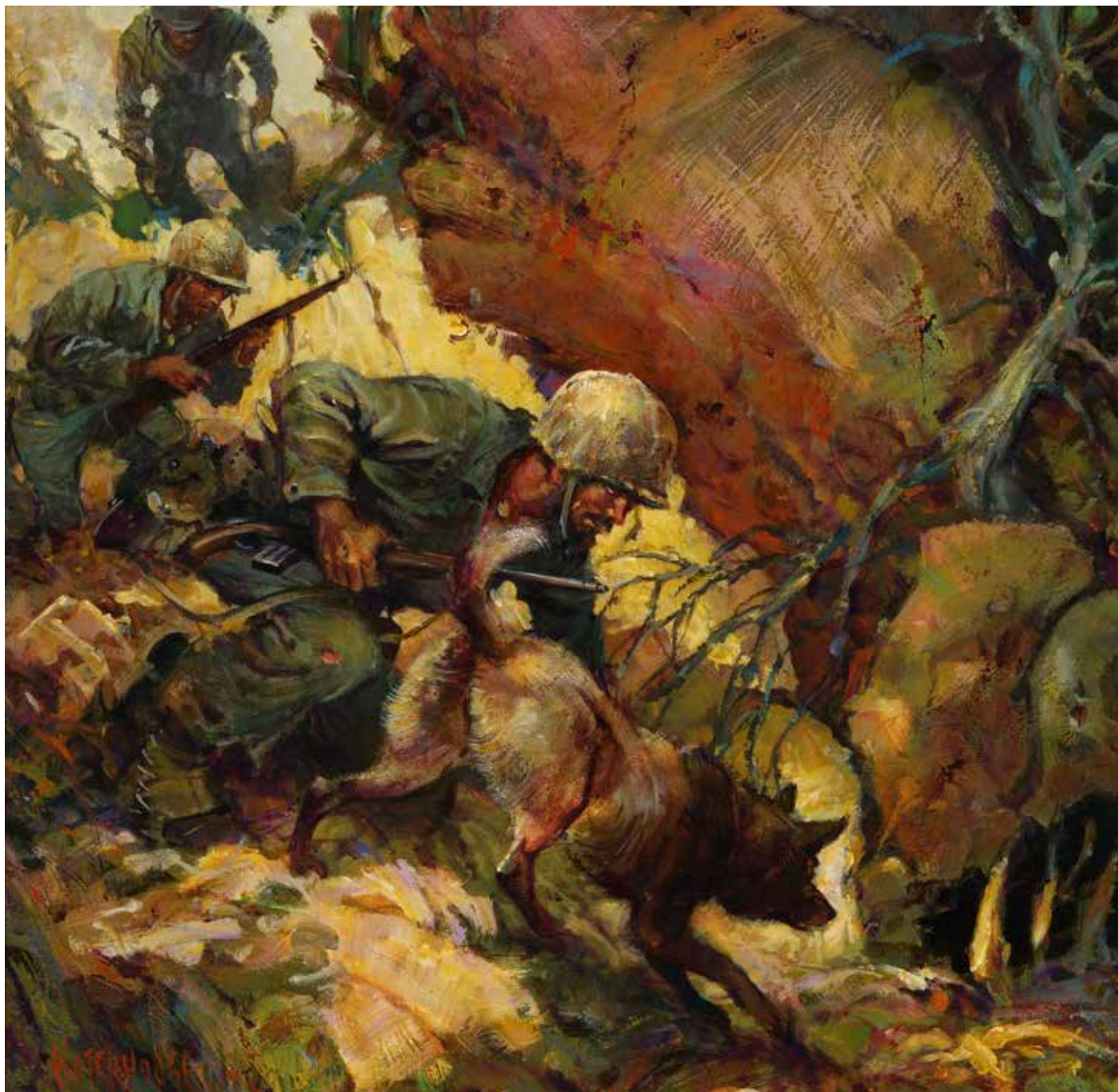


# MARINE CORPS HISTORY

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

SUMMER 2019



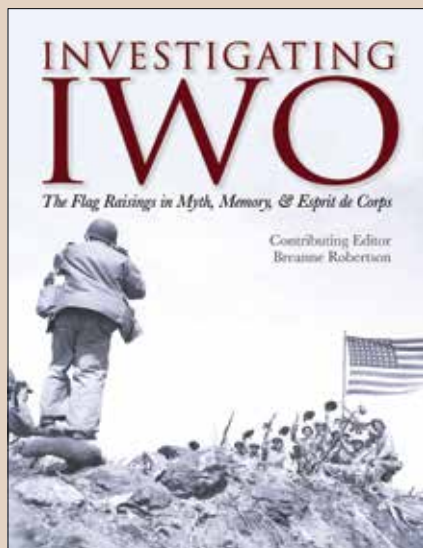
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# STORY TO TELL

*Marine Corps History* is accepting article and book review submissions for 2020.

*Marine Corps History* publishes twice a year, and the editors are currently looking for new articles and book reviews on all topics within the long history of the Corps: Civil War, Spanish-American War, Banana Wars, WWI, WWII, Korea, Cold War, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and women and minorities in the military. We are particularly interested in masters and PhD students who are ready to venture into scholarly publishing. Articles must be at least 4,000 words, footnoted according to *Chicago Manual of Style*, and focus on some aspect of the Corps either directly or indirectly, including foreign marines and joint operations.

For more information about submission guidelines or history books available for review, please contact the managing editor at [stephani.miller@usmcu.edu](mailto:stephani.miller@usmcu.edu).



## INVESTIGATING IWO

*The Flag Raisings in Myth, Memory, & Esprit de Corps*

Contributing editor Breanne Robertson, PhD

On 23 February 1945, Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal snapped a photograph of six Marines raising the American flag during the Battle of Iwo Jima. The moment has been a subject of intense popular interest and scholarly debate. How many flags did the Marines plant that day? Where did the flags come from, and why did they swap them out? What qualifies an individual as a flag raiser? And what does our continuing fascination with the raising say about our identity, our values, and our evolving relationship with the past? Representing years of accu-

mulated research across a range of academic and professional disciplines, *Investigating Iwo: The Flag-Raisings in Myth, Memory, & Esprit de Corps* presents a collection of 14 essays that permit us to fundamentally reconsider the impact of Rosenthal's iconic image on American culture both at the time of conflict and in the years since. Precipitated by the 2016 Huly Panel and 2019 Bowers Board investigations, the Marine Corps History Division partnered with military historians, archivists, curators, and independent researchers in this important undertaking.

8.5 x 11 | 400 pp | September 2019

Email [history.division@usmcu.edu](mailto:history.division@usmcu.edu) for a print or digital copy.



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# MARINE CORPS HISTORY

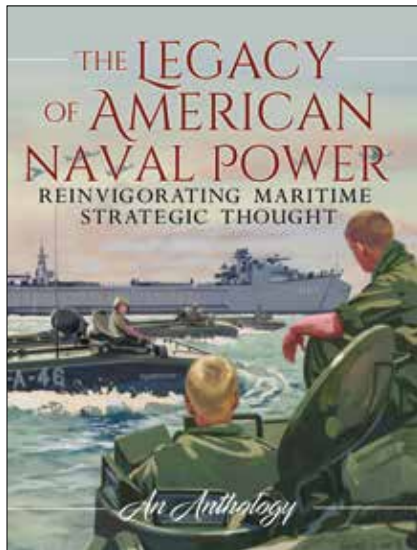
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## NOW AVAILABLE



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AN ANTHOLOGY

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## REVIEW ESSAY

*Palestine: The Ottoman Campaigns of 1914–1918; The Battle of the Somme; Thunder and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917–1918; and Written in Blood: The Battles for Fortress Przemyśl in World War I*

Reviewed by Major Timothy Heck, USMCR

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*Scholarly Debate*

*Marine Corps History* is a peer-reviewed, scholarly publication, and in that tradition we recognize that the articles published here are not the official or final word on any topic, merely the beginning of a conversation. If you think an author missed the target or failed to deliver, please join the debate by submitting an article for consideration. Email the managing editor at [stephani.miller@usmcu.edu](mailto:stephani.miller@usmcu.edu) for deadlines and author guidelines.

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# DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

*Edward T. Nevgloski, PhD*

On the warm afternoon of 8 September 1919 in the Bronx, New York, a young Boston Red Sox outfielder and pitcher named George Herman “Babe” Ruth hit his 26th home run of the year off New York Yankees right-hander Jack Quinn. The Babe was just beginning to make his mark on America’s pastime and changed the way the game is played. Roughly 215 miles to the south of the Bronx on that same afternoon, the 12th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General George Barnett, released Marine Corps Order Number 53 establishing the Historical Section of the Department of the Adjutant and Inspector at Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, DC. In the 100 years since, while much has changed in the game of baseball and the Marine Corps Historical Section’s structure has changed several times over, its mission to preserve, promote, and publish the history of the U.S. Marine Corps has not.

For a century now, the Marine Corps History Division has supported 18 presidents and 27 Com-

mandants and recorded the story of the Corps from the Great War to ongoing operations in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. From its meager offices in the Washington Navy Yard to the new and spacious Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center at Marine Corps University, located in Quantico, Virginia, the division serves Marines and the American people through many tried and trusted means and looks to continue to do the same through new and unique methods thanks to technological advances. Looking forward to the next century, the division will continue to embrace change and evolve to support the expectations and demands of Marines and researchers around the globe.

A focus on education through the Service’s institutional history is one such change. Simply telling the Corps’ story is no longer enough. Answering the question “so what?” is as important—if not more—as delivering the facts of history, particularly as the Corps again faces questions about its relevance and mission, while preparing for the most challenging battlefields and unthinkable threats.

The articles featured in this, the 2019 summer edition of Marine Corps History, shine a spotlight on the 100-year history of Marine Corps History Division. Former chief historian of the division, Charles D. Melson, recounts the Corps’ efforts at recording staff history since 1919 and charts the evolution of these efforts into the current historical program. The

---

*Dr. Edward T. Nevgloski is the 28th director of the Marine Corps History Division and chief of Marine Corps History. He retired from the Marine Corps on 30 September 2017 at the rank of lieutenant colonel and with more than 28 years of service to the nation. His civilian education includes a bachelor’s degree in history from East Carolina University in Greenville, NC; a master of arts in military history from Norwich University in Northfield, VT; and a doctor of philosophy in war studies from King’s College, London. Dr. Nevgloski is also a graduate of the Marine Corps’ Expeditionary Warfare School, Command and Staff College, and School of Advanced Warfighting.*

head of the Oral History Section, Fred H. Allison, discusses the history of the program and the inherent value of documenting first-person accounts of operations and of capturing the experiences and perspectives of Marines and preserving them for posterity. Allison offers several excerpts of notable oral histories that demonstrate the program's value. Historian Seth Givens's historiography of the History Division not only traces its evolution through the works it has produced, it also explicates how those works serve a vital role in forming a historical basis for the decision makers responsible for determining the Corps' future. A piece by archivist James Ginther relates the original proposition of an archival program by Major Henry Ball Tyler as a means to support administrative reform; the founding of the first program to collect and preserve key documents and records; and its development from the nineteenth century to the current period's Archives Branch. Historian Douglas E. Nash Sr. offers a concise history of other Services' historical offices, and curator Robert Sullivan gives an account of the creation of the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia. Finally, Gregory J. Urwin provides a visiting researcher's perspective of His-

tory Division and the history of the Corps, reflecting on the many ways in which the division's historians welcomed and took him under their collective wing, counter to common perceptions of Marine historians.

As you will see, with each passing war and conflict, each major change to institutional character, and new demands placed on every Commandant since Commandant Barnett, the division strove to remain relevant regardless of its higher headquarters, organizational structure, and even its name. The ability to embrace change and evolve is the mark of a professional organization that is able to maintain its relevance through the decades. History Division fits that description and then some. Going forward, I anticipate much of the same in the next century and am confident the division will meet every expectation and demand head-on and will succeed. That is all it has ever done.

Semper Fidelis,  
Edward T. Nevgloski, PhD  
Director  
Marine Corps History Division  
and Gray Research Center

• 1775 •

# United States Marine Corps



## LINEAGE OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

1919 - 2019

ACTIVATED 8 SEPTEMBER 1919 AT WASHINGTON, D.C.,  
AS HISTORICAL SECTION, DEPARTMENT OF THE ADJUTANT AND  
INSPECTOR, HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

RELOCATED DURING NOVEMBER 1941 TO ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

REDESIGNATED 1 MAY 1943 AS HISTORICAL DIVISION AND REASSIGNED  
TO PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT, HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

REDESIGNATED 1 NOVEMBER 1946 AS HISTORICAL SECTION AND  
REASSIGNED TO DIVISION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION,  
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

REDESIGNATED 17 JUNE 1949 AS HISTORICAL DIVISION  
AND DETACHED FROM DIVISION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

REDESIGNATED 15 FEBRUARY 1952 AS HISTORICAL BRANCH AND  
REASSIGNED TO THE G-3 DIVISION, HEADQUARTERS,  
U.S. MARINE CORPS

REDESIGNATED 1 NOVEMBER 1969 AS HISTORICAL DIVISION  
AND DETACHED FROM THE G-3 DIVISION

MERGED WITH THE MARINE CORPS MUSEUM AND REDESIGNATED  
15 OCTOBER 1973 AS HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION

RELOCATED DURING 1977 TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

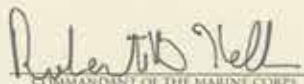
REASSIGNED 1 OCTOBER 2002 TO MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY,  
EDUCATION COMMAND

MUSEUMS DIVISION DETACHED 1 JULY 2005

RELOCATED DURING SEPTEMBER 2005 TO QUANTICO, VIRGINIA

8 February 2019

DATE

  
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

# Directors of Marine Corps History Division

On 8 September 1919, the Historical Section of the Marine Corps was established. Major Edwin N. McClellan was a natural choice to be the first official historian of the Corps based on his experience as the Marine Corps' representative to the Historical Section of the American Expeditionary Forces. He spent five months in France collecting information, documents, and oral histories to capture the Marine experience. His efforts in France live on in today's History Division.

Each director has left an impact on the Corps and the historical program in their time. Though a captain at the time, Harry A. Ellsworth continues to inform and guide Marine Corps historians, researchers, and scholars through his creation of the ELLS-DRAN filing system. The ELLS-DRAN system derives its name

from the first four letters of his last name (Ellsworth) and the acronym that comes from the phrase *direct reference, alphabetical, numerical*. This system is still used by patrons of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Captain Philips D. Carleton, an acting head for a short period in 1944, was a combat historian with the V Amphibious Corps in World War II. Some directors came to the division with valuable combat experience and decorations, such as Major Alphonse DeCarre, Colonel Howard N. Kenyon, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Gayle, Colonel Frank C. Caldwell, and Colonel John W. Ripley Jr., all of whom were recipients of the Navy Cross.

Below is a chronological list of all former directors. The ranks at the time do not necessarily reflect their final rank in service.

Name	Dates of Service
Maj Edwin N. McClellan	8 September 1919–31 May 1925
Maj Edward W. Sturdevant	1 June 1925–15 August 1928
Capt Lucian Burnham	16 August 1928–31 July 1929
Mr. James C. Jenkins	1 August 1929–26 September 1929
Capt Jonas H. Platt	27 September 1929–19 June 1930
Maj Edwin N. McClellan	20 June 1930–2 March 1933
Capt Harry A. Ellsworth	3 March 1933–30 August 1934
Maj Alphonse DeCarre	31 August 1934–5 February 1935
Maj/LtCol Clyde H. Metcalf	6 February 1935–31 December 1938
Mr. James C. Jenkins	1 January 1939–4 October 1942
Col Clyde H. Metcalf	5 October 1942–15 April 1944



Name	Dates of Service
Capt Philips D. Carleton (acting)	16 April 1944–2 May 1944
Col John Potts	3 May 1944–2 January 1946
Col Howard N. Kenyon	3 January 1946–15 October 1946
LtCol Ellsworth N. Murray	16 October 1946–20 December 1946
LtCol Robert D. Heinl	21 December 1946–12 June 1949
LtCol Gordon D. Gayle	13 June 1949–13 August 1951
LtCol Francis O. Hough	14 August 1951–8 June 1952
LtCol Harry W. Edwards	9 June 1952–17 July 1955
Col Charles W. Harrison	18 July 1955–24 July 1959
Maj Hubard D. Kuokka	25 July 1959–17 August 1959
Maj Gerald Fink	18 August 1959–7 January 1960
Col William M. Miller	8 January 1960–31 July 1961
Col Thomas G. Roe	1 August 1961–30 June 1962
Maj John H. Johnstone	1 July 1962–8 November 1962
Col Joseph F. Wagner Jr.	9 November 1962–31 August 1963
LtCol Richard J. Schening	1 September 1963–14 November 1963
LtCol/Col Frank C. Caldwell	15 November 1963–30 November 1971
BGen Edwin H. Simmons	1 December 1971–1 July 1978
BGen Edwin H. Simmons (Ret)	October 1978–3 January 1996
Col Michael F. Monigan	4 January 1996–11 July 1999
Col John W. Ripley Jr. (Ret)	12 July 1999–31 August 2005
Maj Charles D. Melson (Ret; acting)	1 September 2005–8 January 2006
Col Richard D. Camp Jr. (Ret; acting)	9 January 2006–10 December 2006
Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer	11 December 2006–21 December 2017
LtCol Paul J. Weber (Ret; acting)	22 December 2017–6 January 2019
Mr. Jay Hatton (acting)	7 January 2019–14 April 2019
Dr. Edward T. Nevglowski	15 April 2019–present

# Beyond McClellan and Metcalf

## STAFF HISTORY IN THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

Charles D. Melson<sup>1</sup>

American Marines have maintained some type of formal staff history effort since 1919 and continue to do so to date.<sup>2</sup> Its history and museums organization developed over time along with the Washington, DC, headquarters and the base at Quantico, Virginia. What sort of evolution has occurred during the last 100 years to create the modern historical program? How have placement, structure,

and wars impacted the ability of official historians to provide value to the Service and its members? What efforts have been temporal and which were of lasting value? These are timely questions, as often history to the Marines becomes all things to all people. This article will provide a history of history in the Corps. The current mission of the Marine Corps History Division is “to provide knowledge of the Marine Corps’ past to ensure an understanding of its present and future for the Marine Corps and the American people by making its hard-earned experience and official history available for practical study and use.”<sup>3</sup>

The value of a systematic study of past events has long been recognized in Western classical liberal education. Well-known nineteenth-century soldier and military strategist Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779–1869) wrote after the Napoleonic Wars: “Military history, accompanied by sound criticism, is indeed the true school of war.”<sup>4</sup> His contemporary, Prussian general and military strategist Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831), observed as well: “Only the study of military history is capable of giving those who have no experience of their own a clear picture of what I have just called the friction of the whole machine.” Clausewitz also provided the basis for the modern case study when

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles D. Melson is the former chief historian of Marine Corps History Division. His experience included serving as a staff historian for various Marine units; as a joint historian with the U.S. Central and Special Operations Commands; and as a Headquarters action officer for historical matters as a writer and member of the uniform board. His experience spans the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the Global War on Terrorism.

<sup>2</sup> A broader approach can be found in John B. Hattendorf, “The Uses of Maritime History in the for the Navy,” *Naval War College Review* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 13–39; and John B. Hattendorf, “The State of American Naval History in 2010,” *Historically Speaking* 11, no. 4 (September 2010): 16–18. For the evolution of the Marine Corps staff, see Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, eds., *Commandants of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004); Kenneth W. Condit, Maj John H. Johnstone, and Ella W. Nargele, *A Brief History of Headquarters Marine Corps Staff Organization* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1971); Kenneth J. Clifford, *Progress and Purpose: A Developmental History of the U.S. Marine Corps, 1900–1970* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1973); LtCol Charles A. Fleming, Capt Robin A. Austin, and Capt Charles A. Braley III, *Quantico: Crossroads of the Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1978); and C. A. Gregson, “CMC Moves to Pentagon: Most of HQMC to Follow,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 8 (August 1996): 59.

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<sup>3</sup> “Mission,” *Marine Corps Order (MCO) 5750.1H, Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 13 February 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Robert D. Heinl, ed., *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1966), 147.

he advocated the use of examples in his theory of war: "Examples from history make everything clear, and in addition they afford the most convincing kind of proof in the empirical fields."<sup>5</sup> This was well before the case study method of modern business schools.

As early as 1843, the Marine Corps showed interest in the systematic study of its profession by creating a library "for the use of the officers of the Marine Corps at Head Quarters [sic]."<sup>6</sup> This followed an established U.S. Navy practice of having a collection of books provided for both yards and vessels of war. Of note were titles of history and biography along with administrative and technical works. Commandant Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson's own views were more to the point when he wrote in 1848 that commissioned and noncommissioned officers of the Corps should contribute in writing to the record of their active service in the U.S. Mexican War: "It is considered incumbent on the officers of the Marine Corps to have a faithful and impartial history written of the services of that portion of the Corps which has been on active duty with the Army and the Navy during the existing war with Mexico. Justice alone to the Corps, particularly to that part engaged in this arduous service, would require a record of this."<sup>7</sup>

Seventy-one years later, after World War I, the Progressive secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, directed both the Navy and Marine Corps to document the experience from that conflict. As a result, on 8 September 1919 the Historical Section, Adjutant and Inspector's Department, was established at Headquarters by Commandant Major General George Barnett. Duties specified were establishing a historical

archive from records no longer needed in service, to prepare a narrative of the Marines in World War I, and to revise and update the history of the Marine Corps.<sup>8</sup> In this endeavor, officers and enlisted were to assist in matters of "historical interest."<sup>9</sup>

How did the Marine Corps develop an organizational interest in history at the headquarters level? Beginning with General Barnett's *Marine Corps Order (MCO) 53*, the location and command relations of the Historical or History Division have varied over time, as Headquarters itself has evolved. Of note is that the *Marine Corps Manual* of 1921 (the basis for Service orders and directives) did not mention history as such, nor was military history considered in the promotion examinations of that era. What was detailed was how to record events for the Commandant in accordance with naval regulations while on expeditionary, advanced base, or campaign duty and the disposition of records forwarded or destroyed with the approval of the Headquarters adjutant and inspector. In this author's opinion, a start was established with Commandant Major General John A. Lejeune's birthday message to Marines, published in the 1921 *Marine Corps Manual*, observing the founding of the Corps each 10 November. The first officer in charge of the Historical Section, Major Edwin N. McClellan, who wrote the message, justified this annual commemoration by stating: "It is the one day in which every Marine should have impressed upon him that he is an important integral part of an ancient and honorable organization." With it, Marines were obliged to observe the founding of the Corps by "calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, bk. 2 (New York: Everyman's Library, 1993), chapter 6, 199–204.

<sup>6</sup> Navy Department to BGen A. Henderson, 2 October 1843, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. This unique and eclectic collection existed for approximately 162 years before absorption into the Education Command's James Carson Breckinridge Professional Library in September 2005. See Evelyn A. Englander, personal communication, 19 November 2013, Charles Melson History of History Division (HD) files, History Division Staff Research Material, COLL/5786, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. This collection will hereafter be referred to as Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>7</sup> Headquarters, Adjutant and Inspector's Office, order, 6 April 1848, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>8</sup> LtCol Shawn P. Callahan, "The Gilded Age Foundations of the U.S. Marine Corps' Historical Narrative" (panel paper, 2011 McMullen Naval History Symposium, Annapolis, MD, 15 September 2011).

<sup>9</sup> *Marine Corps Order (MCO) 53*, Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 8 September 1919, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>10</sup> Maj E. N. McClellan to MajGen J. A. Lejeune, 21 October 1921, Charles Melson History of HD files.

## Historical Section, Adjutant and Inspector's Department, Headquarters

*Located at Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, from 8 September 1919, until moving to the Navy Annex, Arlington, Virginia, on 30 April 1943.*

Along with Major McClellan, initial participation in the development of a historical program was by Chief Clerk James F. Jenkins. His assistant, Joel D. Thacker, researched personnel data and obtained the transfer of the records of Marine units with the American Expeditionary Forces in France to Marine Corps control from the War Department (the National Archives and Records Administration was not established until 1934, and earlier collections were kept by the Library of Congress). The first staff or operational histories were also written and published. Beginning with McClellan's narrative of the Marines in World War I, some four volumes of official history were produced during this period. McClellan's history of the Marine Corps remained in mimeograph form, a project completed by Lieutenant Colonel Clyde H. Metcalf with the *History of the United States Marine Corps* (1939). Published in part by subscription, for economy the associated documentation was not included.<sup>11</sup>

Commandant Major General Thomas Holcomb established a Marine Corps Museum with a circular letter on 2 October 1940. Lieutenant Colonel Metcalf was designated its curator and it was located at Marine Corps Barracks Quantico, Virginia, "where as many as possible of the officers and enlisted of the Corps can have access to it."<sup>12</sup> Its first location was in the old base headquarters at Potomac Avenue and Broadway Street in the town of Quantico. The exhibit and museum effort was separate from the Historical Section in the sense that its supervision was split between Marine Corps Base Quantico and later the Corps' chief of staff.

Henry I. Shaw Jr., the longtime chief historian,

summarized that the historical office of the 1920s and '30s was, as with the Corps, charged "with a multitude of tasks to be performed by a modicum of people." He went on to say, "In the 1940s, with enormous expansion of the Corps beyond most people's dreams, four years of combat actions across the whole range of the Pacific, and stunning and rapid demobilization, the historical office had done little more than cope with its own expansion and contraction to suit the times."<sup>13</sup> The Historical Division's mission had remained the same for a quarter of a century, but the demands of World War II brought major changes.<sup>14</sup>

## Historical Division, Personnel Department, Headquarters

*Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 1 May 1943–31 October 1946.*

By March 1944, some five million records were transferred to the division for retention. Commandant General Alexander A. Vandegrift confirmed the results of the Navy Manpower Survey Board that assigned the division responsibility for collecting war records and reports; using these same records to answer inquiries; compile data from these to prepare monographs, articles, and histories of Marine organizations; and to edit these and other assigned projects for historical accuracy.<sup>15</sup> But Headquarters appeared at a loss as to what to do with the historical staff during relocation and restructuring, as seen by the shift from personnel to public affairs, along with combat photographers and artists. Approximately 10 unit or campaign histories were prepared and published under these conditions.

## Historical Section, Division of Public Information, Headquarters

*Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 1 November 1946–16 June 1949.*

Throughout the war the *Marine Corps Manual* estab-

<sup>11</sup> The search for the missing notes became the Holy Grail of Marine historians ever since the history's publication.

<sup>12</sup> MajGen Commandant to All Officers, Circular Letter No. 390, 2 October 1940, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>13</sup> Henry I. Shaw Jr., "The Marine Corps Historical Program: A Brief History," *Fortitudine* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1989–90): 5–7.

<sup>14</sup> "Archives of World War II," *Marine Corps Gazette* 27, no. 3 (July 1943): 48–49.

<sup>15</sup> Director of Naval History to CMC, Marine Corps Administrative History, 26 August 1947, Charles Melson History of HD files.



lished “record of events,” war diaries, and after action reports as the main means of transmitting narrative information as part of the five million records transferred to the historical office. But, according to naval historian Fletcher Pratt, “the purpose of a special action report is to create the impression that the operation proceeded according to plan.”<sup>16</sup> Only the Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns had a Marine historian deployed to the field during the fighting. Later writers questioned the value of low-level field interviews as providing too much detail for use in creating a narrative.<sup>17</sup> These campaigns also witnessed the use of field recording equipment by correspondents rather than historians. The officer in charge of the Historical Section in 1947, Major Robert D. Heinl Jr., felt that based on the example of the German Wehrmacht’s well-organized “historical spot-reporting,” there was the need for “a wartime historical program for the Marine Corps settled in advance, providing for a paper organization within the Fleet Marine Force and approximately 100 reservists including men who actually make their living by writing, studying, or teaching history.”<sup>18</sup> The writers were seen as the ones who ensured uniform editing of historical works rather than delegating this as a clerical function to others.<sup>19</sup> The first “standard usage in historical monographs,” or style guide, was established and these same standards remained in use through 2004.<sup>20</sup> Of note is that the World War II story of the six Marine divisions and Marine Air were written by either Marine correspondents or civilian journalists and published using unit recreational funds. In addition, some six unit or campaign histories were prepared and published as well.

<sup>16</sup> As quoted in Maj Robert D. Heinl Jr., “Combat Historians?,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 31, no. 9 (September 1947): 10.

<sup>17</sup> Verle E. Ludwig, A Brief History of the Marine Corps Historical Program, 27 June 1957, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>18</sup> Heinl, “Combat Historians?,” 10, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Henry I. Shaw, “The Base Line in Writing and Editing Marine Corps History,” *Marine Corps Historical Center Writing Guide* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 1981); and *Marine Corps Historical Center Writing Guide*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Historical Section Memorandum 3-47, 26 September 1947, Charles Melson History of HD files.

## Historical Division, Headquarters

*Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 17 June 1949–14 February 1952.*

From the experience of World War II, Lieutenant Colonel Heinl articulated the primary functions of the historical program in a March 1950 *Marine Corps Gazette* article:

1. *Maintenance of historical archives.*
2. *Preparation and publication of definite [sic] official narratives.*
3. *Operation of a working reference-collection.*
4. *Applied research to provide answers to historical questions which originate either within the service or the general public.*
5. *Encouragement of semi-official or private historical research of military value.*
6. *Arrangements for collection, preservation and display of historical objects.*
7. *Establishment of a specialist reserve historical component.*<sup>21</sup>

By organizing to accomplish these functions, the division then consisted of an administration and production branch, records (archives) and research (library) branch, and a writer’s branch that expanded with an applied studies branch at the start of the Korean War.<sup>22</sup> Heinl’s bid for a rational program was carried on by his successor, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon D. Gayle. They deserve credit for the modern historical program that has since been in effect. Shaw recalled, “Both possessed the drive and peer recognition necessary to win the Historical Division a respected place in the HQMC hierarchy. And both recognized that the jobs that needed to be done had to be done by professionals and that couldn’t be done on a shoe-string budget with a skeleton staff.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> LtCol Robert D. Heinl Jr., “Marine Corps History—Report to the Stockholders,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 34, no. 3 (March 1950): 47. The status of the functions was confirmed by Director of Marine Corps History to Director of Plans and Policies, Historical Division, Mission of, 1 March 1951, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>22</sup> Headquarters Marine Corps, History of the Archives and Library of the Records and Research Section, Historical Branch, G-3, July 1952, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>23</sup> Shaw, “The Marine Corps Historical Program,” 5–7.

Concurrent with the effort to document World War II was the outbreak of fighting in Korea that saw a simultaneous endeavor to publicize the Marine participation using both military and civilian historians. Journalist Lynn Montross was hired to assume these duties. The 1st Provisional Historical Platoon (now the 1st Provisional History Platoon) was fielded in August 1950 with teams to Korea in an effort to document events, but it disbanded by July 1952. Platoon members commented, "It of course would help all hands if all officers and men in the Marine Corps would become more history-conscious, so that those who are interviewed after an operation could be more helpful."<sup>24</sup> Seven unit or campaign histories were prepared and published.

## Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters

*Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 15 February 1952–31 October 1969.*

The branch was now organized under a colonel with three sections: writing under a lieutenant colonel, records and research under Thacker, and administration and production under a captain.<sup>25</sup> In 1957, it consisted of a mix of regular, Reserve, and civilian staff for a total of five officers and 13 civilians. At the time, the custodian of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant Colonel John H. Magruder III, and the Quantico museum fell under the branch for supervision with its one officer, three enlisted, and three civilians. It was located in Building 1019, the new base headquarters, in 1960.<sup>26</sup> An updated history of the Marine Corps was published in 1962 by the U.S. Naval Institute, Heinl's *Soldiers of the Sea*.

In November 1963, chief of staff of the Marine Corps Lieutenant General Wallace M. Greene Jr.,

fended off a bid for control of the Historical Branch by Marine Corps Schools at Quantico due to conflicting findings (the move was apparently motivated more by manpower ceilings and space problems than functions), but he directed the matter be studied further.<sup>27</sup> The resulting study was a model of staff work addressing both the Historical Branch and Marine Corps Museum, including comparisons with the other Services. As a result, it was decided "that for reasons of more efficient operation of the historical program and greater personnel stability," the Historical Branch would remain where it was in the nation's capital.<sup>28</sup>

In July 1964, now as Commandant, General Greene established an advisory committee on Marine Corps history. Its first members were Brigadier Generals Keith B. McCutcheon, Gordon G. Gayle, and Donn J. Robertson. This was the culmination of General Greene's long-held concern for history seen previously with his efforts in operations and plans, and then as the chief of staff. The committee's precepts or charter included: 1) advising the Commandant on the "scope, content, and direction" of the historical program; 2) recommending priorities for major projects; 3) encouraging the study and exploitation of historical assets; and 4) fostering the acquisition of private papers and material of significance to the Marine Corps. It became a standing committee that met once a year until disbanded in 1979.<sup>29</sup>

In 1965, a proposal was again made to move the functions of the Historical Branch and the Marine Corps Museums from the G-3 Division to the Marine Corps Schools. It was said by Colonel Frank C.

<sup>24</sup> *Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, General Order No. 114*, 25 July 1952, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>25</sup> TSgt Allen G. Mainard, "They Chronicle the Corps," *Leatherneck* 39, no. 11, November 1956, 51–53, 93.

<sup>26</sup> Notes on the Work of the Historical Branch, G-3, 17 August 1956, Charles Melson History of HD files; and Verle E. Ludwig, A Brief History of the Marine Corps Historical Program, 27 June 1957, Charles Melson History of HD files. The museum had an on-again/off-again relationship with the Historical Branch, reporting directly to the chief of staff of the Marine Corps for a time, brought on by its location at Quantico, VA, rather than Headquarters Marine Corps.

<sup>27</sup> CMC to MCS, Location of Functions of the Historical Branch, AC/S, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps, 7 November 1963, Charles Melson History of HD files; and Col R. E. Cushman to Chief of Staff, memorandum, 26 December 1963, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>28</sup> HQMC, G-3 Division, Decentralization of Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, study, 31 January 1964, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>29</sup> HQO 5750.5, *Establishment of the Commandant's Advisory Committee on Marine Corps History*, 29 September 1966, HD: Historical Center file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA; and HQO 5420.22B, *Commandant's Advisory Committee on Marine Corps History*, 17 March 1972, HD: Historical Center file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

Caldwell, director of the Historical Branch, that the writers and reference staff would do everything but history in the demands for education, doctrine, and development that existed at Quantico.<sup>30</sup> The director of Marine Corps Museums stated this proposal had been raised every two or three years since 1947. Behind this was Colonel Magruder's desire to retain the museum under the chief of staff of the Marine Corps because of the previous lack of support by Marine Corps Schools between 1942 and 1954. In 1967, proposal for a Corps museum on the grounds of the Marine Corps Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, was made to General Greene, who responded "you are aware of the type of effort required to study, design, *fund* and build a project of this magnitude."<sup>31</sup>

The modern historical program was well in place and under the leadership of Colonel Caldwell when the war in Vietnam began. This was expanded by Fleet Marine Force, Pacific and III Marine Amphibious Force historical and documentation efforts. Current command chronology and oral history programs started with the publication of *MCO 5750.1, Duties of the Marine Field Historian*, in May 1965, which mandated a historical program for the first time beyond the *Marine Corps Manual* containing both headquarters functions and a writing guide. Routine (semiannual in garrison, monthly while in combat for battalion- and squadron-size units or larger) command chronologies were called for in July 1965 and oral histories solicited in October of the same year.<sup>32</sup> The leading advocate of oral history at headquarters was Benis M. Frank,

beginning with a career interview of General Greene.<sup>33</sup> Headquarters instituted an interview program for Vietnam returnees through major base commands. The purpose was to obtain narratives of noteworthy professional value and to preserve transcripts of interviews for future use in writing the official history of participation in the war in Vietnam (roughly 6,500 interviews were collected).<sup>34</sup> In 1969, the head of the Vietnam unit of the historical branch, Dr. Jack Shulimson, posited that professional Marines as well as professional historians must use the historical record of the ongoing Southeast Asia conflict: "The Vietnam historical data base already exists; it only remains to be exploited."<sup>35</sup>

In regards to writing, there was a reversal of roles from military (albeit reservists with history backgrounds) to civilian writers who had previously been research assistants. The head of the writing section and chief historian from 1965 was Henry I. Shaw Jr. rather than a Marine officer. Some shifting of priorities occurred from long-term historical projects to address short-term current events.<sup>36</sup> Accounts of the battle of Khe Sanh and the Combined Action Program were produced as exceptions to the general publication trends. Approximately 71 unit or campaign histories were prepared and published on World War II and Korea. These ranged from reference pamphlets to bound multivolumes of definitive history.

## Historical Division, Headquarters

*Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, 1 November 1969–14 October 1973.*

In November of 1971, Chief of Staff Lieutenant General John R. Chaisson recommended to Commandant General Leonard E. Chapman Jr. that the museum program should be formally placed under the Historical Division along with the combat art program. The

<sup>30</sup> Director, Marine Corps Museums, Proposal to Assign Historical Branch to CMCS, memorandum, 29 December 1965, History of History Division file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>31</sup> CMC Green Letter No. 18-67, 3 November 1967, HD: Historical Center file, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. Emphasis original.

<sup>32</sup> Col Frank C. Caldwell, "Every Marine an [sic] Historian," *Marine Corps Gazette* 50, no. 3 (March 1966): 33–38; and Jack Shulimson, "Vietnam Historical Data," *Marine Corps Gazette* 53, no. 2 (February 1969): 43–45. The experience of classified history chronologies and writing was somewhat less successful due to the problems of writing about current events. Gen Simmons overcame this by using FMFPac's more readable narrative accounts, the "Krulak Fables."

<sup>33</sup> R. B. Morrissey, "To Make That Report," *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1960): 53; as early as this time a bid was made for oral history reporting of events.

<sup>34</sup> *MCO 5750.3, Historical Interview Program for Vietnam Returnees* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 16 October 1965).

<sup>35</sup> Shulimson, "Vietnam Historical Data," 45.

<sup>36</sup> Background on the Writing of Marine Corps Official Histories, memorandum, 5 May 1966, Charles Melson History of HD files.

resulting organization would be under an active duty general officer. The Commandant agreed and assigned Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons to head the new organization in December 1971, with colonels heading the both the history and museum branches.

The field historian and combat artist effort also continued in 1971, evolving into a number of Marine Reserve volunteer training units, and finally a mobilization-training unit was established as the basis for the current field history program. Marine Corps museum and combat art programs were integrated in 1973 and *Fortitudine*, the bulletin of the Marine Corps historical program, was first produced. General Simmons's *The United States Marines: A History* was published by the U.S. Naval Institute in 1974 (continuing in a third edition through 1998). Twenty-six unit or campaign histories were prepared and published.

## History and Museums Division, Headquarters

*Located at Navy Annex and Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia, until moving in 1977 to the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC, 15 October 1973–30 September 2002.*

The Marine Corps Museum under Colonel F. Brooke Nihart was established at Building 58 at the Washington Navy Yard in 1978, as well the Marine Corps Air-Ground Museum at Brown Field at Quantico (local base museums existed at Parris Island, South Carolina; Camp Pendleton, California; and San Diego, California). In 1979, the Marine Corps Historical Foundation was founded to preserve and promote Marine Corps history and tradition as a nongovernmental nonprofit organization (renamed the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation). Dr. Allan R. Millett's *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (1980) was published, combining both the Service and academic approaches.<sup>37</sup> During this period, editing and design staff were added to the division and tasked with responsibility for preparing the division's written products

for publication. About 148 unit or campaign histories were prepared and published, including those documenting the Vietnam War and the Gulf War.

This was the most stable, and one could say most fruitful, period for the historical program, while others felt the institution had become resistant to new challenges. In these two and a half decades, a number of orders and regulations institutionalized the management of the program. These included:

*Marine Corps Manual: "Objectives of the Marine Corps Historical Program are:*

- a. *To make the historical experience of the Marine Corps available for practical study and exploitation.*
- b. *To preserve a record of Marine Corps activities and tradition by collecting and maintaining papers and articles of lasting historical interest to the Marine Corps.*
- c. *To achieve a generally accepted realization within the Marine Corps that military history is a basic source of knowledge for solving problems and attaining advances in the theory and practice of military science.*"<sup>38</sup>

*MCO P5400.45, Headquarters Marine Corps Organizational Manual: "The Director, Marine Corps History and Museums are the Commandant's principal staff officer for historical matters. As such, the Director conducts the operations of the Division; supervises the operations of assigned field historical activities; and has staff cognizance over the general execution of the historical program throughout the Marine Corps."*<sup>39</sup>

*Table of Organization 5164, History/Museum Division (HD):*

*The Director of Marine Corps History and Museums is responsible for coordinating the planning of the Marine Corps Historical Program; making the historical experiences of the Marine Corps available*

<sup>37</sup> A variety of other tabletop or commercial publications have appeared, with journalist J. Robert Moskin claiming his 1977 *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* as the first not written by a Marine. BGen Edwin H. Simmons, "A History of the Marine Corps History," *Naval History* 17, no. 1 (February 2003): 34–37.

<sup>38</sup> *Marine Corps Manual* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1980), section E, paragraph 1402, 1–35.

<sup>39</sup> *MCO P5400.45, Headquarters Marine Corps Organizational Manual* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 15 May 1989), 12-1-12-22.



*for practical study and exploitation to preserve a record of Marine Corps accomplishments by collecting and maintaining printed and written documents and oral history tapes of lasting historical and sentimental value to the Marine Corps in order to ensure effective planning for the future through evaluation of the past; ensuring that historical facts are presented in clear, reliable and academically reputable form; determining the eligibility of Marine Corps units for unit awards, campaign, and service streamers; and coordinating the efforts of the Marine Corps Museum in preserving, collecting, exhibiting, and exploitation of objects, memorabilia, Marine Corps art, and personal papers of lasting historical and traditional value to the Marine Corps.*<sup>40</sup>

And finally, the MCO P5750.1G, *Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program*, was in its eighth edition as the program authority.<sup>41</sup> From this and the other references it can be stated that by then the program's mission was accomplished through four interrelated branch functional areas: historical, museums, support, and field operations. But none of these documents ensured adequate funding levels for personnel, operations, and management. A comparison with other Service history and museums agencies indicated the history and museum program had always done more with fewer resources.

In August 1990, Major Charles D. Melson reported as a joint historian to the U.S. Central Command for the Gulf War. He was followed by approximately eight regular, Reserve, and recalled officers as field historians.<sup>42</sup> Combat artists came from the regular

and Reserve establishments as well. A Reserve field historian and combat artist Field History Branch of individual mobilization augmentees was organized in 1994. Subsequent deployments took place to Somalia, Liberia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The coming Global War on Terrorism would be well served by this prior experience.<sup>43</sup> Along with these events, the planning for the National Museum of the Marine Corps began in 1995. At least three separate design phases were conducted before a final construction contract went out for bid.

### **History Division, Training and Education Command/ Marine Corps University**

*Located at the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC, until moving to Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, 1 October 2002 to present.*

With the director, Colonel John W. Ripley (Ret), and deputy director, Colonel Jon T. Hoffman, focused on a museum to be located at Quantico, their initial effort for the History Division and Museums Division was to move it into the General Alfred M. Gray Marine Corps Research Center of Marine Corps University. The commanding generals of Training and Education Command pushed back on this and felt the move from the Navy Yard would not occur until a purpose-built facility was constructed. A shift from Washington, DC, to Quantico, Virginia, was precipitated as much as anything else by the reduction of headquarters staff prior to its shift to the Pentagon, the elimination for a time of the Marine Corps Staff director as a general officer billet, and the base closing and realignment process. The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation and its museum planning cell were already located at Quantico.

This changed dramatically when the president of Marine Corps University, Major General Donald R. Gardner (Ret), gave notice in the fall of 2004 that the museums branch would be a separate division as of

<sup>40</sup> Table of Organization 5164, History/Museum Division, 14 November 1989, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>41</sup> MCO P5750.1G, *Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 28 February 1992).

<sup>42</sup> In Kuwait, this included Col Charles J. Quilter II, LtCols Charles H. Cureton, Dennis P. Mroczkowski, and Ronald J. Brown. Maj Charles D. Melson remained at headquarters as the coordinator of the collection effort.

<sup>43</sup> In Afghanistan and Iraq, this was with Cols Nicholas R. Reynolds, Reed Bonadonna, Gary W. Montgomery, and Michael D. Visconage; LtCols Nathan Lowery, David A. Benhoff, and Kurtis P. Wheeler; Majs Melissa D. Mihocko, Theodore R. McKeldin, John P. Piedmont, Christopher Warnke, and Joseph Winslow; and CWO4 Timothy S. McWilliams.

July 2005 and the entire History and Museums Division would be in Quantico no later than 1 September 2005. These structural and personnel changes were challenged by both a Headquarters-mandated implementation planning team and a subsequent March 2006 review board chaired by General Carl E. Mundy Jr. (Ret).<sup>44</sup> That this move allowed a run on History Division personnel resources and was unfunded and poorly executed was an effect but not the cause of the shift.<sup>45</sup> Departing at the same time were the director and deputy director, as well as the majority of the editing and design, support, library, and archives staff. After this disruption, further unbalancing occurred with the arrival of a new acting director, Colonel Richard Camp (Ret), along with a sudden infusion of a half-dozen Marine Reserve officers with no previous History Division affiliations or loyalties. All of this created a wave of attention on short-term goals at the expense of long-term vision. As new employees arrived, no regard was taken of previously established procedures or experience that had evolved into the historical program from the 1971 founding of the History and Museums Division. There was one particular achievement of note during all of this: the National Museum of the Marine Corps was successfully opened at Quantico on 10 November 2006 by President George W. Bush. At the event, Corporal Jason L. Dunham posthumously received a Medal of Honor, who was killed in action in Iraq, emphasizing the continued relevance of history to today's Marines.<sup>46</sup>

*Marine Corps Order 5750* and Table of Organization 5164 were all modified with needed revisions that resulted from the move to Marine Corps Base Quantico.<sup>47</sup> Authored and staffed by longtime senior historian Charles R. Smith, the 2009 update to the order, *MCO 5750.1H*, did much to ensure the historical pro-

gram survived.<sup>48</sup> But significantly, History Division's director, Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer, and deputy director, Paul Weber, also had to take on the responsibility for the Gray Research Center in 2012 and then the 2015-16 move to the Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center.<sup>49</sup> The purpose-built facility promised for more than a decade previously finally came to pass, but as this article shows, significant changes to the program have already occurred.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

In summation, much has changed in the period discussed from 1919 through 2019, but much has not. In the broadest sense, the program continues to document the Marine Corps in times of conflict for the American people.<sup>51</sup> The historical program has accomplished this with narrative histories and writing, museums and exhibits, and other heritage efforts (e.g., lineage and honors, commemorative naming) as part of the military staff process. These are with historical products (i.e., general support) rather than services (i.e., direct support) for the use of Headquarters, commands, and other knowledge-based functions. The subtleties between academic and applied history seems to defy program managers, most of whom are not interested in the liberal arts. The historical program does not accomplish this for public affairs and community relations, lessons and operational analysis, doctrine and developmental support, or professional military education and instructional supports, because each of these functions has its own programs,

<sup>44</sup> *MCO 5750.1H, Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 13 February 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Dir, HD to CG, EdCom, Decision Paper, 20 September 2012, Charles Melson History of HD files.

<sup>46</sup> In the prophetic words of the late Col Heinl, "Few projects within the Marine Corps have been subjected to the winds of chance, the vagaries of personality, and just plain misunderstanding and general ignorance, as has the Marine Corps historical program, together with its long-suffering executor, the Historical Division." See Heinl, "Marine Corps History—Report to the Stockholders," 46.

<sup>47</sup> "At the conclusion of the operations analysis phase it is equally important that this documentation be made available to the Director of Naval History and the Director of Marine Corps history so that official histories and historical analyses can be prepared and made available to the public." *Secretary of the Navy Instruction 5212.5D, Navy and Marine Corps Records Disposition Manual* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 22 April 1998), part 5, Records of Armed Conflict.

<sup>44</sup> The author participated in the various planning teams and Mundy board.

<sup>45</sup> This included the destruction of the unique library collection.

<sup>46</sup> Col Patricia Saint, "Museum Dedication: From Design to Dedication, A Project Management View," *Fortitudine* 32, no. 2, 2007, 4-6.

<sup>47</sup> Col Jon T. Hoffman, USMCR (Ret), "It Was the Best of Times, It Was the Worst of Times" (panel paper, 2011 McMullen Naval History Symposium, Annapolis, MD, 15 September 2011).

personnel, and budgets that far exceed that dedicated to the history effort. These disciplines also benefit more from a social sciences rather than a historical approach.

Derived from public law and a variety of Department of Defense and Service regulations, the current authority and responsibilities of the History Division to provide continued value to the institution in the critical efforts for: 1) the maintenance of permanently valuable records in compliance with U.S. Codes, primarily 5 and 10; 2) to provide a resource for command decision making; and 3) to serve as a resource for educating and training Marines.<sup>52</sup> This had been accomplished as a separate special staff section with the ability to engage in operational reporting and deployments, and the ability to run its own facilities and programs. From 1919, this was with Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps in Arlington, Virginia; but

from 2002 on, the division became part of the Marine Corps Education Command and Marine Corps University at Quantico, an organization whose mission is professional military education for resident and non-resident students having a continual turnover on an annual basis.

More than a decade ago, the author stood before the U.S. Naval Academy's McMullen Naval History Symposium and predicted the need for staff or operational history for the twenty-first century, based on the efforts to document the Gulf War.<sup>53</sup> Since the transition to the current History Division at Marine Corps University, roughly 50 or more monographs and campaign histories have been prepared and published, including those documenting the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. As a result, some of what this author proposed during that symposium has come to pass.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Annette Amerman, "Every Marine an Historian: A Sequel," *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 3 (March 2012): 77–79. This article dealt with a basic and perennial source of concern.

<sup>53</sup> Randy Carol Balano and Craig L. Symonds, eds., *New Interpretations in Naval History: selected papers from the Fourteenth Naval History Symposium, held at Annapolis, Maryland, 23–25 September 1999* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), 424–31.

<sup>54</sup> 2011 McMullen Naval History Symposium (Panel: History in the Marine Corps), 14–16 September 2011, chaired by Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer, with papers by Col Jon T. Hoffman, LtCol Shawn P. Callahan, and Charles D. Melson.

# Documenting Marine Corps History Through the Spoken Word

By Fred H. Allison, PhD<sup>1</sup>

What good is oral history? Many argue that it is a questionable means by which to document history. After all, memory can be faulty and people are prone to exaggeration and subject to outside influence, cultural norms, political considerations, personal promotion, self-interest, and more. But then again, people write official reports and are likewise influenced by the above motivations that might show up in their writing. The Marine Corps has maintained an oral history program since 1966, when Marines became extensively involved in Vietnam. The Corps' investment in collecting and preserving the recorded voices of Marines is significant. It not only indicates a desire to more thoroughly document Marine Corps operations for the sake of history, but beyond that, it is proof of the Corps' belief that every Marine plays an important role in accomplishing missions. Marine experiences and perspectives are worthy of retention for the sake of history and for the benefit of future Marines.

Marine historian Benis M. Frank pioneered the Marine Corps Oral History Program. Beginning in 1965, it was an element of the overall historical program. Its mission was to provide yet another source of information about the Vietnam War as well as the recent past history of the Corps. Oral or spoken histo-

ry was just emerging as a means of collecting primary source material, a concept originated by Professor Allan Nevins of Columbia University.

Commandant of the Marine Corps General Wallace M. Greene Jr. saw the utility of oral history and considered it a form of living history. He believed that the "tape-recorded voices of Marines who had seen service in Vietnam would serve to obtain a vast collection of lessons learned."<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, the commanding general of Fleet Marine Force Pacific, supported the Commandant's initiative. Krulak wrote, "The personal comments of the key individuals participating should prove invaluable in amplification of the written SitRep [situation reports]."<sup>3</sup> Generals Greene and Krulak were right. Oral history has the unique capability to capture the thoughts, experiences, and perspectives of individual Marines and thereby provide context and a deeper understanding of operations.

An aggressive oral history collection effort in Vietnam followed. Marines of all ranks and military occupational specialties (MOSs) were interviewed and the program captured a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives. During the 10-year span of

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<sup>2</sup> Benis M. Frank, "Living History," *Marine Corps Gazette* 54, no. 11 (November 1970): 47.

<sup>3</sup> LtGen Victor H. Krulak letter to Gen Wallace M. Greene, 25 June 1966, History of the Oral History Program folder, Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.



the Vietnam War, some 15,000-plus interviews were collected, many in the field but others at continental U.S. bases with recent returnees. This is an incredibly rich repository of information on the Vietnam War.

This set the pattern for the Oral History Program and operational interviews remain the top priority. Since Vietnam, Marine Corps oral historians have collected interviews with Marines at important areas of operations. Nearly 25,000 operational interviews are now in the Oral History Collection.

## Oral Histories from the Field

Operational interviews are a unique and valuable asset. Because they are often conducted in the field and on-site, they provide immediacy, detail, and accuracy that are often lacking in interviews with veterans conducted years after the event. They are a window to the real world of Marine Corps deployments, operations, and often combat. The events discussed in operational interviews are not yet history but will eventually become history. For instance, the Marines at Khe Sanh under siege in 1968 did not necessarily regard what they were experiencing as historic; they were merely doing their duty and trying to survive. Now, 40 years later, we know that Khe Sanh was a monumental Marine Corps battle. The interviews collected there are in essence an oral snapshot of that historical event (imagine interviews with troops in the field at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania). The same can be said of operations today in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Ultimately, the great utility of operational oral histories is that they supplement the command chronologies that units are required to submit to History Division. They provide the human perspectives and experiences that cannot be captured by a concise report. When historians gather to write history, operational oral histories are a vital ingredient and a primary source that supports the official Marine Corps version of combat operations.

The vast majority of operational interviews done since the early 1990s have been conducted by Marine reservists serving as part of a specially focused unit. The Mobilization Training Unit (MTU) was originally founded in 1978 with the mission to deploy trained

field historians and combat artists with all Fleet Marine Forces commands. The MTU's first full deployment as a unit was in 1983 to Operation Urgent Fury (Grenada). Subsequent deployments in the early 1990s included Operation Desert Storm (Kuwait), Operation Provide Comfort (Kurdistan), Operation Safe Harbor (Guantánamo Bay), Operation Able Manner (Haiti), and Operation Restore Hope (Somalia).

In 1994, the MTU transformed into an Individual Mobilization Augmentee Detachment (IMA Det) and deployed field historians to Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. By the decade's end, nearly 2,000 oral history interviews had been collected. With the advent of the Global War on Terrorism, IMA Marine reservists have conducted more than 7,000 oral history interviews during Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and others dealing with terrorist organizations.

The IMA field historians are successful Marines in their primary MOSs and most have extensive deployment histories, so they are able to gain the trust and confidence of unit commanders and their Marines. Many of the Marine reservists are history professors and authors in their civilian careers, and most possess a master's degree or PhD. Presently, this small group of field historians (around 12 in total) visit forward deployed units in combat zones and during major field exercises and occasionally even catch rides aboard amphibious ships returning home to collect interviews. The field historians then draft detailed summaries of each interview to support research. The interviews and associated documents are digitized and stored in the Oral History Collection.

Issue-related interviews are a type of operational oral history, but instead of combat the focus is on innovations in technology, doctrine, tactics, or procedures. An example of this was the author's 2005 visit to Marine Operation and Evaluation Squadron 22 (VMX-22), the squadron testing and evaluating the Boeing MV-22 Osprey, during which interviews with aviators and maintainers were conducted. Other topics that issue-related interviews document include humanitarian operations, contingency deployments, and important training exercises—essentially anything that could be construed as historically significant.

## Career Oral Histories

The distinguished Marine/career interview project is another important aspect of the Oral History Program. This part of the program began in 1966, when Major General Ford O. Rogers, a pioneer Marine aviator, was interviewed by Benis Frank. Since then, about 300 career interviews with prominent Marine officers have been conducted to include most of the post-World War II Commandants, with the exception of Generals Randolph M. Pate, Greene, and P. X. Kelley. The first Commandant to provide a career interview was General Clifton B. Cates. In most cases, the interviews with the Commandants began within a few years of retirement.

These interviews are in-depth, detailed, and cover the prominent officer's entire career. These individuals can provide valuable insights and perspectives on changes in the Marine Corps and bear witness to important operations in which they have participated. The career interviews are fully transcribed, edited, and indexed by oral history staff. The finished transcript, often with photographs and supporting documents added, is copied, bound, and distributed with copies going to other military research facilities and appropriate civilian libraries. These transcripts see a lot of use, both because of the authority with which the interviewee speaks and because the polished transcript is easy to use.

## Veterans' Oral Histories

A third type of oral history maintained by the Oral History Section records the stories of veterans. This type of oral history has grown in stature of late as a means of historical documentation and to note veterans' service. Recognizing this, but limited by resources and manpower, initiatives were undertaken by the Oral History Section to support or facilitate efforts by individuals or organizations to capture the experiences of former Marines. These initiatives include a volunteer program, a self-memoir program, joint oral history projects with veterans' organizations, and partnerships with other servicemember organizations.

One organization in particular is the Witness to War Foundation, which conducts professional-quality video interviews of combat veterans. Lieutenant General Ron Christmas (Ret), who serves on Witness to War's board of directors, linked the Oral History Section with the organization for a collaboration that has resulted in the donation of a number of quality video interviews.

Another example is the Women Marines Association (WMA). Led by Colonel Elizabeth M. Wilson (Ret), WMA members interviewed a number of women Marine veterans extending back to World War II. The interviews were subsequently donated to History Division's Oral History Collection. The WMA project exemplifies what veterans' organizations can do to preserve their history and traditions as well as support Marine Corps history. The WMA has donated more than 100 oral histories into the collection.

## Collection Digitization Efforts

Since its inception in 1966, the Oral History Collection has grown to include more than 30,000 interviews. Interviews are conducted digitally now and due to an aggressive digitization effort, more than 80 percent of the collection has been digitized and stored on CDs. This digitization effort is the result of a collaborative project with the Naval Historical Foundation. In addition, a state-of-the-art database stores information on each interview, and the sound recordings and associated interview summary sheets or transcripts can also be accessed through the database. The work of professionally processing an interview is the biggest chore involved in building and maintaining oral history collections; it is time-consuming and tedious. Nevertheless, it must be done, because without it the interview has little use. The Oral History Section is responsible for ensuring proper processing and archiving of each interview. Digitization and databasing, however, has done a lot to streamline this work.

## The Rewards of Oral History

With all this great material and easy accessibility, we must ask: What is it for and who uses it? First and

foremost, oral histories are collected, like command chronologies, to support the official Marine Corps writing program. A lot of official and unofficial written Marine Corps history is undergirded by oral history interviews, including very prominent commercially published books on the Marine Corps. Mainly, however, like the rest of the History Division, the Oral History Section exists to support the Marine Corps itself by assisting units and individuals in need of historical information. Oral histories are available for use by Marines for their research, especially the large number of Marines attending the various schools at Quantico. Finally, being a public archive, the Oral History Collection is available for use by outside researchers, scholars, media, and the general public. A substantial number of oral history products, averaging about 1,250 each year, are provided to researchers and others on request. Among those making requests are notable authors, historians, and producers of broadcast historical programs.

While oral history is not the best way to establish facts, however, it is the best way to understand what it was like to be on the ground during significant events. Oral history records eyewitness viewpoints—personal experiences—along with the context and conditions under which historic events occurred. In this way, the voices of past Marines can make a direct connection to Marines of today. This information can be gained by no other method than by talking and recording personal experiences.

For example, the victory of Marines at Guadalcanal would have much less meaning and value if we did not know just how bad the weather was, how hungry the troops were, or the effects of Japanese shelling. We know these things from the spoken word. Marines of today can understand and connect with Marines of the past through these human voices and through this tangible connection, Marine traditions, ethos, and esprit de corps are carried forward.

**The personal accounts of Marines can tell us about combat and what it was like to be at some of the Corps' iconic battles.**

## BELLEAU WOOD

*Then came June 7 when we went into Belleau Wood. . . . They [Germans] had gotten in there and very fast had organized into interlocking machine gun nests . . . they shot on sound, not sight. They didn't see us and we didn't see them at first. They opened up with those Maxims at crossfire as soon as we made a sound. . . . The woods didn't seem to stop the bullets one bit. It was a big battle, and it really roared. At first machine guns and rifles, then some mortars, and later on some artillery. We were in the open and they were concealed, and they were Prussian Guards and didn't give up easily. We'd have gone into anything, we didn't care how much it was, never stopped at all until we were just decimated, and we just couldn't go any further. The only thing our officers knew was, "Go ahead! Fight 'em and kill 'em, damn it! Straight ahead, what are you waiting for?!" It was a pretty bad business. It did have the effect on the Marine Corps: it showed us up as being very stubborn fighters and we got a lot of respect we could never have gotten otherwise from the Germans.<sup>4</sup>*

## TARAWA

*As we're coming in every once in a while somebody would step into a hole and somebody near him would grab a pack strap and pull him up. Sometimes we could actually see the coral under us and sometimes not, it just depended on how many shells were landing and whether or not there was blood in the water and so forth. A lot of times you were just wading blind. When we reached the beach, I saw where [Major Henry P. "Jim"] Crowe was. It turns out I landed almost directly behind where he was. . . . The beach area was very, very narrow. At high tide in some places, the water came all the way to the sea wall. In other places, you'd have maybe three or four or five yards of dry sand. There were already bodies floating in the water when we reached the beach. There were also wounded Marines lying in the area. There were some that weren't, but Crowe was very good about making sure that everybody went over the sea wall. So the sea wall where*

<sup>4</sup> General Alfred H. Noble, interview with Benis Frank, May 1968, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA).

we landed was anywhere from three to five feet and there were already casualties on the beach and there was one Japanese officer's body there. He had his pistol in his hand. You could tell he had fired all his rounds because the slide was back. I had laid the law down for my platoon that there wouldn't be any souvenir hunting. I would have liked to have picked the pistol up but I didn't do it because I was going to abide by my own rule. Crowe had told me, and he told me again, get over the sea wall and start swinging in and swing to the left. We had to physically lift these thousand pound guns over the wall and I'm sure we got some help from troops that were there. When we went over the wall, then we had to pull the guns by hand across the sand. That first night, I probably was not more than 50 yards inland. It's hard to describe how much fire was taking place. The place was just roaring with every kind of weapon. The Marines were shooting, the Japanese were shooting. Gunfire was coming from all directions because the island was essentially flat. Everything was either burning or in wreckage. I don't remember seeing a single building still standing. So there were fires burning everywhere.<sup>5</sup>

## CHOSIN RESERVOIR

I hadn't been sleeping about a half an hour when I awoke to a sound in the trees behind us, "phhfft, phhfft," almost a whisper sound. I asked Ray, a seasoned veteran of the Pusan Perimeter, what that was. He said, "Bullets." I asked him why the hell he didn't wake me up. He said, "They were too far to do anything—I would've woken you when it was time." Out to the front of us was a rice field, it was totally quiet—cold and dark. All along the line there was no firing, disciplined. There was a building in a V of two mountains beyond the field. Our platoon sergeant had bazookas fire and hit that building. You never saw so much movement; they were loading up to attack. Then we fired a flare and when that flare lit and those bazookas went off that whole field like it stood up and started running toward us. Then you talk about bells, whistles and horns and clanging and banging and screaming, "Marine you die tonight, you die tonight!" And they came at us. We just kinda leveled in and

let them have it. It was just continuous then until daylight. Just as daylight started lighting up on the eastern horizon, here came the [F4U] Corsairs. And when they heard those Corsairs, it was just like somebody turned off the noise machine.<sup>6</sup>

## VIETNAM

We were rushing north in the middle of the night to try to rescue 2/3 [2d Battalion, 3d Marines] which had been overrun, literally overrun. Everybody in the whole CP [command post] group, except one guy, [Major Robert F.] Sheridan, had been killed. He was badly wounded. He had holed-up under a tank. We were trying to get to him. As we were going up the old French road, here comes a [Boeing] B-52 [Stratofortress] strike. We could hear the aircraft but we couldn't see them and all of a sudden you see the most incredible sight in the world—these huge flames like the big storms you see on the rim of the sun, big, curling flames, just roaring up in the air. I'd never seen anything like this in my life. In the daytime you don't see any fire, you just see a blast.

When Con Thien became such a conflagration they moved dangerously close to 1,500 yards [for a B-52 strike]. In order to get through this damn thing, not only did you have to be under cover, serious cover, you had to fix yourself in such a way that you wouldn't bounce. It was one thing to be in a bunker, but the damn ground would throw you around like a damn pinball if you weren't really seriously stretched out. What we'd do is we'd face one side of the trench—you never sat down in the trench—and put your back on the backside of it and you just shove and so you're suspended. You could see the aircraft. They were phenomenal. These things were low. We could see them come over the Tonkin Gulf and you could actually see the doggone doors open. Everybody could see that too and the minute they'd see that, they got their feet up and push like hell. You would just strain your whole body like that and most of my Marines would put a battle dressing or sock in their mouth. My socks were so dirty I never did that because you couldn't wash the damn things. And just grip that damn thing the

<sup>5</sup> LtCol Roy H. Elrod, interview with Fred H. Allison, May 2013, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA).

<sup>6</sup> John Cole, interview with Fred H. Allison, May 2007, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). Cole was a rifleman in Company I, 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, at the Chosin Reservoir. Here, he recalls the initial Chinese attack on Marines at Yudam-ni that occurred the night of 27 November 1950.



*best you could and you better have your chin strap buckled and I mean tight. So, you're straining like hell. You could see them pickle that load and the last bomb hadn't come out of that airplane before that first one hit. And boy, there were three [aircraft] in a row just a single column. . . . I'll tell you, it would throw you around. You better be taking a strain because they would pop you right out of the damn trench. I mean it would blow you—[laughs] I felt sorry for who was tired or who didn't want to strain anymore. You see these guys fly through the air and pick up and dust himself off and get back in the hole where you—it was just unbelievable.<sup>7</sup>*

## HIGHWAY OF DEATH, DESERT STORM

*It was like, if you could, put your head inside a Weber grill with the coals red and glowing. We're punching through the clouds at night, using our radar to guide on the target until we're clear underneath, then [we] sweeten the dive using the FLIR; outside its incredible, hellish, red, orange glow off the fires . . . a ribbon or road, cars and vehicles on both sides, on fire, you could see movement, people scattering. Oil well smoke created an overcast, you dropped all your bombs then climbed above the clouds heading home. It was clear, cool and quiet, behind you the clouds were glowing red.<sup>8</sup>*

**Leadership is another topic of high importance to Marines. Again, an oral history interview can provide examples of leadership.**

## THE TROOPS GO FIRST

*The 4th Marines had landed and we were going to move around and give them support. General [Lemuel] Shepherd came up to my squad and was sitting there and his aide*

*brought him up a box and in that box there was a lemon pie and a jug of tea, hot tea. I have always liked hot tea, always liked tea and I had always loved lemon pie—and without even opening it he gave it to me and said, "This is for your boys." He gave us that. I cut it in eight pieces with a K-bar and shared the tea—most of them did not want the tea; they would rather have coffee—and we did not, and I was the senior man as the squad leader, I did not offer my commanding general a piece of that pie. The eight of us ate it. And he did not say a word. He just sat there and was glad we enjoyed it and did that for us. And I would remind him of it a hundred times.<sup>9</sup>*

## CONNECTING WITH THE TROOPS

*I will give thanks for the rest of my life that I had the platoon commanders that I had in Hotel Company. I had one staff sergeant named Copeland, who retired as a master sergeant, and he's now teaching the NROTC [Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps] unit at Naples High School, and who is probably one of the most effective natural leaders I've seen in my life. Very fortunately, he was a black Marine, about six feet five, about 230 pounds, chiseled, and nobody, nobody wanted to fool with Staff Sergeant Copeland. He was my best friend. I mean between the two of us we licked the race thing. We licked the alcohol thing. We licked the drug thing, because nobody wanted to pay the consequence. I'm not talking about maltreatment here. I'm talking about telling people what Marines were going to be in this company, what the standard was, and if you didn't meet the standard you were going to pay a price, and there are a lot of innovative ways you can do that.*

*On base the idea of having the base gym, where white Marines just did not go there, was really troubling to me. The first thing I did was attack that, and one way to break the ice with the company—and this is definitely a troubled company. I mean we had deep divisions in it. I mean I saw it. I felt it. It was palpable. I marched them down to the gym in PT gear with their basketball shoes. I reserved the gym, which I could do. I sat them down in the bleachers and*

<sup>7</sup> Col John W. Ripley, interview with Fred H. Allison, May 2001, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA).

<sup>8</sup> LtCol Michael Parkyn, interview with Fred H. Allison, May 2014, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). LtCol Parkyn was an Grumman A-6E Intruder pilot with Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224 (VMA[AW]-224). This is a description of an air strike on the Iraqi convoy outside Kuwait City. The convoy was so large and the devastation wreaked upon it by Coalition aircraft so extensive that it became known as the Highway of Death. FLIR = forward looking infrared; this technology detects thermal energy and is used in aircraft, tanks, ships, and other vehicles.

<sup>9</sup> MajGen James L. Day, interview with Benis M. Frank, October 1989, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). Day recalls a time when he was a corporal and squad leader in the 2d Battalion, 22d Marines, 6th Marine Division, during the battle of Okinawa.

*I got out in front of the company and I had a basketball in my hand. I asked the company to produce who was the best basketball player in the company and they all pointed to this young Marine who was about six three/six four; a strapping young Marine who happened to be black, and we got out in front of the company and he and I played one on one to ten baskets and I gave him the ball first. No warm up shots. He and I traded misses for the first two and then I beat him ten to six or something like that. I gave him the ball back and said, okay, sit down. I could see there that the thing changed between the company commander and the company because this predominately black company—they're very heavy on minorities—hadn't seen anyone who would come in and come down and play their game on their level and do it better. I had just happened to have been playing basketball a long time in my life and I was still in good shape. I played on the AWS [Amphibious Warfare School] team. Basketball is something I did a lot of. Then I divided the company up, took all the baskets, and made different teams and we all played basketball. All played basketball. Not just one group. Not just another group. We did that a lot, and based on that athletic competition, that permeated to other sports. And then the colonel had a big field day I remember, on New Year's Day, 1 January 1975. We had the battalion field meet out there at Camp Schwab and it was one of the best run field meets I've ever seen. They had the right mixture of athletics and professional military skills and Hotel Company won that field meet and the morale of the company just kind of [shot up]—they'd been down for so long. They'd been told they were bad for so long.<sup>10</sup>*

**Some interviews are unique in that they put you in a place of great historical significance.**

## 7 DECEMBER 1941— PEARL HARBOR

*At exactly 0755 Sunday morning I awoke to sounds of low-*

*flying aircraft and the sounds of machine gun firing. My first thought was that the U.S. Army Air Corps was playing games by disturbing their Marine buddies on a Sunday morning. That thought lasted about two minutes, as I could hear our aircraft on the flight line exploding. I dressed quickly in my liberty khakis which I had removed a few hours earlier, grabbed my rifle, and ran outside. (I even put on my khaki cap because Marines do not go outside uncovered). What I saw was fighter airplanes with big red balls on their wings passing in what seemed all directions and firing their guns. They were flying so low I could actually see the pilots who appeared to be laughing. I was completely terrified. My terror lasted only a few moments and was replaced with anger I had never experienced. I immediately headed for the nearest shelter, which so happened to be the freshly laid cement foundation for our new swimming pool still under construction. From there, along with several other Marines, we began shooting at the enemy aircraft—just like I was taught in boot camp. . . . [We] actually shot one, perhaps two, Japanese aircraft down. During the last attack my rifle was shot out of my hands . . . the enemy bullet had either ricocheted or hit my sight direct . . . it missed me by about six inches. The Marines that day made every possible effort in defending their base and in spite of the confusion, and un-readiness, displayed undaunted courage in the face of direct enemy fire.<sup>11</sup>*

## 11 SEPTEMBER 2001— THE PENTAGON

*Where the smoke was, was where we knew people, we assumed, would be injured. We made it down to ground level in between the D and C rings and . . . just took turns crawling into the hole, a big hole inside the Pentagon that was all filled with smoke and fire . . . looking for bodies, people alive, or people injured. The smoke was so thick, you'd have to come out to catch your breath, sort of like in the gas chamber. . . . I took my camouflage blouse off, and cut it in half, or ripped it in half and gave the other half*

<sup>10</sup> Gen James L. Jones, interview with Dr. Gary Solis, 2002, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). This occurred during Gen Jones' command of an infantry company on Okinawa in 1974. This time was a bottoming-out period for the Marine Corps as the disillusionment of Vietnam and widespread social protests had manifested itself in poor troop morale and discipline. Gen Jones characterized this assignment as the "hardest job he ever had."

<sup>11</sup> Col Albert A. Grasselli, interview with Fred Allison, 2002, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). Grasselli was a private at the time and an air traffic controller for the airfield. The Marine Corps Air Station at Ewa, Oahu, where Marine Aircraft Group 21 was based, was one of the first targets the Japanese raiders hit.

to somebody and I used my half for my face so we could go in there and actually breathe. . . . It was terrible. We were pulling people out and their skin is melting off . . . people with their hair just burnt up, the toxic fumes from the wires and everything else burning. The hardest part of all was when you would get in there and you could only go so far until you couldn't breathe anymore or see anymore. You don't want yourself to become a casualty . . . you had to turn around and you could still hear them saying, "Help me, somebody help!"<sup>12</sup>

**Then there are interviews that give you a unique perspective of historical events.**

### A GUAMANIAN CIVILIAN, BATTLE OF GUAM, 1944

My father got a couple of fresh eggs, cooked them, and brought them to a Marine that was sitting there eating. The Marine didn't want to take the eggs. He says, "I can't take this, I can tell that these are probably the only eggs you have." My father said, "Lieutenant, we saved them for you." He ate them, but you could tell that he really didn't think he should, but he ate them and was very grateful. But my father was very grateful, we were grateful. What came out of that was the sensitivity of the lieutenant, realizing instantly—he was just a young guy—realizing instantly that, "Hey listen, I don't want to take this." We were eating rice and soy sauce, and he was eating these fried eggs, he noted it. But my father had said, "We're going to give him something that they didn't have." My father knew they didn't have fresh eggs in the Marine division; they had these powdered eggs, not fresh eggs, so he went and looked for these eggs and found these two eggs and said, "This is the best treat we can give this guy." This is a very minor story, but I think it made me realize what special people these guys were. They would be so tough in fighting and so gentle when

they were not, that they would refuse a gift because they knew it was so precious. But he took it because he knew that it was intended for him.<sup>13</sup>

**Oral history interviews can also relay first-hand accounts of important social changes.**

### MONTFORD POINT— BOOT CAMP, SECOND DAY

Well, I remember very well, about the second day we was in training my drill instructor, his name was Corporal Cheek, broke us out one night and he told us we might as well pack up your bags and, leave quietly because there had not been any Negroes in the Marine Corps for so many years, and whatever made you people feel that you can be Marines. He said, "If you want to escape this thing the best thing to do is to just leave quietly and shove the hell on off home." And in that case quite a few of the members of my platoon started packing their gear, sleeping bags, not sleeping bags but the suitcases and so forth, getting ready to leave. And so I remember very well I had a friend of mine, later, he came from Birmingham, Alabama, his name was Cooper, and so Cooper and I got together and we told them right there, in my hut, don't nobody leave. We said that's what they wanted us to do. But I left home to join the Marine Corps and when I joined the Marine Corps and got to Montford Point I had 25 cents in my pocket, that's all I had and my last suit I had it on. I came into the Marine Corps to stay and so I intended to stay in the Marine Corps until I went home in a pine box. And I explained to them that nobody was going to drive me from nowhere. If they could be Marines, I thought I could too and they could too. I finally convinced them not to leave. And so the next morning when the DI came he broke us out, we fell out, he went through and counted noses, about twice, three times, and said, "Well, I see you are still here." He said, "Well, I'm going to make you wish you had never joined this damn

<sup>12</sup> LCpls Dustin Schuetz and Michael Vera, interview with Fred Allison, 13 and 20 September 2011, transcripts (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). The comments here are a blend of both Marines' statements. LCpls Schuetz and Vera's office was near Ground Zero, the terrorist-flown airliner's impact point. Schuetz recalled that after the jet slammed into the building he and Vera first ensured their office was cleared of personnel. Then, instead of evacuating themselves, they went the other way.

<sup>13</sup> BGen Vincente Blaz, interview with Fred Allison, 2013, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). A native of Guam, Blaz joined the Marine Corps in 1951. As a youth, he and his family endured the occupation of Guam by the Japanese. A primary reason he joined the Marines was due to the impression Marines had upon him during this battle.

*Marine Corps.” And so we started training that day. And I assure you, it was training.<sup>14</sup>*

**Finally, there are interviews that relay to the listener (or reader) the unique character of the Marine Corps, its esprit de corps.**

## LEAVE NO MARINE BEHIND

*We lost practically no Marines who surrendered to the enemy. We not only brought our wounded out, we brought our dead out. I can see our trucks returning from the [Chosin] Reservoir now, piled high with dead and wounded men who were roped to the running boards of all of our trucks and other vehicles. And the examples set by the individual Marines, bringing out their dead and wounded from the Chosin Reservoir is outstanding. . . . Anything up there, they learned it. [The same thing happened] in Haiti and Nicaragua and Santo Domingo they didn't leave a g—m soul up there. All the Marines that were left in Korea, [were] where the men had fallen in crevices and that kind of stuff, and nobody knew they were there and couldn't see them. But when a column was coming out there and a man was*

*wounded, you could see the body, the column halted and they put this man aboard; and if they couldn't get him on a truck, g—m it, they carried him. You could see a 130-pound Marine out there carrying 175-pound man. Every Marine knew that he could trust the man on his right and left . . . when the true history is written of the 1st Division's conduct in Korea it will go down as the greatest thing that's ever happened in the United States of America; because nothing has ever happened like it before, especially the love of man for his brother.<sup>15</sup>*

The Oral History Section of Marine Corps History Division has the mission of collecting, processing, and archiving the interviews of Marines. Through these interviews, Marines learn the history of the Marine Corps, not from a book but from the voice of a Marine who lived and experienced that history. In this way, a tremendous amount of Marine Corps history is collected, generations of Marines become connected, and esprit de corps—that essential element that makes the Marine Corps unique—is fostered.

• 1775 •

<sup>14</sup> SgtMaj Edgar R. Huff, interview with Henry I. Shaw Jr., June 1972, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA). SgtMaj Huff was among the first group of African Americans to attend boot camp at Montford Point. He enlisted in September 1942.

<sup>15</sup> LtGen Louis B. “Chesty” Puller, interview with Colonel John H. Magruder III, 1961, transcript (Oral History Section, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA).

# The History Division and Change in the Marine Corps

## A HISTORIOGRAPHY

by Seth Givens, PhD<sup>1</sup>

The Marine Corps History Division was born only one month after the last troops returned home from occupation duty in Germany in 1919. The Marine Corps that came back from World War I was different than the one that had left the year before, its combat record in modern warfare paving the way for a more assertive role in national defense.<sup>2</sup> At the apex of this transformational shift, Headquarters Marines Corps constituted the Historical Section, as it was first known. Since, the successors of the Historical Section, including today's History Division, have played a role in the subsequent eras of change in the Marine Corps.<sup>3</sup> The division's importance is not in chronicling what has already been, though that history is an important component of Marine culture.<sup>4</sup> More crucial is its role in producing works that inform those responsible for making decisions that will shape the future of the Service. As a result, the division's publications are historical documents in and of themselves, illustrative of what the leadership has deemed important enough to study at a

given moment. To analyze them is to understand how the Marine Corps has evolved institutionally, doctrinally, and philosophically.

This article is a historiography of History Division publications from 1919 to present. It charts how the office reacted to and sometimes took part in contemporaneous debates and transformations inside the Marine Corps. It is neither a strict accounting of the division's entire publishing record nor a survey of publication types—indeed, staff writers and contributors have published more than 250 titles to date, from the limited scope of pamphlets and occasional papers to the expansive monographs and multivolume definitive histories. It is instead a work that illustrates cause and effect in official histories, an examination of how History Division writers have acted as more than chroniclers; they also have contributed to discussions inside the Marine Corps about the Service's future. As such, this article uses the major events of the Marine Corps since 1919 as a framework, and charts how the History Division reacted to those discussions with the works that they produced.

The Marine Corps is a learning institution. It uses its history to make informed decisions about contemporary challenges. Its History Division, in fulfillment of its mission to record the official institutional and operational history of the Corps, has contributed to that process for 100 years.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Seth Givens is a historian in the Histories Branch of the Marine Corps History Division. He received his PhD from Ohio University in 2018. He currently is preparing the official history of the Marine Corps in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

<sup>2</sup> Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, 2d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 317–18.

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter, all iterations of this office will be referred to as History Division.

<sup>4</sup> See Aaron O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).



## Early Works, 1919–40

When Commandant Major General George Barnett established what would become the History Division within Headquarters Marine Corps, he tasked the first officer in charge, Major Edwin N. McClellan, with producing a history of Marines in World War I. He did so on the orders of Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, who directed both the Marine Corps and Navy to record their wartime experience for the sake of propriety and future study. It was a good opportunity for Barnett, who had fought hard to ensure that his Marines were involved in the ground war.<sup>5</sup> By most measures, the Marine Corps flourished in the war, expanding from a strength of 13,725 in April 1917 to a peak of 75,101 a year and a half later.<sup>6</sup> The Service also occupied a new place in public consciousness, capturing the imaginations of Americans who read about Marines' performance at places like Belleau Wood, France.<sup>7</sup>

McClellan handed his manuscript to Barnett on 26 November 1919. *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* reads more like a historical report than a history. McClellan's handling of operations is less vivid than one may be accustomed to when it comes to World War I, owing to a lack of narrative. What the volume lacks in storytelling, though, is made up in usefulness. McClellan charts how units were organized, trained, and deployed, providing ample facts and figures in several charts. The latter stages of his book switch from chronological to topical, and he covers everything from aviation and casualties to rifle practice. All of this underscores an important point about McClellan's intended audience. The History Division today attempts to produce historical works that are applicable to Marines but appeal to other Federal agencies, scholars, and a general audience. By contrast, McClellan's purpose was to report to the Commandant and secretary of the Navy on the lessons the Corps learned during World War I, with perhaps



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

Maj Edwin N. McClellan.

an eye toward how they might be applied in future conflicts.

McClellan's second project was an ambitious seven-volume history of the Marine Corps since its inception, which falls in line with today's History Division mission of writing to multiple audiences. While he had completed his World War I volume in mere months, he found it difficult to work on a large institutional history. He was forced to put aside the history of the Marine Corps when Headquarters transferred him out of the Historical Section in July 1925, placing him in a variety of staff roles during the next six years in Hawaii, California, Oregon, and Nicaragua.<sup>8</sup> He returned to his old billet in the Historical Section in June 1931, but the project still floundered. McClellan spent so much time in exhaustive research and meticulous writing that he simply ran out of time to complete the planned work. He finished two volumes, both of which are sprawling, if not meandering—in 1,700 pages, he only made it to the War of 1812. The

<sup>5</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 287–96.

<sup>6</sup> Maj Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War*, 4th ed. (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2017), 6–7.

<sup>7</sup> Peter F. Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance: A Battalion of Marines in the Great War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, xvii.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

Maj Clyde H. Metcalf in 1934.

two rough-around-the-edges volumes were published in 1931 as *History of the United States Marine Corps* in mimeographed form. While this first attempt at an official history of the Marine Corps was stillborn, a later director of History Division, Lieutenant Colonel Clyde H. Metcalf, picked up where McClellan left off, basing some chapters of his own work on McClellan's research, and publishing *A History of the United States Marine Corps* with a commercial press in 1939 to become the unofficial history of the Service.<sup>9</sup>

The nascent works of the History Division's predecessor reflected a Marine Corps at a crossroads. With the expansion of American territorial holdings overseas after the Spanish-American War came an increase in the U.S. Navy's strategic duties. To support overseas territorial holdings as well as a fleet that was

now responsible for hundreds of thousands of square miles of ocean, coaling stations at advanced bases were required in the Pacific and Caribbean. After first resisting, the Corps responded with a concept in 1913 to defend these areas. The Advanced Base Force expanded the Marines' traditional role as ships' guards and an expeditionary force. By 1920, Headquarters Marine Corps was staffed with leading thinkers such as Major Earl H. Ellis, who theorized how advanced base operations would work in practice. While Ellis was writing two seminal studies in the Division of Operations and Training, McClellan was producing his institutional histories in the Historical Section, which were, in essence, attempts to explain how the Service of the 1920s came to be.<sup>10</sup> In *History of the United States Marine Corps*, McClellan goes to great pains to illustrate how Marines are part of a long tradition of soldiers of the sea. Indeed, it takes 300 pages to get to the creation of the Marine Corps. Yet, he finds that they are a force capable of adaptation and change.

McClellan's successor continued this theme. In 1934, Captain Harry A. Ellsworth wrote *One Hundred Eighty Landings of United States Marines*.<sup>11</sup> More than a compilation of landings between 1800 and 1934, the work once again reflected the historical basis for contemporary discussions. Months prior, the Marine Corps replaced the Advanced Base Force with Fleet Marine Force, a more mobile, offensive concept. The emphasis was now on amphibious assault rather than seizing and defending naval bases. Ellsworth's book appeared alongside a study that a group at the Field Officers School had been working on since 1931, *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*, which established the principles of amphibious warfare doctrine for the Fleet Marine Force and had considerable influence on the students who passed through Quantico for the next decade.<sup>12</sup> While the authors of the manual looked for-

<sup>10</sup> *Naval Bases: Location, Resources, Denial, and Security*, Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication (FMFRP) 12-45 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Marine Corps, 1992); and *Advanced Base Force Operations in Micronesia*, FMFRP 12-46 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Marine Corps, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Capt Harry Allanson Ellsworth, *One Hundred Eighty Landings of United States Marines, 1800-1934* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, U.S. Marine Corps, 1934).

<sup>12</sup> Millet, *Semper Fidelis*, 330-31.

<sup>9</sup> LtCol Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Son, 1939).

ward, Ellsworth looked backward. There was, in fact, an evolution in Marine Corps amphibious warfare development prior to 1934, though it did not progress linearly. The first landing occurred in 1800, during the Quasi-War with France, when a detachment of Marines from the USS *Constitution* stole a French cutter at Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, and then spiked the batteries protecting the harbor. In the following decades, Marines mounted landings almost once a year, though none of the lessons were translated to doctrine specific to the Corps. That information instead was conserved in a series of U.S. Navy manuals, the first of which appeared in the 1866 edition of the Navy Department's primer for sailors and Marines, *Instructions in Relation to the Preparation of Vessels of War for Battle to the Duties of Officers and Others when at Quarters; and to Ordnance and Ordnance Stores*. Twenty years later, the Marine Corps received its own manual, *The Naval Brigade and Operations Ashore: A Hand-Book for Field Service*, but still published under the auspices of the Navy.

Though Ellsworth's historical study does not connect the forward-looking *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations* to its doctrinal predecessors, he does find that landings had been done for four basic reasons: political intervention, punitive actions, security of diplomatic missions and nationals, and humanitarianism. He argues that the Marine Corps has been employed for armed intervention in the past by virtue of its organization and training, and, according to experts, because the president is not required to seek a declaration of war from Congress for their use.<sup>13</sup>

McClellan and Ellsworth outlined several concepts that became themes in the early works of the division and continue today. The first is the Marine Corps' ability to adapt and change. The second is the transformation that the ability to adapt beget, specifically the transformation into an amphibious force. On



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, 515293  
The 5th Marine Regiment landing at Culebra, Puerto Rico, during fleet maneuvers in winter 1923–24.

the eve of World War II, that concept would be put to the test, but not before General Thomas Holcomb, the Commandant at the time, navigated budget constraints to adopt important technological developments and expand manpower requirements.<sup>14</sup>

## Making the Mold, 1941–60

The 1940s was a growth decade for the History Division, though only the latter half. The Marine Corps' requirements for the war effort meant that the office, despite being larger than it had been for the first 20 years of its existence, went through frequent staff expansions and contractions, making it difficult to produce histories and studies of the recent campaigns, operations, and battles. In the final months of the war, however, the division began publishing unit histories, the first of many in the years to come. The booklets were intended for veterans as well as a general audience and were written in the vein of the work published by the U.S. Army's Information and Education Division in Paris at the time. The initial histories—two of which First Lieutenant John C. Chapin wrote when he was assigned to the division while recovering from wounds received on Saipan—covered the formation,

<sup>13</sup> Ellsworth, *One Hundred Eighty Landings*, vi. See also Allan R. Millet, "Assault from the Sea: The Development of Amphibious Warfare Between the Wars—the American, British, and Japanese Experiences," in *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, eds. Williamson Murray and Alan R. Millet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936–1943* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011).

training, and combat experiences of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Marine Divisions.<sup>15</sup>

The unit histories were a new addition to the type of publications the office produced, as were what followed, the first large-scale, concerted effort to produce a book series. In 1947, decorated combat veteran and director of the division at the time Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heintz Jr. wrote *The Defense of Wake*.<sup>16</sup> During the next eight years, he and his successors oversaw the writing and publishing of 15 monographs that charted the Marine Corps' operational history in World War II. Book-length studies of campaigns and operations, monographs have become the most common History Division publication and can range anywhere from 15,000 to 150,000 words. These World War II volumes set the standard for what would follow. With the aid of official records, the authors produced works that were comprehensive in their coverage of operations, giving readers everything from the context of discussions that occurred at Admiral Ernest J. King's headquarters to the heroics of Marines landing on beaches throughout the Pacific. The authors, all of whom were field-grade officers, are critical where warranted. Captain James Stockman argues that Tarawa showed there needed to be better flexibility in ship-to-shore movement, thereby allowing the landing force the ability to control supply and reinforcements to fit the situation on the beaches.<sup>17</sup> Major Frank O. Hough, among other authors, was critical of naval gunfire, contending that it was so insufficient on Peleliu that the enemy was able to inflict casualties on the assault forces and hamper the first day's operations.<sup>18</sup> The criticism was constructive as

much as it was academic, providing planners lessons from the last war that might be applied to the next.

While the History Division was recording operations in World War II and evaluating successes and mistakes, the Marine Corps was atrophying. On V-J Day, there were 485,000 Marines in uniform.<sup>19</sup> Five years later, there were 74,279.<sup>20</sup> In between, the Marine Corps fought an important battle in Washington, DC. The National Security Act of 1947 had wide-ranging effects on the military, chief among which was the establishment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the creation of the Department of Defense two years later. The reorganization of the national military establishment brought to the fore inter-Service competition for funding. The Marine Corps, part of the Department of the Navy and without a permanent seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, fought a rearguard action between 1948 and 1950 against those in Congress and the Pentagon who made the case for eroding its role as a force in readiness. Marine leaders and their allies pointed to the Service's World War II successes and defended the Corps' capabilities and missions to avoid being subsumed into the other Services.<sup>21</sup> Though unintended, the History Division monographs made the case for the Marine Corps as an independent branch.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after the unification storm died down, the North Korean People's Army crossed the 38th Parallel on 25 June 1950 in a bid to reunify the Korean peninsula under the Communist flag. Two weeks later, the 1st Marine Division formed the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade with troops scraped together from posts throughout the United States. In the coming months, reservists replenished the depleted division. It was these feats of mobilization that the History Division recorded in their first work on the Korean War. In

<sup>15</sup> See BGen E. H. Simmons's foreword in 1stLt John C. Chapin, *The 4th Marine Division in World War II*, 3d ed. (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1976); Lt John C. Chapin, *The Fifth Marine Division in World War II* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1945); and Capt James R. Stockman, *The Sixth Marine Division* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1946).

<sup>16</sup> LtCol R. D. Heintz Jr., *The Defense of Wake* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1947).

<sup>17</sup> Capt James R. Stockman, *The Battle for Tarawa* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1947), 68.

<sup>18</sup> Maj Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1950), 181.

<sup>19</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 447.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest H. Giusti, *Mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve in the Korean Conflict, 1950-1951*, 2d ed. (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1967), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Steven L. Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: The Formative Years, 1947-1950*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984), 385-422.

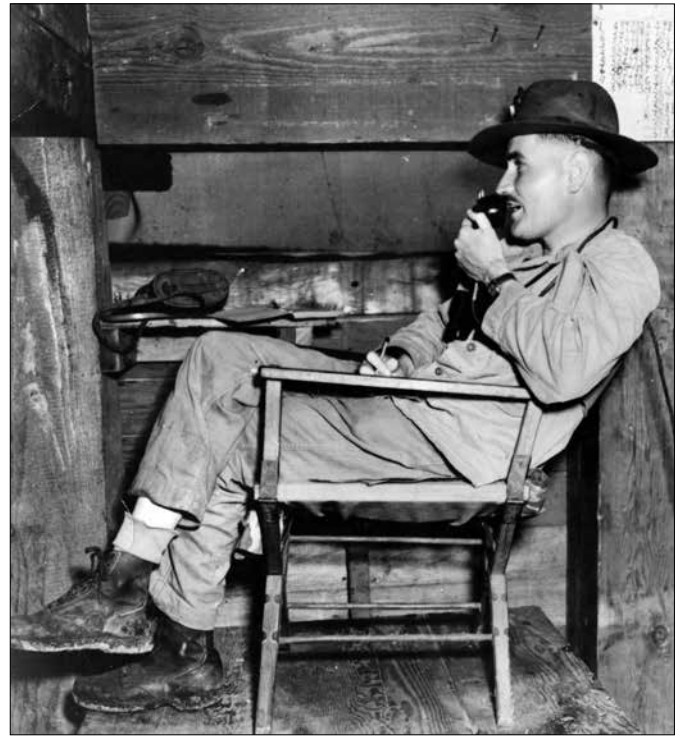
<sup>22</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 456-74.



1951, the office produced a pamphlet from Captain Ernest H. Giusti, titled *Mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve in the Korean Conflict*, a not insignificant topic given that the Organized Reserve and Volunteer Reserve made up the lion's share of the Marine Corps forces that arrived in Korea early in the war. In June 1950, reservists outnumbered active duty troops two to one.<sup>23</sup> Even by March 1951, after active duty strength was tripled, the Reserves still comprised 45 percent of the Marine Corps.<sup>24</sup> As a pamphlet, Giusti's work was intended for internal reference. The primary audience was staff officers, who were to learn lessons in how to mobilize, important for a Service that boasted the ability to react to situations around the globe. He argued that the Corps' reserve program was sound and the experience in Korea justified it as a concept.<sup>25</sup> No doubt the reservists' prior experience added to their effectiveness, as 99 percent of officers in the Volunteer Reserve and 75 percent of its enlisted men were World War II veterans.<sup>26</sup>

The Korean War provided the History Division with an opportunity to employ field historians attached to the office. The new concept was Heintz's; his experience writing the World War II monographs led him to conclude that the Marine Corps needed a better way of recording events for later use. He studied the U.S. Army's historical program, which included a mobilization plan for reservists who were professional historians. Finding merit in the concept, Heintz established a Marine Corps version, creating the 1st Provisional Historical Platoon, which was activated in late 1950 and operated until July 1952.<sup>27</sup>

The History Division began publishing the first draft of the official history of the Korean War as early as June 1951, a direct result of hiring civilian historians with advanced degrees.<sup>28</sup> A series of articles from



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo  
Robert D. Heintz Jr. during naval gunfire training in Hawaii when he was an officer on Gen Holland M. Smith's staff.

the division's historians appeared in the *Marine Corps Gazette* and were published in 1954 as a compilation titled *Our First Year in Korea*.<sup>29</sup> Most of the articles were from Lynn Montross, an already established writer and author of a hefty overview of military history called *War Through the Ages* that became a textbook of sorts on college campuses mid-century.<sup>30</sup> It was these articles that formed the basis for the most important undertaking of the History Division to that point. In 1954, the division published *The Pusan Perimeter*, the first book in a five-volume series of definitive histories titled *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*. Montross was the primary author of the series, coauthoring four of the five volumes, three of them with Captain Nicholas A. Canzona, who had been awarded the Silver Star for destroying bridges at Hagaru-ri, protecting the retreating Marines' flank when breaking out from the Chosin Reservoir. The volumes of *U.S. Marine*

<sup>23</sup> Capt Ernest H. Giusti, "Minute Men—1950 Model: The Reserves in Action," in *Our First Year in Korea: Accounts by the Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps* (Quantico, VA: *Marine Corps Gazette*, 1954), 25.

<sup>24</sup> Giusti, *Mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve*, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Giusti, *Mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 481.

<sup>27</sup> Benis M. Frank, "The Korean War's 'Fighting' 1st Provisional Historical Platoon," *Fortitudine* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1989): 17-18.

<sup>28</sup> Henry I. Shaw Jr., "The Marine Corps Historical Program—A Brief History," *Fortitudine* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1989-1990): 5-7.

<sup>29</sup> *Our First Year in Korea*.

<sup>30</sup> Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944).





Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, Frank Farkas Collection (COLL/4463).  
Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division  
Fox Company, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, head toward Inchon, Korea,  
15 September 1950.

*Operations in Korea* were written in the vein of the U.S. Army's vaunted World War II definitive histories, the "Green Books," which Army historians had begun in 1946. Relying on official documents and providing a detailed narrative, Montross and the series's other authors focus on aspects that resemble the World War II monographs, with emphasis on planning and operations, from the highest reaches of Headquarters down to the experiences of individual troops.<sup>31</sup> The difference, however, is size and scope. Definitive histories range from 110,000 to 600,000 words, compared to the more modest 15,000 to 150,000 words for mono-

graphs, and are the most comprehensive and detailed accounting of Marine Corps operations during a major conflict. As they were the first, the Korean War "Blue Books" set the model for History Division definitive histories.

While the office was still completing its largest project to date, it began yet another ambitious series, one for which it is best known. In 1958, it published *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, the first of five volumes that would make up the *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II* definitive histories.<sup>32</sup> The monographs that the division produced between 1947 and 1955 served as the foundation upon which the series was built. Henry I. Shaw Jr., chief historian of the division, oversaw and cowrote the series. The volumes are arranged chronologically, and the first chapter on the creation of amphibious war concepts in the 1920s sets the tone. These are works that evangelize the virtues of amphibious warfare. Unlike the Army or Navy, whose roles as land and sea powers have never been challenged, the Marine Corps has not considered itself impervious. World War II was the purest illustration of its role and capabilities, as well as the bravery of those who served. *U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II* covers aspects that are therefore important to the identity of the Service. This significance and the quality of research and writing of the "Red Books," as they are referred to, ensures that even today they remain an invaluable resource for scholarship on operations.

Concurrent with the writing of the World War II and Korea definitive histories, the division continued producing booklets and pamphlets that informed discussions occurring inside the Marine Corps. The Service had survived the post-World War II draw-downs and then proved itself once again in combat. After Korea, leaders strived to convince national security decision makers that the Fleet Marine Force was an important component of the U.S. defense strategy for the Cold War. The Marine Corps had to navigate the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration's "New

<sup>31</sup> Lynn Montross and Capt Nicholas A. Canzona, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, vol. 1, *The Pusan Perimeter* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1954); Lynn Montross and Capt Nicholas A. Canzona, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, vol. 2, *The Inchon-Seoul Operation* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1955); Lynn Montross and Capt Nicholas A. Canzona, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, vol. 3, *The Chosin Reservoir Campaign* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1957); Lynn Montross et al., *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, vol. 4, *The East-Central Front* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1962); and LtCol Pat Meid and Maj James M. Yingling, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, vol. 5, *Operations in West Korea* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1972).

<sup>32</sup> LtCol Frank O. Hough et al., *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II: Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958).

Look” national security policy carefully, however, as it emphasized nuclear deterrence through massive retaliation. By contrast, the Corps’ identity was as a conventional force, small, mobile, and amphibious. To maintain its force in readiness mission and prepare for a wide range of contingencies, all while not alienating itself from the other Services, it undertook a series of doctrinal studies and development programs in the mid- and late-1950s to assess its roles and missions.<sup>33</sup> Out of this came the idea for the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), General Lemuel C. Shepherd’s attempt to build a flexible expeditionary combined arms concept. Technology was the enabling but also limiting factor for such doctrinal innovations. Helicopters gave the Marine Corps maneuverability, but there was a lag in modifying and procuring ships from which to operate. Until then, and until senior Marines could agree on mission, composition, and size, the MAGTF would be a concept and not doctrine. The maxims of Marines going to war with four elements—command, ground, aviation, and logistics—and that the size of the task would dictate the size of the force did not come until December 1962.<sup>34</sup>

The History Division publications from the latter half of the 1950s reflected this broadening of attention in the Corps. The office produced a range of studies that looked as much to the future of the Service as its past, covering conflicts (*The United States Marines in the War with Spain*) and institutional changes (*Marine Corps Ground Training in World War II*).<sup>35</sup> The prolific staff historian Bernard C. Nalty almost single-handedly did much of the work in a historical reference series, covering myriad aspects of Marine Corps heritage, from the Civil War (*The United States Marines in the Civil War*), Marines’ role in the Caribbean (*The United States Marines in Nicaragua*),

and China (*The Barrier Forts: A Battle, a Monument, and a Mythical Marine*), to installations (*A Brief History of the Marine Corps Base and Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina, 1891–1956*; *A Brief History of the Marine Corps Base and Recruit Depot, San Diego, California*), the traditional role of Marines as diplomatic guards (*The Diplomatic Mission to Abyssinia, 1903*), and officer selection since 1775 (*A Brief History of Marine Corps Officer Procurement*).<sup>36</sup>

## Vietnam and the Search for Historical Lessons, 1960–75

The Marines found an ally in the John F. Kennedy administration. In contrast to Eisenhower, Kennedy de-emphasized nuclear weapons in his national security strategy. He preferred flexible response to massive retaliation, and illustrated early into his presidency that he was prepared to use special operations and small, conventional forces to achieve objectives, believing that an incremental approach to using military power was more credible to deterring Soviet encroachments than threatening nuclear war. There was apprehension from senior leaders about counterinsurgency, however. With the exception of Major General Victor H. Krulak, who embraced the role, most were dismissive of the mission.<sup>37</sup> All the same, the History Division began producing works that underscored the Corps’

<sup>33</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 518–28.

<sup>34</sup> See Col Douglas E. Nash Sr., USA (Ret), “The ‘Afloat-Ready Battalion’: The Development of the U.S. Navy-Marine Corps Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit, 1898–1978,” *Marine Corps History* 3, no. 1 (Summer 2017): 62–88.

<sup>35</sup> Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines in the War with Spain* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1959); and Kenneth W. Condit et al., *Marine Corps Ground Training in World War II* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1956).

<sup>36</sup> Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines in the Civil War* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1959); Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines in Nicaragua* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958); Bernard C. Nalty, *The Barrier Forts: A Battle, a Monument, and a Mythical Marine* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1959); Elmore A. Champie, *A Brief History of the Marine Corps Base and Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina, 1891–1956* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958); Elmore A. Champie, *A Brief History of the Marine Corps Base and Recruit Depot, San Diego, California* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958); Bernard C. Nalty, *The Diplomatic Mission to Abyssinia, 1903* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958); and Bernard C. Nalty, *A Brief History of Marine Corps Officer Procurement* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958).

<sup>37</sup> Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 180–81. See also Nicholas J. Schlosser, ed., *The Greene Papers: General Wallace M. Greene Jr. and the Escalation of the Vietnam War, January 1964–March 1965* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2015).

global reach historically. Henry I. Shaw Jr. published *The United States Marines in North China, 1945–1949*, outlining III Amphibious Corps' skirmishes with communists and their support of the Chinese nationalists while repatriating 600,000 Japanese and Koreans during Operation Beleaguer.<sup>38</sup> Two annotated bibliographies followed in 1961, both calling upon the Corps' prior experience in irregular warfare.<sup>39</sup> Major Marvin L. Brown Jr.'s *The United States Marines in Iceland, 1941–1942* a few years later was meant to illustrate how the Marines operated in short-of-war operations.<sup>40</sup> Jack Shulimson's *Marines in Lebanon, 1958* outlined Task Force 62's role in the July–October 1958 U.S. military intervention in Lebanon to protect the pro-Western government there, though its publishing was an attempt to show the effectiveness of the Marine Corps carrying out American foreign policy through a show of force.<sup>41</sup> A group of authors made these points more explicit in *A History of Marine Corps Roles and Missions, 1776–1962*, a reference pamphlet that outlined how flexible the Marines had been historically.<sup>42</sup> This was the second time that such discussions had taken place inside the Corps. The first began in the 1920s, when individuals began studying the Banana Wars, culminating in the now-classic *Small Wars Manual*, published in revised form in 1940 and codifying the lessons troops learned waging irregular warfare.<sup>43</sup> Understaffed and too preoccupied to take part in the earlier discussions, the History Division made sure that it stud-

ied operations short of war the second time around.

After Battalion Landing Team, 3d Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, came ashore north of Da Nang on 8 March 1965, beginning the Corps' involvement in Vietnam, such discussions ended and the History Division followed a pattern it had begun during Korea. The office published the first work on the war in 1967 with one audience in mind: *Small Unit Action in Vietnam, Summer 1966* was intended to keep troops in-country and those about to deploy informed about lessons learned in combat and civic action. The project had its origins in a concept from the assistant chief of staff, G-3, Major General William R. Collins, who wanted to produce readable but accurate works for the benefit of enlisted Marines and junior officers. The author, Captain Francis J. West Jr., would go on later to become an analyst for the Rand Corporation, assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs during the Ronald W. Reagan administration, and a leading commentator on Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).<sup>44</sup> Another lessons-learned book, a companion piece to West's work, followed two years later, *U.S. Marine Corps Civic Action Effort in Vietnam, March 1965–March 1966*.<sup>45</sup>

By 1969, Marine operational history of Vietnam began to appear. The first was Captain Moyers S. Shore's *The Battle for Khe Sanh*, with a foreword from General William C. Westmoreland.<sup>46</sup> As with the World War II monographs, the work is comprehensive for its size. Shore focuses not just on the siege of Khe Sanh but also on Marine Corps operations in the area leading up to the battle and four months afterward, stressing that the isolated outpost was part of the three-pronged strategy for I Corps: pacification, counter guerrilla, and large unit offensive actions.

Despite Shore's work, the History Division did

<sup>38</sup> Henry I. Shaw Jr., *The United States Marines in North China, 1945–1949* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1960).

<sup>39</sup> Maj John H. Johnstone, comp., *An Annotated Bibliography of the United States Marines in Guerrilla-Type Action* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1961); D. Michael O'Quinlivan, *An Annotated Bibliography of the United States Marines in the Boxer Rebellion* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1961).

<sup>40</sup> Maj Marvin L. Brown Jr., *The United States Marines in Iceland, 1941–1942* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1962).

<sup>41</sup> See preface in Jack Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon, 1958* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1966).

<sup>42</sup> Col Thomas G. Roe et al., *A History of Marine Corps Roles and Missions, 1776–1962* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1962).

<sup>43</sup> Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps' Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915–1940* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Bing West, *The Village* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Bing West and MajGen Ray L. Smith, *The March Up: Taking Baghdad with the 1st Marine Division* (New York: Bantam, 2003); and Bing West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (New York: Bantam, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Capt Russel H. Stolfi, *U.S. Marine Corps Civic Action Effort in Vietnam, March 1965–March 1966* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1968).

<sup>46</sup> Capt Moyers S. Shore II, *The Battle for Khe Sanh* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1969).

not create a monograph series for Vietnam as they had for World War II. Instead, it produced the larger definitive histories, nine volumes under the series name *U.S. Marines in Vietnam*, with staff historian Jack Shulimson as the lead for the project.<sup>47</sup> The first, *The Advisory and Combat Assistance Era, 1954–1964*, was published in 1977. The division released new volumes every two years, the most popular of which, *The Defining Year, 1968*, was the last published in the series and came in at a thorough 800 pages.<sup>48</sup> Playing a crucial role in establishing the vision for the definitive histories was Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, director of the History Division from 1971 to 1996 and namesake of the building where the division resides today at Marine Corps University. Under his direction, the division expanded and thrived, making him perhaps the most important director of Marine Corps history next to McClellan. Simmons insisted on accuracy and readability, mirroring the World War II Red Books and the Korea definitive Blue Book histories. The Vietnam volumes followed their predecessor's operational history model, but they also acknowledged the difficulties the Marines faced, such as the frustrations of pacification, the effect of the draft on the Corps, and problems with discipline and morale, all reflecting that Vietnam was indeed a different war than World War II and Korea.

## History Division and Modern Warfare, 1975–Present

While the History Division published its definitive histories, the Marine Corps struggled to find its place in a post-Vietnam defense landscape. As early as 1971, the leadership urged Marines to move on. “We got defeated and thrown out,” then-Commandant General Leonard F. Chapman Jr. said. “[T]he best thing we can do is forget it.”<sup>49</sup> Since some viewed Vietnam as an ab-



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo  
Chief Historian Henry I. Shaw presenting the first copy of the third volume in the *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II* series to Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps, June 1967.

erration, it was fitting perhaps that, in some ways, the Marine Corps' experience from the New Look era was repeated in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, as the Service was buffeted by the storm of budget cuts and critics who claimed there was no role for an amphibious force vulnerable in nuclear war that operated primarily outside of Europe. The Corps reaffirmed its belief in maritime supremacy and the importance of amphibious forces in providing a forward collective defense in Asia and Europe.<sup>50</sup> Organization and doctrine changed to reflect this new role, updating the MAGTF, once again due to technology. In 1976, the Navy commissioned the first *Tarawa*-class amphibious assault ship, which gave the Marine Corps the ability to land a battalion of troops either via helicopters or, owing to a well deck, amphibious craft.

Though the Marine Corps preferred to put Vietnam behind it, the History Division ran in the opposite direction, continuing to produce a range of volumes on Vietnam, from a spate of works on avia-

<sup>47</sup> Shulimson was a scholar on the Marine Corps in the nineteenth century. See Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880–1898* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).

<sup>48</sup> Jack Shulimson et al., *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Michael A. Hennessy, *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary Warfare in I Corps, 1965–72* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 181.

<sup>50</sup> See Terry Terriff, “‘Innovate or Die’: Organizational Culture and the Origins of Maneuver Warfare in the United States Marine Corps,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (June 2006): 475–503, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390600765892>.





Official U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl R. R. Keene, Jonathan F. Abel Collection (COLL/3611), Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, board a Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 165 for operations northwest of Phu Bai, 1967.

tion to monographs on chaplains and military law.<sup>51</sup> This is the first discernible moment in the division's history where it diverged from discussions occurring inside Headquarters and the schools at Quantico, due to Simmons' vision and direction. In addition to the Vietnam works, the office tackled studies on multiple conflicts, both commemorating foundational periods in the Corps' history as well as recording recent events. In the former category was Charles Smith's definitive history, *Marines in the Revolution*, which coincided with the bicentennial of the Marine Corps' founding in 1775.<sup>52</sup> In the latter was Ronald Spector's *U.S. Marines in Grenada*, 1983, a work that Spector, a Reserve Marine officer and an established scholar, called "an experiment in the writing of contemporary

military history."<sup>53</sup> In reality, the division had been doing just that for a decade already, and would continue the model into the next several wars.

When the 1990s dawned and the Soviet Union survived to see just two short years of it, thus ending the post-Vietnam discussion about the Marines' capabilities on a Cold War battlefield, the office began publishing commemorative histories. Commemoratives emphasize a readable narrative intended for a general audience and have since become a staple of the division. The first, by former Chief Historian Henry I. Shaw Jr., was published in 1991, observing the 50-year anniversary of America's entry into World War II. *Opening Moves: Marines Gear Up for War* was the inaugural work in a 25-volume commemorative series on World War II, with the last published in 1997, and all of which were truncated versions of the monographs written between 1947 and 1955. Since, the division has published commemoratives on World War I, Korea, and Vietnam.

The U.S. military's response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait tested the Fleet Marine Force that leaders such as Lieutenant General Alfred M. Gray Jr. had overhauled in the 1980s.<sup>54</sup> A modernized and re-equipped Marine Corps performed well in the Gulf War, first deploying to the region with impressive speed and then opening a breach and racing to Kuwait City with the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions. In short order, the History Division planned seven full-length volumes about the Gulf War in a return to how the office recorded operations after World War II. In 1992, the division published *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography*.<sup>55</sup> This followed in the footsteps of the Vietnam series, which also was preceded by an anthology with the intent of providing a collection of articles and documents that served as an interim reference until the division

<sup>51</sup> LtCol William R. Fails, *Marines and Helicopters, 1962-1973* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1978); Maj William J. Sambito, *A History of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1978); Cdr Herbert L. Bergsma, USN, *Chaplains with Marines in Vietnam, 1962-1971* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1985); and LtCol Gary D. Solis, *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1989).

<sup>52</sup> Charles R. Smith, *Marines in the Revolution: A History of the Continental Marines in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1975).

<sup>53</sup> See Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985); and LtCol Ronald H. Spector, *U.S. Marines in Grenada, 1983* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1987), iii.

<sup>54</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 631-35.

<sup>55</sup> Maj Charles D. Melson et al., *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1992).



could complete the official histories. The first monograph in the series appeared in 1993: Lieutenant Colonel Charles H. Cureton's *With the 1st Marine Division in Desert Shield and Desert Storm*.<sup>56</sup> Twenty-one years later, staff historian Paul Westermeyer published the single-volume definitive history of the war, *U.S. Marines in the Gulf War, 1990–1991: Liberating Kuwait*, as the comprehensive work on the subject.<sup>57</sup> The division was able to write such detailed history soon after the event because of historical document collection that occurred during the war. Like their predecessors had done during the Korean War, five officers from the Mobilization Training Unit (History) deployed to the gulf and assembled notes and documents and conducted oral history interviews.

The Marine Corps formalized this model in the wake of the Gulf War, creating today's Field History Branch within the History Division. This meant a shift away from the Mobilization Training Unit system, which tasks a unit to support operational requirements when needed, to the Individual Mobilization Augmentee Detachment (IMA Det) program, which places skilled individuals within an existing unit. The IMA Det allowed the History Division to expand in short order—as it did during operations in Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo—and augment its staff with historically trained reservist Marines, who do an excellent job not only collecting historical materials but also authoring occasional papers, battle studies, and monographs. The expansion of the History Division during the 1990s with IMA Det personnel led to a dual-track approach in publishing, split between Desert Storm monographs and World War II commemoratives.

Despite the changes to History Division's organization, it approached the task much as it had before when Marines deployed to the gulf once again in 2003 for Operation Iraqi Freedom: field historians mobilized and deployed to collect materials and interviews, the division published an anthology first as a stopgap,



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, A708141  
BGen Edwin H. Simmons in 1980.

and writers produced a series of monographs.<sup>58</sup> The first of the monographs came from Colonel Nicholas E. Reynolds, commander of the Field History Detachment. Published in 2007, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Basrah, Baghdad and Beyond* covered the march up during the combat phase of OIF.<sup>59</sup> Its counterpart, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2004–2005: Into the Fray*, was published four years later.<sup>60</sup> In between, the History Division published battle studies, calling back on the World War II monographs on operations, yet on a smaller

<sup>56</sup> Col Charles J. Quilter II, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990–1991: With the I Marine Division in Desert Shield and Desert Storm* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> Paul W. Westermeyer, *U.S. Marines in the Gulf War, 1990–1991: Liberating Kuwait* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> Maj Christopher M. Kennedy et al., *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography—U.S. Marines in the Global War on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2006). See also LtCol Nathan S. Lowrey, *Marine History Operations in Iraq* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2005).

<sup>59</sup> Col Nicholas E. Reynolds, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2003: Basrah, Baghdad and Beyond—U.S. Marines in the Global War on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> LtCol Kenneth W. Estes, *U.S. Marines in Iraq, 2004–2005: Into the Fray* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2011).



Official U.S. Navy photo by PhoM Tom Daily  
USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1) leads the landing helicopter assault ships (LHA) and landing helicopter dock ships (LHD) of Task Force 51 in the Persian Gulf on 20 April 2003, one month after Operation Iraqi Freedom began. The task force was the largest amphibious force assembled since Inchon.

scale. This new series, called *U.S. Marines in Battle*, started in 2008 with a volume on the Gulf War engagement at al-Khafji.<sup>61</sup> Two OIF battle studies in the series followed the next year with Francis Kozlowski's examination of an-Najaf and Colonel John Andrew Jr.'s on an-Nasiriyah.<sup>62</sup>

Staff historian Dr. Nicholas J. Schlosser became the division's OIF expert, recording what Marine units had done in Iraq with battle studies on al-Qaim and Fallujah while also participating in discussions within and without the Service about the U.S. military's prior experience with counterinsurgency.<sup>63</sup> His monograph *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare Training and Education: 2000–2010* answered how the Marine Corps adapted to fight the Global War on Terrorism, calling on its history with insurgencies to modify its mod-

ern warfighting philosophy.<sup>64</sup> The volume he edited with James Caiella from papers presented at Marine Corps University's 2009 symposium "Counterinsurgency Leadership in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond" is a good companion to his monograph and an important successor to Colonel Stephen S. Evans's 2006 anthology *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare, 1898–2007*.<sup>65</sup> Compared with the work that has been completed on the Marines in Iraq, there is still ground to cover on Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). To date, there have been three works on Afghanistan, two anthologies, and Colonel Nathan S. Lowrey's monograph *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001–2002: From the Sea* on operations during the first year.<sup>66</sup>

As it has from its inception, History Division continues to reflect debates occurring in the wider Marine Corps. Today, the division's support of Marine Corps University (MCU), where it moved in 2006, is the most direct way that it contributes to these discussions. This was seen recently in the anthology *The Legacy of American Naval Power: Reinventing Maritime Strategic Thought*, which serves as a companion to a lecture series from MCU president Brigadier General William J. Bowers called "Reinvigorating Maritime Strategic Thought: The Future of Naval Expeditionary Force."<sup>67</sup> The History Division's place on the MCU campus ensures that its writers will be part of such discussions for years to come. The office's mission of informing the public of the Marine Corps' role in na-

<sup>61</sup> Paul W. Westermeyer, *U.S. Marines in Battle: Al-Khafji, 21 January–1 February 1991* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Francis X. Kozlowski, *U.S. Marines in Battle: An-Najaf, August 2004* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2009); and Col John R. Andrew Jr., *U.S. Marines in Battle: An-Nasiriyah, 23 March–2 April 2003* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2009).

<sup>63</sup> Nicholas J. Schlosser, *U.S. Marines in Battle: Al-Qaim September 2005–March 2006* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2013); and CWO4 Timothy S. McWilliams with Nicholas J. Schlosser, *U.S. Marines in Battle: Fallujah, November–December 2004* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2014).

<sup>64</sup> Dr. Nicholas J. Schlosser, *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare Training and Education, 2000–2010* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Nicholas J. Schlosser and James M. Caiella, *Counterinsurgency Leadership in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011); and Col Stephen S. Evans, comp., *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare, 1898–2007: Anthology and Selected Biography* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> Maj David W. Kummer, comp., *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001–2009: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography—U.S. Marines in the Global War on Terrorism* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2014); Paul W. Westermeyer with Christopher N. Blaker, comps., *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2010–2014: Anthology and Annotated Bibliography—U.S. Marines in the Global War on Terrorism* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2017); and Col Nathan S. Lowrey, *U.S. Marines in Afghanistan, 2001–2002: From the Sea* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Paul Westermeyer and Breanne Robertson, eds., *The Legacy of American Naval Power: Reinventing Maritime Strategic Thought* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2019).



Photo by Col Kurt Wheeler, USMCR

Col Kurt Wheeler, a field historian deployed to Iraq, interviews a gunnery sergeant at Camp Ramadi, 2006.

tional defense by preserving, presenting, and promoting the Service's history also continues. Work on the Vietnam and World War I commemoratives is ongoing. The first of this series was released in 2014: Colonel George R. Hofmann's *The Path to War: U.S. Marine Corps Operations in Southeast Asia, 1961–1965*.<sup>68</sup> The office is in the research stage for a definitive history series on OIF, following in the footsteps of the authors who

wrote the World War II and Korea volumes. There are also works in various stages of completion on Marines in the Frigate Navy, an edited volume on the cultural implications of the Iwo Jima flag raisings, and operational histories of OEF. The staff, historically minded people who live in the present and commanded by people who look to the future, continue the mission.

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<sup>68</sup> Col George R. Hofmann Jr., *The Path to War: U.S. Marine Corps Operations in Southeast Asia, 1961–1965* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2014). See Paul Westermeyer, ed., *The Legacy of Belleau Wood: 100 Years of Making Marines and Winning Battles—An Anthology* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2018).

# An Archive for the Marine Corps

by James Ginther, PhD<sup>1</sup>

In September 2017, the U.S. Marine Corps opened its first purpose-built facility for its History Division. This facility at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, houses the historians and archivists, publishing staff, and support facilities that make up the division. Though the division was established in the adjutant and inspector's office on 8 September 1919, the concept of a purpose-built facility for preserving the historical documents of the Marine Corps is much older.<sup>2</sup> Such a facility was first proposed back in the era of Commandant Archibald Henderson's Marine Corps (1820–1959), and like the current Archives, it was tied to attempts to improve education and professionalization in the Marine Corps.

The idea was first proposed by Major Henry Ball Tyler in the 1850s. At that time, Tyler was serving as adjutant and inspector of the Marine Corps, a position that placed him second only to Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson. Tyler is one of the more interesting and much-neglected characters of the era. He entered the Marine Corps in 1823 with a commission as a second lieutenant from Prince William County, Virginia, after an unsuccessful stint at West Point—a mere generation away from the rees-

tablishment of the Corps under Marine Corps Commandant Colonel William Ward Burrows (1798–1805) during the administration of President John Adams. Tyler entered a Corps that had emerged from the War of 1812 with a solid reputation yet suffered from dissension among its officers. The controversy over the dismissal of Commandant Anthony Gale set off a competition among rivals that culminated in the promotion of Archibald Henderson, a dark-horse candidate, to succeed him. The upheaval created factions, brought to light irregularities in management, and raised questions about the direction of the Marine Corps that plagued the officer corps during Tyler's entire 38-year career with the Corps.<sup>3</sup> As a result, Tyler would serve in one of the more colorful and revered periods of Marine Corps history and served under only two Commandants—Archibald Henderson and John Harris—both of whom he would come to loathe for what he perceived as their lack of willingness to act to improve the Corps' situation.

Throughout the first 20 years of his service, Tyler saw a rotation of long periods of sea service, barracks duty, and assignments in Washington that allowed him

<sup>1</sup> Dr. James Ginther was formerly an archivist in the Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division.

<sup>2</sup> *Marine Corps Order (MCO) 53, Establishment of the Historical Department, Adjutant and Inspector's Division, Headquarters, Marine Corps* (Series 1919) (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 8 September 1919), copy held by Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>3</sup> Alan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 53–56. The charges and specifications against Gale, the reaction of the officer corps, and the resultant elevation of Henderson are documented in the Correspondence of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Record Group (RG) 127, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC. See, in particular, correspondence of Samuel Miller with Anthony Gale and Archibald Henderson, same collection.



to experience the Marine Corps from multiple points of view. He also seems to have spent an inordinately large amount of time assigned to duty on courts-martial. His only extended period of field service was as regimental adjutant during the Creek War in 1836.<sup>4</sup> In June 1857, Tyler led a platoon of Marines to quell riots that had broken out in Washington, DC. Tyler's Marines were disciplined and able to get the situation under control, but not without difficulty, causing Tyler to question the preparedness of the Navy Yard Marines for a military crisis. The experience seems to have been the tipping point in his thinking about the preparedness of the Corps to face potential emergencies and its overall efficiency and accountability. After this, he would lobby hard for reforms he felt would strengthen the training and efficiency of the Corps. Through these experiences, Tyler became convinced that if the Marine Corps was going to be a viable part of the nation's military structure, it would need reform with more focused training, better recruiting, and stricter accountability to the U.S. Congress.<sup>5</sup> Tyler carried these convictions with him when he assumed the duties of the adjutant and inspector of the Marine Corps (1857–61). They would eventually cause him to run afoul of Henderson (1820–59) and later Henderson's successor, Colonel John Harris (1859–64), and may have ultimately led to his decision to leave the Service altogether.<sup>6</sup>

It was this last assignment as adjutant and inspector that would convince Tyler of the need for a facility dedicated to the collection, preservation, and accessibility of Marine Corps records. Early in his tenure, Tyler clashed with Henderson about his actual duties. His predecessor, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel

Parke G. Howle, had been in ill health for a number of years and was rarely present at Headquarters. Tyler assumed the position upon Howle's death in 1857. As he began settling in, he discovered irregularities that caused him concern. It would be difficult to say with certainty that Tyler's motivations in raising these issues were wholly altruistic, but he recognized that part of accomplishing the reforms he sought to implement in the Marine Corps meant stricter inspection of units and preservation of key documentation at Headquarters.<sup>7</sup> Both would provide him with the information necessary to confirm that the Corps was operating within the law and remained a viable fighting force in the nation's defense structure, particularly in the face of the growing sectional crisis in the country.

Tyler reported some of his concerns in a letter addressed to the secretary of the Navy on 22 September 1858 outlining evidence of "maladministration of the Marine Corps," which Tyler stated was "traceable to an absence of military regulations." These irregularities, Tyler contended, were rooted in the usurpation of the duties of adjutant and inspector by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, demonstrable from evidence in the records (or lack thereof) maintained by the adjutant and inspector's office. Among the irregularities cited by Tyler were: violations of legally mandated recruiting standards; recruiting beyond legal limits set by Congress; recruiting and paying for

<sup>4</sup> "Summary of Service Henry Ball Tyler, late Major USMC," box 16, folder 9, Ralph W. Donnelly Papers, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Simmons History Center, Quantico, VA.

<sup>5</sup> See Henry B. Tyler letter to Josiah Watson, 17 October 1860; Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 26 August 1859; Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 30 November 1860; Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 27 September 1858, all RG 127, Records of the United States Marine Corps: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Adjutant and Inspector's Department, General Records, Correspondence, Letters Sent, August 1855–October 1861, NARA.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Edward Krivdo, "What Are Marines For?: The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War" (doctoral diss., Texas A&M University, 2011), 161.

<sup>7</sup> Like most people, Tyler seems to have had a mixture of motivations for leaving the Service. His experience with the riot convinced him that the Marine Corps was unprepared to face a real military emergency and so he instituted programs to better train and equip Marines that the chain of command did little to endorse or expand. He routinely came into conflict with Henderson and Harris on the duties and responsibilities of the adjutant and inspector and had in the past come into conflict with them over the authority that could be properly exercised over Marine officers by naval officers. His correspondence regarding irregular expenditures and discharge practices fell on deaf ears. See Krivdo, "What Are Marines For?," 162–63; Henry B. Tyler letter to Josiah B. Watson 17 October 1860, RG 127, Records of the United States Marine Corps: Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, Adjutant and Inspector's Department, General Records, Correspondence, Letters Sent, August 1855–October 1861, NARA; "Court Martial," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), first edition, 11 March 1856, 2, Library of Congress; Henry B. Tyler Sr. letter to Toucey, HQMC, 26 August 1859 and 1 December 1860, RG 80, Entry 14, NARA; and Toucey letter to Tyler Sr., Navy Dept., Washington, DC, 31 December 1860, RG 80, Entry 1: "Letters Sent, 1798–1884," NARA. Several other examples of these exchanges exist within this source.



a Marine Corps Band in violation of Congressionally authorized manpower limits; illegally authorizing Service bounty lands for deserters; appointing and paying the Commandant's son as an aide de camp; and the retention of the rank and privileges of brevet brigadier general in violation of the provisions of the law establishing that rank.<sup>8</sup>

As the means of redressing these irregularities, Tyler lobbied for three main remedies: adoption of U.S. Army regulations to define the duties and responsibilities of the Marine Corps staff; a stronger definition of the duties of the office of the adjutant and inspector; and the construction of a purpose-built repository to hold, protect, and make available the Corps' records.<sup>9</sup> The reason for this last recommendation stems from a conviction that the Marine Corps records needed to be maintained as vital evidence for the adjutant and inspector to evaluate the Corps' progress toward reform, its professionalization, and its fulfillment of its legal obligations. On 7 September 1857, to Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey, Tyler wrote:

Sir:

I have the honor to submit to you for your inspection and recommendation, and through you to the Hon: the Secretary of the Navy a drawing designed

as a plan of an office for the Adjutant and Inspector of the Marine Corps. This plan with the estimated cost of the building was made by Mr. Clark, the architect of the Patent and Gen'l [General] Post Office Building. You will perceive that the building is to be fire proof, one story high, and to contain two rooms, with a passage or Hall between them. There has never been an office built for the Adjutant and Inspector of the Marine Corps. He at present occupies for that purpose two of the Barrack rooms (mens [sic] Quarters) these [sic] rooms have the Garrison cook room on one side and the Bake House on the other, it is apparent from their locations that they are liable at any moment to take fire and should the building catch fire on either side, these rooms with the records of this office would be consumed in the general conflagration. These rooms are moreover too damp for the preservation of papers and too dusty for an office; if the papers are not removed to another building, they will in a short time become damaged by the dampness of the rooms; and in the event of fire, their destruction is inevitable.<sup>10</sup>

In this recommendation, Tyler was very forward-thinking for his time. Codification of archival theory in the United States dates back to Theodore Roosevelt Schellenberg's seminal work beginning in the 1930s and culminating in the publication of *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* in 1956. Yet, in his proposal, Tyler shows consideration for many of the principles we consider essential to modern archival practice. Tyler's proposal is steeped in the belief in the evidential value of records and their usefulness in documenting, evaluating, and analyzing how the Marine Corps

<sup>8</sup> *Service bounty lands* refers to land grants given by Congress as a reward to those who had served honorably in the military forces of the United States as an incentive to enlistment. Tyler's motivations are unclear. Certainly, he did have the best interests of the Corps in mind, however, Tyler stood to gain considerably in power and influence over the Corps at the expense of his rivals, giving him a chance to enhance his own prestige and potential for promotion. Tyler continued to doggedly pursue reform of the management and training of the Marine Corps long after Henderson and Harris or Secretary of the Navy Toucey showed any sign of willingness to act on his complaints. Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 22 September 1858, RG 80, General Records of the Department of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, General Records, Letters Received, Letters from the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, NARA. Tyler follows this letter with several like it during the succeeding two years, all contained in the source cited; Krivdo, "What Are Marines For?," 346.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 29 July 1857; Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 7 September 1857, hereafter Tyler letter, 7 September 1857; Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 1 June 1858; Henry B. Tyler letter to Isaac Toucey, 22 September 1858, all in RG 80, General Records of the Department of the Navy, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy: General Records, Letters Received, Letters from the Commandant and Other Officers of the Marine Corps, NARA.

<sup>10</sup> Tyler letter, 7 September 1857.

carried out its duties. This documentation would be invaluable in measuring progress toward professionalization as well as proving the Corps was following through on its obligations. It also demonstrates a concern for safeguarding those records from theft and damage and a cognizance that the conditions under which the records were kept were detrimental to the survival of the information they contained. The building design reflects consideration for the basic functions of a modern archive: accession, access, reference, preservation, and security of the records.

Furthermore, Tyler's building would be purpose-built to modern architectural standards and designed in such a way as to consider in its construction the long-term preservation and accessibility to the records of the Corps. For instance, Tyler's insistence on a free-standing brick structure and a central hallway significantly reduce the threat to the records posed by fire, humidity, and dust in the current environment. The provision for a room dedicated to records storage showed Tyler understood the need to secure them, both for their preservation and for accountability. It also demonstrated an understanding of the irreplaceable nature and value of the evidence they contained. The separate office allowed controlled access to the records, which made them readily available while protecting their integrity and security. Finally, creating a freestanding brick building for housing the Marine Corps' records showed an understanding of environmental factors that might shorten a record's useful life. All these ideas are central to modern archival theory and document preservation.<sup>11</sup>

In the end, many of Tyler's critiques and ideas for reform would go unheeded. His frustrations eventually would lead him to resign his commission and take a commission in the Confederate States Marine Corps (CSMC), along with many of his reform-minded brethren with combat experience. Tyler was commissioned a lieutenant colonel, the second ranking officer in the CSMC. He trained and led a CSMC battalion in Pensacola, Florida, and later served as a brigade commander in the Army of Pensacola un-

til January 1862, when he was dismissed by General Braxton Bragg for negligence. His military history is checkered after that. He did staff duty sitting on various courts martial and then seems to have been banished—for reasons unknown—to Lynchburg, Virginia, where he was paroled in 1865, claiming to have taken no further part in the war after leaving Pensacola.<sup>12</sup>

Tyler fell on hard times after the war. He had lost substantial wealth during the war when the federal government confiscated and resold the land he owned in the District of Columbia under the provisions of the Confiscation Act of 1863. He would later enlist the help of friends to help him to try and regain citizenship and regain this property through the courts. These efforts failed. To improve his fortunes, Tyler bought and operated the Union Hotel in Fairfax, Virginia. He died at his home in Fairfax County on 17 December 1879.<sup>13</sup>

However, Tyler's dream for a purpose-built archival facility for the Marine Corps remained alive. The first steps toward this were taken in the creation of the Historical Branch within the Office of the Adjutant and Inspector of the Marine Corps in 1919. The goal was to preserve and make accessible the historical records of the Marine Corps and to help get its story before the public. After World War II, the older records held by that office were transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration to become the basis of Record Group 127 to preserve them for future generations. Efforts to expand Marine Corps archival holdings outside the records of Headquarters began in the 1950s with the creation of

<sup>12</sup> Krivdo, "What Are Marines For?," 166–68; and David M. Sullivan, *The United States Marines in the Civil War: The Final Year* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 2000), 260–61.

<sup>13</sup> See Correspondence in Henry B. Tyler Case File, Case Files of Applications of Former Confederates for Presidential Pardons (Amnesty Papers), 1865–1867, RG 94, microfilm roll 70, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; "Local Matters—Important Action in the United States Circuit Court—Quashing of Indictments for Treason—Mr. Davis Free at Last," *Richmond (VA) Dispatch*, 12 February 1869, 1; "Letter from Fairfax," *Alexandria (VA) Gazette*, 8 December 1866, 1; "Local News—Legality of the Confiscation Act," *Alexandria Gazette*, 6 March 1867, 3; "Confiscation of Property in the U.S. Capital and in Alexandria, Va.," *Abingdon (VA) Virginian*, 14 August 1863, 1; "Local News—In the U.S. Supreme Court," *Alexandria Gazette*, 30 March 1870, 3; *Washington Post*, 20 December 1879, 4.

<sup>11</sup> T. R. Schellenberger, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2003), 8, 10, 15–16, 162–64.

the Marine Corps Personal Papers Collection. Then Colonel (later lieutenant general) Victor H. Krulak created the Historical Amphibious Files in the James Carson Breckinridge Professional Library of the Marine Corps Schools (which later grew into the current Marine Corps University Research Library branch of the Library of the Marine Corps) to document Marine Corps innovation in amphibious warfare in the post-Korean War era.

In 1965, Commandant Wallace M. Greene Jr. created the Commandant's Advisory Committee on Marine Corps History. The committee's work created the Marine Corps Museum with an archival component at Marine Corps Base Quantico and ultimately the Marine Corps Historical Division with its archive in 1971, which until 2005 resided in the Washington Navy Yard. Under the guidance of this committee, the Marine Corps further developed its cache of historical resources, including the Command Chronology Program, the Oral History Program, and Historical Reference Branch. In 1992, as part of the vision for Marine Corps University, the Marine Corps Research Center (now the Alfred M. Gray Research Center) opened with an archival component that would make historical materials available for the students of the Marine Corps schools. These two archives were merged in 2005 within the Gray Research Center aboard Quantico. Four years later, the staff of the Archives Branch, Library of the Marine Corps Quantico, and Marine Corps Historical Division began planning to build, for the first time, a dedicated facility for historical research and publication, and the collection, preservation, and access to historical resources of the Marine Corps, thereby laying the ground work to fulfill Tyler's vision of a purpose-built facility to provide for the collection and longer term preservation of Marine Corps historical resources.<sup>14</sup>

Tyler's vision for a purpose-built archive for the Marine Corps was finally realized in 2017 with the opening of the Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center aboard Quantico. This facility now houses the Archives Branch of the Marine Corps History Division and was built to National Archives standards to house historical records of continuing value to the Marine Corps, and its operational, training, and educational programs.

Today, the Archives Branch maintains more than 5,800 personal papers collections representing the experiences of individual Marines of all ranks and military occupational specialties serving in all climes throughout the history of the Marine Corps. In addition, it maintains significant research collections related to the activities and campaigns of Marine Corps units, the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, the Training and Education Command, and the Marine Corps Systems Command. It is also home to thousands of films and photographs. Archives serves a broad and varied patron base from Headquarters Marine Corps to the Marine Corps schools, the Corps' operating forces and commands, academic researchers from universities around the country, and federal agencies like the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The archive replies to nearly 4,000 requests for information per year and another 1,500 requests per year from the Veterans Administration alone.

Tyler's vision for an archive for the Marine Corps has been realized. Day to day, it serves Marines, veterans, academics, government agencies, and researchers around the world. The archive provides an accessible link to the past for the Fleet Marine Force, Headquarters, and the students of Marine Corps University and the Training and Education Command. It is an invaluable resource for documenting the activities of the Corps, serving as a source for accountability, and a reference point for the developmental, educational, and training needs of the Marine Corps. As such it will continue to fulfill the need envisioned by Tyler more than a century ago well into the future.

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the expansion of Marine Corps historical and archival resources in the post-World War II period, see Col Frank C. Caldwell, "Every Marine an Historian," *Marine Corps Gazette* 50, no. 3 (March 1966): 33-38; Annette Amerman, "Every Marine an Historian: The Sequel," *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 3 (March 2012): 77-79; and Kara Newcomer, "History Division on the World Wide Web," *Fortitudine* 34 no. 5, 2009. These two publications are treasure troves of information on the developments in the Marine Corps historical program.

# Keepers of Odd Knowledge

## HISTORY AND FUNCTIONS OF THE HISTORICAL REFERENCE BRANCH

by Annette Amerman<sup>1</sup>

Housing compact shelves filled with files, History Division's Historical Reference Branch may look like an archive, but it is not.<sup>2</sup> The term *reference* may conjure images of a library, yet the Historical Reference Branch is much more. It is staffed not with archivists or librarians, but with historians—yet these historians are not tasked with writing monographs like the other historians of the division. These facts make the Historical Reference Branch something of an enigma within the division. This piece seeks to provide clarity on how the Historical Reference Branch came into being and how it fits into the larger mission of the History Division, its current role and responsibilities, and its future.

### Origins of the Branch

When discussing the Historical Reference Branch, one must also discuss its founding father, Joel Davis Thacker. In 1931, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) hired Thacker, a decorated U.S. Army veteran of World War I, to organize and review the muster rolls of the Marines that served in the war. His skill, knowledge, and creation of better procedures

for completing this task led to a special mission of conducting research in medical and other records of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps concerning Corps personnel in the Great War. As a result of this work, hundreds of Marines were awarded long-delayed medals and monetary benefits authorized by law. While carrying out his special mission, Thacker was in close and continual contact with the Historical Division of the Marine Corps by assisting in the preparation of numerous historical materials and by organizing and adding valuable materials to the Corps' archives. In June 1942, Thacker transferred permanently to the Historical Division where he was dubbed the resident "answer man" as he quickly became the historian who handled all inquiries from Marines and the general public.<sup>3</sup> As Thacker's career progressed within the division, he collected documents, papers, clippings, and more so he could answer more questions. These were the first steps in the creation of what is today the working files collection of the Historical Reference Branch.

For all his work, Thacker was designated as historical advisor to the Corps in 1951, for his rapid, professional and historically accurate response to requests from across the Marine Corps, including the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Thacker's official title was the head of the Records and Research Section, which was devoted to the combined functions

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<sup>1</sup> Annette Amerman is the head of the Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division. She started with the History Division in 1995 as an intern, and later as a research assistant. She returned to the division in 2003 and was promoted to branch head in November 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Today's Historical Reference Branch has undergone many name changes in the course of its history; for ease of reading, it will simply be referred to as *Reference* or *the branch* throughout.

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<sup>3</sup> Bill Kreh, "The Marines' Answer Man," *Sunday Star*, 29 June 1952.

of the archives and historians conducting research in response to requests. This section held a variety of materials, such as official records, published works (books, magazines, and newspapers), and the working files established by Thacker. Eventually, the section's activities expanded beyond its original scope, with its historians fielding increasing numbers of requests for information. Conducting research into those records and printed materials in order to answer inquiries dramatically degraded their ability to achieve their primary missions. In 1957, after decades of military and civilian service, Thacker retired, leaving behind a distinguished career and an office capable of handling the varied and multiple requests for information received.<sup>4</sup>

By 1966, the old Records and Research Section was reorganized into three separate sections: Archives, Library, and Historical Reference sections. This separation allowed the historians in Reference to strictly focus on the historical requests for information that did not fall under the other two sections while enabling the archivists and librarians to focus on their tasks. The archivists were charged with the collection, arrangement, preservation, and access to the official records. Similarly, the librarians were charged with the maintenance of information in published format and with providing access to them.

In answering questions, the Reference historians provided context to the bare facts of history as well as advice regarding other resources, helped shape the product the patron was attempting to create (dissertation, article, book, etc.), and assisted the layman to understand the Corps' history. For instance, when the patron did not have a clear focus to their final project, the historians of the branch could act as a sounding board and offer suggestions to assist in the project's development. When family members needed to understand elements of their Marine's service—whether a service record, the history of a unit, or general historical context—the historians of the branch helped that family. This primary function of Reference remains today.

## Expansion of Roles and Mission

Since the separation of the three sections, the historians in Reference have remained focused on answering a broad spectrum of inquiries. To respond rapidly to requests, Reference still uses Thacker's system of working files. Originally housed in black vertical filing cabinets, the branch's working files now are housed in a compact shelving unit that is 19 feet long and 11 feet tall. The working files are organized into four groups: biographical, subject, unit, and photographic.

The biographical files are organized by name and contain information on prominent, famous, and infamous Marines of the past, such as former Commandants of the Marine Corps, Medal of Honor recipients, Lee Marvin (famous), and Lee Harvey Oswald (infamous). The files may contain copies of newspaper articles, brief biographies (usually less than 10 pages), copies of portions of the individual's official military personnel file (OMPF), or even copies of their own correspondence and notes created by branch historians.

The subject files contain subcollections on a variety of topics from abbreviations to youth programs and can contain copies of extracts from official records, newspaper clippings, articles, brief histories, reports, and correspondence from branch historians relevant to the topic.

The unit files are the fastest growing working file group, as the files as the Corps' force structure changes, units continue to deploy, and historians continually update units' lineages and honors. These files can contain copies of records, listings of commanding officers, brief histories, and research materials collected by the historians for lineages and honors, among other documents that may be helpful in future efforts.

The photographic files are printed copies of photos held by the National Archives and Records Administration, but are strictly Marine Corps related. The collection was created when prints were made in support of the Marine Corps Museum, then located in Building 58 at the Navy Yard in Washington, DC, and to support historical manuscripts published by the division. As use of digital imagery increased, the need to obtain prints from the National Archives decreased,

<sup>4</sup> Joel D. Thacker biography, Biographical File, Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.



so Reference's collection ends around the time of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

As the Corps continues to create history, Reference adds to its working files to assist in fulfilling future requests. As the bulk of the files contain copied materials, either from newspapers, official records, reports, and products created by the historians in the branch, they do not fall under the Department of the Navy's or the Marine Corps' records management manuals for retirement to the National Archives.<sup>5</sup> The files are unique in their singular focus on the Marine Corps and their wide range of coverage, and they may include information covered by the Privacy Act of 1974. For these reasons, they are noncirculating and individuals outside of the branch are granted access only in the branch researcher room, much in the way a library does not allow borrowing of its reference books.<sup>6</sup>

While answering requests was how the branch came to fruition, the mission has grown in the years since Thacker's departure. As an extension of the mission to provide assistance to researchers, the section compiled and published chronologies covering the periods "1935-1946 and 1947-1963, bibliographies, and various reference publications."<sup>7</sup> In 1968, the Marine Corps created the Lineage and Honors Program to track the administrative and operational histories and cumulative battle honors of eligible Marine Corps units, mirroring the program of the Army.<sup>8</sup> Since its

inception, the Lineage and Honors Program has been administered by the historians of Reference. At the outset, the program issued certificates only to the fighting regiments; today, the list of eligible units has expanded to nearly 450. Having the responsibility for the program expands the historians' knowledge of the general history of Marine Corps units and enhances their research skills in the official records held by the division. The last major expansion of responsibilities for the branch came in 1976, when the Commemorative Naming Program was transferred to the Historical Division from the Logistics Division and assigned to Reference.<sup>9</sup> The knowledge of prominent and famous Marines of the past held by the branch makes it easy for the historians to vet naming candidates and even offer suggestions of potential candidates.

## Changes to Mission

The number of requests received by the branch reached a peak of around 8,000 per year in the early 1990s, fueled particularly by requests for assistance regarding the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and coinciding with commemorations of the 50th anniversary of World War II. In the years since, the number of requests received has decreased, largely due to the availability of information on the internet. However, the complexity and level of effort and time needed to respond has increased dramatically. Many questions are received from HQMC offices, such as the Commandant's Staff Group, the Strategic Initiatives Group, and Plans, Policies and Operations, requesting speech support, fact checking, preparation for overseas visits to battlefields, and planning for the future of the Corps' force structure. One of the more interesting examples of recent HQMC requests was regarding force structure and history of Marine Corps combat service support since World War II and the historic roles and missions of the Marine Corps since the end of World War II.

Requests from family members of Marine veter-

<sup>5</sup> The Department of the Navy's (DON) *Records Management Manual*, SecNav M-5210.1, and the *Marine Corps Records Management Manual*, MCO 5210.11F, establish policies and procedures for lifecycle management (creation, maintenance, use, and disposition) of DON and Marine Corps records. The manuals provide guidelines and procedures for the proper administration of a records management program. Both contain all DON and Corps records disposition schedules approved by the National Archives.

<sup>6</sup> The Privacy Act of 1974, broadly stated, is to balance the government's need to maintain information about individuals with the rights of individuals to be protected against unwarranted invasions of their privacy stemming from federal agencies' collection, maintenance, use, and disclosure of personal information about them.

<sup>7</sup> Col Frank C. Caldwell, "Every Marine an [sic] Historian," *Marine Corps Gazette* 50, no. 3 (March 1966): 37.

<sup>8</sup> Annette D. Amerman, "A Milestone Anniversary: The Marine Corps' Lineage and Honors Program," *Fortitudine* 34, no. 3 (2009): 13.

<sup>9</sup> LtCol Robert B. Newlin, "This High Name," *Marine Corps Gazette* 70, no. 11 (November 1986): 82.

ans often require considerable time and patience to explain that which Marine Corps historians take for granted, such as deployment patterns, ranks, command structure and general information on specific battles or wars. Families of Marine veterans have become more interested in the minute details of their relatives' service than just the overview provided in a military service record. Branch historians work with them to understand the context of their relatives' service.

In decades past, it was primarily the general public who submitted requests, but today it is the Marines of the operating forces that comprise the largest part of the branch's patron base. On average, the bulk of the requests are received from three groups—35 percent from Marine Corps units around the globe, 30 percent from the general public (including veterans and their families), and 15 percent from other staff within the division; the remaining 20 percent come from external academics and professional historians, HQMC, the Department of the Navy, and other government agencies. The overwhelming majority of the requests received come in by email (75 percent), followed by telephone requests (20 percent), with the rest from in-person visitors.

The Lineage and Honors Program remains one of the most time-consuming aspects of the branch's responsibilities. More than 450 units are issued certificates that give a snapshot of their histories and list their cumulative battle honors earned. To compile this overview, a historian must comb through the command chronologies submitted by the unit and any other official record of the unit's activities since the last certificates were issued. This process requires close coordination with the unit to ensure all operational deployments are captured accurately, as well as with HQMC's Military Awards Branch to confirm all unit awards are corroborated and legitimate. Researching, reviewing awards, drafting, editing, and preparing lineage and honors certificates can take upward of 8–10 hours to complete per set.

Over the past 15 years, there has been a dramatic increase in requests for digital responses from branch

patrons. However, at least 97 percent of the working files within Reference remain in their original, non-digital state. To meet this demand, there have been attempts to digitize the working files, beginning in 2005; however, none have been enough to digitize the entire collection. When possible, using outside contractors, a portion of the files have been digitized and are available upon request, such as the biographical files, casualty cards (wounded, killed, and missing from WWII to Korea), and lineal lists (lists of Marine officers in order of precedence). The members of the branch are also digitizing materials on demand in response to requests. To move forward with digitization and online access to the branch's materials, a historian is now designated as the collection and online content manager in addition to their regular duties; this historian is creating file inventories and research aids to better assist patrons and branch historians alike.

In addition to the established responsibilities, the branch historians are increasingly providing presentations and short lectures to civic organizations, Marine Corps units, and academic conferences on a variety of topics such as Belleau Wood, World War I aviation, Navajo code talkers, Tarawa, the Combined Action Program, and prominent Marines of the past, just to name a few from the past year. While many presentations can be recycled and tailored to the specific audience, each presentation is designed for the specific audience and the theme of their event.

## Moving Forward

The branch is committed to providing sound historical information in a timely manner to its patrons. If the historians of the branch do not know the answer to a question, they endeavor to find out—not just because it was asked but because it expands their knowledge and abilities for future requests. Therefore, the collective corporate memory of the branch is critical.

To give patrons more information, the branch is considering reengaging in publishing products such as topical anthologies, annotated bibliographies, and other research-centric works, as well as updating brief unit histories. Such published products are within the

scope of the branch's mission to help researchers understand the history of the Corps. It is true that the Historical Reference Branch does not fit into any pre-defined mold. However, the functions that the branch

fulfills are essential to the overall mission of the History Division to serve Marines, scholars, the general public, veterans, and their families alike.

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# “Record the Things that Were Well Done”

## THE CREATION OF AMERICAN SERVICE BRANCH HISTORY OFFICES IN THE WAKE OF THE GREAT WAR

by Colonel Douglas E. Nash Sr., USA (Ret)<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, World War I represents a watershed event for the Marine Corps. In preparation for the war, the Corps studied new kinds of tactics, weapons, and organizations, learning how to wage a large-scale land war as part of a combined arms force. During the bloody struggles for Belleau Wood and Mont Blanc, Marines fought a first-class opponent equipped with modern weapons and learned the cost of victory. The Corps also realized the importance of recording and maintaining records of its own history and publishing written accounts for posterity.

Although it still relied on Major Richard S. Collum's informal history of the Marine Corps, first written in 1874 and last updated in 1903, the Corps found itself after the “war to end all wars” with no official historian of its own to update Collum's work and write about its participation in that conflict. To correct this shortcoming, Edwin N. McClellan, then a major and freshly returned from the fighting in France, was formally appointed historian of the Marine Corps in 1919 and charged by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General George Barnett, with writing the Corps' official account. Tasked at first with writing a pamphlet, McClellan's efforts ex-

panded to encompass nearly every aspect of the Marine Corps' involvement in that war, including charts, statistics, tables, and an index.<sup>2</sup> The Corps was to be the first Armed Service to offer its official history of World War I.

When *The United State Marine Corps in the World War* was first published in 1920 by the Government Printing Office, McClellan's account contained 109 pages of densely packed text. Reprinted several times and augmented with photographs and additional text since, it remains the Corps' definitive history of that conflict, with the recent 2014 edition totaling 228 pages.<sup>3</sup> To write his manuscript, McClellan's office was augmented by three enlisted men, who acted as research assistants and editors. Shortly thereafter, he began work on what was to be the definitive official history of the Marine Corps, which he envisioned would encompass seven volumes. He never finished it before he retired in 1935, but by then, the Marine Corps Historical Section was an accepted institution.

Just as the Marine Corps considered the creation of a history office after the war, so too were the other Armed Services—which at that time meant the U.S. Army, represented by the War Department, and the Department of the Navy—began considering creating their own history offices during the same period. The

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<sup>1</sup> Col Douglas E. Nash Sr., USA (Ret), served as head of Histories Branch, Marine Corps History Division, since 2016. In addition to his six commercially published books on various topics of military history, a number of his articles and book reviews have been published in *Marine Corps History*, *Fortitudine*, *Army History*, *Armchair General*, and *World War II* magazines. He has also appeared as a commentator on the History Channel and “Ollie North's War Stories” on the Fox Network.

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<sup>2</sup> Edwin H. Simmons, “A History of Marine Corps Histories,” *Naval History* 17, no. 1 (February 2003): 34.

<sup>3</sup> Maj Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2014).





Maj Richard S. Collum, 1905.

*Official U.S. Navy photo, NH 79199*

LtCol Edwin N. McClellan, 1934.

*Official Marine Corps photo*

U.S. Air Force did not officially exist until 1948, but its accomplishments during World War I were duly recorded by the Army, from which it derived. The U.S. Coast Guard, which until 1915 was known as the Revenue Cutter Service, also participated in the war and took steps to create such an office as well. These various Service history offices evolved in a manner similar to that of the Marine Corps—not in a straight line, never funded sufficiently, and even temporarily dissolved at one time or another—but they have survived and adapted to become the organizations that the Marine Corps History Division works with today.

### **The U.S. Navy's Historical Office**

The U.S. Navy's history office traces its roots back to the creation of the Navy Department Library in 1794, which focused its efforts on collecting records, maps,

books, and other relevant naval documents at its location in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. However, it was not involved in drafting and publishing any works of a historical nature. After 1800, it also began acquiring naval artifacts and various trophies of war, including cannon from captured enemy vessels. In 1814, the library moved to the Washington Navy Yard in the District of Columbia, though it still functioned as a repository for books, documents, maps, and various artifacts rather than an office formally charged with the preservation and publication of the Navy's history.

In 1879, 14 years after the Civil War had ended, the Navy Department Library was moved to the same building on 17th Street occupied by the State, War, and Navy Departments. For administrative purposes, it was placed under the Navy's Bureau of Navigation



Official U.S. Navy photo, NH 45022

Prof James R. Soley, assistant secretary of the Navy, 1890-93.

as part of the Office of Naval Intelligence. The U.S. Congress officially recognized the Navy Library in 1882, when that body voted to authorize funds for the library and its staff. The legislation also directed that the Navy Department Library and the Naval War Records Office be combined under one directorship, an action that resulted in a new name: the Office of Naval Records and Library, which made the Navy the first Service with a permanent office dedicated to the preservation and study, though not writing, of military history.<sup>4</sup>

Using the funds allocated, the new history office began work in 1884 drafting and publishing the Navy's official history of the Civil War, under the leadership of the project's superintendent, Professor James Russell Soley. Soley was also the first professional historian to serve in that capacity, having had a career as a naval officer, U.S. Naval Academy instructor, and international lawyer and as a prolific author of a number of articles on past and contemporary naval history. While work on the Navy's Civil War volumes continued apace, Soley was appointed in October 1889 to become assistant secretary of the Navy. Prior to his

departure, he selected Lieutenant Commander Frederick M. Wise to serve as the new librarian in charge of not only the library, but all naval war records as well. With the drafting of the various volumes of its *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* completed by 1894, Congress authorized funds to print the first volumes in the series. By the time the project was completed in 1927, 31 volumes had been printed.

When the United States declared war against the Central Powers of Europe in 1917, further work on the Civil War history project was suspended until the end of hostilities. In the meantime, the secretary of the Navy declared on 18 August 1918 that the Navy needed to formally establish a permanent historical section separate from the Office of Naval Records and Library that would operate under the direction of the Chief of Naval Operations.<sup>5</sup> This new office, officially titled Historical Section, was tasked with recording and publishing the Navy's history beginning with its inception, and thus the Navy's first history office dedicated to writing official histories was created. Tasked with writing not only the history of the war that had been underway for nearly a year, the office was also instructed to gather relevant historical material on foreign navies as well.

As the war neared its end, Admiral William S. Sims, who commanded all U.S. Navy forces operating in European waters, appointed Captain Dudley W. Knox to write the official account of the Navy's participation in the European theater of war against the Central Powers. This office would operate separately from the newly established Historical Section at the Washington Navy Yard, and to carry out his assignment, Knox was assigned 20 officers and 50 enlisted men to gather documents, conduct research, and begin the task of writing from an office in London. This project was cancelled shortly after it started when the war ended unexpectedly on 11 November 1918. But Knox's efforts to preserve the historical records of that war were not forgotten.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Origins of the Naval History and Heritage Command," Naval History and Heritage Command website, accessed 28 November 2018.

<sup>5</sup> "Origins of the Naval History and Heritage Command."

<sup>6</sup> "Origins of the Naval History and Heritage Command."



Official U.S. Navy photo, NH 63299  
Capt Frederick M. Wise, USN, ca. 1865.

A year later, the Navy's Historical Section and the Office of Naval Records and Library were both placed under a single command, though not merged. On 14 July 1921, Captain Knox was abruptly plucked from his fleet assignment and appointed the director of both the naval records and the library offices and tasked with writing the official history of World War I, a project that he estimated would require several years. Although seven monographs about certain aspects of the war were published in the years that followed, the Navy's official history of World War I was never completed due to a variety of factors, such as lack of people and money, a challenge that the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps' history offices were all facing at this time. Knox's tenure as the curator for the Navy Department, responsible for both the Historical Section and the Office of Naval Records and Library, was to last 25 years and would leave a lasting mark on that institution.

In 1927, the embryonic Historical Section was



Official U.S. Navy photo, NH 48462  
Capt Dudley W. Knox, USN, taken while he was officer in charge of the Office of Naval Records and the Navy Department Library.

absorbed by the Office of Naval Records and Library, becoming a single organization.<sup>7</sup> In 1930, an attempt to create a Navy museum was undertaken, as the Navy had amassed an impressive amount of relics and monuments; however despite now-commodore Knox's best efforts, this initial attempt did not succeed. Most of these relics, known as the Dahlgren Collection after the officer who created it, Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren, continued to be maintained at the Washington Navy Yard, while the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis preserved its own collection of Navy artifacts.

Interrupted by the onset of World War II, the Office of Naval Records and Library's Historical Section was tasked with gathering and compiling the official record of that war, an overwhelming task for which it was not well suited because the majority of its writers

<sup>7</sup> William James Morgan and Joye L. Leonhart, *A History of the Dudley Knox Center for Naval History* (Washington, DC: Dudley Knox Center for Naval History, Department of the Navy, 1981), 6.

were civilians based in Washington, DC, who could not sail with the fleet. This obstacle was partly overcome by Knox when he sought out noted historians such as Dr. Samuel Eliot Morison, a Reserve naval officer who volunteered for active duty and served in a variety of naval theaters during the war. Though he was not officially assigned to the Historical Section, his work resulted in the definitive 15-volume *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*.<sup>8</sup>

During the war, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal also created the Office of Naval History in 1944 “to coordinate the preparation of all histories and narratives of the current wartime activities in the naval establishment in order to assure adequate coverage to serve present and future needs and effectively to eliminate non-essential and overlapping effort.” Admiral Edward C. Kalbfuss (Ret) was named to head the newly established office as its director. As established, it was not part of the Office of Naval Records and Library, even though Captain Knox served as Kalbfuss’ deputy director. This new office greatly assisted Knox with his efforts to collect historical data from the ongoing conflict, particularly since all ships and naval units at sea or ashore were required to submit periodic histories to the Office of Naval History. Following the war, both offices were merged into one in 1949, with the new title being the Naval Records and History Division.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the U.S. Naval History Division was activated in 1952 and formally established at the Washington Navy Yard, replacing its predecessor. It was charged not only with maintaining the Navy library and historical records and with publishing official histories, but also with storing and cataloging the growing collection of Navy art, photographs, and oral history. Meanwhile, the Naval Historical Display Center was designated as the successor to the Dahlgren Collection in 1961 and was renamed the National Museum of the Navy, which opened in a new building

at the Washington Navy Yard in 1963. The museum and Naval History Division were finally merged into one organization in 1971, bringing all Navy historical offices under one roof in the newly formed Naval Historical Center.<sup>10</sup>

In 1991, the Naval Historical Center assumed responsibility for the Naval History Detachment Boston, which maintained and operated the USS *Constitution*, the oldest commissioned warship in the Navy’s inventory. Its most recent addition was the creation of the Underwater Archeology Branch in 1996, which is responsible for protecting and studying the Navy’s submerged cultural resources and protecting the status of sunken U.S. warships as war graves. The oldest of the Services’ history offices, the Naval History and Heritage Command (its new name since 2008) continues to serve as the nation’s repository for official Navy history and as custodian of its naval artifacts, working in close cooperation with the Marine Corps History Division.

## The U.S. Army’s Center of Military History

Although it has been in existence since 1775, the U.S. Army did not establish a permanent military history office until August 1943. Until that point, the secretary of war, as head of the War Department, would appoint officers to form committees to write the official accounts of its campaigns. In 1877, the Army began work on the multivolume *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, which became known as the “monumental history of the Civil War.”<sup>11</sup> Working as the head of the newly established War Records Section of the War Department’s Publications Office, Captain Robert N. Scott (later brevet lieutenant colonel) worked diligently to collect thousands of official records and to hire a team of writers, who labored for 20 years to produce 128 books in 70 volumes between

<sup>8</sup> Morgan and Leonhart, *A History of the Dudley Knox Center for Naval History*, 8; and Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, 15 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947–62).

<sup>9</sup> Morgan and Leonhart, *A History of the Dudley Knox Center for Naval History*, 8–9.

<sup>10</sup> Morgan and Leonhart, *A History of the Dudley Knox Center for Naval History*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> “The US Army Center of Military History: An Overview,” U.S. Army Center of Military History website, accessed 28 November 2018.



1880 and 1901.<sup>12</sup> When Scott died from pneumonia in 1887, he was replaced by Colonel Henry M. Lazelle, who relied heavily on his civilian compiler or editor Joseph W. Kirkley to complete the series. The office was disbanded with the publication of its last volume in 1901.<sup>13</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, the Army, still lacking its own historical office, was directed by its chief of staff, General Tasker H. Bliss, to establish a historical office as a section under his direct supervision. Bliss made his intent clearly known at the outset, stating that the purpose of such an office was to “record the things that were well done, for future imitation . . . [and] the errors as shown by experience, for future avoidance.”<sup>14</sup> Before General Bliss could ensure that his intent for the Historical Section was met, he was transferred to France on 23 January 1918 to serve as the American permanent representative to the Allied Supreme War Council.<sup>15</sup>

Bliss’s successor, acting Chief of Staff General Peyton C. Marsh (subsequently confirmed as chief of staff on 20 May 1918), believed that the needs of the Army would be better served by having the historical office located within the General Staff rather than directly under his supervision. Consequently, *War Department General Order No. 41*, dated 9 February 1918, was issued, directing that a Historical Branch be established as an element of the Army’s General Staff War Planning Division at the Army War College. The following month, it was activated under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Weeks with seven officers, fifteen enlisted men, and five civilian employees at Washington Barracks

(now Fort McNair) in the District of Columbia.<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after its activation, a team of eight, including stenographers and translators, was dispatched to the headquarters of General John J. Pershing’s American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in France, where it collected and organized copies of orders, memoranda, and other official correspondence. Here, it remained until October 1918, when it was transferred to the AEF secretary of the General Staff. Before the war ended on 11 November 1918, the Army’s Historical Branch, including the section in France and the main office at Washington Barracks, had grown to comprise 81 soldiers and civilians and much work had been done obtaining historical records as well as drafting and publishing two historical monographs. However, funding and manpower constraints that arose in the wake of the massive demobilization meant that the Historical Branch had shrunk to 14 officers, warrant officers, and civilian employees by 1920.

General Bliss had envisioned that the Historical Branch would prepare a “complete history of our participation in the World War,” including volumes on mobilization; economic, financial and industrial mobilization; diplomatic relations; military operations; and a photographic history.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, these plans were scrapped in the wake of the drawdown, which shrank the Army from a wartime strength of nearly four million men to its prewar strength of slightly more than 100,000 in less than two years. The Historical Branch then outlined a more realistic plan that would concentrate on four main areas: the classification of all historical records received, the publication of sets of documents as rapidly as possible, the preparation of monographs on both operations and services of supply, and the publication of an American order of battle in the war.

Even then, this less-ambitious plan would be

<sup>12</sup> *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901).

<sup>13</sup> “Guide to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion,” Civil War Digital website, accessed 15 May 2019.

<sup>14</sup> *United States Army in the World War, 1917–1919: Organization of the American Expeditionary Forces*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948), vii.

<sup>15</sup> Biography of Tasker H. Bliss, “Finding Aid: Tasker H. Bliss—An Inventory of His Collection,” Collection of Tasker H. Bliss, Manuscript Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Robert S. Thomas, *History of the Historical Section, Army War College* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, U.S. Army War College, 1941), 1. The Army War College was temporarily shut down in 1940, only to be opened up 10 years later at Fort Leavenworth, KS, then a year after that at Carlisle Barracks, PA. *Carlisle Barracks and the Army War College* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Center for Social and Urban Research, 2018), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas, *History of the Historical Section, Army War College*, 1.



Library of Congress photo, CPH3A36601  
Gen Tasker H. Bliss, chief of staff, USA, ca. 1918 during World War I.

hard to implement. Funds were disappearing, as were the people needed to carry out these tasks. Now reduced to a combined strength of three officers and nine civilian clerks under the supervision of Colonel Oliver L. Spaulding, the Historical Branch struggled to carry out its mission.<sup>18</sup> Surprisingly, its authors and editors did manage to write and publish nine historical monographs, ranging from a study of German tactics to describing how best to organize tactical formation for battle, as well as what became volume one of the *Allied Expeditionary Force Order of Battle*.

On 16 August 1921, the Historical Branch was

transferred from the General Staff to the faculty of the U.S. Army War College and renamed the Historical Section, where it experienced an increase in prestige and received, for most of the following decade, the necessary means to fulfill its mandated responsibilities, which included the addition of more academically qualified historians. Another attempt was made in 1925 to draft and publish a comprehensive four-part study of the war, encompassing 57 volumes, but after the first volume was published in 1928, the commandant of the Army War College, Major General William D. Connor, shortly afterward ordered all work to stop and distribution of the existing volume to be suppressed. This was due in part to his sense that the Historical Section had exceeded its mandate by embarking on an analysis of political and economic factors that he believed were beyond the purview of the military profession. With the onset of the Great Depression, the Historical Section was reduced in size even more, but the ban on further work was lifted in 1938.<sup>19</sup>

Instead of focusing on writing more monographs, the commandant of the Army War College directed the Historical Section on 14 August 1929 to complete a report on World War I that would unfold in three phases, beginning with searching the files and classifying all World War I documents of historical value, followed by compiling volumes of these documents, and ending with writing the synopses of facts from the complete records of armies, corps, and division and corresponding units.<sup>20</sup> This report, which would eventually total 18 volumes of selectively edited AEF records, was eventually titled *The United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919*. Cited as a “widely representative selection of the records . . . believed to be essential to a study of the history of that war,” the series included some of the most illustrative documents about the war, culled from the large mass of paper generated both overseas and within the various Army posts and headquarters throughout the United States.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919: Organization of the American Expeditionary Forces*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1988), xi.

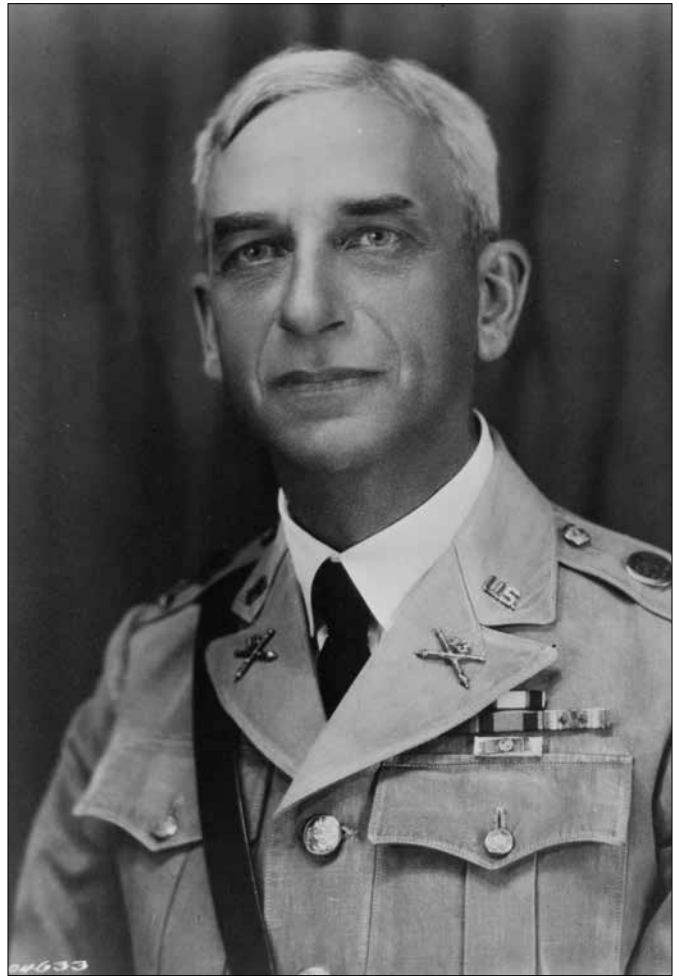
<sup>18</sup> Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, PA: Alumni Association of the U.S. Army War College, 1994), 177.

During the 20-year period encompassing 1919 to 1939, the Historical Section at the Army War College was engaged in collating and editing this primary source material, both American and foreign, including captured German records, and deciding which ones should be included in this massive first pass at its World War I history. Once this initial stage was completed, the group moved on to the next phase, which included putting the material into a readily accessible format so it could be used both by Army War College students and the public for future study. No monographs or separate studies would be included. During these two decades, Army officers and civilians assigned to the project would first concentrate on indexing the vast amounts of tactical and technical information contained in the official records, followed by determining which of the thousands of selected individual documents to include and agreeing upon the theme of each volume, which would guide the placement of the selected material.

This task was laid aside in 1939 when, with war clouds gathering, the Army took tentative steps toward mobilization. One of the backward steps the Army made was its 1940 decision to reduce the size of the Historical Section, which had an immediate negative impact on the production of the World War I official history. The adjutant general of the Army, Major General Emory S. Adams, halted all further work on the war's history and also suspended classes at the Army War College that same year, echoing the same quaint sentiments of the former secretary of war, Newton D. Baker, who stated in 1919 that

such a history would be incomplete unless it undertook to discuss economic, political and diplomatic questions, and the discussion of such questions by military men would necessarily be controversial, and many of the questions . . . would be impolitic and indiscreet for treatment by the War Department.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Bell I. Wiley, *Historical Program of the U.S. Army 1939 to Present* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, War Department, 1945), 3.

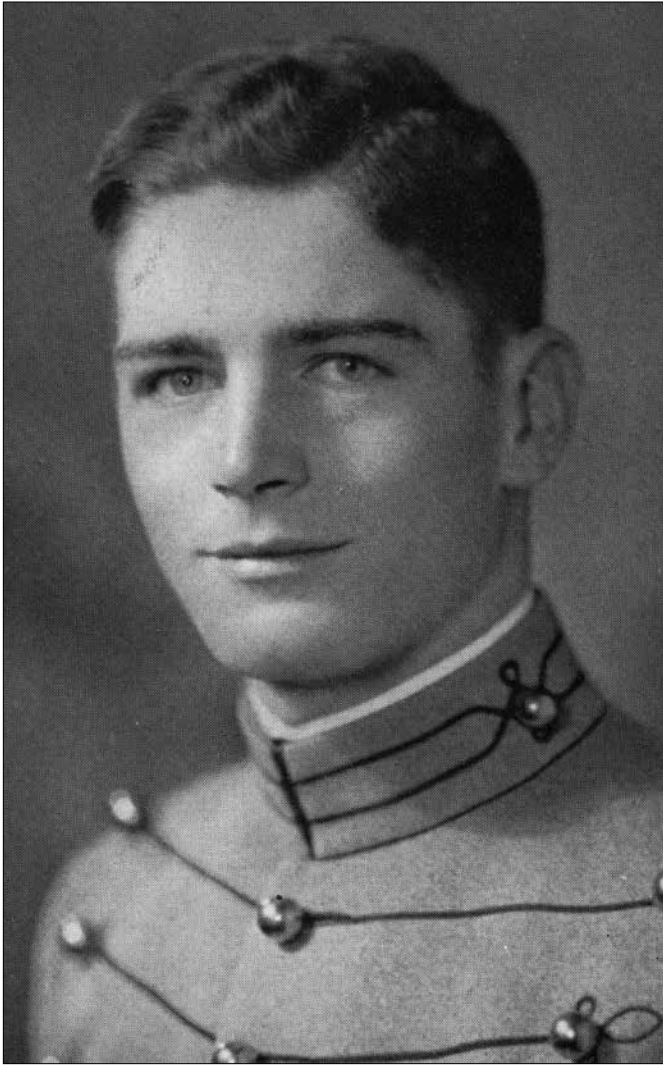


Official U.S. Army photo, 104633  
Col Oliver L. Spaulding, first director of the Army War College's Historical Branch, 1919.

Further interrupted by the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the entry into World War II on 7 December 1941, work on the collection of World War I manuscripts languished for four years. Publication did not finally begin until the end of the Second World War, almost 30 years after the first had ended.

After overcoming initial resistance from within the Army Staff, on 3 August 1943 the War Department, influenced by General Spaulding's arguments in favor of bringing back an organizational history office, authorized the creation of a historical division within the Army G-2 Staff Section. Its first director beginning in 1943 was Lieutenant Colonel John M. Kemper,





*U.S. Military Academy photo*

LtCol John M. Kemper, first director of the Army's Historical Section, 1943 (shown here as a West Point cadet).

a Columbia graduate with a master of arts degree in history, whose office was established in Room 5B773 in the Pentagon.<sup>23</sup> His focus, naturally, was recording and writing the official history of World War II, an effort that resulted in the publication of the Army's famous Green Book series, titled *The U.S. Army in World War II*. This monumental endeavor, which ended with the publication of its 78th volume in 1992, still stands today as the benchmark for evaluating official Service

history.<sup>24</sup> It would not be circumscribed by prewar restrictions on content, which fortunately allowed its authors to freely write about the political, economic, and grand strategic aspects of the war, unlike the authors of the First World War study.

Kemper also ensured that the World War I official history started in 1919 by the War College Historical Section would finally be completed and made available to the public. He oversaw the merging of the Army War College Historical Section into the Army Historical Section in 1947. This became the Historical Section's World War I Branch, which would finally sever all ties with the newly reinstated Army War College three years later in 1950. Shortly after merging with the Historical Section, the World War I Branch sent its work to printers, beginning with the first volume on 23 April 1948.<sup>25</sup> The World War I series was so successful that a full reprint of the entire collection, with a new foreword and introductory chapter, was authorized in 1988. After serving as the chief of the Historical Section for five years, Kemper departed shortly thereafter to become the headmaster of the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, a position he held until his death in 1971.

Since the creation of the Army's historical office in 1943, it has undergone several name changes. Now the Army Center of Military History, it carries on with its original mission, which is to provide historical support to the Army Secretariat and Staff from its office at Fort McNair, Washington, DC. Included in the Center of Military History's mission is contributing historical background information needed to assist decision makers, writing official histories such as the series on the Vietnam War, facilitating staff actions within the Army Staff, supporting various command information programs at all levels, and providing historical background information for public

<sup>23</sup> "The U.S. Army Center of Military History: An Overview"; and Wiley, *Historical Program of the U.S. Army 1939 to Present*, 27–28.

<sup>24</sup> This appraisal is widely documentable, but most recently in Edward J. Drea, "Change Becomes Continuity: The Start of the U.S. Army's 'Green Book' Series," in Jeffrey Grey, ed., *The Last Word: Essays on Official History in the United States and British Commonwealth* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), chapter 5; and James Jay Carafano, "The Last Word?: Essays on Official History in the United States and British Commonwealth," *Joint Force Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter 2005), 115–16.

<sup>25</sup> Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 241.



statements made by Army officials. Along the way, it has taken on the additional mission of managing the Army's museum system, collecting works of art, and providing support to military schools. It also fulfills the function of assisting with the development of the official Department of Defense names for land campaigns and battles, a task originally fulfilled by the War Department's Office of the Adjutant General beginning in 1866.

## The U.S. Air Force History and Museums Program

Interestingly, the Army Air Corps—which in 1948 became a separate Service, the U.S. Air Force—had already recognized the need to officially record its own history and was directed by General Henry H. Arnold, chief of the Army Air Corps, to establish the Army Air Forces Historical Division in 1942. Under the administration of its first director, Brigadier General Laurence S. Kuter, the office operated under his dictum that “it is important that our history be recorded while it is hot and that personnel be selected and an agency set up for a clear historian's job without axe to grind or defense to prepare.”<sup>26</sup> Although some accounts of the fledgling Air Corps' deeds had already been recorded by the Army in its official World War I volumes, the Army Air Forces Historical Division more than made up for the lack of any previous official histories of its formative years by publishing numerous accounts of its role in that war, including squadron histories, histories of various aircraft, and other aviation-related topics. In 1969, the Historical Division was renamed the Office of Air Force History, which reported to the Air Force Chief of Staff.

The Office of Air Force History printed a four-volume series about its role in World War I, beginning in 1978 with the publication of *The U.S. Air Service in World War I: The Final Report and a Tactical History*.<sup>27</sup> Compiled by a team of scholars and researchers and edited by Air Force historian Maurer Maurer, the

bulk of the edited volumes consists of original reports from the front lines, as well as reports about logistical challenges faced by a fledgling force engaged in aerial battle for the first time. Much of this information had lain unused since the World War I, when the Army War College Historical Section decided to gloss over most of the material in favor of covering ground campaigns and battles. This work was preceded by the Air Force's official history of the Second World War, a seven-volume work that appeared in 1983, titled *The Army Air Forces in World War II* and edited by noted historians Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, which rivaled the Army's Green Book series in detail and completeness.<sup>28</sup>

In 1991, the Office of Air Force History was reorganized and renamed the Air Force History and Museums Program, consisting of several branches that operate independently of one another, though all report to the program's office in the Pentagon, which provides policy, guidance, and advocacy for the worldwide program. These branches encompass the Air Force Field History Offices located worldwide, the Air Force Historical Research Agency located at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, the Air Force Historical Studies Office at Bolling Air Force Base (at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling) in Washington, DC, and the Air Force Museums System, which includes the massive National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.<sup>29</sup>

## The U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

The U.S. Coast Guard, established in 1789 as the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, was not originally envisioned as a branch of the military, but rather as a law enforcement organization operating under the aegis of the Treasury Department. Rather than controlling the seas, it concentrated on patrolling the nation's coastal waters, operating lighthouses along the coast, and rescuing those in peril at sea. On 28 January 1915,

<sup>26</sup> Jacob Neufeld, “History Makes You Smart—Heritage Makes You Proud,” *Air Power History* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 44.

<sup>27</sup> Maurer Maurer, comp. and ed., *The U.S. Air Service in World War I*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1978–79).

<sup>28</sup> Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vols. 1–7 (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> Neufeld, “History Makes You Smart—Heritage Makes You Proud,” 45–6.



Official U.S. Air Force photo

Gen Laurence S. Kuter, USAF, 1962.

it merged with the U.S. Life-Saving Service and was renamed the U.S. Coast Guard. That same year, it assumed a military role under the control of the U.S. Navy. During the First World War, it protected Atlantic overseas convoys against the German submarine threat. It has served in every major war since as one of the nation's five Armed Services.<sup>30</sup>

Though a history of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service was written and published in 1905 by Captain Horatio D. Smith covering the period from 1789 to 1846, no official U.S. Coast Guard history was prepared until after World War I, when Commander Charles Johnson began writing an account

of the now-renamed Service's participation in that war after hostilities had ceased. When Johnson died prematurely, his position as Coast Guard historian was filled on 15 June 1921 by Commander Richard O. Crisp, who completed the work that Johnson began. For reasons still unknown, Crisp's four-volume manuscript, titled *A History of the Coast Guard in the World War*, was never officially published, though it is available to researchers at the current U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office.<sup>31</sup> The first history of the Coast Guard, *The United States Coast Guard 1790–1915: A Definitive History*, written by Stephen Hadley Evans, was published by the Naval Institute Press in 1949, but it did not treat with the junior sea Service's history of World War I, focusing instead on the 125 years preceding its establishment when it was still titled the Revenue Cutter Service.<sup>32</sup>

Shortly afterward, Crisp's office was eliminated in the general postwar reduction in force, following the model of the early Army and Navy history offices. It was not reestablished until World War II, when in 1942 Coast Guard Lieutenant Commander Frank R. Eldridge assembled a team of 17 officers, enlisted men, and SPARS (officially known as the U.S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve) to write the official history of the Coast Guard's participation in the war under the umbrella of the Coast Guard Headquarters' Public Information Division. This 30-volume effort, officially titled *The Coast Guard at War*, concluded with the publication of its final volume on 1 January 1954.<sup>33</sup> Their work completed, the Coast Guard Historian's Office was once again disbanded that year, though a one-volume work by one of its team members, Malcolm F. Willoughby, was published and used as a standard

<sup>30</sup> Connie Terrell, "Coast Guard History 2016: How the Coast Guard Became a Military Service," *Coast Guard Compass* (blog), 1 August 2016; and "U.S. Coast Guard History Program," United States Coast Guard Historian's Office (website), accessed 28 November 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Connie Braesch, "Coast Guard History Day," *Coast Guard Compass* (blog), 11 June 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Hadley Evans, *The United States Coast Guard, 1790–1915: A Definitive History* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 1949). A postscript was written in 1950 that covered the years between 1915 and the outbreak of the Korean War, but while Capt Evans was an actively serving Coast Guard officer at the time, he did not write it as that Service's official historian. He later served as the superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy and retired in 1962.

<sup>33</sup> *The Coast Guard at War*, 30 vols. (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Public Information Division, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, 1944–54).



Official U.S. Coast Guard photo, 113544  
Capt Horatio D. Smith, U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, 1904.



Official U.S. Coast Guard photo, 113544  
Coast Guard Cdr Richard O. Crisp shown here as a midshipman in 1883 prior to World War I.

historical text at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.<sup>34</sup>

The Coast Guard's Historian's Office was not reestablished as a permanent institution until 27 November 1970, shortly before the end of the Vietnam War, but in the intervening years its historians have worked diligently to make up for the gaps and shortfalls in its history, including adding an extensive library and building an impressive collection of artwork and photographs. After 1993, the Historian's Office also assumed responsibility for operating the Coast Guard Museum in New London, Connecticut, located on the grounds of the U.S. Coast Guard

Academy.<sup>35</sup> Along with the rest of the Coast Guard, the Historian's Office was transferred from the control of the Treasury Department to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2002. Now located in Washington, DC, it is led by a U.S. civil service chief historian supported by a staff of six historians (two of whom operate the Coast Guard Museum) and two area historians. The Coast Guard Historian's Office, though the smallest of all the Armed Services, pursues an ambitious program of not only publishing official histories chronicling its past accomplishments but also capturing contemporary events shortly after they unfold, including the Coast Guard's response to Hurricane Katrina.

<sup>34</sup> Malcolm F. Willoughby, *The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1957).

<sup>35</sup> Braesch, "Coast Guard History Day."

## Other Military History Offices

Two other U.S. government military history offices were created in the wake of World War II: Historical Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 1949 and the Joint History Office for the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1955. Both had their genesis in the National Security Act of 1947, when their parent organizations, the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were established by law, replacing the former War and Naval Departments and consolidating them under one secretariat.<sup>36</sup> The first office was created to document the history of the Office of the Secretary of Defense since its inception in 1949, while the other served to do the same with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Since neither historical organization can trace its origins back to World War I or the immediate post-World War I era, this article will not go into further detail, though readers are encouraged to visit their respective websites if they wish to learn more.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

While each of the Armed Services' history offices have followed a winding path since World War I, all have secured solid budgetary and organizational footing in the years since. Influenced by funding and legislative challenges, personnel cuts, and conflicting philosophies about the proper role of military history in the modern era, they have seen the size of their organizations ebb and flow depending on the conflicts that the nation has experienced during the past century. Initially possessing relatively thin academic and institutional credentials to pursue their missions, all of these history offices have raised the bar and now enjoy far more professional respect and credibility than their predecessors. Most importantly, they have not lost sight of their true missions: to preserve the histories of the Services in the defense of their nation. This they continue to do, recording the things that were done well, the things that were not done well, and everything in between.

• 1775 •

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Franklin Cooling, "History Programs in the Department of Defense," *Public Historian* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 58–59, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3378784>.

<sup>37</sup> For additional information, visit the Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense's website ([www.history.defense.gov](http://www.history.defense.gov)) or Joint History Office, Joint Chiefs of Staff's website ([www.jcs.mil/about/joint-staff-history/](http://www.jcs.mil/about/joint-staff-history/)).



# “Why Shouldn’t the Marine Corps Have a Museum of Its Own?”

by Robert J. Sullivan<sup>1</sup>

First Lieutenant Carl Gardner, editor of *Leatherneck*, asked in an editorial in March 1927, “Why shouldn’t the Marine Corps Have a Museum of its own?” He argued that the Marine Corps had existed for 150 years but had no place to exhibit the material objects that told the Corps’ story. Flags, weapons, ordnance, uniforms, and pictures, among other trophies, were scattered across the posts of the Corps or in the hands of individuals where few people saw them. If gathered together in one place, the objects could tell the Service’s story to a greater audience, Gardner reasoned. He had a point. The efforts by the Marine Corps to establish a quality museum of its own is a story of an evolving process through trial and error and incremental progress for six decades. In the mid-1990s, the process adopted a revolutionary approach that culminated in 2006 with the opening of the National Museum of the Marine Corps (NMMC). For much of the past 85 years, Marine Corps historians played significant roles in these efforts.<sup>2</sup>

The other military Services had established museums during the nineteenth century, but due to the size of the Corps and operational activities, Marines

showed no real interest in following suit.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Army established a museum at West Point, New York, in 1854, though a collection of historical objects had commenced years earlier.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Naval Academy had exhibited a collection of flags since 1849.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy’s museum at the Washington Navy Yard had been in operation since 1865.<sup>6</sup> Other organizations borrowed artifacts from the Marine Corps for exhibitions. Marine objects from World War I were exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution in 1921 and in Philadelphia at the 1926 Sesquicentennial Exposition, but it was not until the 1930s that Marine leaders acted to start the process of creating a museum at Quantico and a few other locations to exhibit their material heritage.<sup>7</sup>

In 1933, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General Ben H. Fuller, issued Circular Letter No. 133 directing the commanding general of Marine Barracks Quantico, to establish a trophy room to exhibit historical objects and photographs. At the same time, the commanding officer of Marine Barracks Washington, DC, borrowed objects from the Histori-

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Sullivan served as a Marine from 1974 to 2002 and retired as a lieutenant colonel. He joined the museum staff in 1997 as the head of the Museums Branch, History and Museums Division, then transitioned to a curator position at his retirement and remains on the NMMC staff. His current duty is curator of museum design, with a focus on the final phase gallery project.

<sup>2</sup> “A Marine Corps Museum!,” *Leatherneck* 10, no. 3, March 1927, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Col Brooke Nihart (Ret), “History of the Marine Corps Museums, Part I, Imperfect Solutions,” *Fortitudine* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1992): 14.

<sup>4</sup> R. Cody Phillips, *The Guide to U.S. Army Museums* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2005), 90.

<sup>5</sup> “History,” U.S. Naval Academy Museum website, accessed 15 January 2019.

<sup>6</sup> “National Museum of the U.S. Navy History,” Naval History and Heritage Command website, updated 25 January 2019.

<sup>7</sup> “Exhibit at the Sesquicentennial,” *Leatherneck* 9, no. 9, June 1926, 30.

cal Branch at Headquarters Marine Corps to exhibit artifacts in the Sousa Band Hall.<sup>8</sup> In December 1933, General Fuller responded to a request from the commandant of the Washington Navy Yard for Marine Corps trophies to be included in a future Navy Yard Museum, stating that any trophies in excess of the needs of the two existing Marine museums at Quantico and Marine Barracks Washington, DC, would be available for loan to the Navy Yard Museum; however, no objects were loaned.<sup>9</sup> Later, a writer at the *Marine Corps Gazette* recommended a museum be built at Quantico based on the design of Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, similar to the exhibit at the 1926 Philadelphia Exposition, but nothing came of this idea.<sup>10</sup>

An organized museum came to life at Quantico in 1940. On 2 October 1940, Commandant Major General Thomas Holcomb issued Circular Letter No. 391, ordering that a museum be established at Quantico on the second floor of the newly constructed Quantico Recreation Building (now Little Hall). The museum was intended to foster esprit de corps, build and maintain traditions, and preserve objects of lasting historical and sentimental interest to the Marine Corps, words similar to those included in the mission statement of the NMMC today. Holcomb assigned Marine Corps historian Lieutenant Colonel Clyde H. Metcalf to be the museum's curator. Holcomb's letter contained much more detail and thought regarding historical objects and museum operations for the time than had Circular Letter No. 133.<sup>11</sup> Large cases exhibited flags, weapons, trophies, medals, and equipment, and mannequins wearing original uniforms. Exhibits were rotated to retain interest, objects not on exhibit were secured in steel lockers, and donors were required to contact the curator before sending

objects, all procedures still used by the NMMC staff today. Unfortunately, the museum's initial success did not last long.<sup>12</sup>

Metcalf was transferred overseas in late 1942 and the custodial responsibility of the museum fell to the post recreation officer. By 1945, the head of the Historical Division, Colonel John Potts, wrote a memo to Commandant General Alexander Archer Vandegrift addressing a number of museum concerns, two of which were that Quantico was the wrong location for a museum due to the lack of public access and his recommendation to assign an older noncommissioned officer or warrant officer to oversee preservation, inventory, and care of the objects. The Commandant approved the appointment of First Sergeant Lowrey A. Weed to curate the museum. Weed made headway in the stewardship of the collection by using the Smithsonian Institution's recordkeeping process, until he transferred in 1946. The post recreation officer once again became the custodian. Nothing came of the issue of public access to the Quantico museum location, though ease of access played a part in the selection of the site of the new NMMC.<sup>13</sup> John Elliott, a young Marine who reported to Quantico in 1946, remarked that when he visited the museum, there were few Marines in sight, though the exhibits looked impressive.<sup>14</sup>

The museum's story took a turn for the better in the early 1950s, when Commandant General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. reached out to Marine Reservist John H. Magruder III to return to active duty and oversee the Quantico museum. Magruder recruited two active duty assistants to his staff, historian Major David E. Schwulst as curator and Master Sergeant George McGarry, an ordnance expert and jack of all trades. Magruder had experience organizing exhibits about Marines at the Smithsonian Institution's Hall of Naval History. Magruder's staff was small in num-

<sup>8</sup> Nihart, "History of the Marine Corps Museums, Part I, Imperfect Solutions," 14.

<sup>9</sup> B. H. Fuller letter to the Commandant, Navy Yard, Washington, DC, 18 December 1933, copy in the author's possession.

<sup>10</sup> "Tun Tavern Museum," *Marine Corps Gazette* 19, no. 1 (May 1934): 42. Legend says that Tun Tavern was the original Marine recruiting site in Philadelphia in 1775.

<sup>11</sup> T. Holcomb Circular Letter No. 391, "To All Officers, Active and Retired, Reserve Officers of the Rank of Captain and Above, Former Officers, and Relatives of Well-known Deceased Officers," 2 October 1940.

<sup>12</sup> Nihart, "History of the Marine Corps Museums, Part I, Imperfect Solutions," 15; and "The New Quantico," *Leatherneck* 24, no. 7, July 1941, 14-27.

<sup>13</sup> Nihart, "History of the Marine Corps Museums, Part I, Imperfect Solutions," 15-16.

<sup>14</sup> Maj John Elliott (Ret), in discussions with the author, 25 January and 22 February 2019. Elliott, now age 95, is a volunteer at the NMMC, a retired Marine, and former Smithsonian curator of aviation who worked with Col John Magruder in the 1960s.



Marine Corps Combat Art Collection, 2012.1027.11

MSgt John C. DeGrasse (Ret), former art director for *Leatherneck* magazine, sketched this scene of Building 1019, the Marine Corps Museum, with the bronze statue "Iron Mike" in front in 1973.



Photo by NMMC staff

Artifacts on exhibit in Building 1019, August 1965.

ber—approximately five people to handle the curatorial, administrative, exhibits, and any other tasks that needed to be accomplished.<sup>15</sup>

In 1960, Magruder moved the museum to Building 1019, adjacent to Little Hall. The new museum building was small but their own, and the staff were proud of their work. In January 1962, Magruder wrote a memorandum to the head of the Historical Branch, G-3, that during a visit to the Marine Corps Museum by two U.S. Army general officers the previous December, the visitors stated that the West Point Museum could learn something from the Marines. Magruder continued: "The thing that gives me particular satisfaction is the knowledge that West Point spent several million dollars renovating their Museum about four

years ago while we have operated on a mere fraction of their budget and with a staff that is considerably smaller."<sup>16</sup>

Magruder's accomplishments during his tenure as director of the museum were many, including his work to open additional buildings to exhibit the aviation history of the Corps and future plans to exhibit the stories of Marines in Vietnam; his comments on a draft of *Marine Corps Order 4010* on the preservation of historical material; increasing and diversifying the museum staff; and designing the windows in the Marine Memorial Chapel at Quantico and the Marine window at the Arlington Cemetery Chapel. Three other initiatives that were considered on Magruder's watch but never materialized include Magruder lead-

<sup>15</sup> Col Brooke Nihart (Ret), "History of the Marine Corps Museums, Part 2, Major Magruder Sought First Full-Scale Marine Museum," *Fortitudine* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1993): 27–30.

<sup>16</sup> Director, Marine Corps Museums letter to Head, Historical Branch, G-3, subject: Marine Corps Museum, 8 January 1962, copy in author's files.

ing a Smithsonian Institution effort to plan and build an Armed Forces Museum in 1965 near Washington, DC, Magruder's plan for a fortress-like museum on the parade field near Lejeune Hall in 1966, and Felix de Weldon's proposal to the Commandant to construct a Marine museum near the Iwo Jima War Memorial in 1967.<sup>17</sup>

Magruder retired from the Marine Corps in 1969 and died in 1972. He was a fierce proponent of the museum program while he was on active duty and in retirement and he continued to comment on museum affairs. He put the museum program on firm ground that included a larger and more professional staff than before, additional funding, greater visibility of the museum program, and influence on regulations that pertained to historical property.<sup>18</sup>

Magruder's momentum in advancing the museum program continued, and major changes to the

museum and historical program occurred during the 1970s through the 1990s. This time was a period of growth in museum staff and reorganization, movement of museum activities, acquisition of additional buildings, and the establishment of a key partner that supported the history and museums program.

Prior to 1973, there were two Marine Corps historical activities, the Historical Branch of the G-3 (Operations) at Headquarters Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Museum at Quantico functioning under the Commandant's office. The Commandant formed the Commandant's Advisory Committee on Marine Corps History during the 1960s that provided oversight to both activities. The committee was composed of distinguished historians and retired senior Marines who had a deep interest in the Corps' history. The committee met annually, reviewed the programs of both the museum and historical branch and provided a report to the Commandant. Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, recently appointed as the director of Marine Corps History and a Marine Corps historian, proposed to the Commandant that the History Division and museum activities be combined into one organization. This consolidation was effective October 1973 and the division was renamed as the History and Museums Division (HD) and was headquartered at Building 198 at the Washington Navy Yard.<sup>19</sup>

In 1973, the museum acquired the 1920s-era brig at Quantico, Building 2014, for the collections and museum staff offices.<sup>20</sup> In 1976, the museum in Building 1019 closed and the art and artifacts and a

<sup>17</sup> Col R. D. Heintz to LtCol John H. Magruder III, memo, Proposed Marine Corps Order of 27 September 1957 with undated draft of *Marine Corps Order 4010*, subject: Historical Material, preservation of, copy in author's possession. Heintz's intent was to resolve issues related to preserving material for historical purposes by defining the procedures within a regulation. Today, the museum section of *Marine Corps Order 5750, The Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program*, specifies the NMMC's mission, billets, responsibilities, services, collections management, collections stewardship, and staff training. Both History Division and NMMC staffs review this consolidated document on a regular basis to ensure the historical program of the Corps is relevant to the needs of the Corps. A number of other regulations at the federal level provide guidance on stewardship, disposition of historical property, gifts and donations, and ethics, among other topics. Col R. D. Heintz Jr., "John Magruder: In Memoriam," *Marine Corps Gazette* 56, no. 11 (November 1972): 16-17; *A Study Relating to the Establishment of A National Armed Forces Museum* (Washington, DC: National Armed Forces Museum Advisory Board, Smithsonian Institution, 1965); Director, Marine Corps Museums letter to Commandant of the Marine Corps, subject: Permanent Marine Corps Museum Building, with enclosures, 1 November 1966; and Wallace M. Green, Green Letter No. 18-67, "Proposed Marine Corps Museum, Arlington, Virginia, with enclosure," 3 November 1967, copy in author's file. Magruder was a member of the National Armed Forces Museum Advisory Board. He was in favor of a museum at Quantico or in the Washington, DC, area. The author believes that all three museum initiatives failed due to lack of available resources, service objections, and the timing during the Vietnam War.

<sup>18</sup> Nihart, "History of the Marine Corps Museums, Part 2, Major Magruder Sought First Full-Scale Marine Museum"; and Magruder letter to Commandant Gen Leonard F. Chapman, 14 April 1969. Magruder requested retirement in this letter and did so with mixed emotions. Magruder letter to LtGen Raymond Davis, 14 July 1970. In the letter, Magruder strongly pushed for the separation of the museum and history programs.

<sup>19</sup> "Marine Museum Chronicles Our Glorious Past," *News* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), Spring 1990, 5. The Commandant's Advisory Committee was abolished during the James E. "Jimmy" Carter administration in an effort to streamline government. Later, HD moved into Building 58 and remained there until the division moved to Quantico in 2005.

<sup>20</sup> NMMC staff reside in the building today. The "old brig," as Building 2014 is called, has had its share of facility problems. During the 1990s, Quantico Facilities completed a plan for improvements, Project QU 9630M, which included adding an elevator, fire sprinkler system, office spaces, restrooms, etc., but the project was not funded. Over the years, some of these improvements have been completed. The museum's collections continued to grow and the older buildings on Quantico that housed the artifacts and some staff became obsolete. In 2016, the NMMC leased a commercial building a short distance from the museum that houses much of the collection, curator offices, and restoration work spaces.



few museum staff were moved to the Washington Navy Yard, where a second Marine museum opened. This museum, called the Marine Corps Museum, left Quantico with neither a museum nor trophy room for four decades, but this was not to last. The remaining Quantico museum staff, reorganized as the Museums Branch of HD, had been working on another museum activity since Magruder's tenure that was originally an extension of the museum in Building 1019. This additional museum activity would be located in two older hangars on Brown Field near the present-day Officer Candidate School. This museum activity formally opened as the Aviation Museum in 1978.<sup>21</sup> The exhibits showed the role of Marine aviation in World War II using a number of restored aircraft. Future plans included a Korean War hangar and an Early Years hangar depicting pre-World War II aviation history.<sup>22</sup>

In 1979, friends of the Corps and retired Marines established the Marine Corps Historical Foundation (MCHF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the purpose of supporting the official historical effort of the Corps. The foundation supported HD at the Navy Yard commencing in 1983, maintained offices in Building 58, and filled some of the void left by the abolishment of the Commandant's Advisory Committee on Marine Corps History. The foundation would prove to be critical to the museum program in the years ahead.<sup>23</sup>

In 1985, Brigadier General Simmons ordered

that the Aviation Museum be renamed the Marine Corps Air-Ground Museum (MCAGM) and the aviation-focused exhibits were reworked to show the operations of the air-ground team in combat. A number of museum staff relocated from the Navy Yard to the MCAGM.<sup>24</sup> The unheated and unair-conditioned hangars never attracted more than 25,000 visitors each year during the eight-month open season. The Restorations Section, consisting of Marines, civil servants, and volunteers, occupied a portion of Larson Gymnasium and worked wonders in keeping the aircraft and rolling stock in good condition for exhibition.

The structural condition of the three hangars of the MCAGM were a continued source of comment since the early 1980s. In the spring of 1984, General Simmons suggested to Colonel Brooke Nihart (Ret), deputy director for museums, to speak with MCHF about including a new museum in the foundation's long-range plan. During the ninth annual meeting of MCHF in November 1987, the president of the foundation, Lieutenant General George C. Axtell (Ret), stated that one foundation initiative was to erect a suitable structure at Quantico to house what has grown into a significant monument to the Marine Air-Ground Team. In December 1988, Simmons reported to the MCHF that marginal repairs were made to the hangars to include painting and reskinning the roofs.<sup>25</sup> By 1992, the foundation and HD were considering the construction of an additional structure at the MCAGM to tell the Vietnam story. The concept was not adopted, however, in favor

<sup>21</sup> Bruce Martin, "Aviation Museum," *Leatherneck* 61, no. 7, July 1978; and Ken Smith-Christmas, email to author, 22 January and 9 May 2019, hereafter Smith-Christmas notes. Smith-Christmas stated that the bulk of the Museums Branch activities—Personal Papers, Special Projects, and Photographs—shifted to the Navy Yard. The staff remaining at Quantico were designated as the Marine Corps Branch Activities, Quantico, and included the deputy director of Museums Branch Col Tom M. D'Andrea, the aviation and ordnance collections, and Restorations Section in Larson Gymnasium. Smith-Christmas started working at Marine Corps Museum at the Washington Navy Yard in 1976, permanently relocated to Quantico in 1986, and served in various capacities in the Museums Branch until his departure in 2005 to the Planning Office for the National Museum of the U.S. Army.

<sup>22</sup> Herb Richardson, "Birds of Prey on Display," *Leatherneck* 62, no. 5, May 1979, 34–39.

<sup>23</sup> "Events at the Center," *Fortitudine* 8, no. 4 (Spring 1979): 22; and "A Symbiotic Relationship: Foundation, Historical Events at the Center," *News* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), Spring 1990, 5. The foundation changed its name to the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation in 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Nancy Lee White, "Marine Corps Air-Ground Museum," *Leatherneck* 69, no. 5, May 1986, 55–59; and Smith-Christmas notes.

<sup>25</sup> The MCAGM closed in 2002. The three hangars are still used by the NMMC as large artifact storage. In 2004, Smith-Christmas was asked to accompany the then-assistant Commandant, Gen Michael J. Williams, on a trip to the Beech Hill Hotel Museum, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, where the World War II Londonderry Marines resided. A conversation at the hotel between Williams and Smith-Christmas included the facility issues of the hangars and soon thereafter funding was provided for the improvements. The structures were painted again, insulated, and outfitted with climate control systems.

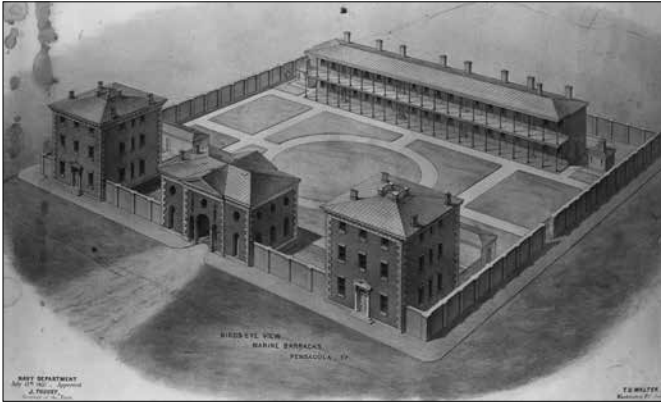


Photo by NMMC staff

Col John Magruder's Quantico Museum building concept was based on the nineteenth-century fortress-style layout of the Marine barracks in Pensacola, FL. The distinctive entrance gate provides the central motif for Magruder's museum.



Photo by NMMC staff

Goodyear FG-1 Corsair still on exhibit in 2003 in the then-closed Marine Corps Air Ground Museum's World War II hangar.

of a radical heritage center concept at Quantico.<sup>26</sup>

The museum staff increased gradually during the 1970s through the 1990s. A total of 12 civilian museum staff were on the rolls of HD during the mid-1970s as curators, administrators, exhibitors, and restorations specialists to operate and maintain both museums at the Navy Yard and at Quantico.<sup>27</sup> In January 2000, the Museums Branch roster at Quantico included 12 ac-

tive duty Marines and 10 federal employees.<sup>28</sup> The Museums Branch civilian personnel strength continued to increase with an approved table of organization for the NMMC. Marines provided security, were guides for visitors, and were a living bridge connecting the exhibits of the past to the present Corps. Active duty Marines serve today at the NMMC in similar roles.

## The Revolution Begins and Continues

By 1995, the concept of a new heritage center at Quantico was taking center stage at MCHF meetings rather than discussing the expansion of the MCAGM. The foundation and two professional exhibits firms studied the concept of a heritage center campus containing a world-class museum at Quantico to improve stewardship of the MCAGM collections, reach a wid-

<sup>26</sup> Action memo, HDM: CAW 3.1.3, "Museums Committee Meeting, 6 April 1984," 18 April 1984; "President's Remarks at AGM," *News* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), November 1987, 5; "Status Report: Marine Corps Historical Program," *News-Notes* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), December 1988, 5; and "Extension of Foundation's Air-Ground Museum is Planned," *News* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), Fall 1992, 3. Simmons readdressed the idea for a new museum at Quantico that had been raised previously. The Commandant's Advisory Committee recommended to the Commandant in its annual report of July 1966 that plans be initiated for a permanent, modern, and expanded museum to house the rich assets held by the Corps. Magruder subsequently submitted his proposal for a permanent museum sited on the parade field near Lejeune Hall in November 1966. The commandant of the Marine Corps Schools endorsed Magruder's proposal, but moved the recommended location of the museum from the parade deck facing Lejeune Hall to across the street where the current Clubs of Quantico is located.

<sup>27</sup> Smith-Christmas notes. The authorized strength of federal employees for the museum at Quantico in 1990 was nine. Gen Simmons remarked in his report to MCHF in late 1991 (*News*, Winter 1991) that with the downsizing of the Corps, he expected a reduction in civilian employee strength of 20–25 percent within the following two to three years. This loss necessitated a reorganization of HD, though the Quantico museum gained two additional civilian staff to total 11.

<sup>28</sup> "Organization, Mission, and Functions" (briefing paper, History and Museums Division, 12 February 1996); and Museums Branch Recall Roster, 3 January 2000. During the 1990s, the junior enlisted Marines assigned by the Headquarters special assignments monitor to the Quantico museum were drops from the Marine Security Guard School (wrote a bad check, unqualified with service weapon, or academic failure were some reasons). Later, the infantry monitor assigned the enlisted Marines to the museum. One of the two officers assigned was in administration. The officer-in-charge billet specified an officer in an aviation specialty, a holdover from the Aviation Museum's table of organization. The author had an artillery occupational specialty and the ground and aviation monitors coordinated the billet fill.

er audience, and instill in the visitor an understanding of the contributions that the Marine Corps had made throughout our nation's history and continues to do so.<sup>29</sup> The museum program took a major leap forward when in 1999, the foundation and HD formally launched a capital campaign in support of a Marine Corps Heritage Center colocated with a National Museum at Quantico.<sup>30</sup>

The task at hand was complex. Few members of the foundation, History and Museums Division, and the U.S. Navy's facilities construction office, Engineering Field Activities Chesapeake (EFACHES), had ever designed a museum with unique requirements from the ground up. The building design was to support the galleries and artifacts on display using privately raised funds on forested land that the federal government did not own at the time. This project included a cast of hundreds from many professions working together throughout the multiyear project while continuously coordinating their efforts.<sup>31</sup> The degree of cooperation was high and the learning curve was steep.

EFACHES assumed the role of managing the numerous multimillion dollar government contracts, including hiring the architectural and exhibits design and installation firms and conducting the environment impact study. The contracted architects, Fentress Bradburn Architects of Denver, Colorado, and exhibit designers, Christopher Chadbourne and Associates of Boston, Massachusetts, studied and experienced the history of the Corps. Their winning building and ex-

hibits design reflected their focus. They walked the German trenches and wheat fields of Belleau Wood, entered Japanese tunnels and gun emplacements on Guam, Saipan, and Tinian, and stood atop Mount Suribachi on the exact spot where the famous flag raisings took place during World War II. They participated in boot camp activities and lived for a few days on board ship.<sup>32</sup>

The firms designing the museum translated their experiences into a distinctive structure and innovative exhibits. A second exhibits firm, Design and Production Inc. of Lorton, Virginia, turned the exhibit designs and drawings into reality. A gleaming central mast reaching 210 feet in the air at an angle reminiscent of Joseph Rosenthal's famous photograph of the Iwo Jima flag raising, topped by a cone of glass, and encircled at its base by exhibits evokes history through the eyes of Marines. Groundbreaking for the new museum commenced in 2003 on 135 acres outside the main gate of Marine Corps Base Quantico. Locating the museum outside the base made public access easier. The museum sits astride the King's Highway, a Colonial-era road that saw commerce, famous personalities, and military units move over it during the past three centuries.<sup>33</sup>

The project became a full-time duty for many in the History and Museums Division. The historians and Museum Branch staff joined contracted exhibits and architectural representatives on working groups. Major tasks included developing the storyline and exhibits, reviewing text, architectural and exhibit designs, selecting and preparing objects for the galleries, determining the size of the NMMC staff, projecting future budgets, drafting position descriptions and

<sup>29</sup> LtGen George Christmas (Ret), "Strategic Planning Review, National Museum of the Marine Corps" (briefing slides, Marine Corps Heritage Center, Quantico, VA, 18–19 October 2001). LtGen Christmas, the foundation's president, worked tirelessly to garner support for the heritage center and was very successful. "President's Notes," *News* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), Summer 1995, 2; and "America's Own," Visitor Experience Concept Development, draft submission, the Prentice Company, Ames, Iowa, April 1997.

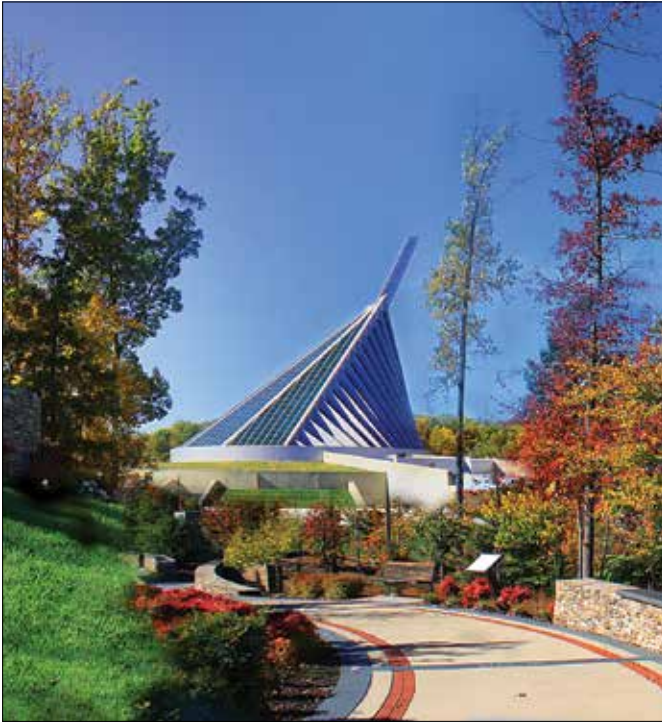
<sup>30</sup> "Presidents Notes," *Sentinel* (Marine Corps Heritage Foundation), Summer 1999, 2, 12. Commandant Gen Charles C. Krulak approved the project by stating in April 1999, "The Marine Corps Heritage Center is envisioned as a multi-use complex of buildings and outdoor facilities. It will be devoted to the presentation of Marine Corps history, professional military educational opportunities, and unique military events. This complex with its varied capabilities will be the showcase for our Marine Corps heritage." Marine Corps Heritage Center brochure, ca. 2000.

<sup>31</sup> BGen Gerald L. McKay (Ret), email to author, 16 May 2019. McKay was the foundation's chief operating officer during the project.

<sup>32</sup> Lin Ezell, comp., *National Museum of the Marine Corps* (Lawrenceburg, IN: Creative Company, 2010); and Design Development Drawings, National Museum of the Marine Corps, Christopher Chadbourne and Associates, Boston, MA, 2003. The three original selected sites were on the base, but were found unsuitable for various reasons. A fourth site not on the base was identified during the public comment portion of the study and was selected. Prince William County, VA, offered to transfer the site back to the federal government. This is the present location of the heritage center.

<sup>33</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*; and Col Joseph C. Long (Ret), "The Competition," in *Portal to the Corps: Chronicling the National Museum of the Marine Corps*, ed. Jessica H. del Pilar (Victoria, Australia: Images Publishing Group, 2007), 21–23.





*Photo by Gwenn Adams, NMMC public affairs officer*

The NMMC as seen from one of the heritage paths near the chapel on the Heritage Center grounds.

selecting candidates, reviewing videos and selecting hundreds of still photographs, participating on committees to award contracts, travelling to scheduled meetings, training the museum volunteers, and recommending opportunities in the galleries for foundation fundraising. Retired Marine and historian Colonel Joseph H. Alexander was contracted to be the principal historical writer for the Phase I text. Foundation and HD staff briefed the Assistant Commandant and senior generals of the Corps on progress and issues in a monthly executive steering committee.<sup>34</sup>

Funding was split between MCHF and the Marine Corps. The foundation raised the funds needed to build the circular structure and to oversee construction of the planned initial construction of 120,000 square feet at a cost of \$60 million, hiring Jacobs Fa-

cilities Inc. to assist them and commissioning Balfour Beatty to build the structure. The foundation operated all revenue-generating activities in the museum to include a museum store, rifle range, a tavern, and a restaurant. Costs to the Marine Corps totaled \$42 million for funding design, exhibitions, start-up, restoration/conservation of artifacts, and NMMC staff labor. Other spaces in the NMMC include a 95-seat theater, maintenance facilities, and offices for a portion of both the NMMC and foundation staffs.<sup>35</sup>

The NMMC opened on 10 November 2006 to fanfare that included President George W. Bush as the guest speaker and an estimated 10,000 attendees. In 2008, a playground was added to the grounds and a nondenominational chapel opened in 2009. The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation continues to support programs at the NMMC, including paid internships, special assistants, docent needs, and the purchase of art and artifacts for the museum collections.<sup>36</sup>

## Museum Reorganization

In 2002, the Commandant directed that the History and Museums Division be moved to Quantico and assigned to Marine Corps University (MCU). This transition included a major reorganization of the history and museums program. The elements of the division—the Historical, Support, and Museums branches—were separated. The branches at the Navy Yard shifted to Quantico by September 2005.<sup>37</sup> In 2005, the NMMC expanded the staff of the Museums Branch and reorganized as a division within MCU. The first museum director, Lin Ezell, a curator with many years at the Smithsonian Institution, took the museum's helm in

<sup>34</sup> "National Museum of the Marine Corps Project Workload," Information Paper, History and Museums Division, 5 February 2003. Col Long was selected by a Headquarters search committee to be the project manager to coordinate the activities among the major organizations and to organize the monthly executive steering committee meetings with the Assistant Commandant.

<sup>35</sup> 2017 Staff Briefing, National Museum of the Marine Corps, November 2017. Outside the NMMC, heritage paths within Semper Fi Park on the Heritage Center campus overseen by MCHF provided opportunities for reunion groups to erect memorials to their units and fallen comrades and for people to purchase a brick to be placed on the paths in memory of a loved one or comrade. In 2005, to mark the 230th anniversary of the Marine Corps, the U.S. Mint struck a commemorative silver dollar that raised \$6 million.

<sup>36</sup> 2017 Staff Briefing; "Art Purchased for Corps Museum," *News* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), Fall 1991, 6, 8; and "President Reports Past Accomplishments, Future Goals," *News* (Marine Corps Historical Foundation), Spring 1992, 1-2.

<sup>37</sup> See Charles D. Melson's "Beyond McClellan and Metcalf: Staff History in the U.S. Marine Corps," 8.



2005 and immediately immersed herself in the project. The museum located in Building 58 of the division's headquarters at the Navy Yard was closed, and the art collection and all museum employees moved to Quantico.<sup>38</sup>

In June 2006, the NMMC staff consisted of 21 federal employees, 9 Marines, and approximately 150 volunteers, and in December 2006 soon after the grand opening, the staff increased to 30 civilians and 10 Marines. By July 2009, the staff grew to 41 federal employees and 18 Marines organized into nine sections: Directorate, Operations/Facilities, Curatorial Services, Art, Registrar, Restorations, Exhibits, Education, and Visitor Services.<sup>39</sup>

## An Overview of the NMMC

The NMMC is the crown jewel of the Marine Corps' museum program, which includes three command museums (one each at the Marine Corps Recruit Depots in San Diego, California, and Parris Island, South Carolina, and an aviation-themed museum at the Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar, California) and numerous historical displays at Camp Pendleton, California. The NMMC was constructed during a number of years in two phases.

### *Phase I Concept*

The exhibit space for the NMMC, which was planned to open in 2006, is organized into seven themed galleries arrayed chronologically from 1775 through 1975, a central gallery (Leatherneck), and a Legacy Walk that total more than 60,000 square feet. Due to fis-

cal issues, three themed galleries of the original seven, 1775 through World War I, were delayed in opening until June 2010 (commonly called Phase 1A). The strategic approach to the design of the museum and exhibit presentation is guided by 11 core messages for the staff and visitors. The designers approached the visitor experience with a layered, complex, and engaging presentation for a wide audience of retired and active duty military and families and those who never served. The Marine Corps story is told through high-quality exhibits, some immersive, containing approximately 2,000 artifacts, videos, still imagery, audio, cast figures, and hands-on interactions. Scheduled public programming events and educational outreach activities within the gallery spaces provide additional impact to the story.<sup>40</sup> The Assistant Commandant selected the initial galleries to be opened in 2006 for the living veterans who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

**Leatherneck Gallery:** the museum experience commences when the visitor first enters the NMMC. Leatherneck Gallery, the central gallery, evokes bearing and resolve, but also permanence and innovation. The artifacts, vignettes, testimonials, and images in this space honor the contributions of every Marine and highlight the core messages of the NMMC. Aircraft are suspended above visitors, vignettes show Marines in combat, and the multicolored terrazzo floor represents the expeditionary nature of the Marines.<sup>41</sup>

**Making Marines Gallery:** all Marines remember their boot camp or officer candidate experience. Visitors step inside the process used by drill instructors to

<sup>38</sup> A committee to examine the organization and functions of the historical program, headed by retired Commandant Gen Carl E. Mundy Jr., was convened on 20 March 2006. The details of the committee's report and endorsement by retired MajGen Donald R. Gardner, president of Marine Corps University, reflected a focus on the historical portion of the former History and Museums Division than on the museum. The committee was impressed with the direction and leadership of the NMMC.

<sup>39</sup> Lin Ezell, "NMMC Staff Phone Roster," 16 June 2006; NMMC Myers-Briggs Roster, 26 December 2006; and Lin Ezell, "NMMC Staff Phone Roster," 7 July 2009. Contracted security and maintenance crews assisted the Operations/Facilities Section. The collections totaled 40,000 historical objects and art. The staff included both retired military and nonmilitary, many holding graduate degrees in their chosen fields and having years of museum experience before joining the NMMC.

<sup>40</sup> Design Development Drawings, National Museum of the Marine Corps; and Design Development Exhibit Design Package, National Museum of the Marine Corps, Christopher Chadbourne and Associates, Fentress Bradburn Architects Ltd., and Col Joseph H. Alexander (Ret), 16 July 2003. The 70 cast figures that populate the Phase I galleries add realism to scenes. Most of the cast figures were modelled on active duty Marines and sailors.

<sup>41</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 2-3; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 01.01-01.08; Final Text, National Museum of the Marine Corps, Christopher Chadbourne and Associates, Fentress Bradburn Architects Ltd., and Col Joseph H. Alexander (Ret), March 2005. Leatherneck Gallery has hosted retirements, commissionings, promotions, reunions, family days, educational activities, concerts, formal dinners, proms, and presentations.

transform young men and women into Marines. From the hometown recruiting station to graduation, visitors are immersed in the memorable experiences that forge recruits and officer candidates into privates and lieutenants. They get up close and personal with their own drill instructor by entering a sound booth, stepping on the yellow footprints, and trying their marksmanship skills at the M16 laser rifle range modeled on the Quantico ranges.<sup>42</sup>

**Legacy Walk:** this is the main hallway through the space from which visitors enter the themed galleries. On one side, the hallway contains a timeline of significant dates in U.S., world, and Marine Corps history from 1775 through 2006. More than 50 artifacts populate small exhibit cases. On the other side of the hallway, exhibit cases contain iconic artifacts of the Marines such as General Lejeune's overseas cap worn in World War I and a three-war K-bar knife. Kiosks present narrated topical videos.<sup>43</sup>

**Themed Galleries:** themed galleries provide a more detailed study to a period in history for the visitor. Wall murals, photographs, oral history interviews, and dioramas deliver stories about combat operations, significant contributions to the war, individual Marines, special units, morale, and air support. The first gallery—Uncommon Valor: Marines in World War II—recalls the Marines in battle in the Pacific and holds the most important artifact in the museum's collection: the Iwo Jima flag. Exhibits in the World War II Gallery highlight innovation in tactics, equipment, women Marines, a Montford Point exhibit focusing on racial issues, the Code Talkers, and Navy Hospital Corpsmen.<sup>44</sup>

The second themed gallery that opened in 2006 is titled Send in the Marines: The Korean War. The exhibits in this gallery include the significant Marine amphibious assault at Inchon, the subsequent fighting in urban areas and hills, an immersive exhibit at Toktong Pass during the Chosin Reservoir fighting (in

## CORE MESSAGES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

1. The Marine Corps is a global force of expeditionary readiness.
2. The Marine Corps operates from the sea in partnership with the Navy.
3. The Marine Corps fights as a self-sufficient combined arms team including aviation and logistics support.
4. Tough training and shared hardship forged the Marine Corps spirit/camaraderie.
5. Every Marine is a rifleman.
6. The Marine Corps traditions of rapid deployment and assault from the sea require constant innovation.
7. In the Marine Corps, uncommon valor is a common virtue.
8. Marines instill leadership by example.
9. *Semper fidelis* epitomizes honor, courage, and commitment.
10. Marines are "no better friend, no worse enemy."
11. The Marine Corps strives to represent the cultural diversity of the nation's people.

Core messages 10 and 11 were added during the planning for Phase II.

which visitors feel a chill while walking through the scene), POWs, and weapons and vehicles used by the combatants.<sup>45</sup>

In the Air, on Land, and Sea: The War in Vietnam is the last themed gallery of the 2006 opening. Focusing on one of the longest wars in Marine Corps history, the Vietnam War story tells of the experiences of Marines and their allies fighting insurgents and North Vietnamese troops in both urban and rural areas. A Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopter represents the air war. This aircraft is the helicopter piloted by Marine Captain Stephen W. Pless in action against the enemy in 1967, for which he was

<sup>42</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 6–7; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 04.01–04.17; and Final Text, 8–42.

<sup>43</sup> Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 05.1–05.19; and Final Text, 43–76.

<sup>44</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 20–25; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 010.1–10.24; and Final Text, 77–185.

<sup>45</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 26–29; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 11.1–11.23; and Final Text, 186–233.



Courtesy of Anthony Espree, NMMC Exhibits Branch  
Recent view of Leatherneck Gallery from the second deck overlook of the NMMC.



Courtesy of Eric Long, Smithsonian Institution  
U.S. Marine tank and infantry assault on North Korean position in the South Korean capital of Seoul, September 1950.

awarded the Medal of Honor for valor. Visitors see Marines fighting at Hue City and walk through a Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter into an immersive exhibit of Marines at Hill 881 South near Khe Sanh in 1968.<sup>46</sup>

Defending the New Republic was one of three galleries that opened in 2010. More than 90 years of almost continuous warfare are portrayed here, from the birth of the Corps in 1775 through America's costly Civil War in 1865. The museum's oldest artifact—an engraved powder horn used by a Marine in 1776—is exhibited here. In one scene, Corporal John F. Mackie fires on Confederate positions from a gun port on the USS *Galena* (1862), recreating the action that resulted in his being awarded the Medal of Honor, the first for a Marine.<sup>47</sup>

In the second gallery that opened in 2010, Global Expeditionary Force, visitors first see Sergeant Daniel J. Daly fighting a Chinese “Boxer” atop the Tartar

Wall of Peking in 1900 above his exhibited two Medals of Honor. The gallery takes visitors to all points of the compass and travels from 1866 to 1916. Various artifacts are displayed that tell the stories of Marines who lived during these times in both combat and at home. The shotguns and childhood violin of Marine bandleader John Philip Sousa, the “March King,” are on exhibit.<sup>48</sup>

The third gallery that opened in 2010, Marines in World War I focuses on the Marines in France and that war's innovations in tactics and weapons. A short film of the famous battle at Belleau Wood in June 1918 is included in the immersive space of the fight that contains cast figures, weapons, and other objects from the period. A Thomas-Morse S-4B aircraft flies overhead and a Liberty truck, restored by the NMMC staff, stands ready to take provisions to the front.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 30–33; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 12.01–12.20; and Final Text, 234–300.

<sup>47</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 8–11; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 06.01–06.18; Draft Text, Phase 1A, National Museum of the Marine Corps, Christopher Chadbourne and Associates, Fentress Bradburn Architects Ltd., and Col Joseph H. Alexander (Ret), January 2007, 1–198.

<sup>48</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 12–15; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 07.01–07.25; and Draft Text, 199–348.

<sup>49</sup> Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 16–19; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 08.01–08.19; and Draft Text, 349–467.





Exhibits Branch, NMMC

This graphic shows the final phase gallery layout. From left, the chronology starts in 1976 and ends with Operation Iraqi Freedom on the right.

### *Final Phase–Phase II*

In October 2012, the museum staff commenced their work on the final phase expansion. This phase adds another 117,000 square feet to the building and includes a 350-seat giant screen theater with signature film, galleries to tell the Marine story for the years 1976 to the present, the Interwar Years, an art gallery, education and staff spaces, a children's gallery, two themed galleries—From the Sea, depicting the Marine story from 1976 to 2001 and Afghanistan and Iraq, exhibiting the history 2001 to the present—a large changing/temporary exhibit gallery, the Hall of Valor, and a sports gallery. The MCHF funded \$69 million for the vertical construction and the Marine Corps \$34.3 million for the exhibits. Groundbreaking occurred in 2015, and two galleries opened in 2017. The remaining galleries will open between 2019 and 2026. The architectural firm for the first phase, Fentress, returned to complete the museum's structural design, Balfour Be-

atty returned to build the structure, and Eisterhold Associates of Kansas City designed the galleries.<sup>50</sup>

With Phase I lessons learned in hand, the staff reached out to the stakeholders for input—veterans, families, wounded warriors, units, active duty Marines, Headquarters staffs, senior leaders, and formal school faculty who lived the history or supported the warfighter. Objects and stories will link the new galleries to the current ones to provide visitors with a

<sup>50</sup> Lin Ezell, "Final Phase Executive Brief" (PowerPoint brief, National Museum of the Marine Corps, Quantico, VA, 1 October 2013); Final Phase Exhibit Galleries: Concept Design Draft, National Museum of the Marine Corps, Eisterhold Associates Inc., October 2014; Children's Gallery Design Development, National Museum of the Marine Corps, Eisterhold Associates Inc., 11 March 2015; Ezell, *National Museum of the Marine Corps*, 34–35; Ezell, "Final Phase Executive Brief"; Design Development Exhibit Design Package, sheets 09.01–09.12; Col Joe Alexander (Ret), "Small Wars Draft Text and Selected Images" (working paper, National Museum of the Marine Corps, 2005); and Draft Text, 468–587. Smaller exhibit spaces include themes such as transforming the Corps, no better friend, service and sacrifice, the events of 9/11, Marine families, and enduring missions. Images, videos, cast figures, and oral histories will enhance the story text.



means to connect the threads of a theme through history, including hands-on stations that present real-world decision-forcing situations faced by Marines as part of their ethical and leadership challenges.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

Lieutenant Gardner did not live to see the answer to his question, but if he had, the NMMC exceeds his expectations. The process to achieve a world class museum is not complete, as a living history museum is never finished. The staff works hard to maintain the high standard set in 2006 and continues to be relevant to the Corps. The NMMC is the first museum in the Marine Corps built to support the story within. The director is by position the curator of the Marine Corps and the Commandant's subject matter expert on museum stewardship within the Corps. The staff members are seasoned professionals and experts in their own disciplines. Today, the NMMC is a destination for the public with 5.85 million visitors as of mid-May 2019. An average of 50,000 schoolchildren visit the museum annually and they are greeted by staff members from the corps of volunteers and educators. The museum continues to maintain its close professional relationship with the History Division.

Within six years of the museum's opening, the American Alliance of Museums awarded NMMC its certification of accreditation, an honor awarded to approximately 1,000 of an estimated 33,000 museums in the United States. To attain this goal, the staff underwent a rigorous multiyear evaluation, by both internal and external evaluators in all aspects of museum operations, all while preparing to open three

additional galleries in 2010 and to plan for seven more in the years ahead.<sup>52</sup>

The acclaim bestowed on the NMMC is a result of the dedication by Marine leaders, Marines, civil servants, volunteers, contractors, and friends of the Corps during the last 80 years. These include the Commandants who provided the official support since the 1930s; the Marine historians and the heads of the museums through the years—Metcalf, Magruder, Nihart, Simmons, and recently Ezell—whose passion and visions of a museum advanced the professionalism of the staffs, programs, stewardship, and exhibitions; the civil servants and volunteers who are the “life and soul” of the museum; the designers and contractors who throughout the Heritage Center project were exceptional in their expertise and cooperation; and finally the friends of the Corps, the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, whose partnership with the History and Museums Division for 40 years has been critical for success. All have had a hand in the accomplishments of the museum program today.<sup>53</sup>

• 1775 •

<sup>51</sup> A large number of people with first-hand experience and respected opinions assisted the museum staff in this second phase. The NMMC organized a panel consisting of four retired Marine general officers, a retired sergeant major of the Marine Corps, and one university professor to guide the staff on exhibits and messaging. Approximately 50 writers supported the tasks of writing text, coordinated by the author, which included NMMC staff, Reserve Marines from the Field History Branch of History Division, historians, university educators, volunteers, interns, active duty and retired Marines, and naval personnel. A historian from History Division was included in the writing pool both to draft text and to review the drafts and selected maps from the other writers.

<sup>52</sup> A number of other awards received for the NMMC project included: 2006, Pyramid Award, Associated Builders and Contractors and Platinum Award for Engineering Excellence (with Centex, now Balfour Beatty), American Council of Engineering Companies of New York; 2008, American Architecture Award Chicago Athenaeum/Metropolitan Arts Press, Innovative Design and Excellence in Architecture using Steel; 2009, the Themed Entertainment Association recognized the NMMC for outstanding achievement in exhibits. The Marine Corps League of the Washington, DC, area awarded its Dickey Chapelle award to Director Lin Ezell for outstanding contributions to the morale, welfare, and well-being of the officers and enlisted Marines of the Corps, and the secretary of the Navy presented an award of merit for group achievement. In 2011, the South Eastern Museums Conference awarded its Gold Award to the NMMC in its annual publications competition, gallery guide category. The award-winning architectural design incorporated many sustainability features, such as a green roof system, bioretention facilities, and the use of highly recycled materials. The author has a complete list of awards from the building design courtesy of Brian Chaffee, lead architect at Fentress on the NMMC project.

<sup>53</sup> Edward P. Alexander, *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence* (London: AltaMira Press, 1995), 16. The museum website [www.usmcmuseum.org](http://www.usmcmuseum.org) includes a virtual tour and other information of interest to the visitor.

# Portal to Marine Corps History

## OBSERVATIONS OF A CIVILIAN HISTORIAN

by Gregory J. W. Urwin<sup>1</sup>

Although the U.S. Marine Corps is considerably smaller than the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force, it occupies a disproportionately broad space in the American public's consciousness. The Corps and its exploits have inspired scores of filmmakers, novelists, artists, journalists, and popular historians, and these works tend to underline the claim that Marines embody their country's best qualities. Yet, despite the leatherneck's prominence in popular culture, few members of the academy have chosen to specialize in Marine Corps history. For professional military historians who might be tempted to change course and study the soldiers of the sea, the Marine Corps History Division offers a convenient means of access. This article draws on the author's personal experiences to emphasize the division's utility to the historical community.

For more than a century, the Marine Corps has enjoyed folkloric status in America's imagination. As the twentieth century opened, various far-flung Marine detachments thrilled the public with their defense of Beijing's Legation District from Chinese Boxers and equally daring exploits in the Philippines,

Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. The press depicted Marines as a sort of sea-going foreign legion ideally suited for defending American interests around the developing world. Then came World War I, and the Corps' image underwent a revolutionary change. The all-leatherneck 4th Brigade in the U.S. Army's 2d Infantry Division lost 112 officers and 4,598 men when it cleared veteran German troops out of Belleau Wood in June 1918, but all that bloodletting vindicated Marines' claims that they constituted a *corps d'élite*. Their countrymen heralded them as the world's most indomitable assault troops, and Marines proudly appropriated a nickname bestowed, according to legend, by their enemies, *die Teufelshunden*—the Devil Dogs.<sup>2</sup>

World War II not only provided the Marine Corps with the opportunity to mobilize a record-breaking six divisions, but also to earn an equally outsized reputation as arguably America's most fearsome

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gregory J. W. Urwin is a professor of history at Temple University and a former president of the Society for Military History. A fellow with the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Company of Military Historians, and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, he has served 20 years as the founding general editor of the *Campaigns and Commanders Series* at the University of Oklahoma Press. His current book project is tentatively titled, *When Freedom Wore a Red Coat: The British Invasions of Virginia, 1781* (forthcoming).

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<sup>2</sup> While many historians have written on this piece of Marine Corps lore, nothing has been found to indicate that the Germans, in fact, used the term *devil dogs* in their official reports. Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991) remains the best single-volume overview of Marine Corps history. Robert B. Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 2d ed. (New York: Putnam, 1965; Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1996) is a classic account of that battle and its impact on the Corps' image. Also useful are Dennis E. Showalter, "Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps as a Military Elite," *Marine Corps Gazette* 63, no. 11 (November 1979): 44–58; Merrill L. Bartlett, *Lejeune: A Marine's Life, 1867–1942* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); and Hans Schmidt, *Maverick Marine: General Smedley D. Butler and the Contradictions of American Military History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987).

and respected fighting force. The first Japanese thrusts in the Pacific left the U.S. Navy and Army scrambling to rationalize the Pearl Harbor disaster and the loss of the Philippines, respectively, while a few hundred Marines produced a slew of morale-lifting headlines with their two-week defense of Wake Island, a stand that resulted in their country's first tactical victory of the war and reaffirmed Americans' confidence in the potency of their armed forces.<sup>3</sup> Just three months after Corregidor fell to the Japanese, the 1st Marine Division spearheaded the first American offensive of the Pacific war by landing at Guadalcanal. The division's dogged defense of the ground it took seemed to eclipse everything else about the six months of attrition that demonstrated the United States possessed the material resources and the moral strength to prevail over Japan. In the wake of that turning point, Marines delivered a series of bloody amphibious assaults that turned such strange-sounding places as Tarawa, Peleliu, Bougainville, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa into household words on the home front. Although the Army provided nearly four times as many divisions to the Pacific and conducted that theater's largest land campaign in the Philippines, many Americans considered the fighting in the world's widest ocean as quintessentially a Marine Corps show. Joseph Rosenthal's stirring photograph of the second raising of the American flag over Iwo Jima validated that perception in the eyes of millions, and it persists to this day, as witnessed by the 2010 HBO miniseries, *The Pacific*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The fight for Wake Island and what it meant to the American public are recounted in Gregory J. W. Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), and Gregory J. W. Urwin, "An Epic that Should Give Every American Hope: The Media and the Birth of the Wake Island Legend," *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 12 (December 1996): 64–69.

<sup>4</sup> Though handicapped by insufficient research and a somewhat narrow perspective, Aaron B. O'Connell succeeds in describing how the Marine Corps of World War II endeared itself to the American public in *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). A much more satisfying treatment of what Iwo Jima and its myths meant to the Marine Corps comes from Robert S. Burrell, *The Ghosts of Iwo Jima* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006). Six years after the end of World War II, Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory, and Its Practice in the Pacific* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951) credited the Marine Corps with raising amphibious warfare to a fine art during that conflict.

The Cold War, with its emphasis on nuclear deterrence, seemed to offer Marines few chances to shine again, but the Corps carved out a strategic role for itself as what Allan R. Millett called "the nation's principal 'force in readiness.'"<sup>5</sup> With the outbreak of the Korean War, the Provisional Marine Brigade hastened across the Pacific to help shore up the Pusan Perimeter. For most Americans, the most memorable incident in that frustrating conflict was the 1st Marine Division's fighting retreat from the Chosin Reservoir. The ability of those beleaguered leathernecks to check repeated thrusts from units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army reassured their fellow citizens that the United States possessed the spirit and wherewithal to prevail in a hostile world.<sup>6</sup> More than a decade later, the 3,500 men from the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade who splashed ashore at Da Nang on 9 March 1965 unknowingly kicked off the Americanization of the Vietnam War. Among the most vivid memories Americans retain of that ultimately unsuccessful conflict are the defense of Khe Sahn by two Marine regiments from 21 January to 9 July 1968 and the role that three Marine battalions played in recapturing the old imperial capital of Hue around the same time at the height of the Tet offensive.<sup>7</sup>

Since 11 September 2001, Navy SEALs and the Army's Delta Force have encroached on the Marines' preserve as America's most glamorized warriors, but the Corps stands ready should any situation arise that requires larger numbers of crack troops for more conventional operations. Young men and women still vie to prove themselves the toughest Americans of their

<sup>5</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Millett produced the definitive history of the first year of American military operations in the Korean War with *The War for Korea, 1950–1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010). See also Kenneth W. Estes, *Into the Breach at Pusan: The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the Korean War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); and Robert Debs Heintz Jr., *Victory at High Tide: The Inchon-Seoul Campaign* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1968), a triumphalist account of the Marines' revival of their amphibious skills that turned the tables on the North Korean People's Army.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Caputo, then a Marine lieutenant, recalled the early days at Da Nang in his widely read Vietnam memoir, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977). The Marine experience throughout the Vietnam War is admirably captured in Otto J. Lehrack, *No Shining Armor: The Marines at War in Vietnam—An Oral History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas), 1992.

generation by earning the privilege to wear the eagle, globe, and anchor.

One would think that an institution with such a storied past and universal brand recognition would inspire more innovative scholarly histories. A lot has been written about the Marine Corps, to be sure. Most of these works, however, focus on the Corps' battles and campaigns. While they ably relate what Marines do, they fall short of explaining just who Marines are and how they got to be that way. We also have far to go in understanding how the Corps evolved from a miniscule and oft-neglected scattering of ships' detachments and guards at naval yards into an institutionally complex and self-conscious elite whose adaptability and determination to serve national interests enable it to project American power to the most distant corners of the globe. Although the past two decades have witnessed noticeable progress on that front, professional historians have yet to reveal what made the Marine Corps tick at crucial points throughout its development.<sup>8</sup>

Why, one may well ask, does the historiography on the Marine Corps have yet to exhibit the same scope and level of sophistication as the monographic literature devoted to the U.S. Army? True, the Corps has always been dwarfed by the other armed forces, but bigger does not necessarily translate into better in choosing viable topics for historical research. Indeed, the fact that there have been comparatively fewer soldiers of the sea makes it easier to collect the data required to generalize reliably about them. With cultural studies all the rage in the historical profession these days, one would think that scholars would be clamoring to probe the inner working of an organization as distinctive and conspicuous as the Marine Corps.

The fact of the matter is that some historians view Marine Corps history as a minefield that they enter at their peril. The Corps is what military journalist Thomas E. Ricks describes as "a culture apart," and

that can intimidate academics. Furthermore, a considerable number of Marine Corps histories are penned by Marines or Marine veterans, and many of them are unapologetically celebratory. That leads scholars who never wore a Marine uniform to fear that any contributions to this field that take a critical bent would not be warmly received.<sup>9</sup> Colonel Robert Debs Heintz Jr., the officer in charge of the Historical Section in the Marine Corps Division of Public Information who oversaw the production of the first generation of Marine monographs on World War II, personified his Service's intellectual tribalism at its most virulent. Two years before Heintz's death, he wrote Commandant Louis H. Wilson Jr. to denounce the employment of civilians by the Marine history program:

I doubt if you have much experience with the breed of civil-service military historians; to know them, as I do, is not to love them. They are a seedy, self-serving crew, many unemployable at anything like their Government pay in academia. They shift back and forth from service to service, wherever the grade increases lead them in the civil service game. There are exceptions to all generalizations including the above. But, if you ever want a sample of civil-service military history at its worst, just look at our own dull, unimaginative, poorly written History of Marine Corps Operations in World War II, which was the result of an era in which deadhead colonels routinely dozed over the old Historical Branch and the civilians ran it.<sup>10</sup>

Graduate students still shiver over the fate of the late professor Craig M. Cameron of Old Dominion University. Cameron cooked up a bold departure from Marine Corps studies with his 1994 book,

<sup>8</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 649–51. The author first offered this critique (in much less measured language) in "United States: Armed Forces, Marine Corps," in Charles Messenger, ed., *Reader's Guide to Military History* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 606–8.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, *Making the Corps* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 19.

<sup>10</sup> R. D. Heintz Jr. to Louis H. Wilson Jr., 14 August 1977, Robert Debs Heintz Jr., Papers, Personal Papers Collection, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.



*American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951*. Instead of writing a traditional chronicle of the 1st Marine Division's combat record, Cameron focused on the myths and cultural imagination that shaped how Marines viewed themselves during World War II and the early years of the Cold War. Cameron's approach impressed the historical profession and resulted in his receiving the 1997 Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Military History. Nevertheless, he infuriated Marine readers by likening Marine training and attitudes to those adopted by the *Waffen-SS* and other killer elites. Cameron also raised hackles by identifying certain aspects of Marine culture as homoerotic, something that might seem less shocking today than it did a quarter of a century ago. *American Samurai's* page on Amazon.com still displays reviews that echo the hate mail that inundated Cameron. One critic, apparently unaware that Cameron had served as a Marine officer from 1980 to 1984, fumed that people like him "are not fit to utter the phrase 'Marine Corps,' let alone offer an opinion of its war fighting preeminence. Tens of thousands of voices long dead shout them down."<sup>11</sup>

Speaking as a non-Marine who has published on Marine Corps history, I would say that I have never found the field to be unwelcoming. The perception that the Corps cannot tolerate critical scrutiny is false. Indeed, openness to what the past may teach is essential to that Service's continuing health. Allan Millett, a Marine who also arguably ranks as the leading military historian of his generation, put it in these words: "In the continual struggle to match performance with elitist rhetoric, in the daily challenge to separate organizational mythology from relevant military doctrine, the Corps must understand its own past without excessive self-congratulation."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth and Imagination in the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); "Craig McNeil Cameron," *Chicago Tribune*, Obituaries, 16 January 2005; "American Samurai: Myth and Imagination in the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division," Amazon, accessed 21 November 2018; and Gregory J. W. Urwin, "World War II: Armed Forces, United States, Marine Corps," in Messenger, *Reader's Guide to Military History*, 758.

<sup>12</sup> Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, xviii.

The official histories produced by the Marine Corps History Division play an indispensable part in the process Millett outlined. Those titles operate as the first draft on subjects that interest historians who toil outside of the Corps, and their footnotes and bibliographies provide leads to sources for continuing research. As I learned through my career, the division also functions as a readymade portal to help initiate civilian historians into the mysteries of Marine Corps history.

My involvement with Marine studies owes more to accident than design. After I earned my bachelor's degree in 1977, I decided—with a young man's characteristic hubris—that I was too educated to ever work again with my hands. I therefore started writing historical articles for pulp magazines like *Air Classics*. I began by churning out biographies of World War I flying aces, but most *Air Classics* readers preferred World War II. The editor accordingly blackmailed me by threatening to publish my World War I material only if I wrote some pieces on the subsequent global conflict. Momentarily stumped, I then remembered the 1942 Paramount film, *Wake Island*, which I had seen on television as a boy. The "last stand" character of that dramatization had always been appealing, and I remembered that the Marines who defended Wake and their Japanese foes had both used airplanes.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, I conducted a quickie research job and wrote a pot-boiler called "The Wildcats of Wake Island" about Marine Fighting Squadron 211 (VMF-211) and the 12 Grumman F4F-3 Wildcat fighter planes it flew in a desperate attempt to defend the atoll. Under the article's title, the editor added this florid teaser: "In their planes or without them, the men of VMF-211 proved that U.S. Marines could fight anywhere with anything and hit their enemy hard."<sup>14</sup>

The article appeared in the September 1977 issue of *Air Classics*. About a month later, the editor for-

<sup>13</sup> The author's obsession with last stands led to his first book: Gregory J. W. Urwin, *Custer Victorious: The Civil War Battles of General George Armstrong Custer* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Gregory J. W. Urwin, "The Wildcats of Wake Island," *Air Classics*, September 1977, 78–82, 94–95.



Author's collection

2dLt John F. Kinney, VMF-211, at the Ewa Marine airfield on Oahu, Hawaii, in November 1941, shortly before his transfer to Wake Island. Retiring from the Marine Corps as a brigadier general, Kinney was the first Wake veteran to reach out to the author.

warded me a letter from a reader that bore the signature of John F. Kinney, "Brig General U.S. Marine Corps (Ret)." That must have made my eyes bug out. Nearly 36 years earlier in December 1941, Second Lieutenant Kinney had distinguished himself in Wake's defense as VMF-211's engineering officer. In May 1945, he and four other American officers successfully escaped from the Japanese in China. Much to my delight, General Kinney asked me if I was interested "in writing the whole story of WAKE."<sup>15</sup>

Although I had majored in history while an un-

dergrad, the idea that one could interrogate living sources was something that had never occurred to me, and I jumped at General Kinney's invitation. As our relationship grew, the general introduced me to other American veterans of the Wake Island Campaign. Many of those men were reaching retirement age, which left them more willing to talk about their wartime experiences. One was Charles A. Holmes, a former warrant officer with an antiaircraft artillery battery on Wake who served as the historian of the Defenders of Wake Island, the garrison's veterans association. Holmes took me under his wing and became my chief promoter, encouraging his comrades to speak or correspond with me. As I gathered first-hand testimony, I initially intended to write a more accurate article about Wake's defense. It soon dawned on me that I was accumulating the kind of data that would permit me to write the history of a small American battle from the bottom up—something along the lines of John Keegan's *The Face of Battle*.<sup>16</sup> I accordingly chose Wake Island as the topic for my doctoral dissertation at the University of Notre Dame, whose graduate program I entered in 1979.

Although my oral history work uncovered a lot of interesting information, I realized that I could not test the reliability of what my interview subjects related unless I researched the Wake Island campaign from the top down. In order to understand why Wake's defenders could hold their Japanese opponents at bay for 16 days, I also needed to familiarize myself with Marine culture and the state of the Corps on the eve of World War II. That necessitated spending a month or more plumbing the Marine Corps Historical Archives, which then resided in the Marine Corps Historical Center at the Washington Navy Yard. The archives housed after action reports and other unpublished materials of potential use in unraveling the Wake Island story. A generous Marine Corps Historical Program research grant provided the funding required for an extended research trip, and I headed off to our nation's capital in early January 1982.

In those days, what eventually became the Marine Corps History Division was a component of the

<sup>15</sup> John F. Kinney to Gregory J. W. Urwin, 24 January 1978, author's collection.

<sup>16</sup> John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).

History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. It shared space with the Marine Corps Historical Archives, Marine Corps Historical Library, and Marine Corps Oral History Collection, which were housed on the second deck of the Marine Corps Historical Center, a sturdy old building of white-washed brick.

I remember the day I reported to the Historical Center, anxious to start accumulating some archival dust under my fingernails. After I registered with security, an enlisted man conducted me to the office of retired Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, who had just completed his 10th year as director of the History and Museums Division. The general was a veteran of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. He possessed a master of arts in journalism from Ohio State University and had established his bona fides as a historian by publishing a popular history marking the Marine Corps' bicentennial.<sup>17</sup> Simmons was an immaculately dressed and groomed man with a movie star's good looks and a diplomat's polished manners. He received me graciously and provided a concise briefing on the available research facilities and the general procedures to be followed.

Following that interview, General Simmons entrusted my handling to his subordinates, and a young historian could not have asked for a better set of mentors. Instead of mixing with the "seedy, self-serving crew" derided by Colonel Heinl, I found myself privileged to become the pampered guest of a community of scholars and civil servants whose knowledge of Marine Corps history was equaled by their professionalism, dedication, and commitment to my making optimal use of the time spent among them. Several historians from the History and Museums Division interrupted their own work to offer advice. Jack Shulimson was busy writing an official history on Marines in the Vietnam War, but he generously shared insights gleaned from his personal research to school me on the origins of professionalism in the Marine officer



Author's collection

TSgt Charles A. Holmes, seen here in Honolulu, Hawaii, in November 1941, served in Battery E, Wake Island Detachment, 1st Defense Battalion. As the historian of the Defenders of Wake Island, he assisted the author in scheduling interviews with veterans of the 16-day-siege of the atoll. Holmes' papers now reside in the Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division.

corps.<sup>18</sup> I enjoyed equally fruitful conversations with Henry I. Shaw Jr. and Benis M. Frank, who had both worked on the magisterial *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, also known as the "Red Books," which had superseded the monographs produced under Colonel Heinl's auspices in the late 1940s. Shaw and Frank knew the sources on Wake Island and the prisoner of war (POW) experiences of its garri-

<sup>17</sup> See Edwin H. Simmons, *The United States Marines: The First Two Hundred Years, 1775-1975* (New York: Viking, 1976).

<sup>18</sup> Much of what Jack Shulimson taught the author appeared in Shulimson's groundbreaking book, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880-1898* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993).



Author's collection

From left to right: PFCs Clifton H. Lewis, LeRoy N. Schneider, and John E. Pearsall of the Wake Island Detachment, 1st Defense Battalion. These three young Marines survived the fight for Wake and three-and-a-half years as prisoners of war under the Japanese. Pearsall's POW diary and notes now belong to the Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division.

son, and they pointed me in the right direction more than once.<sup>19</sup> Frank also acted as director of the Marine Corps Oral History Collection, and he helped me locate the transcripts of interviews with retired officers whose experiences would deepen my appreciation of the "old Corps" of the 1920s and 1930s. The ebullient Richard A. Long lent me the transcribed interviews that he conducted for a history of the 4th Marines, the regiment that transferred from Shanghai, China, on the eve of the Pacific war—only to endure combat and capture in the Philippines. This generous gesture also contributed to my broader knowledge of the Service culture that produced the Wake Island Marines.

I spent an inordinate amount of my time in the History and Museums Division's Reference Section, which turned out to be a storehouse of information

on Marine units, bases, and battles, along with detailed biographical data on the Marine officers who figured in my research. I shall never forget how much I owed Danny J. Crawford, Robert V. Aquilina, and their colleagues for assisting me in navigating their innumerable files to find what I needed.

Armed with the photostat copies and notes that I gathered at the Marine Corps Historical Center, along with treasures uncovered at the National Archives and other repositories, I managed to write and defend my dissertation, a 515-page monster titled "The Defenders of Wake Island: Their Two Wars, 1941-1945," within two years. A revised version of the first half of that opus was published as *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island* in 1997. That book won the 1998 General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award, which proved instrumental in obtaining a position at Temple University. Following a second visit in 1998 to the Marine Corps History Center at the Washington Navy Yard before it transferred its archival holdings to Quantico, Virginia, I completed my last book-length contribution to Marine Corps history, *Victory in Defeat: The Wake Island Defenders in Captivity, 1941-1945*, which Naval Institute Press released in 2010.

Since my arrival at Temple in 1999, I have directed two dissertations devoted to Marine Corps history. The students who produced them, David J. Ulbrich and Earl J. Catangus Jr., both received dissertation research fellowships from the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, which permitted them to interact with a reorganized Marine Corps History Division at its current location in Quantico. Ulbrich and Catangus received the same kind of solicitous care from the Marine history program that I enjoyed decades earlier. Ulbrich published his dissertation with Naval Institute Press in 2011 as *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936-1943*, and it won the 2012 General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Book Prize. Catangus is currently revising his 2016 dissertation, " 'Getting Rid of the Line': Toward an American Infantry Way of Battle, 1918-1945," for publication, and it should result in an equally fine book.

Serious military history has undergone a revo-

<sup>19</sup> The two volumes from the Red Series most useful to the author's research were Frank O. Hough et al., *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, vol. 1, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1958); and Benis M. Frank and Henry I. Shaw Jr., *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, vol. 5, *Victory and Occupation* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1968).



lution during the past four decades. While its practitioners still write about commanders and military operations, they have enriched their work by tapping the approaches of social, cultural, ethnic, gender, political, diplomatic, business, and environmental history.<sup>20</sup> Applying the methodologies developed by those subfields to Marine Corps history will produce numerous insights into what makes Marines so unique and their interactions with American society and the societies they have impacted during their many years of global service. Those revelations will complement the traditional narrative of what Marines do on the battlefield.

Based on my personal experience as a student, historian, and teacher, I consider the Marine Corps History Division as an indispensable ally for any civilian academics who aspire to write about America's soldiers of the sea. Such a relationship will inevitably contribute to the ongoing maturation of the history of an organization that tells us so much about this country's character.

• 1775 •



*Author's collection*  
David J. Ulbrich (left) and Gregory J. W. Urwin (right) claim Wake Island for Temple University in August 2002 while shooting a two-hour documentary special there for the History Channel based on Urwin's *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island*.

<sup>20</sup> See Tami Davis Biddle and Robert M. Citino, Society for Military History white paper, "The Role of Military History in the Contemporary Academy," 30 November 2014.

## IN MEMORIAM

# Oscar Edward Gilbert Jr.

10 DECEMBER 1946–10 FEBRUARY 2019

*by Kenneth W. Estes and Romain Cansière*

Oscar Edward Gilbert Jr. was born in Birmingham, Alabama, to Oscar E. Gilbert Sr. and Elsie Mae Kendrick Gilbert. He grew up in a small, unincorporated suburb called Green Acres, where his parents and extended family members owned small farms. Although he lived in a typical small American town, he spent a lot of time at his uncles' farms in rural Shelby County, Alabama, and his father owned a small farm where he hoped to someday retire. Gilbert also hunted and fished a lot. He spent his entire youth there, graduating from Jones Valley High School in 1964. As a teenager, he worked in landscaping and in fence construction. He then attended and graduated from the University of Alabama with a bachelor of science in geology in 1969 and a master of science in 1974; he later earned his doctorate at the University of Tennessee in 1981. While a student in Alabama, Gilbert met Catherine Rittman; they were married in 1971.

After obtaining his doctorate, he worked for a state geological survey in uranium exploration and taught at Auburn University (he liked to tell Auburn jokes to his captive audience). Gilbert spent most of his geological and geophysical career at a succession of oil and gas companies in both domestic and international exploration and production. His early ambition was to work the length of the Appalachian Mountains; instead, he got to work in and visit numerous countries. He retired in 2009.

Gilbert also served in the Marine Corps Reserve



*Photo by Dave Pena*

Gilbert with late Col Edward L. Bale Jr., who died in December 2017 and to whose "In Memoriam" piece Gilbert contributed in the Winter 2017 issue of *Marine Corps History*.

as an artilleryman and noncommissioned officer instructor from 26 June 1969 to 25 June 1975. He taught the required annual refresher courses on a number of subjects, including the history of the Marine Corps.

In his later years, Gilbert became a military



Photo by Carole Dowd

Oscar Edward Gilbert Jr. and his wife Catherine on the day he received the 2016 Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award for outstanding nonfiction.

history enthusiast. One day, as he was complaining about contradictions and factual errors in a book he was reading, his wife Catherine retorted, "If you're so smart, why don't you write your own book?" Gilbert reached out to a friend who was a retired master gunnery sergeant, who helped him contact surviving veterans from World War II for his first book: *Marine Tank Battles in the Pacific* (2001).

He began his research for that book in August 2000, attending the annual meeting and reunion of the USMC Tankers Association, held that year at Coos Bay, Oregon. In what would become a characteristic method of Gilbert's, he spent many hours interviewing the veteran tankers and quickly gained their confidence and friendship. He relished getting close to history through living witnesses and their photographs and documents that they shared with him. He

showed equal intensity working in various archives, museums, and collections around the United States.

Gilbert never accepted anything as the final word on a subject. He liked to reexamine history and if at all possible to tour the old battlefields, not just recycle previous accounts.

In his work, he aimed to understand military history from the bottom up, with a particular interest in the personal experiences of the men who were actually there. In doing so, he proved that many of the accepted common-knowledge accounts of the role of the tank in the Marine Corps were erroneous and underestimated, as were several other elements of the actions he studied.

Gilbert liked teaching and it showed in his published works and correspondence with his friends. His well-crafted books made history accessible to all. His series of books on Marine Corps tank battles will remain a definitive reference to all readers, professionals and students alike.

In all, Gilbert authored 18 books on the subject and (thanks to his wife Cathy) on the American War of Independence. His book *Tanks in Hell: A Marine Corps Tank Company on Tarawa* (coauthored by Romain Canisère; 2015) was awarded the 2016 General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award for outstanding nonfiction.

As a military historian, Gilbert wrote for veteran, historical, and hobby magazines, and he served as a technical and historical advisor on film and television projects. He appeared on CNN and several episodes of the cable television series *Greatest Tank Battles*. Yet, despite his evident talent and skills in military history, he never considered himself an expert.

Oscar Edward Gilbert Jr. died 10 February 2019 from metastatic melanoma at home in Katy, Texas. He is survived by numerous relatives but primarily the members of his immediate family: wife Catherine, son Oscar III and spouse Lauren Nicole, daughter Elizabeth Jordan Gilbert-Hillier and spouse Adam Hillier, daughter Elana Jillian Gilbert, and grandchildren Oscar IV, Levi, and Lilly Gilbert.

IN MEMORIAM

# Second Lieutenant Elwood Ray Bailey

MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 223  
18 AUGUST 1920–24 AUGUST 1942

by Geoffrey W. Roecker<sup>1</sup>

Elwood Ray Bailey was born on 18 August 1920 to Michigan farmers Ray and Lula Live-say Bailey. He grew up on the family farm in Sandstone Township and attended schools and social events in nearby Parma. Photographs from Bailey's childhood show an outdoorsy boy rowing with his dog and fishing with his older sister, Helen Virginia, at McCormick Lake in the northern part of the state. He applied himself well in school and, after graduating from Parma High in 1938, he was accepted to Jackson Junior College in Jackson, Michigan.

There were two great loves in Bailey's young life. The first was his sweetheart. He noticed Daisy Eunice Roberts while attending Parma High, or maybe she noticed him first; he was good looking, athletic, and "a hell of a nice guy."<sup>2</sup> Their class was so small they could scarcely have missed each other. Bailey and Roberts started dating, and by graduation were all but insepa-



Courtesy Wayne Tompkins

Elwood Bailey's acid-etched identification tag was recovered from the wreck of his Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter and returned to his family.

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Roecker is the founder of MissingMarines, an initiative focused on the recovery and repatriation of U.S. Marine Corps personnel who remain unaccounted for from World War II. He runs two research websites ([www.missingmarines.com](http://www.missingmarines.com) and [www.1stbattalion24thmarines.com](http://www.1stbattalion24thmarines.com)) and has written numerous articles and profiles for both projects. Roecker is the author of the forthcoming book *Leaving Mac Behind: The Lost Marines of Guadalcanal* (December 2019). A version of this article that appeared on MissingMarines.com in October 2018 received the 2019 Gen Roy S. Geiger Award by the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Tompkins, email to author, 9 January 2018.

able. Bailey's second love was flying. Jackson Junior College was an early adopter of the Civilian Pilot Training Program and flying classes were offered as



part of the curriculum. The chance for thrills mixed with practical instruction was a popular draw for students, and as Europe descended into war, both the headstrong and the realists concluded that the United States might one day follow. A civilian pilot's license might someday translate into a military commission.

Then, too, there was the simple joy of flying—still a novel experience in 1939 and 1940. Bailey was so enamored with the air that he pooled some of his savings with his buddies and bought a single-engine Piper Cub. Bailey, Zenneth A. Pond, and William “Bill” Maher spent hours behind the controls of their little plane practicing maneuvers and stunts. On the ground, they must have talked about the prospect of war and what they would do if America got involved in the global conflict. All three decided to beat the draft and earn the gold wings of naval aviators.

Pond could not wait. He dropped out of Jackson Junior College, entered the Navy in May 1941, and was soon earning honors in training at Naval Air Station Grosse Ile, Michigan.<sup>3</sup> Bailey followed a month later on 26 June—he wanted to graduate before joining—and easily passed the rigorous screening. Their friend, Bill Maher, was not so lucky; the Navy uncovered a medical issue that was deemed disqualifying.<sup>4</sup> After several weeks of elimination training, Seaman Second Class Bailey bade farewell to his family and set out on the journey from Jackson to Jacksonville, Florida, and the newly commissioned Naval Air Station where he would train as a cadet.<sup>5</sup> Roberts was not quite ready to let Bailey go and made the trip down with him.

Cadet Bailey was in Jacksonville on 7 December 1941. His exact reaction to the news of Pearl Harbor is not known, but one might assume that practicing maintenance, maneuvers, and mock dogfights sud-



*Courtesy Wayne Tompkins*  
Elwood Bailey and Eunice Roberts were high-school sweethearts. They married just before Bailey departed for overseas duty.

denly took on a new level of seriousness for every man in his class. Instructors bore down harder than ever, and the training grew more intense—solo navigation problems, night flights, and learning to fly on instruments alone. It was a far cry from doodling over Jackson in a Piper Cub.

Finally, on 22 April 1942, Bailey received the coveted “Wings of Gold” that proclaimed him a fully qualified naval aviator. At some point, he made the decision to become a Marine—possibly as early as enlistment; the Corps did not have a separate aviation training program—and traded in his white Navy ensign's uniform for the forest green of a Marine second lieutenant. His commission was effected in Miami on

<sup>3</sup> “58 at Grosse Ile Base Earn Advanced Training in Aviation,” *Detroit (MI) Free Press*, 13 July 1941. According to Navy muster rolls, Pond enlisted on 31 May 1941. He was the youngest cadet in his class and earned the top spot by winning the Knudsen Trophy.

<sup>4</sup> Maher later joined the Army Air Corps and spent the wartime years flying “The Hump”—a notoriously difficult transport route over the Himalayas into China. He went on to have a distinguished career as a civilian pilot.

<sup>5</sup> Muster rolls for NAS Jacksonville indicate that Bailey was appointed an aviation cadet on 13 November 1941.



Courtesy Wayne Tompkins

Elwood Bailey at home in Michigan, ca. 1941.

15 May 1942, 10.5 months after he enlisted at Grosse Ile, and he was presented with orders instructing him to report to San Diego, California.

In California, Second Lieutenant Bailey was assigned to the newly formed 2d Marine Aircraft Wing. He must have been delighted to find his old buddy, now Second Lieutenant Pond, assigned to the same unit. Pond had completed his aviation training at Corpus Christi, Texas, and was commissioned only a few days before Bailey. The two friends were both assigned to a new squadron that was forming in Oahu, Hawaii. With only a few days before shipping out, the new pilots scrambled to put their affairs in order. Bailey had one thought in mind. Roberts joined him in

San Diego and the long-time sweethearts were married, allowing them to spend one final day together. On 26 June 1942, Bailey and Pond boarded the USS *Hilo* (AGP 2) and sailed for Pearl Harbor. Nine days later, they reported for duty with Marine Fighting Squadron 223 (VMF-223)—the “Rainbow Squadron” or “Fighting 23”—at Ewa Field, along with Second Lieutenants Noyes McLennan and Kenneth D. Frazier.<sup>6</sup>

“If any military man in Hawaii last June [1942] had told a colleague that Marine Fighting Squadron 223 was made of the stuff of heroes,” wrote *LIFE* reporter Richard Wilcox, “he would have been laughed out of the islands. It would take months for a bunch of kids, most of them straight from flying school and just learning to navigate, shoot, and maneuver their Grumman F4F Wildcats, normally to be able to fly together as a squadron.”<sup>7</sup> Since being commissioned on 1 May 1942, VMF-223 was racing toward a state of combat readiness under the leadership of Captain John Lucian Smith, “a hard-jawed, hazel-eyed Marine” all of 27 years old. He had a formidable task ahead of him. Only four of his pilots had more than a year’s service; the rest were young second lieutenants. Three of the latter were veterans of Midway and painted grim pictures of the abilities of Japanese pilots and the shortcomings of the Brewster F2A Buffalo fighters with which the squadron was equipped. Smith “begged and borrowed planes for his green pilots”—eventually replacing the hated Buffaloes with more advanced Grumman F4F Wildcats—and formed the squadron through a combination of hard work and sheer willpower. “All he could do was to double and redouble flying schedules, keep pounding technical knowledge into the heads of his enlisted men in the hope that the transformation from farm hand and store clerk to aircraft radioman and mechanic would be rapid and halfway thorough,” Wilcox wrote. “And he could pray that when the time came for the attack on the Solomons, VMF-223 would be prepared to fight.”<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> The squadron nickname would later change to the more familiar “Bulldogs.”

<sup>7</sup> Richard Wilcox, “Captain Smith and His Fighting 223,” *LIFE*, 7 December 1942, 120.

<sup>8</sup> Wilcox, “Captain Smith and His Fighting 223,” 120.

training regimen cost the life of one pilot a few days after Bailey joined the squadron.

Though Smith's pilots anticipated change every day, the arrival of deployment orders was shockingly sudden. "The order came on a Sunday to be on the carrier Tuesday morning," wrote Wilcox. "That left two days for a few final drinks in Honolulu, some movies and a last telephone call back to the States for sweethearts and wives. . . . [The] order was countermanded. VMF-223 had to be aboard in three hours. In the feverish haste of packing and last-minute plane checkovers, the squadron left Hawaii before it had time to make its farewells."<sup>9</sup> Nineteen officers and 65 enlisted men hurried aboard the escort carrier USS *Long Island* (ACV 1) on 2 August 1942 and were at sea bound for "destination secret" by nightfall.<sup>10</sup>

It took 15 days to reach their next port of call, which turned out to be Efate in the New Hebrides Islands. During that time, Bailey and his comrades were kept busy by the ever-energetic Smith. Second Lieutenant Roy A. Corry Jr., one of the Midway veterans and the squadron's gunnery officer, wheeled each of the squadron's planes to the carrier's side and fired bursts of tracers, fine-tuning each of the .50-caliber guns. McLennan dreamed up new dogfighting maneuvers, and Second Lieutenant Charles Kendrick became the squadron's self-taught and self-appointed weatherman. In their downtime, the men argued tactics, war news, rumors, and gripes. And sometimes they talked just to talk. Richard Wilcox listened in on their conversations. Corry "brooded about being killed." Kendrick and McLennan argued about the virtues of Harvard and Yale. Frazier and Pond made loud bets about how many Zeroes they were going to

shoot down.<sup>11</sup> "All hard, clean-cut members of the new breed of fighting men," proclaimed Wilcox, yet also "average Americans, some light-hearted, some solemn, some emotional." He also spoke often to Bailey, "who thought of the wife with whom he had lived for only a day before being sent into the Pacific."<sup>12</sup>

The squadron spent a single day at Port Vila, Vanuatu, which Smith used to exchange a handful of his pilots for more experienced flyers from VMF-212. By 19 August, they were at sea again. This time, the destination was well known: Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, where Marine ground forces were desperately hanging on against determined Japanese attacks on land, sea, and air. The little USS *Long Island* took on outsized importance as one of the few operable carriers in the South Pacific, and rather than risk the ship, it was decided to launch VMF-223 some 200 miles out at sea. On the morning on 20 August 1942, the first of their Wildcats roared down the flight deck and wobbled into the air. It was a hair-raising challenge for the young aviators, few of whom had had the chance to qualify on carriers.<sup>13</sup> Captain Marion E. Carl, one of the more experienced pilots, recalled "a tedious process with only one catapult and a crowded deck. Our formation was led by Lt. Col. Charles [L.] Fike, executive officer of [Marine Aircraft Group] MAG-23. . . . We watched Fike manage a shaky launch"—from the worryingly short flight deck—and "everybody else got off safely," followed by the dive-bombers of Marine Scout Bombing Squadron 232 (VMSB-232).<sup>14</sup> Elwood Bailey joined the formation circling above the *Long Island* and, at around 1330 hours, the flight departed in the direction of Guadalcanal.

The infamous island "looked green and peaceful in the morning air," Wilcox wrote. "As they brought their planes over the airfield which had been captured from the Japs, all of [the] Fighting 23 [VMF-223] felt

<sup>9</sup> Wilcox, "Captain Smith and His Fighting 223," 121.

<sup>10</sup> War Diary, VMF-223, August 1942, Record Group (RG) 38, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1875–2006, Series: World War II diaries/other records and histories, ca. 1/1/1942–ca. 6/1/1946, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC. The remainder of the squadron sailed aboard the USS *William Ward Burrows* (AP 6) several days later. The *Long Island's* history is somewhat long and complicated. It was converted to an aircraft carrier and initially designated APV 1 but then redesignated and commissioned as AVG 1. It was reclassified as an auxiliary aircraft carrier and redesignated ACV 1 on 20 August 1942. A year later, the *Long Island* was reclassified as an escort carrier and redesignated CVE 1 on 15 July 1943.

<sup>11</sup> Mitsubishi A6M Zero long-range fighter aircraft, operated by the Imperial Japanese Navy.

<sup>12</sup> Wilcox, "Captain Smith and His Fighting 223," 121.

<sup>13</sup> John B. Lundstrom, *First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign: Naval Fighter Combat from August to November 1942* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 118.

<sup>14</sup> MajGen Marion E. Carl with Barrett Tillman, *Pushing the Envelope: The Career of Fighter Ace and Test Pilot Marion Carl* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994).





*Courtesy Wayne Tompkins*

Cadet Bailey during his training to become a naval aviator. After receiving his wings, he elected to join the Marine Corps as a second lieutenant.

that this was going to be fun.”<sup>15</sup> They landed to a hero’s welcome. Overjoyed Marines, some with tears in their eyes, poured out of the jungle and swarmed around the aircraft, shaking hands and slapping backs. Until then, they had had no ground-based air support. Bailey and his buddies spent the balance of the day nervously critiquing the Navy servicing detachment—who “although willing and intelligent had, for the most part, less than four months service” and “required the closest supervision.”<sup>16</sup> They also solicited advice from the infantry: “Never go off in the jungle alone. Eat and sleep every chance you get. Duck when you hear a big one coming over.”<sup>17</sup> That night, they lay

under captured Japanese tents and mosquito netting and listened to the Battle of the Tenaru blazing a few hundred yards away.

Patrols began the next day. Noon was already established as “Tojo Time”—most likely for a Japanese raid—and a four-plane flight of VMF-223 Rainbows tangled with six Japanese Zeroes. The squadron’s first combat resulted in a kill credited to Major Smith and four Wildcats shot full of holes. Bailey likely made several flights in the days that followed. An ordinary combat patrol was about two hours long, and the Marines also flew air cover for damaged ships taking cover near Tulagi off the Solomon Islands. Reports of a Japanese naval task force sent excitement rippling through the “Cactus Air Force” on the afternoon of 23 August, and a strike group was assembled and sent to investigate, but bad weather forced them to return without making contact. Much later that night, a Japanese submarine sent some shells into the perimeter, a belated riposte to the aborted strike.<sup>18</sup>

Wilcox reported:

In a few days, the picnic atmosphere of life on Guadalcanal was dispelled. Life became a deadly, never-ceasing struggle. Fighting 23 was in the air every day. . . . At about 9:30 AM, the pilots of Fighting 23 would get an all-plane scramble as a flag was run up in front of the aircraft operations office. The pilots would sprint for their dispersed planes, then climb to meet the Japs coming in from the sea. They would get up into the sun and wait for the enemy to come, in their precise V-of-V’s. Then Smith would give the signal and they would scream down as bombers and Zeros [*sic*] fell like burning leaves from the Jap formation. Sometimes, along with them, one of Fighting 23’s Grummans would plummet crazily down and crash into

<sup>15</sup> Wilcox, “Captain Smith and His Fighting 223,” 122.

<sup>16</sup> War Diary, Marine Air Group (MAG) 23, August 1942, RG 38, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1875–2006, Series: World War II diaries/other records and histories, ca. 1/1/1942–ca. 6/1/1946, NARA.

<sup>17</sup> Wilcox, “Captain Smith and His Fighting 223,” 124.

<sup>18</sup> Guadalcanal was code-named was “Cactus”; the American air forces operating out of Guadalcanal were sometimes referred to as the Cactus Air Force.



the hills or in the sea around Guadalcanal.<sup>19</sup>

On 24 August 1942, VMF-223 encountered their first major air raid of 12 Zeroes and 15 bombers in a two-wave formation. Fourteen Wildcats—VMF-223 and their attached buddies from VMF-212—went to intercept. As Marion Carl's four-plane flight entered the fray, Bailey and Pond were either racing for their Wildcats or, if they were on alert status, were already in the cockpits and making frantic preparations to take off. A fully-laden Wildcat could take up to 45 minutes to reach attack altitude, and there was no time to waste. The Japanese fighters obliged by coming down to the deck, strafing the last VMF-223 pilots as they took off and wrecking one of the Wildcats.

In attempting to piece together the dogfight that followed, aviation historian John Lundstrom admits "confusion as to the details of the fight pretty much set the tone for this immensely perplexing air battle." As proof, he cites an interaction between correspondent Richard Tregaskis and Ken Frazier: "He [Frazier] could not say how many enemy bombers there had been or whether they were one or two motored craft."<sup>20</sup> Carl remembered that "this fight was very confusing." He had good reason to remember it; when he landed, he was the first ace in Marine Corps history.<sup>21</sup> The VMF-223 war diary claimed 15 enemy aircraft shot down and three more probably destroyed. Pond personally accounted for two bombers and a Zero; a few days later, he would be an ace. The bombers inflicted no damage. It was a great victory for VMF-223.

The elation was tempered by the sudden realization that not all of the Americans had returned. Second Lieutenant Robert Read, who had been caught on takeoff by the strafing Zeroes, managed to ditch near Florida Island. He returned safely after a few days. The Wildcat flown by Second Lieutenant Lawrence

Taylor, one of the VMF-212 pilots, fell in flames after shooting up a bomber.

The F4F-4 Wildcat Bureau Number 02095 flown by Bailey did not return at all. "The first to go was Bailey, the boy who had been married the day before he left to join the squadron," wrote Wilcox. "On Aug. 24 he flamed into the sea after shooting down two Zeros attacking Henderson Field."<sup>22</sup> Lundstrom described "a low-level running fight" over the island of Malaita that pitted a pair of Wildcats and three Army Bell P-400 Airacobras against six seasoned Japanese Navy pilots. One of those veterans shot up Bailey's plane, and "although seen to bail out over Tulagi, [Bailey] never came back."<sup>23</sup> Group and squadron war diaries simply recorded that Bailey failed to return and, after a month with no news, he was dropped from the rolls of VMF-223 and taken up by the Prisoners of War and Missing Persons Detachment at Headquarters Marine Corps. He was far from the last. One by one, VMF-223 pilots fell from the sky: Corry, Kendrick, McLennan, and even Pond, who took off to intercept a bombing strike on 10 September and never returned.<sup>24</sup>

News of Bailey's disappearance reached Jackson, Michigan, a few weeks later, and in the year of uncertainty that followed, his loved ones tried to keep their spirits up. Eunice Bailey moved in with Ray and Lula Bailey while attending the W. A. Foote Memorial School of Nursing in Jackson. On 7 December 1942, the first anniversary of Pearl Harbor, *LIFE* hit the newsstands with a photograph of Major John Smith—now a famous flier—on the cover. The senior Baileys bought a copy of Richard Wilcox's story, and his description of Elwood Bailey's fighter falling in flames to the sea must have been terrible to read. The New Year came; the anniversaries of his graduation, enlistment, commission, and marriage came and went. On 25 August 1943, the secretary of the Navy declared that Elwood Ray Bailey was officially dead. They could not even be sure they would have a body to bury.

His family tried to move on. In 1947, Eunice

<sup>19</sup> Wilcox, "Captain Smith and His Fighting 223," 124.

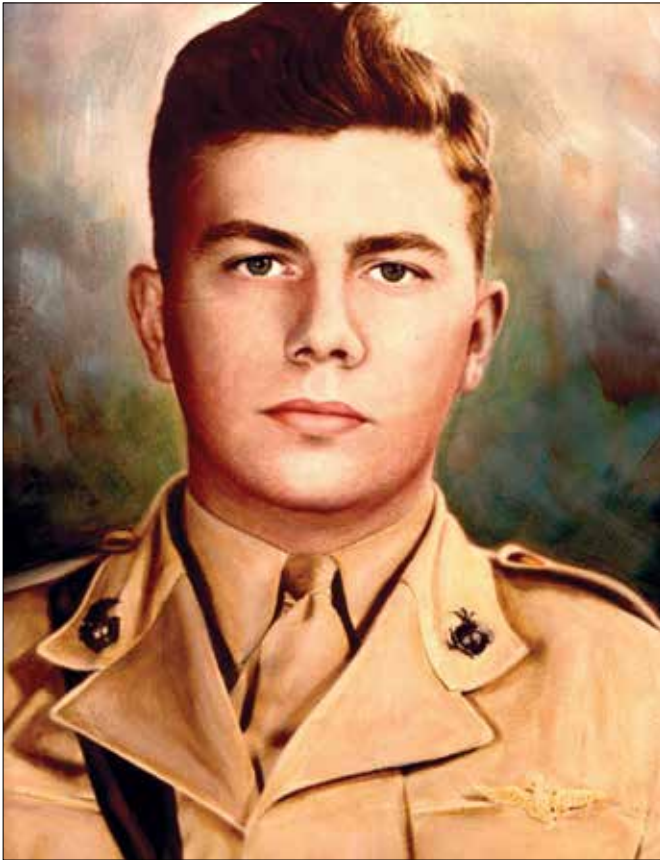
<sup>20</sup> Lundstrom, *First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign*, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Carl and Tillman, *Pushing the Envelope*. The term *ace* is not an official designation but generally is applied to pilots who shoot down five enemy aircraft.

<sup>22</sup> Wilcox, "Captain Smith and His Fighting 223," 124.

<sup>23</sup> Lundstrom, *First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign*, 143.

<sup>24</sup> Pond received the Navy Cross for valor in the air over Guadalcanal. As of this publication, his remains have not been recovered.



*Courtesy Wayne Tompkins*

2dLt Bailey earned his pilot's wings at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL, in April 1942. Family painting.

went to Ray and Lula requesting their permission to remarry; her intended was a wounded soldier she had been treating in the VA hospital in Dearborn, Michigan. The Baileys agreed. Importantly, this meant that Ray became the primary next of kin and contact point for a final attempt to recover Elwood Bailey's remains. Between 1947 and 1949, teams from the 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company traveled the Pacific in search of thousands of missing or unrecovered Americans who fell between 1941 and 1945. The Baileys might have read a newspaper item about Charles Kendrick Sr., a wealthy businessman who personally traveled to Guadalcanal to search for the body of his son, Elwood's squadron mate Second Lieutenant Charles Kendrick. The elder Kendrick beat the odds; his boy was found. The Baileys were not wealthy or well-connected, however; they could not make such a

journey, and the search teams had no more luck. With hundreds of square miles to cover in the Solomon Islands alone, and with no specific idea of where Bailey's aircraft had disappeared, they could only make the most general search. The Wilcox story seemed to be confirmed: Elwood Bailey must have gone down at sea, and there was no hope of his recovery.

The Baileys could not bury their son, so they buried the mention of him for the next generation. "I think the subject of his death left such a scar on everyone that it was just too painful a subject for them to discuss," recalled Elwood's nephew, Wayne Tompkins.<sup>25</sup> His mother, the former Helen Bailey, rarely talked about her younger brother. "We knew that he had died heroically in aerial combat in Guadalcanal," said Tompkins. "The unfortunate reality is [his family] died not really knowing for sure what had happened to him. . . . The fact that the circumstances of his death were unknown created a real sense of anguish."<sup>26</sup> While details about Elwood Bailey's early life faded into obscurity, the family continued to treasure his memory. The *LIFE* magazine issue became an heirloom. Eunice told her children "glowing stories" about her first husband, and Tompkins's son also became a naval aviator, following in Bailey's footsteps.

Seventy years passed.

In 2012, Clay Chulao was exploring in the jungles near his home in Mbarana Village, Guadalcanal, when he stumbled across the rusting wreckage of an American fighter plane. He managed to pry loose a wing, which he sold to the proprietor of a museum in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The buyer alerted the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), and a search team was dispatched in 2013. The site had been picked over, but significant debris remained—including the tail assembly, weather-bleached and rust-spotted, with the number 02095 still plainly visible.

Elwood Bailey's plane had not gone down at sea at all. Instead, it had crashed to earth in the foothills of Mount Austen, significantly inland from Henderson Field. One mystery was solved, but the whereabouts of

<sup>25</sup> Tompkins email.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor DesOrmeau, "Remains of Michigan WWII Pilot Found, Coming Home for Burial," *MLIVE.com*, 10 October 2018.

the pilot were still unknown. Had he bailed out, leaving the fighter to crash unmanned? Had the official records mistaken which plane he flew on the day he disappeared? Had he perhaps survived the crash only to become lost in the jungles or caught by a Japanese patrol? Or were his remains somewhere nearby, hidden by years of jungle growth and disturbed by scavengers? The JPAC team recovered debris from the site, but nothing that could be identified as human remains.

Three more years passed before Chulao entered the picture once again. He had more items from the crash site: a pistol; an identification tag bent and folded nearly in half as if hit by something hard; and, in the cautious language of the newly formed Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), “possible human remains.”<sup>27</sup> The tag, though damaged, was still plainly legible. It was of the early war style, acid etched

instead of stamped, and bore the inscription “E. R. BAILEY 2d Lt. USMCR.” With a reasonable association thus confirmed, the DPAA contacted Bailey’s family.

On 5 September 2017, just days after the 72d anniversary of his death, Elwood Ray Bailey was officially accounted for. His life and his friendship with Pond and Maher became the subject of a documentary film produced by students at his alma mater, and on 13 October 2018, his remains were laid to rest beside his parents. “It’s nice to finally think that their souls will be a little more at peace, knowing this whole thing had been brought to a conclusion,” commented Wayne Tompkins.<sup>28</sup>

Sadly, Eunice passed away in October 2015, after Elwood’s plane was found, but before his official recovery.

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<sup>27</sup> In January 2015, the Department of Defense reorganized its missing personnel recovery and identification efforts. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office were consolidated, forming the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. Department of Defense, “Statement from Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on Personnel Accounting Reorganization,” news release, 9 January 2015; Department of Defense, “Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Becomes Operational,” news release, 30 January 2015;

<sup>28</sup> DesOrmeau, “Remains of Michigan WWII Pilot Found, Coming Home for Burial.”

# REVIEW ESSAY

by Major Timothy Heck, USMCR<sup>1</sup>

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*Palestine: The Ottoman Campaigns of 1914–1918.* By Edward J. Erickson. (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 2016. Pp. 230. £19.99 cloth; £8.00 e-book.)

*The Battle of the Somme.* Edited by Mathias Strohn. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2016. Pp. 272. \$35.00 cloth; \$24.50 e-book.)

*Thunder and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917–1918.* By Edward G. Lengel. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015. Pp. 470. \$39.95 cloth.)

*Written in Blood: The Battles for Fortress Przemyśl in World War I.* By Graydon A. Tunstall. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. Pp. 408. \$45.00 cloth; \$9.99 e-book.)

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*The Great War of 1914–18 was a global war and its fronts were integrated and interdependent. . . . Modern scholarship rightly rejects the use of words like “sideshow” or “indirect approach” to capture what was going on in Italy, Salonika, the Middle East or Africa—let alone in Russia, the war’s other major front.* (Strohn, p. 15)

The centenary of the First World War has unleashed a library’s worth of new books about the conflict. Aimed at both scholarly and popular audiences, recent scholarship has helped expand our understanding of the conflict and its impacts, costs, and consequences. Many new works look beyond the traditional studies of combat operations on the western front to include an increased focus on operations in the Middle East and the eastern front. This expanded scholarship allows for a more nuanced and insightful comprehension of history. Of the four books reviewed here, all deepen our understanding of the conflict. Two focus on fronts outside of France. One focuses on a single battle and another on a single nation’s army.

Though the war started over the assassination

of an Austro-Hungarian archduke, very few English-language works since have analyzed the performance of the Austro-Hungarian Army or its Russian opponent. Norman Stone’s 1975 classic work, *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917*, remains the definitive text. More recent titles such as David R. Stone’s *The Russian Army in the Great War: The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (2015) have broadened our comprehension and appreciation for this often-overlooked theater. Graydon Tunstall’s *Written in Blood: The Battles for Fortress Przemyśl in WWI* analyzes Austro-Hungarian and Russian performance around the crucial Fortress Przemyśl in the war’s opening months.

Prior to the outbreak of war, the fortress was “an isolated and basically unknown garrison . . . only twenty-eight kilometers from the Galician frontier, that slowly assumed a pivotal role in Hapsburg eastern front military strategy” (Tunstall, p. 2). The obsolete fortress played an outsized role as “the expansive nine-hundred-kilometer eastern front, [was] too vast for available German, Austro-Hungarian or even Russian troops to defend” (Tunstall, p. 16). Due to Habsburg incompetence, within months of the war’s start its army had already “expended a catastrophic amount of professional and reserve soldiers” (Tunstall, p. 45). These losses became increasingly difficult to replace, further limiting the effectiveness of Aus-

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<sup>1</sup> Maj Timothy Heck, USMCR, is a field artillery officer by training. He is currently working on an analysis of Soviet military art during the Great Patriotic War.



tro-Hungarian armies. The fortress stood as a place of strength and refuge but, ultimately, an albatross for the Austro-Hungarians as they poured more and more resources into it.

By the end of September 1914, “nine Russian infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions blockaded the fortress; thus the citadel fulfilled its mission of binding significant enemy forces” (Tunstall, p. 65). Resupplying and attempting to liberate the besieged fortress, however, cost the Austro-Hungarians greatly. The result of weak Habsburg commanders and an overreliance on Fortress Przemyśl was that “hundreds of thousands of lives would be sacrificed on both sides of the battlefield in futile rescue attempts” (Tunstall, p. 138). Despite the assistance of their German allies against the Russians on other areas of the eastern front, the Habsburg army never formulated a strong and cohesive strategy, and Fortress Przemyśl continued to sap strength from other operations. After the German defeat at the Marne and the resulting collapse of the Schlieffen Plan, it became “obvious that the Austro-Hungarian army desperately required assistance to prevent its collapse” (Tunstall, p. 76).

Another previously under-covered area, the Middle East, has also seen a resurgence of Great War scholarship in the recent past. Traditionally, works on the Middle East covered the failed Allied operation at Gallipoli, British operations in Mesopotamia, or the exploits of Lawrence of Arabia. The war, however, expanded well beyond those well-trod events and reminded the reader of the global scale and impact of the war. Ultimately, the war’s imperial impact is perhaps no more clearly felt than in the Middle East where, despite an incredible cost, the British Empire lived on while the Russian and Ottoman empires collapsed. The impact of the Great War, especially in Palestine, continues to play out in current geopolitics.

*Palestine: The Ottoman Campaigns of 1914–1918* by Edward J. Erickson (a former professor of military history at Marine Corps University), presents an Ottoman perspective on the Palestinian campaign. The book is “intended to be a corrective to the Anglo-centric historiography [and] is not designed to be a comprehensive history that tells the entire story

from both sides” (Erickson, p. 1). Regardless of the disclaimer, Erickson presents a balanced view of British and Ottoman objectives, actions, and outcomes. Erickson’s writing reminds us that war is not fought against a stationary or unthinking enemy, and thus his analysis of both Ottoman and British operational art, logistics, and tactics are elucidating.

The war in Palestine, Erickson claims, differed from the traditional images of World War I. While machine guns, trenches, aircraft, and poison gas ruled the western front and our collective memory, these elements of an industrialized war of materiel did not play such a large role in Palestine.

It may be argued that the war in Palestine was, in fact, the last nineteenth-century war. In fact, the very signatures of the First World War were absent in the Palestine theatre. There were few continuous lines of trenches and the battles in Palestine were never battles of materiel, involving large numbers of crew-served weapons and huge expenditures of munitions. (Erickson, p. 4)

Rather, as he explains, Palestine was largely a war of maneuver for the underresourced armies facing off across vast swaths of desert.

By 1917, the British forces still had not defeated the weaker Ottoman military, which found itself spread between the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, and the eastern Caucasus. Despite spending much of 1916 strengthening and expanding their base of operations in Egypt, British commanders failed to heed the lessons of other operations during the First and Second Battles of Gaza (March and April 1917, respectively). Here, Erickson pulls no punches:

The defeat at [First] Gaza seemed to indicate that the British Army fighting the Ottomans failed to learn and adapt to the demands of modern war . . . almost two full years after Gallipoli, co-ordination between the infantry and the artillery continued to remain very weak. (Erickson, p. 82)

And, at the Second Battle of Gaza,  
Once again, two years after Gallipoli,  
the British demonstrated a lack of  
understanding concerning the char-  
acteristics of the Ottoman Army. In  
particular, the British artillery was  
very ineffective. (Erickson, p. 86)

The lack of learning by British commanders allowed Ottoman forces to continue to hold what should otherwise have been nearly untenable positions at the end of very weak lines of communications.

The arrival of British General Edmund H. H. Allenby in late June 1917, however, significantly changed Ottoman fortunes and the scope of the war. Following his assumption of command, the war in Palestine “was characterized by tactical and operational manoeuvre that had not been seen previously in that theatre” (Erickson, p. 124). As a result, the Ottomans never regained momentum, nor were they able to do more than temporarily halt British advances. The military collapse of the Ottoman Army in 1918 thus triggered the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and a redrawing of the Middle East’s maps.

Both authors use a variety of hard-to-access sources to create and support their narratives. Tunstall’s use of Austro-Hungarian archives allows him to explain the problems faced by commanders on both sides at Fortress Przemyśl while giving voice to the participants. Erickson’s Ottoman sources reveal an army unprepared for conflict because it was spread so thinly and was riven with political intrigue. By incorporating these previously underaccessed sources, both authors present well-argued and balanced analyses of their subjects.

Matthias Strohn’s *The Battle of the Somme* is a collection of essays written by military historians who dissect one of World War I’s seminal battles from a variety of perspectives. Strohn’s work and that of his essayists is not to portray the battle in a cohesive narrative format but rather to delve into various elements of the battle and its impacts. All but one of the essays are written with a focus on a singular combatant or element of the battle. This multinational approach

leads to an academically rewarding analysis of the battle and reflects the battle’s varied objectives and outcomes. Professor Lothar Höbelt, an Austrian historian, writes that it was ultimately unclear as to who won the battle, making the Somme “a perfect symbol of what was widely seen as the futility and the senseless slaughter of the Great War. It reinforces the image of the war in 1916 as one characterized by stalemate” (Höbelt, p. 23).

Chapters on the German, French, and British strategies open the book, reminding the reader that the Somme was not a strategic or even operational blunder. The Allies had clear strategic and operational objectives but, despite these, “[at] the tactical level, the offensive was nevertheless ill-conceived, despite the considerable effort put into its preparation and the Allies’ material superiority” (Soutu, p. 71).

Dr. Stuart Mitchell’s chapter on British Army operations and U.S. Army War College Professor Michael Neiberg’s chapter on French generalship help flesh out Allied operations and the “learning curve” theories behind the Allied leadership during the war. Popularized by Professor Gary Sheffield, the learning curve theory helps remove the characterization of Allied leaders as heartless dullards who callously sacrificed their troops because they failed to understand the changing nature of war. This theory, however, does not excuse the horrific casualties and limited results on the Somme but rather reminds the reader that war ultimately is a human struggle led, supported, and carried out by people, with all their strengths and flaws.

Dr. Christian Stachelbeck’s essay on Germany’s land warfare tactics should sound familiar to modern maneuver warfare armies. German combined arms warfare tactics empowered junior leaders to make decisions based on tactical situations. While the Somme was not the debut of these tactics, the cultural shift and adaptation by the German Army meant that “responsibility for the conduct of combined arms combat was transferred down from the corps commands to the division level” (Stachelbeck, p. 151). The creation of defense-in-depth models and reliance on increasing numbers of machine guns signaled a change at the tactical level. This change in tactics also meant a change

at the operational level, with newly installed Chief of the General Staff General Paul von Hindenburg using the phrase “*Erschöpfungskrieg* (war of attrition)” in memoranda at the operational level (Stachelbeck, pp. 155–56). Chapters on French and British tactics, the experience of one German division, and a postmortem on the impact of the battle in modern memory round out this well-written and well-curated book.

Edward Lengel’s *Thunder and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917–1918* seeks to explain why Americans, having witnessed nearly three years of war in Europe, struggled so much as combatants. After all, American junior infantry leaders, the 1915 class of West Point, did their staff ride at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, instead of looking at the battles in Europe. Lengel creates a history at the tactical level with the intent of providing “a broader and deeper understanding of how the [American Expeditionary Forces] AEF developed between its landing in France and the opening of the Saint-Mihiel offensive” (Lengel, p. 7). This period included early combat and, most importantly to Marines, the Battle of Belleau Wood.

While soldiers in the ranks might have remarked that the AEF actually stood for “After England Failed,” the critical analysis provided here shows something decidedly different. Focusing on American units that were partnered with the French, Lengel successfully explains just why the Americans suffered so much. He echoes familiar problems: poor and insufficient equipment, inadequate and inappropriate doctrine, poor training, unprepared officers, and inexperienced troops. As the commander is ultimately responsible, here too, they were looking at the wrong war: “Ill-trained officers were fixated on fighting conflicts like those against decrepit Spanish troops or Filipino and Mexican guerrillas” (Lengel, p. 11).

Lengel effectively argues that the learning curve for American commanders was neither uniform nor was it particularly rapid. Relationships between Americans and their French counterparts were tense. European commanders wanted to employ the AEF as replacement units to fill holes in British and French formations. American commanders, understandably, wanted to retain command of the AEF as a unified

body. The predominant conflict was over the American focus on training for open warfare, while French leadership insisted on training for trench warfare. Partially as a result of this disconnect, only the 26th Infantry Division (a.k.a. “Yankee” Division) of the New England National Guard received the French training *en masse*.<sup>2</sup>

*Thunder and Flames* gives no quarter to the 2d Infantry Division, Marines included, at the Battle of Belleau Wood. While ultimately a victory for the Americans and a cornerstone of modern Marine Corps identity, Lengel writes that American and French generals “failed a splendid group of marines and soldiers” through a lack of planning and coordination (Lengel, p. 206). As Americans plodded through the wheat fields without adequate artillery cover, they were slaughtered by the astonished German defenders. Fighting in the woods, too, exacted a heavy price on Marines and soldiers. Here, Lengel identifies by name commanders who failed to plan, prepare, or support the fighting units. The six chapters he dedicates to the battle, nearly 40 percent of the book, are both eye-opening and disheartening. The lessons French and British armies had learned about the need for artillery support and coordination seem to have gone unheeded, resulting in the needless deaths of hundreds of Americans. Ultimately, the engagement was catastrophic for the 2d Division, which “was so badly handled in Belleau Wood that it never fully recovered” (Lengel, p. 205).

U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Mark A. Milley remarked on the 100th anniversary of America’s declaration of war:

It’s appropriate on the 100th anniversary of the United States’ commitment into World War I for us to reflect. Are we better at decision making today? Are there similarities in the structure or rising powers? Are there similarities and interconnectedness where no-

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Yankee Division’s efforts, see Terrence J. Finnegan, “A Delicate Affair” on the Western Front: America Learns How to Fight a Modern War in the Woëvre Trenches (Stroud, UK: History Press, 2015).

body can fathom or imagine or believe conflicts of this size and scope and levels of violence could ever happen? Are we that much smarter than those who came before us 100 years ago today?<sup>3</sup>

The books reviewed here seek to answer some

of those questions. By looking at a variety of theaters and combatants, no longer mere sideshows to the war in Flanders, these books all offer valuable lessons for those studying the conflict as a historical event and those studying it in an attempt to answer General Milley's questions.

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<sup>3</sup> As quoted in Shannon Collins, "100 Years Ago Today, America Fought in WWI," *News*, U.S. Department of Defense (website), 6 April 2017.



# BOOK REVIEWS

Andrew Harrison Baker<sup>1</sup>

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*Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War.* By Gregory F. Domber. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2014. Pp. 416. \$27.95 paperback; \$19.99 e-book.)

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In an influential article on the American civil rights movement, Charles W. Eagles highlighted the similarity between movement historiography and histories of the Cold War. Citing the influential Cold War scholar John Lewis Gaddis, Eagles noted that historians in both fields struggled to maintain scholarly detachment while their respective struggles continued. Gaddis argued that time would permit scholars of the Cold War to more objectively assess the conflict.<sup>2</sup> Although the Soviet Union collapsed more than a quarter of a century ago, the nature of its collapse remains controversial among historians and participants. The role of the Ronald W. Reagan administration in facilitating a Soviet collapse has been a particular point of contention. At one extreme, a “triumphalist” school aided by the memoirs of former Reagan administration officials argues that the president and his advisors won the Cold War. Other scholars contend that Reagan deserves little to no credit for the end of the Cold War. Fittingly, given its long history of recurrent warfare and occupation, Poland is central to the historiographical debate.

In *Empowering Revolution*, Gregory Domber provides a well-researched and balanced account of Communist Poland’s final years that provides a middle ground between the competing perspectives. Domber uses Polish-American relations in 1981–89 to assess the role played by the United States in Poland’s transition from Communism to democracy and in larger changes

within Eastern Europe. He moves beyond a bilateral framework. *Empowering Revolution* complicates the traditional narrative by highlighting the role of Polish actors, other European states, American nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the Catholic Church alongside Reagan administration and Soviet officials.

Domber’s overarching argument is that the United States played an important, if not decisive, role in the demise of Poland’s Communist government. As Domber contends, the United States sustained and empowered Polish reformers who “deserve ultimate credit for transforming Eastern Europe in 1989” (p. 3). This transformation was aided by American money, trade goods, and rhetoric.

*Empowering Revolution* opens with the Polish government’s declaration of martial law in December 1981, which Domber argues reflected the government’s need to placate Soviet unease over the Solidarity movement. He contends that, despite initial vacillation, the Reagan administration’s hard response was in line with the president’s early views on Communism: “The president decided at that moment to take a stand, seeing himself like [Franklin D.] Roosevelt standing up to the Nazis” (p. 46). The result of these choices created a half decade of tension and distrust between the Reagan administration and Poland’s ruling Polish United Workers’ Party (PUWP).

This early misunderstanding serves as a good metaphor for Polish-American relations throughout much of the decade. Domber argues, “Poland’s transformation and American policy did not follow a straight trajectory” (p. 87). The issue of political prisoners is particularly instructive. American policy makers

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<sup>2</sup> Charles W. Eagles, “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era,” *Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 4 (November 2000): 815.

felt betrayed by prisoner release deals that were not honored in the longer term, while the PUWP disliked the unwillingness of the United States to offer larger rewards in exchange for policy changes. Domber contends that relations between the PUWP and the United States improved after a total and lasting amnesty was granted to Polish political prisoners in September 1986. In his estimation, amnesty and other reforms were driven more by internal issues in Poland than by American policy.

Domber, however, argues that the combination of Western European and American sanctions exacerbated Poland's economic woes and contributed to revolution. In the final stanza, Polish activists took advantage of mounting difficulties and effectively overthrew the Communist government in 1989. Domber contends that American policy was most successful in this period when the George H. W. Bush administration sought to manage change in Poland.

The most revelatory side of *Empowering Revolution* relates to the American use of *soft power*. Domber convincingly argues humanitarian aid and monies directed to the support of activists played an important role in fostering an appreciation for the United States among ordinary Poles and in sustaining Polish revolutionaries. The actions of Americans such as U.S. charge d'affaires to Poland John R. Davis Jr. and his wife Helen, who held gatherings for Polish

intellectuals and activists, might be termed another form of soft power. These actions worked in concert with American *hard power*.<sup>3</sup> Domber argues the end result was "empowering a subset of the indigenous Polish opposition that deserves credit for overthrowing the Communist system" (p. 282).

In *Empowering Revolution*, Domber successfully complicates the traditional narrative of the American role in Poland's revolution. He should be commended for demonstrating how Americans succeeded in influencing the revolution while also acknowledging the limitations of American influence. Domber's most impressive achievement, however, is methodological. *Empowering Revolution* draws from an impressive array of sources that diplomatic historians have not always utilized well. The inclusion of records from NGOs, such as Catholic Relief Services and labor organizations, including the AFL-CIO, are particularly useful. An appendix of National Endowment for Democracy funds is also helpful. Oral histories from important actors in Poland and the United States provide an effective supplement to these records. Until currently closed records from the Reagan and Bush administrations are made public, there is little to add to Domber's account. *Empowering Revolution* is an excellent choice for professional reading.

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<sup>3</sup> Hard power is the use of economic or military strength to influence behavior; soft power entails the use of culture, values, and ideas to influence behavior without coercion.

*Evan C. Rothera*<sup>4</sup>


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*The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War.* By Peter Guardino. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. Pp. 512. \$39.95 cloth.)

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The U.S. war with Mexico (1846–48) sometimes seems like a forgotten war in U.S. history, at least when compared to the American Revolution, the U.S. Civil War, and World War II. Nevertheless, scholars such as Justin H. Smith, John S. D. Eisenhower, Timothy J. Henderson, Amy S. Greenberg, Ernesto Chávez, Richard Bruce Winders, Paul Foos, and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, among many others, have written book-length studies of the conflict. Many of these studies, although certainly not all, emphasize U.S. successes and Mexican failures. Given the outcome of the conflict, this is perhaps not surprising. Furthermore, one common, and often-cited, explanation for the outcome of this war concerns political differences. Namely, “Mexicans were divided and lacked commitment to their newly formed country, while Americans were more united and more nationalistic” (p. 5).

Peter Guardino’s deeply researched, well-written, and compellingly argued *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* questions both these tendencies. As he observes, although Mexico lost the war, emphasizing U.S. successes masks both impressive Mexican logistical feats as well as how, on more than one occasion, Mexican armies came within a whisker of defeating U.S. forces. Furthermore, he offers a powerful critique of the “Mexico lost because of a deficiency of nationalism” thesis. As he demonstrates, Mexicans had plenty of nationalism. They had no problem envisioning the nation and their relationship to it. U.S. prosperity, rather than alleged U.S.

unity, defeated Mexico, and Guardino chides scholars for overemphasizing political factors and underemphasizing economic ones.

This is not a narrative history focused solely on the military aspects of the conflict. While Guardino has an excellent command of the military history of the war and does justice to the battles, readers desiring this type of history would be better advised to look elsewhere. This is nothing less than a “social and cultural history of the 1846–1848 war that focuses on the experiences and attitudes of ordinary Mexicans and Americans, both soldiers and civilians” (p. 4). In other words, this is military history as it should be written: in conversation with social, cultural, economic, and political history and attentive to the common soldier as well as to elites. Comparing the United States and Mexico allows him to demonstrate how the differences between the two countries have been overemphasized, although he sometimes overstates his case. U.S. politicians such as Andrew Jackson and James K. Polk were as unscrupulous as many Mexican politicians. However, the United States was, on the whole, more stable at the federal level. While Guardino is right that some differences have been overstated, others are not as exaggerated as he suggests. As a historian of Mexico who has written two books on nineteenth-century Mexican history, Guardino has mastered its historiography and has extensive experience working in Mexican archives. However, at times, he seems less familiar with U.S. historiography.

After offering a brief background sketch of the conflict, he analyzes the men in Zachary Taylor’s army. Many U.S. soldiers were recent immigrants, although their service to the nation did not shield them from

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<sup>4</sup> Evan C. Rothera is a postdoctoral teaching fellow in the Department of History at The Pennsylvania State University. He is currently revising his dissertation, which examines civil wars and reconstructions in the United States, Mexico, and Argentina, for publication.

virulent criticism by nativists. In general, this discussion of the U.S. Army illustrates a point scholars have made before: many people considered service in the Army disreputable. Some of this was due to conceptions of masculinity. Men, after all, “were supposed to be autonomous citizens, not subject to arbitrary authority” (p. 40). The soldiers Taylor’s men faced at Matamoros, like their U.S. counterparts, were also seen as engaged in disreputable service. Local authorities usually did not send the best men to the Army because they wanted to preserve the labor supply and protect families. In addition, unlike the U.S. force, Mexican women played a more prominent role in the army as *soldaderas*. Interestingly, “both Mexicans and Americans judged the military effectiveness of Mexican regular troops to be very high” (p. 65).

President James K. Polk was more than willing to fight a short war with Mexico. He believed any war between the two countries would conclude quickly because of the nature of Mexican domestic politics. However, Polk, like many scholars, underestimated Mexican nationalism. Despite Mexico’s poverty and political instability, the country “was well on its way to becoming a national state in which loyalty to the nation was the paramount political identity” (pp. 75–76). Taylor’s victories at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma (both near modern-day Brownsville, Texas) demonstrated that U.S. economic might, not a lack of nationalism, put Mexico at a disadvantage. These victories generated enthusiasm in the United States. Interestingly, U.S. volunteers had more in common with regular officers than regular enlisted men. The undisciplined behavior of the volunteers became notorious, and volunteers routinely committed crimes against Mexican civilians. Indeed, “the social composition and beliefs of American volunteer units led directly to guerrilla warfare between Americans and Mexicans in northern Mexico” (p. 123). U.S. volunteers “found themselves locked in a sordid and bloody cycle of ambush, revenge, and atrocity” (p. 132). As with the United States, Mexico also mobilized citizen soldiers. The records for the citizen soldiers of both countries are mixed.

Although he was not a good battlefield commander, Antonio López de Santa Anna excelled when

it came to logistics. He staged and equipped an army in the city of San Luis Potosí and marched it to confront Taylor. This was a prodigious feat that came very close to defeating the U.S. forces at Buena Vista (near Monterrey). Guardino uses this episode to demonstrate how “expressions of nationalism abounded in San Luis Potosí, and many people there made an enormous effort to construct and supply this army” (p. 143). In other words, the nation was not an abstraction. Efforts to collect donations drew people into the war effort and reinforced Mexican identity. In addition, the people of Mexico City offered fierce resistance when General Winfield Scott’s army arrived. That so many Mexicans took to the streets illustrates how they envisioned the nation. Furthermore, if nationalism ran stronger in Mexico than historians have realized, the United States was not free of divisions. Antiwar sentiment occurred frequently among Whigs. The defection of the San Patricios highlighted another set of divisions among U.S. soldiers.

Guardino crafts a well-defined and provocative argument that he sustains throughout the book. As he notes, “the widespread view that Mexico lost the war because it was not a nation and therefore many people were not willing to defend it does not withstand sustained scrutiny” (p. 356). He contends that the archives are filled with thousands of expressions of nationalism and that the lack of nationalism thesis is based on an insufficient understanding of the term. He makes the compelling case that Mexico lost the war because it was poor, not because it was not a nation. Scholars, even if they disagree, will have to think very carefully about the ramifications of this argument. It may well have an influence in reshaping people’s analysis of the Constitution of 1857, which was long given much credit for facilitating the emergence of the Mexican nation.

Guardino has produced a very compelling analysis of the U.S. war with Mexico. While there are some minor problems throughout the volume, they are vastly outweighed by the book’s strengths. *The Dead March* will work well in upper-division undergraduate classes and graduate seminars and will appeal to both an academic and a general audience.



Robert J. Kodosky, PhD<sup>5</sup>

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*Huế 1968: A Turning Point of the American War in Vietnam.* By Mark Bowden. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2017. Pp. 610. \$30.00 cloth and e-book; \$20.00 paperback.)

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War is hell, and “hell sucks.” Vietnam War correspondent Michael Herr observed this in 1968. Mark Bowden, the author of *Black Hawk Down*, confirms it in *Huế 1968: A Turning Point of the American War in Vietnam*. He also does something else: he reveals the hell that Huế became resulted largely from decisions made by American and Vietnamese officials.

Delusion drove policies and this made them lethal. The Battle of Huế extinguished thousands of lives. From the perspective of “nearly half a century,” however, this appears as a “tragic and meaningless waste” (p. 526). Bowden contends that it should elicit “permanent caution” about war for any but “the most immediate, direct, and vital national interest” (p. 526).

The case is compelling, and *Huế 1968* offers a riveting read. It possesses the urgency of a novel even as it shatters the “conspiracy of denial” around the battle (p. 520). It does this by drawing on a variety of American and Vietnamese perspectives that Bowden sought out. He interviewed numerous participants on all sides, both in the United States and in Vietnam.

Bowden puts these, along with reports from the time, to good use. He ably chronicles the battle’s details while demonstrating how Americans and others perceived them in real time. “Modern war,” he suggests, “is as much about perception as about reality” (p. 543). The insight informs Bowden’s approach and renders the horrors of Huế as incomprehensible. Cer-

tainly, they resonate as more macabre than any fiction might yield.

This includes the exploits of Marine First Lieutenant Allen W. Courtney, who Bowden identifies as “the kind of man for whom war seemed invented” (p. 362). Following a firefight in which the Marines under Courtney’s command fought off an attack, a search began for a particular casualty suffered by the enemy, likely a Chinese advisor.

The Marines found the corpse where Courtney placed it—on a bridge, on a chair, legs crossed with a cigar in his mouth and a copy of *Playboy* magazine draped across his lap. Courtney’s superiors decided that bringing out visiting journalist Walter Cronkite for a look around was “ill-advised” and called for a court-martial. Courtney’s men, however, “loved him” (p. 363).

Bowden is not one-sided in chronicling the battle’s many atrocities. There exists “blame enough for both sides” (p. 455). Viet Cong soldiers, for example, targeted the city’s Vietnamese-American toddlers, identifying them as future imperialists. They terminated these young lives by swinging their tiny bodies by the heels and crushing their heads against walls.

Terror dictated perversity as an acceptable response. Bowden describes American soldiers who shot at a dog that had fallen in the river. They strove not to kill it but to prolong its suffering by “keeping it from reaching the bank” (p. 456).

These actions exacted an enormous toll. Nguyen Dac Xuan, a Communist poet who joined the fighting in Huế wrote of being “overjoyed,” though he grew increasingly “sore and spent” from digging graves (p. 457). Meanwhile, it became “not uncommon” for

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Robert J. Kodosky earned his PhD at Temple University and is the author of *Psychological Operations American Style: The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond* (2007). He currently chairs the history department at West Chester University, West Chester, PA, where he also serves as faculty advisor to the Student Veterans Group.

American soldiers to “reach their hands up during a mortar barrage” (p. 380). They sought an escape from hell.

Some struggled long to find it. Bowden follows two men who returned to Pennsylvania, where they hardly found heaven. Corporal Richard Leflar, a young Philadelphian who ended up in Vietnam as an alternative to juvenile detention, saw the worst of what the war offered. He witnessed a gang rape and murder by his own squad. He morphed from a terrified teenager into an enthusiastic killer. He spoke to Bowden about all of this with great “remorse,” working to “reconcile himself to the things he did in Vietnam, and the kind of man he became” (p. 530).

Fellow Pennsylvanian William D. Ehrhart, wounded in Huế, returned home changed. In high school, he supported the war and enlisted when he turned 17. After his service ended, he became a prominent antiwar activist and teacher, displaying in his classroom enlarged photographs he took from a Vietnamese adversary whom he killed.

Bowden’s aim is not sensationalism, rather, it is to use the Battle for Huế as an entry point to the “entire Vietnam War” (p. 541). This stands as unprecedented. Works previously published in the United States consider the Battle for Huế in isolation. They cite it as a victory, extolling the valor of American combat-

ants.<sup>6</sup> These are studies in tactics. Their celebration of American heroism is not unwarranted. There existed much of that in Huế, and Bowden does not neglect it. That is only part of the story, though.

Views contrary to Communist propaganda that situates Huế as a great victory are only now emerging.<sup>7</sup> As Bowden recalls from his trips to Vietnam in 2015 and 2016 to conduct interviews, it all proved “tricky.” His Vietnamese hosts saw him as “revisiting a heroic chapter in the national struggle” while also “reopening old wounds.” Many remained reluctant “to speak candidly” (p. 528).

Yet, Bowden persisted and found those willing to talk on all sides. The resulting insights are invaluable—and not only regarding Vietnam. Bowden makes it clear that U.S. policy stood as “misguided and doomed” (p. 526). He also shows that in taking Huế, a similar hubris consumed Hanoi—it “hugely overreached” (p. 524).

None of this alleviates the hell experienced by those who participated in the Battle of Huế. It might provide a lesson, though; one that enables a similar descent. Bowden instructs, “Beware” of ones “with theories that explain everything” and trust “those who approach the world with humility and cautious insight” (p. 526). A worthy lesson, indeed.

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<sup>6</sup> Examples include: Eric Hammel, *Fire in the Streets: The Battle for Hue, Tet 1968* (New York: Random House, 1992); Keith William Nolan, *Battle for Hue: Tet, 1968* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983); and George W. Smith, *The Siege at Hue* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> See Nha Ca and Olga Dror, trans., *Mourning Headband for Hue: An Account of the Battle for Hue, 1968* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

Keith D. Dickson, PhD<sup>8</sup>

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*The City becomes a Symbol: The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Berlin, 1945–1949.* By William Stivers and Donald A. Carter. (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2017. Pp. 346. \$44.00, cloth.)

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The book's title leads the reader to expect a standard unit-based history, which the Center of Military History is justifiably famous for producing. Donald A. Carter's preface, however, indicates that although the book has a focus on the U.S. Army's involvement in the occupation of Berlin, a different perspective based on "the nature of events in Berlin" was required (p. xvi). This is a two-fold perspective: first, it is intended to provide the story of soldier-diplomats who, Carter claims, established the basis of U.S.-Soviet relations for the next 50 years. Second, it provides the story of the citizens of West Berlin, who became agents of their own political destiny. These two perspectives appear to compete against each other in the chapters that follow. There is a heavy emphasis on the interplay of personalities and often ephemeral political-social issues within Berlin that certainly add a sense of immediacy to the narrative, and while the soldiers and units are dutifully presented, they are a nearly invisible backdrop to the effort to present what the authors believe is a larger, more compelling story.

One of the most useful and historically significant parts of this book is the account of the actions of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in the months before Germany's surrender to Allied powers. Even as the breakout in Normandy proceeded, SHAEF planners accepted a Soviet plan for the physical occupation of Berlin, dividing the city into British, American, and Soviet zones. The planners focused on tasks related to occupying strate-

gic areas, disarming German troops, maintaining law and order, and repatriating Allied prisoners and displaced civilians. Although France was later added to the occupying powers after the Yalta Conference, the Western allies essentially accepted the Soviet proposals for administration and occupation of Berlin. This exceptional historical summary is a valuable contribution to understanding the background to the actions of SHAEF after November 1944, clearly indicating that there was no intent to drive to Berlin ahead of the Soviets. This was confirmed in February 1945 when a key planning assumption for future planning indicated that the Soviets would occupy Berlin first.

Another valuable contribution is the detailed account of the role a civil affairs detachment played in forming a military government for Berlin at the conclusion of hostilities. In October 1944, the detachment began studying German politics, history, social structure, language, and the details of public utilities and the city's administrative organization. Guidance from higher headquarters was limited, focusing on the elimination of Nazis in government and emphasizing the treatment of Germany as a defeated country; at the same time, U.S. forces were to institute an indirect rule, implying that the de-Nazified German civil and government institutions could function on their own. The detachment commander, U.S. Army Colonel Frank L. Howley, an artist-scholar and shameless self-promoter and propagandist, emerges as one of the significant actors in the American occupation. He became instrumental in shaping the public narrative of Soviet recalcitrance and duplicity and contributed significantly to the eventual breakdown in U.S.-Soviet relations.

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Keith D. Dickson is a professor of military studies at the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, VA, National Defense University. His most recent book is *No Surrender: Asymmetric Warfare in the Reconstruction South, 1868–1877* (2017).

With the German surrender, SHAEF eventually settled on an experienced Army staff officer, Major General Floyd L. Parks, to command the 25,000 U.S. troops that would serve as the first occupation forces in Berlin. These included the 2d Armored Division, later replaced by the 82d Airborne Division. The coordination between the Soviets and U.S. leaders was cordial and professional. The Americans, taking over control of their zone after 10 weeks of total Soviet control, found a population traumatized by Soviet excesses of rape and pillage but also found a basic functioning infrastructure. With the arrival of occupation forces and a large headquarters element, the Americans at first acted more like conquerors than occupiers, seizing prime real estate and displacing occupants. Priority efforts went to establishing camps for tens of thousands of displaced persons, including Polish Jews, and providing adequate food and fuel to support the city's population quickly became a primary topic of concern. Civilian labor was conscripted and military tribunals imposed heavy fines and imprisonment for black market activity, assault, murder, rape, theft, and destruction of property. The German civilian administrators had no choice but to carry out American dictates. German publications were heavily controlled, and nonfraternization rules were strictly enforced.

The Kommandatura (military government headquarters), composed of the Allied commanders responsible for their occupation zone, served as the joint governing body for Berlin. The military governors of the occupation zones became the Allied Control Council with responsibility for policy and guidance on city administration as well as representing the interests of their respective nations. The authors place Army Lieutenant General Lucius D. Clay, the U.S. military governor of Berlin, as the main actor in their story. Clay, an engineer, bureaucrat, New Deal project manager, and military overseer, is portrayed as a pragmatist who made the quadripartite administration process function effectively. Although the significant contribution of the U.S. military administration to restore civilian government control in West Berlin cannot be discounted, the authors emphasize that the organizations and social forces that had defined Berlin

decades before the Second World War played a major, and perhaps dominant, role in building the support of the people for the American-designed postwar democratic order.

Between January and September 1946, the 14,000 tactical soldiers and 2,600 other soldiers assigned to support the military government had declined by more than 5,000 men. There was a corresponding decline in discipline and morale. The authors characterize this with a rather laconic statement: "For the bulk of the troops, those making up the security force, primary duties consisted mostly of roving patrols and static sentry positions" (p. 127). The authors conclude that although the small American force was never a realistic deterrent, it provided "enough of a military presence to make [a Soviet military incursion] unacceptable" (p. 295). While this certainly can be inferred, there is unfortunately not enough evidence from unit records to support this statement.

Between 1946 and 1948, as it became more obvious that Berliners posed no threat to the occupation forces or facilities, German city leaders were increasingly encouraged to become more independent. In addition, cooperation between U.S. and Soviet units remained good. American families were soon allowed in theater, and U.S. units rotated in and out of Berlin rapidly, becoming smaller and reorganized for more specific roles. The 82d Airborne was replaced by the 78th Infantry Division, which was replaced by the 3d Infantry Regiment and the 16th Constabulary Squadron; the 3d Infantry was replaced by 3d Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, of the 1st Infantry Division. This battalion, along with the 16th Constabulary Squadron, totaled about 1,650 officers and men and became the force that was in place as tensions with the Soviets escalated. This transition to a constabulary force comprising light mobile groups trained in policing skills, including raids and searches, was largely intended to respond to emergencies, assist Berlin city law enforcement, and where necessary, coordinate with Soviet forces.

With the exception of a training survey report for two battalions of the 3d Infantry Regiment in 1946, there is very little information on unit training of the U.S. units in Berlin. Within this account of



change in units and organization there is no indication as to how commanders analyzed their unit's mission, how they organized training, or what the units did day to day. It would seem that as time went on and tensions with the Soviets grew, there would be a change in training and readiness, increased coordination and cooperation with French and British forces, or staff planning for crisis scenarios. None of these activities is indicated. Instead, much detail is given to minor activities related to morale and welfare and support to families. Although the authors consulted the official records of the U.S. Army elements involved in the occupation, these records appear to have yielded little other than rather bland details of administration and mundane training. Apparently, these records did not include unit standard operating procedures or orders, the daily patrol reports of the constabulary, intelligence reports, or incident reports. These certainly would have brought to life the nature of the challenges soldiers faced during this four-year period, and perhaps they might have provided some insights into U.S.-Soviet relations and what protocols, both formal and informal, emerged. While there are references to the challenges of occupation duty (e.g., boredom, criminal activities, poor discipline), there is nothing to indicate how American units dealt with the Soviet, French, and British occupation units or how the individual U.S. Army soldier performed their role as a soldier-diplomat.

The authors point to American efforts to return Berlin to self-government through free and open elections as a source of tensions. The American military began backing specific German political parties in an attempt to forestall perceived Communist subversion and infiltration. Soviet-American relations focused on political interests instead of neutral administrative issues. The larger strategic intent to remake West Germany into a single independent economic entity with its own trade, finance, and communications policies ran afoul of the Soviets and created a crisis in the Allied Control Council. The Soviets used the *Kommandatura* meetings to denounce U.S. policy and accused the United States of attempting to undermine Soviet authority in its occupation zone.

The Americans in Berlin, sitting 125 miles inside the Soviet zone, recognized their vulnerability to isolation, yet the American leadership in the city also recognized Berlin's new role as a symbol of Western resolve, and they had become something more than military-political administrators of a capital city that no longer represented Germany. The authors do not elaborate on Clay's assessment in late 1947 that Berlin could hold on "for some time" (p. 209). What exactly was Clay's assessment based on? What plans existed, or were being contemplated? What role would U.S. forces play in such a situation? These very interesting questions are not addressed, outside of Clay's broadly expressed concerns to Army Chief of Staff Omar Bradley about potential crisis scenarios. Bradley is revealed as almost inert, focused entirely on the indefensibility of Berlin as Clay pressed for more aggressive actions to assert U.S. interests. While the reader gains some valuable insights into the perspectives of two senior leaders, none of this dialogue apparently was translated into any guidance to American units that certainly should have influenced unit readiness and planning.

The Berlin blockade caught Clay off guard, despite his concerns that the Soviets might attempt some action to threaten Berlin. Unable to gain support for any aggressive countermove, Clay took action on a British proposal to supply the city by air. The authors' account of the Berlin blockade, which has been thoroughly covered in a number of other monographs, intentionally moves out of Berlin to Washington and London. The understanding between Clay and Harry S. Truman that the loss of Berlin would be a defeat that would negate everything the Western allies had been fighting for since 1939 is the critical decision that shaped the entire direction of the Cold War. The authors do an admirable job of highlighting Clay's significant and decisive role in shaping the president's decision to support Berlin.

The authors also provide some details on the actions of the 3d Battalion, 16th Infantry, and the 16th Constabulary Squadron in supporting the airlift, consisting of a general outline of the process of unloading and transporting cargo. Although there are some in-

teresting details, more thorough coverage of their contribution would have been welcome. Unfortunately, the extraordinary efforts of U.S. military engineers to build a second and third runway at Tempelhof airport with masses of German civilian labor receive only a brief mention. Interestingly, the authors conclude that the crisis had little or no effect on Americans in the city, who were “neither diverted from their accustomed tasks nor disturbed in their comforts” (p. 240). While German citizens had electricity and food rationed, Americans suffered few privations.

The authors make it clear that the crisis over Berlin never transpired into a crisis within Berlin. Both sides refrained from any actions that would lead to confrontations. It was this tacit agreement that served

as the real basis for the security of American soldiers and civilians in Berlin (p. 244). In fact, the western sectors of Berlin were not closed, allowing individuals to purchase goods in East Berlin as well as in the countryside outside of the city. The Soviets also provided Berliners in the western sector bordering the Soviet zone free access to food and fuel rations.

The book provides a unique understanding of the Army’s role in the occupation of Berlin, but its intent to provide a different perspective is less than satisfactory and downplays a more significant presentation and analysis of the Army in Berlin as an emerging instrument of national policy that culminated in the Berlin airlift.

*First Lieutenant Walker D. Mills*<sup>9</sup>


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*American Amphibious Warfare: The Roots of Tradition to 1865.* By Gary J. Ohls. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2017. Pp. 320. \$39.95 cloth.)

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Amphibious warfare conjures up images of beaches raked with fire and strewn with bodies and of boats unloading soldiers and Marines into the surf. It brings to mind places like Normandy, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Tarawa. In his new book *American Amphibious Warfare: The Roots of Tradition to 1865*, Gary J. Ohls challenges these perceptions and details the much older history of amphibious warfare in North America. His book chronicles battles and operations from the Revolutionary War through the American Civil War and compares them with current amphibious doctrine and tactics. Ohls covers nearly a hundred years of intermittent operations seeking to ground twentieth-century operations in their historical antecedents.

Ohls organizes his work chronologically, with each war or conflict a chapter. He includes chapters on the American Revolution, the Barbary Wars, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, and the Civil War. Ohls draws on his time as a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where he taught classes on joint maritime operations. Each chapter ends with an overview of the lessons a contemporary reader can take from amphibious operations in the past by sprinkling in today's amphibious buzzwords, such as *littoral*, *combined arms maneuver*, *task organization*, and *combined* and *joint commands*, terms he understands from 36 years in the Marine Corps, from which he retired as a colonel. Without a clear definition of what Ohls considers "American amphibious warfare," it is difficult to discern a pattern in the actions covered, or even how the actions

covered were chosen. The book has an entire chapter devoted to the War of 1812 but only features British amphibious operations. It also covers the battles of Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey, during the American Revolution, despite recognizing that they were only amphibious because the Continental Army had to cross the Delaware River en route to the battlefield. He details the Battle of Brandywine Creek during the Revolutionary War and the Battle of San Pasqual during the conquest of Mexico, despite both taking place well inland. Conversely, Ohls does not include any of the action that was part of the Mississippi River campaign during the Civil War, including the siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi, perhaps the best example of combined operations of that war.

Though comprehensive, *American Amphibious Warfare* is monotonous. Both the prose and the organization of the content conspire against the reader. Ohls's narration carries the reader through history without assistance from contemporary voices or documents, much like a grade-school text book. His exhaustive research is only on display in the extensive bibliography and notes, not in his text, which is almost entirely free of primary sources and quotes. A sprinkling of maps helps the reader understand the operations described, but more would be helpful. Several black-and-white portraits of the key leaders mentioned are interesting but unhelpful in aiding the reader's understanding of the operations.

Ohls cuts his work critically short without explanation, using only one case study from the Civil War, the Battle of Fort Fisher, North Carolina, in 1865. Ohls ignores all of the Mississippi River battles and the Battle of New Orleans. He does not cover the

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<sup>9</sup> 1stLt Mills is a rifle platoon commander with 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, and is currently pursuing a master of arts in international relations and contemporary war at King's College, London.

Spanish-American War or the following Philippine-American War, which is significantly more important to the development of American amphibious warfare in the Second World War than the minor landings and waterborne movements that he details from the revolution or the exclusively British actions from the War of 1812. This gap in the chronology makes it much more difficult to see contemporary American amphibious warfare as having a lineage that stretches back to George Washington.

Ultimately, *American Amphibious Warfare* falls short of expectations. Ohls is an extremely qualified researcher who has mastered his subject matter and brings an array of sources to bear in his synthesis, but the work suffers from two critical flaws: uninspired prose and the lack of a strong central argument to or-

ganize his history. The argument that current American amphibious doctrine and tactics have roots in American wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a provoking thesis that certainly merits examination, but Ohls presents a chronologically organized series of case studies rather than a cogent argument. However, Ohls recounts the facts and chronology without a strong argument. *American Amphibious Warfare* is a book only for readers who have a strong or developed interest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century amphibious operations and have exhausted other sources. Jeremy Black recently published a more diachronic survey of amphibious warfare: *Combined Operations: A Global History of Amphibious and Airborne Warfare* (2017).

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Fred H. Allison, PhD<sup>10</sup>

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*Combat Talons in Vietnam: Recovering a Covert Special Ops Crew.* By John Gargus. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2017. Pp. 288. \$35.00, cloth.)

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Colonel John Gargus, U.S. Air Force aviator, has done an excellent job of describing the little-known operations of Air Force's Lockheed Martin MC-130E Combat Talons in Vietnam. These aircraft flew missions in North Vietnam in support of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam's highly secret Studies and Observation Group (SOG). Gargus was an air-planner and navigator who flew with the Combat Talons in 1967–68. While his account of squadron life and operations is justification enough to read the book, his account of the mysterious crash of an MC-130E in North Vietnam (the only Combat Talon aircraft lost in combat), and the recovery of its wreckage and human remains, makes this book doubly interesting and valuable as a historical resource.

The opening chapters provide an illuminating overview and background of Air Force special operations, details on training, and operations in Vietnam. He gives an interesting and detailed account of the Combat Talon MC-130E's special equipment. The heart of the Combat Talon 1 aircraft—what made a C-130E an MC-130E—was its special equipment. This included terrain-following radar, a forward-looking infrared system, and sophisticated electronic countermeasures equipment. Most unique was the Fulton Recovery System (FRS), which enabled the recovery of personnel or packages in hostile territory. A 500-foot lift line connected to the person or package was suspended in the air by a helium balloon. The FRS-equipped MC-130E flew under the balloon and snagged the line with special pincher arms on the aircraft's nose (this is de-

picted in the 1968 movie *Green Berets*). The person or package on the end would be yanked airborne and reeled into the back of the MC-130E. The Combat Talons were painted with a special dark green paint that reduced their radar signature, thus earning them the nickname "Blackbirds."

The next chapters provide a detailed look at operations by Combat Talons in Vietnam. Their mission was top secret and involved supporting SOG with airlift and resupply. Fascinating information is given in these chapters, formerly highly classified of course. The author also gives us engaging details on life at Nha Trang, South Vietnam, the home base for Combat Talons of Detachment 1, nicknamed, "Stray Goose." Detachment 1 was part of the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing (later renamed the 15th Air Commando Squadron and finally the 90th Special Operations Squadron). His details include daily life conditions of billeting, dining and food, and off duty activities. He also details events at Nha Trang during the Tet offensive when Communist fighters attacked throughout the city.

Most compelling is his in-depth account of the last flight of the only Air Force MC-130E Combat Talon 1 lost in combat; this crash also represented the largest single aircraft loss of life of the war, and efforts, years later, to locate the crash site and the crew's remains. This aircraft crashed on a night mission deep in North Vietnam on 28–29 December 1967. Gargus takes the reader through the entire flight, from planning the mission (in which he participated) to efforts he and other veterans of the Combat Talon community, years later, made to determine what happened on the flight and the location of the remains of the aircraft

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Fred H. Allison has managed the Marine Corps History Division's Oral History Section since 2000. He is a retired Marine major and earned his PhD in history from Texas Tech University in 2003.

and crew. The crash site, a rocky mountaintop, was not discovered and officially investigated until 1992.

Gargus gives the reader an education on the agencies, bureaucracy, and process by which the crash sites are investigated, remains recovered and identified, and the bureaucracy by which families are notified, bodies are identified, and then buried with all due honor. It is an impressive exposition of the great lengths that the U.S. takes to recover and properly honor every American lost in war.

This book is a solid introduction to the world of U.S. Air Force special operations, written by a veteran of those missions and an accomplished author. Gargus also wrote the well-received *The Son Tay Raid: American POWs in Vietnam Were Not Forgotten* (2007). Any serious scholar of aviation history, Vietnam War history, or special operations history would benefit from reading this book.

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*Commander Larry A. Grant, USN (Ret)*<sup>11</sup>


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*Yesterday There Was Glory: With the 4th Division, A.E.F., in World War I.* By Gerald Andrew Howell. Edited by Jeffrey L. Patrick. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2017. Pp. 464. \$29.95 cloth.)

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Gerald Andrew Howell, a veteran of the 39th Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, served as a “buck private” from 1917 through several important American battles in France during the First World War, including the Meuse-Argonne. Following the Armistice on 11 November 1918, he marched with his regiment through Luxembourg into the German Rhineland as part of the U.S. Third Army occupation force. There, he served among the Germans for several months into 1919 as the Allied leaders negotiated the terms of the peace at the Versailles Peace Conference. A native of New York, he seems to have spent much of his life outside the Army working in manufacturing, either as an electrician, a sales engineer, or as an inspector. He died in 1948 at the fairly young age of 58. *Yesterday There Was Glory* is his account of his service in the First World War.

If one word had to be used to describe Howell’s writing style, it would be *Runyonesque*. This distinctive style bears the name of Damon Runyon, an American author best known for the humorous stories he wrote about the colorful hustlers, gangsters, gamblers, and other characters who lived along Broadway in his particular version of Prohibition-era New York City. In addition to his Broadway stories, Runyon worked as a New York-based newspaperman. It seems very likely that he would have been well-known to a native New Yorker like Howell, who might have found Runyon’s writing style an appealing model for his own. Run-

yon’s characters speak with the accents and the slang found in the streets, not in the drawing room. The dialogue figures prominently in his stories as a kind of poetry and as a device that creates depth and individuality for his characters. Women are *dolls* or *birds* (or, given a Brooklynese pronunciation, “boids”) and almost every character has a heart of gold, though it may not be obvious at first.

Similarly, in Howell’s story, the members of his squad speak with the accents and the slang of the common doughboy, not in the accents of the officers’ mess. An example of what might be Runyon’s influence appears in the following representative sample of the dialogue included in Howell’s book.

“Geeze! Ain’t these French chariots rough ridin’ though?” says O’Hara with profound disgust.

“Yeah! The old hay rick, and the runaway team of sorrel mares back home in Indiany, was heaven compared to these Paris busses,” says Stevens.

“Git yer damn foot out of my eye, will ya!” exclaims Belkin to O’Hara. . . .

“What ya squawkin’ about, rook-ie? When I gits on terra firma again, I’ll put both my hobs right through yer ‘sophagus,” replies O’Hara. (p. 136)

Dialogue of this sort is also reminiscent, more appropriately given the Army cast and setting, of the conversations between William H. Mauldin’s two cartoon GIs from World War II, Willie and Joe. One favorite shows Willie and Joe climbing down a boarding

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<sup>11</sup> Cdr Larry A. Grant, USN (Ret), is an adjunct professor of history at The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina. He is the editor of *Caissons Go Rolling Along: A Memoir of America in Post-World War I Germany* by MajGen Johnson Hagood (2012) and author of “Meuse-Argonne Logistics” in *A Companion to the Meuse-Argonne Campaign* (2014).

net into a landing craft, vehicle, personnel. Joe calls to Willie above him, "When ya hit the water, swish yer feet around. They kin use it." This sort of dialogue is seldom used in modern writing. Even when it is employed, it rarely appears in more than a few passages, since overuse of dialect and accent interferes with an author's more serious purpose of telling the story in a way that does not create unnecessary hardships for the reader.

Howell uses it throughout *Yesterday There Was Glory*, at least in part, it seems, to draw a sharp line between "the lowly, uneducated, unrefined, dumb, foul-mouthed, crap shoot-in doughboy" without whom "the generals could never have succeeded in a single battle or [have brought] an arrogant militarocracy to its knees, nor have made the world safe for the international bankers" (p. 31). As editor Jeffrey L. Patrick sums up in an accompanying footnote, "Howell was obviously displaying an American enlisted man's disdain for officers, particularly generals" (p. 31n1).

Howell's account of experiences in France in 1917-18 is not a standard history or even a typical memoir. He planned to tell the story of World War I from the typical mud "sojer's" point of view, and not from the exalted view of generals, lieutenants, and sergeants. Others have tried to tell that story, but Howell uses his cast of characters to emphasize the point: "All the characters comprising the company squad are but prototypes of what were the actual living soldiers. While some of the names given them in this narrative are similar to those who were in the original squad, the words they speak, or the episodes described, are not actually those that the originals participated in." Despite those liberties, Patrick continues, "These pages contain a true account of the exploits of the 'Forgotten Fourth Division'" (p. 29).

Another writing choice that Howell made was the use of mixed tenses in the narrative. He frequently jumps from present tense to past tense and back. The present tense can be used to create a sense of immediacy in a passage, but it is difficult to use well for an entire book. Howell did not do it well, and the reader may wish he had stuck with a more consistent use of

the past tense that is common in this sort of work.

*Yesterday There Was Glory* is arranged in 17 chronological chapters that follow Howell and his unit from their stateside training camp, across the Atlantic, throughout their French actions, into Germany after the Armistice, and finally back to the United States for demobilization. In addition to the body of the manuscript, Howell included four appendices. The first two include short unit histories of the 4th Division in World Wars I and II and of the 39th Regiment. The third contains the lyrics from the songs "Madoiselle from Armentieres" and "Oh! How I Hate to Get up (In the Morning)," and the fourth lists the stations occupied by Howell's company for most of 1918. The book also includes almost four dozen contemporary photographs from the National Archives' U.S. Signal Corps Collection selected by Howell to illustrate his text. Editor Patrick has provided a lengthy introduction that includes Howell's biography and a more complete regimental history of the 39th in addition to many helpful annotations to the text.

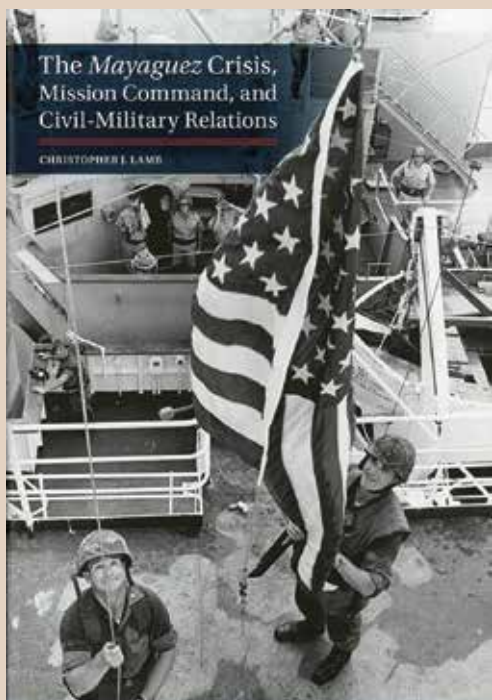
In comparison with World War I memoirs and literature such as Robert Graves' *Good-Bye to All That*, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, or Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel*, Howell's text is uneven. There is no question, however, that it is a passionate statement of a veteran's view of his service, of the brass, of the Army, and even of his fellow (non-combatant) Americans. In a passage describing the voyage home, Howell refers to a "misguided upper crust female, a society war worker with a superiority complex, [who] was standing on the bridge deck one day with a half-baked 'shavetail' lieutenant. She happened to notice the rough looking doughboys laying around, sunning themselves on the decks below and was very contemptuous of the soldiery. Within earshot of the ship's captain, she remarked, 'Look at those dirty pigs down there! All of them might better have been killed in France!'" According to Howell, she was "immediately arrested and confined under guard for the rest of the voyage" (p. 312). If this scenario seems unlikely, and Howell does not claim to have been a witness, it was the sort of just desserts a

combat soldier like Howell would have appreciated being dealt out to someone with an undeserved “superiority complex.”

Howell's *Yesterday There Was Glory: With the 4th*

*Division, A.E.F., in World War I* is an interesting and entertaining story worthy of the attention of students of the First World War.

• 1775 •



## NEW FROM THE JOINT HISTORY OFFICE

### *The Mayaguez Crisis, Mission Command, and Civil-Military Relations*

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Constance Wallace<sup>12</sup>

*We Were Going to Win, or Die there: With the Marines at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan.* By Roy H. Elrod. Edited by Fred H. Allison. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2017. Pp. 320. \$29.95 cloth.)

While there has been some controversy about using oral history and memory as a source for historical inquiry, the story of Roy H. Elrod is certainly a valued addition to the narrative of the Marines and their service in certain Pacific campaigns of the Second World War. Fred H. Allison has helped create a superior memoir of Elrod, and his experiences and recollections of the battles at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan make the reader feel as if they walk in Elrod's shoes with him. Allison noted that "about thirty hours of interviews were recorded and transcribed" and this is certainly evident by the inclusion of tiny details that may seem inconsequential to the greater story of the battles, but are important to the narrative of the man involved in them (p. viii). Roy Elrod's individual narrative in the greater context of the history of the Marines in World War II lends value because it "carries a historical authenticity" that readers may not discover in other memoirs (p. ix).

This authenticity is evident in Allison's editing of the oral testimony. By providing contextual information at the beginning of each chapter, every reader will be able to comprehend Elrod's narrative. Allison also "selected pertinent parts of his large collection of letters" to intertwine in several of the chapters, and noted that these letters were used as a catalyst for prodding memory (p. viii). While the letters provide no germane information, as most letters written in

war were censored or constructed in such a way as to protect loved ones, having them provides a connection for the reader to understand the disparity between the actual events of war and how servicemen (or women) portray the horror of conflict to those back on the home front.

Within the memoir, Allison provides annotated footnoting of certain terms that may be vague to those who do not understand the military jargon of Marines. This element is certainly an attribute of the volume. Allison also uses footnoting to provide additional details, such as relevant information that support the memories of the author. He "checked dates, locations and names" against the Marine Corps records, Allison notes (p. viii). This connection to Marine records lends creditability to Elrod's individual narrative and his recollection of battle details. The use of primary sources includes not only Elrod's oral history but also that of other key people, such as Colonel Henry P. Crowe. Indexing is provided in the back of the book to provide the reader with quick access to elements of special interest.

The first chapter, "Muleshoe to Texas A&M: Growing up in Texas, 1920s and 1930s," is the introduction to Roy Elrod, offering a unique glimpse at his childhood. It is here that Elrod's personal story begins and the reader quickly identifies where his strength and tenacity were built as he recalls the guidance of a mother who "shot the necks" off bottles with a rifle and a father who gave examples of how "a real man handled his problems" (pp. 8–9). It is in this chapter where Elrod's personality becomes evident; he remarks about his education that because he received high marks in military science at Texas A&M Univer-

<sup>12</sup> Constance Wallace is a PhD candidate at the University of North Texas. Currently she is editing several letter collections from the First World War. Her most recent article, "Flirtation by Postage Stamp: Using Digital Tools to Analyze the Space of Letter Writing and Sexuality in Sam Riggins' WWI Correspondence," was published in the 2016 South Carolina Historical Association's Annual Meeting Minutes.

sity, he “had an inclination for the military” (p. 19). In the second chapter, “The Old Corps: USMC Boot Camp, 1940–1941,” Elrod describes his experiences at the Marine Corps base in San Diego, California, having enlisted after college. “When I joined the Marine Corps, it was not much more than 20,000. Someone said it was smaller than the New York City police force at that time” (p. 31). Elrod stated that by the time his basic training was over, there were tents stretched beyond sight. During his time at the rifle range at the end of his basic training, his boyhood experiences with his mother helped him to achieve the expert level at the rifle qualifications: “I had no trouble at all in shooting expert with the rifle. I’d been firing a rifle since I was a very small boy” (p. 39). It is at graduation that Elrod meets a very famous Marine, Marine Gunner Henry Pierson, who became a mentor to him: “We were lined up not knowing what to expect. This very impressive marine officer came walking by[,] and he had the hardest blue eyes I think I had ever seen” (pp. 39–40). Crowe was making his selection of certain men in the group, and Elrod remembers that Crowe stopped in front of him and tapped him on the chest with his finger. This moment becomes a catalyst for the direction of Elrod’s military career.

In “Eighth Marines: Preparing to Fight,” the editor notes that as Elrod completed boot camp he had been assigned to the 8th Marines, which had been reactivated in April 1940 as a part of the 2d Marine Division (p. 43). Following this assignment, Elrod was moved to train at Camp Elliott, north of San Diego. “When we arrived at Camp Elliot, I joined the [R]egimental Headquarters and Service Company and was assigned to the anti-tank platoon” (p. 45).

Elrod’s narrative of his duty continues with “Exotic Samoa: Defending the Southern Lifeline.” After the attack on Pearl Harbor it became paramount to support the Pacific areas against the advance of the Japanese. The lines of communication between Australia, as well as American interests in the Samoan and other Pacific islands, sparked a movement with the American military for the defense of these locations. Elrod was promoted to second lieutenant during the nine months the 8th Marines were in Samoa.

While there was not any invasion from the Japanese, it did give the 8th Marines a chance to gain needed training and the cohesiveness of a unit, before being transferred to Guadalcanal and their first combat.

Next, the narrative focuses on Elrod’s personal experiences in the battle that was fought between August 1942 and February of the following year. Elrod stated that he “heard once that once we [the 8th Marines] arrived, it was the first time that there were enough marines to make a solid perimeter defense around the airfield. The entire operation at Guadalcanal was for the protection and operation of that airfield” (p. 105). To him, what was more destructive to the platoon was the living conditions. “We were living really like animals,” he recalled (p. 110). After the intense fighting in the Battle of Guadalcanal, the 8th Marines were moved to rest, which is the focus of chapter six, “New Zealand: Paradise Found.”

The next phase of fighting for Elrod occurred at Tarawa, and he emphasized the “harsh test of Marine Corps amphibious doctrine” (p. 159). Because of Elrod’s preemptive steps in constructing apparatuses to move his platoon’s 37-mm guns, he was successful in getting them to the island from the ships. There were reefs that the boats could not maneuver around, and Elrod had been advised of this back in New Zealand: “I had decided that the only way we were going to get our guns ashore was to pull them ourselves, and we had made rope slings for every member of the gun squad. I had also made special preparation to carry as much ammunition as possible” (p. 162). It was Elrod’s belief that his preparedness was what enabled his guns to be the only ones to make it ashore during the battle at Tarawa. “The attitude of the marines was that we were going to win. We never thought that we weren’t winning. There were more Japanese bodies lying around than ours” (p. 175). In the photograph section of the book, an image is shown that was taken by a news correspondent of Elrod and a fellow Marine that appeared in newspapers back home. The editor includes a letter written by Elrod to his mother explaining the photo.

The rest and recovery from the battle at Tarawa Atoll is documented in “Hawaii: Recovery and Prepar-

ing for the Next Show.” During this period of healing, Elrod said that the 8th Marines received a Presidential Unit Citation in recognition of their performance at the battles at Guadalcanal and Tarawa.

Elrod also tells about the strategy for capturing the Mariana Islands, which would put Allied forces in proximity to Japan and bring them within bombing range of its shores. Elrod’s memories in this chapter include the famed Navaho code talkers, Crowe’s wounding in the battle, and his own injury. Just before the Marines handed control of the island over to the Army, Elrod recounts, “It felt like I had been hit across the back with a baseball bat or a two-by-four. . . . I had no sensation of my left leg, and I thought it had probably been blown off” (p. 237). His recovery is documented in the final chapter—a bittersweet end,

as it also prevented his participation in future battles.

The editor ends this wonderful narration with a small epilogue, which relates the rest of Elrod’s life. He married his sweetheart, Malda, and became an instructor to Navy officers, teaching them the “intricacies of naval gunfire in support of troops fighting ashore” (p. 261). Elrod served many tours of duty at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, where he eventually retired. Elrod’s recollections are fascinating and give an individual perspective to the history of the campaigns he participated in by allowing the reader to experience the sensory aspect of these memories. Allison did an excellent job of organizing the oral interviews, and I would recommend this book as an additional read to those studying the Pacific campaigns of the Second World War.

• 1775 •



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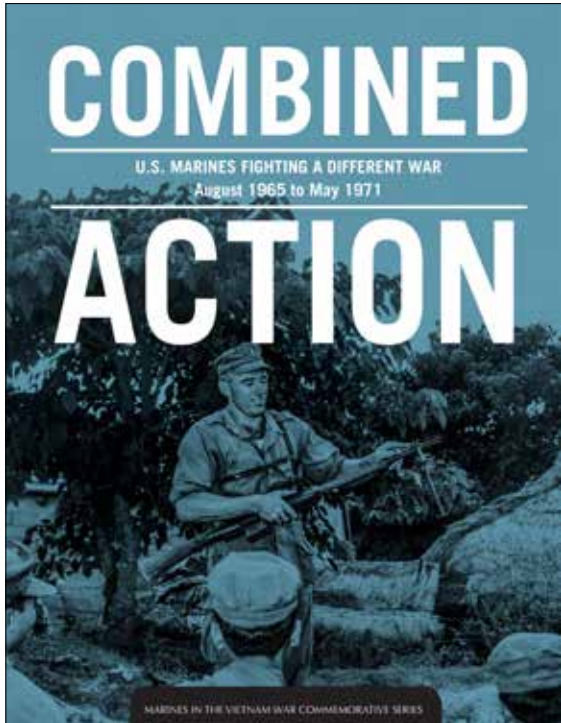
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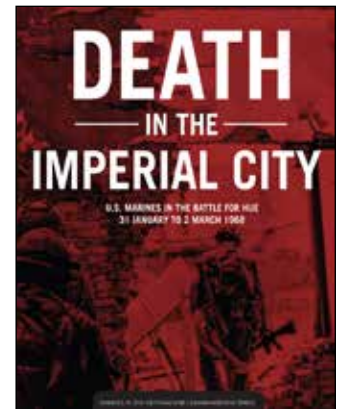
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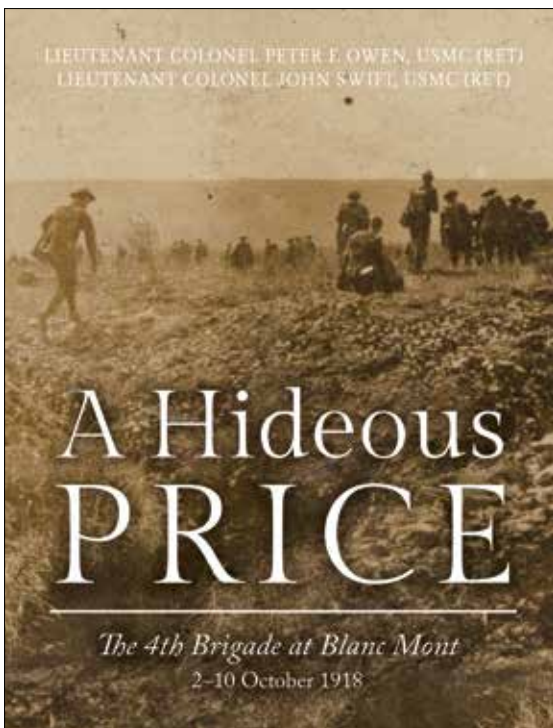
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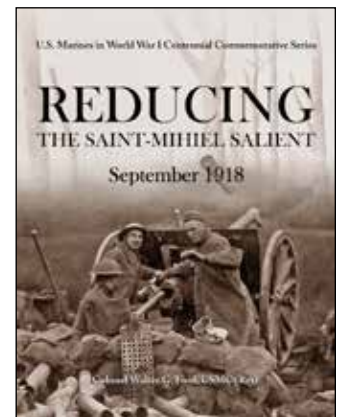
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