise far more likely, since the Japanese had little time to react once the assault began.

This technique, coupled with preinvasion naval and air bombardment, proved so successful at Saipan, Tinian, and Guam that Japanese commanders learned to avoid battle at the water's edge. Instead, they chose to defend inland, as they did at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, rather than face this amphibious juggernaut. In addition to the advantages LSTs provided in their ability to quickly launch waves of LVTs, the medium tanks carried on board LSDs could be just as quickly landed from LCMs or LCTs once the first assault wave had secured a beachhead. Paired with infantry, the work of neutralizing the enemy's inland defenses could begin in earnest by using tank cannon or flamethrowers.

Often overlooked in the evolution of amphibious operations was the need for reliable command and control by the amphibious force commander. For example, during the assault on Tarawa, the old battleship USS *Maryland* (BB 46) was the V Amphibious Force flagship. However, at a critical time during the initial assault phase, there was a communications failure. This command-and-control failure subsequently led to the development of purpose-built Amphibious Force Flagships (AGC) and Amphibious Command Ships (LCC). The AGC and LCC designs were based on merchant ships that had the space to house the necessary personnel and communications facilities needed to command and control ship-to-shore operations involving dozens of ships, hundreds of landing craft, and thousands of men. These AGCs and LCCs carried sufficient radio equipment to simultaneously communicate with the assault forces ashore and the myriad elements of the task force that provided naval

gunfire support, air support, and logistical support, as well as the ability to communicate with higher and adjacent elements.

With the surrender of Japan in August 1945, the Navy and Marine Corps had learned many practical lessons about how to plan and conduct amphibious warfare successfully. The existing pre-war technology had been adapted to meet new challenges as they arose until newer purpose-built ships, vehicles, and weapons were designed and fielded. Between 1942 and 1945, the amphibious force grew beyond any expectation foreseen by the visionaries of the 1930s and had changed so much that it no longer bore much resemblance to the force that the Navy and Marine Corps began the war with in 1941.

While the battle-tested doctrine was institutionalized after the war in their service schools and fleets, the Navy and Marine Corps was forced to rely on virtually the same World War II-vintage amphibious shipping and landing craft for the next 10 years due to lack of funding as well as institutional battles within the Department of Defense that threatened the existence of the Marine Corps and the Navy's supporting role. Thus, the amphibious force that landed on Inchon in 1950 was equipped virtually the same as the force that assaulted and seized Okinawa five years earlier. It was not until the advent of helicopters that the Navy and Marine Corps began to experiment with new types of amphibious vessels and the promise of vertical envelopment, a subject that will be covered in the next issue. •1775•

*The Line of Departure. An LVT-4, laden with Marines from the 2d Marine Division, launches from the bow of an LST during the amphibious assault against Iheya Shima, 26 June 1945. This combination of LSTs and LVTs would remain the standard method of putting Marines ashore for the next 15 years until the advent of vertical envelopment and modern amphibious assault ships.*

Official Marine Corps photograph no. 126-986





# THE FLIGHT HAS ENDED

Gregory A. Macheak

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Assistant Chief Ranger, William “Bill” J. Butler, hiked up Mount Rainier on 21 July 1947, hoping to find some evidence of a missing transport plane with 32 Marines on board. Though he was an experienced mountaineer, Butler had to dodge rock falls and climb over dark, depthless crevasses to reach his first destination near “upper Pyramid Glacier and Success Cleaver.” Surveying the landscape with binoculars, he found no evidence of the plane. He climbed upon the crest of Success Cleaver and continued past 8,500 feet until he reached about 9,500 feet. Searching the upper area of South Tahoma Glacier, he spotted an object that appeared to be plane wreckage. Shifting his position to get a better view of the glacier, he “definitely ascertained the presence of plane wreckage just beginning to protrude from the melting snows.” Though verification of the wreckage could not be confirmed until the survey teams arrived from the U.S. Navy and Army, Butler had found the missing plane.

The missing transport plane had crashed on 10 December 1946 while on a scheduled flight from El Toro Marine Base, San Diego, California, to Sand Point Naval Air Station, Seattle, Washington. There were six transport planes in this flight. After reaching the area north of Portland, Oregon, the flight encountered a severe storm with heavy snowfall, strong winds, and icing conditions. Consequently, four planes turned back and landed at Portland while the other two continued toward Seattle. To avoid the icing problem, one of the planes climbed to 12,500 feet while the other plane stayed at about 9,500 feet.

The plane flying at 9,500 feet had 32 Marines on board and was commanded by an experienced pilot. The plane’s last verified position was over Portland; later, the pilot radioed that he was flying over Toledo, Washington. “Due to about a 70-mile-an-hour westerly wind of which the pilot was in all probability unaware, his actual position at this time was approximately over Randle, Washington.” Randle is approximately 50 miles almost due east of Toledo and approximately equidistant between Mount Saint Helens and Mount Rainier.

Shortly after the pilot communicated from his perceived location over Toledo, the plane disappeared. With the plane’s disappearance, an intensive air search began, involving the U.S. Navy, Army, Coast Guard, and civilian planes. However, the search was hampered by the continuing storm and heavy precipitation, which “was over five



U.S. National Park Service, Mount Rainier National Park

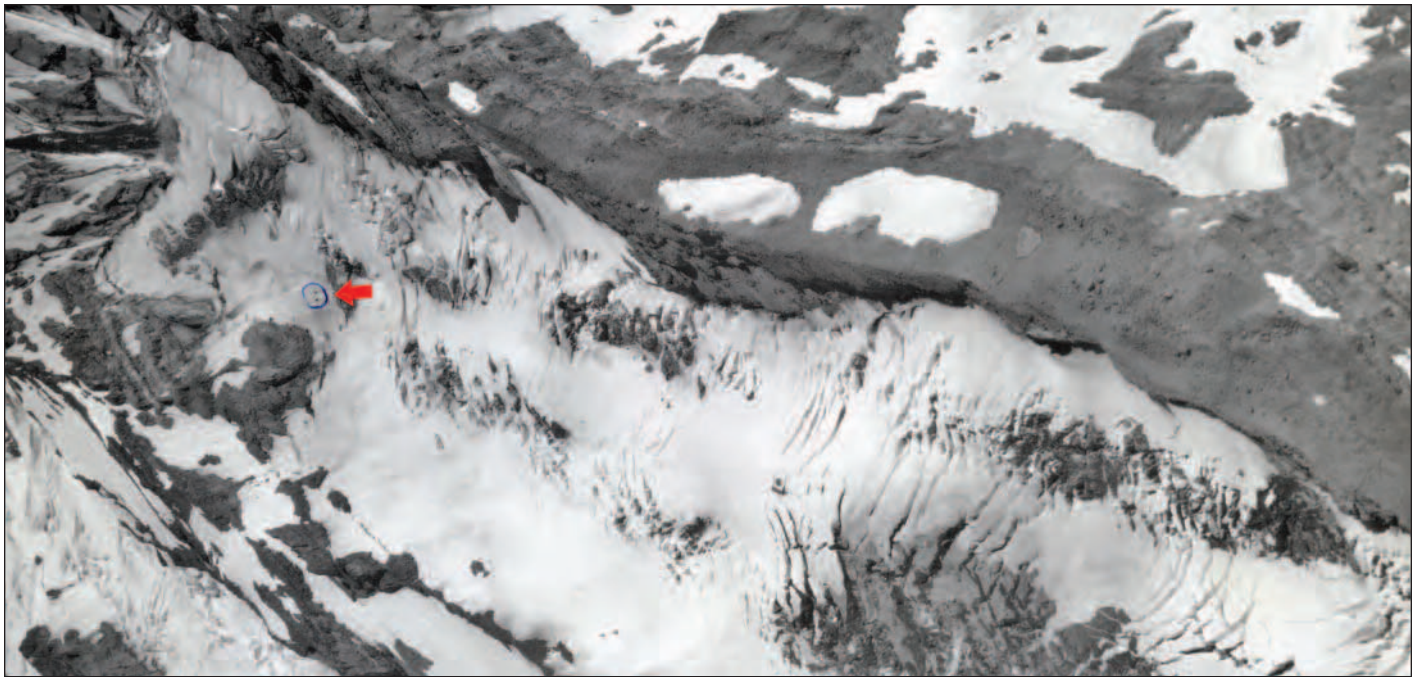
*Map of Mount Rainier showing the approximate location of the crash site.*

feet of snowfall at 9,500 feet elevation.” As soon as weather conditions permitted, the Navy initiated searches in the area where it believed the plane had crashed on the “south or southwestern exposure” of Mount Rainier. The Navy committed personnel for “aerial and ground” searches of all “probable crash areas,” taking “numerous photographs” of these potential crash sites. The initial, intensive search lasted 30 days without a clue of where the missing plane lay.

After the initial 30-day search, search parties continued to investigate the surrounding areas of Mount Rainier throughout the winter, spring, and summer of 1947. By 20 July 1947, the search parties

... had thoroughly investigated the lower watersheds of Kautz Creek, Pyramid Creek, Tahoma Creek, and minor drainages in the area. Included also was the lower portions of the Pyramid Glacier, Kautz Glacier, Nisqually Glacier and country between. The vicinity of Pyramid Peak and Crystal Mountain and the Fan country was searched.





Official U.S. Navy photograph

*Aerial photograph showing South Tahoma Glacier with the location of crash site circled.*

*Mount Rainier as viewed from Indian Henry Hunting Ground about three miles from the wreckage site on South Tahoma Glacier.*

Official U.S. Navy photograph



By the summer of 1947, prospects of finding the missing plane appeared dim. All that changed on 21 July when Butler discovered the wreckage of the missing transport plane. After Butler had determined the location of the plane wreckage by orienting its location with landmarks, he proceeded back down the mountain. He arrived at

park headquarters at 2230 and immediately notified Park Superintendent John C. Preston. A meeting was called with Assistant Superintendent Harthorn L. Bill, Chief Ranger Albert D. Rose, and Trail Foreman Robert Jeffrey attending. A phone call was made to Captain O. A. Rule, Commander Naval Air Bases, Sand Point Naval Air





Official U.S. Navy photograph

*Climbing parties on 24–25 July 1947; Assistant Chief Ranger Bill Butler is shown with head scarf in center of photo.*

Station, Seattle, and a telegram was sent to the regional director of Region Four. It was decided that news of the wreckage should be delayed until definitive identification could be determined.

On 22 July 1947, Rose and Butler left for Sand Point Naval Air Station. Lieutenant Gordon Stanley, USN, conducted aerial reconnaissance of the crash site before Rose and Butler arrived. Butler then accompanied Stanley on another flight over the site where more photographs were taken. The photographs were enlarged but no distinguishing marks could be determined on the exposed objects. Rose and Butler returned to their headquarters where plans were made for a ground search. The Navy released news of the discovery at 1610 that day.

The next day, Mount Rainier National Park employees established a base camp that horses could reach, which served as the operations center for the search parties and was approximately four miles from the crash site. The Navy established a radio communications truck, initially at Rounds Pass but then moved it to Ricksecker Point for better radio reception. Two “walkie-talkies” were provided for communications between the base camp and Success Cleaver, which served as a transmission hub to and from the crash site. At the base camp, the U.S. National Park Service established a field set, and a “tele-

phone line from Indian Henry Hunting Ground” was laid. These last two Park Service devices proved the most reliable for sending and receiving messages.

Equipped with mountaineering gear, three parties set off for the crash site early on 24 July 1947. The groups included Butler, District Ranger Gordon Patterson, Temporary Ranger George Senner, Temporary Ranger Naturalist Bruce Meyers, and four guides from the Mount Rainier Guide Service (Dee Molenaar, William R. Dunaway, Robert Parker, and Charles Welsh). Through sleet and snow the parties climbed upward toward the crash site at around 10,500 feet. They found a Marine’s health record, a fragment of a Marine’s uniform, and some pieces from the plane. With the health record in hand, the Navy cleared the release of information about the crash to the press at 1745.

The next day, the same climbing parties went back to the crash site, including Lieutenant Stanley and Seaman First Class K. C. Tesson, USN. More legible service records were found along with more pieces of the plane wreckage. A part the tail assembly was found and the identification tag was removed. The wreckage “was scattered over an area in excess of one-fourth mile” with some parts embedded in glacier ice, 50 feet below the surface. After the climbing parties arrived back at base camp, Lieutenant Colonel Harrison Brent and Lieutenant Vincent E. Murphy





Official U.S. Navy photograph

*Bruce Meyers in a crevasse examining a piece of plane wreckage.*

of the El Toro Marine Base examined the tag and other pieces of the plane and made definitive identification of the missing Marine transport plane from the 10 December 1946 crash.

Though the actual circumstances of the crash could not be determined from this survey, it was thought that the plane hit the cliff above South Tahoma Glacier or the glacier itself and disintegrated without burning. With no evidence of the Marine bodies found, memorial services were planned for 24 August 1947. However, the National Park Service had stated that they would continue patrols on the mountain to determine if any bodies could be found.

Consequently, on 17 and 18 August, Butler, District Ranger Robert K. Weldon, and Meyers again climbed to the upper reaches of South Tahoma Glacier and found more plane wreckage. During their investigation of the wreckage, they found "11 bodies freed by the melting ice and snow." These three mountaineers then returned to park headquarters to discuss their findings. A meeting was arranged with Bill, Rose, Butler, Weldon, Meyers, and District Ranger J. Leonard Volz. Superintendent John C.

Preston was not available for this meeting but was apprised of the most recent discovery as soon as he returned to park headquarters the next day.

Assistant Superintendent Bill then directed Butler, Weldon, Meyers, and Rose to travel to Sand Point Naval Air Station and report their findings to Captain Rule, under whose authority all operations were being conducted. At 0920 on the 19th, the Navy was informed of all pertinent information and more aerial surveys were ordered. Butler, Weldon, and Meyers went along on these flights, with Meyers acting as photographer. Though the photos did show some of the plane wreckage emerging from the snow and ice, "the bodies were not visible."

After lengthy discussions about what to do with the bodies, it was decided that another survey team climb Mount Rainier and continue to investigate and determine if additional bodies were uncovered from the ice and snow. As such, "a final decision as to the advisability of attempting an evacuation of the bodies" would wait until this survey team had completed their analysis of the wreckage site. The team spent 20–21 August preparing supplies, equipment, and reestablishing the base camp at the same location as the original site in July.

At 0630 on 22 August, the team left base camp and made the arduous climb back up to the crash site. The team was composed of National Park Service employees (Butler, Senner, Seasonal Ranger Cornelius Molenaar, Meyers, Weldon); naval personnel (Lieutenant Sam Bowler, one doctor, two corporals, five enlisted men); and three Mount Rainier Guide Service employees (Dunaway, Parker, Dee Molenaar). After arriving at the crash site, the team accounted for 32 bodies of which 11 could be extracted from the wreckage and snow, while the remaining 21 were so "entangled in the wreckage [that] they could not be removed or were held fast in the ice pack." Personal items found in duffle bags or scattered about the crash site were "placed into individual bags and marked by Navy personnel." After avoiding serious injury from several large rock falls, permission was given to discontinue the survey and return to base camp.

On 24 August, a memorial service was held at Round Pass in Mount Rainier National Park. The service, conducted in conjunction with the Marine Corps and the Navy, included 60 Marines, Captain Rule and other naval personnel, civilians, National Park Service representatives, and the families or relatives of the fallen Marines.

After the memorial service, there was still considerable pressure from the families and relatives of the fallen Marines to recover the bodies from the crash site. Though the recovery effort would entail about "50 to 75" professional mountaineers and would be "extremely difficult" but doable, after much debate, it was agreed to attempt another survey of the area. Captain Rule obtained the services of an U.S. Army mountaineering



Official U.S. Navy photograph

*Memorial service at Round Pass, Mount Rainier National Park.*

team out of Camp Carson, Colorado, and other experienced civilian mountaineers.

On 25 August, a mountain rescue team of Army, Navy, and civilian personnel ascended Mount Rainier to the high camp at 6,465 feet. This team included 12 Navy personnel: two lieutenants (one a medical officer) and ten cooks, radio operators, and other assistants; nine Army personnel: one lieutenant colonel, major, and captain, four noncommissioned officers (experienced mountaineers), and one reporter and photographer. Besides the Navy and Army personnel, there were three civilians from Camp Carson (instructors in mountaineering and winter conditions), two National Park Service rangers, three Mount Rainier summit guides, and three civilian mountaineers.

After reorganizing and refitting, 16 men ascended the mountain until they arrived at 10,500 feet to begin the survey. However, conditions on the glacier were exceedingly dangerous with rock slides coming down with a “deafening roar, carrying boulders the size of a small house with the velocity of artillery shells.” According to the Army report, the survey team found the following:

Decomposition of 11 bodies extracted from the wreckage was well advanced, their eyes were no longer visible, their skin was drawn back tightly

exposing all teeth. The pilot, co-pilot, and crew chief are all at their proper stations, compressed in the twisted wreckage of the nose. Seven men are still strapped to their seats, the lower portion of their bodies firmly held by the glacier ice. The remaining bodies are undoubtedly in that part of the wreckage which is still imbedded in the ice. All bodies except those 11 already laid out on the surface of the glacier cannot be removed intact, but would have to be chopped out in pieces. There are no predatory animals at this altitude and insects, such as blowflies, cannot survive the cold nights, hence the mortal remains of these men will not be molested.

After all team members had returned to the high camp, Lieutenant Colonel Warren S. Shelor, USA, commander of survey team, called a meeting of all leaders to discuss the options available. Major Eric E. Wikner, USA, made the following recommendations:

1. Attempt evacuation of all bodies.
2. Attempt burial of all bodies in a crevasse.
3. Bury entire wreck and bodies by dropping a demolition bomb on icefall above wreck.
4. Cremate bodies and destroy wreckage by dropping one or more Nepalm [sic] bombs on same.





Official U.S. Navy photograph

*Large rockfall (not in picture) and portion of the plane in the glacier (right).*

5. Leave everything the way it is and let nature take its course.

After discussing the above options, all agreed to the following:

1. Evacuation of all bodies was impossible and that the evacuation of even a few would mean the loss of additional lives, require preparations enormous in scope, necessitate an additional camp at the 10,000 foot level, would be hampered and possibly curtailed by fog and snow.
2. Burial of all exposed bodies in a crevasse would mean the exposure of at least 20 highly trained mountaineers to sudden death for a period of several days.
3. Dropping of demolition bomb on the icefall might have a far-reaching and disastrous effect on a large portion of the mountain because the entire peak is so badly disintegrated.
4. Cremation by means of Nepalm [sic] bombs was strongly opposed by some parents whose religion prohibits cremation.
5. The last alternative and the one that all concerned, including the parents, considered the most sensible, was finally adopted during a joint conference at Longmire, 1130–1500, 27 August 1947. During this conference, a representative group of fathers signed the attached statements. (Enclosure 1 & 2)

Consequently, with the consensus made about the deposition of the Marine bodies, the Mount Rainier National Park closed off the upper reaches of the South Tahoma Glacier to hikers, mountaineers, or curiosity seekers, and put up notices on the trails leading up to the South Tahoma Glacier.

In homage to the fallen Marines, Mount Rainier National Park erected a plaque, attached to a large boulder,

inscribed with the names of the Marines. The plaque is located at Round Pass where the memorial service was held on 24 August 1947. To see the plaque today, one would have to hike about four miles—the road was washed out—from the nearest parking area. Currently, there is a memorial service held every year on the last Saturday of August in Enumclaw, Washington, at the Veterans Park.

### Epilogue

Even though there had been ongoing controversy about reopening the upper reaches of South Tahoma Glacier for recreational use, today that area where the plane crashed in December 1946 is open. After approximately 67 years, the natural progression of the glacial snow, ice, and pressure ground to dust all remains of the plane and the personnel inside. The road, still washed out and wider than before, leads to the boulder with the memorial plaque. However, for any intrepid hiker with an interest in Marine Corps history, the way is rugged but beautiful. •1775•

### Memorial plaque at Round Pass.

Photographer unknown



## GENERAL DAVID DIXON PORTER'S QUEST FOR THE MEDAL OF HONOR

**Major David W. Kummer**  
Historian, History Division  
Marine Corps University

### Introduction

**O**n 25 April 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented then-Colonel David Dixon Porter (1877–1944) with the Medal of Honor. The ceremony, besides marking the end of a career-long battle to overturn the 1902 Board of Awards, in some ways also validated the service and sacrifice of Marines that served on the island of Samar during the Philippine Insurrection. Interestingly, Porter's path into the U.S. Marine Corps can be traced back to an unlikely beginning. During the closing days of the American Civil War, General Porter's grandfather, Admiral David Dixon Porter (1813–91) accused "Marines [of] having failed in their duty" during the attack by some 400 Marines and 1,600 sailors on the Confederate stronghold of Fort Fisher. In the wake of a string of failures during the war, Porter's words not only insulted the Marine Corps but diminished the value of both shipboard Marines and amphibious operations for an entire generation of young naval officers.

Perhaps in an effort to make amends, Admiral Porter was one of the Corps' staunchest allies when Congress threatened to disband it after the war. In 1866, he also

gained an appointment for his son, Carlisle Porter, as a Marine Corps officer. Carlisle's 33-year career was rather ordinary when compared with that of his father. However, the early exploits of Carlisle's son—David Dixon Porter, who was named after his famous grandfather—seemed to point the young man toward military greatness before the ill-fated events of the Samar campaign.

### David Dixon Porter

In 1898, Second Lieutenant David Dixon Porter accepted a Marine Corps commission for service in the Spanish-American War. The war ended soon after and Porter, along with other temporary lieutenants, was soon discharged. However by April 1899, Porter gained a regular commission as a first lieutenant in the Marine Corps. After a short stint at the Marine barracks in Annapolis, Maryland, Porter received orders to report to a battalion being formed for duty in the newly annexed Philippine Islands.

In the Philippines, Marines established themselves at the old Spanish naval station located in the Cavite Province where insurgents continued to resist the American presence. The Marines overcame many of their initial logistical obstacles and, by the fall, were finally ready to make an effort to help pacify the province. In October, Lieutenant Porter, barely in country two weeks, joined the 400-man Marine battalion sent to cooperate with an

*Adm David Dixon Porter.*

Library of Congress



*MajGen David Dixon Porter.*

Official U.S. Marine Corps photograph





Army column in clearing the province. On 8 October, the Marines backed by a naval gunboat attacked the insurgent stronghold of Novaleta located on the Cavite coast. Historian Allan R. Millett called the Marines' first action in the Philippines "less than professional," however, it did signal that the Marines would be more involved in future actions. More importantly for the young lieutenant, his first exposure to combat earned Porter a brevet promotion to captain for "distinguished conduct in the face of the enemy."

By summer 1900, the Boxer Rebellion threatened the Foreign Legation in Peking, China. As conditions deteriorated, the Corps began detaching Marines from the 1st Regiment in the Philippines for duty in China. The last day of June 1900, the Marine Corps sent a second detachment of 300 Marines from the Philippines aboard the USS *Brooklyn* (CA 3). The entire detachment, including Porter, fell under the command of Colonel Robert L. Meade, the nephew of Gettysburg victor General George G. Meade. Once ashore, Meade organized

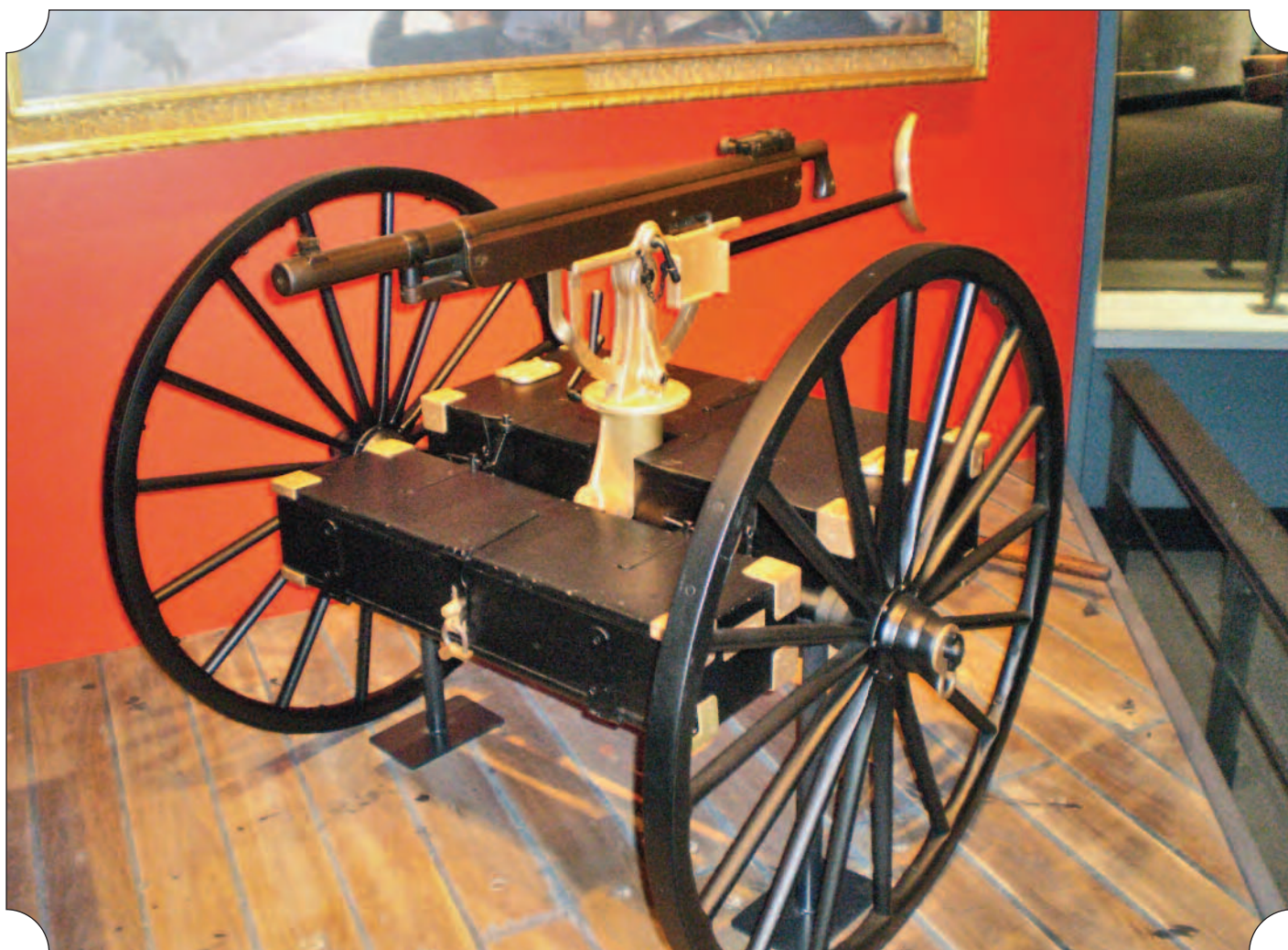
his Marines and joined forces with detachments sent by the other major world powers. From the coast, they moved to the walled city of Tientsin, which blocked the allies progress toward Peking. They found the city, defended by thousands of Boxers and Imperial Chinese troops.

At 0300 on 13 July 1900, the combined forces from United States, Russia, Britain, and Japan began their attack on Tientsin. The allies decided on a two-pronged attack, one led by the British and the other by the Japanese. The coalition's plan of attack, of which the Americans had little input, placed the Japanese on the right, and the British and Americans on the left. For the assault against the city, the Anglo-American column consisted of the following: the Royal Welsh Fusiliers with two companies; the Marine Regiment with 350 men in two battalions; the British naval artillery and naval brigade; and finally the 9th U.S. Infantry Regiment.

Two companies of Marines from the 1st Battalion advanced along a mud wall parallel to the city in support of the overall British assault. The 2d Battalion, com-

*The Colt Model 1895, mounted on its light landing carriage, saw extensive service with Marine battalions during the Spanish-American War, Philippine Insurrection, and Boxer Rebellion.*

National Museum of the Marine Corps





National Museum of the Marine Corps

*Lt Smedley D. Butler received the Brevet Medal for his actions during the Battle of Tientsin, China, 13 July 1901.*

manded by Captain Charles D. Long, consisted of one artillery company with Company D as its supporting infantry company. Long's battalion went into action near the British field artillery. The 2d Battalion's three 3-inch, rapid-fire field guns and three Colt Model 1895 machine guns joined the British naval counterbattery fire against heavy Chinese guns, which rained "heavy and accurate" fire on the attacking troops.

At 0630, the Marines received an order to support the Royal Welsh Fusiliers' attack on the extreme left flank. The 1st Battalion advanced over the low-lying swamp land, dotted by cemetery mounds and numerous dikes that provided improvised entrenchments. Chinese troops used the abundant cover to keep a high rate of accurate fire on the exposed Marine positions some 800 yards away. During the attack on Tientsin, Porter commanded the Marine's three Colt Model 1895 machine guns in what roughly equates to a modern weapons platoon. Throughout the morning, Marine field guns and Porter's machine-gun platoon kept up their fire but by



National Museum of the Marine Corps

*Inscription on the reverse reads, "For Distinguished Conduct in the Face of the Enemy."*

afternoon the heavy weapons were out of ammunition. Meanwhile, Chinese artillery rained down on Long's artillery company and the 1st Battalion in its exposed forward positions some half a mile distant from 2d Battalion.

Twice, Chinese forces massed to try and flank the Marines. In the morning, Colonel Meade's troops beat back the attempt. However, in the early afternoon, the Chinese made another attempt to flank the Marines' forward position. An ammunition shortage left Long's artillery company unable to support Meade's position. In response, 2d Battalion commander, Captain Long, took Porter's machine gun platoon, minus its Colt machine guns and about 60 other Marines from the artillery company to bolster Company D, 2d Battalion. The reinforced company then moved to counter the Chinese flank attack on the extreme left of the allied position. From there, it opened fire on the attacking Chinese, crossed over a mud wall, and advanced across 800 yards of open terrain to link up with the hard pressed 1st Battalion. The Marines held their position until after dark when they were



ordered to withdraw. During the night, the Japanese attack succeeded in blowing up the city's south gate, forcing the Boxers to retreat from Tientsin.

Marine after-action reports recommended some officers for brevet promotion for their actions. One of those officers was Porter's contemporary, then-First Lieutenant Smedley D. Butler, who earned a brevet promotion at the Battle of Tientsin. Following the battle, the multinational relief column continued its 80-mile march toward Peking, encountering resistance along the way. Porter became the regimental adjutant, though it did not keep him far from the action. When the Marines entered the Forbidden City on 15 August 1900, they were ordered to capture flags mounted on its western gate. After a fire-fight, and with the enemy subdued, Lieutenants Porter and Arthur E. Harding captured the Chinese banners for the commanding general. First Battalion commanding officer, Major Littleton W. T. Waller, stated that "Lieutenant Porter does not belong to my battalion but served, as always, with great courage."

Porter remained in China until October 1900 and then transferred back to Cavite for duty with the Marine Regiment. In September 1901, Porter received orders transferring him to command the ship guard aboard the USS *New York* (ACR 2). However, the Philippine Insurrection still flickered on the island of Samar. The island's rugged interior provided a secure base of operations for insurgents who managed to slaughter nearly two-thirds of Company C, 9th U.S. Infantry, just weeks before at the town of Balangiga. For Porter, sea duty lasted only a month, before he was assigned to the Marine battalion commanded by Major Waller, who Porter knew from the Peking relief expedition.

Waller himself was an energetic man of action, but was prone to reckless decisions and poor planning reportedly due to a dependence on alcohol. Ashore, the Marine battalion fell partially under the control of the 6th Separate Brigade, commanded by Army Brigadier General Jacob H. Smith. The old general, both overwhelmed with command of a brigade and arguably mentally ill, infamously ordered Waller to undertake a punitive campaign in which every male over the age of 10 could be shot on sight. For Waller's part, he evidently passed along the flavor of Smith's orders, though he reportedly told Captain Porter that the Marines were not on Samar to "make war on women and children."

With most of the population confined to coastal villages under U.S. military "protection," Waller's battalion began the task of clearing the insurgents from the coastal villages. Waller continued the Army's tactics of depriving the "insurrectos" of food and preventing smuggling. Besides crushing the insurgency, Waller also intended the Marines to punish the insurgents for the Balangiga massacre. He assigned Captain Porter to garrison the area around Balangiga with half of the battalion.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photograph  
Col Hiram I. Bearss.

After offering locals protection in exchange for swearing allegiance, Waller's punitive logistical strategy left devastation in its wake for those who failed to take the pledge. Marines burned more than 250 houses, killed cattle, and destroyed almost a ton of rice along with other property. To prevent rice and hemp smuggling, which kept insurgent leader Brigadier General Vicente Lukban's rag-tag force in the field, Waller forced locals to register boats or see them sunk. The effect of Waller's and Porter's scorched earth policy not only deprived the insurgents of logistical support but also coerced allegiance from the locals who depended on the Marines for supplies.

As Waller's temporary amnesty expired, any Samareños who failed to take the loyalty pledge was branded as an insurgent and liable to be shot on sight. The Marines not only continued their logistics denial strategy but also conducted offensive operations to engage Lukban's insurgents. Porter's aggressive actions against the insurgents garnered favorable mention in Waller's dispatches for "distinguished conduct and public service in the presence of the enemy." Although Waller's battalion managed to kill or capture almost 60 insurgents, they failed to pre-

vent many of them from retreating inland to their jungle base camps.

Waller was determined to press inland and capture the insurgent camp, rumored to lie on the Sohoton River. During the first 10 days of November 1901, Porter led a column of Marines deep into the mountainous jungles, searching for the elusive insurgents. On 13 November, Waller mounted another expedition to find the insurgent camp. The expedition consisted of three columns, two advanced overland while a third, commanded by Waller, navigated the river. On 17 November, Porter's land column connected with the other land column, commanded by Captain Hiram I. Bearss, at the junction of the Sohoton and Cadacan Rivers.

Porter and Bearss' columns then advanced along either side of the river, surprising a group of insurgents. The Marines quickly routed and killed 30 insurgents before they could trigger a series of deadly traps from their entrenchments, guarding the base camps. Meanwhile, Waller remained in the boats to control the river and prevent any attempted escape downstream. After clearing the entrenchments close to the river, the two land columns moved to attack the enemy camps. Unlike their former coastal haunts, the insurgents built their camps atop 200-foot high volcanic cliffs.

Porter was assigned to lead the attack and devise a way to ascend the steep cliffs. Besides primitive bamboo cannon, the insurgents also ingeniously suspended tons of rock in baskets some 200 feet above the river bank, rigged to rain down on the Marines. Porter's Marines then confronted the steep cliffs and jagged volcanic rocks. They used bamboo ladders and makeshift handrails abandoned by the insurgents to scale the cliffs and clear the network of caves high above. At the top, Porter and his men continued to dodge poison-tipped spears, sporadic gunfire, and hidden traps designed to kill or maim the Marines. After clearing one side of the river, Porter's men climbed down, crossed the river, and repeated the feat on the opposite side.

The expedition, in combination with Waller's aggressive patrol tactics on the coast, broke the insurgency. Waller recommended Porter, Bearss, and several enlisted Marines for "either a medal of honor or a brevet [promotion]." Brigade commander, Brigadier General Smith, congratulated Waller's command as a "brilliant success." Both Porter and Bearss received other congratulations, one even from the Asiatic fleet admiral and U.S. Army Major General Adna R. Chaffee, military governor and commander of U.S. troops in the Philippines. As Waller's recommendation made its way up official channels, events on Samar prevented Porter from gaining any official recognition for his acts.

After the Marines' success in November 1901 along the Sohoton, Waller attempted to cross Samar's southern

half despite ominous warnings from Army officers familiar with the region. In late December, Porter along with 54 Marine officers and enlisted men, and 35 scouts and porters left the eastern coastal town of Lanang and joined Waller on what would become one of the most infamous treks of the Corps. However, no amount of Waller's bravado could overcome his lack of logistical planning that soon doomed the expedition.

On 1 January 1902, after less than a week in the jungle, Waller's men neared their physical breaking point as they contended with the harsh jungle and unforgiving mountainous terrain. When Waller finally realized his error, he struck out with two officers and a squad of Marines to find a relief party, while leaving the rest of the expedition under the command of Captain Porter. After several more days with no contact from Waller, Porter decided to split the expedition again. He took seven Marines, including Gunnery Sergeant John H. Quick, recipient of the Medal of Honor during the Spanish-American War, in an attempt to retrace their path through the jungle to Lanang. Lieutenant Alexander Williams and the remaining Marines struggled to survive, battling potential starvation, oppressive environmental conditions, and the increasingly hostile actions of their native porters.

After a grueling eight-day trek back through the jungle, Porter reported his desperate situation to Army officers in Lanang. They immediately launched a relief party that finally found Lieutenant Williams' party on 18 January 1902. The unforgiving jungle left the ragged survivors nearly crazed from heat and starvation, and almost a dozen Marines died from exposure.

Back in Lanang, Williams relayed how the porters attacked him and behaved in what he considered a mutinous manner. Porter agreed with Williams' assessment and that "these natives should have been shot at the time . . . but the men were so weak they could hardly handle their rifles." Captain Porter ordered that the natives be sent back under guard to headquarters at Basey to face military justice. On their arrival in Basey, Waller, still suffering from malaria, deemed the porters to be mutineers and ordered them summarily shot. Though Waller's Marines and the 6th Separate Brigade approved of Waller's handling of the executions, General Chaffee in Manila was determined to court-martial Waller.

The harsh tactics adopted by Americans in the Philippines found their way into the press back home. Brigadier General Smith's overall conduct of the campaign on Samar and Waller's expedition only added to the allegations of atrocities committed by American troops. As the stateside newspapers continued to report atrocities committed in the Philippines, public opinion at home demanded a change in policy. In response, the War Department pres-



sured Chaffee to make an example of Waller. Despite what Chaffee considered to be ample evidence, the trial failed to convict Waller, and the Marine Corps also opted not to punish him. Though some historians have viewed Waller as a scapegoat, his court-martial testimony enraged the nation and aided challenges to the Philippine annexation.

Ironically enough, while the press seized on the negative aspects of Waller's expedition, the incident actually sparked a tradition within the Marine Corps. A few months before the ill-fated expedition, Congressman Thomas S. Butler, father of Captain Smedley D. Butler who Waller commanded in China, wrote that "I have reason to believe that you have a good friend in the White House." However, President Theodore Roosevelt publicly deplored Marine conduct on Samar, and newspapers branded Waller the "Butcher of Samar." The episode tarnished not only Waller's reputation but also the reputations of those men under his command, including Captain David Dixon Porter. While the public at large may have deplored the

*Col David Dixon Porter received the Brevet Medal for his actions on 8 October 1899 during the Philippine Insurrection when Marines captured the town of Novalena, Cavite Province, Philippine Islands.*

National Museum of the Marine Corps



actions on Samar, the Marine Corps informally celebrated the doomed expedition. For years afterward, Marines honored Porter and the other survivors by saying, "Stand gentlemen, he served on Samar" when one of them entered the mess.

In the aftermath of the Waller court-martial, Porter's award recommendation and those of other battalion Marines made their way to Headquarters. The Board of Awards for 1902 found that Porter's actions and the other Marines on Samar rated no awards. By 1904, President Roosevelt appointed William Howard Taft, the former civilian governor of the Philippines, as his Secretary of War.

For Taft, the whole Waller affair cast a pall over his term in the Philippines and thus provided ample reason for Taft to distance himself from anything related to the Samar campaign. As such, politics intervened to frustrate Porter's efforts in 1904 to overturn the ruling by the 1902 Board of Awards.

With Taft's election to the presidency, the politics of the Samar incident continued to haunt Porter's old battalion commander. In 1910, despite strong support from some in Congress, President Taft appointed Colonel William P. Biddle as Commandant of the Marine Corps over Waller. Again in 1914, following Biddle's tour as Commandant, politics again derailed Waller's bid to become Commandant. While Porter's Medal of Honor recommendation languished as a result of Waller's actions, Porter's military career continued seemingly without penalty. After his return from the Philippines in June 1902, Porter served on ship and shore in Panama and later in Cuba. By 1908, the Marine Corps promoted Porter to the rank of major and ordered him to report for duty as the Assistant Adjutant and Inspector of the Marine Corps. Porter returned to the Philippines as the 1st Brigade Adjutant and Inspector in 1911. During World War I, he was promoted to the rank of colonel while serving in the Adjutant and Inspector's Office at Headquarters Marine Corps.

In 1919, Porter's supervision of the entire Marine Idemobilization after the World War I armistice garnered him a Navy Cross recommendation. He did not receive the Navy Cross but did receive a special letter of commendation from the secretary of the Navy. Porter also saw some of his service in the Philippines recognized as one of only two dozen or so Marines to receive the Brevet Medal. From 1922 to 1933, he served as the officer-in-charge of the Eastern Recruiting Division and then commanded the Marine Corps Recruiting Bureau located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Porter returned to the Adjutant and Inspector's Office in late 1934, where he worked as the assistant adjutant and later as the adjutant and inspector until he retired in 1937.

## *From Brevet Medal to Medal of Honor*

From the Civil War until just before World War I, the Marine Corps maintained few options to honor its officers for bravery in battle. Traditionally, the Marines relied on the brevet promotion system to promote officers for their heroic conduct; however, an 1870 law prohibited officers from wearing their brevet rank. In contrast to enlisted Medal of Honor recipients, officers were left with no device to wear in uniform. As a result, recipients' accomplishments soon faded into history and the brevet promotion continued to lose favor though the Marines continued the practice until just after the turn of the twentieth century.

In 1915, Marine Corps officers also became qualified for the Medal of Honor, which up until that time was strictly an award for enlisted Marines and sailors. However, those officers brevetted during the previous 50 years were not considered. In 1921, Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General John A. Lejeune, decided that the Marine Corps needed a medal to recognize those officers promoted by brevet. Several design proposals were submitted, and on 7 June 1921, the secretary of the Navy approved the Brevet Medal.

In the post-World War I Marine Corps, new medals like the Navy Cross and eligibility for the Medal of Honor made the Brevet Medal exceedingly rare. Brevet Medal requirements mandated that a Marine officer hold a brevet commission confirmed by the Senate and prevented posthumous awards. These requirements and the fact that the military no longer used the brevet system limited overall eligibility to less than 25 Marines. Regulations originally directed the wearer to place the Brevet Medal next to the campaign medal in which it was earned; however, by 1929, the Brevet Medal was elevated in seniority of wear second only to the Medal of Honor.

Porter continued to wage a campaign to overturn the 1902 awards board decision. After being turned down in 1902 and again in 1904, Porter resubmitted the nomination in 1919 and again in 1928. Each time, the Board of Awards reverted back to the position of the 1902 decision and failed to find "any instances of extraordinary heroism," and thus, again recommended that "no award be made in this case."

On 16 February 1934, Porter wrote directly to acting secretary of the Navy, Henry L. Roosevelt, by way of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General John H. Russell, requesting that his award recommendation from the Philippine Insurrection be reconsidered. This time Porter proposed that the Board of Awards evaluate whether his actions on Samar justified the Distinguished Service Medal in lieu of the Medal of Honor. Only three days later on 19 February, the Commandant endorsed Porter's petition. The Commandant also asked that the secretary reconsider the cases of retired Colonel Hiram I.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photograph  
Col Hiram I. Bearss (right) and Col David Dixon Porter (left) receive  
the Medal of Honor from President Franklin D. Roosevelt (center).

Bearss, First Sergeant Harry Glenn, and former Corporal Robert F. Leckie who originally petitioned the Commandant about the medal upon his discharge in 1920.

Several days later, the secretary forwarded the case to the Board of Awards, Bureau of Navigation. On 10 March, the Board of Awards recommended that Porter and Bearss receive the Medal of Honor. On 13 March, less than a month after Porter petitioned the Commandant, but more than 30 years after first being considered by the Navy, acting secretary of the Navy, Henry L. Roosevelt, approved both awards.

On 25 April 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented both Marines with the Medal of Honor. That fall, Adjutant and Inspector, Brigadier General Rufus H. Lane, retired, leaving only Colonel David Dixon Porter "eligible" and "qualified" to assume the post. In addition to being elevated to the post of adjutant and inspector, Porter was also promoted to brigadier general and served in the post until 1937 when he was medically retired. Shortly before his death, the Marine Corps promoted Porter to the rank of major general on the retired list for a lifetime of service and combat exploits.

In 1865, Admiral David Dixon Porter accused the Marines of failing their duty. In 1902, politics and the Board of Awards intervened to prevent another David Dixon Porter from being recognized for doing his duty. However, in both cases, the passage of time allowed others to eventually correct the record. In recent years, historians have not only vindicated the Marines at Fort Fisher but also placed much of the blame for the botched attack on Admiral Porter himself. Likewise, in the case of his grandson, after 30 years of petitions, the Board of Awards finally recognized that the Marines who served on the island of Samar also did their duty. •1775•



*Faustin E. Wirkus:*

## From “Breaker Boy” to King

**Beth L. Crumley**

Reference Historian, History Division

Marine Corps University

Haiti! Island of drums. Lands of black voodoo and erotic loves. If you ever visit Haiti, don't, for heavens sake, stray into the hills at night. The unsteady roll of drums will sweep through your veins, leaving your muscles bulging with uncontrollable excitement. And as your physical being obeys the sound of the drums, your mind will surrender and sink into an eternity of delicious oblivion.

*~Warrant Officer Faustin E. Wirkus*

There is no doubt that sometimes truth is stranger than fiction. One of the strangest stories from U.S. Marine Corps history is that of Warrant Officer Faustin Wirkus, the Marine who became king of the small island of La Gonave, off the coast of Haiti.

According to the official biography, Faustin Wirkus

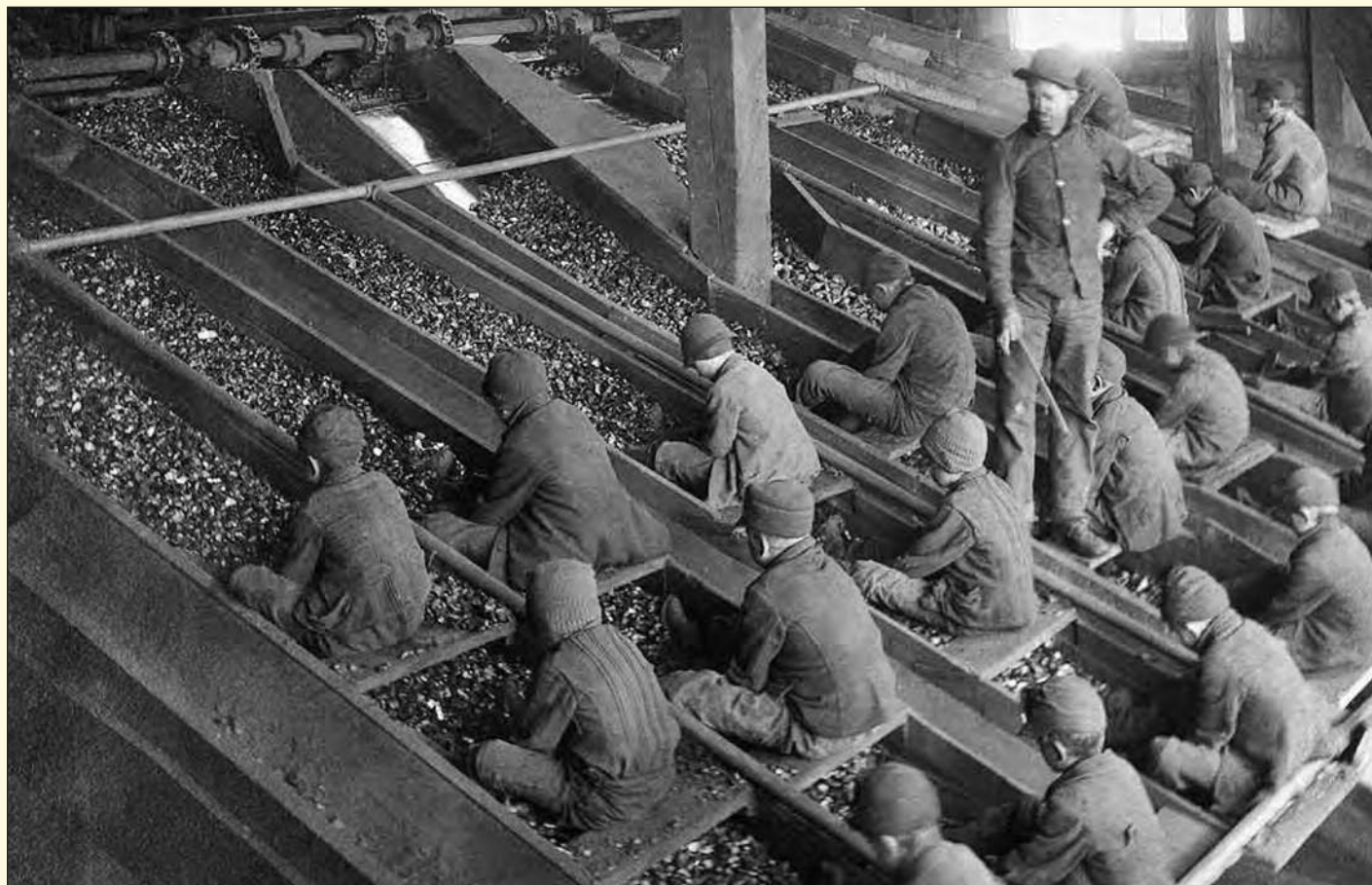
was born on 16 November 1896 in the small town of Rypin, now located in Poland. He came to the United States as a small boy with his parents, who settled in the coal-mining town of Dupont, Pennsylvania, near the city of Wilkes-Barre.

Here, the Susquehanna River winds its way slowly through the Wyoming Valley. Beneath the valley floor lays one of the largest deposits of anthracite coal in the country, the Northern Coal Field. First mined in the Wilkes-Barre area between 1776 and 1780, anthracite coal was king.

At one point, more than 30 coal breakers and collieries operated in Luzerne County alone. (Collieries were the actual mines and associated out buildings. The breakers were dark, looming structures where the coal was processed. It was in the collieries and breakers that men and boys found employment.) With the expansion of the mining and railroad industries came a large influx of immigrants to the area—English, Welsh, Irish, and German, followed by Polish, Slovak, Ukrainian, Hungarians, Russians,

*Breaker boys were employed to separate impurities, such as rock, soil, slate, and clay, from the coal.*

Library of Congress



Italians, and Lithuanians. On both sides of the river, small towns characterized by row houses on narrow streets sprung up, small businesses opened that specialized in making Polish kielbasa and pierogies or offering Italian groceries, and churches could be seen on every block. The story of Warrant Officer Faustin Wirkus begins here.

At the age of 11, in order to augment the family's income, Wirkus began working at the Number 9 Colliery in the town of Pittston. He was a "breaker boy," or one of the desperately poor children who worked for pennies separating coal from slate. Wirkus stated, "I had to go to work in the collieries. When a boy was 11, he was old enough to work as a coal picker in the breakers. There was no escaping the sequence of that rule. No different idea was in the mind of my father, or my mother or any of the neighbors . . . but there was a different idea in my mind . . . In the little time I had been in school, it had become foggily known to me that somewhere out beyond the dust, the rattling collieries, and the grimy shacks of Dupont, was a world full of thrill and the glory of being alive." As Wirkus grew, he moved from working in the collieries to working in the mines.

At the age of 17, Wirkus left home and made his way to a Marine recruiting station in Scranton. He later said, "At this time there was much talk in the newspapers about trouble in Vera Cruz in which the Marines had a part. It seemed a proper time for me to join . . . The posters had fixed the Marine idea in my mind. I didn't know there was any other kind of soldier." When asked by the recruiter what branch of service he wished to join, Wirkus stated, "The Marines!" The recruiter slowly explained that he was with the United States Army and then, after describing the branches of the Army open to recruitment, asked, "Now! What branch of the service do you desire?" Wirkus replied, "I don't want to enlist in anything but the Marines!"

Despite the confusion, on 23 February 1915, Wirkus fulfilled this dream when he traveled to Wilkes-Barre and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. By August, Wirkus began his first tour of duty in the mysterious, troubled nation of Haiti.

Wirkus arrived at the Caribbean country on board the USS *Tennessee* (BB 43). As the ship steamed into the harbor of Port-au-Prince, the young Marine was mesmerized by his first glimpse of Haiti and the island of La Gonave.

The silent, sweeping town of Port-au-Prince, with its deserted streets, its placid bay, the palm-fringed shore, stirred me to such an extent that I took no notice of the mass of jungle and mountains sprawling in the bay to the westward. Someone asked, "What is that place over there," and a sergeant who seemed to know everything said, "If you're lucky you'll never get any closer to that place than you are



*The White King of La Gonave, Gray Research Center*  
Vicinity map of Haiti that shows the island of La Gonave in the Gulf of La Gonave.

now. No white man has set foot on it since the days of the buccaneers. There's a post on it now, but the men stationed there don't usually come back—and if they do, they're fit for nothing but the bug house . . . Place is full of voodooos and God knows what else."

During his first year in Haiti, Wirkus served in and around the city of Port-au-Prince, often patrolling the waterfront. Here, revolutionary activity ranged from sniping to all-out raids. His time in Haiti, however, was cut short when he fell from a truck and broke his arm. He returned to the United States in November 1916 for treatment. After his recovery, Wirkus was stationed in Cuba, but broke his arm a second time and, once again, returned to the United States. He finally returned to Haiti in April 1919. Now a sergeant, Wirkus was commissioned a lieutenant in the *Garde d'Haiti*.

Assigned to the mountain outpost of Perodin, Wirkus commanded a Gendarmerie unit against the rebellious Caco forces. He earned a reputation as a strong leader and excellent marksman. One account, published in 1953, stated that "In one bloody skirmish, [Wirkus] killed a rebel hiding behind a palm tree by estimating the height of the man's chest and sending a bullet straight through the trunk. Awed by this amazing shot, the other bandits dropped their guns and fled."

From January through June 1920, Wirkus served as the subdistrict commander of the *Garde* detachment at Arcahaïe, which included nominal control of the island of La Gonave. From his first glimpse of the island five years before, Wirkus had been fascinated by its dark, mysterious reputation. He could learn nothing from the Marines stationed there, simply because none of them had ever ventured into the island's interior. In March 1920, Wirkus managed to finally make an overnight visit to La Gonave.



Seduced by the mysteries of the island, Wirkus returned to Arcahaie and applied for duty on La Gonave.

Shortly thereafter, a group of prisoners from La Gonave was brought before him. They were charged with offenses against the Republic of Haiti, described later as “trivial voodoo offenses.” Among the offenders was a tall, buxom woman named Ti Memenne, who appeared to be a woman of some importance. After speaking with Wirkus, she reportedly said, “We will meet again.” The woman was transferred to Port-au-Prince for trial, with a recommendation for leniency from the Marine sergeant.

Two months later, Wirkus again visited La Gonave and became the first white man to visit the interior of the island in several centuries. Once there, he learned that the matriarchal system, which had been brought over by the first slaves from Africa, had remained intact. Indeed, Wirkus was welcomed by the queen of La Gonave, who was none other than Ti Memenne. Before the Marine departed the island, Ti Memenne drew him aside and said, “Soon you will be coming back to stay with us, Faustin.”

His first request for transfer ignored, he again applied for duty on the island. His superiors “who thought of La Gonave as the butt-end of the world” appeared surprised by his request. Now a gunnery sergeant, Wirkus had a reputation as a solid leader and a good Marine, so “they shrugged their shoulders” and granted his request. His

opportunity to return to the island came in April 1925 when he was made resident commander of La Gonave.

In the first few months of his residency, Wirkus explored the jungle trails alone and unarmed. Signal drums announced his approach to villages, and he came to know the people of La Gonave. He undertook a program of gradual reform, carrying it out so that it conflicted as little as possible with native customs and superstitions.

Wirkus felt that “I was sent over there from Haiti to act as district commissioner, which meant I had to do practically everything. I was chief of police and my own police force. I was commander of all the native troops, which consisted of 28 men, who tried to keep order among the 12,000 inhabitants of the island. I acted as customs department, magistrate and tax collector, and preformed a few other minor duties.”

During his tenure, he saved the Haitian government thousands of dollars by exposing graft in tax collection and ensured the island farmers were given fair tax assessments. He also oversaw the construction of the first airfield and directed the first census, a difficult task because of a local belief that only the devil kept track of his children. Additionally, he taught the native farmers to plant in rows, rather than randomly scattering seed, helped repair or modernize their agricultural equipment, and took an interest in the care of their children.

These practical reforms endeared Wirkus to the people of La Gonave, and he was made a member of the Twelve Congo Societies, a voodooist organization, over which Ti Memenne reigned as queen. About a year and a half after his arrival on La Gonave, Wirkus was summoned to the queen’s home and was told that the natives had nominated him king of the Twelve Societies in a secret ceremony. (In addition to their love and respect for the young Marine, their decision was partly based on island superstition. According to local legend, a previous ruler of the island, Faustin I, had disappeared with the promise that a descendant of the same name would return to take the throne. The natives of La Gonave has long referred to Wirkus as “Li te pe vini,” or “He who was to come.”)

On the evening of 18 July 1926, Master Sergeant Faustin Wirkus was crowned king of La Gonave in a voodoo ceremony. As the drums beat the “Call of the King,” a rhythm designed specifically for Wirkus, he was carried from the houmfort, or voodoo temple. In the firelight, the blood of a sacrificed rooster marked his forehead and wrists. He wore the crown of Faustin I. Behind him walked Ti Memenne. The crowd shouted “Le Roi! Vive le Roi Faustin!”

Wirkus later said, “They made me a sort of king in a ceremony I thought was just a celebration of some kind. I learned later they thought I was the reincarnation of a former king of the island who had taken the name of Faustin I when he came into power. The coincidence was just good luck for me.”

*Art portrait of Faustin E. Wirkus.*

*The White King of La Gonave, Gray Research Center*





*The White King of La Gonave, Gray Research Center*

*Photo of Wirkus (King Faustin II) sitting next to his queen, Ti Memenne.*

As Faustin II, Wirkus continued to work with the natives of La Gonave. In 1928, however, the president of Haiti visited the island for the first time. He was impressed with the progress the islanders had made under the Marine's guidance. He was less impressed when he learned that the natives of La Gonave considered Wirkus their king. He could not tolerate a king in his republic, and the reign of Faustin II ended in 1929 when Wirkus was transferred back to the mainland.

The young Marine from the coal mines of Pennsylvania returned to the United States in February 1931. His enlistment expired, and Wirkus left the Marine Corps to write and lecture on his experiences in Haiti. During this time, he wrote *"The White King of La Gonave,"* published in 1931 by Doubleday, Doran and Company.

In 1939, as war clouds loomed, Master Gunnery Sergeant Faustin Wirkus, now a reservist, returned to active duty to take charge of the recruiting station in Newark, New Jersey. By February 1942, he was ordered to extended active duty. Appointed a warrant officer shortly thereafter, Wirkus served at Marine Headquarters, Washington, DC, and the Naval Pre-Flight School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Warrant Officer Wirkus fell ill in January 1945 and, after a lengthy illness, died on 8 October. *The Washington Post* ran an obituary that said, "The natives of La Gonave

often said it would be a happy day if King Faustin II could return, but not even the native voodoo could save him from the lingering illness which took his life today." The Marine who had been king was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Warrant Officer Faustin Wirkus was survived by his wife, Yula, and his son, Faustin E. Wirkus Jr., who later served as a helicopter pilot in the Marine Corps. •1775•

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## Oral History Interview: Dr. James E. Huger Sr.

**Fred H. Allison**

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When the U.S. Marine Corps began accepting African Americans into its ranks in 1942, it was on an enlisted-only basis. These became the Montford Point Marines. It was not until the end of World War II that an African American (Frederick C. Branch Jr.) was commissioned. In the meantime, the Corps needed African Americans who could serve in leadership positions and be mentors and role models for other black Marines. There were a number of Montford Point Marines with the requisite background and leadership potential to serve in this capacity. As a result, capable African American Marines were fast tracked to staff noncommissioned officer rank. Several of these Marines attained legendary status within the Corps, such as Sergeant Majors Edgar R. Huff and Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson.

James E. Huger Sr. was another Montford Point Marine who was elevated to sergeant major. He was one of the first African Americans to enlist. Huger had already graduated college and was teaching at Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida. His academic training and leadership potential were obvious. He was promoted to sergeant major and placed in charge of setting up a separate personnel office at Montford Point. He later deployed to the Pacific and again worked in personnel administration. Upon war's end, he served in a Chicago reserve unit but eventually returned to his hometown in Daytona Beach. In the years after, he taught and worked in the administration of his alma mater, Bethune-Cookman University. He also played a prominent role in city and county (Volusia) government. He was the first African American city commissioner in Daytona Beach and the first African American county councilor for Volusia County. Huger was on the cutting edge of desegregation efforts in Daytona Beach and, by working with county and city leaders effectively and peacefully, saw the city and county become completely desegregated.

The following is an edited and truncated interview conducted by Dr. Fred H. Allison on 12 December 2011 at Dr. Huger's home in Daytona Beach. Dr. Huger was 97 years old at the time.

**Allison:** Can you describe your family and growing up in Florida in the 1920s and 1930s?

**Huger:** I was born in 1915 . . . I was blessed that the Lord gave me two beautiful parents. My father was a Methodist minister. My mother was an elementary school teacher. This was during segregation, but they were very avid readers, educated people. They tried to instill in us that we had to read as much as we could. Do all you were able to do to the best of

your ability. Everything was segregated [then]. As a boy, I didn't realize really what was happening. When I got involved with Ms. [Mary Jane McLeod] Bethune [founder of the school that eventually became Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Florida], it was then that I realized what segregation was all about. I really didn't even know that white people existed; we were completely removed from them. Our schools were segregated, our churches were segregated, and our recreational facilities—what little we had—were segregated. You really had no contact with the people who lived on the other side of the railroad tracks. You were aware of Jim Crow laws because you had to live by them. An example, in public places, railroad stations, you had two fountains, one for colored, one for whites; colored people could not drink out of that white fountain, but you could turn the water on.

**Allison:** So Ms. Bethune and her college was pivotal in preparing you to face the future.

**Huger:** When I got involved with Mrs. Bethune is when I realized what segregation was really all about. She was very opposed to segregation. I dropped out of school and worked in a hotel. She came to the hotel to get me out of there and make me go back to school. She said, "Huger, the situation we live in today will not last always. When it happens, opportunities will open up. Unless you are prepared you are not going to be in a position to take advantage of those opportunities. I'm going to see that you get an education." She did. As a result of that education, I was able to do a lot of things she talked about then.

**Allison:** Okay, how did you end up in the Marine Corps?

**Huger:** I finished college—two years at Bethune-Cookman and then finished two years of college at West Virginia State . . . I got married shortly before the war started, in August 1941. I got drafted, but I didn't want to go into the Army because everybody was going into the Army. I didn't want to go into the Navy because I didn't like the way their pants fit, you know, with all those buttons on them. So it turned out that I had one other choice, and that was Tuskegee. The military was just starting to train [African American men] for the Army Air Forces. So I wanted to go into flying. It just so happened that as I was looking at going flying with them, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, which was the Black newspaper, came out and said that "the United States Marine Corps is hiring Negroes." Oh, that's where I'm going, start on the ground floor, and in a couple of years I'll be a general, you know, that's what I said!

**Allison:** So you wanted to sort of be a pioneer?

**Huger:** Well, I didn't want to go with everybody else. I wanted to be different. So I went over to volunteer for the Marines. Orlando was the closest recruiting station. When

we got through with the whole interview, they called me in . . . and the guy said that “you’re the kind of man we’re looking for in the Marine Corps, but we can’t accept you.” I said, “What kind of double talk is that? I’m the kind of man you’re looking for, but you can’t accept me?” They said that “you have a physical defect.” I already had my physical for the Army, approved, ready to be assigned. I said, “What kind of physical defect? I didn’t have it before.” He said that “you have flat feet.” I said, “Oh, there’s nothing I can do about that. I’m sorry.” “No, no, no. We’re going to send your resume up to Atlanta, because that’s our Headquarters and see what they say. So come back in about 10 days and we’ll let you know.” So I said, “I can’t come back in 10 days.” They said, “Why?” “Well, because I’ll be in the Army in 10 days, or the Army Air Force, either one.” So they said, “Well, go get lunch and then come back.” So I went, had lunch, and came back. He’d said that “we went over your resume. You’re the kind of man we’re looking for, but we can’t accept you.” Again, he told me I had flat feet. I said, “Well, I still have flat feet.” “That’s all right. We found out that flat feet is a characteristic of Negroes. So if you’re a Negro, we can make an exception.”

**Allison:** When did you start your Marine Corps training?

**Huger:** The Marine Corps had decided to enlist Negroes, but they had not decided what they were going to do with them or where they were going to train them. They had California, they had Lejeune, and they had Parris Island, but in none of those places did they have a location where they could train black Marines. They never had them before, and they didn’t want to mix them with the white Marines. So when I got involved in the Marines, it was six months later before I was called to active duty. That six months was the time it took the Marines to find a place where they were going to train Negroes. At Camp Lejeune [Jacksonville, North Carolina]. . . they took an area and revamped it, and decided that they now had a place where they could train Negroes. That was Montford Point.

**Allison:** What do you recall of boot camp?

**Huger:** I was in the 7th Platoon. That first morning we were there, all of us were dressed out. The first thing the man said to us was that “The Marine Corps has existed for 167 years without you people, and we could go on forever without you people. We don’t want you in here.”

**Allison:** That was your drill instructor?

**Huger:** This was the drill instructor.

**Allison:** Was he a white man?

**Huger:** Yes, he was a white man because all NCOs [non-commissioned officers] were white at that time at that training base. Well, we proved them wrong.

**Allison:** I understand you eventually were assigned to the administrative offices there. How did that happen?

**Huger:** I was assigned to the administrative office, I guess because of my education, background, and work. So I started out and ended up being in charge of personnel classification. I had an officer by the name of Frank Barnes. He was from

Mississippi. When we found out he was our captain, we all looked worried. Mississippi—the way they were reacting to us! But it turned out he was the best thing that happened to us . . . He proved us wrong. He turned out to be one of the best officers at Montford Point or even in the Marines.

**Allison:** What did he do that made him a good officer?

**Huger:** His attitude was that we were as good as anybody else in the Marine Corps.

**Allison:** How did he show that?

**Huger:** In the training that we were involved with.

**Allison:** In other words, he was serious about your training?

**Huger:** Absolutely. He was always free in his thinking, and there was no color involved. He used good judgment about where he could put us.

**Allison:** So that would probably be good advice for any white officer?

**Huger:** Judge the man, not the color. Because Martin Luther King said, “Do not judge me by the color of my skin,” because you know what, your being born white is no more your fault than me being born brown is mine. We were both accidents of birth, which neither one of us had anything to do with.

**Allison:** So you are in the administrative office, what transpired next?

**Huger:** I stayed with him [Captain Barnes] from the time I was promoted to private first class [PFC] until I was sergeant. When I got to be a sergeant, they decided that the personnel classification system that was handled by Lejeune would now be handled by us. So we set up a personnel classification system, and he selected me as his sergeant. So I stayed in personnel [occupational specialty] the whole time I was in the Marines. I had the good fortune to be in a situation where Captain Barnes assigned me as a sergeant [major] in his area of responsibility. So I was able to pick the guys that I wanted to work with me, and they were just coming in brand new like everybody else.

At that time, they wouldn’t let any of us go into Officer Candidates School [OCS]. But somebody issued an order that said blacks serving overseas could be transferred back to go to OCS. So two black sergeants were sent back to the United States to go to OCS. We had a guy by the name of [Sergeant Major] Charlie [F.] Anderson who was one of the smartest people I ever met in my life. He had been promoted to sergeant, and he was actually the first one, I think, to be promoted to sergeant major. [The other was Sergeant Major Charles W. Simmons.] When they realized that these two sergeants were black, we started asking the question why couldn’t some of us who were at Montford Point, why couldn’t we go to OCS. They picked Anderson because he was the top man and the smartest guy in the crowd—everybody knew that. Charlie Anderson could not flunk. I mean, they couldn’t flunk him on anything educational. So three of them [First Sergeant George F. Ellis Jr. was added later] went to OCS, and when they got through at OCS they would be officers. They called the two guys in and said they’d flunked the



map-reading test. [This was Simmons and Ellis]. So they were transferred [back to the enlisted ranks]. Now, they couldn't flunk Charlie Anderson in anything educational, and they started this business about him needing a physical exam again. Then they found out that he had a heart murmur, and as a result of that heart murmur, they discharged him from the Marines that day. He was not involved in the Marines any more. [All three of these men had successful civilian careers later: Anderson became a lawyer, Ellis a physician, and Simmons a college professor and writer.]

**Allison:** That must have been a tremendous disappointment. Before we move on, were there any other memories of Montford Point that stand out in your mind today?

**Huger:** The colonel called a special meeting on the camp, because somebody [General Henry L. Larsen] was coming back from overseas, and he wanted to see the colored camp. He saw all of us, and he said, "I've just come back from one of the bloodiest wars you'd ever want to see, people dying all around you, and you know what, when I got back to the States, I found out the Marine Corps had women and had dogs in the Marine Corps. But it was not until I saw you people in the Marine Corps that I knew there was a war going on." Of course, that broke up the meeting. The troops were so upset, there was just a commotion, disorder, it just blew the ranks, whatever he said after, nobody could hear. Basically that was the attitude, and not only the boot camp people but people in the ranks, too, felt that black people had no business being part of the Marine Corps.

**Allison:** Did you ever face any of this on a personal, one-on-one level?

**Huger:** One weekend [in 1944] when five of us went to Washington, and we got off the train, and one white Marine came up to me and said, "Marine, you are under arrest." I asked, "Under arrest for what?" One of the other guys was about to fight him. I said, "No, no, these guys are going down to the hotel. Whatever this is, I can straighten it out." So he carried me to the officer of the day, and I said, "What's the charge?" He said, "Impersonating a staff NCO [noncommissioned officer]." That was the first time I heard the charge. The guy didn't ask me for my ID; he just looked on my arm and said, "You are under arrest."

**Allison:** He was thinking, there is just no way it could be.

**Huger:** No way, no, sir. That's exactly what he said to the officer, and the officer said, "You checked his ID, didn't you?" He said, "No, sir. When I saw he had six stripes on his arm and he was black, I knew that was wrong." But by this time, they had my papers and ID in front of them, and he saw that I was a sergeant major. Well, the officer tried to apologize afterwards, and I said, "You don't need to apologize, but I want you to know that I'm going to make sure he doesn't make this mistake again," and I really laid into him. He said, "It takes white boys six to seven years to make sergeant major."

**Allison:** Well, how did you get promoted so fast up to sergeant major?

**Huger:** Well, number one, I was in personnel classifications, and I was the top guy in there, and when they moved all the white NCOs out of the office, then that made that number available.

**Allison:** That opened spots for black NCOs.

**Huger:** Yes, so that's how I got in there; it came as a result of being in personnel classifications with Captain Barnes.

**Allison:** Right place at the right time! What sort of activities were you involved with while overseas?

**Huger:** . . . I was overseas, but I never did get involved in any fighting. I didn't get involved in any of the areas where they were fighting. I was always in administration, in the back.

**Allison:** Were you disappointed by that? Did you want to get into combat?

**Huger:** I had no problem with it, but I didn't want to get into it, because one, when I got overseas, I was supposed to go to a fighting outfit, but they changed my assignment, and he told me the reason. He said, "We're not going to send you because those guys are fighting a war out there. We're going to assign you someplace else." He said, "Because as soon as you get out there, and some of those fighting Marines find out that you're a sergeant major, somebody might shoot you. So we aren't going to take that chance." So I said, "Well, let me tell you this, that when I joined the Marine Corps, I knew there was a possibility that I'd die. But I did not think it would be from one of my own. I assumed an enemy would kill me, so I'd be in line like everybody else, killed by the enemy. But if it happened that one of our own Marines would kill me because I'm a sergeant major, I don't have no problem with that." That was the biggest lie I ever told.

**Allison:** After the war, I understand you played a tremendous role in the desegregation in Daytona Beach; I've seen parks and college buildings with your name on them. You were Daytona Beach's first black city commissioner and county councilman, and chairman of the county council for two years. You are truly a leading citizen here. How much of that work do you attribute to your being a Marine and your Marine training?

**Huger:** The Marine Corps gave me the confidence and the ability to handle every situation. My philosophy has always been, "In the Marines, you do as best you can with what you have." And I've always tried to do just that. I was able to take these sorts of assignments and carry them through to completion.

**Allison:** How do you think the Marine Corps changed you?

**Huger:** I learned that I was as good as anybody else concerned. If you could do it, I could do it. I could do it as well as you, and in many instances, whatever it was, I could do it better than you. That was being a Marine. •1775•

# The One Day Flight of Corsair 02270

Captain Dorothy A. Prose, USN (Ret.)

**Editor's Note:** The following edited excerpt is from the author's story in *Naval Aviation Museum Foundation*, Volume 33, Number 2, Fall 2012.

## The Vittitoe Story

The Marine Corps Corsairs were quickly sent to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands to join the Grumman F4F Wildcats holding down the fort against the more versatile Japanese Zeroes. The Corsair's first combat engagement occurred on 13 February 1943. By the end of the year, all Marine Corps squadrons in the South Pacific were Corsair equipped. The prescribed rotation during the Solomon's campaign included four to six squadrons at any one time in the forward combat zone for four to six weeks, followed by a week's leave in Sydney, Australia, or Auckland, New Zealand, then two to four weeks at Efate or Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides (now the Republic of Vanuatu) for training.

Marine Fighting Squadron 321 was commissioned on 1 February 1943 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina. The squadron received the brand new F4U-1 Corsairs (the "birdcage"). Since the squadron did not have a nickname, its Commanding Officer, Major Edmund F. Overend, recalled his time with the Flying Tigers in China and Burma, and adopted one of their three squadron's names, the *Hell's Angels*. In November 1943, the *Hell's Angels* arrived on the island of Efate, New Hebrides, and established themselves on the northern end of the island at Quoin Hill airfield, which was one of the earliest Marine Corps airbases, hastily built in the South Pacific to stop the Japanese blitz in early 1942.

Vought delivered Corsair 02270 to the U.S. Navy on 12 December 1942. After stops in San Diego, Pearl Harbor, and Marine Air Group 11, the plane was assigned to Marine Fighting Squadron 321 on 5 May 1944. This Corsair served with the squadron for one day, piloted by then-Second Lieutenant James A. Vittitoe.

Vittitoe, a native of Cecilia, Kentucky, joined the Marine Corps as a private in March 1941 and, upon graduating from flight school in Pensacola, Florida, was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1943; he reverted to master sergeant after the war. He served in the Korean War as a helicopter pilot and retired as a captain in 1961.

Vittitoe arrived at the Quoin Hill airfield on the island of Efate on 2 May 1944. After only three days of training in the fighter pool, he was assigned to a flight of 12 Marine Fighting Squadron 321's Corsairs to escort 36

dive bombers on a training mission. The bombers were to navigate, and the Corsairs were to cover the bombers, practicing what was called the Thatch weave—a technique designed to protect each other from enemy aircraft. There was cloud cover, however, and the bombers missed their target. They got lost over the Pacific Ocean.

Back at Quoin Hill airfield, the fighter pool Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Gregory J. Weissenberger, after realizing the Corsairs were overdue, found someone with a radio homing device to give the lost pilots a heading back—it was every man for himself with what fuel they had left. The bombers made it back to the larger base at Bauerfield on Efate. Captain Vittitoe, in his own words, relates that he

... had the propeller on that ole Corsair turning so slow I could almost count the revolutions, and just enough manifold pressure to maintain altitude. I had Quoin Hill in sight at about one thousand feet and about one-half mile from the beach indicating ten gallons of fuel remaining when the engine quit. I turned left to parallel the beach and into the wind, I think, and headed for the water. I dropped the flaps, kept the wheels up and glided to the water. Just prior to hitting the water my right flap started retracting due to no hydraulic pressure. I was able to keep the aircraft level with the rudder. As it settled, the propeller and engine started hitting coral, and for a moment, it looked as if it was going to flip over on its back but settled on the reef half submerged.

He was unharmed but the Corsair was a complete loss. Two island natives waded out, took his parachute, and he followed them ashore in waist deep water. At the end of May 1944, Captain Vittitoe joined VMF-212 and headed to Green Island in the Solomons. Corsair 02270 was stricken from Navy records on 14 July 1944.

After a successful career as chief pilot for Hughes Helicopter, Captain Vittitoe returned to Efate in the Republic of Vanuatu with his oldest son, Craig, and wife, Suzanne, in April 1990 and located his Corsair via outrigger canoe. In spite of corrosion and mangroves growing toward the aircraft and almost concealing it from sight, most of the Corsair was still there. Looking back, as he told his son, it was no big deal at the time. He made a good landing and walked away. It was his final good-bye to his one flight aircraft, Corsair 02270. He passed away in San Diego four years later in 1994. •1775•



# HISTORICAL REFERENCE BRANCH

## Annette D. Amerman

Senior Reference Historian, History Division  
Marine Corps University

“... the thoroughness, promptitude, and courtesy with which every such request, high or low, is dealt with constitute very proper credit items for the Marine Corps as a whole.”

~Colonel Robert Debs Heinl, 1950

Over the course of the last 94 years, the historians of the Historical Reference Branch have fielded requests for historical information from the commandant's office to privates first class in the field, from academic scholars to elementary school students, and from veterans to the general public. While the historians often rely simply based on their extensive knowledge and experience, they also use the working file collection from which they may find answers to difficult questions. Over the past few years, the staff has been working to inventory, reorganize, and digitize the working files. With more than 1,200 linear feet of documentation, this process is slow, but progress has been made.

Since the earliest days of the History Division, the reference branch has collected documentation relating to Marines of repute (as well as ill repute) and placed it into the biographical files for permanent retention. Over the last two years, the branch has completed a full inventory of the biographical files, culled out the duplicative and redundant material, and organized the internal file structure to aid researchers and the historians. It came as no surprise to find that the biographical section held files on 12,533 persons; of course, for prominent Marines like General Lewis W. Walt, this means more than one file. (By the way, the general has 15 files!) It took just over a year for the biographical files to be completely inventoried and processed so they could be digitized. With this portion of the project completed, the historians can quickly tell patrons if a file exists without having to physically enter the files—a feat never before achievable.

With the inventory completed and the files “cleaned up,” it was then possible to start digitizing the collection, which began in February 2013. Page by page and document by document, the process of digitizing this collection of 15,837 files has commenced. As of 5 December 2013, 2,377 files have been completely digitized. The process is slow going because the files must be quality checked to ensure that they are in the proper order and that the documents inside relate to the person listed on the file. One interesting note to mention is that many

families had members from multiple generations join the U.S. Marine Corps; it took a bit of detective work to determine which Marine was father, which was son, or in some cases, which were grandfather or great-grandfather.

Due to the large numbers of files and quality control measures, the process will take a few years to complete because only one member of the staff is able to devote complete attention to the project. As the reference branch digitizes the materials, Marine Corps University is helping History Division upgrade the public website ([www.history.usmc.mil](http://www.history.usmc.mil)), and in time, the digital materials will be posted online for all to use.

## About Reference

The Reference Branch provides historical research and reference services for Headquarters Marine Corps, Marine Corps University, Marine Corps units, other military organizations and government agencies, active duty Marines, and the general public. The branch is also responsible for several key programs and projects, including the Unit Lineage and Honors Program, All Marines Message (ALMARS), and the Commemorative Naming Program. The Reference Branch answers thousands of written, telephone, and in-person requests each year. Reference historians are available to answer questions or direct researchers to appropriate holdings. The branch maintains a large body of secondary historical sources collected over many decades as well as copies of some primary sources. •1775•

*Much of the digitization work has been accomplished by students and interns thanks to the support of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.*

Photo by Annette Amerman



## FIRST TO WRITE

# Women Marines in Vietnam

### First to Write

"First to Write" highlights History Division's past work through excerpts from earlier publications.

Almost 20,000 women were serving in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in August 1945; most of these women left the Marine Corps during the post-war demobilization. In 1948, legislation was passed allowing women to serve in the regular Marine Corps establishment, making women Marines a permanent part of the Corps. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, they served in noncombat support roles, usually in specifically female units, including service in Vietnam.

This excerpt comes from Colonel Mary V. Stremow's *A History of the Women Marines, 1946–1977* (Washington, DC: History Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1986) 83–87. This book can be downloaded for free as a PDF from the History Division's full collection of publications at <http://www.history.usmc.mil>.

### Women Marines in Vietnam

Companion to greater opportunity is greater responsibility and for women in the Marine Corps in the 1960s that meant service in the war-torn Republic of Vietnam. The announcement was made and plans were set in 1967 for one officer and nine enlisted women to fill desk billets with the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), based in Saigon. Generally, they were to work with the Marine Corps Personnel Section on the staff of the Commander, Naval Forces, Vietnam. The section provided administrative support to Marines assigned as far north as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Later, another officer billet was added and Lieutenant Colonels Ruth J. O'Holleran and Ruth F. Reinholz eventually served as historians with the Military History Branch, Secretary Joint Staff, MACV.

Care was taken to select mature, stable Women Marines (WMs) who could be expected to adapt to strange surroundings and cope in an emergency. Interested women Marines were asked to volunteer by notifying their commanding officer or by indicating their desire to serve in Vietnam on their fitness reports. There was no shortage of volunteers, but not all met the criteria. Then there was a number of women who would willingly accept, but not volunteer for orders to a combat zone. Theoretically, all WMs who served in Vietnam were volunteers in that nearly all had expressed their willingness to go and none objected. When Master Sergeant Bridget V. Connolly was asked what made her volunteer

for duty in Saigon, she laughed and said, "Who volunteered? I received my orders in the guard mail." She became a legitimate volunteer when her initial tour ended and she extended for an additional six months.

The first woman Marine to report to Vietnam for duty was Master Sergeant Barbara J. Dulinsky, who arrived on 18 March 1967. After an 18-hour flight, she landed at dusk at Bien Hoa, about 30 miles north of Saigon. Travel was restricted after dark on the unsecure roads, so she was billeted overnight at the airfield. The next morning she was taken by bus and armed escort to Koeppler Compound in Saigon and there her tour began with a security lecture. The briefing was not concerned with security of classified material as one might expect, but with security in day-to-day living in Vietnam, such as recognizing booby traps and checking cabs upon entering to ensure there was a handle inside. Arrival procedures were similar for most WMs.

At first, the enlisted women were quartered in the Ambassador Hotel, and later they moved to the Plaza, a hotel-dormitory, two to a room. Women of other services and several hundred men called the Plaza home. By spring 1968, the enlisted women were moved to the Billings Bachelor Enlisted Quarters (BEQ), located near MACV Headquarters and Tan Son Nhut Airbase.

Generally, the women officers were billeted in Le Qui Don, a hotel-like Bachelor Officers Quarters (BOQ). Company grade officers were usually assigned two to a room; WMs and WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) billeted together. Like the Plaza and Billings BEQ, Le Qui Don Hotel was air conditioned, but electricity was a sometime thing.

There were no eating facilities in either the Billings BEQ or the Le Qui Don BOQ. Most of the women cooked in their room on hot plates or with electric skillets. When the power was out, they managed with charcoal-grilled meals served by candlelight.

There were no laundry facilities, but for about \$15 a month, each woman hired a maid who cleaned her room and washed and pressed her uniforms. Before leaving the United States, the women Marines were cautioned to bring an ample supply of nylons, sturdy cotton lingerie, and summer uniforms. Not only were these items scarce in the post exchange that catered to male troops, but the maids were unduly hard on them. Lieutenant Colonel Elaine E. Filkins (later Davies) spoke of looking out her window to see the maid laundering her nylon stockings and lingerie in a creek by pounding them with rocks. The





Official U. S. Marine Corps photograph

*Between 1967 and 1973, 36 women Marines served in South Vietnam. Capt Elaine E. Filkins (left) and Sgt Doris Denton (right) tour Saigon in a cyclo on a rare afternoon off.*

garments that survived were a mass of torn, short elastic threads. Girdles and bras were short-lived “in the combat zone.”

Nylon hosiery was a luxury. Women of some services were even excused from wearing them when in uniform, a privilege not extended to women Marines. Vietnamese women were fascinated by the sheer stockings, and Lieutenant Colonel Vera M. Jones told of walking down the streets of Saigon and being startled by the touch of a Vietnamese woman feeling her stockings.

The women were advised to arrive with four to six pairs of dress pumps for uniform wear because the streets were hard on shoes and repair service was unsatisfactory. In the “Information on Saigon” booklet provided [to] each woman before leaving the United States was written, “bring a dozen sets of heel lifts . . . Heels can easily be extracted with a pair of pliers and new ones inserted with little difficulty.”

For the most part, the WMs worked in Saigon but, on occasion, duty took them outside the city. In January 1969, Captain Filkins, in a letter to the Director of Women Marines, wrote:

In early December, Corporal Spaatz and I traveled to Da Nang with nearly 100 SRB/OQRs [service record books/officer qualification records] to conduct an audit of the service records of the men stationed in the north. The Army I Corps had been most kind in aiding us in our efforts to provide administrative assistance to our widely scattered men. Corporal Spaatz is a fine representative for the WMs with her professional handling of the audit. It was obvious that the men enjoyed the unfamiliar click of the female high heeled shoes. The weather was on our side so we were able to wear the dress with pumps the entire visit.

When the weather was unusually wet or when the city was under attack, the women wore utilities and oxfords. In addition, the Army issued field uniforms and combat boots to any woman required to wear them for duty.

The Tet offensive of January–February 1968, a large-scale enemy attack that disrupted the city, brought some changes to the lives of WMs in Saigon. At the time, enlisted women were still quartered at the Plaza, which received automatic-weapons fire. Bus service to many of the BOQs and BEQs was cut off, confining the women to their quarters.

Captain Jones was unable to leave the Le Qui Don for a day and a half before bus service, with armed escorts, resumed. Excerpts of a letter from Captain Jones to Colonel Bishop told something of the situation:

3 February 1968. It’s hard to believe that a war is going on around me. I sit here calmly typing this letter and yet can get up, walk to a window, and watch the helicopters making machine gun and rocket strikes in the area of the golf course which is about three blocks away. At night, I lie in bed and listen to the mortar rounds going off. The streets, which are normally crowded with traffic, are virtually bare . . . MSgt [Master Sergeant] Dulinsky, Cpl [Corporal] Hensley, and Cpl Wilson finally got into work this afternoon. Cpls Hensley and Wilson plan to spend the night.

**Excerpts from a letter from Master Sergeant Dulinsky elaborated:**

9 February 1968. We are still on a 24-hour curfew, with all hands in utilities . . . MACV personnel (women included) were bussed down to Koeppler compound and issued 3 pair of jungle fatigues and a pair of jungle boots.

Right now, most of us don’t look the picture of “The New Image.” Whew! Hardly! I can’t determine at night, if I’m pooped from the work day or from carrying around these anvils tied to my feet called combat boots.

Our Young-uns (and me too inside) were scared; but you’d have been proud of them. They turned to in the mess, cashiering, washing dishes, serving and clearing tables.

Although the Tet offensive kept the women from attending the celebration of the silver anniversary of the women Marines in Okinawa, they were not without a celebration. Thanks to a WAVE and male Marines, they had a cake in the office and the traditional cake-cutting ceremony.

The command expected each person to work 60 productive hours a week. Time off was precious, and recreational facilities were limited. Bowling was a popular sport, and old American television shows were broadcast

a few hours each evening. The city was often under curfew with the Americans back in their quarters by 2000 or 2200. Movies were available several nights a week in some of the BEQs and BOQs. A number of the women kept busy during their off-duty hours by working at the Armed Forces Television Station, helping at various orphanages, and visiting Vietnamese families. Captain Jones, the only woman Marine who attended Vietnamese language school, taught English to a class of Vietnamese policemen.

Captain Filkins, interested in an orphanage for blind girls, solicited soap, clothing, linens, toys, and supplies from the women Marine companies at home. In her letter she wrote, "They are rather confined in their small, dark world of the orphanage so they seem quite thrilled when visitors come to see them . . . Many of these children are lucky if they are picked up and held for a few minutes each week."

One woman Marine in particular, Staff Sergeant Ermelinda Salazar (later Esquibel), who touched the lives of Vietnamese orphans, was nominated for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, and was immortalized in a painting by Marine artist Cliff Young. During her 15 months in Saigon, Staff Sergeant Salazar essentially took over a MACV civic action project involving the St. Vincent de Paul orphanage.

In a letter dated 10 September 1969, to Gunnery Sergeant Helen A. Dowd, she told of her work with the children:

I don't remember if I mentioned to you that I had been working with the orphanage supported by MACV. It is not a big one—only 75 children ages from a few weeks old to about 11 or 12 years of age. They are precious and quite lively . . . This whole orphanage is taken care of by two Catholic sisters . . . One of them is rather advanced in age (about in her 60s) and the other is quite young and active. Still and all, Gunny, these two souls work themselves to death . . . The two sisters are Vietnamese who speak no English at all . . . And me? I know a limited number of broken phrases and words in Vietnamese.

Since I've been working at the orphanage, I've had to overcome much repugnance. There's a lot of sickness and disease here in Vietnam . . . So when I say the orphanage it doesn't have the same connotation that it does back in the states where the children are well fed . . . and healthy for at least they have medical facilities and medicines available. These children have nothing! If the WM company is wondering about any projects for Christmas here is something

you can think about. Anything and everything is needed.

Determined that these children would have a party, Staff Sergeant Salazar personally contacted Marine units for contributions, arranged a site and bus transportation, enlisted interested people to help, and wrapped individual gifts for each child. Her interest continued after the holidays and in spite of 11-hour workdays, six days a week, she was able to influence other Marines to follow her lead in working at the orphanage.

Nominating her for the Unsung Heroine Award, her commanding officer wrote: "Her unusual and untiring efforts to assist these otherwise forgotten children reflect great credit upon herself, the United States Marine Corps, this command, and the United States."

Staff Sergeant Salazar was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for meritorious achievement in the performance of her duties during the period 10 October 1969 to 10 January 1970 while serving with the Military History Branch, Secretary Joint Staff, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. In addition, the Republic of Vietnam awarded her the Vietnamese Service Medal for her work with the orphans.

Women Marines in Vietnam normally numbered 8 or 10 enlisted women and 1 or 2 officers at any one time for a total of about 28 enlisted women and 8 officers between 1967 and 1973. Their letters and interviews reveal their apprehension before arriving in Saigon, their satisfaction with their tour, and their increased sense of being a Marine. •1775•

*SSgt Ermelinda Salazar, nominated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary for the 1970 Unsung Heroine Award, recognizing her assistance to children of the St. Vincent De Paul Orphanage, saigon, is the subject of this painting by artist Cliff Young.*

U.S. Marine Corps Art Collection





# Picture This: OL' TIMEY RECRUITING

Kara R. Newcomer  
Historian, History Division  
Marine Corps University



*Buffalo, New York, 1914.*

U.S. Marine Corps



U.S. Marine Corps

*Auto Show, Salt Lake City, Utah,  
February 1922.*



U.S. Marine Corps

*Recruiting "A" sign.*



U.S. Marine Corps

*Mobil recruiting, undated.*





U.S. Marine Corps

(Above), Interstate Fair, Spokane, Washington, September 1925.



U.S. Marine Corps

Sidney H. Risenberg recruiting poster, ca. 1920.

U.S. Marine Corps







U.S. Marine Corps



U.S. Marine Corps

*Wall art.*

*(Below) Tacoma, Washington Fair, undated.*

U.S. Marine Corps





# Eisenhower, the U.S. Marines, and the Korean War

Robert J. Sullivan

Senior Curator

National Museum of the Marine Corps

Throughout his military and political careers, Dwight D. Eisenhower frequently interacted with Marine officers and the U.S. Marine Corps as an institution. He respected the officers for their dedication and professionalism, but for most of his life, he treated the Corps somewhat differently. From his time at West Point through his experiences after World War II, Eisenhower was immersed in and a proponent of the Army position that Marines were experts in their traditional missions and functions: landing small units on hostile shores, policing occupied ports, pacifying backward countries, and performing ceremonial duties. However, they were neither needed for large unit formations nor suitable for extended land campaigns as experienced in both World Wars.

During the bitter unification hearings in the post-World War II period, the Army/Navy rivalry sank to new depths. As the Army's Chief of Staff, Eisenhower played a part in the deteriorating relationship by defending the Army's position on traditional Marine functions, which appeared to be anti-Marine. Yet during his presidency a few years later, he enjoyed his best relations with the Marines. Eisenhower's transition from staunch Army advocate to a future commander-in-chief comfortable with the Corps' functions and respected by the Marines was based on congressional legislation but also on his many encounters with Marines during the Korean War period. This article reviews Eisenhower's actions from early 1950 and through lesser-known events that show a softening in his long-held posture toward the Corps as an institution.

In early 1950, Eisenhower told a reporter that amphibious operations were important but simple affairs and the Pacific campaign of World War II had not been as difficult as the European war. To him, an amphibious landing was "not a particularly difficult thing, but it's a touchy and delicate thing and anything can go wrong. In some ways, from the land fellow's viewpoint, it is one of the simplest operations." The general opined that

the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific was easier to prosecute. The landing force commander knew that his enemy could neither leave nor be adequately reinforced, which was better for planning the attack. However, Eisenhower said Americans had progressed a long way in amphibious doctrine and it would be foolish to neglect this knowledge. Eisenhower believed that each service had an indispensable role in the nation's defense and had leaders who could perform their duties well.

Events in Korea soon proved Eisenhower right. In early June 1950, the Korean People's Army (KPA) crossed the 38th Parallel into South Korea to unify the country by force. United States forces in the Far East had shrunk to minimal effectiveness after the end of World War II, and the strategic reserves in the United States were inadequate in the number of personnel, training, and equipment. General Douglas MacArthur, the American commander in the Far East, merged his poorly equipped Army divisions with the shattered South Korean forces into a United Nations (UN) command. Though he commenced offensive operations in July, MacArthur's forces held a tenuous defensive line in the southern portion of the Korean peninsula near Pusan.

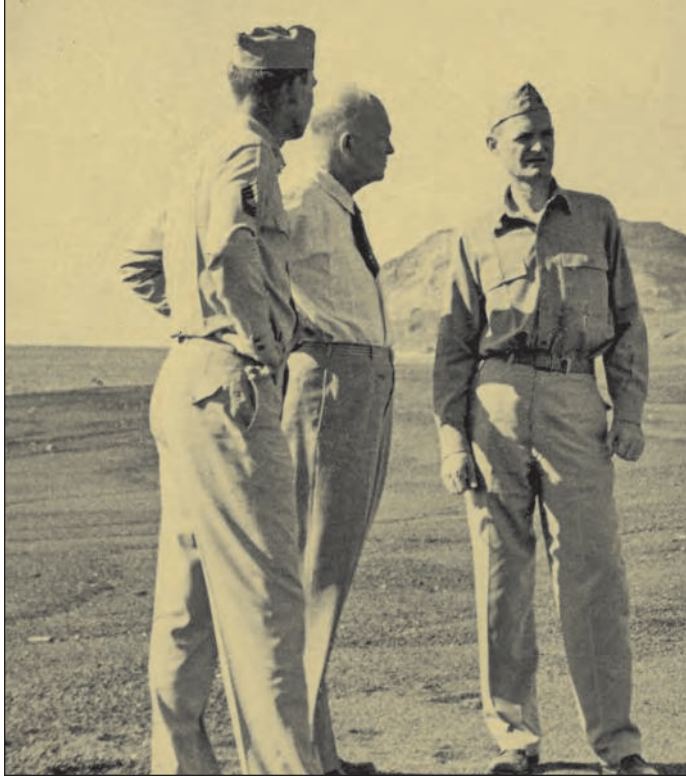
While UN forces to include the newly arrived 1st

*Gen Douglas MacArthur (passenger side, front seat) and senior commanders of the Inchon landing drive along the Inchon beach two days after the amphibious assault on 15 September 1950. MajGen O. P. Smith, Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, sits in the center of the rear seat.*

Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, SC348522







Eisenhower Presidential Library, 65-808-3

*President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower (center) discusses the 1945 Iwo Jima operation with two veterans of the battle, Col William W. Buchanan (right) and MSgt Robert Fox (left), on one of the landing beaches of Iwo Jima in late November 1952. Mount Suribachi is in the background.*

Provisional Brigade, consisting of many Marine reservists formed at Camp Pendleton, fought hard to keep the enemy at bay, MacArthur planned an amphibious attack into the enemy's rear at Inchon. MacArthur requested and received the forces he wanted, including the 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. His advisors and planners argued against Inchon due to a number of factors to include extreme tides, dominating harbor defenses, and adjacent urban areas, but he prevailed. On 15 September 1950, the 1st Marine Division with attached South Korean Marines spearheaded the assault at Inchon, followed by U.S. Army forces.

The operation succeeded and Eisenhower was happy as well, offering his congratulations to MacArthur in a letter, "I think that your fortitude in patiently gathering up the necessary reserves to make a significant counter-stroke at a time when everyone of those soldiers must have been desperately wanted on the front lines and your boldness in striking deep into the enemy's vitals with your counter-offensive were particularly shining example." Not surprisingly, Eisenhower neither mentioned the Marines nor an amphibious assault in this correspondence. To Eisenhower, the 1st Marine Division was another specialized force under Army command that executed its part of the operation.

Within the next two years, Eisenhower decided to run for president. His plan on national defense focused on the bigger picture of efficient, cost-effective, and cooperative

armed forces, not the historical interservice rivalry he knew so well. The war had been dragging on with no end in sight. For any success in his agenda, he needed to end fighting in Korea. He rejected the extreme solutions of withdrawing from the war or of going for an all-out victory. He promised to be prudent and firm to secure a just and lasting peace. To this end, in a speech to the American public on 24 October 1952, Eisenhower declared that he would visit Korea if he won the election.

The president-elect carried out his promise on 29 November 1952 and stayed in Korea during the first week of December. On a stopover of his flight to Korea, he toured the island of Iwo Jima, the scene of a bitter fight between the Marines and Japanese in early 1945. Eisenhower visited the summit of Mount Suribachi where the Marines had raised the American flag while the battle raged. "I'll be dammed," Eisenhower reportedly whispered when he surveyed the beaches below. Visibly moved, the former general said, "I want to know more about everything that happened here. I know more about what happened in the Civil War with names, dates, and losses than I know about this place." He then asked two Marine veterans of the battle who accompanied Eisenhower on his island tour, Colonel William W. Buchanan and Master Sergeant Robert Fox, about units involved, the commanders, landing sites, battle losses, gains, morale, and tactics.

Eisenhower arrived in mainland Korea on 2 December. He visited many American units, including the 1st Marine Division. He spent about 20 minutes receiving briefs at the division's forward command post with the division commander, Major General Edwin A. Pollock. Correspondent Robert Sherrod recalled later that the one question Eisenhower asked the Marines was, "How many men can you put in a helicopter?" Eisenhower exhibited no warmth for the Marines on that cold day, and afterward, Pollock allegedly remarked, "I thought he might have said nice job or something or other."

The president-elect, fresh off of a political victory at home, met a battle-hardened Marine Corps. Always keen to politics, the Marines relied on their old friends in Congress, the press, and the public to preserve a Marine Corps identity and function in the military establishment. Their participation at Inchon and in the subsequent fighting in Korea, as reported favorably in the nation's press, certainly helped their cause. Congressional supporters of the Corps passed a bill on 20 June 1952 that President Harry S. Truman signed eight days later over Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. Army objections. Public Law 416 strengthened the Marines' legal position and gave them the means to carry out their missions specified under the 1947 National Security Act. The Commandant of the Marine Corps could now sit with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and vote on issues of direct interest



National Museum of the Marine Corps, IM-11631  
*Marines load into a Sikorsky HRS-1 helicopter during the fighting in Korea.*

to the Marines. The law specified that the permanent size of the regular Corps was three combat divisions and three aircraft wings. Furthermore, in the preamble to the law, the Corps was recognized as a separate service within the Department of Navy.

Upon his return to the states, Eisenhower spoke highly of the unified American forces in the war. Despite what he witnessed in Korea, he reasoned that America still wasted her wealth on a military force that duplicated missions and demanded unneeded weapons. The politics of

*Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr., and sculptor Felix de Weldon designed the seal, which is the familiar Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. On 22 June 1954, Shepherd received President Eisenhower's approval with Executive Order 10538, establishing a seal for the United States Marine Corps. A worker recovered this damaged seal from the Pentagon after the attack on 11 September 2001 and gave it to MGySgt Roberto F. Graham who donated it to the National Museum of the Marine Corps.*

Accession number: 2011.150.1, Official Marine Corps Seal  
 National Museum of the Marine Corps



this rivalry that hindered the Allies' efforts in the last war continued, and he wanted to stop it. His vision was defined in the "New Look." The plan was not reassuring to the Marines because the focus was on nuclear and strategic capabilities over conventional forces. Marines reduced procurement and construction programs to maintain operating forces and committed themselves to vertical envelopment based on their successes in Korea.

During the 1950s, Eisenhower interacted frequently with the Marine Corps, more so than any previous time in his life. His trip to Korea, especially the few days he spent on Iwo Jima, increased his appreciation of the Marine Corps, which continued throughout his time as president. Both the president and Marines settled into a position of mutual respect, based on the realities of the turbulent 1950s; Eisenhower as the commander-in-chief and the Corps as his amphibious force in readiness that he frequently called upon to move rapidly to a crisis and carry out his foreign policy. •1775•

*On 10 November 1954, Eisenhower officiated at the dedication of the Iwo Jima War Memorial at Arlington Cemetery. This bronze, miniature sculpture is a replica of the larger Felix de Weldon sculpture.*

National Museum of the Marine Corps





## Fighting for MacArthur

**Paul Westermeyer**

Historian, History Division  
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Review of *Fighting for MacArthur: The Navy and Marine Corps' Desperate Defense of the Philippines*, by John Gordon (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011).

From December 1941 through May 1942, the Philippine islands were the only theater where major American military forces were continuously engaged with Axis forces. The Philippine campaign was fought primarily by Army forces led by Army commanders, but the Navy and Marine Corps had significant forces in the theater as well. In *Fighting for MacArthur*, John Gordon has brought the stories of these disparate naval forces together in one work, covering the relationship between the Navy and MacArthur as well as the operational histories of the sailors and Marines left in the islands.

Gordon's first two chapters carefully examine the preparations made by the naval forces prior to the Japanese attack and the contentious relationship between Admiral Thomas C. Hart, commander of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet and General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the United States Army Forces Far East. The next few chapters detail the Navy and Marine Corps initial reaction to the outbreak of the war; his detailed description of the Japanese air raids on 10 December, especially the attack on the Cavite Navy Yard, is some of the most vivid prose in the book.

Gordon also describes MacArthur's dishonest reports on the war in the Philippines and his complaints about Admiral Hart; MacArthur accused Hart specifically and the Navy generally of being "defeatist" while sending dishonest reports to Washington on Japanese strength, losses, and the activity of his own forces.

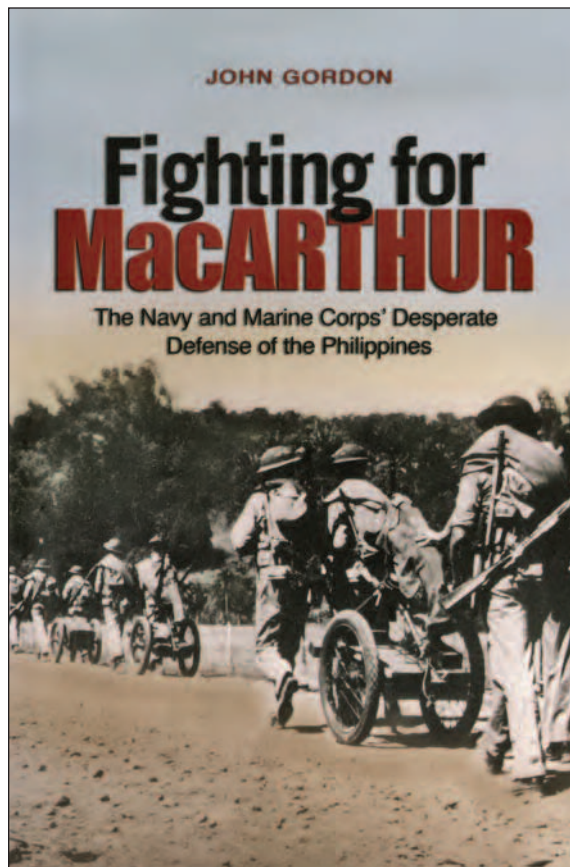
Hart's departure from the islands aboard a submarine on 26 December and his eventual

arrival in Washington later in 1942 ensured that the Navy's senior commanders were well aware of MacArthur's duplicity during the campaign. Gordon attributes the Navy's opposition to a unified Pacific command under MacArthur to this knowledge of his weaknesses, but it seems unlikely that the Navy would have accepted the leadership of any Army general in the Pacific theater—although undoubtedly MacArthur's actions cemented this resolution. In the end, the Pacific campaign was fought by two commands, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz' Pacific Area command and MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area command.

Despite the attention he pays to this drama in the high command, Gordon provides an excellent operational history of the Navy and Marine Corps activities in defense of the islands. He carefully analyzes the submarine squadron's limited attacks on the Japanese invasion fleets, the continued defense against Japanese air attack and the shifting of supplies and personnel to Bataan and Corregidor Island as the Japanese harried the troops retreating to Bataan. He describes the various gunboats, minesweepers, and PT (Patrol Torpedo) boats that remained with the Navy after the last two large combatants, the destroyers USS *Peary* (DD 226) and USS *Pillsbury* (DD 227) departed for Australia.

After the fall of Manila, Gordon moves on to the naval contribution to the defense of Bataan. The 4th Marines were assigned to defend the beaches on Corregidor rather than being deployed on Bataan, a decision Gordon defends, and a naval battalion was formed from sailors and Marines in the service areas around Mariveles. The naval battalion's successful defense of Longoskawayan Point in January 1942 is one of the book's high points, as Gordon makes excellent use of Japanese sources to present both sides of the battle.

The landings on the point were merely a sideshow for the Japanese, whose main effort involved pushing the American



forces down the peninsula, Gordon's description of these fights is highlighted by his comparison between MacArthur's deliberately fanciful description of the events with the pragmatic, factual account sent to the Navy by a naval intelligence officer who examined the battlefield, reinforcing the Navy's distrust of MacArthur.

Following the defeat of the first Japanese attempt to drive the Americans from Bataan, there was a lull in the fighting on Bataan. Gordon describes this period in detail as the sailors and Marines prepared the defenses of Corregidor and struggled to survive the continuous air raids. MacArthur's famous flight from Corregidor on PT boats ends his active service in the defense of the Philippines.

Gordon ends his story with chapters describing in detail the fall of Bataan, the artillery duel over Corregidor, and the final invasion of the island. He provides a very readable, yet technical explanation of Corregidor's artillery defenses, highlighting an aspect of the battle that is often glossed over. The final stand of the 4th Marines, the only

U.S. Marine regiment that has ever been forced to surrender, completes the historical narrative.

Gordon's final chapter presents his analysis of the campaign, and is marked by strong criticism of MacArthur. Gordon is going too far to blame subsequent Army-Navy command tension on MacArthur's dishonesty alone, however. Interservice rivalry and the Navy's proprietary attitude toward Pacific strategy (a theater dominated by naval action, after all) undoubtedly played just as great a role in the command conflicts that occurred later in the war. Gordon's analysis of the campaign as a whole and the naval role in it is on stronger footing, he acknowledges that the American-Filipino force had no real hope of holding out indefinitely against the Japanese invasion.

*Fighting for MacArthur: The Navy and Marine Corps' Desperate Defense of the Philippines* is an excellent work, well-researched, and engagingly written. Covering the campaign from the strategic down to the tactical level, Gordon provides the reader with a thorough understanding of the Navy and Marine Corps' role in the campaign and the campaign's place in the larger context of the Pacific war. **1775**

*Marine Corps officers, shown during a march along a jungle road, saw plenty of action on the Philippine front. Pictured below are (left to right), LtCol John P. Adams, Maj Andrew J. Mathiesen, Capt Golland L. Clark, Dr. X. Hosphire, Capt Roy Robinton, and WO James Shimel.*

Official Marine Corps photo





