

Keystone Battle Brief

The Battle of Belleau Wood

1–26 June 1918

Researched and written by

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As part of his internship with, and under the direction of the Marine Corps History Division

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I. Introduction: The Significance of the Battle—Why Study It?

- a. The Battle of Belleau Wood is a significant battle in the history of the Allied fight against the Germans in the Great War, the history of the United States' involvement in said war, and the history of the United States Marine Corps. It was there, near Chateau Thierry, that the Allies began to roll back the last German offensive of the war, the offensive that aimed at capturing Paris and ending the conflict. There, the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) proved that its arrival in France, albeit quite late in the war, was not too late and that Americans could not only fight but fight well. And it was there that U.S. Marines, a small naval service that had long expounded its own martial prowess, finally demonstrated they were worthy of the title “first to fight.” Although technically they were not the first American troops to fire a shot in anger in that war, by the summer of 1918, the American people believed that they were. For the Marines, this belief made all the difference.

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A. Context: Time, Place, and Opposing Forces

- a. **Grand Strategy:** In the winter of 1917–18, the Great War in Europe had been raging for over three years. The major Allied powers, Great Britain and France (with their attendant colonial forces) strained to hold the line against the German forces. England had experienced massive casualties in France and significant losses at sea to the German's unrestricted submarine warfare. France's people suffered greatly throughout the war and parts of her armies had nearly mutinied in 1917. Russia, consumed by a communist revolution, pulled out of the war by late 1917 and signed the unilateral Brest-Litovsk peace treaty in March 1918. A combined German and Austrian offensive almost destroyed Italy's army at the battle of Caporetto in 24 Oct–12 Nov

1917. The American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) had arrived, piece-meal, throughout the fall and winter of 1917 fresh and optimistic, but untested. The German high command had both a sense of opportunity and of urgency. German commanders believed that a massive offensive in the spring of 1918 could knock the Allies out of the war before the United States could field an effective army.

These events enabled Field Marshall General Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff to concentrate nearly 200 divisions for a planned spring 1918 offensive. Plan Blücher involved three armies, the Eighteenth, Seventh, and First. On 27 May von Boehn's [1] Seventh Army and the right of von Mudra's [2] First Army were to attack along a twenty-two-mile line running southwest from Anizy to Berry-au-Bac, the objective being the line at Soissons-Reims. A second phase would push the German right across the Ailette River toward its parent stream, the Oise, while the German left attacked as far south as Reims. Depending on developments, the Eighteenth Army was to plan an attack west of the Oise with the principal effort toward Compiègne. Simultaneously with the opening of the first phase, the Eighteenth and Second armies were to feint with a large-scale attack in the Amiens sector. Meanwhile in Flanders, Crown Prince Rupprecht's army group would rest and refit—once Plan Blücher had sucked French reserves south, Rupprecht could recommence his offensive.

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- b. What was at stake:** The Germans believed they could end the war here. The allies had to stop them. This was also an important initial contact between American and German forces, and both sides recognized it.
 - i.** Ludendorff ordered that the Americans be hit “particularly hard,” because “should the Americans on our front even temporarily gain the upper hand, it would have a most

unfavorable effect for us as regards the morale of the Allies and the duration of the war. In the fighting that now confronts us, we are not concerned with the occupation or non-occupation of this or that unimportant wood or village, but with the question as to whether the Anglo-American propaganda that the American Army is equal to or even superior to the German, will be successful.”

- ii. MajGen Omar Bundy asserted that “effects on the American and German morale and prestige make imperative the occupation of the Bois de Belleau.”
- iii. MajGen James G. Harbord claimed later that “every man in the Marine Brigade realized that America was on trial as to the courage and fighting quality of her sons.” He and Ludendorff agreed that “more than the Bois de Belleau was at stake . . . it was a struggle for psychological mastery.”

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II. Body

A. Commanding Generals

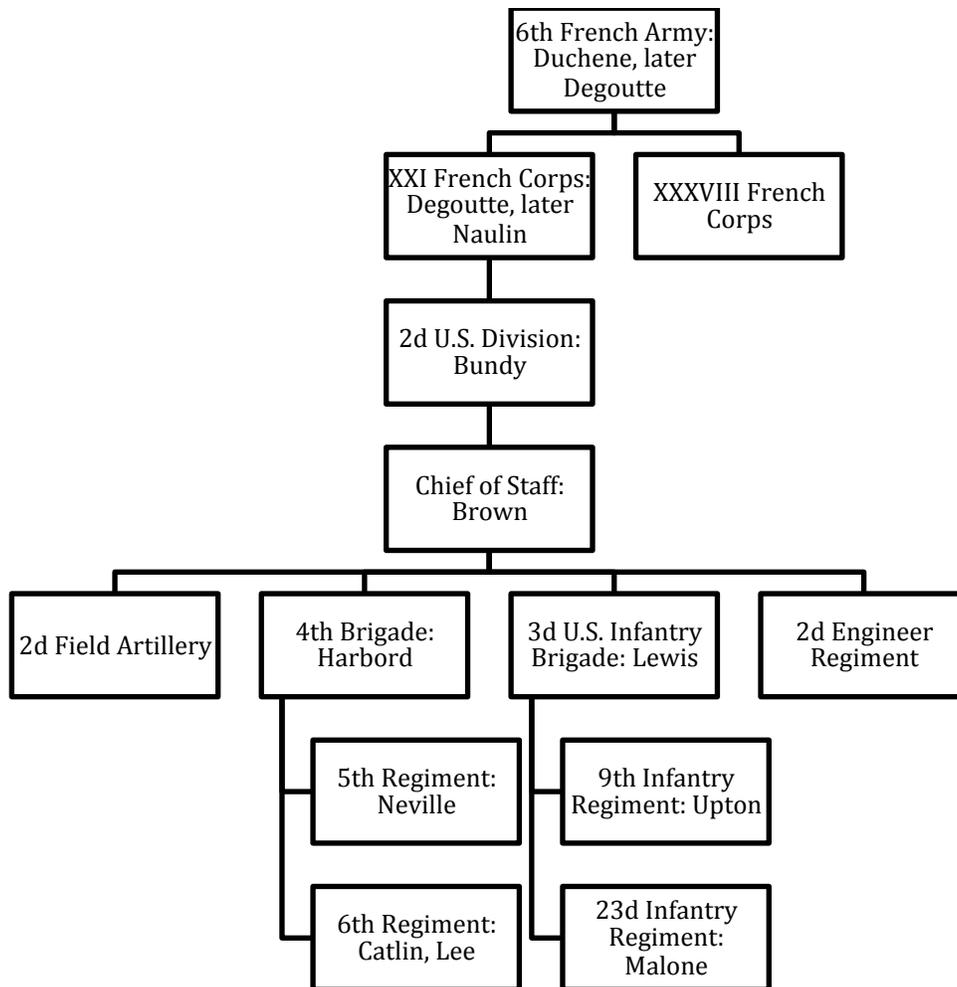
- a. American: 2d U.S. Division: MajGen Omar Bundy CO
 - i. 4th Brigade: BGen James Harbord
 - 1. 5th Regiment: Col Wendell C. Neville
 - 2. 6th Regiment: Col Albertus Catlin (LtCol Harry Lee on 6 June 1918)
 - 3. 6th Machine Gun Battalion: Maj Edward B. Cole
 - a) Capt Major 10 June, 1918
 - b) Capt Osterhout, 11 June 1918
- b. Opposing: General Richard von Conta, (Corps Conta)

- i. Elements of the German 237th, 10th, 197th, 87th, and 28th Divisions. Although, the 237th and 28th were the main German forces against Marines in Belleau Wood.

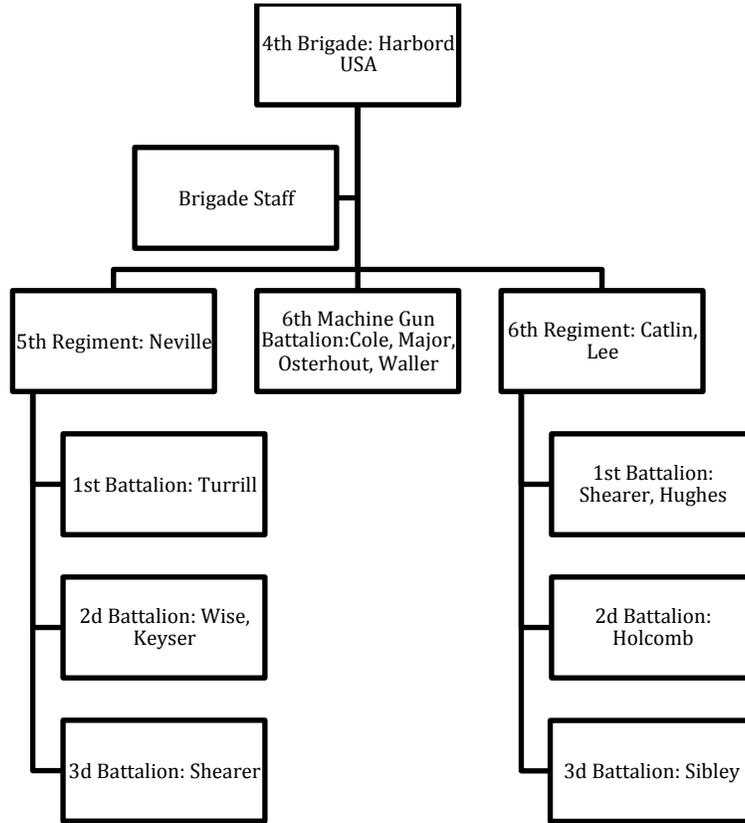
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B. Simple Orders of Battle and Tables of Organization (T/O)

Army and Division T/O



Brigade and Regiment T/O



(Slide 7)**C. Chronology/Phases of the Battle****a. Leading up to the Battle**

- i.** 18 May 1918: 2d Division moves to ready positions near Paris because Germans have made headway against the French at Amiens and against the British at Lys.
- ii.** 27 May 1918: Germans launch a surprise attack at Chemin des Dames near Reims, roll back the French troops, and drive unchecked to Chateau-Thierry on the Marne River east of Paris. Shortly after midnight on 27 May the combined violence of nearly 4,000 German guns pounded the entire French Sixth Army Sector. Preceded by heavy gas, the three-and-a-half-hour barrage exploded seven to eight miles deep throughout the battle zone while trench mortars concentrated on barbed-wire defenses and on the densely packed trenches of the immediate front. By dawn, organized Allied resistance had turned to carnage and confusion as German assault teams plunged forward along the line. By 1000, the German vanguard stood on the Aisne. The brisk day's work, which killed and captured thousands of French and British soldiers, resulted in a twelve-mile advance.
- iii.** This assault worked because the Germans assaulted through a weakly defended portion of the Allied line. Ten depleted Allied divisions, six French and four British, guarded that sector of the line. All of these divisions were badly depleted and were in the process of recuperating when the assault took place. There were no divisions in reserve (no defense in depth which was a patent contradiction of General Phillippe Petain's expressed policy). But Allied command believed that if an attack came it would not be there due to rather rough terrain.

- iv. There were intelligence reports that implied otherwise. Intelligence reports from Pershing's G-2 section sent word up the chain of command warning of an impending attack. (They had captured two Germans who indicated as much.)
- v. The twin failures of neglecting intelligence and providing defense in depth would cost thousands of French, British, and American lives—resulting in the greatest Allied crisis since the German drive on Paris in 1914.

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- vi. The alarming situation caused General Phillippe Petaine to call on American troops (along with dozens of other Allied divisions) to be sent to the Chateau Thierry region. The AEF Commander, General John "Black Jack" Pershing, responded to Petain's request by sending in the 2d and 3d Divisions quickly.
- vii. 30 May 1918: 2d Division begins moving up to check the Germans. The 9th Infantry and the 5th Regiment, the lead elements, were initially spread across the entire rear of the retiring XXI French Corps. As the 5th Regiment and the 23d Infantry arrive, they are fed into position and the thinly held line becomes 11 miles long. The orders were: "No retirement will be thought of on any pretext whatsoever."

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- viii. By 4 June 1918, most French units had withdrawn through the lines while U.S. Marines and soldiers moved into the front. Fresh French units moved in on their flanks. While the relieved French battalions retired through the Marines' lines, Capt Lloyd W. Williams USMC—who was killed in the subsequent battle—snorted, "Retreat Hell, we just got here!" His famous comment was directed at a French officer who urged the Marines to retreat.

- ix.** The 2d Division repelled what was left of the German assault, which by now, even though this fact was not known at the time, was running out of steam. When the Germans approached the 4th Brigade's lines, Marine rifle fire began killing them at 800 yards. German officers who did not teach their men to shoot at individual targets—first thought they had encountered a panicky unit firing prematurely. But as their casualties mounted, they became convinced they were facing a unit armed with nothing but machine guns and rifles. Their advance stalled and never regained its momentum. Their drive on Paris stopped.

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b. Phase I: 1–9 June 1918

- i.** What appeared to be shaping into a defensive stand to save Paris soon turned into an opportunity for the division to make its first major attack.
- ii.** During 1–5 June, American troops suffered sporadic enemy small arms and artillery fire. The Marine Brigade repelled one strong attack on 3 June. On 5 June French XXI Corps commander, Brigadier General Jean Marie J. Degoutte, ordered the 2d Division to make short advances the following day to seize better defensive ground. These actions were the some of the first AEF offensives of the war.
- iii.** In accordance with BGen Degoutte's directive of 5 June, 4th Brigade Commander, BGen James G. Harbord (USA), ordered 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, to advance about a kilometer and take Hill 142, a small rise in elevation just west of Belleau Wood.
- iv.** The attack began at 0345 without significant artillery support so as to retain the potential for surprise. By 0700, the Marines took Hill 142 but suffered heavy

casualties (around 400) in part because of the decision not to bombard the enemy positions in preparation for and in coordination with the attack. The Germans launched sporadic counterattacks afterwards.

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1. While defending Hill 142, Gunnery Sergeant Ernest A. Janson (served under the name Charles Hoffman) earned a Navy and Army Medal of Honor. The Army citation reads: “For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy near Chateau-Thierry, France, 6 June 1918. Immediately after the company to which Gunnery Sergeant Janson belonged, had reached its objective on Hill 142, several hostile counterattacks were launched against the line before the new position had been consolidate[d]. Gunnery Sergeant Janson was attempting to organize a position on the north slope of the hill when he saw 12 of the enemy, armed with five light machine guns crawling toward his group. Giving the alarm, he rushed the hostile detachment, bayoneted the two leaders, and forced the other[s] to flee, abandoning their guns. His quick action, initiative, and courage drove the enemy from a position from which they could have swept the hill with machine-gun fire and forced the withdrawal of our troops”

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- v. BGen Harbord ordered an attack that afternoon to seize Belleau Wood, which stood directly in front of his brigade. Harbord ordered four Marine battalions to attack in two phases: the first to seize the wood and the second to take the town of Bouresches just southeast of the wood.

- vi.** The Marines of 96th Company, 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment, attacked and captured Bouresches but suffered over 50% casualties. The Marines of 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment, attacked over an open wheat field with no connections on either flank with other companies. Horrific machine-gun fire from Belleau Wood and Bouresches caused the battalion many casualties. An accurate German machine-gunner hit future 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) Lt Clifford Bledsoe Cates on the helmet, knocking him unconscious. He soon came to and continued into town with a few men left from the 96th Company. After they cleared the town, only 21 men remained to hold it. Luckily, no counterattack was made before reinforcements arrived.
- vii.** (Side note: For capturing and holding the town of Bouresches by the 96th Company, the 4th Brigade was cited by the French and Americans in General Orders. Bouresches had been captured from the French on June 2 by the 10th German Infantry Division, one of the German's finest, and it was defended by the 7th and 8th Companies, 398th German Regiment).

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- viii.** At H-Hour, Marines formed up in a long line and began a long, slow march through the wheat fields toward Belleau Wood. Few men from Major Benjamin S. Berry's battalion (3/5) made it. Halfway across the wheat field, German machine guns and rifles opened up on the long, straight lines and mowed them down. Berry's regimental commander, Colonel Wendell Neville (CO 5th Regiment), reported that most of the battalion was probably killed or wounded.

- ix.** To the right, where the distance between the American lines and the wood was much shorter, Major Berton W. Sibley's 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment, made it into the southern edge of the wood before being stopped by enemy fire. Around 1730, 6th Regiment Commander, Colonel Albertus W. Catlin, watched what was left of 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment, edge close to the wood. A German bullet caught him in the chest and left him paralyzed temporarily on his right side. LtCol Harry Lee came forward to take command while Catlin was evacuated.

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- x.** There were 1,087 Marine casualties that day while only shattered fragments of the battalions made it into the wood.
- xi.** Harbord wrote later that he believed Belleau Wood was lightly defended. This belief plus the absence of any visible earth works or defensive positions lured him into a false sense of the enemy's strength. He ordered very little artillery support for the assault because he wanted his men to make a surprise attack. The wood, however, turned out to be well defended by elements of General Richard von Conta's Corps (Corps Conta); Gen von Conta was a career German soldier, commanding men with relatively vast combat experience compared to their opponents.
- xii.** Harbord ordered a halt to all attacks during the night of 6 June. By the next morning, the Marines tried to work their way forward again. They made little headway on 7 June and even less the following morning of 8 June. By midday of 8 June, Berry's battalion was practically destroyed. Sibley's unit had suffered severe casualties and was stuck on an unidentified line in the southern part of the wood. Untold numbers of enemy machine guns dominated the forest and covered the open ground surrounding

it. Additional attacks were reported to be impossible without reducing the German position further with artillery.

- xiii.** Harbord modified his tactics in preparation for an assault scheduled for 10 June. Beginning on the morning of 9 June, U.S. artillery opened up on the Germans in Belleau Wood and sustained a constant, continuous fire all day and night. Harbord ordered over 28,000 75mm and 6,000 155mm shells fired on the Germans in the wood. An hour before the assault, the guns increased their fire to the maximum rate. Then, for the first time in the battle, the light guns were to shift to a dense, rolling barrage to cover the attacking Marines. The barrage advanced every two minutes, the first instance of coordinated artillery support of the infantry in the 4th Brigade.
- xiv.** To help isolate the German garrison in the wood, Harbord ordered 12 machine guns to form a massed battery in the town of Bouresches from where they could pour their fire along the eastern flank of the wood to box in the defenders. This was the first time the division incorporated machine-gun fire into an attack plan.

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c. Phase II: 10-18 June

- i.** Faced with a lack of replacements and with severe shortages of supplies and equipment, Gen von Conta had to reorganize his defensive line, first by relieving the 197th Division on his right with the 5th Guards Divisions, next by relieving the 10th Division with the 28th Division, finally by moving division sectors to the right, a shift that drastically altered the defense of Belleau Wood.
- ii.** Until the 28th Division began moving into line on 8 June, Major Bischoff's 461st Regiment, 237th Division, had ably defended the entire wood. The shifting, however,

left only one reinforced battalion in the wood. This unit, commanded by Major von Hartlieb, was to tie in with a battalion of the 28th Division on its left. The 28th Division was an experienced, first-rate, organization, but it was exhausted and greatly under strength when it moved into Belleau Wood.

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- iii. At 0430 on 10 June, with the artillery beginning to roll their impact zones back through the wood, the Marine's began their assault. The barrage worked at keeping the Germans' heads down. The 74th Company had four casualties while advancing through the wheat.
- iv. While in the wood, the advanced slowed down as Marine companies encountered German resistance. One German lieutenant who falsely believed that they had repulsed the American advance claimed in his journal of June 9–10th: "The worst night of my life. I am lying in a thick wood on an open height in little holes behind rocks, for this is certainly heavy artillery fire, until six o'clock in the morning. It is a wonder that the fellow were all at their posts when the Americans attacked. The attack, thank God, was repulsed. God has mercifully preserved me. They fight like devils."
- v. Once in the wood, it was small-unit warfare fought hand-to-hand with bayonets and anything the soldiers could get their hands on. Intense and close fighting against entrenched machine guns, covered by other machine guns, took a heavy toll on the Marines. However, the advance continued and pushed forward across the wood to what they believed was the objective: the northern end of the wood, but they had only reached the eastern end, not the northern. The Marines became hopelessly

disorientated around the same time the German 2d Battalion, 40th Fusiliers, rushed to the wood to meet the attack.

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- vi.** Harbord received reports of these German reinforcements but thought they were headed to Bouresches. He also believed from reports that the Marines had taken all objectives in the wood. Those reports were wrong. The northern end of the wood remained to be taken, and in the time it took to realize this, the Germans had collected the remnants of the defending companies, called up two reserve companies, and sent them to reinforce the northern section of the wood.
- vii.** Both sides spent the next couple of days harassing each other along the lines and consolidating their forces. The Marines in the wood desperately needed relief and reinforcements.
- viii.** On 13 June, German artillery fired a high volume of shells and mustard gas into the wood and onto the Marines. Two Marine companies, each already whittled down by heaving fighting, had to evacuate 160 gas casualties. An artillery duel ensued that lasted for a couple of days.

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- ix.** On 11 June, Lt Orlando H. Petty USN worked hard and dangerously to save Marines' lives. Wounded, gassed, but still up doing his duty, Lt Petty earned the Medal of Honor for his actions that day. Having lost his dressing station to enemy shelling, he personally carried Capt Lloyd Williams (of "retreat hell" fame) back to safety through an artillery barrage. His citation reads:

1. For extraordinary heroism while serving with the 5th Regiment, U.S. Marines, in France during the attack in the Bois de Belleau, 11 June 1918. While under heavy fire of high explosive and gas shells in the town of Lucy, where his dressing station was located, Lt Petty attended to and evacuated the wounded under most trying conditions. Having been knocked to the ground by an exploding gas shell which tore his mask, Lt Petty discarded the mask and courageously continued his work. His dressing station being hit and demolished, he personally helped carry Capt Williams, wounded, through shellfire to a place of safety.
 - x. Capt Williams died from his wounds the next day.
 - xi. During the night of 13–14 June, Gunnery Sergeant Fred William Stockham took off his gas mask during a gas attack so that a fellow Marine could breathe. This self-exposure damaged his lungs to the extent that it killed him a week later. Spear-headed 20 years later by Colonel Clifton Cates, Stockham's company commander at Belleau Wood, Stockham was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in December 1939.
 - xii. On 15 June the artillery duel slacked off and Marines continued the advance into the northern part of the wood. Around this time, the 7th Infantry arrived and began relieving the beleaguered and exhausted Marine units. While the Army replaced the Marines, so too did the Germans, who sent in more reinforcements into the northwestern part of the wood. Instead of a short, weakly defended line imagined by Harbord, by June 18, the Germans defended their remaining portion of the wood with considerable strength.

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d. Phase III: 19-26 June

- i.** By 18 June, the 7th Infantry, called up from the U.S. 3d Brigade, relieved the weary Marine battalions and occupied their lines. During this time, the 2d Engineers improved defenses by digging deeper shelters and more thorough barbed wire defenses.
- ii.** It was during this transition that the soldiers of the 7th Infantry had their first experience at combat. A sharp engagement occurred when 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, commanded by LtCol Adams tried to relieve Holcomb's 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment, along the front line. German artillery bombarded the soldiers as they came in. As they made it to the trenches, the Marines were engaged in a firefight. Lt Cates of the 96th Company described it a couple of days later, "I felt sorry for them last night when they came in. They had just arrived and were starting the relief when all hell broke loose. The Boche in our rear started firing, then our men returned it, the Germans to our front started firing, we answered, then both their artillery and ours opened up . . . it was a mad house."
- iii.** Partly due to inexperience, mostly due to the Germans of 1st Battalion, 374th Infantry, being able to reinforce themselves and fortify their positions, the 7th Infantry had a hard time clearing the rest of the Germans from the wood. An action took place on 20 June involving two platoons from Company D supplemented by one platoon each from two other companies. The attack failed and received 63 casualties for the effort. Not knowing that the Germans had reinforced themselves, Harbord ordered the 7th Infantry to attack again on 21 June making it clear to LtCol Adams that "the battalion cannot afford to fail again."

- iv. After a small preparatory barrage, the soldiers of 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, stepped off at 0315 toward the German positions. The attack went poorly. Companies A and B lost contact with each other immediately, which slowed the advance. The Germans opened a counter-barrage that stopped and dispersed the attacking waves while simultaneously hidden machine guns wreaked havoc. The frantic action ended not long after it began with 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, taking well over 200 casualties. By 0730, the battalion pulled back to its original positions.
- v. Harbord, furious with Adams, and perhaps being a little unfair given the situation 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry, was up against, wrote to Bundy that “the 7th Infantry needs a period of instruction under a strong commanding officer, with disciplinary drills and the weeding out of inefficient officers. It is unreliable at present.”
- vi. Harbord sent in Major Shearer’s 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, to relieve the 7th Infantry. This battalion deployed teams of sharpshooters (teams of two) into the wood to reduce the German positions without much expenditure of men. At 1900, loaded down with extra hand grenades, Marines assaulted after a small preparatory bombardment. The battalion advanced about 200 yards before being forced to stop by an array of alternate machine gun positions that covered each other. The 3d Battalion had 130 casualties in three hours, and by 2320, the assault stopped.

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- vii. The Germans, having repulsed both an Army and Marine battalion on consecutive days, now warranted a heavy artillery barrage, according to Harbord. From 0300 to 1700 on 25 June, 75 and 155mm guns opened up on the German positions in the northwest corner of the wood.

- viii. This bombardment worked. The Germans suffered serious casualties. Also, the bursting shrapnel either knocked out or disorganized most of their machine-gun nests. This artillery barrage allowed 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, to advance much more efficiently than previously. Marine companies, suffering significant casualties throughout the day, created and sustained a momentum in the advance. The German 374th began withdrawing piecemeal. By 2300, Harbord had received a message from Shearer that “we have taken practically all of wood but do need help to clean it up and hold it.” By 0700 on 26 June, the last objective, the extreme northwestern portion of the wood, stood bereft of German troops. Shearer then sent a message to Harbord: “Belleau Woods now U.S. Marine Corps entirely.”
- ix. 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, had 250 casualties, and the Germans lost about 450, of whom 300 were prisoners.

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III. Conclusion

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- A. **KIA/WIA:** The 4th Brigade alone suffered 112 officers and 4,598 men as casualties. Over 1,000 of these were KIA.

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- a. Medals of Honor
 - i. Gunnery Sergeant Ernest A. Janson (Served under the name of Charles Hoffman)
 - ii. Gunnery Sergeant Fred W. Stockman, Posthumous
 - iii. Lieutenant Orlando Henderson H. Petty, Medical Corps, USNR
 - iv. Lieutenant (JG) Weeden Osborn USN, Posthumous

v. 143 Navy Crosses

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B. Significance of Battle to the War: AEF and Allied commanders saw Belleau Wood as a local engagement, a relatively smaller battle that was largely contained in and of itself. Nevertheless, Belleau Wood was a part of a larger strategic struggle that did have a notable impact on the German and Allied efforts that summer.

- a. When Crown Prince Wilhelm's assault divisions handed the French a crushing defeat on 27 May and drove all the way to Chateau-Thierry, panic broke out in Paris. Hundreds of thousands evacuated, and the French government made plans to do the same.
- b. A little more than a month later, the U.S. 2d Division, a part of which the Marines of the 4th Brigade did more than their fair share of the fighting, began to roll back the German advance, which created a decisive shift in Allied and French morale. With few exceptions, German offensive power was spent and would remain on the defense until the end of the war. That process began at Belleau Wood.

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C. Significance of Battle to the Marine Corps

- a. This Battle was a turning point for the Marine Corps as an institution for several reasons.
 - 1. It gave a core cadre of officers and enlisted Marines experience in large scale combat operations against a seasoned enemy. It ended doubts that Marines could fight well in large war. Marines at Belleau Wood learned first-hand the dangers of modern war (modern as of early 20th century): Heavy artillery barrages working in concert with a coordinated infantry assault; the

employment of machine guns in both offensive and defensive operations; constructing field fortifications; and the terror and effectiveness of chemical warfare.

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2. Soon after Belleau Wood, the 2d Division came into the hands of BGen John A. Lejeune, the first Marine to command a U.S. division in war.

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3. The French Government renamed the wood to Bois de la Brigade de Marine in honor of the 4th Brigade that fought there and awarded the 5th and 6th Regiments the French Fourragère. The Fourragere was also awarded to the 23d Infantry Regiment for its participation in the battle. To this very day, Marines of the 5th and 6th Regiments wear the Fourragère with service alphas, dress blue alpha, and dress blue bravo uniforms. The Fourragère has become a symbol of the Marine Corps fighting history and a lasting tradition.

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4. Famous Participants: It also added legends to the Corps

b. Future Commandants.

- i. General Wendell C. Neville, 14th CMC, 1929–1930; Belleau Wood: Colonel, CO, 5th Regiment
- ii. General Thomas Holcomb, 17th CMC, 1936–1943; Belleau Wood: Major, CO, 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment

- iii. General Clifford B. Cates: 19th CMC, 1948–1951; Belleau Wood: Lieutenant, 96th Company, 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment
- iv. General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr.: 20th CMC 1952–1955; Belleau Wood: Lieutenant, 55th Company 2d Battalion 5th Regiment

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c. Belleau Wood to Iwo Jima.

i. Graves B. Erskine

1. Iwo Jima: MajGen CG 3d MarDiv
2. Belleau Wood: Lt, 79th Co. 2d Battalion 6th Regiment

ii. Clifton B. Cates

1. Iwo Jima: MajGen, CG 4th MarDiv
2. Belleau Wood: Lt, 96th Co. 2d Battalion 6th Regiment

iii. Keller E. Rocky

1. Iwo Jima: MajGen, CG 5th MarDiv
2. Belleau Wood: Captain, 1st Battalion 5th Regiment (XO)

iv. Holland M. Smith

1. Iwo Jima: LtGen, Commander ATF
2. Belleau Wood: Major, 4th Brigade (Adjutant)

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d. Other Notables:

- i. John W. Thomason: Author of *Fix Bayonets!*, *With a Few Marines*, and many other short stories and novels. He was also an impressive artist who drew

countless sketches of things he saw in combat in France. The most significant story teller and crafter of the WWI era and interwar period Marine image.

- ii.** GySgt Dan Daly: Lejeune referred to him as “the outstanding Marine of all time.” Smedley Butler called him “the fightinest Marine I ever knew,” and that “it was an object lesson to have served with him.” A two time recipient of the Medal of Honor, a veteran of the Boxer Rebellion, Vera Cruz, and Haiti, Daly was a famous Marine before he even set foot in France. During the Battle he served with the 73d Machine Gun Company attached to the 6th Marines. On 10 June, by now a 1stSgt, he single-handedly attacked an enemy machine gun emplacement, capturing it by the use of hand grenades and an automatic pistol. Later that day, during an enemy attack on the village of Bouresches, he brought in wounded under heavy fire. He went on to fight in the St. Mihiel offensive in September 1918 and Blanc Mont in October. He earned the Navy Cross and Croix de Guerre for his actions in France. Dan Daly was and is the beau ideal of the fighting Marine. Legend has it that on 6 June, while his platoon’s attack towards the wood faltered, he stood and stated the immortal words “Come on, you sons of bitches. Do you want to live forever?”
- iii.** SgtMaj John H. Quick: A veteran combat and expeditionary Marine with experience in the Spanish American War in 1898, the Philippine insurrection in 1901-02, and Vera Cruz in 1914. He won a medal of honor “For Distinguished and gallant conduct in battle at Cuzco, Cuba, on June 14, 1898. Signaling to the U.S.S. Dolphin on three different occasions while exposed to

a heavy fire from the enemy.” Quick was a legend before landing in France as a battalion SgtMaj. He participated in every phase of the fight for Belleau Wood and subsequent actions against the Germans until the Armistice on 11 November 1918. He earned a Distinguished Service Cross and the Navy Cross at the Battle of Belleau wood.

- iv. Captain Lloyd Williams: On 3 June, on their way to face the Germans near Chateau-Thierry, French soldiers were withdrawing and marching in the opposite direction. One French major ran into Capt. William’s second in command, Capt. Corbin, telling him that the Americans should withdraw their line. Corbin passed this message on to Williams who said “Retreat, hell. We just got here.” Captain Williams was killed not long after.
- v. Holland M. Smith: Served in General Harbord’s staff as an adjutant which is similar to today’s operations officer. Went on to play a key role in the development of the Marine Corps’ amphibious landings doctrine.

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- e. The Marine Corps Image and Public Relations.
 - i. General Pershing’s press officers allowed the American press who were covering the battle to identify the Marines as the attacking American Troops. Therefore, according to American newspapermen, the entire fight around Chateau-Thierry became a Marine Corps fight. Floyd Gibbons of the Chicago Tribune, wrote and circulated a heroically styled account of the attack on hill 142. Therefore, in the summer of 1918, starting with the Battle of Belleau Wood, the once obscure United States Marine Corps was ubiquitous in

American newspapers. They reported that Marines stopped cold the German offensive at Belleau Wood. As the story went, they saved Paris, and the Allied war effort, but just as importantly, they proved that Americans could fight. The Atlanta Constitution reported that “U.S. Marines Finest Troops in the World.” The Washington Post claimed that at Belleau Wood “American marines vanquished the flower of the Kaiser’s army.” In all its history, from 1775 to 1917, the Marine Corps never enjoyed such popularity and public approval.

- ii.** The term “Devil Dog” came into use during World War I, and is said to have originated as follows: A captured German Soldier, when interrogated as to his opinion of U.S. in the bitter fighting in Belleau Wood during June 1918, replied that the Marines fought like teufel hunden, the legendary wild, or devil dogs that at one time roamed the forests of Northern Germany. This story is unsupported by any historical documentation. It is impossible to prove that any one German soldier actually called Marines “Devil Dogs.” The Marine Publicity Bureau took the story and ran with it anyway. The name has stuck ever since then.
- The military order of Devil Dogs is referred to as the “fun, or frolic, society” of the Marine Corps League. The Marine Corps League was officially organized on 6 June 1923, the five year anniversary of the beginning of the battle of Belleau Wood, at a caucus of Marines in the Pennsylvania Hotel, New York City. It was composed of persons who are serving, or have served, honorably in the United States Marine Corps.

(Slide 41-42)

- iii.** Belleau Wood catapulted the Marine Corps, into the national spotlight, forever changing the public's perception of Marines. Marines like John A. Lejeune, John W. Thomason, and the heads of the Marine Recruiting Bureau capitalized on this popularity to show how the Marine Corps was America's premier force fighting force, always ready, and the first to fight.
- iv.** These have always been controversial claims to make considering that Belleau Wood was never a completely Marine Corps affair. But the stories ran anyway and Marines made the best of it.

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