

MARINE CORPS HISTORY

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Marine Corps History

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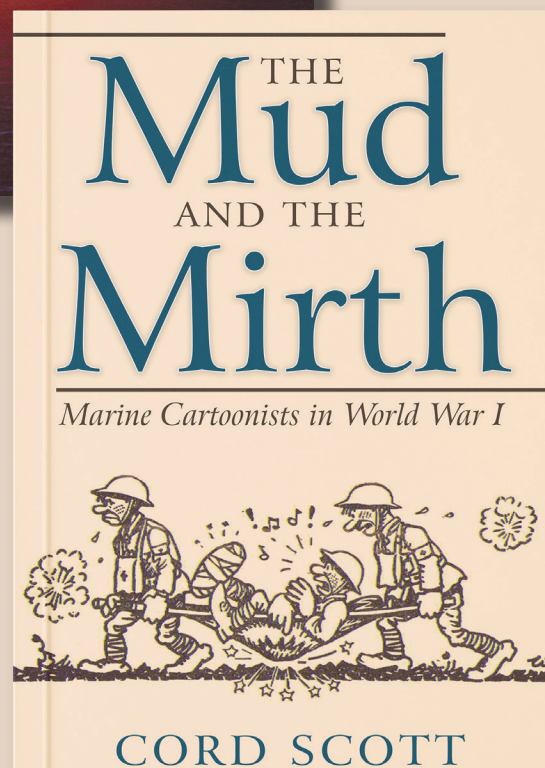
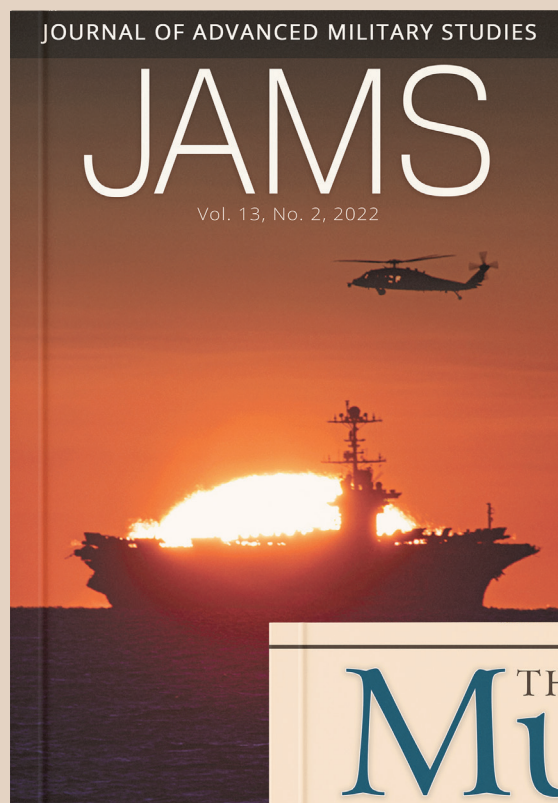
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Department of the Navy
Headquarters Marine Corps
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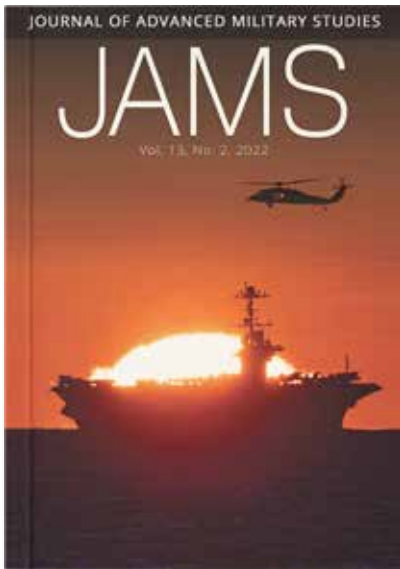
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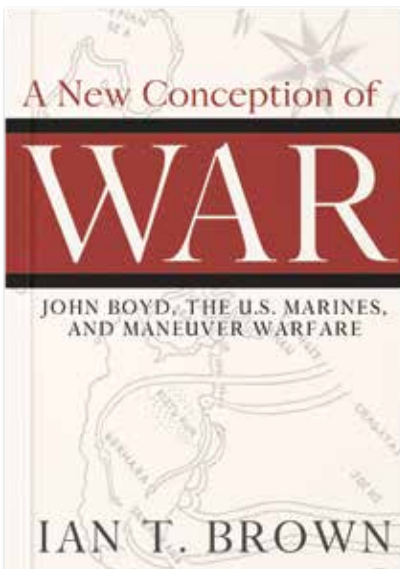
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JAMS

The *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* focuses on topics within the international relations, political science, security studies, and political economics spectrum. The Fall 2023 issue of JAMS will focus on Russia, NATO, and the war in Ukraine. Article submissions are due by 31 May 2023. Book reviews, review essays, and historiographical essays also welcome.

Article submissions for all three journals should be between 4,000 and 10,000 words, footnoted, and formatted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition). For more information about submission guidelines or to submit an article idea, please visit our website or contact MCU_Press@usmcu.edu.

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FROM THE EDITORS

On 10 November 2022, Marines around the world celebrated the Marine Corps' birthday with toasts, cake, and the sharing of tales from days gone by. Wherever celebrants were—at home, abroad, or afloat—they could look back with pride on the Corps' 247 years of years of service to the United States and forward to a bright future. Each Service, of course, has its own birthday celebrations, but anyone who has spent time in or around the U.S. military knows that the Corps' birthday celebrations are *different*: just ask any Marine! One of your editors had the opportunity to witness this at the Pentagon, where he listened as a room of Army and Air Force officers traded stories about Corps birthday balls they had attended. “The Marines,” one participant noted, “really know how to throw a party.”

As an institution, the Marine Corps takes great pains to inculcate this esprit de corps during training, periodically reinforced by events like the annual birthday celebrations. But tradition and pride are not only the products of deliberate acts and policies. Marines today perceive themselves to be part of an elite organization because of the Corps' history, and there is no shortcut to almost 250 years of tradition.

Likewise, the history of the Corps influences strategic, operational, or policy changes in the present and future. Commandant David H. Berger's *Force Design 2030* harkens back to the early twentieth-century history of the Corps with the concept of Expeditionary Advance Base Operations, a reference to the Marines' Advanced Base Force, the predecessor of the Fleet Marine Force. General Berger's proposals, as our

readers know well, have sparked a healthy debate in the wider Marine Corps community with supporters and opponents turning to the rich history of the Service to bolster their arguments. Clearly, then, Marine Corps history—and, we hope, *Marine Corps History*—is a vital part of the Corps' present and future.

Looking back on the past to chart a course for the future requires a solid base of rigorous scholarship to collect, interpret, analyze, and rethink information about the past. This month, *Marine Corps History* helps to provide that base by highlighting the breadth of the Corps' experience with articles that range in time from the Mexican-American War to Vietnam, and in subject from the grisly aftermath of battle to the history of the Marines' Hymn.

Our first article, James P. Gregory Jr.'s “The Forgotten Front” considers a forgotten aspect of Marine history in the First World War: the first Marines committed to combat in early 1918. There, in a quiet sector of the French front near Verdun, a brigade of Marines learned to operate under the conditions of trench warfare, providing valuable lessons for future engagements. Just as importantly, Gregory relates that it was during this time in the trenches that Marines acquired their famous “devil dogs” nickname under mysterious circumstances.

Next is the third part of Lauren Bowers's series on the history of the “Marines' Hymn.” Here, she discusses the history of the song during World War II, and its rise to prominence as an international symbol of the Corps. She also details an official change to the lyrics to reflect the increasing role of Marine Corps

Aviation. Lastly, Bowers details the bewildering array of alternative lyrics to the song written by Marines, other servicemembers, and ordinary civilians, reflecting the esteem in which Americans viewed the Marine Corps and its war record.

Geoffrey W. Roecker's "Field Burials, Memorial Graves, and the Postwar Search for Tarawa's Fallen" highlights a consequence of World War II by examining the often-unsuccessful attempts to recover and identify fallen Marines and sailors after the Battle of Tarawa. While news articles assured Americans at home that bodies were identified and placed in well-tended cemeteries, the chaos of battle and inadequate graves registration protocols meant that many of the dead could not be positively identified. Indeed, the impressive cemeteries built after the battle largely comprised grave markers over empty plots. While postwar efforts identified some casualties, there are some 350 sailors and Marines from the battle still unaccounted for.

Marc Romanych's "Marine Hawk Missiles in Guantánamo Bay during the Cuban Missile Crisis" sheds light on an underappreciated aspect of that crisis: the deployment of Battery C of the 3d Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion from Twentynine Palms, California, to protect the American base at Guantánamo Bay from Soviet or Cuban attack. Faced with a dearth of official primary sources, Romanych has used the base newspaper from Twentynine Palms, letters, and interviews with veterans to bring this important deployment to light.

Cavender S. Sutton's "To Take Some of that Fear Away" looks at the Corps' Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) during the Vietnam War to explore cohesion and combat effectiveness. Sutton finds that the CAP program, which placed groups of 14 Marines and 1 Navy corpsman in South Vietnamese villages to work alongside local militias to disrupt guerrilla

activity, generated unusually effective and cohesive small units. These teams, usually led by a young non-commissioned officer, shouldered the arduous task of cultivating trust in an unfamiliar environment while fighting at a far remove from reinforcements. Despite these challenges, CAPs proved to be cohesive, effective fighting forces, largely due to the bonds formed with their assigned villages.

Our last article, Christopher N. Menking's "To the Halls of the Montezumas," is a historiographical essay outlining the body of work written on the Marine Corps in the Mexican-American War. While not a primary focus of historical writing on the war, Menking points the reader to a "small but rich collection of primary documents, books, and articles" that highlight the role played by the Corps in that conflict.

The issue concludes with nine reviews of recent books that will be of interest to our readers. In addition to Marine Corps history, works covered include histories of the interwar U.S. Navy, amphibious operations, and OSS activities in Occupied France during World War II.

Telling the story of the Marine Corps requires a variety of skill sets and backgrounds and this issue highlights the diversity of the Marine Corps history community. Contributors to this issue include independent scholars, a retired Army officer, Marine Corps veterans, graduate students, and in one case a Marine Corps veteran currently in graduate school. We are always looking for contributors to *Marine Corps History*, whether as authors, reviewers, or readers. We are especially interested in historiographical essays examining the sources and the state of the field on various topics in the history of the Marine Corps. If you are interested, please contact us via email at MCU_Press@usmcu.edu for article submission requirements and issue deadlines.

The Forgotten Front

THE 4TH BRIGADE OF MARINES IN THE TOULON SECTOR: MARCH–MAY 1918

by James P. Gregory Jr.

Abstract: Marines deployed to Verdun in the Toulon sector during World War I got a unique introduction to the reality of modern warfare there. During this training and acclimatization period, they experienced the hardships of trench warfare and their first combat and casualties of the war. Yet, most World War I histories omit the preparatory experiences of the 4th Brigade of U.S. Marines at Toulon and the valuable lessons this training period conferred, an oversight which this article seeks to begin to correct.

Keywords: 4th Brigade, Verdun, Toulon sector, World War I

In the annals of Marine Corps history, discussion of World War I is dominated by the Battle of Belleau Wood, with more recent additions looking at Soissons, Blanc Mont Ridge, and the Meuse-Argonne offensive. However, many of these histories leave out the experiences of the Marines at Verdun in the Toulon sector when they first arrived in France. This period was meant for training with the French and acclimating the Marines to modern warfare. As a result, many historians ignore the Marines' sojourn in Toulon sector as inconsequential because the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) switched to open warfare tactics at Belleau Wood, which they continued to utilize throughout the rest of the war. The time spent in the Toulon sector introduced the 4th Brigade to the reality of a modern war through the hardships of trench warfare and their first combat and casualties

of the war, and it established the Marine Corps as a formidable fighting force. The purpose of this article is to illustrate the personal experiences of the Marines in the 4th Brigade at Toulon; it is not a critical study of the brigade's tactics and operations during this period.¹

Formation

In World War I, the 4th Brigade served in the U.S. 2d Division, which comprised two infantry brigades, each fielding two infantry regiments. In the 2d Division, the U.S. Army's 9th and 23d Infantry Regiments and the 5th Machine Gun Battalion constituted the 3d Infantry Brigade. The Marines comprised the 4th Brigade with the 5th and 6th Marine Regiments and the 6th Machine Gun Battalion. The division would not be formed until September 1917 as these units arrived en masse to France.²

James P. Gregory Jr. is a PhD candidate at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. He has written and edited several books on the Marine Corps in World War I, including *The Story of One Marine: The World War I Letters and Photos of Pvt. Thomas L. Stewart* (2017), *A Poet at War: The Story of a World War I Marine* (2018), and *C'est la Guerre: The Memoirs of Capt. James McBrayer Sellers* (2020). His article, "A Calamity of Errors: The Untold Story of the 5th Regiment at Blanc Mont Ridge on 4 October 1918" (<https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2021070202>), was selected by the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation to receive the 2022 Colonel Robert Debs Heintz Jr. Award. The author thanks Steven Girard, Rachel Douglas, Byron Scarbrough, Pete Owen, and Annette Amerman for their assistance in the research for this article. <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2022080201>

¹ Part of the reason for this article's personal narrative is the lack of primary and secondary source material on the Marines during this period. In the *Records of the Second Division (Regular)*, 10 vols. (Washington, DC: U.S. Army War College, 1927), comp. by Capt Cylburn O. Mattfeldt, the American records are scant and detailed records from the 4th Brigade do not appear in earnest until June 1918.

² Peter F. Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance: A Battalion of Marines in the Great War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 31.

The first Marines of the 5th Regiment landed in France on 26 June 1917. By 3 July, the entire regiment was under canvas. Initially, the Marines were assigned guard duty. Eventually, the 1st and 2d Battalions were transferred to the Gondrecourt training area to learn under the so-called French “Blue Devils,” the *Chasseurs Alpin*. On 24 and 25 September, the 5th Regiment moved to the Bourmont training area. The first units of the 6th Regiment began arriving in France in November 1917. They would join the 2d Division as its nucleus, alongside the 5th Regiment. It would not be until 10 February 1918 that the final Marines of the 6th Regiment would arrive and complete the 4th Brigade. Due to the various guard assignments and piecemeal arrival of the Marines, training did not begin in earnest until February 1918.³

Training

Unfortunately for the earliest units in France, including the 2d Division, the training received from their French and British officer instructors was almost exclusively based on trench warfare. General John J. Pershing had not planned this as the course for the AEF, but that is the training they received due to the nature of the war up to that point.⁴ In January and February 1918, the companies of the 5th and 6th Regiments were billeted in various French towns and given equipment and instruction. For instance, the 96th Company, 6th Regiment, billeted in Blevaincourt where it received its first training in trench warfare. During this period, the Marines received their steel helmets and gas masks. On 15 February 1918, they marched to practice trenches 14.5 kilometers from the village, where the regiment trained mostly at night while enduring freezing temperatures. Private Thomas L. Stewart, 96th Company, 6th Regiment, later recalled of the conditions that “one night we were over there and it turned bitter cold. We did have our blanket but even so we were on our feet for two on and four off but you might as well be on cause you couldn’t sleep, it was too

cold.”⁵ First Lieutenant James McBrayer Sellers, 78th Company, 6th Regiment, also later commented that

at Robecourt, we went through arduous training consisting of practice hikes, more trench digging, bomb throwing, and standing by all night in the trenches. The weather worked against us, and the great deal of mud impeded our progress. Most of the training was done in daylight, and at night we went back to shelter.⁶

During this period, the brigade continually drilled and practiced “machine gun drills; range finding; indirect fire problems; barrage problems; tactical exercises, including long barrage firing; drills and gas masks; digging emplacements; and a French signal section gave instructions on the liaison service in the field.”⁷ To prepare the Marines for trench warfare, they built practice trenches constructed at Saint-Ouen-lès-Parey where raids and reliefs were carried out by the units of the brigade.⁸ The Marines were issued the French M1915 Chauchat light machine gun, which did not find favor among them. First Lieutenant Seller recalled,

My company was issued cheaply manufactured French automatic rifles known as the *Chauchat*. These weapons looked as if they were made out of cigar boxes and tin cans, and we had an awful time making our men carry them. A man shooting one almost was in as much danger as anyone out in front being shot at.⁹

³ Thomas Stewart, interview by David Kirk, 1985, unpublished transcript, based on “Carolyn & Stuart Kirk Interview” home video, ca. 1985–89, author’s personal collection, hereafter Stewart interview.

⁴ William Sellers, James Gregory, and Steven Girard, *C’est La Guerre: The Memoir of Capt. James McBrayer Sellers, USMC* (Oklahoma City, OK: Gray Sparrow Books, 2020), 61–62.

⁵ Maj Edwin N. McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 5, no. 1 (March 1920): 90–91.

⁶ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 91.

⁷ Sellers, Gregory, and Girard, *C’est La Guerre*, 62.

³ George Clark, *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999), 27–39.

⁴ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 39.

The bitter cold, constant mud, and French weapons were a burden to the Marines, but they would soon face the same conditions in addition to constant harassment by the Germans.

By 1 March 1918, rumors swirled that they would enter the front in a quiet sector. On 10 March, 2d Division Headquarters announced that the “division will move to the front for training for a period of approximately one month. It will be assigned to and installed in the sector now occupied by a French Army Corps, and will be placed under this Corps for tactical instructions.”¹⁰ In preparation for the trenches, equipment such as trench knives, trench boots, and extra clothing started being dispersed.¹¹ Beginning on 13 March through the 17th, the brigade moved to the front. On their arrival at Dugny, a German aviator spied the unloading train and signaled the German artillery. By the time the artillery zeroed its target, the Marines had already begun the march to their destination, which resulted in the only casualties being a lieutenant’s trunk and many of the 5th Regiment’s musical instruments.¹² The Toulon sector would be the brigade’s home for the next three months. The various units were stationed at camps and towns throughout the sector, with several rotating through at Camp L’Eveche, which the Marines later nicknamed “Never Rest.” The Marines were all located near Verdun, where the combined losses of German and French troops had approached more than 600,000 during the largest engagement of the war in 1916. Verdun was rather quiet by the time the Marines arrived, and they were able to go in and visit the city when not on the line.¹³

Trench Life

On 21 March 1918, the Germans launched an offensive along the Somme, cracking the British lines. They followed this success with a second offensive on 9 April

near Lys. In order to send experienced French troops to contain the offensives, the Marines’ time in the trenches would be extended by another month. This long stay in Verdun curtailed the 2d Division’s ability to practice the open warfare maneuvers the AEF depended on.¹⁴

During this time, the various battalions rotated through the front lines so that by the end, every unit had experience in the trenches. This introduced the Marines to valuable skills they would need to survive in France. Although the trench environment would not follow the Marines after their service in the Toulon sector, they carried with them the lessons and stories gathered at Verdun. This also provided the only time that Marines would fight like their British and French allies had for the previous four years, and, for those who would survive the hell that followed, it gave them a unique look at the war. However, this did not mean that the Marines were happy for the experience. To the contrary, as remarked by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Derby, 2d Sanitary Train, 2d Division,

From the beginning our men did not like the trenches. It was not the kind of warfare that appealed to them. Continuous living in the mud with never a sight of the enemy, got on their nerves and made them morose, just as it had done in the case of many good men before them. They were impatient for a fight at close quarters. They despised an enemy that kept himself out of sight, they despised their blue coated neighbors for their apparent indifference to this stationary warfare, and they would have ended in despising themselves. But in spite of rain and mud, that inner fire kept burning, fed by the prospect of leaving the trenches when fine weather had established itself.¹⁵

¹⁰ General Orders No. 23, 10 March 1918, in *Records of the Second Division (Regular)*, vol. 1, comp. Capt Cylburn O. Mattfeldt (Washington, DC: U.S. Army War College, 1927).

¹¹ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 92.

¹² McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 93.

¹³ Sellers, Gregory, and Girard, *C’est La Guerre*, 63.

¹⁴ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 43–44.

¹⁵ Richard Derby, “Wade In, Sanitary!”: *The Story of a Division Surgeon in France* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1919), 24–25.



Records of the Second Division (Regular), vol. 10, comp. Capt Cylburn O. Mattfeldt (Washington, DC: U.S. Army War College, 1927)
Map of the Verdun sector, 19 March 1918.

Some Marines did find a way to make the best of their situation by appealing to the emotions of the local French. Corporal Joseph E. Rendinell, 84th Company, 6th Regiment, stated, "We told them that we were going to Verdun because a lot of them have brothers and kin folks there. Some cried, so we cried too. We sure put on a good act because they kept fetching out the wine and cognac. I guess I must have cried at every house in the village."¹⁶

The trench environment taught several aspects of survival to the Marines, from surviving the weapons of war, the tactics involved, to daily life in a mud-covered cesspool. Despite Verdun being referred to as a "quiet sector," the threat of German military action still persisted. The Marines would be subject to heavy artillery barrages, the use of mustard gas, and the withering fire of German machine guns.

Being most of the Marines' first time under shell fire, they came face to face with their own fears of death alongside the other men of the 2d Division. Private Harry Driscoll, 2d Ammunition Train, 2d Division, admitted to his brother of his first shelling in

¹⁶ Cpl J. E. Rendinell and George Pattullo, *One Man's War: The Diary of a Leatherneck* (New York: J. H. Sears, 1928), 59.



Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

Marines of the 20th Company, 5th Regiment, in the trenches of Verdun.

Verdun, “I am not ashamed to say I had a funny feeling, and although I had gone to confession and communion the Sunday before, I began to think of my past life. Those big shells made me do that.”¹⁷ In the Toulon sector, the Marines would learn the necessary skills to survive against incoming artillery. Private Stewart recalled that they “learned to tell about where they would land by the sound of the various shells.”¹⁸ Constant artillery later became a commonplace condition for the Marines wherever they served throughout the war, but those who learned at Verdun would teach the replacements as they rotated into units.

At this time, gas also became a reality for the Marines who had until then only practiced their gas

mask drills. In the heat of battle, the quick thinking needed to retrieve one’s mask and place it over one’s face while still maintaining combat readiness would prove too much for many Marines who would perish from gas in the coming months. Gas became a very common tool the Germans used against the Marines at Toulon. In writing his article “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” Major Edwin N. McClellan noted that

whether the Germans labored under the impression that the Americans were afraid of gas, whether it was their policy to administer liberal doses of it to all newly arrived units, or whether it just happened that conditions were favorable, the various American Divisions were all greeted with large

¹⁷ “Driscoll Writes of Experiences,” *Journal and Tribune* (Knoxville, TN), 29 December 1918, 9.

¹⁸ Thomas L. Stewart, “The Story of One Marine,” unpublished memoir, Stewart family’s private collection.

quantities of gas as soon as their arrival became known to the enemy. The Marines, among others, received their share of the poisonous stuff. An extent of the enemy's gas activities can be gained when it is considered that more than four hundred gas shells were dropped within a small area in the rear of the Marines' lines, during one bombardment.¹⁹

Colonel Albertus W. Catlin, commanding officer of 6th Regiment, believed "that the gas was the worst evil we had to encounter, and we learned to dread the deadly smell of mustard."²⁰

The gas attacks could come at any moment, even while the Marines slept. Corporal George W. Ruth, 97th Company, 6th Regiment, remembered one night when "we had the gas alert . . . they hit the end of the barracks house and I am sure I slept some, but whatever I slept that night was with a gas mask on, naturally."²¹ The constant looming threat of a gas attack made many of the Marines jumpy while listening for a gas alarm. This resulted in many false alarms and sometimes to the embarrassment of those raising the alarm, such as when First Lieutenant Sellers "thought I heard a siren go off, so I had the platoon put on their gas masks. The 'siren' turned out to be a mule braying, much to my embarrassment."²²

Alongside the artillery and gas training, time in the trenches also acclimated the 6th Machine Gun Battalion to fighting under real battlefield conditions. Major Littleton W. T. Waller Jr., commanding officer of 6th Machine Gun Battalion, wrote that "in this trench work the machine gunners learned much, although no drills and instructions were held."²³ The

companies built emplacements under camouflage, secured protection against observation from German airplanes, cared for their animals and equipment under adverse conditions, and learned of the supply needs under trench conditions.²⁴ They also learned the proper methods "which up to this time had not been found in textbooks" such as

how to establish mechanical means of covering certain areas with fire at night; safety precautions to keep from shooting into our patrols or working parties; how to furnish sentry and ration details and still get the maximum amount of rest; liaison, a subject which up to this time we had not really understood, and one which is a complete study in itself; and best of all, how to give general directions to platoon and section commanders and to trust to them for the execution of the details to carry these out. Probably the most valuable items of all those learned in this sector was the self-reliance acquired by platoon and section commanders, which taught them to rely on their own judgement and gave them confidence in their own ability to handle their own units under any conditions that might arise.²⁵

Thus, the Marines within the 6th Machine Gun Battalion learned the valuable lessons of warfare that would carry them through the harsh fighting in the following months.

On top of learning survival skills of trench warfare, the Marines needed to learn the tactics required to fight in the trenches. This included reconnaissance and raids into the German lines. Private Stewart recalled of the patrols

You were facing their trenches and they were facing our trenches and ev-

¹⁹ McClellan, "The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector," 101–2.

²⁰ Albertus Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines: The Battles of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1919; repr. 2016), 40.

²¹ Steven Smith, "WWI George Ruth US Marine—in His Own Words, The Lost Interview," 3 April 2018, YouTube video, 12:59–13:12.

²² Sellers, Gregory, and Girard, *C'est La Guerre*, 67.

²³ Maj L. W. T. Waller, "Machine Guns of the Fourth Brigade," *Marine Corps Gazette* 5, no. 1 (March 1920): 4–5.

²⁴ Waller, "Machine Guns of the Fourth Brigade," 5.

²⁵ Waller, "Machine Guns of the Fourth Brigade," 6.

ery night there would be a patrol go out to try and see if they were making any changes or anything. One thing that always bothered me a little bit, this patrol was not supposed to open fire on anybody, but you were supposed to get back into your trenches as fast as you could and report what you found out. And in my mind I always thought, here we come tearing back, these guys are gonna think we're [Germans] and shoot us but they never did.²⁶

Stewart also wrote home of one particular experience, likely in an observation post, in which “I lived five days out in ‘no man’s land’ without going back as far as the first line. We got two shellings in the five days there, so were glad to get out when we did.”²⁷ The grueling schedule of being on post in the trenches began to impact the troops’ perceptions. Corporal Joseph E. Rendingell noted, “My eyes got sore looking out in No Man’s Land. The bobbed [sic] wire posts and stumps of trees looked like they moved and many a time I let fly thinking they was Germans.”²⁸

When they were not fighting or dodging artillery, the Marines of the 4th Brigade worked to acclimate themselves to their new surroundings. The trench environment consisted of mud “knee deep in many places; have running water in the dugouts and water knee deep in some of the bomb proofs.”²⁹ Besides the natural conditions of the trenches, the Marines inherited the refuse of the French who had occupied the position before them. First Lieutenant Sellers recalled

Major Thomas Holcomb, USMC, our battalion commander, came out one night shortly after we had arrived at L’Eveche to inspect my platoon. The French had previously occupied the

trenches we were inhabiting, and they had made their bunks out of two by fours and chicken wire, and had left grenades, ammunition, and other supplies in every nook and cranny. Of course, Major Holcomb had to find something to criticize, so he zeroed in on the mess the French had left for us. The Major’s criticisms insulted my platoon GySgt. George H. Lyman. As I was coming back around a corner I heard Sergeant Lyman talking to another sergeant, and, referring to Holcomb, he said, “He ain’t worth a [c—k] full of cold piss.” I had never heard such a vile expression in my entire life. He was taking up for me of course, but I am surely glad the Major did not hear him.³⁰

These conditions did not provide a stable foundation for the Americans and the Marines spent much of their time digging and shoring up the trench networks.

Along with the mud and the combat conditions, the brigade was spread out and separated by large areas, making their movement both difficult and unsafe. For example, First Lieutenant Sellers recalled that the 78th Company spent time near Mont-sous-les-Côtes, once a small village, now uninhabited “except by rats and certain other varmints, and my platoon of Marines. They ought to have called us Maroons though, because nobody could visit there or depart during daylight. We had to sleep all day, stay under cover, then come out and stand to during the night, having breakfast just after nightfall, dinner at 11:30 p.m. and supper about 7 a.m.”³¹ The Marines suffered through the trenches and the uncomfortable life offered therein. However, for some officers, life at the front was comfortable.

In late April, Sellers became “a regular cave dweller.” His platoon found themselves positioned at

²⁶ James P. Gregory Jr., *The Story of One Marine: The World War I Letters and Photos of Pvt. Thomas L. Stewart* (Ashland, OR: Hellgate Press, 2017),

97.

²⁷ Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 111.

²⁸ Rendingell and Pattullo, *One Man’s War*, 62.

²⁹ Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 105.

³⁰ Sellers, Gregory, and Girard, *C’est La Guerre*, 64.

³¹ Sellers, Gregory, and Girard, *C’est La Guerre*, 65.

the base of an old quarry cliff. The sandstone had a crack in the cliff face where the French had entered and carved out rooms. Sellers was “half way up the face.” He was “as safe as a bug in a rug, in a solid rock dugout built or rather hollowed out of a crack in a quarry wall. I had a bunk for myself, one for my orderly, a little table on which I wrote, a small open fireplace, some shelves, and a couple of benches. I brought several candles with me, also some paper and a pen.”³² However, this was not the norm for many Marines and the unsanitary conditions of the trenches plagued many.

While trying to survive through the realities of trench life, Marines struggled to fight their hunger. Rations became difficult to supply to the men. In simply passing through the trenches, the “gummy viscous mass” of mud meant that stopping for even two minutes would require “considerable effort to extricate one’s feet from the red, sticky mud.”³³ The 6th Machine Gun Battalion suffered due to their units being scattered and assigned to various other companies. At first, they attempted to disperse rations preparation among each company, but as Major Waller remembered, “The gun positions were so far apart that the men carrying the rations were exhausted by the long trips through the mud of the trenches.”³⁴ Private Stewart lamented, “They sure said truly when the guy said ‘give me the safety of the front line’ but there are disadvantages to it even with all its ‘safety.’ It is pretty hard to get up such things as water and ‘chow!’”³⁵ The rations the men could get were scant but, if they were lucky, as Stewart recalled, they could have “bacon and spuds for breakfast; beef and spuds for dinner, and stew and rice for supper; coffee and bread at each meal, and that is all, provided the [German] artillery does not locate our ‘chow’ house.”³⁶ However, as First Lieutenant Sellers noted, “the bread was moldy, and we did not get much. . . . We usually lived on stew



Courtesy of Rachel Douglass
Pvts Thaddeus Forney and Theodore Guerry and Cpl Barry A. Smith.

(known as slum), canned ‘bill,’ and hard tack, with an occasional slab of bacon.”³⁷

It also seemed to one Marine, Private Clifford Medine of the 55th Company, 5th Regiment, that the Germans specifically targeted the American force’s food in an effort to make their lives even more miserable: “Easter Sunday the [Germans] played us a dirty trick. We were going to have a big dinner, turkey and everything, and just a half-hour before they dished out the chow, the damned fools dropped a big shell in the dugout where the kitchen was and out went the big

³² Sellers, Gregory, and Girard, *C’est La Guerre*, 70.

³³ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 96.

³⁴ Waller, “Machine Guns of the Fourth Brigade,” 5.

³⁵ Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 105.

³⁶ Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 107.

³⁷ Sellers, Gregory, and Girard, *C’est La Guerre*, 66.



Courtesy of Rachel Douglass

Marines of the 96th Company, 6th Regiment, resting on 1 May 1918.

feast, flying in all directions, with the cook and a few helpers.”³⁸ One unfortunate instance of this targeting of food left many men of the 95th Company, 6th Regiment, sick. While in the back of the lines, their rations, particularly the bread, received a “shelling of mustard gas,” as Private Warren R. Jackson recalled: “Every man in that company thought he was going to die and was disappointed because he could not.”³⁹ Fortunately, the effects of the gas bread only lasted a few days. The environment and lack of reliable food left many Marines “cold and wet, and hungry.”⁴⁰

The Marines were not the only hungry creatures in the trenches. Lice (cooties) and rats became the bunkmates of many Marines. The Marines spent

much time ridding their uniforms of lice. Colonel Albertus W. Catlin claimed, “The cootie is as troublesome as shrapnel and he loves Red Cross knitting.”⁴¹ The men tried to rid themselves of these creatures in the trenches, such as taking a lighter or match along the seams of their uniform to burn any lice and their eggs. Sometimes, to provide some entertainment, the Marines would have “cootie races.”⁴² They would take a frying pan and make two marks with chalk in it as a start and finish line, pick two lice from their body, and bet on which would win. Once placed on the starting line, the pan would be heated to encourage the lice to hop along to the finish. The Marines “spent long hours picking lice and throwing them in a hot pan.”⁴³

It was not until around 8 May that the Marines were able to properly rid themselves of the lice. Their uniforms were placed into the Thresh-Foden disin-

³⁸ Kemper F. Cowing, comp., and Courtney Ryley Cooper, ed., *Dear Folks at Home—The Glorious Story of the United States Marines in France as Told by Their Letters from the Battlefield* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 54.

³⁹ Warren R. Jackson, *His Time in Hell: A Texas Marine in France*, ed. George Clark (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2001), 65.

⁴⁰ Byron Scarbrough, *They Called Us Devil Dogs* (n.p.: self-published, 2005), 45.

⁴¹ Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines*, 31.

⁴² Rendenell, *One Man's War*, 65.

⁴³ Scarbrough, *They Called Us Devil Dogs*, 52.

factors. These were large cylinders mounted on truck chassis that operated a steam engine in which clothing and blankets were placed. In 15 minutes, all of the lice and their eggs would be killed and the Marines could have a brief respite from the constant itching.⁴⁴

Rats, attracted to the ideal conditions in the trenches of sewage waste and the rotten corpses of men forgotten in no-man's land, were omnipresent. Many Marines awoke to rats crawling across their bodies or attempting to steal their food. Private Stewart commented that "we not only eat and sleep with the rats, but at night on watch they throw rocks at you from the parapet. They are certainly familiar."⁴⁵ Corporal Sidney B. Hill of the 79th Company, 6th Regiment, wrote home that sometimes when he was "listening on the wire for the [Germans], the rats get on it and begin to fight and for a few moments he does not know whether it is a [German] coming and whether he should throw a bomb, or fire his rifle, or just lay low." Hill also remarked, "I would hate to kill a poor innocent rat, but I would love to get a [German]."⁴⁶

Rats could grow quite large and would frequently gnaw on wounded men. Corporal Joseph Rendinell recalled: "These rats are terrible. We can't lay down without them starting in to nibble at our legs. They are nice and fat from eating dead French and Germans. Now they want American meat. Those babies will find it pretty tough, I bet."⁴⁷ Corporal Adel M. Storey, 83d Company, 6th Regiment, wrote,

Never in my life have I seen rats of such size as these are here. They don't run from us, either, like any ordinary rats does. They will fight like a good fellow when you fool with them. Where we are now there are several cats, and in the daytime they come into the dugouts and around where we are, but at night they stay out in No Man's Land. . . . But it is a fact, when everything is quiet at night around the trenches and

in the dugouts the rats are out in force and the cats take refuge in No Man's Land.⁴⁸

To combat this plague of rodents and provide some form of entertainment, the Marines often hunted the rats through the trenches. Major Robert L. Denig, 17th Company, 5th Regiment, wrote home, "Oh, yes, rat-hunting in the trenches is some sport. They run down and everyone tries to jump on them. I got a couple. The rats are worse than the [Germans]."⁴⁹ Sometimes, dogs such as Jimbo, a rat terrier who was the mascot of the 67th Company, 5th Regiment, were used to hunt the rats. But the Marines also had an aardvark that Colonel Albertus Catlin recalled "did murder rats."⁵⁰

The unsanitary conditions of trench life also made it difficult to maintain good hygiene. The constant water in the trenches led to many cases of trench foot. Marines like Private James Scarbrough, 83d Company, 6th Regiment, suffered through the condition and recalled that his "feet were already bad from the ice and cold, but now they were swollen up like bear's feet. . . . It was becoming a war with the mud as much as a war with the Germans."⁵¹ Just to get a bath, the Marines would expose themselves to hostile fire from the German trenches. Private Stewart recalled one such instance during the brigade's time in Toulon when the troops decided that a bath was worth the risk to their lives: "There was a pond there in the area out in the open and some of us got us a bath right there in the open. [The enemy] was over there about couple hundred yards away in the trenches but it was broad daylight so we weren't too scared that they were gonna come." As a precaution, they laid their rifles out on the ground around the shell hole as they bathed.⁵²

Trench life also provided them time to reflect on their homes or perhaps it forced them to in order to escape their current living situations. Stewart wrote home about one of these evenings: "We had a

⁴⁴ Derby, "Wade In, Sanitary!," 42-43.

⁴⁵ Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 105.

⁴⁶ "Fighting the Rats," *Tacoma (WA) Times*, 30 May 1918, 3.

⁴⁷ Rendinell, *One Man's War*, 63.

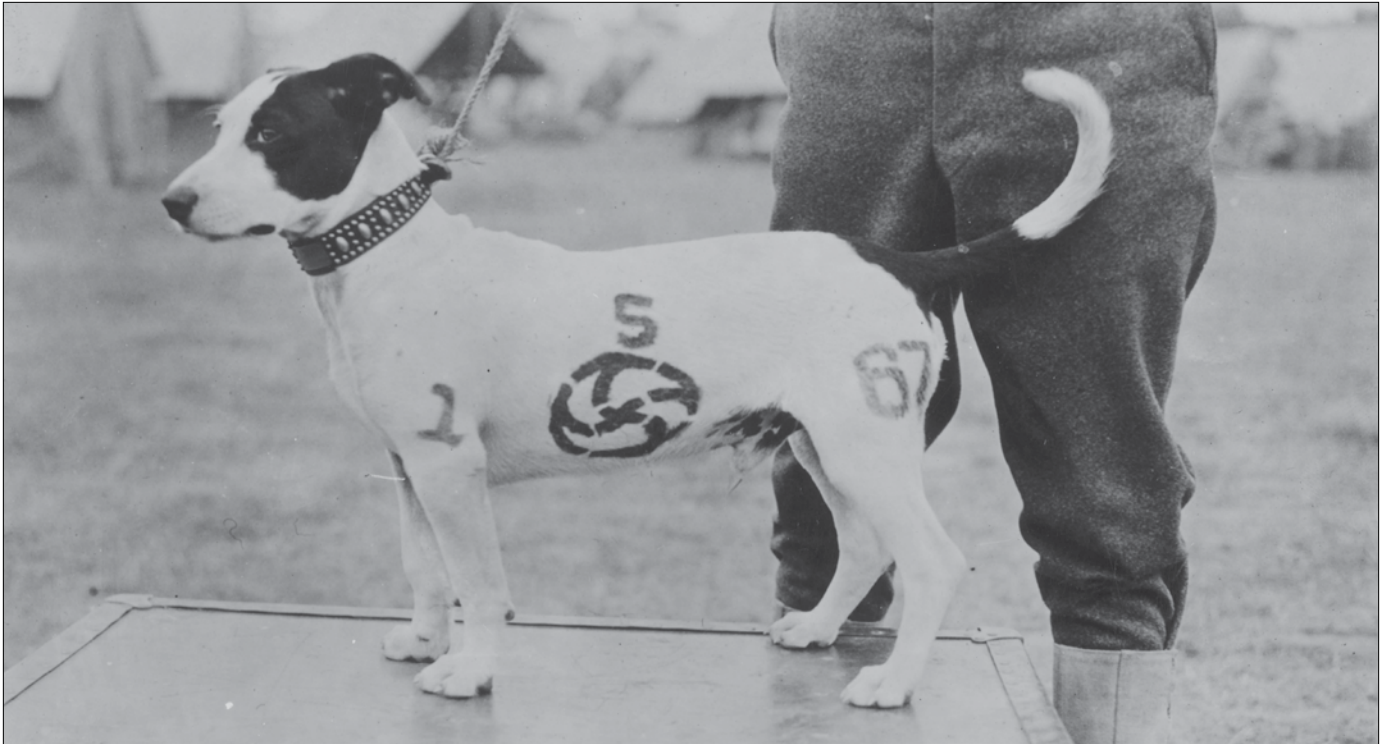
⁴⁸ Cowing, *Dear Folks at Home*, 61.

⁴⁹ Cowing, *Dear Folks at Home*, 47.

⁵⁰ Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines*, 31.

⁵¹ Scarbrough, *They Called Us Devil Dogs*, 46.

⁵² Stewart interview.



Signal Corps photograph, #2158, 111-SC-2158, Series: Photographs of American Military Activities, ca. 1918–ca. 1981, RG 111, Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860–1985, NARA

Jimbo, the mascot of the 67th Company, 5th Regiment. The markings on the dog are for 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, 67th Company.

good thunder and lightning storm last night, about the first we've had. Didn't seem natural not to hear the 'whistle' of the shell when you hear the crack and see the flash. Did seem more like a Kansas storm tho. My bunk is open on one side so it is sure outdoor life; last night the wind blew some but we escaped a soaking."⁵³ However, these moments of peace were periodically broken with fierce combat as the Germans tested the strength of the 4th Brigade and the 2d Division.

Combat

Adding to all of their lessons, the true test of the Marines came with the intense close-quarters combat of the trenches. The fears and excitement of the Marines after arriving in the Toulon sector are best summed by Corporal Havelock D. Nelson, 97th Company, 6th Regiment.

How would I react under machine gun or shell fire? Would I cringe and hide,

or, worse yet, run the wrong way? If it came to hand-to-hand combat, would I have the strength and skill to parry the swiftly approaching enemy bayonet, or would I be so paralyzed with fear that the cold steel would, unhindered, find a mark in my stomach or throat? Just how did it feel to have a bayonet or trench-knife suddenly plunged into some vital spot? What would be the sensations immediately following the impact of a bullet or shell-fragment? How would the boys as a whole react? Would the military discipline born of the past few months of intensive training still hold us together as an efficient military machine

⁵³Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 107.

during the heat and intense excitement of actual combat?⁵⁴

When the Marines finally arrived at the front, the sector seemed to operate under a tacit agreement between the French and Germans of “if you don’t shoot at me, I won’t shoot at you.”⁵⁵ However, the sector would not remain so quiet.

On 1 April 1918, Private Emil Henry Gehrke, 82d Company, 6th Regiment, became the first Marine killed in action in France. A German shell exploded over his working party in the woods to the rear of its position in the trenches. Shell fragments passed through Gehrke’s chest, killing him instantly. Privates Anton F. Hoesli and John R. Gabriel were severely wounded, and Private Harry R. Williams was mortally wounded and died on 2 April.⁵⁶ This loss instilled a fire within the Marines. As Colonel Albertus W. Catlin remarked, “We knew we were in the war then, in deadly earnest, and our men drew together and faced the music with a grim determination that boded ill for the unlucky [Germans] who might chance to appear within range of their rifles.”⁵⁷

On 6 April, the anniversary of the United States’ entrance into the war, the heaviest bombardment up to that point assailed the Marines. This was followed by a raid on the 74th Company at the town of Tresauvaux that did not meet any success. The Marines repulsed the attack, killing four Germans while losing one Marine and three wounded.⁵⁸

On 12 April, the 6th Regiment received its first heavy losses of the war. That foggy morning, the 74th Company was sleeping in reserve at Camp Fontaine-St. Robert, mostly in barracks in a wooded ravine. Unfortunately for the Marines, the Germans knew the

position of the camp “in Map Square 3272.”⁵⁹ Suddenly, a heavy barrage made of mostly gas inundated the area, catching the Marines in their billets before they had a chance to escape.⁶⁰ A shell “struck the roof of a building crowded with men, and the concentrated fumes filled the structure before the men were able to get their gas masks on. The shifting winds soon spread the gas to all parts of the ravine. The men were scattered through the woods for better protection, and their wet clothes readily absorbed the gas, which accounted for the serious body burns that resulted.”⁶¹

All officers were evacuated in serious condition and about 220 men were burned or had inhaled the gas. Forty of them died as a result.⁶² One of the hospital corpsmen, Pharmacist’s Mate Third Class Fred C. Schaffner, who had not been in the building, but who worked for hours over his comrades, inhaled so much gas from the men’s clothing that he died 48 hours later.⁶³ Another corpsman, Hospital Apprentice First Class Carl O. Kingsbury, also suffered from gas exposure while treating the wounded Marines, but was evacuated and spent the next three and half months in the hospital; one month of which he was totally blind.⁶⁴ Both men would become the first Navy corpsmen awarded the Army Distinguished Service Cross in World War I. The high mortality rate was nearly twice that ordinarily experienced by either the French or British. A later analysis of the shells showed this was “due to the mixture of phosgene.”⁶⁵

During the period of 17–21 April, Marines of the 96th Company, 6th Regiment, moved up to the frontline trenches. Corporal Harrison Cale remembered from this trip, “When the dawn came our men

⁵⁴ Havelock D. Nelson, “Verdun (Toulon Sector),” *Leatherneck*, December 1939, 12.

⁵⁵ Harrison Cale, “The American Marines at Verdun, Chateau Thierry, Bouresches, and Belleau Wood,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 15, no. 2 (June 1919): 183.

⁵⁶ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 97.

⁵⁷ Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines*, 27.

⁵⁸ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 100.

⁵⁹ 8th Landwehr Division War Diary and Annexes, 12 April 1918, in *Translations of War Diaries of German Units Opposed to the Second Division (Regular)*, 1918, vol. 1, trans. Gustav J. Braun and Trevor W. Swett (Washington, DC: U.S. Army War College, 1927).

⁶⁰ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 102.

⁶¹ Derby, “*Wade In, Sanitary!*,” 29–30.

⁶² McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 102.

⁶³ Derby, “*Wade In, Sanitary!*,” 30. Medical personnel in Marine organizations came from the U.S. Navy. See Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 33.

⁶⁴ Carl Oliver Kingsbury, *Pennsylvania War Service Record of Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines*, folder “Carl Kingsbury,” Lawrence County Historical Society, New Castle, PA.

⁶⁵ Derby, “*Wade In, Sanitary!*,” 29–30.



Courtesy of Rachel Douglass

Tresauvaux, near Verdun.

climbed onto the parapets and when they saw some Germans down by a creek washing their clothing they promptly opened fire on them. This not only brought down the wrath of the French but a raid by the Germans. Now came our long waited chance for action.⁶⁶ The Germans brought down a heavy bombardment on the Marines and then attacked in force. The Germans barely “reached the barbed wire entanglements” in front of the American trench when the Marines “opened up such a heavy rifle fire and machine gun fire that we held them in the wire until the American artillery . . . got into action.” The barrage finally inflicted enough casualties to convince the Germans to retreat.⁶⁷

On 20 April, the 84th Company, 6th Regiment, held back a large raid while outnumbered two to one. In the middle of the night, the Germans crawled through the mud and quietly cut through almost half of the last line of barbed wire entanglements nearest the American trenches. Fortunately, the snapping of wires alerted the Marines, who quickly opened fire. The Germans, once discovered, let loose with rifle fire, flamethrowers, and grenades. Soon, Germans jumped into the trench while throwing grenades. Intense hand-to-hand combat and such a large force necessitated a barrage to push back the Germans.⁶⁸ The Marines attempted to fire the six-star signal flares four times, but they were too damp. All lines of communication had been cut off. Fortunately, more flares were found and fired, which called down a short 10-min-

⁶⁶ Cale, “The American Marines at Verdun, Chateau Thierry, Bour-sches, and Belleau Wood,” 183.

⁶⁷ Cale, “The American Marines at Verdun, Chateau Thierry, Bour-sches, and Belleau Wood,” 183.

⁶⁸ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 51; and Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines*, 38–40.

ute barrage. Two Marines, Privates Earl H. Sleeth and Frank H. Hullinger, volunteered to convey the call to Mont-sous-les-Côtes to continue the barrage. They both braved the horrific German barrage falling on the road to the back of the lines but managed to make it through safely. Exhausted from his sprint through hell, Hullinger remained at Mont-sous-les-Côtes while Sleeth returned to the front with more flares.⁶⁹ The intense fire of the Marines pushed the Germans back.

During that same night, the 83d Company, 6th Regiment, also held off about 30 Germans equipped with flamethrowers and grenades. Of the flamethrower, Private James Scarbrough recalled that “in trenches, it was very effective and it caused a horrible death. . . . You’d feel the heat from a hundred yards away. . . . The smell of men burning with that gasoline vapor stays with you.” Fortunately, the Germans did not make it through their barbed wire entanglements and the 83d Company pushed them back with grenades and machine-gun fire. Once they ceased fire, a flare went up to provide light over the carnage. Private Scarbrough peeked over the top where he saw two German soldiers “hanging in the wire, dead. . . . They were all jumbled in the wire and looked like scarecrows, just shadows of men. . . . The Germans were all gone; they had all retreated out of there leaving their dead.”⁷⁰ According to the German records, “After about one hour the patrol was forced to retreat to our own trenches without having accomplished anything.”⁷¹

On 21 April, the 45th Company, 5th Regiment, held the trench line through the town of Eix. Between 0400 and 0500, the Germans laid down a barrage and a German raiding party attacked the line. Fortunately, the Marines repulsed the enemy before it reached the second row of wire. The casualties of the 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment, from the attack consisted of 3 men killed and 11 wounded. The Germans left with three officers and one private killed. The following morn-



Pvt Clarence H. Douglass, 5 April 1918.

Courtesy of Rachel Douglass

ing, several German ambulances were seen going to the rear, indicating that the losses sustained by the enemy in the raid of the previous night were quite heavy.⁷²

In the dead of night on 22 April, U.S. Army Reserve second lieutenant August L. Sundval of the 18th Company, 5th Regiment, led a patrol of 30 men into no-man’s-land. During their advance, they ran into a larger German working party “numbering at least a

⁶⁹ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 104–5.

⁷⁰ Scarbrough, *They Called Us Devil Dogs*, 51.

⁷¹ “Raid against Villerschanze,” in “Report covering the period of April 17 to 23, 1918,” 10th Landwehr Division War Diary, in *Translations of War Diaries of German Units Opposed to the Second Division (Regular)*, 1918.

⁷² McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 103–4; and Capt Francis Fisk and Sgt Charles S. Cole, *A History of the 20th Co. 5th Regt. United States Marines* (Rossbach, Germany: self-published, 1919), 8.

hundred men.”⁷³ Unfortunately for the Germans, “the Marine does not count his enemy’s number.” A heated battle erupted in the mud wherein “rifles cracked and spat fire, and now and then a grunt told of an American bayonet that had found its sheath in a German body.” During the fighting, Sundval was wounded and as the battle lulled, Corporal Wolcott Winchenbaugh grabbed Sundval and carried him through heavy machine-gun fire back to the American lines.⁷⁴ For his actions, Winchenbaugh received the Army Distinguished Service Cross.⁷⁵

In early May, toward the end of their stint in the sector, some Marines of the 49th Company, 5th Regiment, went on a patrolling party into no-man’s-land when they “ran into a German party and the Germans shouted ‘Halte.’” The Marines dropped down “to old Mother Earth and the music started.” Despite being outnumbered, the Marines drove back the Germans and captured a wounded German officer.⁷⁶ In instances such as this, the Germans praised the Americans’ “sporting instinct” in “crawling ahead” to face the German patrols.⁷⁷

The aforementioned engagements are just some of the many fights between the Marines and the Germans that heralded their arrival in France. While not taking major losses like the battles in the following months, the Marines still suffered 513 casualties.⁷⁸ However, this varied greatly between companies depending on where they served on the front. Some units such as the 20th Company, 5th Regiment, did not suffer any major casualties and during their time

in the trenches “no action took place, and everything was quiet.”⁷⁹

Beginning on 13 May, the French began to relieve the 4th Brigade from the sector. They then traveled a long journey to about 40.2 kilometers northwest of Paris near the French villages of Gisors and Chaumont-en-Vexin drilling, maneuver training, and resting. As Private Stewart remarked of this period, the Marines were “sure hitting the ball from 5:30 to 9:30 P.M. so we think our rest billet is at the front, not the rear. But at that I haven’t heard anyone wishing for the front line. It is some relief to be out of range of the sighing Susies.”⁸⁰ This rest would not last long before they would be whisked away to stop the German advance toward Paris near Belleau Wood in June.

While not as large as the later engagements, the time the Marines spent in the trenches of the Toulon sector established them as a formidable fighting force that would thoroughly test the strength of the German Army. As Private Clifford Medine, 55th Company, 5th Regiment, stated in a letter home, the success of the Marines in the trenches “was remarkable, as we were new to the game and nearly all the fighting was hand-to-hand business.”⁸¹ The men of the 4th Brigade upheld the reputation of the Corps and earned their accolades. Many examples of heroism were undertaken around Verdun. Some of these were recognized with medals, while many acts of personal bravery unfortunately went unacknowledged.

Acts of Valor

Several Marines were awarded medals for their valor while at Verdun. For instance, on 17 April a force composed of French soldiers and Marines of the 5th Regiment successfully launched a raid out of Eix, near Demi-Lune. For their part in the raid, Second Lieutenant Max D. Gilfillan and Sergeant Louis Cukela of 49th Company, Corporal John L. Kuhn (who was killed) and Private Walter Klamm of 16th Company, and Private George C. Brooks of 17th Company were

⁷³ Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines*, 52. The 4th Brigade had at least 90 Army Reserve officers leading Marines during the war due to the lack of Marine officers at the entry of the United States into the conflict. For more information, see Richard S. Faulkner, “Doughboy Devil Dogs: U.S. Army Officers in the 4th Brigade in the Great War,” *Marine Corps History* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2021): 5–23, <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2021070101>.

⁷⁴ Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines*, 73.

⁷⁵ George Clark, *Decorated Marines of the Fourth Brigade in World War I* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 110–11.

⁷⁶ Cowing and Cooper, *Dear Folks at Home*, 72.

⁷⁷ “Captured,” in “Report covering the period of April 17 to 23, 1918,” 24 April 1918, 10th Landwehr Division War Diary, in *Translations of War Diaries of German Units Opposed to the Second Division (Regular)*, 1918, vol. 1.

⁷⁸ George G. Strott, *Navy Medics with the Marines 1917–1919*, 2d ed. (Nashville, TN: Battery Press, 2005), 38.

⁷⁹ Fisk and Cole, *A History of the 20th Co. 5th Regt.*, 8.

⁸⁰ Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 113. The term *sighing Susies* was slang for a type of incoming artillery.

⁸¹ Cowing and Cooper, *Dear Folks at Home*, 54.

awarded the Silver Star Medal and the French Croix de Guerre.⁸²

Patrols into no-man's-land also resulted in many acts of heroism that went unrecognized. One such act was performed by Gunnery Sergeant Charles Thompson of the 83d Company, 6th Regiment, on 30 April. That night, Thompson took two Marines from his company, Private Edward J. Steinmetz and Private Gregory A. Dorian, on a reconnaissance patrol. The Marines discovered an abandoned set of trenches and went into them to find the enemy. During their exploration, Steinmetz slipped in the mud and fell. He "almost laughed" but when he drew breath, he found that mustard gas had begun filling the trench. Thompson "grabbed Steinmetz by the belt and hurled him topside, out of the trench." While Steinmetz gasped for breath "hoping to God the [Germans] didn't hear him," Thompson went deeper into the trench to pull Dorian out. Thompson then carried Dorian over his shoulder and led Steinmetz back through no-man's-land while dodging a German patrol. Thompson and Steinmetz recovered from their wounds, but Private Gregory Dorian died on 1 May at Base Hospital 15.⁸³

Bravery does not require a front line to be shown. Acts of valor also took place behind the lines in the Toulon sector. For example, during a bombardment of Mont-sous-les-Côtes at about 1845, on 9 April, Private Clarence S. Markham, 84th Company, 6th Regiment, was thrown to the street by an explosion. Private James E. Hatcher, 84th Company, 6th Regiment, witnessed this and, without thinking of his own danger, ran into the barrage and carried Private Markham to a place of safety. While carrying the wounded man, Private Hatcher fell to the ground, but quickly recovered and got his fellow Marine out of further danger.⁸⁴

⁸² McClellan, "The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector," 103.

⁸³ Scarbrough, *They Called Us Devil Dogs*, 52–59; and Dorian Gregory, Addenda Roll, July 1919, Ancestry.com. U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, 1798–1958, database online.

⁸⁴ McClellan, "The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector," 101.



Courtesy of Byron Scarbrough

GySgt Charles Thompson.

Accolades

These examples are just a few of the countless acts of bravery shown by the Marines during their two-month stretch in the trenches. Their sacrifice and determination helped to form the identity of hard Marines who were even harder fighters. U.S. Army major general Omar Bundy, commanding general of 2d Division, commented that the "Fifth Regiment was regarded as one of the most efficient infantry organizations in the American Expeditionary Forces."⁸⁵ On replacing Brigadier General Charles A. Doyen, Brigadier General James G. Harbord wrote of the 4th Brigade, "Your Brigade has always set a pattern of sol-

⁸⁵ McClellan, "The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector," 107.

dierly excellence, and has been a pride to us all.”⁸⁶ The Marines knew this, and expressed their opinions to General John J. Pershing during an inspection during their rest period in May. In a letter, Private Thomas L. Stewart wrote, “When we were inspected not long ago by Gen. Pershing, he asked if there were any recruits in our company. The answer was ‘No.’”⁸⁷ Only hardened Marines made up the company after their time in the trenches.

The accolades did not stop with American leadership. To the Germans, the Marines had secured their reputation as formidable enemies. According to the reports of the *10th Landwehr Division*, the Americans of the 2d Division “offered embittered resistance with their machine guns, some even with their bayonet; a great many of them died fighting heroically.” The 5th and 6th Marine Regiments “should be classed as units of a somewhat higher value in view of their picked replacements and their better training than the 9th and 23d Infantry Regiments.”⁸⁸ Marine Gunner Horace Talbot of Headquarters Company, 5th Regiment, wrote home of Verdun,

The Germans who tried to conduct raids, etc., found out that this division had no intentions of being caught napping and letting a couple of hundred prisoners fall into their hands, as the case had been in another sector held by an American division. On the contrary, all raids against us were a failure, and it was the Germans instead who left prisoners and material in our hands and failed to accomplish anything against the Second.⁸⁹

The Marines’ constant harassment and the Germans’ failure to accomplish anything of import against

them led to the creation of the most treasured nickname of the Marine Corps, “Teufel Hunden” or Devil Dogs.⁹⁰ Contrary to the popular myth, however, no evidence backs the claim that the nickname came from the Germans. The name began appearing in American newspapers by April 1918, with some articles claiming that their information came from a Marine’s letter home; yet the original source—the letter cited in the 13 April newspaper article—for this claim has not been found.⁹¹ Despite its dubious origin, the Marine Corps wore it as a badge of honor. Marine Corps publications erroneously claim the nickname came from the fighting during the Battle of Belleau Wood, but in fact, it was created during the 4th Brigade’s time in the Toulon sector.⁹² Corporal Willard P. Nelligan of 95th Company, 6th Regiment, later gave one explanation of how the Marines earned the nickname Devil Dogs.

That’s what they call the Marines down at Verdun. Here’s how we got the name: We had our patrols out every night in No Man’s Land down there, and kept pestering the life out of them until they thought they would teach us a lesson; so they sent a raiding party, two hundred and fifty strong, to take our trenches and incidentally to get some prisoners. But we cut them to pieces, and instead of capturing any of us we captured most of them. They figured it was no use trying to capture any Marines, and they then nicknamed us “Teufelhunden.”⁹³

Out of the lessons and accomplishments from the time spent in the trenches, perhaps the creation of this nickname played the largest part in the lasting impact and memory of the Marine Corps in World War I.

⁸⁶ McClellan, “The Fourth Brigade of Marines in the Training Areas and the Operations in the Verdun Sector,” 108.

⁸⁷ Gregory, *The Story of One Marine*, 111–12.

⁸⁸ “Combat Value,” in “Compilation of Statements of Captured Americans,” 4 May 1918, 10th Landwehr Division War Diary, in *Translations of War Diaries of German Units Opposed to the Second Division (Regular)*, 1918, vol. 1.

⁸⁹ “The Fifth Marines and the Second Division in the Great War,” *Fall River (MA) Daily Evening News*, 2 April 1919, 9.

⁹⁰ “Marines Now ‘Devil Dogs,’” *Perth Amboy (NJ) Evening News*, 13 April 1918, 3.

⁹¹ “Wounded Marines Were Known Here,” *New York Times*, 27 April 1918, 13.

⁹² *U.S. Marine Guidebook* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2010), loc. 302 of 3612, Kindle.

⁹³ Cowing and Cooper, *Dear Folks at Home*, 204.

The experiences of the Marines at Verdun in the Toulon sector were meant to train and acclimate them to modern warfare in France. Unfortunately, this meant that the 4th Brigade could not practice the open-warfare maneuvers the AEF depended on. The German spring offensive resulted in a longer stay in the trenches, which further belabored their lack of training.⁹⁴ Despite this, the Marines excelled in facing the challenges they encountered in the trenches. Even though Belleau Wood dominates the annals of Marine

Corps history, the time spent in the Toulon sector played a critical role in conditioning the Marines to life in the trenches, brought the first combat and casualties of the war, and established the Marine Corps as a formidable fighting force. The sacrifice and lessons learned in Toulon not only prepared the Marines for later momentous engagements but also founded the reputation that the Marine Corps continues to uphold today.

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⁹⁴ For a deeper dive into the development of Marine tactical doctrine, see Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*.

“The Song They Lived By”

THE “MARINES’ HYMN” DURING WORLD WAR II

by Lauren Bowers

Abstract: With the onset of America’s involvement in World War II in December 1941, there was a marked upswing in the popularity of all patriotic music, including the “Marines’ Hymn.” This article provides insight into the story of the “Marines’ Hymn” during World War II, including the increase in demand for published sheet music editions and the numerous suggestions of new lyrics to reflect the wartime experiences of Marines around the globe. It also highlights the role played by Marine Corps leadership in encouraging the hymn’s popularity, both at home and in the directives given to their combat correspondents reporting from the front.

Keywords: “Marines’ Hymn,” Brigadier General Robert L. Denig, Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb, Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, Navajo code talkers, Marine Corps Aviation

Introduction

From its mysterious nineteenth-century beginnings, the “Marines’ Hymn” became increasingly standardized and well-known throughout the 1910s and 1920s.¹ It remained popular throughout the 1930s as the official song of the Marine Corps, and was frequently played on the radio, such as in “The Leathernecks,” a program broadcast on radio station WNYC by the New York detachment of the Marine Corps League starting in 1931.² It also featured prominently in several films, such as *The Cuban Love Song*

in 1931 and *Professional Soldier* in 1935.³ Short articles also regularly appeared in local newspapers that gave a brief history of the hymn and offered commentary on its quality and its popularity among the general public. The hymn’s impact as a symbol of the U.S. Marine Corps was such that after hearing it during a stop in Iceland on 16 August 1941, British prime minister Winston S. Churchill famously recalled, “[The hymn] bit so deeply into my memory that I could not get it out of my head.”⁴

With the onset of America’s involvement in World War II in December 1941, there was a marked upswing in the popularity of all patriotic music, including the “Marines’ Hymn,” as seen in the numerous requests from publishing companies to print new editions of the song and the steady stream of letters sent to Headquarters Marine Corps suggesting new lyrics to reflect the wartime experiences of Marines around

Lauren Bowers holds a bachelor of arts in international affairs from the George Washington University in Washington, DC, and master’s degrees from the University of York in England and Trinity College Dublin in Ireland. <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2022080202>

¹ For the first two articles in this series about the history of the “Marines’ Hymn,” see Lauren Bowers, “A Song with ‘Dash’ and ‘Pep’: A History of the ‘Marines’ Hymn’ to 1919,” *Marine Corps History* 6, no. 2 (Winter 2020): 5–22, <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2020060201>; and Lauren Bowers, “The ‘Devil-May-Care Song of the Leathernecks’: A History of the ‘Marines’ Hymn,’ 1920–47,” *Marine Corps History* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2021): 36–53, <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2021070203>.

² Jo Ranson, “Radio Dial-Log,” *Brooklyn (NY) Daily Eagle*, 19 December 1931, 13.

³ Although *The Cuban Love Song* was able to use the “Marines’ Hymn” freely in the United States, when the film played in Europe, film studio MGM had to pay royalties to the descendants of Jacques Offenbach, credited as the composer of the tune, in accordance with local copyright laws. Glen Beverly, “Those Indefatigable ‘Musical G-Men,’” *Brooklyn (NY) Daily Eagle*, 27 June 1937, 53.

⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 3, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 449.

the globe. This popularity was actively encouraged by Marine Corps leadership, who approved a new official lyric in November 1942 celebrating Marine Corps Aviation, partly in response to the growing public support for such a change. The Marine Corps also directed its combat correspondents to report stories from the front that would promote the fighting spirit, which resulted in several accounts of Marines being welcomed by rousing renditions of their own hymn by citizens of other nations worldwide. An article in a headquarters bulletin in February 1944 even boasted about this increased international familiarity of the “Marines’ Hymn” since Guadalcanal, due in part to the attention given to it in various media.

The news flashed to the world from Guadalcanal in August, 1942 did two things—it put into common use a previously little-known name and place, and it loosed on the radio and movie screen, as well as countless other places, the musical notes of the “Marines’ Hymn.” Probably at no other time—even following the heroic fight in Belleau Wood in 1918 (for there was no radio in the home then)—have the notes from the stirring song been played so often, or so universally, as following the Guadalcanal attack. Today, the words and music of the “Marines’ Hymn” are known and frequently sung by flaxen-haired Icelanders, Solomon Island natives, and the residents of the Antipodes.⁵

Using documents stored at the Marine Band Library in Washington, DC, and the Marine Corps History Division’s Historical Resources Branch at Quantico, Virginia, as a foundation, this article tells the story of the “Marines’ Hymn” during World War II and its role in the war effort, at home and abroad.

⁵ “The Marines’ Hymn Sung Round the World,” Headquarters bulletin, February 1944, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library, Washington, DC, 9.

The Rush to Publish

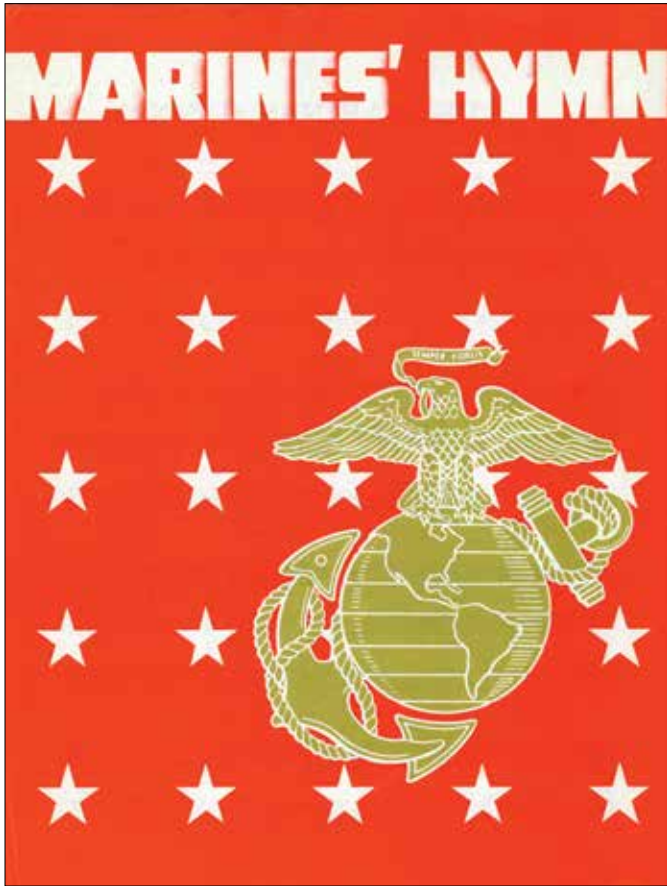
By the start of the war, the Marine Corps already had a history of providing free copies of the lyrics and music of the hymn for recruiting purposes, such as when Major General Commandant Wendell C. Neville asked the Marine Corps Recruiting Bureau in Philadelphia to print 10,000 copies of the hymn for distribution in April 1929.⁶ This practice of offering free copies of the hymn became well-known, and several articles advertising the availability of such copies, often described as “beautifully illustrated,” at recruiting offices and mentioning their popularity among the general public are seen in local newspapers across the country throughout the 1930s.⁷ The recruitment purpose of this endeavor can be seen in a letter by the sergeant in charge of publicity in Louisiana printed in a local newspaper, which stated, “We are particularly interested in supplying high school bands with the music of our inspiring song, and we’d be grateful to you for the names of all groups who desire copies of the Marine Corps Hymn.”⁸

While the Marine Corps continued to supply free copies of the hymn during the war, this effort apparently did not meet the high public demand, and requests soon came pouring into the Division of Public Relations, led by Brigadier General Robert L. Denig, from music publishing companies that saw an opportunity to make money publishing their own editions of the song. Most requests were from companies wishing to publish arrangements of the hymn for piano or choral groups, or from those publishing songbooks for schoolchildren. However, there were more unusual requests too. In September 1942, the American Printing House for the Blind requested permission to publish a version embossed in braille; in March 1943, there was a request to publish a version in Greek; in July 1943, the O. Pagani and Brothers music company

⁶ MajGen Cndt Wendell C. Neville to the Officer in Charge, Marine Corps Recruiting Bureau, Philadelphia, 24 April 1929, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, Marine Corps History Division (MCHD), Quantico, VA.

⁷ Casey, “Sea Soldiers’ Song Is Mystery Ballad,” 4; and “Who Wants Free Copy of U.S. Marine Hymn?,” *Courier-Post* (Camden, NJ), 25 June 1936, 33.

⁸ Sgt Richard C. Seither, “Marine Corps Hymn,” *Texas Gazette* (Saint Joseph, LA), 6 March 1942, 1.



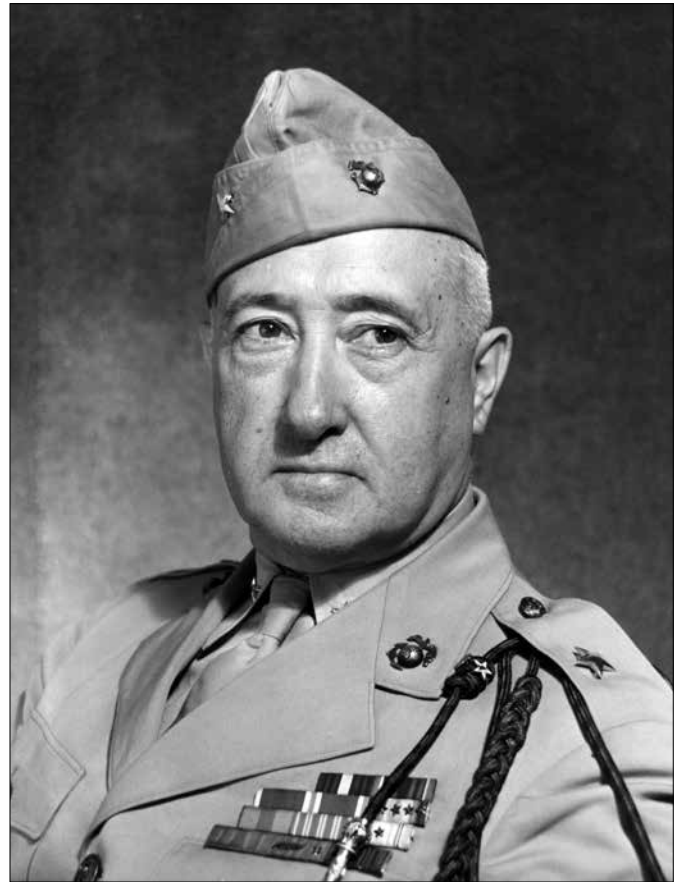
Marine Band Library

World War II-era cover of the “Marines’ Hymn” sheet music printed for complimentary distribution by the U.S. Marine Corps.

requested permission to publish one version for piano accordion and another for two mandolins and guitar; and in August 1943, the Oahu Publishing Company asked to publish an arrangement for Hawaiian guitar.⁹ Two Canadian publishers also requested permission, including the Provincial Normal School in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, which wished to include one or two good American songs in its upcoming songbook “to help foster and maintain the very fine sense of neighborliness which exists between our two countries.”¹⁰ Requests for nonmusical uses of the hymn were sent

⁹ American Printing House for the Blind to BGen Robert L. Denig, 15 September 1942; William F. Santelmann, memo to T. F. Carley, 15 March 1943; Theresa Costello, O. Pagani and Bro. to BGen Robert L. Denig, 20 July 1943; and Harry Stanley, Oahu Publishing Company to BGen Robert L. Denig, 30 August 1943, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

¹⁰ R. J. Staples, Provincial Normal School, Saskatchewan, Canada to BGen Franklin A. Hart, 9 March 1946, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.



Historical Resources Branch, Archives, Marine Corps History Division
BGen Robert L. Denig, director of the Division of Public Relations.

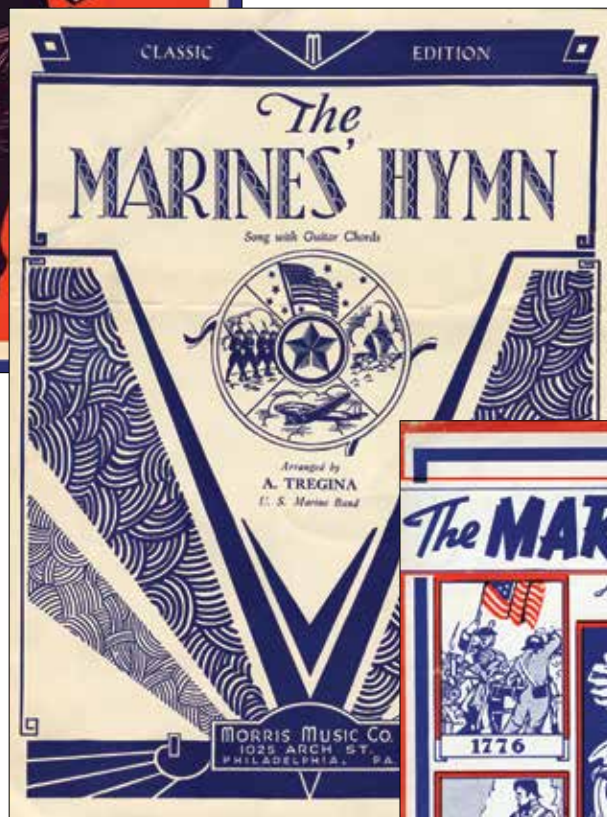
too, including from the Walter S. Mills Company to print the words of the hymn on cloth, earthenware, and decorative tiles.¹¹

Denig approved most of these requests, making sure that the publishers complied with the Marine Corps’ policy from 18 February 1942, which allowed for royalty-free use and publication of the hymn on condition that the authorized version was used, with credit given to the U.S. Marine Corps. This policy had been proposed by Brigadier General Edward A. Ostermann, adjutant and inspector of the Marine Corps, in a memorandum to Lieutenant General Commandant Thomas Holcomb, in response to a decade-long dispute about the ownership of the “Ma-

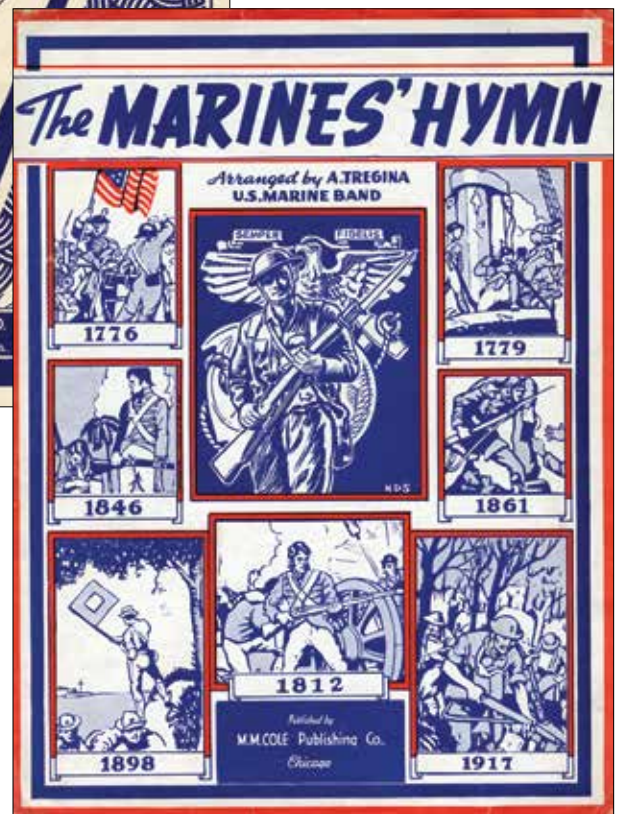
¹¹ Walter S. Mills Company, Ltd. to BGen Robert L. Denig, 20 May 1943; and BGen Robert L. Denig to Walter S. Mills Company Ltd., 25 May 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.



Marine Band Library
Cover of the "Marines' Hymn" sheet music printed by the Calumet Music Co. in 1943.



Marine Band Library
World War II-era cover of the "Marines' Hymn" sheet music printed by the Morris Music Co.



Marine Band Library
World War II-era cover of the "Marines' Hymn" sheet music printed by the M. M. Cole Publishing Co.

rines' Hymn." This dispute had mainly been between the Marine Corps, former First Sergeant L. Z. Phillips (who had been instrumental in registering the first copyright of the hymn on 19 August 1919), and the Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, which claimed to have purchased the copyright from Phillips in October 1935 and spent the next few years aggressively pursuing its rights to collect royalties from it.¹² This policy was built on the precedent set in August 1931, when Major General Commandant Fuller granted L. Z. Phillips's request to publish copies of the hymn at his own expense on the condition that he use the authorized version of the lyrics and include the credit line "Copyright 1919 by U.S. Marine Corps."¹³ Between that initial letter to Phillips in August 1931 and Ostermann's memorandum in February 1942, about 20 other publishers had received similar permission, and the number rose even higher during World War II. This policy reasserted Marine Corps ownership of the 1919 copyright of the hymn and ensured that no third party could control publication rights of the hymn or collect royalties from other publishers by claiming to be the copyright holder.

The relevance of the copyright issue at this time can be seen in the response to the Canadian Music Sales Corporation in April 1943. The company complained that a competing Canadian publisher had recently released "The Song of the Marines," which was likely an infringement on the copyright of the "Marines' Hymn" and offered to protect the Marine Corps' legal interests in this matter in the Canadian market.¹⁴ In response, Rear Admiral L. E. Bratton, acting judge advocate general of the Navy stated, "The USMC copyright registration is effective in the United States only, as this country is not a member of the International Union under whose provisions a copyright registration is also effective in those countries

that are members of the Union, provided that certain requirements are complied with."¹⁵

In addition to approving many publication requests, Brigadier General Ostermann actively corresponded with various music publishing companies to clarify the new Marine Corps free-use policy of February 1942. He reprimanded publishers who were not in compliance with the new policy and acknowledged the complaints of publishers who were frustrated by the sudden proliferation of sheet music editions of the hymn, especially those that undercut the competition by selling for 3 or 4 cents per copy, far below the usual 22 cents per copy.¹⁶ Ostermann also reassured those who had previously received cease and desist letters from the Marks Corporation that they were within their rights to publish the song royalty-free.¹⁷ For example, when the Chart Music Publishing House in Chicago sent Ostermann a check in July 1942 for 5 percent of the net revenue of its quarterly sales of the hymn, Ostermann restated that no royalties from sales of the hymn could be accepted and returned the \$22.78.¹⁸

Not all requests to use the hymn were approved by the Marine Corps. For instance, in March 1942 the J. Fischer and Brother company from New York City requested permission to publish the hymn as part of a musical medley. Ostermann rejected the request, on the grounds that "the Marines consider the relation of this hymn to the Corps as analogous to the relations of the national anthem to the United States. Navy Regulations forbid the playing of the Star Spangled Banner as part of a medley, and it is the policy of the Marine Corps not to sanction the playing of 'The Marines'

¹² BGen Edward A. Ostermann, memo to LtGen Cmdt Thomas Holcomb, 18 February 1942, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library, hereafter Ostermann memo to Holcomb; and Bowers, "The 'Devil-May-Care Song of the Leathernecks,'" 41–47.

¹³ Quoted in Ostermann memo to Holcomb.

¹⁴ Canadian Music Sales Corporation, Ltd. to LtGen Commandant Thomas Holcomb, 7 April 1943, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

¹⁵ RAdm L. E. Bratton to W. S. Low, 27 April 1943, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

¹⁶ Eugene A. Warner, Chart Music Publishing House, Inc. to BGen Edward A. Ostermann, 28 July 1942, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library, hereafter Warner letter to Ostermann.

¹⁷ BGen Edward A. Ostermann to Manhattan Publications, 30 April 1942, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD; BGen Edward A. Ostermann, to the Morris Music Company, 31 July 1942; and R. L. Kramer, Morris Music Company to BGen Edward A. Ostermann, 3 August 1942, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

¹⁸ Warner letter to Ostermann; and BGen Edward A. Ostermann to Eugene A. Warner, 31 July 1942, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

Hymn as part of a medley.”¹⁹ However, this position was either reversed or overruled the following year, when permission was given to Louis Lewyn Productions in August 1943 to use the hymn in a short film showing the U.S. Coast Guard Band playing a medley of martial airs in a musical salute to the Marines.²⁰ Another exception to the Marine Corps’ free-use policy was the specific arrangement played by the Marine Corps Band. In March 1943, Charles E. Jenkins, a member of a 45-piece ensemble including Army band members from World War I, requested copies of the Marine Corps Band’s own arrangement, rather than the simplified version available on the market. Band Leader William F. Santelmann denied the request, on the basis that the arrangement was his own, and was only to be used by the Marine Corps Band.²¹ These exceptions show that although the Marine Corps had broadened its policy regarding third-party use of the hymn, it still considered the hymn to be “special property of the Marines” and reserved some uses for itself.²²

On 21 November 1942, Lieutenant General Commandant Thomas Holcomb issued Letter of Instruction 267, stating that he officially approved a change in the fourth line of the first verse of the hymn from “we fight our country’s battles on the land as on the sea” to “we fight our country’s battles in the air, on land and sea.”²³ The subsequent press release issued through the Associated Press on 26 November noted that, although many people had suggested similar changes to honor the contributions of Marine Corps Aviation, Commandant Holcomb specifically adopted the version proposed by retired gunnery sergeant Henry Lloyd Tallman at a recent meeting of the

First Marine Aviation Force Veterans Association in Cincinnati, Ohio.²⁴ No evidence has been found that the Marine Corps leadership asked music publishers to recall their now outdated editions, but for the remainder of the war, most responses to publication requests included a free copy of the updated lyrics and clarification that these were the correct lyrics to be used in any forthcoming editions.²⁵ The extant letters in the Marine Corps collections also indicate that music publishers took this change in stride and were eager to publish the correct version of the hymn. For instance, immediately after the Associated Press press release, Robert Schirmer of the Boston Music Company in New York City, which had published seven different editions of the hymn since the bombing of Pearl Harbor, wrote to Denig to ascertain whether the change was indeed official, adding that “if it is, we will be more than glad to make the correction in all our editions before the next printings.”²⁶

The Women’s Reserve and the Navajo Code Talkers

A thorough discussion of the impact and dissemination of the hymn’s updated lyric is beyond the scope of this article, but one important outcome is worth highlighting here. Namely, that the official lyric change mentioned above, which was done to recognize the contributions of Marine Corps Aviation, likely inspired other groups of Marines to celebrate their own specialized contributions to the Corps.

The Marine Corps Women’s Reserve was formed on 13 February 1943, seven months after it had been signed into law. Within the first three days, Mrs. Lillian Parker sent a letter to the director, Major Ruth

¹⁹ J. Fischer and Bro. to U.S. Marine Corps, 20 March 1942; and BGen Edward A. Ostermann to J. Fischer and Bro., 23 March 1942, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library, hereafter Ostermann letter to J. Fischer and Bro.

²⁰ Louis Lewyn, Louis Lewyn Productions to U.S. Marine Corps, 19 August 1943; and BGen Robert L. Denig to Louis Lewyn, 21 August 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

²¹ Charles E. Jenkins to Director, Marine Corps Band, 20 March 1943; and William F. Santelmann to Charles E. Jenkins, 1 April 1943, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

²² Ostermann letter to J. Fischer and Bro.

²³ LtGen Cmdt Thomas Holcomb, Letter of Instruction 267, 25 November 1942, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

²⁴ “Alteration Made in Marine Anthem: First Verse Revamped to Give Recognition to Troops in Air Branch,” *Baltimore (MD) Sun*, 27 November 1942, 4, 28; and Bowers, “The ‘Devil-May-Care Song of the Leather-necks,’” 47–51.

²⁵ Some examples: BGen Robert L. Denig to Ginn and Company, Educational Publishers, 31 December 1942; LtCol G. T. Van Der Hoef to Harry Stanley, Oahu Publishing Company, 15 September 1943; BGen Robert L. Denig to Max T. Krone, Associate Director, School of Music, University of Southern California, 30 November 1943; and BGen Robert L. Denig to Leonard Greene, Sam Fox Publishing Company, 8 January 1944, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

²⁶ Robert Schirmer, Boston Music Company to BGen Robert L. Denig, 27 November 1942, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.



Frank V. McKinless Collection (COLL/5185), Historical Resources Branch, Archives, Marine Corps History Division
 Frank V. McKinless swearing in the first Women Marines in the New York area in February 1943 at the Marines' Women's Reserve recruiting office.

C. Streeter, with a new verse honoring the Women Marines:

From the hearts and minds of all of us,
 to Marines we will be true.

We will strive to give them all our help
 in everything we do.

We will share their hopes for freedom
 and will keep our honor clean,
 we are proud that we can be of use,
 to United States Marines.²⁷

²⁷ Lillian Parker to Maj Ruth Streeter, 16 February 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

In response, Major C. B. Rhoads, assistant to the director, wrote that she was interested in having a hymn specifically for the Women's Reserve and would pass the letter on to the Division of Public Relations.²⁸ A few weeks later Rhoads forwarded another suggested version of the hymn "for the ladies," with similar lyrics:

From the Halls of Montezuma
 to the shores of Tripoli,
 you can fight our country's battles
 for we have set you free.

²⁸ 19 February Response from Maj C. B. Rhoads to Lillian Parker, 19 February 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

Though we may not leave this country
though no enemy we'll face,
we free you for that privilege
as we quickly take your place.

So on Marines to Victory
'gainst what ever foe you find.
And leave the detail here at home
to the girls you left behind.
When history is written
and you look behind the scenes,
we are sure that you'll be proud of us
this country's Girl Marines.²⁹

The tone of these entries echoes the "Free a Marine to Fight" slogan that was used in recruiting materials for the Women's Reserve. Similar verses were sent in by other women, mostly emphasizing the supportive role the new recruits would play, but also honoring their own determination and patriotism:

From the office and the schoolroom
from the home and from the stage,
we have come to do our duty
in this hist'ry-making age;
we could not endure just waiting
and we're tired of magazines,
so we gladly donn'd the colors
of United States Marines.

Till the starry flag of freedom
waves unchallenged in the sky,
we are standing by our brothers
as they bravely live and die.
Tho' the way seems long and weary
as we learn what Service means,
we will never shirk or falter
we're United States Marines.³⁰

In July 1943, Marine Corps Band Leader William F. Santelmann forwarded to Major Streeter a recording, manuscript, and arrangement of the "March of the Marine Corps' Women's Reserve" that had been composed by Second Class Musician Louis Saverino, with lyrics by Second Class Musician Emil E. Grasser Jr., both of the Marine Corps Band. The piece had been composed for a presentation ceremony, when flags were presented to representatives of the Women's Reserve, and Santelmann requested that it be selected as the official march of the Women's Reserve.³¹ Major Streeter approved the request in August, with one important clarification: "Care must be taken not to call this the official 'hymn' of the Women's Reserve. There is only one hymn of the Marine Corps. . . . As the Women's Reserves are full members of the Marine Corps, this is their hymn also and no separate hymn will be authorized for them."³²

Another important group of Marines had their own relationship with the hymn. In early 1942, Navajo recruits, who would later be known as code talkers, began their training at the Marine Corps Training Center at Camp Elliott in San Diego, under the command of Staff Sergeant Phillip Johnston. An article in *Marine Corps Chevron* from 23 January 1943 described their daily lives, coyly noting that "naturally not much can be said about the work they're doing in school and in battle zones. But it takes advantage of individual intelligence, military training and heredity, and is distinctly annoying to enemy forces."³³ The article also mentioned that the unit planned to "stage one of their annual ceremonial dances for the benefit of the entire camp" and that "another one of their stunts has been the translation of the 'Marine Hymn' into their native tongue. They sing anything at the least excuse (and well) and it's really an experience to hear 40 odd Navajos swing out on the cocky-sounding 'Hymn' in 'Navajo-ese'."³⁴ The text of this unique version of the

²⁹ Maj C. B. Rhoads, memo to LtCol G. T. Van Der Hoef, 4 March 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

³⁰ Quoted in BGen Robert L. Denig to Thelma M. Parker, 24 March 1943, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

³¹ William F. Santelmann to Maj Ruth C. Streeter, 15 July 1943, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

³² Maj Ruth C. Streeter to Max Winkler, 13 August 1943, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

³³ PFC Bruce Deobler, "Navajos Ready to Go Tough for 'Japanazis'," *Marine Corps Chevron*, 23 January 1943, 3.

³⁴ Deobler, "Navajos Ready to Go Tough," 3.



Photograph Collection (COLL/3948), Historical Resources Branch, Archives, Marine Corps History Division

Navajo code talkers on Bougainville, 1943. From left to right, front row: Pvt Earl Johnny, Pvt Kee Etsicitty, Pvt John V. Goodluck, and PFC David Jordan. From left to right, rear row: Pvt Jack C. Morgan, Pvt George H. Kirk, Pvt Tom H. Jones, and Cpl Henry Bake Jr.

hymn was not included in the article, which may have been an intentional omission due to secretive use of the Navajo language in the war effort. Two years later, in January 1944, a Marine Corps public relations officer wrote to Brigadier General Denig requesting permission to publish the text of the hymn in Navajo, stating, “If security is no longer involved, perhaps the hymn and translation could be released to service and other publications.”³⁵ Denig denied the request, noting that “they still have the ban on mentioning or discussing Navajo Indians, therefore it would appear that

the attached Marine Corps Hymn in Navajo should not be published.”³⁶

The Navajo version of the hymn and its English translation were eventually published, with Jimmy King, a Navajo instructor at the training camp, credited as the translator:

We have conquered our enemies
All over the world.
On land and on sea,
Everywhere we fight.
True and loyal to our duty.
We are known by that.

³⁵ 1stLt C. E. McVarish to BGen Robert L. Denig, 25 January 1944, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

³⁶ BGen Robert L. Denig to 1stLt C. E. McVarish, 29 January 1944, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

United States Marines.
To be one is a great thing.

Our flag waves
From dawn to setting sun.
We have fought every place
Where we could take a gun.
From northern lands
to southern tropic scenes,
We are known to be tireless,
the United States Marines.

(Last verse like a prayer)
May we live in peace hereafter.
We have conquered all our foes.
No force in the world we cannot conquer,
We know of no fear.
If the Army and the Navy
ever look on Heaven's scenes,
United States Marines will be there
Living in peace.³⁷

This version was sung at subsequent events honoring the code talkers. One such occasion was a veterans gathering in Window Rock, Arizona, in July 1971, during which “each of the 60 participants was presented Fourth Marine Division medallions [to] commemorate Congressional Medal of Honor winner Pima Indian Ira Hayes’ part in the flagraising atop Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima.” Jimmy King attended the event, and “sang a Navajo version of the Marine Corps Hymn which he composed in 1943.”³⁸

The “Marines’ Hymn” at the Front

The popularity of the “Marines’ Hymn” and its close connection to the identity of the Marine Corps was reflected in the numerous wartime news reports from around the globe. For instance, reports from Guadalcanal in September and October 1942 recounted that Japanese tactics in the thick jungles included calling

out common names like Smith and Brown, and whistling the “Marines’ Hymn” and “Reveille” “to entice the enemy to reveal his positions and to deceive him as to his opponents’ whereabouts.”³⁹ Two years later, an article in the *New York Times* described an account by a small advance patrol during the Battle of Kwajalein: “Five wounded marine veterans of the Marshall Islands invasion said today that they and their comrades had laughed and sung the marine hymn as they stormed the beach at Namur Island.”⁴⁰

There were also several accounts of Marines being welcomed by the inhabitants of various islands in the South Pacific by rousing renditions of the “Marines’ Hymn,” often in their native languages. For instance, in an article written by a Marine Corps correspondent, First Lieutenant J. Wendell Crain recounted the successful patrol he led against a Japanese unit on Malaita in the Solomon Islands in early November 1942. Crain described how “the natives were overjoyed by our success . . . [they] gave us plenty of fruit and sang a lot of native songs for us. Before we left, they were all singing the Marine Corps hymn.”⁴¹ The following year another Marine Corps correspondent, Sergeant Ben Wahrman, reported on a version of the “Marines’ Hymn,” although with strikingly different words and melody, that he heard in the Solomon Islands. It was sung in pidgin English by the native islanders and celebrated the recent deeds of the U.S. Marines. The three-verse song was transcribed for Wahrman by island native Philip Charles Kana:

Me Maliney, fly all aloudy, longey
Eastey, Longey Westey
Me sentry All Aboutey, Keepem Solomons.
My work Lookey Lookey,
Longey Landey, Longey Sea.
Hah hah, hah hah, hah hah, hah hah hah.

³⁷ Doris A. Paul, *The Navajo Code Talkers* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Dorrance, 1973) 21–22.

³⁸ “Navajo Codetalkers Assemble, Relive Days of WWII Glory,” *Albuquerque (NM) Journal*, 11 July 1971, 6.

³⁹ Hanson W. Baldwin, “Japs Whistle Reveille, Sing Marines’ Hymn,” *Chicago (IL) Tribune*, 29 September 1942, 2; and “Guadalcanal,” *New York Times*, 18 October 1942, 1.

⁴⁰ “Five Marines Tell of Namur Landing,” *New York Times*, 14 February 1944, 7.

⁴¹ Sgt James W. Hurlbut, “40 Marines Do a 100% Job,” *New York Times*, 15 December 1942, 10.

Me falle ecome downee, Long my parasuit
 enemy shoot some, but he missey all bootee
 You know me come, but where me belong him.
 Hah hah, hah hah, Japanee, hah hah.

You wantem Smarseem Every Island Pacific
 America Smarseem Capital Tokyo,
 You look out, my friend, old man kickee back.
 Me laugh long, you Japanee, hah hah⁴²

In March 1944, Marine Corps combat correspondent Master Technical Sergeant Samuel E. Stavisky recounted how the newly liberated villagers on the island of New Britain greeted the Americans by bursting into song.

We have long since become used to their hymns, rendered in pleasing harmony, but this night they were singing something new and startling, something they didn't understand, but knew would please the Marines who had driven out the Japanese. It was the celebrated Marine Corps Hymn. An Australian guide accompanying our combat force had taught the musical Melanesians the first two lines: "From the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli."⁴³

Another account from Bougainville in March 1945 described a festive stage show put on by the Maori members of the Royal New Zealand Air Force as a tribute to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Marine Major General Ralph J. Mitchell, under whom the New Zealand air units had served. The show included members of the Maori battalion wearing grass skirts and singing traditional songs, with the highlight be-

ing their singing of the "Marines' Hymn" in the Maori language.⁴⁴

These kinds of stories were not arbitrary observations of life in the field, but instead deliberately reflected the directives given to Marine Corps combat correspondents by Brigadier General Denig, head of the Division of Public Relations. In the aftermath of the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Wake Island in December 1941, it became clear that having journalists in the field alongside fighting Marines would be necessary to manage news and publicity during the war, and Denig began recruiting professional newspaper and public relations experts into the Marine Corps, with the first group of combat correspondents graduating from boot camp in July 1942.⁴⁵ Starting in September 1942, Denig had the Division of Public Relations produce a regular "Memorandum for all Combat Correspondents" that updated the correspondents on each others' work and provided information about what types of stories were and were not in demand. The 8 December 1942 memorandum noted that one of the two best stories produced by the correspondents so far was about the "treacheries" employed by Japanese combatants, including the tactics used on Guadalcanal mentioned above.⁴⁶ The 1 February 1943 memorandum included a specific request from *Leatherneck* magazine for stories about "what the men think of the enemy (either combat or personal) [and] how they mix with the native population" as well as "something that would be understandable to all enlisted Marines everywhere and serve to integrate Corps morale and fighting spirit."⁴⁷ The accounts mentioned above, of Pacific Islanders welcoming Marines with exuberant renditions of the Marines' own hymn, can be seen as a response to such a request.

⁴² Sgt Ben Wahrman, Press Release 163, 26 November 1943, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD. Solomon Islands pidgin is one of the primary languages spoken among the citizens of the Solomons, due to there being in regular use between 70 and 120 different languages and dialects, in addition to English as the official language.

⁴³ Samuel E. Stavisky, "Natives Greet Marines by Singing Corps Hymn," *Brattleboro (VT) Reformer*, 28 March 1944, 1.

⁴⁴ "New Zealanders Honor Marines," *Courier-News* (Bridgewater, NJ), 6 March 1945, 8.

⁴⁵ Colin Colbourn, "Esprit de Marine Corps: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps through Public Relations, 1898–1945" (PhD diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 2018), 165–66.

⁴⁶ BGen Robert L. Denig, "Memorandum for all Combat Correspondents," 8 December 1942, Combat Correspondents subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD, 2.

⁴⁷ BGen Robert L. Denig, "Memorandum for all Combat Correspondents," 1 February 1943, Combat Correspondents subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD, 8.



Field Harris Collection (COLL/746), Historical Resources Branch, Archives, Marine Corps History Division

MajGen Ralph J. Mitchell (left), commander, Marine Aircraft, South Pacific, who oversaw the Royal New Zealand Air Force including the Maori Battalion.

Denig's most common directive to the correspondents was to report on the experiences of individual Marines: "Give most of your time and attention to the enlisted man and what he says, thinks, and does. Tell the human-interest side of the Marine Corps."⁴⁸ These personal accounts, known as "Joe Blow" stories, connected the Marines in all corners of the world to their families and communities back home, and their popularity led to the adoption of this style of war reporting by other correspondents. One such personal account referenced the "Marines' Hymn" to heighten the emotional impact for the readers back home as it

relayed the story of Private First Class Red Vanover, 21, of Louellen, Kentucky, while he lay in a hospital bed after being severely wounded on Saipan.

"I know I am going to die." His head slowly turned toward the [doctor and two nurses]. He asked: "Will you do me a favor?" They nodded. His eyes sparkled. There were no tears; instead, a smile. "Will you have someone play, or maybe whistle or sing the Marine Hymn?" A moment of silence. His eyes

⁴⁸ Quoted in Colbourn, "Esprit de Marine Corps," 171-72.

closed, smiling. He was dead—and the smile was still there.⁴⁹

An equally moving story from September 1945 told of the hero's welcome given at the Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, to the old 4th Marines, who had fought at Bataan and Corregidor, after their liberation from three years in Japanese prison camps. The celebration included steaks, jazz music, American beer, and a rendition of the "Marines' Hymn."

The band struck up the marine corps hymn, and as the familiar strains of "From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli" rang across the field one returned prisoner—a tough-looking leatherneck with a face like a bulldog's—began to sob openly. Tears streamed down the cheeks of half a dozen more, and those who weren't weeping were swallowing hard. It was a long time since these men—most of them professional troops—had heard the song they lived by.⁵⁰

A Hymn for Everyone

With the increased visibility of the "Marines' Hymn" during the war, due to the proliferation of published sheet music editions and recordings, the official change in lyrics to honor Marine Corps Aviation, and references to the hymn in numerous reports from the front, it is not surprising that many ordinary Americans chose to pen their own verses of the hymn to express their support for Marines fighting around the world. This was not a new practice, as by the 1940s there was already a long tradition of both Marines and non-Marines creating various updated lyrics, either in seriousness or for their own amusement. Indeed, the newest official change to the hymn, incorporat-

ing "in the air, on land and sea" in the first verse, was approved in part because of the groundswell of public support for such a change, as seen in the many similar suggestions that were made during the start of the war. However, this long tradition of ordinary Americans writing their own verses of the hymn took on a different character during World War II. First, there was a significant increase of people sending their suggestions directly to Headquarters Marine Corps. Second, when analyzing the collections of these letters that are now kept at the Marine Corps History Division and the Marine Corps Band Library, it is clear that many people viewed their suggestions of new lyrics as a genuine part of the war effort, either as a way to offer support and comfort to active Marines, to preserve details of the war for posterity, or simply to fulfill their patriotic duty as Americans. One mother of an active-duty Marine even stated that she was inspired to write two new verses for the hymn partly because she "heard the President say that song writers should get to work on patriotic songs."⁵¹

The earliest submission of a wartime verse in the collection of the Marine Corps Band Library is dated 12 December 1941, just five days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. It was submitted by Arthur Jenkins, who had served in the Marines from 1918 to 1919 and wrote his verse to commemorate the heroic deeds of the Marines fighting in the Pacific:

From the bay of Honolulu
to the tip of North Luzon,
we are fighting for our country
in the isles of Wake and Guam;
first to fight the yellow peril,
our glory to maintain,
we still possess the title
of United States Marines.⁵²

The following day, an editorial was printed in the *Atlanta Constitution* that highlighted the connection be-

⁴⁹ "Death Cheats Doctors of Chance to Grant Dying Kentuckian's Request to Hear Marine Corps Hymn," *Cincinnati (OH) Enquirer*, 23 January 1945, 1.

⁵⁰ Hal Boyle, "Homecoming for Bataan's Marines Fourth Welcomes Back Survivors," *Joplin (MO) Globe*, 7 September 1945, 1.

⁵¹ Clara Fauteck to BGen Robert L. Denig, 28 October 1944, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁵² Arthur Jenkins to the Marine Corps Band, 12 December 1941, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

tween the fighting at Wake Island and the importance of traditions within the Marine Corps, including the hymn, that would be needed to get the Marines through the current war.

I remember talking some years ago with a very wise old man. He was saying that a man without tradition was a man without character. . . . I thought of that again, thinking of the Marines at Wake Island. The Marines have a Marine Corps hymn. When it is sung or when the music is played, they stand up and take off their hats just as the college crowds do when alma mater is played. . . . His Marine hymn gets to be a part of him. . . . That handful of Marines on Wake Island has thrilled the whole nation. They suffered severe losses, but they are there and being a little stylish about it and just a little dashing. Theatrical? Sure. They mean it to be. The Marine Corps hymn, the ribald songs, the tradition of shooting and soldiering stylishly, will help them to die in style and in a manner which will make a story and add to the Marine Corps tradition. It all adds up. The old man was right.⁵³

Many other submissions of new verses commemorating Pearl Harbor and Wake Island soon followed, and throughout the war Americans continued to submit new lyrics to Headquarters Marine Corps to express their reactions to the harrowing news reports of various campaigns, including Guadalcanal, Saipan, Guam, Tinian, and Kiska Island. For example, Hugh Brady Long of New Jersey explained why he penned such a verse after learning about the Battle of Tarawa.

I wrote this on the day the result of the battle was announced, having in mind the commanding officer's state-

ment that this was the hardest test ever faced by the corps. The idea came to me while on the job as an inspector in an airplane propeller plant here, so it might be regarded as a tribute from the production front to the fighting front. Ample precedence for such an additional stanza exists, as I recall one was added after the Battle of Chateau Thierry [sic] and the Marne in the First World War. While I may not be a poet enough to do complete honor to the corps, I believe, at least, my stanza catches the spirit of the immortal saga.⁵⁴

Another example came from Philip A. Mark, captain of the campus patrol at Pennsylvania State College, after the Battle of Iwo Jima.

To even borrow the music of such a song is an honor let alone write a verse. However, I sincerely feel that the last great and heroic effort of our "1945" Marines should not go unnoticed in song—in fact, in the song of the Marines. I refer, of course to the Battle of Iwo Jima. The verse I have written is the work of just an ordinary person but it takes care of one of the greatest achievements of any part of our Armed Forces.⁵⁵

Not all the new verses written during the war reflected such serious topics. Some, often by Marines themselves, took a more lighthearted look at the wartime experience, such as the one printed in *Leatherneck* in September 1944 and written by Private First Class Donald C. Akers from an unspecified location in the South Pacific as he reflected on his time in San Diego:

From the streets of San Diego

⁵³ Ralph McGill, "One Word More," *Atlanta (GA) Constitution*, 13 December 1942, 8.

⁵⁴ Hugh Brady Long to BGen Robert L. Denig, 13 December 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁵⁵ Philip A. Mark, to BGen Robert L. Denig, 31 March 1945, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

to the shores of the Salten [sic] Sea;
 where the desert winds are blowing,
 and the women all love me;
 where we spend our time on liberty,
 pitching woo with sweet sixteens;
 we're the wolf pack of the service,
 we're United States Marines.

If you're young, sweet and lovely,
 and pure as morning dew,
 you have no need to worry,
 for we'll all be after you;
 We'll start your heart to throbbing
 we'll haunt you in your dreams;
 we're the Casanovas of the fleet,
 we're United States Marines.

We can laugh and love from dark 'til dawn,
 when the soldiers are in bed;
 we will laugh and love when they are gone,
 and the sailors are all dead.
 If the Army and the Navy
 ever gaze on heaven's scenes,
 they'll find the angels in the arms
 of United States Marines.⁵⁶

It is also worth noting that several submissions to Headquarters Marine Corps were from servicemembers of other branches who were impressed and inspired by news from the front. Private Pink Walker, U.S. Army Air Corps Reserve, called himself a “Marine admirer” after learning about the defense of Wake Island, and submitted a verse of the hymn in the hopes that “its expresse[d] American feeling to the fullest.”⁵⁷ In December 1943, Mrs. C. S. Cash wrote to the Commandant to pass on the words of her son, who was serving as a sergeant in the Army, formerly in the 7th Regiment in New York City.

[My son] says that the Marines should henceforth begin their song with “From the beach at Tarawa to” etc. instead of the “Halls of Montezuma.” Tarawa will remain thru the years as a hallowed memory—whereas—Montezuma is vague to many of ours and future eras. I hope I am not presumptuous, but my boy said, the Marines’ feat at Tarawa will be a constant reminder that they have a debt to pay on behalf of the Marines, he also said the news of that day stirred his men as nothing else has in this war.⁵⁸

Other submissions were inspired by personal connections, written by the parents, siblings, and friends of Marines fighting in far-off places. Mrs. A. N. Kilmartine, a member of the American Gold Star Mothers, submitted a verse while her son was deployed in an unknown location.⁵⁹ Similarly, Olive and George Roda of Rochester, New York, submitted three verses in honor of their son, Private First Class Arthur A. Roda, while he was on Guadalcanal.

I am just a mother of one of those Marines, who spent his twenty-first birthday there. To keep my mind occupied I have acquired a hobby of writing patriotic songs and verses. I have never had a complaint from my son since he entered the service of the United States Marines. Only since the news has come out in the newspapers and on the radio did I know of the real situation on Guadalcanal.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ “Parody from Perdition,” *Leatherneck* (Pacific Edition), 15 September 1944, 28.

⁵⁷ Pvt Pink Walker, to BGen Robert L. Denig, 6 January 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁵⁸ C. S. Cash to LtGen Cmdt Thomas Holcomb, December 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Roberta Jacobs to BGen Robert L. Denig, 10 January 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁶⁰ Olive and George C. Roda to BGen Robert L. Denig, 28 February 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

For the Bartlett family, the hymn was a source of comfort while their son was deployed, and they wished to share their own verse with other families in a similar situation.

From the home to far off battlefields
that is where our son has gone;
he has learned the art of modern war
and will fight through to the dawn.
All Marines are trained to meet the foe
and to work unceasingly;
and they'll all march home triumphantly
with a well-earned victory.⁶¹

Other submissions were from people who felt excluded from the larger war effort but wanted to help in any way they could. This included several teenagers and children, such as 11-year-old Jerome Silverman of San Francisco, who submitted the following verse in August 1944:

On Tarawa they told us we had to hold,
you could hear the rifles crack.
The enemy attacked from every side
but by-gosh we drove 'em back.
We have fought on bloody beach-heads,
we have fought in Normandy,
and we glory in the title
of the United States Marines.⁶²

Many of these younger lyricists expressed admiration for the Marine Corps and a desire to join once they were old enough. In a similar vein, letters were submitted by adults who had tried to enlist in military service but were denied and were now looking for other outlets to lend their support. Charles A. Darr, who had made the suggestion to add the line “in the air, on the land and sea” in July 1942, sent a follow-up letter in November 1942 to Lieutenant General Commandant Holcomb to express his pleasure that the change had been officially approved (mistakenly taking credit

for it), and his frustration at being denied a chance to serve: “I have tried three times to get into the service but because I am 62 years of age and too many of the brass hats do not fully realize we have a war on, that there are exceptions to all rules in an emergency, I cannot get in, even to being inducted and detailed for clerical work.” Instead, he settled on calling himself an “Honorary member of the Marines.”⁶³ David W. Miner from Washington, DC, likewise turned to the hymn after the disappointment of being deemed unfit for military service and honorably discharged from the Marine Corps. “My commanding officer Brigadier General E. P. Moses, told me that I could help win the war at home. I have written, sir, a last verse to the famous Marine Hymn. Will you please give it a little consideration, as it is all that I am able to offer.”⁶⁴

For the most part, these letters were accepted with a simple note of thanks for all the fine tributes that the many friends of the Marine Corps had submitted, and an acknowledgment that the submissions of new verses were being compiled for future reference. In the case of younger letter writers, the responses also included Marine Corps recruiting pamphlets. However, the responses after the official lyric change in November 1942 also made clear that the Marine Corps was not planning to make further changes to the “Marines’ Hymn.” As stated in one response, “The Hymn and its words have become so much a part of the Corps’ tradition that any attempt to change them would bring about a storm of protest.”⁶⁵

Marine Corps leadership graciously accepted these private letters, but actively discouraged those who expressed a wish to share their new verses more publicly. For instance, in October 1944, Mrs. Clara Fauteck of Wichita, Kansas, asked permission to sing her two new verses at a meeting of the Southern Kansas Marine Corps Auxiliary. She had written the

⁶¹ Bartlett Family to the Marine Corps Association, 22 January 1943, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁶² Jerome Silverman to BGen Robert L. Denig, 10 August 1944, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁶³ Charles A. Darr to LtGen Cmdt Thomas Holcomb, 28 November 1942, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

⁶⁴ David W. Miner to BGen Robert L. Denig, 13 April 1944, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁶⁵ LtCol G. T. Van Der Hoef to C. S. Cash, 20 December 1943, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

verses to honor her son, Corporal Robert J. Fauteck, a machine gunner who had fought on Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian and believed her sentiments as a mother at war would be best expressed through the melody of the “Marines’ Hymn.”

We are firmly convinced that no other tune would fit these two verses and that no Leatherneck can appreciate any tune but their own beloved Marines’ Hymn. I honestly believe that this would encourage our Marines and build up their morale, which is already good. I have written from the viewpoint of a Marine, for those Marines who would like to express themselves in song, and cannot. I have tried to write what I believe they have in their hearts. I believe they need these lines now, not after Japan has been whipped. For that reason, above all, I ask that you grant permission for these lines to be used for the glory of the United States Marines.⁶⁶

Denig rejected the request, stating that “it has long been an established policy of the Marine Corps not to authorize the inclusion of any additional verses to the official copyrighted version of the song; also not to authorize the use of music with words other than those of the official version.”⁶⁷ This stance was extended to celebrities too. In November 1945, television station CBS in New York City requested permission to allow Frank Sinatra to sing a parody of the “Marines’ Hymn” on an upcoming radio broadcast. “It would be a parody ‘From the Shores of California to the hills of Tennessee’ and would pay tribute to the people who built the bombers, made guns, etc. It will be used along with parodies of Home on the Range (Tribute to West); Oklahoma (Midwest and Central) and Land

of the Big Sky Waters (North).”⁶⁸ When the request was denied on the basis that it would violate the Marine Corps’ policy of only authorizing use of the official copyrighted version of the hymn, the origin of this policy was explicitly cited as the memo written by Brigadier General Ostermann on 18 February 1942.⁶⁹

Another Change to the Hymn?

Despite the Marine Corps’ stance that official changes to the hymn would not be considered after November 1942, as the war came to a close and Americans reflected on the enormity of its impact, there were repeated suggestions in 1945 and 1946 to officially change the hymn’s lyrics to honor the extraordinary Marines of World War II. One suggestion came from the Hageman-Wegis detachment of the Marine Corps League in its November 1945 booklet honoring Marines from Kern County, California.

New verses should be added to that stirring marine corps hymn to include the immortal heroism of the corps at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima, Okinawa; indeed all that galaxy of strange named places, the lustre [sic] of which shall brighten with the polish of history, as time adds them to the annals of the corps. Their names are written in the blood of its men.⁷⁰

In March 1946, Joseph W. Wells of Norfolk, Virginia, proposed two new verses to the hymn, which he initially composed while serving with the V Amphibious Corps during the assault and seizure of Iwo Jima. These new verses were submitted with the intention of officially honoring the exploits of the Marines in both world wars:

From the blood-soaked beach at Lunga Point

⁶⁶ Clara Fauteck to BGen Robert L. Denig, 28 October 1944, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁶⁷ BGen Robert L. Denig to Clara Fauteck, 3 November 1944, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁶⁸ Memorandum to BGen Robert L. Denig and Col E. R. Hagenah, November 1945, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁶⁹ J. T. Carley, Memorandum to Col E. R. Hagenah, November 1945, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁷⁰ “Local Detachment Honors Marine Corps: Booklet Features Kern ‘Leathernecks’ in War,” *Bakersfield Californian*, 1 November 1945, 13.

to Tulagi's shell-ripped shore,
 from the runway strip on Henderson
 where Grumman Wildcats roar.
 We have trod Decatur's hallowed path,
 for God and country's sake,
 from the "Philadelphia's" blazing guns
 to the sacred soil of Wake.

Through the crimson surf at Tarawa
 to Suribachi's Crest,
 Through the littered streets of Garapan,
 we followed in our quest.
 We have sought Jehovah's guiding hand,
 we have prayed as best we could,
 that we might fight as well as those
 who fell at Belleau Wood.⁷¹

In December 1946, Colonel Robert D. Heinl Jr., officer-in-charge of the Marine Corps Historical Section, sent a memo to the director of the Division of Public Information in which he officially recommended consideration of adding a verse to the hymn "embodying the soldierly achievements, traditions and victories of the Corps in World War II." He further suggested that a nationwide competition be organized for such a purpose, with the winning entry to be chosen by the Commandant "with the assistance of a board of nationally distinguished literary men" and a prize of \$500 offered by the Marine Corps Fund. Heinl also noted "that properly handled and exploited, it would prove to be a source of much desirable general publicity for the Marine Corps."⁷² Although no response to this recommendation was found in the files, it is clear that Heinl's suggesting was not approved, and lyrics commemorating World War II were never officially added to the hymn. However, Heinl's recommendation was significant in that it carried on the decades-old tradition of wanting to keep the hymn updated and relevant to new generations, and because it looked

to the public rather than professional songwriters for the new lyrics. The proposed selection process may have been a departure from the way previous changes were approved, but the keen awareness of the potential publicity boost from such a change was very much in line with past decisions regarding the hymn. Heinl's proposed selection process was even referenced nearly 30 years later, in a response by Colonel C. W. Hoffner, deputy director of information, to yet another proposal to update the hymn's lyrics: "The longstanding tradition and history associated with the Marines' Hymn are not likely to allow for changes or additions to the piece. . . . If another verse should be added to the Marines' Hymn I am sure it will be announced to the public for composition on a competitive basis."⁷³

Suggestions to incorporate lyrics relating to World War II, sometimes in conjunction with those honoring World War I and the Korean War, continued for many years. For instance, during his speech as guest of honor at the Marine Corps birthday dinner in November 1970, Walter H. Annenberg, U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom, stated, "I would respectfully suggest that the tremendous Marine participation at Château Thierry and Belleau Wood, as well as the heroic episodes of the Pacific, from Guadalcanal to Iwo Jima, be incorporated in a further stanza of your traditional song."⁷⁴ In April 2002, Jack V. Scarola submitted six verses of his self-penned "Marine Hymn of the Forties," which he hoped would supplement, not supplant, the existing "Marines' Hymn" that honored Marine Corps achievements of the nineteenth century. Although Scarola had served in the Marine Corps in the late 1950s, he felt compelled to honor the previous generation of Marines, the "unique breed of Americans who enabled our nation and her allies to survive a truly unique crisis, [who] deserve this lasting honorific tribute to their courage, sacrifices, achievement

⁷¹ Joseph W. Wells to BGen Robert L. Denig, 28 March 1946, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁷² Robert D. Heinl Jr., memorandum to Director, Division of Public Information, 30 December 1946, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

⁷³ Col C. W. Hoffner to Robert E. Anti, 11 December 1975, Marine Corps Hymn Correspondence, January 1943–August 1946, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁷⁴ Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg, speech, 11 November 1970, Marines' Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

and unforgettable *Rendezvous With Destiny*” in his new verses.⁷⁵

Time will tell if the hymn is ever updated to specifically honor the Marines who fought in World War II, but considering that the previous changes, honoring Marine Corps Aviation in 1942 and adding the “First to Fight” slogan during World War I, were added during moments in history when they were most relevant, as more time passes it becomes increasingly unlikely.

Conclusion

The “Marines’ Hymn” had already been an integral part of Marine Corps identity for decades, but during World War II it became more popular and visible than ever before. It could be accessed in sheet music, phonograph recordings, radio, movies, and numerous news reports from the front. Furthermore, many Americans found comfort and strength by adding their own words to the famous song in response to the overwhelming scope of the war and their fears for loved ones serving abroad.

On 16 August 1945, Hanson W. Baldwin, who had won a Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 1943 for his coverage of the Southwest Pacific theater, published an article in the *New York Times* pondering what life after such a devastating war would look like, and how the American armed forces had fared.

Gone, but never forgotten. For the Pacific battles have become warp and woof of our tradition, to be passed down from generation unto generation as our rightful heritage. The marines, perhaps the proudest corps of a proud nation, have added new verses to their stirring hymn; Army outfits storied with past glories fly new battle streamers; the strong ships and the stout ships of a Navy unequalled in any

epoch conceal their battles scars beneath new peace time paint.⁷⁶

It is striking that the main comment about the impact of the war on the Marine Corps, written by a man who had witnessed the Guadalcanal campaign firsthand, was about the wartime experience of the “Marines’ Hymn.” Baldwin was likely aware that the Marines had not literally added new verses to their hymn during the war, and rather, his comment may allude to both the numerous unofficial additions to the hymn written by average citizens as a way of enduring the war years, and also to the knowledge that the lyrics and spirit of the hymn would now be forever associated in the American mind with many more campaigns than merely the ones enumerated in the famous first lines.

On 13 January 1945, the *Halls of Montezuma* radio program broadcast its 139th episode, “Poetry in War,” which was dedicated to “poetry written by Marines inspired by the emotions of battle; and martial music played by the Post Band.”⁷⁷ The weekly program, which first aired in April 1942, was entirely produced by enlisted men in the San Diego area and focused on dramatizing “the stories of Marines, past and present, who have become heroes in action.” According to a November 1942 press release, the show was heard on about 140 radio stations nationwide, with an audience of around 7,000,000.⁷⁸ The “Poetry in War” episode featured a section focusing on the hymn, with a brief account of its history, highlighting the contributions of individual Marines over the years, including “the words another Marine left to be sung by those who would follow after him” written in the South Pacific in 1942:

In the merry hell of Guad’canal,
we paved the way once more.
Ripped the Nipponese from cocoa trees,

⁷⁶ Hanson W. Baldwin, “Beginning After End: Our Traditions Upheld, Brightened, America Faces Complicated Tasks,” *New York Times*, 16 August 1945, 3.

⁷⁷ PFC Gene Shumate, “Poetry in War,” *Halls of Montezuma* radio show, episode 139, 13 January 1945, Marines’ Hymn file, U.S. Marine Band Library.

⁷⁸ Press release, *Halls of Montezuma* radio show, November 1942, Command Performance, Correspondence and Radio Program Schedules, March–December 1942, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

⁷⁵ Jack V. Scarola to Col John W. Ripley, 29 April 2002, Hymn subject file, Historical Resources Branch, MCHD.

and we opened Truk's front door.
Crossed the bridge of Tanambogo,
Stormed Gavutu's cave-torn hill,
Repaying Heaven's Sons with steel and gun,
Marines have settled one more bill.

By Lunga's side our comrades died,
in the fight to keep us free.
In the crawling mud they spilled their blood,
moving on to victory.
Rising wounded out of foxholes,
in sleepless grim routine.
To alien sky they gave reply
as to "Why is a Marine."

On guts and luck in jungle muck,
we have seen our Wildcats rise,
and with hammering guns, our flying song,
swept Zeros from the skies.
Keeping rendezvous with glory,
far above Tulagi's strand,
Geiger's boys up high echo the cry,
"Situation's well in hand."

Now when Gabriel toots his mighty flute
calling old comrades home,
and Tojo's ears have hung for years,
on Valhalla's golden dome,
Then the Lord will wink at Vandegrift,

while he's eating Spam and beans,
saying, "God on high sees eye to eye,
with United States Marines."⁷⁹

The episode also included a poignant description of what it meant for a Marine to hear the hymn, deliberately connecting the generation that fought in World War II with all the Marines who had come before.

The Marine Hymn is a song dear to the heart of every Leatherneck because it bespeaks the spirit of the Corps. When you're sweaty and tired and your dogs are battered and you're covered with mud made up of dust and sweat; when the pack weighs a ton and your cartridge belt seems filled with 15-inch shells instead of caliber 30 ball; when you're too tired to cuss and want to fall in your tracks and sleep; when you're like that, brother . . . and the band way up ahead strikes up the old hymn with a flare of drums and trumpets, one by one the voices start in singing, chins and chests come up and our legs seem to swing in rhythm . . . right away you become a part of that tradition that has carried the Marines through 160 years of fight and fire.⁸⁰

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⁷⁹ "Poetry in War," *Halls of Montezuma* radio show.

⁸⁰ "Poetry in War," *Halls of Montezuma* radio show.

Field Burials, Memorial Graves, and the Postwar Search for Tarawa's Fallen

by Geoffrey W. Roecker

Abstract: The battle for the Tarawa atoll—and, specifically, the V Amphibious Corps assault on the island of Betio during World War II—resulted in an enormous and highly publicized loss of American lives. Grieving families were assured that every possible care was given to their fallen Marines and sailors, and photographs of beautiful cemeteries appeared in magazines and print. This belied the reality of the situation: most of the “graves” were only memorials, and a postwar effort to recover the dead was markedly unsuccessful. Representatives from the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps pointed fingers until Navy inspector general Charles A. Lockwood issued a report blaming “a series of errors . . . and a series of unavoidable circumstances” for the fiasco. This article examines the factors contributing to the nonrecoverability of hundreds of the fallen and describes the challenges facing researchers and archaeologists who continue the search for the lost graves of Betio.

Keywords: memorial graves, field burials, Tarawa atoll, World War II, Betio, V Amphibious Corps

The failure of the Army Graves Registration Company to locate and identify bodies of Marine Corps personnel on Betio is due not to an error by any one individual, but to a series of errors by several individuals or groups of individuals, and to a series of unavoidable circumstances.¹

Geoffrey W. Roecker is the researcher behind Missing Marines, an independent project dedicated to the return of fallen World War II personnel. He is the author of *Leaving Mac Behind: The Lost Marines of Guadalcanal* (2019), is a regular contributor to *Leatherneck* magazine, and is the recipient of the 2019 Marine Corps Historical Foundation's Gen Roy S. Geiger Award. Roecker received his master's degree in military history from Norwich University in 2015. He gratefully acknowledges the support of Katie Rasdorf, Justin LeHew, Dave Holland, Tom Godwin, and Stephani Miller. This article is based on one Roecker first published on MissingMarines.com. <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2022080203>

¹ Charles Andrew Lockwood, “Investigation of Burial of Deceased Marine Corps Personnel on Tarawa Atoll,” 11 March 1947, box 783, Office of the Commandant, General Correspondence January 1939–June 1950, Record Group (RG) 127, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, MD, 1, hereafter Lockwood report.

Operation Galvanic—the amphibious assault and capture of Tarawa atoll undertaken by U.S. Navy and Marine Corps units in November 1943—captured public attention wholly and immediately. “Beachheads Punched out by Yankees,” blared newspaper headlines, and “Wreck Jap Bases at Tarawa.” Photographs of the battlefield, fresh from the front lines, accompanied the articles; an unusually high percentage depicted dead Americans, an unfamiliar sight to most readers. Editors worried that their audience might become distressed. The *Kansas City Star* quickly noted “US Toll Not Too High. Looks Worse than It Is.” The subhead explained: “Losses Appear Shocking Because Bodies Littered Beach in Short Period of Time”—hardly a reassuring message for readers with friends or relations in the 2d Marine Division, and one undercut by the release of casualty lists.² Yellow Western Union

² B. J. McQuaid, “Jap Boast Fails,” *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 30 November 1943.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo by PFC Clifford G. Jolly

Navy Lt Francis W. Kelly (CHC) and Cpl Daniel A. Getz perform Catholic and Jewish rites for the dead. Note the casualty tags affixed to the rifle and plank of wood serving as markers. Kelly assisted with the postwar search for the dead. Written on the back of the photo: "This is a typical funeral on Tarawa that was common throughout the brief but fierce battle."

telegrams arrived at thousands of homes just in time for the holiday season. *With the Marines at Tarawa*, a full-color documentary, arrived in theaters, and families saw (or thought they saw) their loved ones smiling or waving or running or falling, larger than life, one final time.³ If Wake Island was a symbol of sacrifice and Guadalcanal was the epitome of endurance, Tarawa was synonymous with brutality and seemingly senseless slaughter.

As the home front digested the highly publicized horrors of the battle, Betio was completing a transition that started before the shooting stopped. Naval Construction Battalion personnel (Seabees) began repairing roads and building new infrastructure; American aircraft were landing on the former Japanese airstrip within days. By March 1944, Naval Air Base Hawkins Field (Tarawa) was a familiar home to bomber crews who flew strikes to targets in the Marshall Islands. The base boasted machine shops, mess halls, a new pier, and even a movie theater. Curious airmen climbed ruined Japanese gun positions, peeked into bunkers,

³ U.S. Marine Corps, *With the Marines at Tarawa*, directed by Louis Hayward (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1944).

and sunbathed on the invasion beaches. Between the crew's tents and Quonset huts sat pristine cemeteries with immaculate rows of crosses. Individual graves lay beside duckboards and under trees, a stark reminder of the island's cost.

Looking at aerial photographs of the island, one sees orderly cemeteries neatly organized into a jigsaw of base roads and buildings, as if by design. This is precisely the case: original burials were "beautified and reconstructed" by the garrison troops, who took pride in their efforts to create fitting monuments to fellow Americans. Headquarters Marine Corps commended the work and acknowledged the existence of *memorial cemeteries*—but either failed to grasp the term's whole meaning or deliberately downplayed its impact when communicating with the families of the fallen and those charged with returning the remains.

Thus, when the Army's 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company (QMGRC) arrived in 1946, its members expected to exhume remains from numerous, well-ordered, and accessible graves, a physically strenuous but relatively routine operation. After weeks of frustrating effort, the 604th QMGRC turned up only "about fifty percent of the bodies previously reported buried on that Atoll. . . . of that number, only about 58% were identified."⁴ This stunning admission triggered a ripple of criticism in military channels and a tidal wave of righteous anger from the families of the fallen, who had been assured of their loved ones' proper burial and now struggled to grasp how bodies could seemingly disappear. Anthropologists working at the Central Identification Laboratory in Honolulu, Hawaii, spent two years searching for clues in bones, teeth, and personnel records; their efforts identified 186 individuals. Added to the 215 identified by the 604th QMGRC and the 116 known buried at sea, the total stood at 517 cases resolved and 500 more declared permanently nonrecoverable.

The Marine Corps demanded an inquest into the perceived failure of the 604th QMGRC, but it never occurred. Navy inspector general Charles Lockwood conducted his own review and concluded that, while errors were committed in the field, the Army was not solely to blame. Rather, he identified a series of poor post-battle decisions and inefficient practices that predated the Marine landings. These "unavoidable circumstances"—a need for rapid burial, inconsistent identification, and insufficiently trained personnel—combined to exacerbate the 604th QMGRC's shortcomings and continue to plague identification efforts to this day.

The Aftermath: Collection and Identification

To understand the first blow against the successful identification of Betio's dead, it is necessary to come to grips with the conditions that fighting Marines faced in the hours and days after the battle. The island of Betio, barely 300 acres of sand a few feet above sea level, was strewn with an estimated 6,000 American, Japanese, and Korean corpses.⁵ "What I saw on Betio was, I am certain, one of the greatest works of devastation wrought by man," wrote Robert L. Sherrod. "Words are inadequate to describe what I saw on this island of less than a square mile. So are pictures—you can't smell pictures."⁶

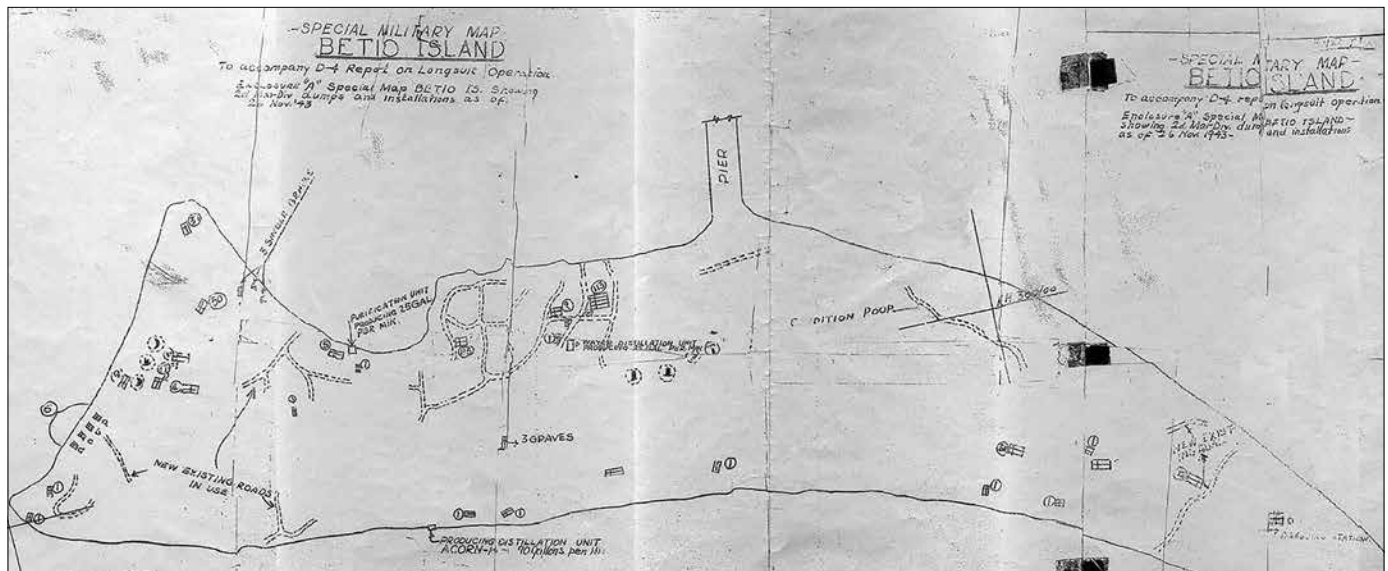
Betio sits a few degrees off the equator. During the battle, temperatures reached into the triple digits and the heat and humidity created ideal conditions for putrefaction. Sherrod observed the bodies of several Japanese soldiers "already turning a sickly green, though they have been corpses only two days."⁷ Bodies turned black, swelled, and ruptured. A stench permeated the air; a "miasma of coral dust and death, nauseating and horrifying," in the words of Major General

⁴ 1stLt Isadore Eisensmith, "Memorandum to Chief, Memorial Branch, Quartermaster Section, Army Forces, Middle Pacific," 3 July 1946, General Correspondence, Miscellaneous File, RG 92, Records of the Quartermaster General, NARA, College Park, MD, 3, hereafter Eisensmith report.

⁵ Rebecca J. Taylor et al., "The Tarawa Project Part I: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Resolve Commingled Human Remains from the Battle of Tarawa," *Forensic Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (July 2019): 87, <https://doi.org/10.5744/fa.2019.1004>.

⁶ Robert Sherrod, *Tarawa: The Story of A Battle* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, 1944), 123.

⁷ Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 124.



2d Marine Division Correspondence, 1942–1950, RG 127, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, entry #A1 238-H, NARA, College Park, MD
Special military map, Betio Island, dated 26 November 1943. This rather crude sketch shows graves known to be marked before the 2d Marine Division departed.

Holland M. Smith.⁸ Pilots flying over Betio were sickened by the smell; those on the ground, like Platoon Sergeant Roger Scovill, faced almost unimaginable horrors: “The odor was overwhelming. It was like a burning garbage dump. Within a very short period—let’s say, two, three hours—the only way we could tell a Marine from a Japanese was by the web gear that we were wearing and by the armament that the man had.”⁹

Exposure to rotting flesh was bad for sanitation; the sight of decomposing friends was terrible for morale. The combined effect reduced the fighting efficacy of the surviving Marines. Getting the dead underground as rapidly as possible was of utmost importance. This was generally impossible during the first two days of the battle while the situation was, in the words of General Julian C. Smith, “in doubt.”¹⁰ When the fighting moved on, however, burials happened rapidly. A single cemetery along Red Beach 2 received 112 bodies on 22 November; the same crew buried 66

more a short distance away the next day. Western Betio was dotted with dozens of individual graves for Marines who were buried as a matter of expedience. Their graves, at least, were marked: Japanese and Korean bodies, which outnumbered Americans by about five to one, were simply tossed into craters or fortifications and covered with sand.¹¹ Lockwood summed up the issue in 1947.

The small area of the island, the closely contested action fought over it, and the precarious position of our forces under constant Japanese attack made it imperative to beat the enemy, to fight to stay alive, and to get underground by any effective, improvised method available, the large number of fast disintegrating bodies lying about. There was no time to properly bury the dead. Such is war.¹²

⁸ Col Joseph H. Alexander, USMC (Ret), *Across the Reef: The Marine Assault of Tarawa* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps Historical Center, 1993), 48.

⁹ Roger P. Scovill, interview with Mark Van Ellis, 16 September 1997, transcribed by Nathan King and Abigail Miller, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Research Center, Madison, WI, 10, hereafter Scovill interview. Scovill served with Battery M, 10th Marines, 2d Marine Division.

¹⁰ As quoted in Col Joseph H. Alexander, “A Bloody Proving Ground,” *Naval History* 22, no. 6 (December 2008).

¹¹ Lt W. Wyeth Willard, “The Gilbert Islands Campaign, Report of Chaplain, and Recommendations,” 30 November 1943, scanned copy of document originally from the Willard estate, courtesy of Katie Rasdorf, 4–6, hereafter Willard report.

¹² Lockwood report, 4.



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

Original three-row layout of Navy and Marine Corps Cemetery no. 1 established by W. Wyeth Willard on 23 November 1943. Individual markers are simple sticks. Building in background served as a field hospital.

Unfortunately, the necessary speed of burials meant that proper identification was not always taken from the dead. According to regulations, every man in naval service was supposed to carry a pair of metal identification tags. “These tags are prescribed as a part of the uniform,” instructed the 1940 *Marine Corps Manual*, “and when not worn as directed . . . will be habitually kept in the possession of the owner.”¹³ The tags included name, service number, religious preference, blood type, date of last tetanus shot, and branch; they

were such a vital part of a Marine’s kit that they were subject to scrutiny at inspection. The reasoning was plain in the manual’s language.

In order to secure proper interment for those who fall in battle, and to establish beyond a doubt their identity, should it become desirable subsequently to disinter the remains for removal to a national or post cemetery or for shipment home, the identification tag suspended from the neck of the officer or enlisted man will in all cases be interred with the body. The

¹³ *Marine Corps Manual, 1940* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1940), 21.



duplicate tag attached thereto will be removed at the time of the burial and turned over to the surgeon or person in charge of the burial, from which a record of same, together with the cause and date of death, shall be made and reported to the commanding officer.¹⁴

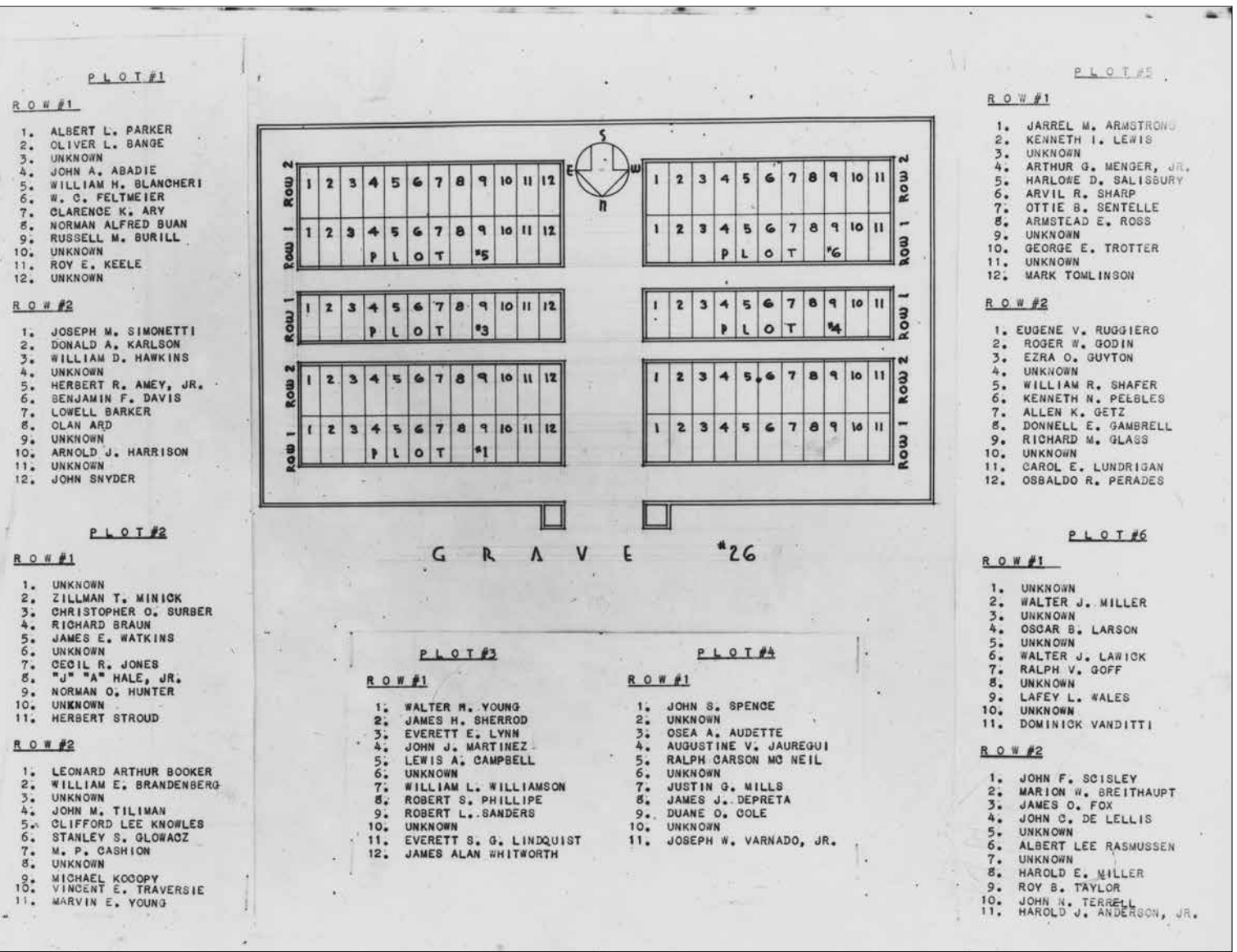
The tags, however, were small and easily lost on rigorous field exercises or spirited liberty calls. Some men preferred carrying tags unsecured in their pockets.

Since the cost of replacement tags was docked from a Marine's monthly pay, some losses doubtless went unreported until discovered at inspection, and some men preferred to make their own tags from coins or other souvenirs.¹⁵ Thus, it may be assumed that a certain percentage of any Marine unit was without regulation tags at any given time. Many Marines wore sterling silver bracelets inscribed with their names, but these too could be lost or discarded.

Some men lost tags accidentally, others deliberately. The 2d Marine Division went into Operation

¹⁴ *Marine Corps Manual*, 22.

¹⁵ *Marine Corps Manual*, 22.



Official U.S. Navy photo

Formerly named Cemetery no. 1, now called Cemetery 26, after beautification by the Navy garrison in March 1944.

Galvanic with an unusual superstition: identification tags brought bad luck. The origins and prevalence of this belief are difficult to determine, but it was notable enough to be remarked on by persons interviewed for Lockwood’s investigation. Some Marines just chucked their tags, while others “would exchange tags as a good luck measure.” The effect of this practice had tragic implications when they went into battle. In recalling his experience burying bodies on Betio, Chaplain William Lumpkin remarked that “in almost one-third of the cases, no identification was found on the bodies.”¹⁶

Before landing on 21 November 1943, First Sergeant Lewis J. Michelony (Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines) “made sure the men had dog tags . . . because that was the only way that you could identify anybody.” He went on to explain how this worked in practice:

When we identified and buried a man, we didn’t know what to do with the other dog tag. So finally, we found out that we had to give them to the chaplain. . . . We marked the man, if he had a toe, by putting the dog tag on his right toe. In some cases, we just

¹⁶Lockwood report, 2.



Official U.S. Navy photo

The impeccably manicured Memorial Cemetery 11, June 1944.

put them around their neck. . . . See, these were things that they hadn't told us before the battle.¹⁷

Then, of course, there was the impact of violent death. Platoon Sergeant Scovill commented that "Marines who were fortunate enough not to have their dog tags blown away" were more easily identified; the obvious implication is that many were not so fortunate.¹⁸ A Marine Corps casualty card for Private First Class Raymond Warren includes a unique notation: "The

head was practically severed from his body and caused the loss of his dog-tags, and later [caused] identification complications to burial authorities."¹⁹

Tags lost all inherent value once removed from a body, and troops with an incomplete understanding of graves registration protocols unwittingly compounded identification problems by trying to help. Chaplain Warren Wyeth Willard of the 8th Marines recalled a conversation with one Private Yontz who "took the identification tags from [several] bodies and

¹⁷ 1stSgt Lewis J. Michelony Jr., interview with John Daniels, 2 May 1993, transcript, World War II Veterans Oral History Collection, National Museum of the Pacific War Digital Archive, 47.

¹⁸ Scovill interview, 10.

¹⁹ U.S. Marine Corps Casualty Card for Warren, Raymond, PFC, 426717, Historical Resources Branch, Archives, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA. The quoted text is attributed to George J. Fox; Warren was hit by ricocheting tank shell. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) accounted for Warren in 2019.



Official U.S. Navy photo Monument Cemetery 10, September 1944. These small-footprint plots were ideal for high-traffic areas. Original markers were discarded, and the cross built atop the bodies.

placed the tags into the hands of a Marine Colonel.” Yontz gave Willard 12 names, 11 of which eventually appeared on the list of unrecovered.²⁰ Lieutenant (Dental Corps) Solomon M. Kozol handed Willard a stack of 19 tags said to be removed from bodies; only 14 of these individuals were actually dead, and of these, only 7 were identifiable at time of burial.²¹ Technically, Yontz and Kozol were following guidelines as

²⁰ Willard report, 7. Yontz provided the names of Eaves, Scisley, Kroenung, Gaviglia, Caley (probably Daley), Woolsey, Cole, Reynolds, Winkler, Parks, Voorheis, and Mannix. Aside from Eaves (wounded but survived), all were reported as unrecoverable. Scisley, Gaviglia, Woolsey, and Winkler were identified after the war; Kroenung and Cole were buried as unknowns in Honolulu and accounted for in recent years. Daley, Reynolds, Parks, Voorheis, and Mannix are still unaccounted for.

²¹ Willard report, 7. Kozol’s collection included two men who were wounded but survived, two who escaped without recorded injury, and one incorrectly transcribed name. Archival and archaeological evidence reveals that the deceased men were buried, identified or not, in several different cemeteries, and it is not known how Kozol came to have these specific tags. Five of them (Michael Green, Frank Krchmar, Lloyd Livingston, Stephen Mayer, and Robert Newell Smith) are still unaccounted for.

prescribed in the *Marine Corps Manual*—that is, handing over tags to an officer in charge. However, verbal communication was insufficient, and those who buried the bodies had no idea who was who. This dismal ratio was compounded across the island.

Provisions were made for handling casualties without official identification. Some men were trained to fingerprint the dead for later comparison against service records of those reported killed or missing, but battle wounds and rapid decomposition limited this method’s effectiveness. Corpsmen and clerks at clearing stations were overwhelmed by the sheer number of casualties and naturally had to focus their attention on those with a chance of survival; we can only guess at the number of errors made under the stress of pitched battle. In the Solomon Islands, Chaplain Willard learned to retrieve “pocketbooks or other identification material” from corpses and recommended others do the same. “In many cases on divers [sic] parts of the Island of Betio, bodies were in such a state of decomposition that the unpleasant task of searching their outer garments was not carried out,” he wrote in his battle report.²² Paper or fabric items were frequently damaged by water or biological fluids, and there was no way to guarantee perfect accuracy in assigning a name from a wallet or notebook to a dead person.

Willard also noted a decidedly ghoulish behavior among Marines who “pilfered . . . money and valuables before our working parties could reach [the dead].” This was a particular sore point for Willard, who buried a close friend whose pack was turned inside out by a scavenger. The chaplain recommended shore patrols to prevent the “mad rush for souvenirs” until burials were complete and that “all companies be lectured by their commanders regarding the wickedness and depravity of such malicious practices.”²³

The complications arising from initial misidentification are illustrated by the burial ground designated Navy and Marine Corps Cemetery no. 1. Willard buried 112 men on 22 November 1943 and kept a de-

²² Willard report, 9.

²³ Willard report, 10.



Official U.S. Army Signal Corps photo

The 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company exhumes Cemetery 26 in 1946. Note discarded and battle-damaged helmets, shoes, and other items left in the trenches.

tailed roster of individual names. Ten of these names are known to be wrong: either the individual survived the battle or never existed at all. (Willard was not prone to guessing or fabrication: these names came from some unknown, inaccurate source, possibly misplaced personal effects.) Another 21 men were not identifiable by any means; of these, only 6 could be fingerprinted. Thus, 31 of 112 (28 percent) of the men buried in a single cemetery had their identities compromised or obliterated within hours of death.²⁴

Individuals like Willard—a prewar part-time undertaker with experience establishing military

cemeteries in the Solomon Islands—could expect little support at Tarawa. In 1947, when Commander Lockwood correctly noted that “the highly organized Graves Registration setup which existed in later battles was not in existence at the Battle for Tarawa,” he was referring specifically to Marine Corps organization.²⁵ In the years after World War I, the Corps spent very little of its limited budget on developing independent support services; it anticipated operating in conjunction with the much larger and better supplied Navy or Army. Chaplains were instructed in the appropriate ceremony of military burial with the expect-

²⁴Willard report, 4–6.

²⁵Lockwood report, 2.



Official U.S. Army Signal Corps photo

Burial service at Lone Palm Cemetery, 1946. Memorial Cemetery 11 is visible in the background.

tation that the Army Quartermaster Corps would handle the establishment and upkeep of cemeteries.²⁶ However, the Army's Graves Registration Service was only mobilized during wartime, meaning there were no standing units available when Pearl Harbor was attacked.²⁷ Training these specialized troops took time and none would arrive in the Pacific theater until early 1943. Using limited copies of *Graves Registration*, Tech-

nic Manual 10-630, and a healthy dose of common sense, the 1st Marine Division established an ad hoc service in the field on Guadalcanal, but Army quartermaster troops later took over this operation, and the nascent Marine units disbanded to other duties.²⁸

The need for Marine-organized graves registration was acknowledged but evidently was not a high priority in Operation Galvanic's planning. While the 2d Marine Division had a dedicated Graves Registra-

²⁶ See *The Chaplain*, Technical Manual (TM) 16-205 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), 22–24.

²⁷ Edward Steere, *The Graves Registration Service in World War II* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951), v. "Continuity of graves registration organization was broken during the peace, resulting in an arrest of the function and such a condition of atrophy that it could not be reinvigorated at will."

²⁸ *Graves Registration*, TM 10-630 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941). Troops deployed overseas had very limited access to this manual. For a detailed discussion about inter-Service responsibilities in peacetime and how they fell apart early in the war, see Steere, *The Graves Registration Service in World War II*.

Figure 1. Marine Corps and Navy designations for known Betio cemeteries.

Marine Corps designations (1943)	Navy designation (1944)
No recorded designation	Isolated Graves 1–8
“Single grave on east end of Betio Island.”	Isolated Grave 9
Cemetery B Green Cemetery B 2d Marines Cemetery no. 2	Monument Cemetery 10
West Division Cemetery	Memorial Cemetery 11
[unnamed individual burials]	Isolated Grave 12
Cemetery A Green Cemetery A 2d Marines Cemetery no. 3 Red Beach 1 Cemetery	Monument Cemetery 13
[unnamed individual or small group burials]	Isolated Graves 14–19 (including 16A and 16B)
D-2-18 Cemetery Wireless Station Cemetery	Monument Cemetery 20
[unnamed individual or small group burials]	Isolated Graves 21–24
Red Beach 2 Cemetery Navy and Marine Corps Cemetery no. 2 1/8th Marines Cemetery Central Division Cemetery, 8th Marines no. 1	Memorial Cemetery 25
8th Marines Cemetery no. 2 Division Cemetery no. 3 Cemetery 3	Monument Cemetery 27
[unnamed individual or small group burials]	Isolated Grave 28
Grid Location 213085 “Isolated grave near airport” “Next to Japanese cement mixer near Hawkins Field”	Isolated Grave 29
[unnamed individual or small group burials]	Isolated Graves 30–31
6th Marines Cemetery no. 1	Isolated Grave 32
East Division Cemetery Cemetery 1	Memorial Cemetery 33
[unnamed individual or small group burials]	Isolated Graves 34–36
“Grid Location 213085”	Isolated Grave 37
[unnamed individual burials]	Isolated Grave 38
“KH 238072 D-2 Map 14 Oct 43”	Isolated Grave 39
[unnamed individual or small group burials]	Isolated Graves 40–41
2d Marines Cemetery no. 1 Green Beach Cemetery C	None; not beautified
Gilbert Island Cemetery Row D, East Division Cemetery	None; not beautified

Source: Author's working files



Official U.S. Army Signal Corps photo

Makeshift morgue on Betio, 1946. Remains were brought to this facility for preliminary identification by the 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company.

tion Section as part of its Service and Supply Company, it did not operate as a cohesive unit on Betio. “The Graves Registration Section, as such, never landed at Betio,” commented Commander Lockwood, “nor was any of its equipment available to forces ashore during the first days of the invasion.”²⁹ (The reason for this decision is unknown but may stem from the overconfidence of planners who believed Betio would fall without much of a fight.) Chaplain Willard noted that each regiment of the division was assigned a squad of eight service troops to assist with graves registra-

tion activities. These squads had at least rudimentary training, but Willard writes, “Many of these men were drafted for working parties and were not allowed to do what they had been trained to do.”³⁰ Instead, Willard had to rely on his two personal assistants and whatever extra labor he could collar.

The dearth of trained graves registration personnel did not impact collecting bodies or digging graves; labor could be done by any able-bodied individual. Specific knowledge regarding identification, mapping of burials, marking of graves, and accurate

²⁹ Lockwood report, 2.

³⁰ Willard report, 9.

UNKNOWN X-17

19. BLACK OUT PARTS OF BODY NOT RECOVERED

left side of mandible missing

BRD 44TH THORACIC MISSILE

20. **MASS BURIAL CERTIFICATE (IF APPLICABLE)**
(Wherein segregation in whole or parts is impossible)

I CERTIFY THAT THE GROUP REMAINS CONSIST OF PARTS OF 3 DECEDENTS BASED ON THE PRESENCE OF ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING ANATOMICAL PARTS:

One (1) unmatched left ulna } From one man.
 One (1) unmatched radius }
 One (1) extra left femur) From one man.

Chas. E. Snow
 Charles E. Snow, SIGNATURE OF MEDICAL OFFICER Anthropologist

21. REMARKS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Picture a tall, young man of 22 with a slender muscular body build and with ash brown hair, fine to medium in texture.

The skull vault is average in size and a rather broad oval in outline with an average amount of backhead protrusion.

The facial proportions were long and narrow with a palate which shows anterior pinching. The lower jaw is quite narrow but deep and appears to have had a rather narrow median point.

Fluoroscopic examination negative. Tooth chart completed.

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE PERSONALLY VIEWED THE REMAINS OF DECEASED AND THAT ALL RESULTING INFORMATION HAS BEEN RECORDED TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE

TYPED NAME, GRADE, ARM OR SERVICE, AND ORGANIZATION	SIGNATURE
O. W. GREENWOOD, CAPT., QMC CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY AND MAUSOLEUM, APO 957	<i>O. W. Greenwood</i>

QMC FORM 1044b
18 MAR 47

Case file for Unknown X-17, Schofield Barracks Mausoleum no. 1, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, NARA, College Park, MD

Portion of Quartermaster Form 1044. This individual (X-17) was recovered from Cemetery 26. The left radius and ulna were associated with another individual; as of 2022, X-17 is still unidentified.

record-keeping was not part of a regular Marine's training, and many did not even know such specialties existed, as Michelony admitted: "At the time, I didn't even know there was a Graves Registration service."³¹ While chaplains and their assistants worked on large cemeteries, smaller graves were dug all over Betio by those more concerned with taking care of fallen friends than noting regulation map coordinates. Markers were sticks, scrap lumber, or helmet-topped rifles stuck in the ground. Locations were sometimes inaccurately reported or not reported at all. An examination of primary sources reveals a dizzying array of burial locations: West Division Cemetery, Wireless Station Cemetery, Division Cemetery no. 3, Map Coordinates KH10035, "next to the Japanese cement mixer." Some locations had multiple names; some Marines' records show burial in two, three, or four places. The 2d Marine Division's supply (D-4) section produced a crude map of "dumps and installations" that included notable burial sites in place as of 26 November 1943 with an estimated number of graves.³² The Graves Registration Section had to piece together a casualty report from these different sources and its final effort was inevitably incomplete. For example, in the February 1944 "Recapitulation of Known Graves," the section reports two "isolated" burial locations totaling seven bodies.³³ In reality, at least 33 isolated graves amounting to more than 50 bodies are known to have existed. The lack of on-the-spot regulated oversight by trained personnel resulted in spotty, confusing, and often contradictory records. When looking at Marine Corps casualty records for Tarawa, the most common refrain is some form of "burial details unknown."

³¹ Michelony interview, 46.

³² "Special Military Map, Betio Island," *D-4 Report on Longsuit Operation*, enclosure A, 26 November 1943, RG 127, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, NARA, Washington, DC. While this map is the earliest known (and only Marine-produced) diagram of cemeteries on Betio, plotting graves was not its primary purpose and its accuracy leaves much to be desired.

³³ "Recapitulation of Known Graves," 3 February 1944, box 168, Graves Registration Section, Service and Supply Company, 2d Service Battalion, Service Troops, 2d Marine Division, RG 127, 2d Marine Division Correspondence, 1942–1949, NARA, Washington, DC.

Burial Details

Although the work was rapid by necessity and complicated by Lockwood's "unavoidable circumstances," combat Marines on Betio did their best to care for dead buddies with reverence and dignity. Field burials on Betio fall into three broad categories: inadvertent, isolated, and cemetery.

As the term *inadvertent* implies, the first type refers to bodies covered up either during the battle—for example, by exploding artillery—or accidentally during cleanup and construction. There is no accurate way to count the number of Marines lost in this manner. However, we do know that it happened because their remains are occasionally found by construction workers or citizens of Kiribati, such as the 1974 discovery of a buried amphibious vehicle, tracked (LVT), with American bodies still inside, or the more recent case of Private First Class Randolph Allen, whose skeletal remains were found in 2013, entangled with four Japanese soldiers. Evidently, the five men died together in a makeshift fighting position and were covered over by heavy machinery, presumably during the construction of Hawkins Field. The fighters were found in the exact positions in which they had fallen in 1943; no attempt had been made to separate or rebury the remains.³⁴

While the term *isolated interment* conjures up an image of a lonely single grave—and this was often the case—the phrase has a specific definition. *Graves Registration* stipulated that all groupings of fewer than 12 graves "will be considered as isolated burials." By contrast, 12 or more graves "were to be established, marked, registered, and reported as a cemetery."³⁵ The nature of the fighting on Betio and the need for swift burial resulted in many isolated graves containing anywhere from one to eight bodies. It is not known how many of these graves originally existed on Betio. Thirty-three were well-marked and conspicuous

³⁴ *History Flight Excavation Report on the Recovery of PFC Randolph Allen, Taiwanese Housing Project, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Republic of Kiribati, JPAC Site #KR-28* (Fredericksburg, VA: History Flight, 19 January 2014), 21.

³⁵ *Graves Registration*, 6. Further, a cemetery was "to remain until the disposition of all bodies, during an armistice or after cessation of hostilities, is definitely agreed upon." Isolated graves could potentially be moved or consolidated at any point, circumstances permitting.

enough to survive until the Navy's beautification process began in 1944; others may have been damaged or destroyed without any record of their original location. Most known isolated graves stood on western Betio, where the 2d Marines faced heavy fighting.

Graves registration protocols dictated that isolated burials were to be avoided whenever practicable in favor of larger cemeteries. This made sense even to those without any specific training: gathering remains together made record-keeping and eventual recovery easier. The 2d Marine Division followed this guidance whenever possible in the Solomon Islands and repeated the practice on Betio, establishing the first cemeteries before the fighting ended.

For cemetery burials, we turn again to the exemplary account of Chaplain Willard. In August 1942, Willard created the first Marine Corps cemetery in the South Pacific at Gavutu; one of his first tasks after coming ashore at Betio on 21 November was to lay out a burial plan with senior officers. The following morning, the chaplain staked out a location near the division command post and secured a bulldozer to scoop out three long trenches "in which the dead could be placed side by side. Under the circumstances, the command decided that individual graves were out of the question. The main thing was to identify and bury our departed comrades with as much reverence as possible."³⁶ He was impressed by the courageous bulldozer drivers, who ducked Japanese sniper fire as they worked.

With the assistance of Chaplain Francis W. Kelly, Willard rapidly filled his three rows. "Kelly had charge of the bodies after they were brought to the cemetery," he noted. "The rest of us went out with working parties to search out the dead."³⁷ He recognized the remains of close friends like Lieutenant Colonel Herbert R. Amey and First Lieutenant William D. Hawkins and gave equal care to mutilated strangers—"one was just the buttocks and legs."³⁸ Willard's two helpers, Assis-

tant Cook Marion Gonzales and Pharmacist's Mate Third Class Edward Rosenberg, helped collect identifying media and fingerprints. Many of the bodies were in such a poor state that Willard had no choice but to note "unidentified" or take a best guess at the last name. At the close of a very long day, U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Cemetery 1 held the remains of 112 men.

After a restless night, Willard collaborated with First Lieutenant Paul B. Goverdare to clear a site for U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Cemetery 2 and bulldoze two trenches. With the help of a truck, Willard's working parties could range farther afield searching for bodies. The chaplain ventured into harm's way on this mission, even after a spent piece of shrapnel smacked his collarbone. He helped collect and bury 66 bodies over the day, only 2 of whom were unidentifiable.³⁹ In his memoir *The Leathernecks Come Through*, Willard writes that "[as of 23 November] it was up to each chaplain, carrying on his work in different sectors of the island, to select his own site for a cemetery."⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the other chaplains did not leave quite as detailed accounts of their activities. The burial grounds Willard helped create were two of the best organized on Betio.

The chaplains rendered excellent service but could not be everywhere at once. In their absence, burials were accomplished "by organization"—platoons, companies, or battalions taking care of their own fallen. There are two standout accounts of cemeteries established by rank-and-file Marines seeking to provide their friends with something close to a proper burial. First Sergeant Lewis Michelony told of a trench burial that would later become known as Row D, East Division Cemetery.

Where we were, there was no graveyard. There was a big tank trap, so we laid Japanese down on one side of the tank trap, and on the other side, we laid Marines down. There were four men with a poncho [to] pick up a dead

³⁶ W. Wyeth Willard, *The Leathernecks Come Through* (New York: Revell, 1944), 218.

³⁷ Willard, *The Leathernecks Come Through*, 218.

³⁸ W. Wyeth Willard personal diary, undated entry (ca. 20–24 November 1943), copy of original document courtesy of Katie Rasdorf, hereafter Willard diary.

³⁹ Willard report, 6. Remains in Row A, Grave 35, were noted as "pair of legs," while remains in Row B, Grave 64, were "burned to death." A handful of men were buried under wrong names.

⁴⁰ Willard, *The Leathernecks Come Through*, 219.



Box 445, General Correspondence, 1946–1946: Graves Registration, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, NARA, College Park, MD
 Detail from a map used by the 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company in 1946. Cemetery numbers are noted along with the number of markers, nearby roads, and buildings.

man (or a part of a man). When we got to [Lt. Hugh D.] Fricks I took my mess gear out, and I carved his name and officer number and rank on it, and I put KIA 23 November 1943 on it. We didn't have crosses [markers] then.

I would go to my men, if I didn't recognize a body, "Okay, you were [in] his platoon. What happened to Jim Jones? What was wrong with him?" "He got hit." "Where did he get hit?" "He got hit in the head, a gunshot wound to the head, evacuation unknown aboard ship." Or they might

answer, "Killed in action and buried."

In some cases, I got the burial place where they were buried.⁴¹

On the other end of Betio, correspondent Robert Sherrod was trying to comprehend the numbing carnage of Red Beach One and "the bodies of Marines who have not yet been reached by burial parties." They lay as they fell in front of pillboxes, hung up on barbed wire, in the hulks of burned vehicles. At one point, Sherrod counted 80 dead Marines in a 20-foot square. Activity at the water's edge drew his attention.

⁴¹ Michelony interview, 46.

A half-dozen Marines, members of the engineer regiment, are walking around the beach, examining the bodies. “Here’s Larson,” says one. “Here’s Montague,” says another. The bodies, as they are identified, are tenderly gathered up and taken fifteen or twenty yards inland where other Marines are digging graves for them.

This is unusual, because most of the Marines are being gathered by burial parties, which have not progressed this far. But these men are looking for dead from their own particular company. Since they are leaving by transport in a few hours, I suppose they think “Here is the last thing we can do for these boys we have known so long. We’ll do it with our own hands.”⁴²

Sherrod hits on another vital fact: the Marines were leaving Betio. The Red Beach burial took place on 24 November as combat units were in the process of boarding transports. The notice came swiftly, as Chaplain Willard wrote, “At 0600 I took a walk. On one little sector I discovered 72 of our dead Marines, that had not been buried. At 0700 received notice that we would have to go aboard ship at 0900. Made 66 crosses, put on names and dog tags. Packed gear.”⁴³

The departure of the 2d Marine Division meant that additional burial records and casualty reports had to be compiled after the fact. Record keepers like Sergeant Michelony had to make the rounds of squads and platoons inquiring after Marines who failed to answer at muster. Approximately 200 were initially reported as “missing in action,” and most of these were later declared dead. It took months—and sometimes years—to finalize the whereabouts of every man who fell on Betio.

Meanwhile, the remainder of battlefield cleanup was left in the hands of Navy garrison troops, who lacked an immediate personal connection to the Marines who died to take the island. The last burials on Betio, for bodies far past individual identification, were less “the last thing we can do” and more an unpleasant chore to be completed as quickly as possible.

From Battlefield to Base: 1944–45

V Amphibious Corps did not expend a thousand lives at Betio for the sole purpose of wiping out a Japanese garrison. Securing the airfield for rapid use was so mission-critical that U.S. fire support took pains to avoid hitting the runway—a remarkable feat, since the runway covered most of the island’s surface. The first U.S. aircraft touched down on Betio on 24 November 1943; in less than a month, U.S. troops repaired or constructed “two coral runways, one 150 feet by 6,150 feet, the other 300 feet by 5,600 feet [with] adequate taxiways, night lighting, control tower, communications, and gasoline facilities.”⁴⁴ Navy Captain Erl C. B. Gould, a veteran aviator, skipper of ACORN-14, and first air base commander of Hawkins Field, was in charge.⁴⁵ On 9 February 1944, Gould was named island commander of Betio, a tenure that would last through June. His efforts to bring Hawkins Field into fighting condition “under nearly continuous enemy bombing activity” earned him a Legion of Merit, with specific praise for “personal foresight and resourcefulness” in overcoming “adverse working conditions of the worst sort.”⁴⁶

Gould fully appreciated the sacrifice of life required to secure Betio. He saw lonely Marine graves dotting the island everywhere he looked, and his ACORN-14 unit buried “several more known mem-

⁴⁴ CINCPAC, *Operations in Pacific Ocean Areas—December 1943*, Part IVD: “Development of Bases in GILBERT Islands,” 31 March 1944, reel A913, RG 38, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1875–2006, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁴⁵ ACORN (Aviation, Construction, Ordnance, Repair, Navy) was the code name for Navy advanced base construction, accomplished by construction battalions (Seabees). ACORNs were small-size air bases that could be swiftly transitioned to American use after capture.

⁴⁶ CINCPAC, *United States Naval Administration in World War II*, part I: “Generalized History of the Marshalls-Gilberts Area, with Emphasis on the Development of the Higher Echelons of Command,” roll 2092, RG 38, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1875–2006, NARA, Washington, DC, 7.

⁴² Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 126–28.

⁴³ Willard diary, 24 November 1943.

bers of the Second [Marine] Division. . . [and] a substantial number of unknown bodies . . . mutilated beyond recognition.”⁴⁷ Gould witnessed burial ceremonies for men who died in bombing raids, operational accidents, and a horrific double crash of two Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers shortly after takeoff on 21 January 1944. He felt not only the immediate loss of young men and comrades but could easily imagine the pain of families at home: his two sons were elsewhere in the Pacific, serving in the Marine Corps.

Gould also wanted to win the war. His base needed troop housing, machine shops, power plants, and access roads in particular locations. When facilities encroached on gravesites, Gould applied his resourcefulness to the issue. In early 1944, he proposed a plan that would allow for needed construction while providing a fitting memorial for those who gave their lives on Betio. However, his decision would constitute the single most significant impediment to the recovery of those same fallen fighters. As Commander Lockwood later wrote, “Gould’s good intentions in desiring a suitable memorial for each man who gave his life were commendable, but his choice of method to achieve this end is questionable as to judgment.”⁴⁸

The island commander’s plan called for replacing the original Marine burial grounds with landscaped memorials laid out by the book and maintained by the garrison. Regulation white crosses would replace scrap lumber, paths and boundaries would be neatly defined, and painted plaques would invite reverence and reflection from the men stationed on Betio. This approach, Gould felt, would appropriately commemorate sacrifice while conveniently opening space for additional construction, as the memorials could be rotated or relocated according to the needs of Hawkins Field. Crucially, there were no premeditated plans to move any of the dead—although archaeological evi-

dence reveals that some remains were apparently reinterred during construction and beautification.⁴⁹

Gould had the skilled workers to accomplish this ambitious goal. Many under his command were Seabees of the 98th Naval Construction Battalion or 549th Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit (CBMU): professional carpenters, builders, and machine operators in civilian life. Lieutenant Elmer J. Miller drafted the designs for the new memorials, while Lieutenant A. E. Dishman of the 549th CBMU organized the workforce. Lieutenant Francis T. Cooke was charged with “the identification and recording of graves,” ensuring the correct number of memorial markers. Cooke’s job was immense: Gould wanted markers for every man who fell in the battle—even those buried at sea.⁵⁰

Hundreds of identical white crosses were hammered together and painted with names procured from the 2d Marine Division’s casualty report. Sailors sawed logs for borders and posts and hung chains to create decorative pathways. Engineers poured concrete pedestals. Sign painters practiced their calligraphy and delivered beautiful tablet-shaped burial registers in red, black, and gold leaf.⁵¹ Sailors volunteered in the cemetery in addition to their regular duties: Fireman First Class Anthony Cyll, an ambitious botanist, cultivated beautiful tropical flowers, trees, and shrubs, especially for the beautification project. “Needless to say, every officer and man who has been connected with this project has considered himself privileged to have the assignment,” Gould declared, “and taken keen interest in developing final resting places which would give evidence of the esteem in

⁴⁷ Capt Erl C. B. Gould, Island Commander, Betio, memorandum to the Commanding General, Second Division, USMC, Fleet Marine Force, “Subject: Cemeteries, Memorial Monuments, and Graves,” CINCPAC Files 1944 P6-Deaths, RG 313, Records of Naval Operating Forces, NARA, College Park, MD, hereafter Gould memo.

⁴⁸ Lockwood report, 3.

⁴⁹ *A History Flight Excavation Report Detailing the Recovery of Captain Richard Vincent from East Division Cemetery (Cemetery 33), Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Republic of Kiribati* (Fredericksburg, VA: History Flight, December 2013), 19. Capt Richard W. Vincent was originally buried in the D-2-18 Cemetery; his remains were not recovered after the war. In 2013, the remnants of a wooden coffin were uncovered from the Cemetery 33 area, and Vincent was identified as the occupant. Coffin burials were not possible in battle conditions, and the prevailing theory is that Vincent’s body was accidentally unearthed by wartime construction and reburied in a more convenient location.

⁵⁰ Gould memo, 5.

⁵¹ Gould memo, 5. This work was led by PTR₂ J. E. Anderson, 98th Construction Battalion. Gould also commended the efforts of PTR_{1s} E. W. Soderberg and K. H. Dewitt (549th Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit) and PTR₁ J. E. Quick (Carrier Air Service Unit 16).

which the gallant forces who fought and died here are held.”⁵² Photographers from *Life* magazine shot color pictures of the sailors at work and sent a film crew to Bairiki to witness the exacting care with which the United States honored its fallen. Their work appeared in the 17 April 1944 issue; much of the beautification was complete by that time. “A conscientious effort has been made to reconstruct and beautify the cemeteries and graves on this atoll,” summarized Gould, “and also to record, as accurately as available data has permitted, the names and burial locations of all the officers and men who fell here.”⁵³

The Navy also did some administrative cleanup on the cemeteries. While Marine records gave burial grounds many descriptive (and conflicting) names, Gould’s island command decided on a simple numbering system. Almost all mentions of Betio burials post-1944 refer to Cemeteries 1 through 41, occasionally appended with the terms *memorial*, *monument*, or *isolated* (figure 1). The layout of each plot was generally based on the number of men initially buried nearby, with due consideration for the needs of the expanding base.

Memorial cemeteries looked like formal plots one might see on a military post back home. Four of these cemeteries appeared on Betio. Gould described their locations using landmarks that veterans of the battle could identify from memory:

- “The main one where memorial services were held on 1 December 1943 just south of the airstrip near the turning circle” (East Division Cemetery, renamed Cemetery 33)
- “Another immediately south of Colonel [David M.] Shoup’s original headquarters” (Central Division Cemetery, renamed Cemetery 26)
- “A third about one hundred yards southwest of the tree upon which our Colors were first raised” (8th Marines Cemetery no. 1, renamed Cemetery 25)

- “The fourth a short distance inland from the northwest end of Betio” (West Division Cemetery, renamed Cemetery 11)⁵⁴

Each memorial cemetery was laid out to exact dimensions, from the size of the individual markers (36 inches high, painted white) to the spacing of plots (three feet side to side, in rows nine feet apart). Coconut log borders and fencing marked the edges. Every cemetery featured a decorative plaque “shellacked to withstand the weather and inscribed with gold leaf.”⁵⁵ A stirring epitaph, jointly composed by Navy captain Jackson R. Tate and Colonel Vivian Fox-Strangways (British resident commissioner) appeared over a Marine emblem at the entrance to each cemetery.

So there let them rest
On their sun-scoured atoll
The wind for their watcher
The waves for their shroud
Where palm and pandanus
Shall whisper forever
A requiem fitting for
Heroes so proud.⁵⁶

Although constructed atop existing Marine Corps graves, the four memorial cemeteries on Betio were oriented according to base construction needs rather than replicating the original burial order.⁵⁷ Cemeteries 25 and 26 nodded to accuracy: the Navy installed one marker for each man, known or unknown, on the Marine burial records. Massive Cemetery 33 and cross-shaped Cemetery 11, centerpieces of the project, contained many more memorial markers than remains. Gould openly stated that “all cemeteries on Betio Island bear a memorial aspect in that accurate detail to locate every cross has never been available. Furthermore, crosses have been erected in them for a

⁵⁴ Gould memo, 2.

⁵⁵ Gould memo, 3.

⁵⁶ Gould memo, 3.

⁵⁷ A fifth memorial cemetery was established on the neighboring island of Buariki, where the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, chased down and eliminated the last Japanese forces in the atoll. In this case, regulation crosses simply replaced old markers, with fencing and plaques added. There was no attempt or need to do much else; Buariki was not intended for military development.

⁵² Gould memo, 5–6.

⁵³ Gould memo, 1.

large number of men reported missing and others buried under memorial monuments so that there stands a cross in memory of every officer and man who fell here.”⁵⁸

While the memorial cemeteries contained individual markers for all casualties, Gould decided that “at four sites . . . where substantial numbers of officers and men are known to have been buried, it has appeared appropriate to erect memorial monuments.”⁵⁹ The monument cemeteries were designed around 10-foot-high crosses made from palm logs and a carved plaque fashioned to look like an open book. The painters applied their talents to include the names of every individual (or the number of unknowns) buried nearby, along with an excerpt from John Masefield’s poem “Truth.”⁶⁰

The monument cemeteries—which the Navy named Cemetery 10, Cemetery 13, Cemetery 20, and Cemetery 27—replaced four Marine Corps burial sites. Original markers were taken down and discarded; in most cases, the monuments were planted directly atop the bodies. A fifth monument of similar size and layout commemorated the New Zealand coastwatchers executed by the Japanese on the atoll in 1942. Notably, monument cemeteries stood in heavier traffic areas where a smaller footprint was more convenient for military operations.

Most of the original burials on Betio were isolated graves—lone Marines or small groups interred on the spot where they died. Gould’s men marked off 33 such graves with the same professional precision as the memorial and monument cemeteries: regulation markers, palm log borders, and mounded sand. Gould noted that “a few bodies were moved to avoid necessary construction work over them,” though he later clarified this as “two” bodies. He added a crucial point of explanation: “Some [isolated] graves . . . are known to be improperly located. In these instances, bodies well identified by name tags, clothing, etc., were buried at varying distances from the sites shown on

the map in question.” This statement makes clear that some isolated graves were only memorials and implies that some bodies were, in fact, built over. Gould could neither specify which graves were “improperly located,” nor did he mention which two were moved to make way for construction.⁶¹

Above ground, the effect of beautification was undeniably impressive. Gould sent a photographer to document each cemetery and wrote up a detailed report of his efforts, lauding the contributions of several officers and enlisted by name. He later received an official letter of gratitude from the 2d Marine Division.⁶² Servicemembers staging through Betio were drawn to the cemeteries, and occasional wreath-laying ceremonies captured the eye of newsreel cameramen. Mrs. Virginia Matthews of the Red Cross managed to visit Betio during the war—“the first American woman serving in the Pacific to see the battlefield grave of her husband”—and hoped that the late Second Lieutenant Ernest A. Matthews might rest there for eternity.

I wish that all the other families who have loved ones there could share the experience. . . . These men earned the right to lie there. In some places, native plants have started to come back, and this results in a gorgeous flood of purple morning glories—it reminds me of a little old cemetery in the U.S., which is mellow and not closely

⁶¹ Gould memo, 2. The author suspects that PFC Leonard E. Kristal and PFC Harold R. Burch may be the two moved men. Their burial information references proximity to a Japanese cement mixer at Hawkins Field. The Navy put markers for them in Cemetery 29 on the eastern end of Betio, while they as members of the 2d Marines landed and fought on the other side of the island near Green Beach. Neither Marine has been accounted for, and both are probably still on Betio.

⁶² William L. Niven, *Tarawa’s Gravediggers: One of the Greatest Mysteries of World War II Finally Solved!* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, 2015), 37. Niven provides a scanned copy of this letter, dated 9 September 1944, and notes that the Betio island commander at the time was Jackson R. Tate. However, the letter is in reference to communication from 1 June 1944, during Gould’s tenure, and as Gould was the only island commander referenced in the postwar inquiry, it is believed that this letter of appreciation was directed to him and not to Tate.

⁵⁸ Gould memo, 4.

⁵⁹ Gould memo, 4.

⁶⁰ John Edward Masefield, “Truth,” *Selected Poems* (London: Heinemann, 1922).

pruned. I can't think of a righter place for my husband to lie.⁶³

Virginia Matthews's sentiments were echoed by many in the United States who received official notice of a loved one's death along with a report of a specific grave location in one of the beautified cemeteries.

However, the graves were nearly all shams. "While this arrangement of markers undoubtedly improved appearances, it destroyed whatever accuracy the first crude grave markings possessed, making it practically impossible to identify most of the graves in later disinterments," wrote Commander Lockwood.⁶⁴ An unknown number of individual markers and two larger cemeteries were never commemorated.⁶⁵

Certainly, Gould was not thinking ahead to later disinterments; ending the war for the living outweighed the needs of the dead. Navy wartime policy dictated that all remains buried overseas remain there at the very least until the end of hostilities.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Gould was a Great War veteran and knew that most American dead from that conflict were permanently buried in other countries. He could not have anticipated the chaos his project would cause, or the pain and strife it would inflict on the families of the Marines he sought to honor.

There was no secrecy about the memorial nature of the cemeteries; the Marine Corps was aware of this before the end of the war. Representatives of the Marine Corps Graves Registration Service inspected the setup in 1945 and came away impressed. Their memo to Commandant Alexander A. Vandegrift read, in part,

Investigation made by this Headquarters indicates that graves in the four cemeteries on Betio Island are largely commemorative (unoccupied). In some instances, bodies will be found interred, but it is uncertain whether the bodies interred are actually the bodies indicated by the markings above them. It is understood that in some cases graves marked "unknown" contain parts of bodies only. . . . It is therefore recommended that all interments in the four cemeteries listed [11, 25, 26, 33] be considered memorial.⁶⁷

This intelligence was not communicated to the families of those supposedly buried in the memorial cemeteries. The Corps either wished to avoid unduly worrying the next of kin or to keep the news as quiet as possible, hoping that most of the remains would be retrieved after the war. Nor was it made plain to the men who would carry out that grim task.

Recovery and Reburial: The Graves Registration Mission

Few Graves Registration Service (GRS) units in the Pacific had as much accumulated experience as the Army's 4th Platoon, 604th QMGRC. Activated in 1943, it trained in Hawaii and deployed to the Pacific in time for the New Guinea campaign; the war took them as far north as Iwo Jima. After the surrender, it was detailed to cross the Pacific yet again, revisiting old island battlefields to collect remains from temporary graves and consolidate small cemeteries in regional hubs.⁶⁸ The 4th Platoon was led by First

⁶³ "Casualties: Last Landing," *Time* 47, no. 13 (1 April 1946), 97. History Flight recovered the remains of Lt Matthews from Cemetery 27 in 2015; DPAA completed the identification in January 2017.

⁶⁴ Lockwood report, 3.

⁶⁵ Although Gilbert Islands Cemetery and Green Beach Cemetery C contained a significant number of graves, neither was commemorated as a memorial or monument, presumably due to the needs of base construction. History Flight located the first site in 2019; the second has not yet been located.

⁶⁶ Steere, *The Graves Registration Service in World War II*, 34. This policy, first proposed by U.S. Armed Forces in Australia (USAFA) and adopted by all branches, cited inadequate facilities for preserving remains, wide dispersion of troops, and lack of transportation, particularly shipping.

⁶⁷ Excerpt from Letter Serial #28531, "Commemorative Graves," 24 April 1945, personnel file for Hillard, Robert, Pvt. USMC, 360956, Official Military Personnel Files, RG 127, NARA, St. Louis, MO, hereafter Hillard personnel file. Copies of this excerpt were included in Official Military Personnel Files of unrecovered men reported buried in these cemeteries.

⁶⁸ In December 1946, the 604th QMGRC received the Meritorious Service Unit award for "completion of a number of difficult separate missions in connection with the American Graves Registration Service concentration program." Tarawa was cited as "the most difficult mission the company ever faced." *Honolulu (HI) Advertiser*, 9 December 1946.

Lieutenant Isadore Eisensmith, with Lieutenant (DC) Henry Robinson as the senior medical officer. The enlisted ranks included embalmers, clerks, dental specialists, bulldozer drivers, and diggers. At Robinson's insistence, all hands arrived with a rudimentary knowledge of tooth charting, courtesy of a compulsory crash course taught en route to Betio.⁶⁹

As the soldiers unloaded the USAT *Lawrence Philips* (U.S. Army transport) and cleaned out the *fales* in which they would live, Lieutenant Eisensmith made a tour of inspection. He counted "approximately 43 graves containing from one body up to 400."⁷⁰ In keeping with practice established on other islands, Eisensmith planned to collect remains, confirm identities, and rebury everyone in a new location to await transport home. He found a spot near the old base chapel, negotiated with British officials for its use, and set his bulldozer driver to work pulling stumps.⁷¹ Chaplains Francis W. Kelly and William R. O'Neill, who helped with the 1943 battlefield burials on Betio, arrived via airplane from Kwajalein. By 15 March, the new cemetery—called Lone Palm for the single tree within its boundaries—was cleared, graded, and ready for use; two days later, the first bodies were exhumed from their temporary graves.

Corporal Hubert Clayton Luther, who was awarded a posthumous Navy Cross with Company I, 2d Marines, and was buried where he died in 1943, was among the first to be brought to the 604th QMGRC's morgue and laboratory. The corpsmen examined bones, charted teeth, and cataloged personal effects. Luther's remains were carefully wrapped in a blanket and placed into a wooden coffin with duplicate identity tags; he was buried in grave 1, row 1. The second was a skeleton uncovered while grading the southwest corner of Lone Palm. He had no personal effects and no identification; after receiving the same thorough exam-

ination as Luther, he was also placed into a coffin with tags reading "Unknown X-1." Betio had surrendered its first unknown soldier. As it happened, later laboratory examination suggested that X-1 was Japanese.⁷²

On 18 March 1946, Lieutenant Eisensmith divided his platoon into four teams. One handled operations at Lone Palm, while another tackled the numerous isolated graves. The other two groups started with Cemeteries 26 and 33 with 119 and 400 individual markers, respectively.⁷³ Eisensmith anticipated a rapid expansion of Lone Palm as the teams worked row by row through the massive burial grounds. He must have been aware, at least on some level, that some of the burials on Betio were memorials. At the very least, a conversation with the garrison force commander intimated that Cemetery 11 was "primarily a 'memorial'."⁷⁴ However, from the sudden tone of dismay in his operation report, the true scope of the problem evidently caught him by surprise. "At this point," he wrote, "our difficulties began."

After two days of excavating, no bodies had been recovered. This created much concern. Father O'Neill, who buried Marine dead on this spot shortly after the invasion, finally made the suggestion that we see if traces of the original rows could be found.

Originally, the remains were buried side by side in three rows. These rows were supposed to be diagonal to certain tree stumps. By a series of prospect excavations and narrow trenches, the middle row was found first. Later the other two rows were found. These rows were also diagonal to the way the cemetery was laid out.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Eisensmith report, 2.

⁷⁰ What the Navy called *cemeteries*, the 604th QMGRC called *graves*—another point of potential confusion for modern researchers. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer them to by the more common Navy designation. *Fales* were simple huts found throughout the South Pacific. ⁷¹ The bulldozer broke down after about a day, and the rest of the Army garrison force heavy equipment on the island was in poor condition. Much of the digging and physical labor was done by hand.

⁷² Case file for Unknown X-1, Schofield Barracks Mausoleum #1, RG 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁷³ 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company, "Company Diary, 21 Feb 1946 to 9 June 1946," box 17969, RG 407, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1917–, WWII Operations Reports 1941–1948, NARA, Washington, DC, hereafter 604th QMGRC Diary.

⁷⁴ Eisensmith report, 7.

⁷⁵ Eisensmith report, 3.

The team at Cemetery 26 faced similar problems: no bodies under the five rows of markers. Kelly, who helped Willard bury Marines on this spot in 1943, recalled the original three-row layout and suggested digging a trench across the cemetery. His idea bore fruit, and the three rows were located. The other two teams were reassigned to help, and an average of 30 remains arrived at Lone Palm Cemetery for reburial each day.⁷⁶

Finding the bodies was only part of the challenge. Battle debris was everywhere; many Marines were buried with live ammunition and grenades on their persons. One grenade exploded—fortunately causing no injuries—and a large Japanese mine was found in Cemetery 26. O'Neill and Technical Sergeant A. S. Galluzzi took on the dangerous task of dumping the rusting munitions into the sea.⁷⁷ Work was further delayed by heavy rain, intense heat, and a fire that burned down part of the mess hall.⁷⁸ These two cemeteries also gave Eisensmith and Robinson a worrisome preview of the identification process.

Very few of the remains had any means of identification such as regulation tags, shoes, or names stenciled on their web equipment and ponchos. The identification tags found were almost useless to us for the chemical reaction of the coral had corroded them until they were illegible. Most of the tags were almost disintegrated when found by us.

Tooth charts were not of much value . . . it appeared that additional dental work had been done since the original charts were made and no record kept of it. The tooth charts taken from the remains did not check with those furnished by [the] Marine Corps for the person whose identification tags were found. It seems that the Ma-

rines had traded identification tags for reasons unknown.⁷⁹

Cemetery 26 was declared closed on 26 March; 123 bodies had been found instead of the expected 119, and the workers started on Cemetery 25. Now wise to the nature of memorial cemeteries, they dug a test trench and quickly found the original burials running perpendicular to the rows of crosses. The same troubles plagued Cemetery 25, and it took nearly a week to finish the job. Cemetery 25 was closed on 2 April; so was Cemetery 33, where only 129 bodies lay under 400 markers. Unfortunately, the nature of the excavations—and, possibly, carelessness or fatigue by the workers laboring with shovels in the hot sun—meant that many bones were left in the ground. It was difficult to differentiate if a missing limb was due to combat-inflicted trauma or simple inattention.⁸⁰

Work on the isolated graves was soon complete, and “it was found that many of the graves did not contain all the remains reported buried there.”⁸¹ Unfortunately, the 604th QMGRC did not specify which isolated burials were problematic, but a tally of individual reports of interment suggests that as many as 18 of the 33 isolated graves either had unidentifiable remains or no remains at all. Some burials on Betio's western shore (Green Beach) were supposedly washed away by coastal erosion.⁸²

The 604th QMGRC took a well-earned weekend break, enjoying payday, a wreath-laying service at Lone Palm, and “a very good USO show.” They were back at work on Monday, 8 April. One group went to Cemetery 11, “the cross cemetery near the Chaple [sic]” while others tackled Monument Cemeteries 10 and

⁷⁹ Eisensmith report, 4–5.

⁸⁰ Archaeological work on these cemeteries occasionally unearths nearly complete skeletons. In these cases, the blame must rest on the soldiers of the 604th QMGRC.

⁸¹ Eisensmith report, 6.

⁸² Most notably Cemetery 9, isolated grave of Capt Thomas B. Royster. Eisensmith spoke with aviators familiar with the shifting coastline and concluded that Royster's grave was underwater. Eisensmith report, 8. William Niven states this phenomenon also affected Cemetery 12 (an isolated unknown) but photographs of Betio in 1946 appear to show that marker still standing. Niven, *Tarawa's Gravediggers*, 89.

⁷⁶ Eisensmith report, 5.

⁷⁷ Eisensmith report, 4.

⁷⁸ 604th QMGRC Diary, 9–11.

13.⁸³ The Cemetery 11 crew anticipated trouble from the beginning, having been told by the garrison force commander that 11 was “primarily a memorial.”⁸⁴ It took two days of digging to find the first two bodies; they found nothing but sand for a solid week. Diggers were dismayed to find seawater seeping into the excavation. Work paused pending the arrival of a pump from Kwajalein.

Cemeteries 10 and 13 presented different problems. There were no clues on where to dig; remains were supposedly in the vicinity (42 at Cemetery 13, 21 at Cemetery 10) but no plots to exhume. Soldiers dug test holes and trenches with no success. Finally, somebody near Grave 14 suggested looking under the monument. A clapped-out garrison truck dragged the wooden cross out to the beach; beneath the concrete pedestal lay the dead Marines. After this discovery, work progressed well: Cemetery 13 surrendered 41 remains, and 19 were retrieved from Cemetery 10.⁸⁵

Simultaneously, a small group boated over to the island of Buota to exhume a small cemetery next to Mullinix Field. They expected 10 remains but located 24, including the elaborate grave of Navy Commander George Tilghman. No less impressive was the commander’s casket, a steel-and-wood construction unlike any other encountered in the Gilbert Islands.⁸⁶ “Contrary to all the other cemeteries on Tarawa, there was no doubt about the identification of these remains,” noted Eisensmith. “Index cards with all pertinent information were found buried in each of the caskets.”⁸⁷

Back on Betio, the crews started work on Cemeteries 20 and 27. Cemetery 20, located near the British wireless station, was the old D-2-18 Cemetery described by Robert Sherrod. From start to finish, operations at Cemetery 20 took only two days and returned all but one of the anticipated remains. Cemetery 27, by contrast, was a complete failure. The 604th QMGRC expected 40 bodies under the cross monu-

ment, but none were found. The pit reached seven feet, twice that of a typical Betio burial, and still no trace of any remains. Frustrated, the 604th QMGRC branched out. “Explorative excavations were started throughout the area,” wrote Eisensmith. “At the same time, trenches were started in front of the four large Quonsets in the area around the boat basin, but all this work was in vain. . . . The area around the barber-shop and the area along both sides of the road was dug up, but no remains, no remnants of equipment, or any other debris that would have indicated a burial place were found.” The soldiers spent half a month working on Cemetery 27 before abandoning the project on 1 May. Eisensmith felt that the entire monument was only a memorial.⁸⁸

With the ongoing debacle of Cemetery 27 weighing on his mind, Eisensmith badly needed some good news. He got it on 24 April when the long-awaited water pump for Cemetery 11 arrived by airplane. However, the day turned tragic shortly after the aircraft departed: a large plume of black smoke rose above the lagoon, and “immediately everyone seemed to know that the [Douglas] C-47 [Skytrain] had crashed.”⁸⁹ A rescue boat raced to the scene and was met by a small fleet of Gilbertese canoes. The bodies of Lieutenant Colonel Fred O. Tyler, Captain Robert B. Poteet, and Captain Wesley J. Siedenbug were fished from the water that afternoon; a few days later, the lower half of one man’s body emerged from the wreckage. There was no hope of individual identification, so the legs were declared a group burial representing Captain William A. Lanman and Corporals John R. Whitehead Jr., William M. Young, and Robert Tingle. The seven men were given a military funeral and joined the dead of Tarawa in Lone Palm Cemetery.

In early May, the 604th QMGRC’s journal commented that “the end of operations seems to be near.”⁹⁰ Teams were still working in the waterlogged Cemetery 11, and a contingent sailed 145 kilometers to Apamama to collect 11 more remains. Idle soldiers

⁸³ 604th QMGRC Diary, 17. For unknown reasons, the 604th QMGRC renumbered these as Grave 18 and Grave 14.

⁸⁴ Eisensmith report, 7.

⁸⁵ 604th QMGRC Diary, 17–20.

⁸⁶ Tilghman, the commander of Mullinix Field, was killed on 4 January 1944 when a bomber ground-looped and crashed into his parked Jeep.

⁸⁷ Eisensmith report, 8.

⁸⁸ Eisensmith report, 8–9. Cemetery 27 was discovered by archaeologists in 2015.

⁸⁹ Eisensmith report, 10.

⁹⁰ 604th QMGRC diary, 26.

were assigned to fill in and level the excavated graves. Chaplains Kelly and O'Neill flew out of Betio, on their way to discharge and home. Lone Palm was beautified with coral pathways, chain fencing, a flagpole, and newly planted trees. On 20 May 1946, Eisensmith authorized a beer party for his men in recognition of two months of hard work. As he looked over the four plots of white crosses, he must have admitted that the cemetery was much smaller than he had hoped. Lone Palm contained only 527 remains, and 274 were under markers labeled unknown.

Chief among the omissions at Lone Palm were nearly 90 battle casualties from three major cemeteries never located by the 604th QMGRC. The failure to find approximately 40 remains at Cemetery 27 was acknowledged, but two others were not mentioned in the unit's report.⁹¹ The first was the tank trap burial conducted by First Sergeant Michelony and his comrades. Originally called Gilbert Islands Cemetery by the 6th Marines, the site became known as Row D, East Division Cemetery, presumably for its proximity to the larger burial ground. However, it was never within the fenced boundaries of East Division Cemetery; photographs show Rows A, B, and C, but no fourth row. Evidently, Row D was a bit of a misnomer, and the tank trap lay some distance away.

Unfortunately, and for reasons unknown, no memorial was raised over Row D during the beautification process, and its precise location was not known to the 604th QMGRC. They certainly searched for it; among their files was a burial roster for 33 men in Row D, and O'Neill was a veteran of the 6th Marines with a personal interest in finding his old comrades. O'Neill also conducted memorial services at East Division Cemetery after the battle; when he returned to Betio in 1946, he would undoubtedly have recalled three, not four, rows of markers. Although one man reportedly interred in Row D was identified, the trench eluded the 604th QMGRC.⁹²

The other lost cemetery is more of a mystery. Known as Green Beach Cemetery C or Cemetery C, 2d Marines no. 1, it once stood along the western shore of Betio and held the remains of 13 men. Its origins are almost entirely obscure; only a few photographs are known to exist, and it does not appear on any Navy-produced maps of the island. Author William Niven postulates that Cemetery C was included on the D-4 "Dumps and Installations" map of 26 November 1943 and presents logical evidence for this conclusion—namely, the proximity to other cemeteries designated A and B.⁹³ Cemetery C was never marked or mapped in the beautification effort, and the 604th QMGRC omitted any mention of the location in their report.

Identification and Accounting

The 604th QMGRC understood that even the best-marked cemeteries could present identification problems: men buried without identification, multiple remains in a single grave, or simple misspellings could mean a delay of months or years. To combat this, they brought reams of paperwork to Betio, including rosters of the fallen as prepared by the 2d Marine Division in 1944. They also had dental charts (Navy Form H-4) for every man known to be dead or missing from the battle. Using the available documentation, Lieutenant Robinson and his team of technicians hoped to confirm the name of each body that came through their morgue.⁹⁴

The process began at the gravesite. A pair of corpsmen attended each exhumation and "would immediately obtain the skull, thoroughly clean the teeth of all dirt, and proceed to make the dental examination and record of condition found on one of the blank H-4 forms." Simultaneously, a clerk filled out Form 1042: "Report of Burial." Lieutenant Robinson pulled the relevant dental record and checked all the information personally. He was a strict arbiter, attuned to the slightest discrepancies. Robinson later reported,

⁹¹ 604th QMGRC diary, 20; and Eisensmith report, 8–9.

⁹² PFC Manuel Nunes (Company M, 8th Marines), recorded as the 33rd and last body in Row D, was reburied in Lone Palm Cemetery on 21 March 1946. It is not known whether the 604th QMGRC really found part of the row, or if Row D was a clerical error on the original report. The 604th QMGRC was exhuming Row B at the time Nunes was found.

⁹³ Niven, *Tarawa's Gravediggers*, 251–52.

⁹⁴ Lt H. H. Robinson, "Dental Officer's Report on Identification Operation at Tarawa," 31 May 1946, General Correspondence, Miscellaneous File, RG 92, Records of the Quartermaster General, NARA, College Park, MD, hereafter Robinson report.

“In the event that there was no clue as to identification, and there was present even the slightest unusual dental condition, a search was made through each record of the bodies buried in the particular cemetery or location.”⁹⁵ Robinson’s task was made more difficult by the similarity of records—many remains showing the results of typical dental work, like extracted wisdom teeth—and the condition of the remains:

There were remains found with one or more teeth missing from the jaws. In many instances, the teeth were found adjacent to the skull. In other instances, the teeth were not recovered. Another common condition found was that parts of one or both jaws were missing. Several skulls were found with one jaw missing, and a few remains were exhumed for which no skull was found.⁹⁶

Damage of this sort could affect identifying features, and, as Robinson correctly argued, “unless there was some dental peculiarity, no matter how slight, it followed that positive identification was impossible.”⁹⁷ He erred on the side of caution, rejecting several possible matches over slight discrepancies that he could not resolve with the resources or information available. At the end of field operations, Robinson collected his conflicting files and collared his eight most proficient corporals for a final review. This homestretch effort resulted in 19 additional identifications.

Confirmation of identity by dental records was vital to the process—for, as noted, few of the bodies had legible identification and those who did sometimes had items that did not match the tooth chart. Robinson noted that “117 bodies were positively identified by dental charts alone, and 137 bodies were identified by correlation of other information with dental

charts. The identity of 40 remains was definitely disproven after other information had led to a tentative identification.”⁹⁸ It does not appear that the 604th QMGRC considered other physical traits—they were not, after all, trained anthropologists—but they did take an additional step for remains deemed unidentifiable. Skulls were propped up on a small stand and photographed from the front and both sides, with a placard bearing their X-number. The photographs were forwarded along with the individual’s burial information. As far as this writer knows, this practice was not repeated elsewhere in the Pacific theater and was possibly due to the high percentage of unidentified remains.

The penultimate stop for Betio’s battle casualties was the Central Identification Laboratory, Honolulu (CIL). At this facility, a trio of expert anthropologists—Doctors Mildred Trotter, Charles Snow, and Paul Graves—worked with a team of technicians to check and confirm the identities of dead men from across the Pacific theater. The workload was immense, and the pressure correspondingly high: they were the final checkpoint before remains could be released to families for final burial.

The Tarawa dead arrived in their caskets from Lone Palm accompanied by the records created by the 604th QMGRC: new tags, reports of burial, dental charts, and any other pertinent information. In the quiet confines of the laboratory, new clues came to light. Remains were spread carefully on examining tables and checked for duplicate bones. Often parts of two, three, or four individuals were found commingled in caskets; an extra articulating right arm, for example, might be removed and associated with another set of remains, or assigned a separate case number. They recorded estimates of age, height, weight, and stature, charted teeth, and ordered fluoroscopy tests. The trained eye of a professional anthropologist could spot the defining physical traits suggestive of Caucasian or Asian ancestry; any remains thought to be Japanese or Korean were removed for separate disposition. The doctors even described how each in-

⁹⁵ Robinson report, 2.

⁹⁶ Robinson report, 3.

⁹⁷ Robinson report, 3. Robinson remarks that Chaplain O’Neill spent a week at Headquarters Marine Corps searching for “original lists and diagrams showing the location of bodies in the various cemeteries and . . . a chart showing the location of cemeteries on the island.” He came up empty; it is not clear if these diagrams ever existed.

⁹⁸ Robinson report, 3.

dividual might have appeared in life. To avoid confirmation bias, they worked without access to personnel files and submitted the findings of each case for review by an external board.

Unfortunately, CIL was somewhat hampered by the remains they received. Recent archaeological work on Betio's cemetery sites tends to return personal effects, smaller bones, entire limbs, and sometimes entire skeletons overlooked by the 604th QMGRC. This suggests the diggers—generally the least experienced or skilled members of the platoon—were not as careful in their work as expected. Furthermore, the 604th QMGRC sometimes submitted dental data that obviously contradicted the CIL findings, indicative of another record-keeping breakdown along the way.⁹⁹

Nor was CIL completely error-free in its work. In 2019, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) accounted for Private First Class Alfred Edwards by combining two separate sets of unidentified remains, which had obviously failed an association check by CIL anthropologists. That same year, Captain Edward Glenn Walker was identified from remains buried in Hawaii. This news came as a surprise to the Walker family, who received and buried a body as their kin back in 1949. The mistake was finally corrected in 2021.¹⁰⁰

Ultimately, the 604th QMGRC sent 282 remains to CIL as unknown. The laboratory assigned identities to 186 of them in just more than a year's time. In 1949, the unidentified remains were buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific with full military honors. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps was grappling with the fallout from the 604th QMGRC's mission. The families of Marines whose bodies were still missing received a form letter.

⁹⁹ For example, Betio Unknown X-20 includes a Navy H-4 form dated 19 March 1946 with the notation "Head shot OFF! (no skull)." A detailed dental chart was created on 17 December 1946; the remains examined at CIL had no skull but included pieces of at least three individuals. X-20 was combined with remains recovered in 2014 and identified as PFC Joseph F. Boschetti in 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Betio Unknown X-198 was determined as a potential match for Walker based on his unusual height and a distinctive pattern of tooth fillings. The error appears to have dual roots: Walker's ID tags were found on one body, and the identification was accepted primarily on this information without the usual confirmation checks by CIL. The remains exhumed from Walker's grave in Lebanon, TN, are still awaiting final identification.

It is with sincere regret that I inform you that his remains have not been recovered. This information was not furnished you at an earlier date pending receipt of the reports of the final searches made of the islands of Tarawa Atoll for isolated graves. These searches are now considered complete. . . . A number of unidentified bodies were found on Tarawa and the American Graves Registration Service is attempting by any known means to identify them. . . . Although it is improbable that the remains of your son will be recovered, you may be certain that should his remains be positively identified you will be promptly informed.¹⁰¹

Naturally, this news was not well received. Families possessing photographs of memorial graves, details of specific burial sites, or boxes of personal effects could not understand the seemingly arbitrary decision that remains were unrecoverable. Mrs. Susie Ratliff, whose son Robert Hillard was among those so designated, was rightly outraged.

If his remains are truly lost or were never recovered, as I have been informed, why have I been deceived? Why didn't they tell me the cold hard facts in the beginning so I could accustom myself to them all at the same time? A woman can stand much after she has become accustomed to it, but to be told one thing, as I was, and then after accepting it as reported, to be informed of something quite contrary, is more than I can sanely take. It is almost the same as freshly receiving that fateful telegram over four years ago.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Hillard personnel file.

¹⁰² Hillard personnel file.

The Navy convened an investigation into the “deplorable graves situation,” and Commandant Vandegrift pressed for a formal court of inquiry. However, the inspector general declined to pursue one, stating it would be “of no further avail” and that “at this late date, due to disintegration of the bodies and their identification tags, no effective action can be taken to remedy the conditions.” Commodore Gould, the man behind beautification, was officially notified of his “error in judgment with regard to rearranging the grave markers,” and the Navy recommended better record keeping and more durable identification tags for future use.¹⁰³

None of this, of course, brought any comfort to the families of the missing. Charles Lockwood’s argument of “unavoidable circumstances,” while rational, made no allowances for accountability, and bereaved families received little more than another form letter expressing official sympathy. Those who requested markers in national cemeteries were rebuffed: official policy was clear that permanent cenotaphs would not be provided at government expense.

In reflecting on the cemeteries at Betio, Robert Sherrod wrote “the inevitable erosion, of heroes as well as landmarks, has set in.”¹⁰⁴ There is perhaps no more fitting epitaph to the sorry situation arising from the “unavoidable circumstances” of burial at Betio and the administrative decision that closed cases but left countless open wounds.

Epilogue

Betio’s cemeteries have not lain undisturbed in the decades since the 604th QMGRC departed. The island is densely populated today; civil construction projects, house building, and even gardening projects have turned up bones and rusted military gear. Repre-

sentatives of the American government were called to the island every few years to conduct investigations, examine the evidence, and take charge of the remains. Occasionally, an identification resulted—Private First Class Maurice J. Drucker in 1965, Private Thomas L. Scurlock and Private Ernest E. Tucker in 1982, Private First Class Darwin H. Brown and Pharmacist’s Mate Second Class Raymond P. Gilmore in 2002—but others followed their comrades into graves in Hawaii marked “unknown.”¹⁰⁵ These finds were all by chance; no formal searches for the missing Marines were made.

Interest in locating the cemeteries accelerated in the mid-2000s as a nonprofit organization called History Flight began researching burial sites and conducting independent digs based on information provided by Kiribati citizens. Working in partnership with the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and its successor DPAA, History Flight led the fieldwork that uncovered Cemetery 27 and the remains of more than 40 men, including Medal of Honor recipient First Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman Jr. in 2015.¹⁰⁶ Four years later, this same partnership located and exhumed Row D, with more than 30 additional remains, most of which have since been identified.¹⁰⁷

The Cemetery 27 discovery turned public attention toward Betio, and in 2016 DPAA recommended exhuming the Tarawa unknowns in Honolulu.¹⁰⁸ The remains were brought back to a laboratory setting for reexamination with modern forensic methods. Matching chest X-rays and DNA samples have resulted in the identification of another 40 casualties; every year, the list of missing grows shorter. To this day, however, there are approximately 350 Betio casualties still unaccounted for—more than one-tenth of all Marine Corps personnel not recovered from World War II.

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¹⁰⁵ Excerpt from Letter Serial #49579, “Drucker, Maurice Jay,” 11 August 1965, personnel file for DRUCKER, Maurice, PFC USMC, 369370, Official Military Personnel Files, RG 127, NARA, St. Louis, MO; and “Profiles of America’s Unaccounted For Personnel,” Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, accessed 25 October 2022.

¹⁰⁶ “Battle of Tarawa,” Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, accessed 25 October 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Jason Daly, “Remains of 30 Service Members Killed in WWII Unearthed at Tarawa,” *Smithsonian Magazine* (27 June 2019).

¹⁰⁸ “Battle of Tarawa,” Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

¹⁰³ Lockwood report, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Sherrod, “Tarawa Today,” *Life* magazine 48, no. 6 (5 August 1946), 19.

Marine Hawk Missiles in Guantánamo Bay during the Cuban Missile Crisis

by Major Marc Romanych, USA (Ret)

Abstract: During the Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. Marine Corps deployed a Hawk air defense missile battery from the 3d Light Antiaircraft Missile (LAAM) Battalion to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to protect the U.S. naval base from a surprise low-level air attack by Soviet and Cuban aircraft. The battalion was alerted and airlifted from Twentynine Palms, California, to Cherry Point, North Carolina, with its Battery C deployed forward into Cuba. The deployment validated the readiness of the Corps' LAAM battalions to employ the Hawk system in support of expeditionary forces. However, the story of the LAAM battalions and deployment of 3d LAAM to Guantánamo Bay is not well known or documented because few official records of the LAAM battalions from the early 1960s exist. This article uses Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms's newspaper to provide context along with veterans' first-hand experiences to fill in the details of the LAAM battalions before and during the Cuban missile crisis.

Keywords: Cuban missile crisis, U.S. Marines, 3d Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion, LAAM, Hawk missile system, Guantánamo Bay

In October 1962, four days after President John F. Kennedy publicly announced that U.S. spy planes had discovered Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba, a Marine Corps Hawk missile battery—Battery C, 3d Light Antiaircraft Missile (LAAM) Battalion—arrived in Guantánamo Bay to protect the U.S. naval base against a low-level air strike by Soviet and Cuban aircraft. The deployment of Battery C to Cuba was the first contingency deployment of a U.S. Hawk

medium-range surface-to-air missile battery outside of the United States and a validation of the Marine Corps' decision to acquire and field the Hawk missile system. Today, the story of 3d LAAM's deployment to Guantánamo Bay is largely forgotten, overshadowed by the strategic nature of the Cuban missile crisis and, perhaps, because there are few official records exist from the period about the 3d LAAM Battalion. This article uses coverage in Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms's newspaper to provide context and first-hand experiences of several veterans to fill in details

Marc Romanych is a retired U.S. Army air defense artillery officer who served in Hawk, Chaparral, and Patriot air defense artillery battalions in positions including battery commander and battalion operations officer. He has a bachelor of science degree in geology from Syracuse University, a bachelor of arts degree in history from the University of Maryland, and a master of arts degree in international relations from St. Mary's University. He is a coauthor (with Jacqueline Scott) of *The Hawk Air Defense Missile System* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2022080204>



Official Department of Defense photo

The Marine Corps' first missile air defense system was the Terrier. Seen here, four Marines transfer missiles from a wheeled missile carrier to a launcher during an exercise at Naval Ordnance Test Station, China Lake, CA.

about the 3d LAAM Battalion before and during the Cuban missile crisis.¹

Before Hawk, the Marine Corps' ground-based air defense weapons were the 75mm M51 Skysweeper antiaircraft gun and the Convair RIM-2 Terrier

¹ Few official records exist of LAAM battalion operations before and during the Cuban missile crisis. Additionally, Marine Corps publications have largely overlooked Hawk prior to the Vietnam War. For this article, the gap was filled by articles from the Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms newspaper the *Observation Post* and telephone interviews and email exchanges between the author and seven Marine veterans who served in Hawk missile units before and during the Cuban missile crisis. Unfortunately, because the crisis occurred six decades before this writing, the few officers and senior noncommissioned officers who served with 3d LAAM in the early 1960s, if still alive, are now in their late 80s or early 90s. A search for LAAM veterans found, with one exception, only junior enlisted Marines, no officers.

guided missile system. The Skysweeper, a modern gun system at the time, was fielded in the early 1950s by both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps for short-range air defense. Fitted with an autoloader for rapid fire and a radar and computer for fire direction, the gun could engage subsonic aircraft to a range of 9 kilometers (km) and altitude of 5,600 meters (18,600 feet). The Skysweeper was simple to operate and relatively mobile, but by the late 1950s its engagement reaction time was too slow and its range too short to effectively engage new Soviet supersonic aircraft such as the Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21. To counter the threat posed by Soviet jets, the Marine Corps acquired the Terrier system, a Navy developed antiaircraft missile



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, by SSgt L. A. Pope, Archives, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA
A Marine Hawk crew loads three missiles onto a launcher using a tracked loader-transporter at Twentynine Palms in 1961.

system designed for use on board cruisers and then subsequently modified for employment on land.² Not only were the Terrier's 12-km range and 12,000-meter (40,000-foot) engagement altitude an improvement from that of Skysweeper, its reaction time and missile speed also were fast enough to engage supersonic aircraft. Even so, the land-based version of the Terrier system was not what the Marine Corps needed. The system consisted of three large semitrailers (a fire control van containing radar scopes and controls for the

crew, a computer van with a fire control computer and communication center, and a radar van with a tracking radar), four launchers (each with two missiles), a pedestal-mounted acquisition radar, and two wheeled missile carriers that could each carry two missiles. The multistage missile was 27 feet long and weighed about 3,000 pounds. The system's prime mover was the M8 High Speed Tractor, and eight M8s were needed to move a complete Terrier system.³

² Mark L. Morgan and Mark A. Berhow, *Rings of Supersonic Steel: Air Defenses of the United States Army 1950–1979—An Introductory History and Site Guide*, 2d ed. (San Pedro, CA: Fort MacArthur Military Press, 2002), 28.

³ MSgt Robert E. Johnson, "The Vertical Frontier," *Leatherneck*, February 1959, 16–23, 65.

Once fielded, Terrier's shortcomings came to light. Designed to engage flying targets over water, the system had problems detecting and intercepting low-flying targets from ground clutter (radar signals that reflect off terrain and vegetation and obscure targets) over land. Another drawback was that Terrier could engage only one target at a time, sufficient only if hostile aircraft were neither too fast nor too numerous.⁴ The size and weight of Terrier's components were a detriment too. Officially labeled as a mobile weapon system, the Terrier was more *transportable* than *mobile*. Its large, bulky components, especially the launchers (weighing 19 tons), were cumbersome to move, particularly when loading onto a ship or landing on a beach. During an amphibious exercise conducted off the coast of southern California in 1960, the launchers barely fit into the landing craft with several hours needed to transfer just one launcher from the landing ship to the landing craft. On top of that, the system needed the better part of a day to emplace and become operational.⁵ While Terrier did usher the Marine Corps air defense into the Missile Age, its utility to expeditionary operations was too limited, and after just six years of service, it was replaced by the Hawk missile system in 1961.

The Hawk Missile System

The Hawk (homing all the way killer) missile system was designed and manufactured for the U.S. Army and Marine Corps by Raytheon in the mid- to late 1950s. To the Marine Corps, Hawk offered an air defense weapon that could engage supersonic aircraft flying from tree-top level to 11,500 meters (38,000 feet) and at a much longer range—32 km—than the Terrier system. It could also move rapidly from one place to another and emplace and be ready to fire within 45 minutes. All major pieces of equipment were small and light enough for easy transport by ship, landing

craft, helicopter, fixed-winged transport aircraft, amphibious vehicle, or truck.

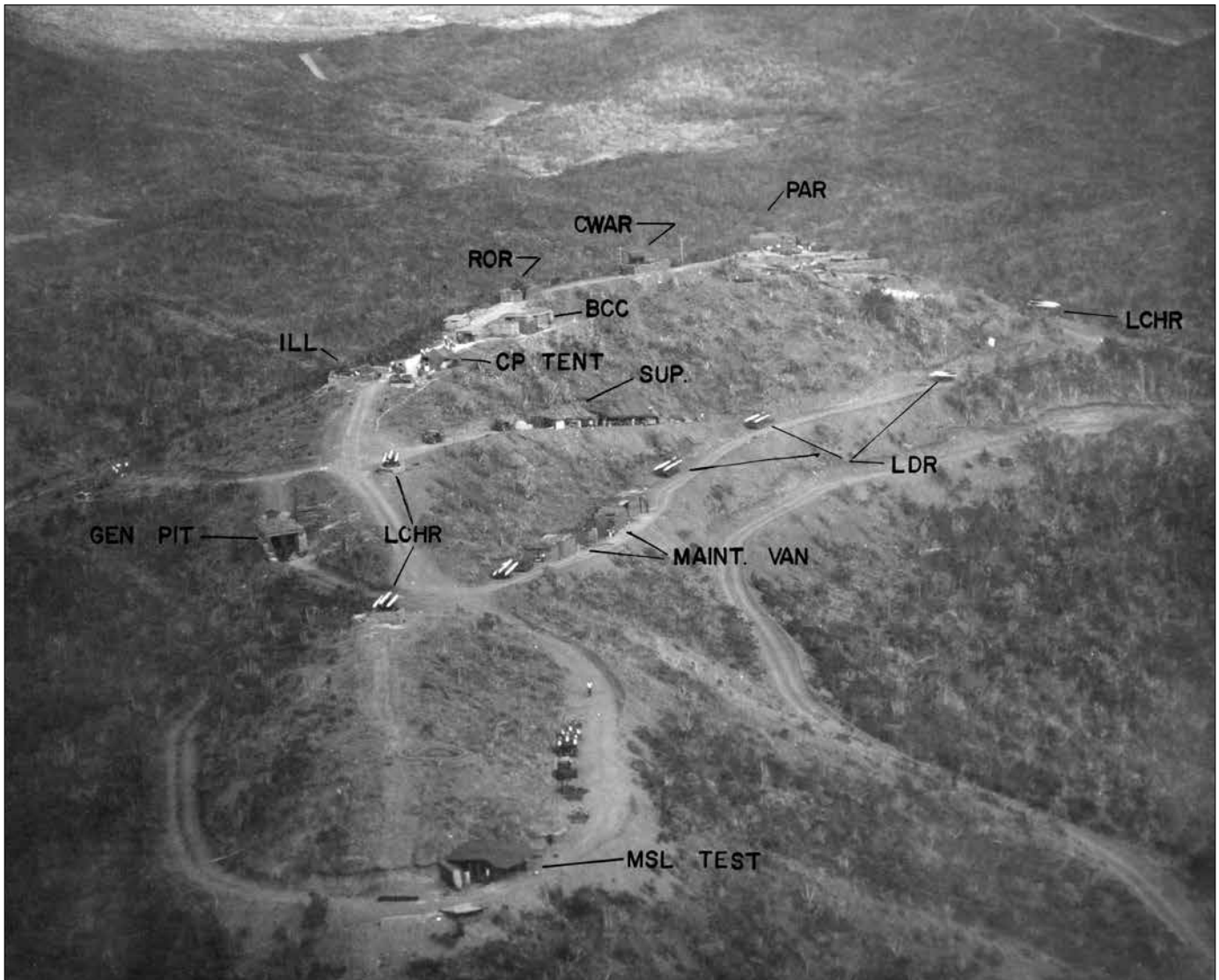
Hawk's main components were its radars, fire control equipment, launchers, and missiles.⁶ A pulse acquisition radar detected aircraft flying at medium altitude up to 100 km, and a continuous wave acquisition radar (CWAR) detected aircraft flying close to the ground to a range of 40 km. Once a target was detected, one of the system's two low power illuminator radars (a.k.a. illuminators), tracked targets with electromagnetic energy that provided guidance for the missiles during their flight. A fifth radar, the range-only radar, was used to overcome enemy electronic jamming during target engagement. For fire control, the primary unit was the battery control central (BCC), a large equipment shelter carried by a 2.5-ton cargo truck. The BCC housed the crew consoles, radar-scopes, status displays, and controls needed to operate the system during tactical operations. A secondary fire control unit, the assault fire command console (AFCC) was a compact version of the BCC. Housed in a man-portable 450-pound equipment case, it had a radar display, the electronic controls to operate the CWAR acquisition radar, and an illuminator with three launchers. This stripped-down part of the Hawk system, called an assault fire unit, was transportable by helicopter and could operate independently of the rest of the Hawk system while still providing an effective capability to shoot down low-flying aircraft. Detaching and deploying the assault fire unit gave a missile battery the ability to extend air defense coverage over a larger area or maintain the ability to engage aircraft while the rest of the Hawk system moved to new location.

For firepower, a Hawk system had six missile launchers, each armed with three supersonic missiles. When operationally deployed, a Hawk battery typically had 36 missiles: 18 loaded on launchers and another 18 stored on either truck- or trailer-mounted missile storage pallets. Two self-propelled, tracked loader-transporters were used to reload launchers.

⁴ Marion E. Oliver, "Terrier/Tartar: Pacing the Threat," *Johns Hopkins APL Technical Digest* 2, no. 4 (1981): 257.

⁵ Sgt Frank Mulder, interview with author, 19 May 2022, hereafter Mulder interview. Sgt Mulder served in a Terrier missile battalion before becoming a Hawk continuous wave radar mechanic in the 3d LAAM Battalion.

⁶ *Air Defense Artillery Missile Unit, Hawk (Battalion and Battery)*, Field Manual (FM) 44-96 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1965), 4-15.



Official Department of Defense photo

Battery C, 3d Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion's, site on John Paul Jones Hill, Guantánamo Bay. Note: PAR = pulse acquisition radar, CWAR = continuous wave acquisition radar, ROR = range-only radar, ILL = illuminator, BCC = battery control central, CP tent = command post tent, SUP = supply, GEN PIT = generator pit, LCHR = launcher, LDR = loader, MAINT VAN = maintenance van, and MSL TEST = missile test set.

Three launchers operated with each illuminator, so with its two illuminators, the Hawk system could engage two targets simultaneously. Ancillary equipment included five 45-kilowatt diesel generators; 30 cables to interconnect the radars, control units, and launchers and to provide power from the generators; two junction boxes to control operations of the launchers; and a trailer-mounted guided missile equipment shop for missile assembly, checkout, and maintenance. For mobility, Hawk's radars and launchers were mounted on wheeled trailers towed by 2.5-ton cargo trucks. To

move a complete Hawk system with missiles required 23 trucks, while the smaller AFU needed just 6.⁷

LAAM Battalions

At the end of the 1950s, the Marine Corps had three air defense battalions stationed at Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms: the 1st Antiaircraft Artillery (AA) Battalion, formed in 1953 and equipped with Sky-

⁷David A. Anderton, "Army Hawk Anti-Aircraft Missile—Part I," *Aviation Week and Space Technology* (4 December 1961): 83.

sweeper guns, and the 1st and 2d Medium Antiaircraft Missile (MAAM) Battalions, which were activated in 1956 and 1958 respectively and equipped with Terrier missile systems. Additionally, several Skysweeper batteries were stationed across the nation in the Marine Corps Reserve.

In 1960, the Marine Corps began transitioning to Hawk by converting its Skyweeper and Terrier units into Hawk missile battalions. Each battalion—designated as a LAAM battalion—was organized with Headquarters and Service Battery and four firing batteries. The Headquarters and Service Battery performed command, administrative, logistic, and maintenance functions for the battalion. The firing batteries, each equipped with one Hawk system, had personnel, vehicles, and equipment required to support and operate the system. The assigned strength of a firing battery was about 150 Marines, while a battalion had nearly 600 Marines.

The first Hawk battalion was formed in May 1960 by redesignating the 1st AA Battalion to the 1st LAAM Battalion.⁸ After redesignation, 1st AA Battalion's Headquarters and Service Battery and four firing batteries remained in place, and most leaders and troops were reassigned to 1st LAAM Battalion, then retrained and re-equipped to operate and support the Hawk missile system. For training, Hawk personnel attended the U.S. Army Guided Missile School at Fort Bliss, Texas, a process that was initiated well before 1st LAAM was even activated. Only four months after activation, the battalion successfully fired missiles at Fort Bliss and was declared operational in September 1960.⁹

The next Hawk battalion—the 2d LAAM—was activated three months after the 1st LAAM Battalion.¹⁰ Unlike 1st LAAM, which was formed from an existing air defense battalion, 2d LAAM was created from the ground up by incrementally activating the

batteries one at a time, starting with Headquarters and Service Battery and then the four firing batteries, until the battalion reached full strength. The battalion's training program was the same as that of the 1st LAAM, however, a longer period—seven months—was needed to organize and train the firing batteries, which were declared operational in February 1961.¹¹

Now, with two operational Hawk battalions and a cadre of Hawk experts, the Marine Corps established its own live-fire Hawk missile range at Twentynine Palms and created a program to train Marines assigned to the LAAM units by using equipment and personnel from the 1st and 2d LAAM Battalions.¹² The program was also used to retrain three California-based Reserve 75mm antiaircraft batteries to Hawk firing batteries, and eventually grew to become an interbattalion Hawk school that provided instruction previously given by the Army at Fort Bliss.¹³

In December 1961, 3d LAAM Battalion was formed from the 1st MAAM Battalion.¹⁴ After activation, the battalion exchanged its Terrier missile systems for Hawk equipment and Terrier's service with the Marine Corps came to an end. Along with 1st LAAM's formation, all LAAM battalions were reorganized by replacing their fourth firing batteries (Battery D) with the Reserve Hawk firing batteries that were created from the three California-based 75mm antiaircraft batteries.¹⁵ The 3d LAAM Battalion trained exclusively at Twentynine Palms and became operational in March 1962 after each battery successfully live-fired missiles.¹⁶

All three active LAAM battalions were stationed at Twentynine Palms and placed under command of

⁸ Lineage of the 1st Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion, 4 August 1996, Marine Corps History Division (MCHD), Quantico, VA.

⁹ "Artillery Era Ends: Last AAA 75 Fired," *Observation Post*, 28 April 1960; and "Marines Fire Hawk: Final Training Phase," *Observation Post*, 21 September 1960.

¹⁰ Lineage of the 2d Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion, 10 May 1995, MCHD, Archives Branch, Quantico, VA.

¹¹ "Second Hawk Missile Battalion Formed Monday," *Observation Post*, 3 August 1960; and "Hawks Activated by Second LAAM's Troops Return from Fort Bliss," *Observation Post*, 15 February 1961.

¹² "2nd LAAMS in the Limelight," *Observation Post*, 2 October 1962.

¹³ "Reserves Train with 1st LAAM," *Observation Post*, 15 March 1961; and "Inter-Bn. Hawk School Retrains 3rd LAAM Bn.," *Observation Post*, 23 January 1962.

¹⁴ Lineage of the 3d Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion, 29 June 1987, MCHD, Archives Branch, Quantico, VA.

¹⁵ "3rd LAAMS Activated, MAAM Colors Retire," *Observation Post*, 5 December 1961; and "LAAM Reserves Fire to Fire Hawk for First Time," *Observation Post*, 26 June 1962. The Reserve Hawk batteries completed training in June 1962 and would eventually be reorganized as the 4th LAAM Battalion in the Reserve forces with its headquarters in Fresno, CA.

¹⁶ "3d LAAMS Fire Hawks," *Observation Post*, 3 April 1962.



Official Department of Defense photo

Crewmen performing periodic checks and maintenance on one of Battery C's two illuminator radars. In the distance is the hill where MAG-32 emplaced its long-range air search radar.

Force Troops, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (FMF Pacific). Plans were made to move 1st LAAM Battalion to Okinawa and 2d LAAM to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, but the transfers never occurred.¹⁷ On Twenty-nine Palms, the battalions' garrison areas were located adjacent to each other with each battalion having its own headquarters and orderly room buildings, barracks, mess halls, billets, motor pools, and a Hawk tactical park where the equipment was emplaced for

maintenance and operation. As much as possible, the batteries kept their equipment packed and uploaded in case of alert.¹⁸

Once operational, each LAAM battalion established a training program to prepare for possible contingency deployment. Battalion-level training included mobility alerts and movements called *mount outs*, field exercises, and missile firings. Because the Hawk system was new to the Marine Corps, these exercises were also used to pioneer techniques and procedures for uploading Hawk equipment on GV-1 transport aircraft (designated as the Lockheed C-130

¹⁷ "Palms May Get Hawk This June," *Observation Post*, 9 February 1960; and Cpl David Young, interview with author, 14 December 2021, hereafter Young interview. Cpl Young, a heavy-duty vehicle mechanic in 1st LAAM Battalion, was present when battalion personnel were informed the battalion was moving to Okinawa.

¹⁸ Young interview.

Hercules by the Air Force), airlift by Sikorsky HUS-1 Seahorse helicopter, and employment of the Hawk's AFCC-equipped assault fire unit. The battalions also participated in major exercises during which firing batteries were airlifted or sealifted to San Clemente and San Nicolas Islands off the coast of California, including an exercise in which Hawk equipment was disembarked at sea and landed on the beach by landing craft. Hawk's transportability was further exercised when one of 2d LAAM's firing batteries was flown long-distance from Twentynine Palms to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, to participate in an amphibious operation with Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic. The LAAM battalions also trained with 3d Marine Aircraft Wing during anti-air warfare exercises to develop doctrine and procedures for missile and interceptor operations and to test an automated control and coordination system for air and surface-to-air missile units that, unfortunately, was not fielded by the time of the Cuban missile crisis.¹⁹ In part, these exercises prompted the Marine Corps to transfer control of the LAAM battalions from Force Troops, FMF Pacific, to Air, FMF Pacific, in May 1962.²⁰

Alert and Deployment

On 18 October 1962, two days after President Kennedy was informed that Soviet nuclear missiles were stationed in Cuba, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Marine Corps to send a LAAM battalion to reinforce Marine forces deploying from Camp Pendleton, California, and Camp Lejeune to Naval Station Guan-

tánamo Bay.²¹ In turn, two days later, the Commandant of the Marine Corps designated the 3d LAAM as the deploying unit, and the commanding general of Force Troops, FMF Pacific, gave the battalion a verbal order to prepare for deployment by 24 October. To preserve security, the commanding general of Force Troops soon followed the verbal order with a message for 3d LAAM to perform a mount out exercise, giving the battalion a plausible reason for its departure from Twentynine Palms. Now on alert, 3d LAAM initiated a limited (local) recall of battalion personnel while the 1st and 2d LAAM Battalions were placed on standby to support 3d LAAM.²²

The next day (Sunday), 3d LAAM's garrison area became a hub of activity. A full recall of all battalion personnel was initiated with Los Angeles area radio and television stations broadcasting messages for all personnel on liberty or pass to return to their unit.²³ The battalion conducted predeployment personnel readiness, packed unit and personal gear, and uploaded equipment onto vehicles. Schools and permanent changes of station were halted, and undeployable Marines were reassigned to one of the other LAAM battalions and then backfilled with Marines from those units. Supplies, spare parts, and equipment were also transferred to 3d LAAM so it could deploy at peak readiness. These activities, especially the sudden transferring of Marines between battalions, caused many unit personnel to realize the alert was not an exercise, and soon rumors of a deployment began circulating around Twentynine Palms.²⁴ Meanwhile, Force Troops notified the battalion that it should expect to execute its deployment sooner than initially ordered.

¹⁹"Hawk Firing Battery Airlifted First Time," *Observation Post*, 1 September 1961; "2nd LAAMS Try Receding Shot," *Observation Post*, 6 February 1962; "Hawk Story Depicted by 'C' Btry., 2nd Bn.," *Observation Post*, 6 March 1962; "Anti-Air Warfare Concept Tested by Marines at MCAAS, Yuma," *Flight Jacket*, 9 March 1962; "Elements from 2nd LAAM Bn. in Caribbean: Navy-MC Operation," *Observation Post*, 24 April 1962; "2nd LAAM's Detachment Returns after Atlantic Fleet Exercise," *Observation Post*, 8 May 1962; "Third LAAM's Btrys. Travel," *Observation Post*, 22 May 1962; "3rd LAAMS to San Nicolas," *Observation Post*, 10 July 1962; "3rd LAAMS Goes to Sea; Train with Jet Drones," *Observation Post*, 7 August 1962; "2nd LAAMS in the Limelight," *Observation Post*, 2 October 1962; and "1st LAAMS Finish One Week Stay at MCAS, Yuma, ARIZ.," *Observation Post*, 9 October 1962.

²⁰"HQ Reassigns Hawks; Changes for Infantry," *Observation Post*, 20 February 1962.

²¹Maj John M. Young, USMCR, *When the Russians Blink: The U.S. Maritime Response to the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1990), 132.

²²LtCol Edward D. Olgesby, "Letter to Commanding Officer, MWHG-2, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina; Subject: Report of Operations," 3d Light Antiaircraft Missile Battalion, 11 December 1962, Collection 18951, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA, 1, hereafter Olgesby letter.

²³Olgesby letter, 1.

²⁴LtCol Herbert E. Hoppmeyer, interview with author, 30 January 2022. Then-1stLt Hoppmeyer was in 1st MAAM Battalion when it became the 3d LAAM Battalion. At the time of the battalion's alert, he was an assistant battalion operations officer, but he left the battalion before it deployed.

On Monday, about 48 hours after being alerted, 3d LAAM Battalion departed Twentynine Palms for George Air Force Base, California. Starting with Battery C and the battalion command group, the battalion's vehicles and equipment convoyed in battery serials the 145 km to the airbase while the rest of the battalion's Marines were transported by bus.²⁵ As the convoys arrived at George Air Force Base, 3d LAAM staged its equipment and personnel for air transport. Soon, the first Air Force cargo aircraft arrived, and loading commenced at 1800 hours with assistance from 1st LAAM.²⁶ While 3d LAAM's lead elements were loading onto aircraft, the crisis was heating up. President Kennedy informed the American people about the Soviet missile sites in Cuba and announced the naval blockade. In Cuba, Cuban military forces began mobilizing and occupying wartime positions, including those needed to attack Guantánamo Bay.²⁷ At 2200 hours, the first aircraft departed for Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina. Only after they were in the air to North Carolina did the Marines of 3d LAAM, except for command and staff, learn that the alert was not an exercise.²⁸

After landing at Cherry Point, the battalion's equipment was quickly off-loaded from the cargo aircraft, staged by battery, and reconfigured for transport on the smaller Lockheed Martin GV-1 (now KC-130) tanker aircraft to Guantánamo Bay. The airlift from George Air Force Base continued for three more days until Thursday, 25 October. In total, 544 Marines and 1,265 tons of equipment were airlifted by 92 aircraft (86 Douglas C-124 Globemaster II, 2 Douglas C-133 Cargomaster, and 4 Boeing C-135 Stratolifter

aircraft). At the same time, the battalion received 72 missiles, enough to fully arm two firing batteries. Shipped inside air-tight metal missile containers, each missile was removed from its container after receipt at Cherry Point, assembled, checked out by the battalion's missile technicians, and then placed on missile storage pallets for transport to Guantánamo Bay.²⁹

While 3d LAAM prepared for deployment into Guantánamo Bay, the battalion staff attended a conference with the commanding general of FMF Atlantic, where it was decided that one missile battery was sufficient to protect the naval base.³⁰ Battery C, the first battery to land at Cherry Point, was designated to deploy, and an advance party was organized and flown out to Guantánamo Bay on two GV-1 aircraft. Led by a master sergeant, the group comprised about a dozen Marines equipped with a 2.5-ton truck and communications equipment. The GV-1 left Cherry Point late evening on Wednesday, 24 October, the same day that the naval blockade of Cuba commenced. Once in the air, the Marines were issued small arms ammunition and learned their destination was Guantánamo Bay. The flight to Cuba took about three hours. After landing, the advance party occupied and secured the site selected for Battery C. The site was located on the southern peak of John Paul Jones Hill—the highest point on Guantánamo—where it overlooked most of the naval base. For the next two days, the advance party selected locations for the Hawk equipment, coordinated with a Navy construction battalion to build access roads and level positions for the Hawk radars and launchers, and constructed sandbag defensive positions.³¹

Before leaving Cherry Point, Battery C was augmented by personnel and equipment from Headquarters and Service Battery. These personnel—mainly communications, maintenance, and staff specialists—were sent to perform battalion-level operations and logistics functions that Battery C could not perform

²⁵ Cpl Charles Meany, interview, 16 February 2022, hereafter Meany interview. Then-PFC Meany was a radio relay operator in 3d LAAM Battalion who deployed with Battery C's advance party to Guantánamo Bay and then served as a vehicle driver for the battalion commander and other officers.

²⁶ Young interview. Cpl Young was detailed as a wrecker operator to support 3d LAAM Battalion's loadout at George Air Force Base.

²⁷ Michael Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 48, 127.

²⁸ Cpl G. M. Caldwell, interview with author, 21 May 2022, hereafter Caldwell interview. Cpl Caldwell was a Hawk launcher crewman in Battery B, 3d LAAM Battalion. He was reassigned to Battery C during its deployment in Guantánamo Bay as noncommissioned officer in charge of a launcher.

²⁹ Olgesby letter, 2.

³⁰ Olgesby letter, 2.

³¹ Meany interview.



Official Department of Defense photo

The Hawk system's trailer-mounted missile test shop was used during missile assembly and checkout to ensure the battery's missiles were fully operational.

on its own.³² The battery was also issued 12 additional missiles (for a total of 48), an extra missile loader-transporter, and three Hawk maintenance shop vans from Headquarters and Service Battery containing direct support-level test and repair equipment and repair parts. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Oglesby, also deployed with the battery. To offset the additional personnel and equipment

from Headquarters and Service Battery while minimizing the number of sorties needed for the airlift, Battery C left most of its vehicles behind at Cherry Point. Even so, 24 GV-1 sorties were still needed to fly the battery to Guantánamo Bay.³³ After Battery C departed Cherry Point, Battery B's equipment and personnel were staged for airlift, but the battery never deployed.³⁴

³² LCpl Thomas DeVogelear, interview with author, 15 November 2021, hereafter DeVogelear interview. LCpl DeVogelear was a radio relay operator in 1st LAAM Battalion. He volunteered to deploy with 3d LAAM Battalion and served with Battery C in Guantánamo Bay.

³³ Oglesby letter, 2.

³⁴ Mulder interview.



Official Department of Defense photo

Hawk radars on the apex of John Paul Jones Hill, overlooking the Caribbean Sea. In the background is Blue Beach.

Guantánamo Bay

The main body of Battery C landed in Guantánamo Bay at McCalla Field on Friday morning, 26 October. The naval base was on high alert, with Marine infantry reinforced by armor and artillery dug in along the boundary line of the base, and naval gunfire support on station offshore.³⁵ Outside of the base, across the rest of the island, Soviet and Cuban forces were completing their preparations for combat.³⁶ After landing, the battery was placed under the operational control

of Marine Aircraft Group 32 (MAG-32), which had only recently arrived from Cherry Point to set up an AN/TPS-15 long-range air surveillance radar and a tactical air operations center for coordinating aircraft and surface-to-air missile operations.³⁷ With assistance from the Navy, which provided vehicles and a wrecker to load the BCC and field maintenance shop vans onto 2.5-ton trucks, Battery C moved from the airfield to John Paul Jones Hill. Within a few hours, battery personnel emplaced the Hawk system, brought it to operational status, and went to battle stations with 18

³⁵ Young, *When the Russians Blinked*, 132–33.

³⁶ Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 159–60.

³⁷ Young, *When the Russians Blinked*, 122–23, 132.



Official Department of Defense photo

Battery C's two acquisition radars. The antennas of both radars rotated every three seconds and were easily observed from outside of the naval base's perimeter.

missiles armed and ready to fire.³⁸ The battery's two acquisition radars were positioned on the apex of the hill with tracking radars and launchers emplaced on opposite ends of the hill, so that one launcher section faced west and the other east. The control units—the BCC and two AFCCs—were placed at the center of the site between the radars and near the battery command post. A Hawk maintenance shop and missile storage area were located along the southern side of the site, below the crest of the hill, where they could not be observed from outside the perimeter of the naval

base. Of the battery's 48 missiles, 18 missiles were on the launchers, 18 were available for immediate reload in the missile storage area, and 12 were stored offsite away from Hawk system. An administrative area with galley and living area was established about 150 meters north of the Hawk system in the direction of main side, although many Marines lived and slept near the Hawk equipment. For command and control, the battery established both wire and radio communications with MAG-32. At first, communications were intermittent because the microwave radio malfunctioned, and nearby Marine units kept accidentally cutting the wire lines. The situation was resolved when the senior

³⁸ Caldwell interview.



Official Department of Defense photo

One of Battery C's two launcher sections. The loader-transporter has just finished transferring missiles to a launcher.

radio relay technician kicked the radio's transmitter unit with his boot.³⁹

From its position, Battery C had radar and missile coverage over all low-altitude approaches to the base, except to the east where several mountains could mask very low-flying aircraft and allow pop-up

attacks as close as 15 km from the battery position.⁴⁰ However, with early warning and aircraft identification information from MAG-32's AN/TPS-15 radar, which covered the western third of Cuba and surrounding sea out to 290 km, the likelihood of surprise air attack against the naval base was low.⁴¹ For an attack on Guantánamo Bay, the Cubans and Soviets had 40 MiG-15, MiG-17, and MiG-19 jet fighters and

³⁹ Cpl Harley Carr, interview with author, 23 March 2022, hereafter Carr interview. Cpl Carr was a radio relay technician in 1st LAAM Battalion and transferred to Battery C, 3d LAAM Battalion, during its deployment to Guantánamo Bay, where he served as the radio relay communications section chief.

⁴⁰ Hawk radar coverage was calculated using the techniques and procedures contained in *Air Defense Artillery Missile Unit, Hawk (Battalion and Battery)*, FM 44-96.

⁴¹ "Radar Set AN/TPS-15," in *Master Maintenance Reference Manual*, TM-2000-15/1 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1962), 1 of 8.



Official Department of Defense photo

A radio relay system with directional antenna (left) provided communications between MAG-32 and Battery C's Hawk BCC. In the background are the ROR used for countering enemy electronic jamming and the CWAR for detecting low-flying aircraft.

42 MiG-21s.⁴² When armed with conventional bombs and air-to-ground rockets, these MiGs could operate in a ground-attack role. In addition, the Soviets had 42 Ilyushin IL-28 long-range, subsonic jet bombers in various stages of assembly, and none of the nuclear-capable version was operational at the time the crisis came to a head on 27–28 October.⁴³ While formidable in numbers, the performance characteristics of the MiG and IL-28 were well within Hawk's engagement capabilities, and when combined with Air

Force and Navy combat air patrols, the likelihood of a successful mass air attack against Guantánamo Bay was low. However, a simultaneous attack by several small groups of maneuvering aircraft might have had a chance to evade U.S. fighter aircraft and penetrate Battery C's air defense umbrella.⁴⁴

It is not known if the Soviets or Cubans knew about the presence of the Hawk missiles, but at 130 meters above sea level, Battery C was easily visible from outside the naval base. Not only did the site lack natural cover and concealment, but the motion

⁴² David G. Coleman, "The Missiles of November, December, January, February. . . : The Problem of Acceptable Risk in the Cuban Missile Crisis Settlement," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws.2007.9.3.5>; and Young, *When the Russians Blinked*, 106–7, 215.

⁴³ Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 246–47; and Young, *When the Russians Blinked*, 24.

⁴⁴ Multiple maneuvering aircraft presented the most challenging engagement scenario for all surface-to-air missile systems, including Hawk, likely requiring Battery C to fire two missiles at each hostile aircraft to ensure its destruction. With 18 missiles on its launchers, Battery C would have had to reload its launchers—an operation that would take about 15 minutes per launcher—after engaging as few as nine aircraft.

of the radars' rotating antennas and the white-and-black-painted missiles, stood out starkly against the surrounding terrain and vegetation. Located just 5 km from the base's perimeter, if ground fighting broke out, Battery C was vulnerable to artillery attack. To improve survivability, battery personnel constructed sandbag revetments to protect the Hawk equipment, even though the revetments would have prevented the battery from quickly moving off John Paul Jones Hill to a different location.

The Nuclear Threat

The greatest danger to Guantánamo Bay was Soviet tactical nuclear weapons. Unbeknownst to the U.S. government and military forces, the Soviets had nuclear 2K6 Luna tactical ballistic rockets and Frontoviyе Kriatiye Raketі 1 Meteor cruise missiles. The Luna rockets (known by NATO as the FROG-5), were organized into three batteries, each equipped with two launchers and armed with either 2-kiloton nuclear or conventional high-explosive missiles. Stationed in western and central Cuba, some 500 km east of Guantánamo Bay, the Luna rockets with their 32-km range were not a direct threat to Guantánamo Bay. Conversely, two regiments of Meteor missiles, each armed with 8 missile launchers and 40 nuclear missiles, were an immediate threat. The Meteor's 14-kiloton warhead was similar in explosive power to the bomb dropped on Hiroshima during World War II, and one of the Meteor missile regiments was stationed near Guantánamo Bay, assigned the mission to defeat U.S. amphibious landings in the region and target the Guantánamo naval base.⁴⁵

On 26 October, as Battery C's Hawk system became operational, the commander of Soviet forces in Cuba, convinced an American invasion was imminent, ordered two nuclear-capable Meteor missile batteries to move to their firing positions. By early the next morning, one of the batteries was emplaced 30 km west of Guantánamo Bay with its three launch-

ers armed and ready to fire on the naval base.⁴⁶ As a target for the Hawk missile system, the Meteor missile's size and flight characteristics were the same as a low-flying jet and well within the Hawk's engagement capabilities. However, without forewarning that a Soviet missile attack was likely or even possible, it is uncertain that MAG-32 and Battery C, which were using manual fire control procedures, could have reacted fast enough to identify and then engage a Meteor missile launched at such close range. Surprised by the sudden appearance of an inbound missile so close to Guantánamo's airspace, the Hawk crew, in coordination with MAG-32's air operations center, would have had about 80 seconds to identify, acquire, and intercept a launched Meteor before it reached the naval station.⁴⁷ Furthermore, because the Hawk system could engage only two targets at once, if the Soviet Meteor battery salvo-fired its three missiles, then at least one missile could have reached its target before the Hawk system could have destroyed the first two Meteors and engaged the third.

A similar scenario might have played out if the Soviets had deployed Luna rockets in the vicinity of Guantánamo Bay. Though not specifically designed as an antimissile or rocket system, Hawk had proven itself capable of intercepting rockets such as the Luna. During tests in 1960–61, a Hawk missile easily destroyed an MGR-1 Honest John surface-to-surface rocket, which was the ballistic equivalent of the Luna rocket. Yet, unless MAG-32 and Battery C knew about the rockets, it is questionable whether Battery C could have responded successfully.

End of Crisis and Redeployment

The immediate political crisis passed on 28 October when the Soviets agreed to withdraw nuclear missiles from Cuba. Yet, the threat to Guantánamo Bay per-

⁴⁵ Dino A. Brugioni, "The Invasion of Cuba," *MHQ—The Quarterly Journal of Military History* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 96; Coleman, "The Missiles of November, December, January, February..." 15; and Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 248–49.

⁴⁶ Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 171, 178–81, 205–6.

⁴⁷ Flying 30 km at a speed of 300 meters per second, Meteor's flight time from launch to Guantánamo Bay was about 100 seconds. But because the launch position was masked by a hill, neither MAG-32 nor Battery C's acquisition radars would have detected the missile for its first 10 seconds of flight. Also, the Hawk system's minimum range shortened engagement time by about 10 seconds, leaving its crew about 80 seconds to detect, acquire, and fire on a Meteor missile.



Official Department of Defense photo

Hawk launcher with three armed and ready-to-fire missiles. Even after the immediate crisis concerning Soviet nuclear weapons was resolved, Battery C remained operational for several weeks before returning to the United States.

sisted and U.S. forces remained on alert for another month, until 28 November.⁴⁸ During that time, Battery C maintained its combat posture. The Hawk system remained at battle stations 24 hours a day; periodic checks and maintenance were performed, readiness drills were conducted, fighting positions were manned, and, to the chagrin of unit personnel, more sandbag revetments were constructed. The constant filling of sandbags left a lasting impression. One young Marine cut a piece of sandbag, trimmed and pinned it as a ribbon on his utility jacket, and said, “Filling sandbags is the only thing we will get credit for.” Soon, the battery settled into a daily routine that resembled a field exercise, and the battery even allowed a few Marines to participate in a rest and relaxation program in San Juan, Puerto Rico, or Montego Bay, Jamaica.⁴⁹

At the end of November, after Cuban forces demobilized, the commander in chief of the Atlantic Fleet directed forces involved in the Cuban contingency to withdraw.⁵⁰ With the threat to the naval base diminished, U.S. readiness measures were relaxed, and deployed units began to stand down and return to home stations. Battery C’s turn came a week later, after U.S. intelligence conformed the Soviets had removed the IL-28 bombers from Cuba, and the battery was released from its air defense mission.⁵¹ The battery departed Guantánamo on 10 December the same way it had arrived, airlifted via GV-1 cargo aircraft to Cherry Point. The main body left first with most of the unit’s equipment and personnel, followed a few days later by a small rear party. At Cherry Point, 3d LAAM briefly reassembled before officially returning to Twentynine Palms on 13 December. However,

⁴⁸ Young, *When the Russians Blinked*, 114, 235.

⁴⁹ Caldwell interview; Carr, interview; and Meany interview.

⁵⁰ Young, *When the Russians Blinked*, 235.

⁵¹ Olgesby letter, 2; and Young, *When the Russians Blinked*, 235–36.



Official Department of Defense photo

The Hawk system required constant maintenance and repair. Here, a warrant officer and three enlisted Marines stand next to their sandbagged Hawk maintenance shop.

the Commandant of the Marine Corps decided to transfer the battalion from FMF Pacific to FMF Atlantic. In anticipation of the transfer, the battalion's equipment was put in temporary storage, and many of its Marines remained at Cherry Point.⁵² A month later, 3d LAAM Battalion was officially reassigned to Cherry Point, where soon it settled in and resumed training operations in preparation for the next contingency operation.

Just two and a half years after the first LAAM battalion was formed, 3d LAAM's deployment during the Cuban missile crisis validated the Marine Corps' decision to field the Hawk missile system. Twice

more, the LAAM battalions were called on to rapidly deploy with expeditionary forces. During the Vietnam War, Battery A, 1st LAAM Battalion, became the first U.S. combat unit to enter Vietnam when it was airlifted into Da Nang airbase on 8 February 1965. The rest of the battalion soon followed, and several months later 2d LAAM arrived by ship. During the Gulf War (1990–91), 2d LAAM was the first U.S. air defense unit deployed to the Persian Gulf. Arriving less than two weeks after Iraq invaded Kuwait, the battalion was airlifted into Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, followed several months later by the 3d LAAM Battalion, which deployed by ship.

For four decades, Hawk was the Marine Corps' primary air defense weapon, but like the Terrier missile system it had replaced in the early 1960s, after the

⁵² Olgesby letter, 2; and Caldwell interview; Carr interview; Meany interview; and DeVogelaar interview.

Gulf War it was Hawk's turn to give way to smaller and more mobile air defense weapons. The air threat to expeditionary forces had changed, and the Marine Corps refocused its ground-based air defense from medium- to low-altitude coverage. By 1997, the Hawk system was retired and the LAAM battalions were

deactivated, replaced by Low Altitude Air Defense battalions equipped with short-range FIM-92 Stinger man-portable air defense missile system and Avenger air defense system. The Cold War was over, Hawk's mission was completed, and the Marine Corps moved into a new age of missile air defense.

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“To Take Some of That Fear Away”¹

TASK COHESION AND COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS AMONG COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS IN VIETNAM, 1965–71

by Cavender S. Sutton

Abstract: Marine Combined Action Platoons (CAP) during the Vietnam War offer a unique lens through which to explore what makes a body of disparate individuals unify into an effective fighting force. How did small units with virtually no supervision coalesce into cohesive and lethal military organizations, and how did they maintain focus on helping villagers while repeatedly battling irregular enemy forces, most of whom were indistinguishable from the local populace? This article posits that living among the South Vietnamese and fighting at the village level fostered a personal attachment to the war that did not exist among American servicemembers elsewhere. CAP Marines maintained higher levels of task cohesion than their non-CAP counterparts, ensuring that they often remained effective fighting forces until the program’s termination in 1971.

Keywords: Combined Action Platoons, CAPs, Combined Action Companies, CACs, South Vietnam, Vietnam War, task cohesion, counterinsurgency

Introduction

What makes soldiers fight? This and similar questions of how bodies of people coalesce into effective fighting forces have long captivated researchers in various spheres. The U.S. Marine Corps’ Combined Action Platoon (CAP) program offers a unique lens through which to explore this subject. CAPs were a counterinsurgency initiative that, between 1965 and 1971, placed small groups of 14 specially trained Marines and a Navy medical corpsman in South Vietnamese villages throughout the country’s five northernmost provinces, also known as I Corps Tactical Zone. Their purpose was to train, advise, and fight along-

side Popular Forces (PFs)—locally raised South Vietnamese militias that were minimally trained, poorly equipped, underpaid, and often low on morale—and to disrupt National Liberation Front (NLF—a.k.a. the Viet Cong) activity there.

Marines who served in the program’s ranks were entrusted not only with protecting their villages while advising and supporting their PF counterparts, but also building positive relationships with them and local civilians. Yet, CAP service entailed far more than simply winning the locals’ hearts and minds—it was also dangerous work. CAPs were small and geographically isolated units. Many frequently clashed with NLF and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers. When that happened, reinforcements were often far away. It was essential for CAPs to function as effective fighting forces to protect their villages and themselves from being overrun. Moreover, CAPs were all-enlisted

Cavender S. Sutton is a PhD candidate in military history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to his academic career, Sutton served in the Marine Corps, during which time he twice deployed to Afghanistan. <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2022080205>

¹ Bill Grunder, telephone interview with author, 23 March 2021, hereafter Grunder interview.

units, often led by a young noncommissioned officer with little or no previous command experience. “What made a CAP unique was not just the opportunity to get up close and personal with the Vietnamese and their culture,” recalls one veteran, “but also the extraordinary degree of trust and confidence the program reposed in young enlisted Marines.”² Young, isolated, and often inexperienced CAP leaders were entrusted with maintaining order and discipline among their Marines while cultivating professional relationships with their Vietnamese counterparts.

From the program’s genesis, it was clear that forming effective CAP units would be a difficult process. Each platoon had to function as an aggressive fighting force willing to patrol its village every day and night to interdict enemy activities while forging relationships with the local Vietnamese, whose language and culture most Marines misunderstood. What is more perplexing is how many battle-hardened Marines maintained their focus on helping villagers even while repeatedly engaging enemy forces. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges these Marines faced was overcoming their own prejudice toward the Vietnamese. That was no small feat for many, particularly infantrymen with significant combat experience. Many entered the program with a universal distrust of the Vietnamese that had to be alleviated for them to function effectively in the villages.

With these complexities in mind, the program’s leaders sought to recruit a very specific type of Marine for CAP service: volunteer infantrymen with at least two months of experience in Vietnam, no recorded disciplinary issues, and no manifestations of culture shock—a polite term for a general hatred of the Vietnamese populace.³ Yet, these requirements, especially those pertaining to motivated volunteers and

experienced infantrymen, were often circumvented or ignored. Nevertheless, various cross sections of volunteers and the voluntold, battle-hardened grunts and adventurous yet naïve rear-echelon personnel, managed to form cohesive and often highly effective fighting organizations while those same characteristics sometimes ebbed among many of their mainline Marine and Army counterparts.⁴

What explains this phenomenon? How did small, all-enlisted units with virtually no supervision manage to coalesce into cohesive and oftentimes lethal military organizations, even though their strict recruiting standards were often loosened or ignored? Moreover, how did they maintain focus on helping villagers while repeatedly battling irregular enemy forces, most of whom were indistinguishable from the local populace? This article posits that the answer lies in the mission itself. Living among the South Vietnamese and fighting at the village level fostered a personal attachment to the war among CAP Marines that did not exist among American servicemembers elsewhere. In short, CAPs maintained higher levels of task cohesion than their non-CAP counterparts, thus ensuring they often remained effective fighting forces until the program’s termination in 1971.

Theoretical Frameworks: Cohesion, Motivation, and Combat Effectiveness

Scholars generally define and divide the concept of cohesion into two categories: social and task cohesion. The former involves “the nature and quality of the emotional bonds of friendship, liking, caring, and

² Edward F. Palm, *Tiger Papa Three: Memoir of a Combined Action Marine in Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2020), 50.

³ LtCol Robert W. R. Corson, USMC, “Combined Action Program in Vietnam,” July 1968, Vietnam War Documents Collection (Vietnam War Docs), Marine Corps History Division (MCHD), Quantico, VA, courtesy of Annette Amerman, 7–8; Bruce C. Allnutt, *Combined Action Capabilities: The Vietnam Experience* (McLean, VA: Human Sciences Research, 1969), appendix C, C-2; and “Official Document, Tactical Lessons: The Combined Action Company,” July 1968, Vietnam War Docs, MCHD, Quantico, VA, courtesy of Annette Amerman, 4.

⁴ As the war dragged on, morale deteriorated in many units, especially after the Tet Offensive and the subsequent beginning of U.S. forces’ withdrawal from Vietnam. Numerous historians have noted that unit cohesion and, by extension, performance, diminished along with morale in the war’s final years. For some examples, see Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), particularly chap. 7; George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002), 345–49; Michael A. Hunt, ed., *A Vietnam War Reader: A Documentary History from American and Vietnamese Perspectives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 146–48; Peter S. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 97, 149–52; and Alan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 596–600.

closeness among group members.”⁵ *Social cohesion*, also known as primary group cohesion within military historiography, guided numerous historians’ explorations of small-unit cohesion in the decades immediately after the Second World War.⁶ S. L. A. Marshall famously promulgated such an analytical approach when studying American forces in the war’s Pacific and European theaters. Years of meticulous research, most of it conducted at the front, convinced him that soldiers were no less a social animal in war than in civilian life. Marshall reasoned it was that sociality that made soldiers perform their duties in battle. “During combat the soldier may become so gripped by fear that most of his thought is directed toward escape,” Marshall wrote. “But if he is serving among men whom he has known for a long period or whose judgement of him counts for any reason, he still will strive to hide his terror from them.” This suggests it is not only the soldier’s dedication to their comrades but also how they wish them to perceive them—as courageous and dependable rather than cowardly and unreliable—that binds soldiers together in war. Marshall argues this conclusion is “simple proof” that “the ego is the most important of the motor forces driving the soldier . . . if it were not for the ego, it would be impossible to make men face the risks of battle.”⁷

The primary group thesis is an alluring explanation for small-unit cohesion. It certainly presents a redeeming quality for what is an otherwise horrific experience. Yet, scholars increasingly argue that explanations hinging on social factors are problematic for two main reasons, both of which are particularly relevant to military service. First, social cohesion does not address the fact that attraction is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for group formation

within a military context. Most servicemembers—especially in the draft era—have no say in what groups they serve. Moreover, there is no guarantee that all group members will get along, especially in a wartime environment where chronic stress, fear, lack of sleep, and an overall sense of helplessness do far more to amplify than mollify irritability toward one’s comrades. Second, combat is generally a negative experience. Analyses focusing on social cohesion fail to explain small-unit effectiveness in bad situations, the most prominent example of which is defeat.⁸ Indeed, history is replete with examples of armies losing wars yet continuing to fight effectively and offering stubborn resistance until the end.⁹

The second, more recent definition is task-oriented. *Task cohesion* refers to a “shared commitment among [group] members to achieving a goal” requiring their collective efforts.

A group whose members are motivated to achieve a common goal through coordinated efforts exemplifies high task cohesion.¹⁰ Proponents of task-oriented cohesion examine tangible criteria to quantify success, such as the ability to set and meet attainable goals and curtailing deviance or indiscipline. This real-world approach allowed researchers to reconceptualize cohesion in terms of the primary group and maintenance of group integrity rather than simply gauging the group’s attractiveness to its members. Moreover, a task-oriented conceptualization placed a far greater emphasis on strong leadership. Leaders give direction, enhance motivation, and support the group’s purpose, culture, and values. Group members respond by increasing their skills and teamwork, which develops

⁵ Robert J. MacCoun, Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin, “Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat?: An Old Question with an Old Answer,” *Armed Forces and Society* 32, no. 1 (2005): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05279181>.

⁶ See Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, Studies in Social Psychology in World War II, 4 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), particularly vol. 2; S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000); Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers*; and J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), particularly chap. 3.

⁷ Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 148–49.

⁸ A. V. Carron, “Cohesiveness in Sport Groups: Interpretation and Considerations,” *Journal of Sport Psychology* 4 (1982): 128, as cited in Guy L. Siebold, “The Evolution of the Measurement of Cohesion,” *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (1999): 14, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327876mp1101_2.

⁹ Two of the most well-known examples of this phenomenon are the German armies of WWI and WWII. For the former, see Dennis Showalter, *Instrument of War: The German Army 1914–18* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2016), particularly chaps. 1 and 6. In the latter case, it is ironic that the first widely promulgated study of small-unit cohesion concerned the *Wehrmacht* in the final stages of WWII. See Morris Janowitz and Edward Shils, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the *Wehrmacht* in World War II,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1948): 280–315, <https://doi.org/10.1086/265951>.

¹⁰ MacCoun, Kier, and Belkin, “Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat?,” 2.

pride and trust in themselves and their leaders. These new conceptions came to define cohesion as “a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its goals and objectives.”¹¹

Cohesion is difficult to measure, but military historians have made numerous efforts to do so by attempting to gauge soldiers’ motivations in war. John Lynn’s influential work on combat motivation among French revolutionary soldiers argues, “Shared labor, shared discomfort, and shared danger unite men when it is clear they can achieve their goals better through association.”¹² Lynn’s assertion here supports the role of task-oriented cohesion in forming an effective military organization. The adverse conditions that accompany life at war make task cohesion natural in a limited sense, as soldiers quickly learn that their plight becomes more bearable and their chances of survival greater through teamwork. However, the term *natural* in this context should not be considered axiomatic or misunderstood as an unbreakable bond. The exhausting nature of life at the front and the violent shock of combat can quickly negate the forces of necessity that first drove soldiers together.

The question then turns to how task-oriented cohesion is maintained as a war drags on. Lynn’s work is a logical foundation for exploring this problem. He describes troop motivation as “the set of reasons, both rational and emotional, which leads a person to decide to act or to do nothing.”¹³ Lynn then proposed his now-classic three-tiered model for assessing soldiers’ motivation. The first is *initial motivation*, which examines one’s decision to become a soldier, either by voluntary enlistment or choosing to comply with conscription. The second is *sustaining motivation*, which applies to all subsequent military life outside of combat, such as training, exercise, marching, or camp life. Sustaining motivation is the most complex part of Lynn’s model, as it requires a delicate synthe-

sis of compliance and individual self-interest within an atmosphere predicated on rigid discipline. Finally, *combat motivation* concerns a soldier’s decision to enter and remain in battle and to act therein. Combat motivation is a simple concept on the surface, but it is inseparable from sustaining motivation, for a unit’s performance in combat is often reflective of its duties before battle.¹⁴

In sum, assessing motivation does not explain small-unit effectiveness on its own, but it can help explain how task-oriented cohesion is formed and maintained. Deficiencies or declines in sustaining motivation can similarly explain how once-effective units lose cohesion and effectiveness. For example, it became difficult for American combat forces in Vietnam to maintain task-oriented cohesion largely because the war’s ambiguous objectives and frustrating character made it impossible to conceptualize what victory meant. From the average infantryman’s perspective, the war lacked tangible strategic ends, outside of vague posturing about maintaining an independent and noncommunist South Vietnamese state. The lack of a clear pathway to victory and an individual rotation system that ensured each soldier would return home after a predetermined amount of time greatly affected how many viewed their role and purpose in the war. In short, for many soldiers and Marines, the primary goal in Vietnam was not to win the war but to survive their tours.¹⁵

Of course, survival in war is a task in and of itself, but if survival becomes the sole foundation of a group’s task cohesion, they are not motivated to do anything more than the bare minimum required to minimize their exposure to danger and stay alive. A singular focus on survival degrades a group’s effectiveness as a cog in a broader military system and undermines that system’s task cohesion by seeking a personal objective. To paraphrase Peter Kindsvatter, cohesion among

¹¹ Siebold, “The Evolution of the Measurement of Cohesion,” 13–14, 21.

¹² John A. Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791–94* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 32.

¹³ Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic*, 35.

¹⁴ Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic*, 35–36.

¹⁵ Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers*, 149–50; Charles C. Moskos, *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today’s Military* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970), 141–43, 156; and John Helmer, *Bringing the War Home: The American Soldier in Vietnam and After* (New York: Free Press, 1974), 153–208. Latter two studies cited in Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic*, 31–32.

small groups of Marines and soldiers in Vietnam did not disintegrate, but hierarchical cohesion did. Small-unit group norms, which prioritized survival, became disconnected from those of the higher military organization, which prioritized accomplishing the mission and winning the war, no matter how vague those aims may have been.¹⁶

Explaining CAP Cohesion

Most CAPs did not witness a similar erosion in task cohesion. Indeed, living and fighting in the villages often cultivated a stronger sense of task-oriented cohesion than their line-unit counterparts, even as American forces began to withdraw later in the war. The program's supervisors attempted to build and maintain strong cohesion in part by imposing strict criteria on anyone who wished to join its ranks. But these standards were not always enforced. While many CAP Marines possessed the experience, character, and genuine motivation to live and work with the Vietnamese that the recruiting standards demanded, a large number did not. More striking, a significant number of participants did not volunteer for the program at all but were instead "voluntold"—sent involuntarily—by their commanding officers. Yet, CAP Marines still fostered and maintained cohesion in no small part because CAP duty required personnel to live alongside the Vietnamese, thus enabling them to familiarize themselves with the people they were there to protect. The CAP experience was not monolithic; some platoons performed better than others, just as some Marines look back on their time in the villages more fondly than their comrades. There are clear similarities among CAP veterans, even those who do not look back on service there fondly, that reveals a collective agreement that living among and attempting to protect the Vietnamese people was a more worthwhile endeavor than the regular infantry's impersonal methods of fighting the war. Indeed, analyzing CAP veterans' experiences using Lynn's three-tiered model reveals clear signs of task-oriented cohesion among their platoons.

Initial CAP Motivation

From its earliest days, the officers who supervised the program realized that its success would rely on the careful selection of properly qualified Marines. "The rather unusual and delicate nature of the Combined Action Program has made it clear from the beginning that the selection of CAP personnel is of central importance," noted a report published in December 1969, "in particular, the personalities of the men involved would be a major factor in the success or failure of the CAP mission."¹⁷ Each platoon's success, and its very survival, depended on maintaining task cohesion in an atmosphere free of any direct supervision. Neither end could be achieved without maintaining discipline within the group—standing guard at night rather than sleeping, performing regular weapons maintenance, aggressively patrolling, and setting ambushes every day and night—while building and maintaining positive relationships both with their PF counterparts and the local populace.

With these difficulties in mind, Marine leaders established specific criteria that each applicant had to meet. First Lieutenant Paul R. Ek, who supervised the first four CAPs between August and December 1965, made an admirable attempt to set a high standard for selecting Marines for service in the villages. The Marines who went to the first CAPs "were hand-picked out of the battalion by myself and the company commanders," he stated in January 1966. "They were the best men that we could get available. They were volunteers and highly motivated."¹⁸ Ek took such a direct role in the first teams' formation because he understood the complexities of both the Vietnamese sociopolitical climate and the irregular nature of their mission—one that was wholly different from anything those Marines had trained for prior to their arrival in Vietnam. Ek deployed to Vietnam as an advisor with a special forces unit in January 1965, where he gained brief but valuable experience about navigating the dynamics of village life and understanding NLF tactics

¹⁷ Allnutt, *Combined Action Capabilities*, C-1.

¹⁸ D. J. Hunter, "Interview with Paul Ek," 24 January 1966, USMCHD Oral History Collection, Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, hereafter Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 6.

¹⁶ Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers*, 149.

for extorting and maintaining political influence over the village. Moreover, prior to his initial deployment, Ek formally studied the Vietnamese language and culture.¹⁹ He used that experience to personally train the Marines he selected before deploying to villages. In a mere week of training, Ek instructed his Marines on village social structure and the political-military relationship between the villagers and the NLF, so that the Marines would understand the importance of denying the NLF access to the people. Further, he taught introductory classes on Vietnamese language and culture. The goal was to “get the people to accept us as members of the community,” he explained. “The Marines’ training was geared to teach them as much as we could about Vietnam and the Vietnamese people so that they could actually live with them in a close relationship, not as an occupational force, but as members of that village.”²⁰

Recruiting standards fluctuated as the program expanded between early 1966 and mid-1969. Specific details and stipulations within the criteria varied from year to year, but a consistent perception emerged about what the ideal CAP recruit would be. Junior Marines (lance corporals and below) were required to have been in Vietnam for at least two months if they were on their first tour or to be serving their second tour. They had to have at least six months remaining on their current tour or agree to extend their time in Vietnam by an additional six months. Applicants were expected to be trained infantrymen without a history of disciplinary issues and less than two purple hearts from their current tour. Above all, the applicant had to volunteer for CAP service, be highly recommended by their commanding officer, and be motivated to live and work with the Vietnamese people. Noncommissioned officers who applied to the program were subjected to the same standards but were also expected to have significant combat experience and a record

of demonstrating high quality of leadership and to be considered highly qualified for promotion.²¹

There is overwhelming evidence that a large proportion of CAP Marines were indeed volunteers, although their reasons for doing so were mixed.²² Some joined out of a genuine desire to live among the Vietnamese to better understand the war in which they were fighting and the people they were there to protect. Sergeant Robert Holm presents a fascinating example. He arrived in Vietnam on 21 September 1966. Assigned to Company K, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, Holm soon found himself immersed in heavy combat in northern I Corps. He recalls that after seven months, a change had come over him. He did not like large-unit tactics—seemingly meaningless sweeps through the northern mountains and jungles, far away from the populace. Holm felt something was missing in his experience. “I had become consumed by the whole of Vietnam,” he wrote. “The people, the beauty, and the thrill of the hunt.” He chose to extend his tour and wanted to continue to fight, but not in a regular line company. Offered a choice of transferring to reconnaissance or CAP, Holm chose the latter specifically because “it offered one additional benefit—the ability to interact closely with the villagers, which was what I wanted.”²³ Holm was so enamored with CAP service that he extended his tour twice more. He agreed to return to the United States after 31 months in Vietnam only because his promotion to staff sergeant took him out of the village he had learned to call home.²⁴

Similarly, Jack Estes sought CAP service to better understand the war by learning to understand the Vietnamese people. Estes arrived in Vietnam in June 1968 and was assigned to Company K, 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, then operating along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating North and South Vietnam. After several violent months in the field, Estes’s bat-

²¹ Corson, “Combined Action Program in Vietnam,” 7–8; Allnutt, *Combined Action Capabilities*, C-2; and “Official Document, Tactical Lessons: The Combined Action Company,” July 1968, Vietnam War Docs, MCHD, Quantico, VA, courtesy of Annette Amerman, 4.

²² Note: 32 of the 44 CAP veterans consulted for this study volunteered for the program.

²³ Robert C. Holm, *In Another Time and Place: My 31 Months in Vietnam* (Columbia, SC: self-published, 2015), 52–53.

²⁴ Holm, *In Another Time and Place*, 181–82.

¹⁹ Hunter, “Interview with Paul Ek,” 1–3.

²⁰ Hunter, “Interview with Paul Ek,” 6–7.

talion went on a particularly brutal clearing operation into the infamous A Shau Valley. His platoon suffered two fatalities shortly after entering the area. Estes and another Marine spent more than a day carrying one of their fallen comrades, having to alternate between carrying the man's lifeless body across harsh terrain and dropping it to take cover and return fire.²⁵ That experience changed Estes's attitude toward the war. He began to feel like it had no point, vaguely summing up his experiences in the weeks after the A Shau operation as "an assortment of meaningless firefights."²⁶

Estes was also painfully aware that he was stuck in Vietnam for another eight months. Determined to make the most out of his remaining time in Vietnam, he wrote to his wife shortly after the A Shau operation and told her of his request to join CAP. Life there would be easier and safer than in a line company, he wrote (erroneously), and it offered "a chance to live with the Vietnamese and get a clearer idea of what this war is all about."²⁷ While describing the disillusionment that overtook him in his final weeks with 3d Battalion, Estes elaborated at length on his desire to escape the meaningless existence of life in a line company. He is very clear about his desire to better understand the war by getting to know the people he was supposedly there to protect.

I was in Vietnam, and knew virtually nothing about the people. I saw very few Vietnamese and the NVA I saw were either shooting at me, or were dead, and I had not yet discovered a reason, if any existed, for being there. In the Nam we had a motto: War is Hell, but a Firefight's a Motherfucker. That's what Vietnam was all about. It wasn't war. It wasn't hell. It was worse. It was indescribable. It was a mother-fucker, for no apparent reason. I had to find a reason. I had to find some sort of justification for fighting. I

needed to escape the mindless nature of the bush. There must be a purpose, a direction, I thought. I felt I would have to live with the people to really understand.²⁸

Estes's words sum up the root of his and many other infantrymen's disillusionment with the war. Trudging through jungles and mountains in search of an elusive enemy offered them no opportunity to interact with the people they were supposed to protect. Estes reasoned that living among the Vietnamese afforded an opportunity to understand them and the war that consumed them all. CAP service, he thought, offered the opportunity to do something decent and worthwhile.

Not all Marines joined CAP as a way to find meaning. In other cases, volunteers simply wanted an escape from the misery and terror of life in the regular infantry. Pete Nardie arrived in Vietnam in August 1966.²⁹ He was assigned to 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, who were ordered to take part in a large clearing operation near the DMZ just days after his arrival. The operation did not go smoothly. All units involved met fierce resistance as they pushed through the jungles in a seemingly desultory matter. Nardie's shocking and violent welcome to Vietnam convinced him that he did not want to be in a line unit any longer than necessary. After two weeks in the field, 1st Battalion went to rest at Phu Bai airfield. A request went out for CAP volunteers soon after their arrival. "To be honest, I didn't know much about what CACs [Combined Action Company—the name used for CAPs in 1966 and 1967] were," he later admitted, "but I did like the idea of living in a village." More significantly, Nardie saw it as an opportunity to escape more clearing operations. He immediately volunteered and was accepted. Nardie had spent just shy of one month in the infantry—half of the minimum time required to join CAP at that time.³⁰

²⁵ Jack Estes, *A Field of Innocence* (Portland, OR: Breitenbush Books, 1987), 100–14.

²⁶ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 135.

²⁷ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 117.

²⁸ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 136.

²⁹ Several former CAP Marines' ranks were not recorded in the sources the author consulted and so are not able to be given here, although it is reasonable to assume that most of the enlisteds were corporals at the time.

³⁰ Pete Nardie, interview with author, 2 April 2021.

Another Marine, Harvey Baker, served in Company K, 3d Battalion, 3d Marines during the horrendous fighting in the hills around Khe Sanh in the spring of 1967. In the final stages of the operation, Baker's company was ordered to seize Hill 861, a terrain feature with a commanding view of the surrounding area that would be a key fixture in much of the fighting around Khe Sanh for more than a year. The company captured the hill, but only 18 of its Marines, including Baker, survived the attack unscathed. Like Nardie, Baker saw CAP duty as a chance to escape life in the infantry. He volunteered as soon as the remnants of the company descended from the hills above Khe Sanh.³¹

Conversely, there is much evidence that noninfantry Marines volunteered for quite different reasons. In many cases, they saw CAP duty as a chance to escape a boring rear-echelon assignment or to experience combat before they rotated home. While the initial regulations for CAP recruitment stipulated that applicants be trained infantrymen, the program's rapid expansion between mid-1966 and mid-1969 required those regulations be relaxed somewhat. Under the revised guidelines, noninfantry applicants had to meet all the same criteria, be personally approved by the commanding general of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, and agree to extend their tour for six months, regardless of how much time they had left in country.³² There is no evidence that any of these regulations were enforced.

Corporal Edward F. Palm's experiences provide one of many examples of a noninfantry Marine joining CAP and skirting some of the stringent recruiting regulations. He enlisted shortly after graduating high school in 1965 and was assigned to a supply warehouse in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. After two years of stateside service, Palm received orders to Vietnam, where he was assigned as a supply clerk in Da Nang.

He found duty on a large base boring and searched for ways to escape it and see what the war was like, admitting that "the macho attitude of not wanting to return home without hearing a shot" played a significant role in his decision.³³ At the time, CAP seemed like the perfect opportunity to do just that. The idea of living in a remote unit embedded within a Vietnamese village appealed to his sense of adventure: "It sounded dangerous and exciting. . . . In a cavalier mood, I raised my hand [to volunteer]."³⁴

Similarly, Sergeant William M. Grunder arrived in Vietnam as an artilleryman in mid-1966. He spent much of his tour on a hilltop fire support base near Phu Bai airfield. Regularly taking part in fire missions offered some excitement, but Grunder felt he was missing out on what the war was really about. He learned about CAP nine months into his tour. He was standing radio watch one night and heard a fire-fight break out nearby. He radioed back to Phu Bai to inquire about the situation and was informed that a CAC unit was in contact. Grunder had no idea what the acronym meant until he went to Phu Bai for rest a short time later. At the post exchange there, he noticed a flyer requesting volunteers for the program. He had long felt like he should do more in the war than sit on a hilltop and periodically fire a cannon at distant targets. Moreover, he was intrigued by the idea of living in the villages and helping the people there. "Many people thought I was crazy," he recalls. "They didn't like the idea of living in a small group out in the boonies and thought orders to CAC was a death sentence." Grunder was undeterred. He volunteered right away and spent more than a year in the program before finally rotating home.³⁵

Not all CAP personnel served voluntarily. From the program's earliest stages, some commanding officers viewed CAP as a way to get rid of incompetent or trouble-making Marines. They realized that the need was so great for personnel to form new teams

³¹ "Harvey Baker," in Albert Hemingway, *Our War Was Different: Marine Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 61. For a corroborating report on 3d Battalion, 3d Marines' activities in this operation, see 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, Command Chronology (ComdC), May 1967, item no. 1201040011, folder 040, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, enclosure 10.
³² Allnutt, *Combined Action Capabilities*, C-6.

³³ Palm, *Tiger Papa Three*, 52–56; "Major Edward Palm, USMC (Ret.)," in Hemingway, *Our War Was Different*, 34–35; latter quote occurred in Edward F. Palm, telephone interview with author, 30 October 2020.

³⁴ Palm, *Tiger Papa Three*, 58.

³⁵ Bill Grunder, telephone interview with author, 23 March 2021.

and replace casualties in existing ones that they could disregard most of the recruiting guidelines without repercussion.³⁶ It became common for Marines to be voluntold for CAP duty, regardless of their disciplinary record, level of experience, or feelings toward the Vietnamese. This practice could be very detrimental to the CAP's overall effectiveness for, as one midwar report points out, "a CAP is precisely where such a man can cause the maximum amount of trouble" due to its physical isolation and sensitive mission. For much of the program's lifespan, however, manpower shortages remained endemic, so much so that, by mid-1969, an estimated one-third of CAP personnel admitted to being voluntold for the program by their commanding officers.³⁷

Hop Brown, an African American rifleman with 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, was voluntold for service in one of the original CAPs in August 1965. This admission directly contradicts Ek's earlier assertion that the first CAP Marines were highly motivated volunteers hand selected by him and 3d Battalion's company commander, leading one to ponder whether those officers had misled Ek to pass some of their misfits along to him. Brown's recollections support this assumption. He suspected his company and platoon commanders wanted to get rid of him. "I was not what you would call a gung-ho Marine," he later admitted. "I had a hard time taking orders and putting up with the racial slurs and innuendos that were prevalent in the Marine Corps at that time."³⁸ Brown also credits his time in the program with changing his attitude toward the Marine Corps. He recalls his platoon as a "very homogeneous group of guys" who mostly worked well with each other and the villagers. "We all judged each other on our own merits rather than the color of our skins."³⁹

In other cases, Marines were involuntarily placed in the program for more benign reasons. Thomas Flynn,

for example, was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. He arrived in Vietnam as a combat replacement to 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, in late 1966. After less than two months in the field, the battalion, which had been in Vietnam since the summer of 1965, was ordered to return to its base on Okinawa to rest and refit. But Flynn did not join it; rather, all personnel in his company with less than 90 days in country were transferred to a CAC instead. Flynn had no idea what that meant, and his commander knew little more than the fact that it stood for Combined Action Company.⁴⁰ Despite having less than two months in Vietnam, having no idea what CACs were or did, and not volunteering for the transfer, Flynn was admitted into the program right away.

In sum, the CAP program's architects realized the platoons would operate in complex and often volatile environments. They reasoned that CAPs required carefully selected, highly motivated, skilled, and experienced Marines to function effectively. They established specific criteria to ensure that only highly qualified Marines could serve in the platoons. Marines entered the CAP program for a variety of reasons, but they rarely fit the criteria espoused by Marine leadership. Some Marines like Estes and Holm fit the criteria well, but many more did not. Many volunteers simply wanted to escape life in the regular infantry. Some thought it was a soft duty that would allow them to wait out the rest of their tours in a safer and less demanding environment. Some had no field experience at all but volunteered more out of fear they would return home without experiencing combat than a genuine desire to live among the Vietnamese. Others were placed in the program involuntarily. Yet, despite frequent practices of skirting or disregarding the strict recruiting criteria, CAPs largely managed to function as effective and cohesive military organizations. Indeed, individual and collective immersion within a village's society proved a powerful source of sustaining motivation that bolstered platoons' task cohesion.

³⁶ Michael E. Peterson, *The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam* (New York City: Praeger, 1989), 24.

³⁷ Allnutt, *Combined Action Capabilities*, C-3.

³⁸ "Hop Brown," in Hemingway, *Our War Was Different*, 25–26. For a brief discussion of racial strife within the Corps' ranks during Vietnam, see Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 598–600.

³⁹ "Hop Brown," 24.

⁴⁰ Thomas Flynn, *A Voice of Hope* (Baltimore, MD: American Literary Press, 1994), 32–33.

CAP Sustaining and Combat Motivation

Regardless of how or why a Marine wound up in a CAP, in most cases he had to adapt to their new situation quickly. Life in a CAP was often very dangerous. Combat and casualties were frequent, oftentimes more so than in a regular infantry unit. The CAP's very location in I Corps, bordering the DMZ, all but ensured the program's members would come under fire and suffer casualties more frequently than units in other areas. Michael Clodfelter's statistical analysis of the war finds that 10 South Vietnamese provinces accounted for 51 percent of all allied combat deaths. Three of the four deadliest were in I Corps; all five I Corps provinces were in the top eight. Clodfelter also found that a mere 1.5 percent of all Marines who served in the war were in a CAP, but CAP Marines accounted for 3.2 percent of all Marine casualties and 8 percent of enemy casualties inflicted by Marines.⁴¹ Administrative records written and promulgated by officers overseeing CAPs reveal similar numbers. A 1970 report on CAP activities reveals that, in 1969 alone, platoons in all four Combined Action Groups (CAGs, the largest organizational unit for CAPs) killed 1,952 enemy combatants and captured 391. During the same period, CAP personnel suffered 117 killed and 851 wounded while PF casualties amounted to 185 and 692 dead and wounded, respectively.⁴² Clearly, many CAPs were effective at locating and combating enemy forces, despite the lax nature in which Marines were often admitted to the program. Evidence indicates that, regardless of how or why they wound up in a CAP, Marines were often held together by a strong sense of task cohesion that manifested after they arrived in the villages.

This phenomenon is demonstrated among many CAP Marines who were voluntold for the program. Indeed, many developed a positive attitude about

their new assignment. Brown, a cynical and unmotivated Marine who was, at best, ambivalent about his new assignment is an interesting case. "In my time [in the village] my attitude changed toward these people," he recalled. "As I got used to their way of life and started to see their customs and rituals from their point of view, I began to understand that the things I took for granted as an American did not apply to this culture."⁴³ Like many CAP Marines, he did not think highly of the PFs' professional skill, but he did come to understand their plight. More significantly, Brown forged friendships with some of the villagers, who accepted him and many of his comrades as part of the community. In particular, he befriended a boy whose father owned a store in the village marketplace. The boy often delivered beer and other goods from his father's store to Brown and his comrades. When Brown rotated home, the boy and his entire family came to the compound to tell him goodbye. Brown does not look back on the war with fondness, but he firmly believes CAP service was "a growth process for the men who were fortunate enough to participate in it."⁴⁴ Flynn describes a similar transformation in his outlook toward the villagers around his CAP. He recalls "a renewed sense of pride and meaning for our being in this country. . . . The average soldier would never have the opportunity to be invited into a villager's home for dinner or to play with their children."⁴⁵

What caused this transformation? Initial CAP training did little to start the process. Administrative records indicate a somewhat rigorous curriculum, but recollections from the Marines suggest the training was not eminently helpful. Few veterans have anything positive to say about CAP school except that it took them out of the field for a few weeks. The school did attempt to teach students a wide array of subjects—Vietnamese language and culture; various weapons used by NLF, NVA, and PF soldiers; small-unit patrolling and ambush tactics; and, perhaps most importantly, classes on radio maintenance and use, namely

⁴¹ Michael Clodfelter, *Vietnam in Military Statistics: A History of the Indochina Wars, 1772–1991* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1995), 107, 252.

⁴² It is worth noting that enemy wounded in action are not included in this report because they were rarely left behind during or after a fire-fight. Marines could generally only count bodies they physically recovered or watched fall during an engagement toward the enemy casualty figure. See "2 CAG Facts Sheet," enclosure 8, folder 22, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive.

⁴³ "Hop Brown," 22.

⁴⁴ "Hop Brown," 26–27.

⁴⁵ Flynn, *Voice of Hope*, 46.

calling for artillery and air support.⁴⁶ The school's biggest weakness was its brevity; all lessons were crammed into a two-week period. In some dire cases, like the program's rapid expansion in the summer of 1967 or the opening phase of the Tet Offensive in early 1968, Marines received little or no training at all.⁴⁷

In practice, the acclimation process occurred in the villages. It had to happen quickly for a CAP Marine to function effectively. One of the biggest challenges the Marines faced was overcoming their own prejudice toward the Vietnamese. This was no small feat for many, particularly infantrymen with significant combat experience. Many entered the program with a universal distrust of the Vietnamese that had to be managed for them to function effectively in the villages. For example, operating as a CAP Marine often required a greater degree of restraint on the Marines' part. Unlike the regular infantry, CAP Marines were immersed in village life and were constantly surrounded by Vietnamese people, some of whom were not friendly. Differentiating friend from foe was thus a difficult task—perhaps even more difficult (and pressing) because of the simple fact that a CAP's isolated position could make even the most experienced new arrivals nervous. “Up at the DMZ, if something moved you shot it. You didn't think about it, you just did it,” recalls one veteran. “When I got to [CAP] Hotel-7, life changed totally. . . . I was sleeping on a cot with a roof over my head, but I felt like we had no security. We were out in the middle of nowhere alone.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ CAP training curricula fluctuated throughout the war, but the classes listed here were present throughout. A good synopsis of the training regimen can be found in Allnut, *Combined Action Capabilities*, appendix D. It is also remarkable, and a bit damning, how little CAP Marines have to say about their time at the school. They mostly comment on enjoying a break from the field and getting three hot meals and a shower each day. One Marine remarked that the only thing he remembers about CAP school was that he learned to play Chinese checkers. See “Tony Vieira,” in Hemmingway, *Our War Was Different*, 41.

⁴⁷ Ed Nest revealed in our interview that he went straight from Company E, 2d Battalion, 26th Marines, to his CAC in August 1967. Ed Nest, telephone interview with author, 24 March 2021, hereafter Nest interview. Another Marine, Tom Harvey, reported to CAP school on 20 January 1968. The Tet Offensive began when his class was only half finished. Their training was abruptly stopped and Harvey and his classmates were shipped out to various CAPs as combat replacements a few days later. See “Tom Harvey,” in Hemmingway, *Our War Was Different*, 73–74.

⁴⁸ Nest interview.

A combination of necessity and proximity led the Marines, often subconsciously, to see the Vietnamese more positively. Many CAP Marines and villagers realized that working together could be mutually beneficial. The latter were often harassed by NLF and NVA forces, who would come into their villages at night to exploit them for taxes, supplies, and recruits. Those who refused were coerced into doing so or were kidnapped, beaten, tortured, or killed as an example to the rest.⁴⁹ Just as the villagers could depend on the Marines to limit NLF and NVA incursions into their villages, the Marines relied on the villagers' knowledge of local politics and family dynamics to provide intelligence. The villagers and PFs knew better than anyone who in their village sympathized with Communist forces. They also intimately knew the terrain and were far more likely to spot irregularities—tell-tale signs of booby traps or other manmade hazards—before the Marines.⁵⁰

As the Marines became more acclimated to life in the villages, they often felt like they were a part of the community. An integral part of this process involved the Marines taking part in the local economy and various social functions. Even in cases where relations with the PF were unreliable or strained, many CAP Marines describe relationships they formed with the villagers through these channels. They often paid a local woman to wash and sew their clothes or befriended a shop owner who supplied them with food, soda, and beer. Some platoons adopted a local orphan who ran errands for the Marines during the day and

⁴⁹ Jack Estes mentions a particularly jarring episode where an entire family was butchered except the mother, whose children were shot and disemboweled in front of her, for the crime of possessing a case of Corps-issued rations in their home. See Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 193.

⁵⁰ Brown briefly discusses the locals providing his CAP with intelligence after they had gained their trust. See “Hop Brown,” 25. Harvey, who served in CAPs across two tours in Vietnam, describes the PF's ability to walk through a hamlet and point out booby traps or tell him that a family had two sons with the NLF, or that another had a son with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN, or South Vietnam) and were reliable. Sometimes families had sons on both sides. See “Tom Harvey,” 81.

stayed in their compound at night.⁵¹ In other instances, Marines taught English classes at the local school when not on patrol during the day.⁵² It was also common for Marines to attend meals at a local family's home or to be invited to a village social event like a wedding or festival, or for the villagers to throw a feast for the Marines in appreciation for their hard work.⁵³

The most interesting examples involve Marines worshiping alongside the Vietnamese. A significant number of South Vietnamese were Catholic, and some CAP Marines attended mass at local churches. For example, several of Ek's Marines were Catholic and attended mass at the church outside of Phu Bai.⁵⁴ Flynn, also Catholic, recalls a similar experience. After several months in his CAP, Flynn decided to attend mass at the village's church. That Sunday, he put on his cleanest utilities and, along with his CAP leader, walked to the village church. "I was amazed to find that the inside . . . looked like any other catholic church," he recalled. "I had a warm safe feeling about being here [sic]. . . . The priest talked in Vietnamese, but I was still very aware of what was going on. The mass was the same all over the world!" To Flynn's surprise, many in the congregation seemed happy to have him there. He writes that many of the local men came to him and his commander after mass and shook their hands. "They made us feel welcome, and it was a warm

feeling. After seeing the way they dressed to attend church, I realized they weren't quite as uncivilized as we wanted to make them out to be. It's funny how your opinion of things can change even in the middle of a war."⁵⁵

Robert Holm never mentions religion in the earlier chapters of his memoir, yet it seems he found it in an unconventional way in Vietnam. After several months in CAP, he became very close with a family in his village, Phu Le. He initially befriended the family's youngest son, a boy of around 10 named Van. Van had a beautiful older sister named Hu'o'ng. After frequent visits and pleading with Hu'o'ng's grandmother for her blessing, Holm began a romantic relationship with her.⁵⁶ Frequent patrols, ambushes, and operations kept Holm busy, but he stopped by Hu'o'ng's family home whenever he could. As their relationship grew closer, Holm took an interest in Buddhism and learned to pray alongside his hosts at the family altar. Hu'o'ng eventually helped Holm design and build his own small altar so he could pray for protection before going out on patrol.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, Hu'o'ng was kidnapped one night in November 1968 and never seen again. Holm left Vietnam two months later, having no idea what happened to her. Forty-three years later, he returned to Phu Le. He went to Hu'o'ng's family home, where he found Van still living there with a family of his own. Holm learned that Hu'o'ng had indeed been taken and executed by a group of NLF. Distraught, Holm knelt at the same family altar alongside Van and prayed for her spirit. The family then took him to her grave, discovered only five years before Holm's return to the village. As the family looked on, Holm knelt before the grave, lit joss sticks, and prayed.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Several Marines in Hemingway's oral history collection describe such interactions. See Hemingway, *Our War Was Different*, 26–27, 28, 63, 168, 173. Flynn describes his village's mayor organizing a feast for his CAP shortly after their arrival. He notes many of the villagers, often dressed in their finest clothes, came to the compound with their favorite foods. See Flynn, *Voice of Hope*, 53–54. Estes describes building a footbridge and other infrastructure-related projects for the locals, going fishing with locals and PFs (sometimes with hand grenades!), and even helping his corpsman deliver a baby, which another Marine in his CAP also did shortly before Estes's arrival. See Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 163, 169, 180, 236–37, 268.

⁵² Bill Grunder and Cpl Cottrell Fox both mention in their respective interviews a Marine in their CAP named Charlie Brown who regularly taught English classes to the children at their village's school. Robert Holm also taught classes at the school near his first CAP. Tom Pierce, who served in CAP during both his tours in Vietnam, taught classes as well. Grunder interview; Cottrell Fox, telephone interview with author, 22 March 2021, hereafter Fox interview; Holm, *Another Time*, 76; and Tom Pierce, telephone interview with author, 26 October 2021.

⁵³ Chuck Ratliff describes having "quite a bit of time to mingle with the people," and going to weddings and parties. See "Chuck Ratliff," in Hemingway, *Our War Was Different*, 28.

⁵⁴ Hunter, "Interview with Paul Ek," 25.

⁵⁵ During France's long occupation of Vietnam (1887–1954), many Vietnamese converted to Catholicism. There were still numerous Catholic churches and orphanages across South Vietnam during the American phase of the war. For Flynn's account, see Flynn, *Voice of Hope*, 147. Other CAP Marines describe visiting Catholic orphanages in or near their villages to deliver clothing and supplies or simply to visit the children there. For examples, see "Chuck Ratliff," 28; and Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 236–67.

⁵⁶ Holm, *In Another Time and Place*, 105–7.

⁵⁷ Holm, *In Another Time and Place*, 193.

⁵⁸ This is one of the more remarkable stories of a CAP Marine growing to be a part of the local community. See Holm, *In Another Time and Place*, 195–205.

Immersion within a village's society was a common source of sustaining motivation for CAP Marines. Whether that happened by taking part in the local economy, attending social events, or a more profound outlet like worshiping alongside villagers, it gave all CAP Marines a new perspective on the war. Fighting in Vietnam became personal as they learned about the people, thus enhancing their sense of purpose. Many seemed more motivated than ever before to do their jobs well, since doing so meant protecting a group of people they saw and interacted with daily. Estes was emphatic about CAP service giving him a reason to fight in Vietnam. "I felt a sense of purpose and meaning to this war," he writes. "I felt like I was protecting little kids and helping the old men who came to fight with us."⁵⁹ Another Marine recalls that he and his CAP became "the boys next door who tried their best to work together and get to know and help the farmers."⁶⁰ Warren Carmon, who served in one of the last CAPs in 1970–71, believes that "CAP Marines were a lot more idealistic than the others who served in Vietnam. . . . I remember guys not wanting to go on R&R because it would leave the platoon shorthanded. We felt a responsibility to the people and our fellow Marines."⁶¹ Because the CAP program made living and fighting at the village level the platoons' mission, many of the Marines felt a personal attachment not just to the people in their assigned areas but to the task of defending them.

A primary issue with assessing cohesion and motivation is that both concepts are abstract and difficult to quantify. There is one tangible indication of sustaining motivation among CAP Marines: the high number of men who chose to extend their tours to remain in the program and those who volunteered to return to Vietnam to enter or return to CAP. Evidence suggests this was a common occurrence throughout the

program's lifespan, until the early stages of the withdrawal from Vietnam initiated a similar drawdown in the number of CAPs that ended with the program's disbandment in 1971. Indeed, 35 of the 56 original CAP personnel did volunteer to extend their time in Vietnam to remain in their villages.⁶² It does not appear that extension rate of more than 60 percent was maintained throughout the program's entire lifespan, but there is ample evidence that a significant number of CAP Marines volunteered to remain in Vietnam.⁶³

It was common for platoon leaders to have at least one extension on their records. A report released in December 1969 noted that 40 percent of CAP leaders in Vietnam that year had extended their tour at least once.⁶⁴ Many extended multiple times. Robert Holm did so on three occasions; Grunder extended twice. Like Holm, Grunder extended the first time simply to get into the program. Then, despite seeing heavy combat in the summer and autumn of 1967, he prolonged his tour again. "I extended because I liked what I was doing. I liked the responsibility [of leading a CAP] and I felt like I was accomplishing things," he explained. "I felt like that was my village, those were my people, and I wanted to protect them and try to make their lives a little bit better. If the [NLF] were coming in and kidnapping and assassinating people, they were living in fear. I wanted to take some of that fear away." Grunder was wounded in a firefight in November 1967 and evacuated. After a brief stint in the hospital, he returned to his CAP just before dusk on 30 January 1968, just in time for the Tet Offensive, which began a few hours later. At approximately 0400 the next morning, a large NVA force assaulted his

⁵⁹ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 166.

⁶⁰ William Nimmo, telephone interview with author, 23 February 2021.

⁶¹ Carmon's comments are striking given the time in which he served in Vietnam. By the time he arrived in 1970, Vietnamization and the United States' withdrawal from the conflict was plainly underway, yet Marines in his CAP were willing to forgo time away from combat to continue performing their duties and protecting the villagers in their area. See "Warren Carmon," in Hemmingway, *Our War Was Different*, 169.

⁶² Capt John J. Mullen Jr., "Modifications to the III MAF Combined Action Program in the Republic of Vietnam," Marine Corps Development and Education Command, December 1968, Vietnam War Docs, MCHD, Quantico, VA, courtesy of Annette Amerman, C-12.

⁶³ CAP did not have its own administrative structure (and thus no command chronologies) before mid-1968, thus determining extension rates is difficult. The veterans surveyed for this study do not quite support the argument that the majority of CAP veterans volunteered to extend their tours, but a large number did. Of 44 CAP veterans consulted for this study, 5 volunteered to extend their tours while 8 volunteered for a second tour to return to or enter CAP service. It is also worth noting that interviewees who served between mid-1969 and 1971 (20 of 44) were not given the choice to extend during their first tour.

⁶⁴ Allnut, *Combined Action Capabilities*, C-6, F-11–14.

compound. The NVA overran the CAP's position but, miraculously, Grunder's Marines and PFs repulsed the attack.⁶⁵ He was wounded again during the battle and sent to teach at the CAP school in Phu Bai as his injuries healed.

After two wounds, numerous firefights, and his platoon being briefly overrun, Grunder wanted a third extension and to return to his village. He appealed directly to 3d Combined Action Group's commanding officer, who agreed to let him regain command of his old CAP, but requested Grunder take a day to think it over. He agreed and decided to pass the time by drinking beer at the Phu Bai noncommissioned officers' club. There, he ran into Sergeant Joseph C. Cerrone, a friend who ran a nearby CAP. Knowing everything Grunder had been through, Cerrone was determined to talk him out of staying. After several hours, and many more beers, Grunder decided to heed his friend's advice and return home. The decision seems to have weighed heavily on him; Cerrone was killed in action soon after.⁶⁶ Yet, Grunder maintains that "the CAP experience was one of the high points of my life. It wasn't anything I expected to do, but it really allowed me to grow. How many guys can say 'I went to live in a village and did my best to protect it?'"⁶⁷

Leadership, Task Cohesion, and Combat Effectiveness

Assertive and aggressive leadership were essential to maintaining task cohesion within a CAP. Group members generally respond positively when their commander provides leadership that supports the group's purpose, culture, and values. For a CAP to function effectively and accomplish its goals, it had to establish and maintain a noticeable presence in and around its village. Initiative and aggressive action in the form of continuous patrols was key. CAPs were sometimes at the mercy of a leadership die-roll. Just as an effective

leader was essential to ensuring a platoon's success, an incompetent or ineffective commander could undermine and ruin a CAP's cohesion.

Effective CAP leaders understood that the best way to accomplish the shared goal of protecting their village was to saturate the area with daily patrols and ambushes. Holm instilled within his Marines the understanding that "the first line of defense and an essential aspect of CAP security was aggressive patrolling. Nighttime patrols and ambushes were of particular importance."⁶⁸ Grunder echoed that sentiment. As the leader of a newly established CAP, he and his Marines constantly patrolled their village and noticed a sudden drop-off in NLF activity within the village. "We were disrupting them," he recalls. "The kidnappings and assassinations [of villagers] pretty much stopped. . . . We stayed focused and that's why we were [successful]."⁶⁹ When Tom Harvey arrived at his first CAP in the middle of the Tet Offensive, everything was in confusion and no one seemed to be in charge. Harvey spent his first month there in a purely defensive posture, his CAP desperately clinging to its position against repeated attacks by NLF and NVA forces. The situation stabilized when they received a permanent leader, an experienced sergeant from a reconnaissance unit. Under his direction, they resumed frequent day patrols and night ambushes. Fighting in the area soon died down considerably.⁷⁰

Conversely, a lazy, arrogant, or incompetent leader could erode or even destroy task cohesion in an otherwise effective CAP. That happened in Thomas Flynn's platoon, Tiger Papa Three. It was attacked in force twice in the summer of 1967; both times it barely managed to hang on to its position. Flynn was badly wounded and moved to another location after the first attack. After the second assault, enemy activity died down in the area and remained that way until the Tet Offensive the following year.⁷¹ Corporal Edward Palm was assigned to CAP Tiger Papa Three as a replacement around that time, shortly after its

⁶⁵ Grunder interview. His story is also corroborated by Cottrell Fox's interview, and a Silver Star citation for Fox, of which Fox was kind enough to provide the author with a photocopy. Attack recorded in 5th Marines, ComdC, January 1968, item no. 1201046154, folder 046, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 189.

⁶⁶ Cerrone's death is also mentioned in Hemingway, *Our War*, 93.

⁶⁷ Grunder interview.

⁶⁸ Holm, *In Another Time and Place*, 74.

⁶⁹ Grunder interview; and Fox interview.

⁷⁰ "Tom Harvey," 73–75.

⁷¹ Flynn, *Voice of Hope*, 65–74, 135–44.

new commander, an infantry sergeant, arrived.⁷² Palm points out that the sergeant was neither arrogant nor incompetent but that he allowed the seemingly peaceful state of things around their village to lure him and his Marines into a false sense of security. Under his cavalier, laissez-faire form of leadership, the platoon settled into a comfortable routine characterized by complacency and predictability. Throughout the autumn of 1967, Tiger Papa Three did little to expand or maintain the fragile security bubble around its village, giving the PFs and villagers little reason to place their confidence in its Marines. Eventually, the captain in charge of all CAPs in the area forced them to be more aggressive, and a Tiger Papa Three Marine was killed in December 1967 when his patrol was ambushed outside a hut they had made a habit of visiting on a daily basis.⁷³

A particularly jarring case of bad leadership is demonstrated in the story of Estes's 2d CAP, 1st Combined Action Company, 2d Combined Action Group, in the spring of 1969. When he arrived that January, its leader was a standoffish but otherwise competent man, and the CAP was an aggressive and effective fighting force. The 2d CAP best displayed its combat effectiveness when it combined with a nearby CAP in late February to ambush and nearly wipe out an entire NVA company. However, the first CAP leader's nerves broke shortly thereafter when they were caught in a pair of successive, well-executed ambushes in which 2d CAP lost two Marines killed and four wounded.⁷⁴

Like the attacks on Tiger Papa Three two years prior, fighting in 2d CAP's area ceased after those two ambushes. A new CAP leader, Corporal Swan, arrived during that time. Swan was an experienced infantryman, but he was lazy and hopelessly naïve. Believing the enemy had left the area, he "ran our C.A.P. [sic] with a carefree attitude that fit well with the new guys but sort of bothered me. He'd smoke dope . . . in the

day and let us stay in hooches at night" rather than sending out patrols and fortifying the platoon's position, Estes recalled.⁷⁵ Despite constant warnings from Estes and his friend Charlie, who had been in CAP a year and recently extended his tour, Swan ran 2d CAP with a sense of complacency that seemed to dare enemy forces to attack. One night, Estes's worst fears came to fruition and they were assaulted by a large NLF force. When the attack began, the entire platoon except Estes, Charlie, and a few PFs were asleep inside a hut they had stayed in every night for the last few months. It was a disaster. Two Marines and the platoon corpsman were wounded. Three more were killed, including Swan and Charlie, along with several PFs.⁷⁶ Estes does not say much about who took over after the attack, though it seems like a Marine named Bingham, the longest-tenured Marine in 2d CAP, took command. What is clear is that the CAP shed its complacency, resumed its aggressive patrolling, and took part in several successful engagements until Estes rotated home two months later.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The CAP program offered a solution for slowing the erosion of task cohesion among American soldiers and Marines during the Vietnam War. Living among and forming relationships with Vietnamese villagers added a new dimension to the war that few American servicemembers could experience. Feeling like they were part of a community, or at least the experience of building relationships with the people they were assigned to protect, gave many CAP Marines a sense that they were fighting for something real, rather than a vaguely defined political objective or to reach a specific date on which they could depart the country. Unlike regular infantry units, which operated in sparsely populated areas and frequently shifted from one place to another, CAP Marines came to know the areas in which they lived and fought. Feeling at home sustained many Marines' combat motivation and in-

⁷² From 1965 to 1968, CAPs were named and renamed sporadically. It was not until late 1968, when CAP got its own command and administrative structure, that CAP names became uniform.

⁷³ Palm, *Tiger Papa Three*, 59–62, 93–94, 108–9, 125–32. See also "Major Edward Palm, USMC (Ret.)," 38–40.

⁷⁴ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 194–215; and administrative record of ambush, 2d Combined Action Group (2d CAG), ComdC, February 1969, item number 1201022062, folder 22, USMCHD Vietnam War Docs, Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive, 15–16, 34.

⁷⁵ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 232. Cpl Swan's full name was not recorded in sources consulted.

⁷⁶ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 252–58.

⁷⁷ Estes, *A Field of Innocence*, 240–41.

creased their desire to do their jobs well because they had a personal connection to the village and people they were assigned to protect. Those sentiments built and often maintained a CAP's task cohesion, thus enhancing their willingness to seek out and engage their enemies, despite being free of external supervision.

Even the Marines who were dubious about the program's overall efficacy acknowledge the practice of living and fighting at the village level was a sound, calculated response to a strategy that was unsuccessful at best and counterproductive at worst. Edward Palm, a vocal critic of the program, maintains it was "a daring move on the Marine Corps's [sic] part, tantamount to breaking ranks in the eyes of some. But much to its credit, the Corps felt it had to dissent from a strategy that clearly was not working and which was proving to be self-defeating." He describes the CAPs as "an enlightened gesture of dissent," in which a small number of Marines broke away from a flawed, impersonal

method of fighting that was failing in no small part because its very nature eroded task cohesion among the soldiers and Marines ordered to carry it out.⁷⁸

Task cohesion was thus rooted in the elements of familiarity with, and a sense of duty toward, the village that proliferated within many CAPs. Protecting one's village, rather than surviving one's tour, was the commonly recognized task that bound many CAPs together. If that cohesion was cultivated and supported by assertive leadership, a CAP was often an effective and lethal fighting force. "In a CAP, you had a wonderful job in an exotic, beautiful environment. Your job was to talk to the people and to learn about how they live," recalls one veteran. "It was more than a personal connection to the war; it was an emotional connection to the village environment and its people. After I got comfortable in my village, it felt like home. I realized that life there was similar to my little hometown in Indiana."⁷⁹

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⁷⁸ Palm, *Tiger Papa Three*, 50.

⁷⁹ William Nimmo, telephone interview with author, 18 April 2021.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

“To the Halls of the Montezumas”

A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE MARINE CORPS DURING THE MEXICAN WAR

by Christopher N. Menking, PhD

The U.S.-Mexico War (1846–48), known colloquially as the Mexican War, served as the United States' first war of territorial expansion. Up to this point, the United States had obtained territory through independence, purchase, or treaty. Setting aside the conflicts with Native American populations during these acquisitions, the Mexican War became the first time the United States sought specific territory and resorted to the force of arms against a rival colonial power to obtain the desired land. The war also represented the first significant foreign war for the U.S. military, which fielded three armies in separate theaters across the continent along with naval operations on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. This made the conflict one of the nation's most significant wars to date. Unfortunately, the immediacy of the impending U.S. Civil War overshadowed the importance of the Mexican War, even the aspects that contributed to the imminent internal conflict.

The Mexican War was sparked by the annexation of the Republic of Texas that was initiated under President John Tyler and finalized by President James K. Polk. In particular, the piece of territory known as the

Nueces Strip in southern Texas, between the Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers, came into dispute. Texas claimed ownership of the region, and Polk backed this position; Mexico disagreed. Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor's army from the Texas-Louisiana border to Corpus Christi, hoping to coerce Mexico into agreeing to yield not only the Nueces Strip, but also to sell California to the United States. This action provoked the opposite reaction, however. Mexican cavalry fired the first shots just north of the Rio Grande when they confronted a scouting party from Taylor's army as it marched toward Matamoros, Mexico. The deaths of Americans in this battle gave Polk the justification he desired to request a declaration of war from Congress. Despite some minor dissent, the declaration was passed by an overwhelming majority.¹

The war was divided into three theaters. The first was the northern Mexico campaign, which was led by General Taylor and sought to occupy southern Texas and northern Mexico, including Monterrey, one of the most significant trade cities in the region. The second theater was focused in the Western Territories includ-

Dr. Christopher N. Menking received his undergraduate education from Texas A&M University in College Station and completed his graduate degrees at the University of North Texas in Denton. He has published articles and chapters relating to the U.S.-Mexico War, South Texas, and the Texas-Mexico borderlands.

¹K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846–1848* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 32–45; John S. D. Eisenhower, *So Far from God: The U.S. War with Mexico, 1846–1848* (New York: Random House, 1889), 49–70; and Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 71–82.

ing New Mexico, Utah, and California. The United States sent naval vessels and two small overland armies under the commands of Captain John C. Frémont and General Stephen W. Kearny to secure primarily California. New Mexico proved an appetizing target because of the Santa Fe Trail, which served as a major trade network with the United States, while Utah was important because of existing tensions with the Mormons who had moved into this territory. Despite success in both theaters, Mexico refused to yield to the United States' demands and would not come to terms for a treaty. This led to the opening of the final theater of war, the central Mexico campaign, which sought to occupy Mexico City and force a treaty by capturing the capital. General Winfield Scott led this campaign to eventual success, the capture of Mexico City, and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on 2 February 1848, which ended the war.²

The soldiers who fought during the war were primarily recent volunteers who expanded the core of the Regular Army. However, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps played an important role in supporting the Army's actions in Mexico's interior. The Navy primarily performed as a blockading force and targeted strategic ports to occupy. The Marines became the backbone of the naval attack forces attempting to capture coastal Mexican cities. In addition, some Marines saw action in the Mexico City campaign while attached to Army units. During the war, the Marine Corps received approval to expand its ranks to include a Marine battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Samuel E. Watson. The battalion eventually was attached to Major General John A. Quitman's 4th Division and served alongside the Army with distinction during the Battle of Chapultepec. Beginning with the landing at Veracruz and culminating with the victory at Chapultepec, the Marines demonstrated their value to the U.S. armed forces. These actions earned the memorialization in the "Marines' Hymn" with the lyric "From the Halls of Montezuma" referencing their actions at Chapultepec in Mexico City, the for-

mer capital of the Aztecs, which Hernan Cortez had conquered for the Spanish.³

The Corps managed to participate in two of the most significant battles of the whole war: the landing at and siege of Veracruz and the Battle of Chapultepec. The landing near Veracruz is particularly important because it was the largest amphibious operation in history at that time, certainly in U.S. history. With the help of Commodore David Conner, General Scott managed to land nearly 3,000 troops in the line of battle on an enemy shore. Sailors and Marines aided in the landing by guiding and rowing the custom-built surfboats for the operation. The amphibious assault at Collado Beach, about five kilometers south of Veracruz—despite being undefended—became a foundational example for future amphibious actions. The Battle of Chapultepec saw the last defenses of Mexico City fall to American forces, including the Marines under General Quitman. The frontal assault that Scott resorted to in the capture of the palace influenced many young officers who would later fight in the Civil War. These two battles, in addition to the more traditional naval supporting operations, placed Marines at the heart of the action during the Mexican War.⁴

The historiography of the Mexican War is unique because the immediacy of the Civil War redirected much of the historical inquiry to the larger conflict. While important in several ways, the land acquired in the Mexican Cession as part of the treaty reignited the North/South, free/slave divisions in the United States, particularly in places like Kansas and other western territories. The descent into the Civil War distracted many historians who favored writing on the larger, more domestically destructive war than the smaller, distant Mexican War. Despite residing in the shadow of the Civil War, there have been bursts of scholarly work on the Mexican War that have made important contributions to our understanding of the conflict.

² Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846–1848*, 81–105, 127–44, 232–90; Eisenhower, *So Far from God*, 71–85, 195–204, 328–68; and Guardino, *The Dead March*, 323–49.

³ Gabrielle M. Neufeld Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*, ed. Charles R. Smith (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1991), 31–33, 36–39.

⁴ Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846–1848*, 232–58, 279–325; Eisenhower, *So Far from God*, 253–65, 328–57; and Guardino, *The Dead March*, 323–49.

The majority of scholarly texts focus on general histories with an occasional work examining unique aspects of the war. Roughly every decade or two, a new wave of general histories was published, updating the historiography with more modern research methodologies and writing styles, but they almost always relied on the earlier texts as their foundation. Since the 1980s, higher-quality general histories have been published, as well as a greater variety of unique, topical books greatly expanding the scholarly scope of the historiography. Most recently, several historians have published books and articles focusing on specific battles and specific state units during the Mexican War.

Within the historiography, there are some significant gaps. There is no analysis of logistical operations during the war, naval operations have received only minimal discussion, and the actions of the Marine Corps are virtually ignored in most scholarly works relating to the war. The latter two points are caused by several factors. First, the Navy often participated in useful, but usually tangential, operations because Mexico lacked a substantial navy to rival U.S. naval force. Second, of the two main operations that the Marines participated in, the amphibious landing near Veracruz is often given just a few lines or a paragraph in most books. This leaves little room for any discussion of Marine participation in the operation. The Marines are far better remembered in the Battle of Chapultepec because they received both accolades and condemnation for their actions.

This historiography addresses several of the major works that relate to the Marine Corps. The following analysis of sources will be divided into four general sections: journals, diaries and other primary sources; Marine Corps-focused texts; general Mexican War histories; and Mexican War scholarly texts with a strong naval or Marine theme. When necessary, comments will be included if a source is particularly relevant to naval actions, actions near Veracruz, or the Battle of Chapultepec.

Journals, Diaries, and Primary Sources

The most riveting texts about the Marines during the Mexican War are often the primary sources written

by men who fought and contemporary discussions of their actions. Compared to the numerous diaries, journals, and letters left by soldiers, Marines and sailors left far fewer records. There are a few that stand out, being of particular interest to Marine Corps and naval history.

The first two are a pair of documents from a general court-martial regarding the behavior of a Marine Corps officer, First Lieutenant John S. Devlin, in Mexico. The original 1852 document—*The Marine Corps in Mexico; Setting Forth Its Conduct as Established by Testimony before a General Court Martial, Convened at Brooklyn, N.Y., September, 1852, for the Trial of First Lieut. John S. Devlin, of the U.S. Marine Corps*—outlines the charges and evidence against Devlin in detail. In the initial court-martial, Devlin claimed misconduct by the Marines at Chapultepec and his claims found their way into an 1852 issue of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* newspaper. This sparked the charges against him and ultimately his dismissal from the Marine Corps. The second document, published in 1853—*A Conclusive Exculpation of the Marine Corps in Mexico from the Slanderous Allegations of One of Its Former Officers; with a Full Official Copy of the Record of the General Court Martial, Held at Brooklyn, New York, 1852*—is an analysis of the case evidence that disproves the alleged slander against the Marine Corps. Although the whole episode is a bit dramatic, it demonstrates how dearly officers and men of the day held their reputation that conjecture could spark a court-martial and cost an officer his position.⁵

The remaining primary texts can be divided based on areas of operation: California/Pacific Coast and Central Mexico. These journals and diaries include one by a Marine; the remaining are by naval officers or sailors. Unfortunately, the Marines who served in the

⁵ *The Marine Corps in Mexico; Setting Forth Its Conduct as Established by Testimony before a General Court Martial, Convened at Brooklyn, N.Y., September, 1852, for the Trial of First Lieut. John S. Devlin, of the U.S. Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: Lemuel Towers, 1852); An Observer, "Marine Soldiers," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (NY), 12 July 1852, 3; and BvtMaj John George Reynolds, *A Conclusive Exculpation of the Marine Corps in Mexico from the Slanderous Allegations of One of Its Former Officers; with a Full Official Copy of the Record of the General Court Martial, Held at Brooklyn, New York, 1852, by Which He Was Found Guilty and Dismissed the Service; and Collateral Documents* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1853).

Mexican War left few records that have survived. The journals left by the naval servicemen still provide a good insight into the lives of Marines alongside whom they served.

The books relating to operations in California or the Pacific Coast of Mexico include some of the best records directly by Marines. *The Journals of Marine Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson* records his time in and around California, including some of the major operations that occurred in the territory. This is essentially the only published set of journals by a Marine during the Mexican War. The second text, *Los Gringos; or, An Inside View of Mexico and California* by Lieutenant Henry Augustus Wise, focuses on the occupation of Mazatlán and the capture of San Jose on Mexico's western coast. The final West Coast-focused book is *Keel and Saddle: A Retrospect of Forty Years of Military and Naval Service* by Joseph W. Revere, Paul Revere's grandson, who also participated in the occupation of Mazatlán. These latter two books provide a robust first-hand discussion of this operation. A primary source titled *Alta California: Embracing the Notices of the Climate, Soil, and Agricultural Products of Northern Mexico and the Pacific Seaboard; Also, a History of the Military and Naval Operation of the United States Directed against the Territories of Northern Mexico in the Year 1846–'47* looks at the territory's climate and agriculture as well as the military operations that occurred there during the war. This helps round out the analysis of West Coast operations during the war.⁶

The next set of primary sources focuses on the central Mexico campaign beginning at the landing near Veracruz and culminating at the Battle of Chapultepec: *El Puchero: or, A Mixed Dish from Mexico* by Dr. Richard McSherry, a naval surgeon who trav-

eled with Watson's Marine battalion during General Scott's march to Mexico City. He writes about the Marines and their major actions at Churubusco and Chapultepec, but the majority of the work discusses the sights, food, and people he encountered during his time in Mexico. This is very similar to most of the journals and diaries of other soldiers who served; their journals read more like travelogues than wartime records. In a similar vein, Captain Mayne Reid of the New York Volunteers included in his *Sketches by a Skirmisher: The Mexican War Writings of Capt. Mayne Reid, Co. B, 2nd Regiment of New York Volunteers* several pages discussing General Quitman and his Marines at the Battle of Chapultepec. It is unusual for an Army soldier to mention the Marines in their journals; most refer only to Quitman with no mention of the Marines.⁷

The Broad Pennant: or, A Cruise of the United States Flagship of the Gulf Squadron by Reverend Fitch W. Taylor includes a broad swath of both military and domestic life as he traveled along the Gulf Coast, including several forays ashore. He writes extensively about Veracruz, including the landing, siege, and capture of the city. Lieutenant Raphael Semmes's *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War* focuses heavily on the naval aspect of the war, but he does serve for about a six-month period alongside various Army units. During that period ashore, he accompanied Scott's army inland from Veracruz to Mexico City, giving him an eyewitness account of most of the major battles during the central Mexico campaign. The final journal is *Sea Memories* by James D. Bruell, a sailor in the Navy. His short book centers around movement to Veracruz and the landing at Collado Beach just south

⁶ Henry Bulls Watson, *The Journals of Marine Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson*, ed. Charles R. Smith (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1990); Lt Henry Augustus Wise, USN, *Los Gringos; or, An Inside View of Mexico and California* (London: Richard Bentley, 1849); Joseph W. Revere, *Keel and Saddle: A Retrospect of Forty Years of Military and Naval Service* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872); and Captain of Volunteers, *Alta California: Embracing the Notices of the Climate, Soil, and Agricultural Products of Northern Mexico and the Pacific Seaboard; Also, a History of the Military and Naval Operation of the United States Directed against the Territories of Northern Mexico in the Year 1846–'47* (Philadelphia, PA: H. Packer, 1847).

⁷ Richard McSherry, *El Puchero: or, A Mixed Dish from Mexico, Embracing General Scott's Campaign, with Sketches of Military Life, in Field and Camp, of the Character of the Country, Manners and Ways of the People, etc.* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Grambo, 1850); and Mayne Reid, *Sketches by a Skirmisher: The Mexican War Writings of Capt. Mayne Reid, Co. B, 2nd Regiment of New York Volunteers* (Garland, TX: Descendants of Mexican War Veterans, 1998), 36–39.

of the city. While brief, it does provide a good glimpse into the operation around Veracruz.⁸

There are dozens more journals and diaries from soldiers who served during the Mexican War, many including passing references to naval operations that involved the Marine Corps, but rarely are the Marines mentioned in these works. Often, the soldiers are more concerned with food or complaining about marching than focusing on the details of battles. While there is value in these primary sources in providing context for actions involving the Marines, the books discussed here are the main primary sources relating to the Marines during the war.

Marine Corps-focused Texts

This section addresses monographs on Marine Corps history that include discussions relating to Marines during the Mexican War. The best stand-alone discussion of the Marines during the Mexican War is the occasional paper published by the Marine Corps History and Museums Division. Gabrielle M. Neufeld Santelli does an admirable job discussing Marine participation in each theater of the war. The paper also includes several appendices with names of officers, deaths, and the composition of the armies, among other details. This paper should be the starting point for anyone seeking information on the Marines during the war.⁹

The first set of books are the concise histories of the Marine Corps. These include *A Brief History of the United States Marine Corps* by Norman Hicks, *A Concise History of the Marine Corps, 1775–1969* by William D. Parker, and *The Compact History of the United States Marine Corps* by Philip N. Pierce and Frank O. Hough. The first two titles devote one to two pages to the Marines in the Mexican War, living up to their titles. *The Compact History* is broken down into chapters including vignettes of Marine actions during various wars.

⁸ Fitch W. Taylor, *The Broad Pennant: or, A Cruise in the United States Flagship of the Gulf Squadron, during the Mexican Difficulties; Together with Sketches of the Mexican War, from the Commencement of Hostilities to the Capture of the City of Mexico* (New York: Leavitt, Trow, 1848); Lt Raphael Semmes, USN, *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War* (Cincinnati: Wm. H. Moore, 1851); and James D. Bruell, *Sea Memories: or, Personal Experiences in the U.S. Navy in Peace and War* (Biddeford Pool, ME: published by the author, 1886).

⁹ Santelli, *Marines in the Mexican War*.

Chapter 5 deals with the Mexican War. Each book is good for a quick summary, but not for in-depth analysis.¹⁰

The next set of books are the full-length general histories of the Marine Corps. The oldest of these is M. Almy Aldrich's *History of the United States Marine Corps*, published in 1875. Aldrich spends three chapters on the Mexican War, discussing operations of the Pacific Squadron, Eastern Squadron, and attached to Scott's army. A decade and a half later, Richard S. Collum published a history by the same name in 1890. He reflects Aldrich's organization for the Mexican War by dividing it into the same three topical chapters, but with a briefer discussion than Aldrich. In 1939, Clyde H. Metcalf published *A History of the Marine Corps* with two chapters on the Mexican War. His chapters on the war marked a general improvement from what his predecessors had written. Robert Debs Heinl's 1962 volume *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps* addressed the same topics, but he created a true tome of Marine Corps history. In its 692 pages, he not only discusses operational history but also weaves in Marine Corps lore, traditions, and descriptions of weapons and uniforms, among other colorful additions compared to earlier books. Heinl only devotes one chapter to the Mexican War, but it is a heartier chapter than the combined efforts of what came before.¹¹

Three other sources relate to general Marine Corps histories, but not in the same broad chronological format as the previous grouping. Marc Parrott's *Hazard: Marine on a Mission* focused less on the broad history of the Corps, instead favoring individual vi-

¹⁰ Maj Norman W. Hicks, *A Brief History of the United States Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1961); and Capt William D. Parker, USMCR, *A Concise History of the United States Marine Corps, 1775–1969* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1970); and Philip N. Pierce and Frank O. Hough, *The Compact History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964).

¹¹ M. Almy Aldrich, *History of the United States Marine Corps*, comp. Richard S. Collum (Boston, MA: Henry L. Shepard, 1875), chaps. 10, 11, and 12; Richard S. Collum, *History of the United States Marine Corps* (Philadelphia: I. R. Hamersly, 1890), chaps. 13, 14, and 15; Clyde H. Metcalf, *A History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), chaps. 5 and 6; and Col Robert Debs Heinl, USMC, *Soldiers of the Sea: The United States Marine Corps* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 1962), chap. 2.

gnettes from some of the lesser-known Marine actions throughout history. Taken from the Mexican War, he included a chapter titled “Gillespie and the Golden Shore,” discussing the Marine Archibald H. Gillespie’s actions in California. With a similar focus, Edward J. Evans’s chapter in *The Leathernecks* titled “From the Halls of Montezuma” discusses the Marines during the Battle of Chapultepec and how that ties into the line from the “Marines’ Hymn.” Karl Schuon, who edited *The Leathernecks*, also edited the *US Marine Corps Biographical Dictionary: The Corps’ Fighting Men, What They Did, Where They Served*. It includes some entries relating to the Mexican War.¹²

Among more recent histories, two stand out: Allan R. Millett’s *Semper Fidelis: The History of the Marine Corps* and Merrill L. Bartlett and Jack Sweetman’s *Leathernecks: An Illustrated History of the United States Marine Corps*. Respected historian Allan Millett does an admirable job tackling the full scope of Marine Corps history. He does not devote a full chapter to the Mexican War as some earlier works did, but instead he places the Mexican War within the larger context of preserving the Corps under Archibald Henderson’s guidance. Bartlett and Sweetman’s work follows the traditional narrative seen in some of the earlier works, but mimics Millett’s formatting of placing the Mexican War within a chapter relating to Henderson’s tenure as Commandant of the Marine Corps. The standout aspect of Bartlett and Sweetman’s book is the images and artwork included that add a new layer to the Marine Corps’ narrative.¹³

General Histories

The Mexican War historiography has not traditionally focused much on the Marine Corps or naval aspects of the war. However, some texts do address the Corps or

related topics in more depth. The first half dozen or so general histories published in the two years following the end of the war in 1848 were often robust works, but none of them mentioned the Marines. General Quitman was referenced; but even in their sections on Chapultepec, the Marines were missing. One outlier was Army general Cadmus M. Wilcox with his *History of the Mexican War*, published in 1892, which did provide some references to the Marines at Chapultepec. A century after the war, things began to change with a new flurry of Mexican War histories being published in time for the war’s centennial. The 1950 book *The Story of the Mexican War* by Robert Selph Henry sparked another spate of publishing on the war. Henry does make some references to the Marines, but they are in passing only. Numerous other general histories on the war were published during this period, but none had significant reference to the Corps.¹⁴

By the late 1960s, Mexican War histories regularly mentioned the Marine Corps, especially relating to the Battle of Chapultepec. Charles Dufour’s *The Mexican War: A Compact History, 1846–1848* is one of the better books published during this era. He includes some discussion of the Marines as well as Watson’s battalion. However, a few years later, K. Jack Bauer published *The Mexican War*, which has a stronger naval theme, including Marine Corps references. This is understandable, because he wrote his dissertation on the naval operations during the war. Bauer’s book remains one of the best on the war with engaging, colorful, yet wonderfully detailed descriptions of the locations and battles throughout the conflict. Bauer included about a dozen different references to the Marines throughout the book, making it the single best general history relating to the Corps. Following Bauer, John S. D. Eisenhower wrote a similar, but somewhat expanded volume on the war called *So Far from God*. While a solid history of the war, it lacks the same emphasis on the Marines seen in Bauer. Eisenhower’s biography, *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott*, also includes some discussion of the Marine Corps.

¹² Marc Parrott, *Hazard: Marines on a Mission* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962); Edward J. Evans, “From the Halls of Montezuma,” in *The Leathernecks: An Informal History of the U.S. Marine Corps*, ed. Karl Schuon (New York: Franklin Watts, 1963); and Karl Schuon, *US Marine Corps Biographical Dictionary: The Corps’ Fighting Men, What They Did, Where They Served* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1963).

¹³ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1980); and Merrill L. Bartlett and Jack Sweetman, *Leathernecks: An Illustrated History of the United States Marine Corps* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018).

¹⁴ Gen Cadmus M. Wilcox, *History of the Mexican War*, ed. Mary Rachel Wilcox (Washington, DC: Church News Publishing, 1892); and Robert Selph Henry, *The Story of the Mexican War* (New York: De Capo, 1950).

Finally, the most recent history of the Mexican War, published in 2017, is Peter Guardino's *The Dead March*, which follows Eisenhower's pattern of referencing the Corps but does not have any significant naval or Marine Corps themes.¹⁵

There are several other Mexican War books that reference the Corps, but most offer only the briefest mention. A few that may be of interest include *The Training Ground* by Martin Dugard, which looks at the influence of the Mexican War experience on future Civil War officers. *North America Divided* by Seymour V. Connor and Odie B. Faulk mentions the Marines supporting Quitman in Mexico City and when he is installed as the governor of the city. Finally, *Invading Mexico* by Joseph Wheelan discusses the Marines during Chapultepec. Although these are some of the better examples, the discussion of the Marine Corps during the war is limited, at best, in most general works.¹⁶

Texts with a Naval/ Marine Corps Theme

A portion of the Mexican War historiography includes books and articles that focus on naval or Marine Corps themes. While few in numbers, they stand out as filling important gaps in the historiography. Unsurprisingly, the best book is K. Jack Bauer's *Surfboats and Horse Marines*, which is based on his dissertation. It is no wonder that his later general history has such a strong theme related to the Corps. The book discusses naval and Marine operations along both coasts and during Scott's campaign to Mexico City. Investigating another aspect of the naval operations in California, Werner Marti's *Messenger of Destiny* discusses Archibald Gillespie's role in Marine Corps action. A final book is *Montgomery and the Portsmouth* by

Fred Blackburn Rogers, which addresses the efforts of Commander John Barrien Montgomery and his ship in California during the Mexican War.¹⁷

There are also a number of articles and papers that focus on the naval theme within the war. In the collection of papers presented at the Bi-National Conference on the War Between Mexico and the United States, Paul Clark Jr. and Edward Moseley presented on the landing at Veracruz and its significance in the larger scope of military history. Peter Gerhard published an article on Baja California during the war in the *Pacific Historical Review*, examining the naval actions in that region, which are often overshadowed by the more well-known conflicts in Alta California. Supplementing this latter article, a short reprint of naval sketches of the war in California was published in 1939, providing images contemporary to the war.¹⁸

The last trio of naval topic sources were compiled by Philip Syng Physick Conner, the son of Commodore David Conner of the Home Squadron in the Gulf of Mexico. The first published pamphlet is *Commodore Conner: Mexican War*, which discusses the commodore's role in the war and his conflict with Commodore Mathew C. Perry. Next is *The Home Squadron under Commodore Conner in the War with Mexico*, which is a longer text looking at the whole action of the Home Squadron under Conner during the war. Finally, he published *The Castle of San Juan de Ulloa and the Topsy-turvyists*, which uses part of the Winfield Scott autobiography with an analysis of the castle at Veracruz leading up to the invasion. This grouping is an odd assortment of primary and secondary sources,

¹⁵ Charles L. Dufour, *The Mexican War: A Compact History, 1846–1848* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1968); Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846–1848*; John S. D. Eisenhower, *So Far from God: The U.S. War with Mexico, 1846–1848* (New York: Random House, 1989); John S. D. Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott* (New York: Free Press, 1997); and Guardino, *The Dead March*.

¹⁶ Martin Dugard, *The Training Ground: Grant, Lee, Sherman, and Davis in the Mexican War, 1846–1848* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008); Seymour V. Connor and Odie B. Faulk, *North America Divided: The Mexican War, 1846–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); and Joseph Wheelan, *Invading Mexico: America's Continental Dream and the Mexican War, 1846–1848* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2007).

¹⁷ K. Jack Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines: U.S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846–1848* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 1969); Werner H. Marti, *Messenger of Destiny: The California Adventures, 1846–1847*, of Archibald H. Gillespie, *U. S. Marine Corps* (San Francisco, CA: John Howell Books, 1960); and Fred Blackburn Rogers, *Montgomery and the Portsmouth* (Portsmouth, NH: Portsmouth Marine Society, 1990).

¹⁸ Paul Clark Jr. and Edward Moseley, "Veracruz: A Grand Design D-Day, 1847," in *Papers of the Bi-National Conference on the War between Mexico and the United States* (Brownsville, TX: Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, National Park Service, 1997); Peter Gerhard, "Baja California in the Mexican War, 1846–1848," *Pacific Historical Review* 14, no. 4 (December 1945): 418–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3634682>; and William H. Meyers, *Naval Sketches of the War in California: Reproducing Twenty-eight Drawings Made in 1846–47* (New York: Random House, 1939).

but it does provide an interesting insight into Conner's actions as commodore.¹⁹

A final set of sources that might be useful to researchers reading about the Mexican War in general and the Marine Corps during the war are a set of three annotated bibliographies. First, *An Annotated Reading List of the United States Marine Corps History* includes a good selection of texts published prior to 1971. Second, the Army Military History Research Collection at Carlisle Barracks published a bibliography of its collection in 1973. Finally, *The Mexican-American War: An Annotated Bibliography*, published in 1981 is a treasure trove of resources, primary and secondary, relating to the war. It is broken up into sections based on time period and/or topic. While none of these

bibliographies have any sources from the last few decades, they are somewhat limited, but each provides a valuable starting point to find primary and secondary sources to begin delving into this topic.²⁰

This historiography of the Marine Corps during the Mexican War is a small but rich collection of primary documents, books, and articles that will captivate anyone interested in military history. This effort to summarize a majority of the sources available is not all-inclusive, but it is as comprehensive as possible. Hopefully, this will provide future historians, professional and recreational, a variety of works to begin reading and exploring both the Mexican War and the history of the Marine Corps.

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¹⁹ Philip Syng Physick Conner, *Commodore Conner: (Note on "Maclay's History of the United States Navy" Mexican War)* (Philadelphia, PA: n.p., 1895); Philip Syng Physick Conner, *The Home Squadron under Commodore Conner in the War with Mexico* (Philadelphia, PA: n.p., 1896); and Philip Syng Physick Conner, *The Castle of San Juan de Ulloa and the Topsy-turvyists* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1897).

²⁰ Jack B. Hilliard and LtCol Harold A. Bivins, USMCR, *An Annotated Reading List of United States Marine Corps History* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1971); Elizabeth R. Snoke, *The Mexican War: A Military History Research Collection Bibliography*, Special Bibliography 7 (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Research Collection, 1973); and Norman E. Tutorow, ed., *The Mexican-American War: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).

BOOK REVIEWS

Ellen A. Ahlness, PhD

Stories of Faith and Courage from the Marines. By Lieutenant Colonel Larkin Spivey. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2021. Pp. 260. \$19.99, paperback.)

The year 2021 was a particularly relevant time for texts dealing with topics of faith, courage, and inspiration; and with Americans now in the third year of a global pandemic, they seem just as necessary. *Stories of Faith and Courage from the Marines* fills this need during a challenging time. The book is divided into six categories and an introduction, with each category containing daily readings focused on a specific conflict. Within these categories there are 13 subcategories that examine specific fronts in a conflict and different forms of warfare. Altogether, there are 180 stories included in the devotional text.

It is certainly valuable that the text includes historical summaries and maps before each section so readers can familiarize themselves with specific subject areas. Readers may not necessarily expect this level of context and historical summary in a devotional, and their inclusion makes for a more well-rounded book. Moreover, there are many photographs that enhance the daily devotional experience.

The average devotional or daily entry provides a specific context of introducing characters and a particular challenge, a short excerpt by someone who was present at the event or who reflected on the challenge, a reflection, and a summary of the lesson learned from the challenge given in the author's own words. Each daily reading also contains a biblical excerpt that connects to the reflection. Some readers may approach

the book assuming that all of the stories are written entirely in the words of contributors or individuals present at specific events. However, each devotional typically only has a short paragraph or excerpt that is from the Marine, leader, or soldier—the reflections and context-setting are written by retired lieutenant colonel Spivey. Additionally, excerpts quoted in the book are not necessarily from involved individuals, either. Sometimes they come from reference materials, including existing books or oral histories. Each daily reading is no more than one page in length. The longest individual entry, consisting of several pages, offers context and history prefacing a particular front. Of the chapters, the Vietnam War is the longest, followed closely by the Korean War and World War II. Operation Desert Storm, meanwhile, is the shortest section.

Material from the World War II, Korea, and Vietnam chapters was borrowed from the author's previous books, while the stories from conflicts in the Middle East were written solely for this book and have been previously unpublished. The book bridges faith and inspiration in the context of service to the United States (specifically the service of Marines). The book is geared toward religious faith, though there could have been opportunities to articulate stories of faith and courage that more explicitly center on the faith and courage soldiers provide to one another for their mutual survival and wellbeing.

Spivey has a long military career in the Marine Corps and also has teaching experience at the Citadel in military history and is now a full-time writer with active involvement in the Anglican church. He engages regularly in media and communications. His au-

Dr. Ellen A. Ahlness is a board member of the Washington State non-profit Education Maksud. She is a former Inuktitut Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow and William H. Gates Fellow in Innovation and Entrepreneurship scholar at the University of Washington and currently researches Arctic geopolitical and environmental strategy.

thor's biography shows his track record in publishing other books about the power of faith in combat, and details his belief that a providential hand in American history is strong, noting in the text that "it is as if God has perfected freedom in America" (p. 55). At the same time, there are references to the need to respect the activities and responsibilities that come with the privileges and benefits of one's leadership status or nationality.

What is perhaps the text's most significant strength is its historical overviews, which provide necessary context for individual stories that can enhance and help create a bond between readers and Marines of every generation. At the same time, there seems to be several opportunities for connections between feelings of sadness and guilt, especially survivor's guilt, and particularly relevant religious passages. Occasionally there seems to be a slight disconnect between the

story shared and the reflective devotional quoted at the end of a day's reading.

There seems to be a strong discursive link between the idea of priests and ministers as "commissioned officers" of religious bodies who need the help, support, and loyalty of "enlisted" individuals (parishioners) in return. Similarly, there seems to be a presentation of military service as an inherently spiritual endeavor. The text likens Christians undergoing spiritual threats to Marines facing physical threats on distant battlefields.

The very last excerpt is chosen well; it considers the value of forecasting into the future and the possibilities that individuals can imagine as they consider the rest of their lives. This reminder that there is indeed a future is comforting during this time of uncertainty and reminds the reader that the text is, fundamentally, about hope.

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Fred H. Allison, PhD, USMCR (Ret)

Three War Marine Hero: General Raymond G. Davis. By Colonel Richard D. Camp Jr. (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2020. Pp. 264. \$34.95, cloth.)

How many former aides get to write a book about the officer for whom they worked as an aide? Retired colonel Richard Camp Jr. had this unique privilege. He served as General Raymond G. Davis's aide while Davis commanded the 3d Marine Division (1968–69) in Vietnam, the third of the three wars in which Davis served. In World War II, Davis commanded an air defense battery at Guadalcanal and Cape Gloucester and then took command of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, in time to take it to Peleliu. In Korea, he commanded 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, during the Inchon/Seoul and Chosin campaigns.

Davis is, in this reviewer's opinion, one of the Marine Corps' great warriors, an inspirational and innovative leader, and a superb tactician. He was awarded a Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism at Peleliu and two Silver Stars and a Medal of Honor for gallantry and extraordinary leadership during his service in Korea. His career ended in 1972 after serving as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Camp, a prolific and knowledgeable chronicler of Marine Corps combat history, masterfully blends oral history with official records and secondary sources to produce a remarkably fresh and engaging combat history of Davis. In so doing, he effectively portrays Davis as the superb combat leader that he was. Davis comes to life through the spoken word in the liberal use of oral history, giving the reader a feel for Davis the man.

This book is fast-paced and hits hard; it engages the reader and moves quickly from one action to

the next. Camp couches the oral history with superb context to set the scene and the significance of the combat. The reader gets a wealth of information on personalities, weapons, plans, and conditions. Often skimmed over in other texts, enemy tactics are discussed in detail, which makes for a comprehensive understanding of the combat setting. This is especially true of the Peleliu and Chosin battles.

Camp's portrayal of Davis's command of the 3d Marine Division in Vietnam is especially insightful. The reader learns of Davis's push to get the division air-mobile and out of static positional defense. He had to "go to war" with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, but in so doing, he got more flexible aviation support for mobile operations in western I Corps, including Operation Dewey Canyon.

General Davis would not want to bring attention or hero worship on himself; he was extremely humble. And this book does not do that. It is a balanced and thoroughly researched study of Davis's role in three wars that justifies the hero characterization in the book's title. It is good that the Marine Corps should remember its best and why they were the best. In writing *Three War Marine Hero*, Camp provides a great service by recalling Davis's combat service for posterity. The lessons and examples related in this account are well worth recalling and applying as appropriate in today's Corps.

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Robert M. Dienesch, PhD

Winning a Future War: War Gaming and Victory in the Pacific War. By Norman Friedman. (Washington, DC: Naval History and Heritage Command, Department of the Navy, 2018. Pp. 276. \$63.00, cloth; free, e-book.)

Any military, no matter the country or branch of Service, has fundamentally two tasks. The first is to be prepared every day to defend and protect the nation. The second is to train and prepare to fight the next war. Conceptually, the latter role is the most difficult to achieve. With changing technologies, evolving social conditions in society, fluctuating political forces, and a notoriously difficult challenge to find sufficient funding, the preparation for war is often a great challenge. It is far greater when the challenge revolves around training future naval officers to wage major wars. While training exercises in small groups is possible, large fleets and actions spanning thousands of miles of oceans are costly and potentially provocative to potential adversaries. The challenge therefore is to find a way to give new officers experience with the complicated tactical and strategic challenges of fleet command. The best solution to this revolves around two things: the use of history as a learning tool and the use of wargames to simulate combat. Not surprisingly, the U.S. Naval Academy has been an active proponent for wargames for a very long time.

Yet, the scale of these training exercises and their importance not just to future officers but to the shape and performance of the fleet is not widely known or discussed. That is why Dr. Norman Friedman's recent work *Winning a Future War: War Gaming and Victory in the Pacific War* is a valuable resource in understanding the scale and importance of wargaming. Friedman

is a scholar with a great deal of experience in naval matters. Known for his skill in naval history and ship design, he is an award-winning author who brings the experience of more than 40 books on naval and strategic issues to bear on this subject. The reader is certainly well rewarded by this experience. Examining the role of the Naval War College and its wargames in the development of the officers of the U.S. Navy, Friedman argues that the Naval War College took on the role not just of an educational institution but also of a think tank, allowing for the development of new ideas in doctrine and operations and helping to shape the training of officers and the creation of the elements essential to win the next war. Experience in the exercises, Friedman maintains, helped to shape ship formations, carrier design, amphibious operational doctrine, and of course strategic thinking.

Across seven chapters, Friedman examines the incredible tapestry of people and their interaction with the wargame process. Starting with the first chapter's study of the naval transformation in the interwar years, including discussions of the strategic problems, naval arms control, and ship design, Friedman begins to build the case for the incredibly dynamic role that the Naval War College played in the evolution of the Navy before 1941. He then proceeds to lay out the relationship of the college to gaming and the relationship between wargames and planning for future wars (chapters 2 and 3). Chapter 4 focuses on the connections between naval aviation and the wargaming experience. The fifth chapter examines the impact of wargaming on cruisers in the Navy. The final two chapters deal with the end of wargaming's think-tank role in the years leading up to the war and finally examines the reality of World War II in comparison to the wargame planning. The text is rounded

Dr. Robert M. Dienesch is a specialist in twentieth-century American history, especially in the areas of national security issues and military and intelligence history. An alumni of the University of New Brunswick, Canada, he is known for his work on American submarine operations in the Second World War and his research on the development of space-based reconnaissance during the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration. Dienesch is the author of *Eyeing the Red Storm: Eisenhower and the First Attempt to Build a Spy Satellite* (2016).

off with a fascinating set of appendices that provide detailed specifics of the wargame experience, including discussions of rules for things like bombing, torpedo attacks, etc.

Norman Friedman's detailed work here pays handsome dividends. It links together conceptual changes for fleet operations with technological innovation and strategic thinking using the glue of the wargame experience. In the process, the innovative and important role of wargaming comes to the forefront. This is especially the case when the reader remembers that both amphibious and carrier operations played a decisive role in World War II in both the Pacific and Atlantic theaters of operations. American naval capability in these areas was certainly shaped by this conceptual thinking and placed the U.S. Navy ahead of many nations in these areas. Certainly, carrier operations were directly shaped by these learning exercises. Carrier design elements, including issues like deck design and the ability to repair flight deck damage at sea and aircraft capacity and handling, were certainly impacted by the lessons learned from wargaming and evolved rapidly during the interwar period. Eventually the *Essex*-class aircraft carrier, which became decisive in the Pacific, was the physical result, but it was matched with doctrinal and training evolution. This included issues related to pilot training, especially allowing the United States to rapidly replace pilots over the course of the war. This served the Navy well.

The important subtext for Friedman's book is

the creation of a group awareness within the confines of these future naval officers. Reminiscent of the German general staff system on land as it developed initially, American naval officers learned not just strategic concepts and ideas relating to naval aviation or amphibious warfare; it also instilled within them a kind of group thought. Having exercised together in this way, American naval officers were able to achieve what staff rides did for German officers. They were all aware of the key elements of carrier and amphibious warfare. More important, they were able to take a measure of their own abilities and those of their fellow naval officers. The result was the creation of a cohesive conceptualization of how the Navy needed to perform in the future. They also had a measure of each other and how they would react within the constraints of the next war. When we remember that all the major naval officers of the next war went through this process as well as those that shaped strategic planning, we understand that the greatest achievement of naval wargaming was the creation of a collective understanding.

This reviewer cannot recommend Norman Friedman's book enough to naval historians and those with a love of military history. Densely written and well researched, it presents what may be the most complete understanding of the impact of naval wargaming on the Navy. As such it is a pivotal work in understanding the evolution of the Navy in the interwar years and how it was able to achieve so much in World War II.

A. R. B. Linderman, PhD

No Bridges Blown: With the OSS Jedburghs in Nazi-Occupied France. By William B. Dreux. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020. Pp. 346. \$125.00, cloth; \$22.00, paperback; \$17.99, e-book.)

As might be guessed from the title, little goes as planned in William Dreux's *No Bridges Blown*, his memoir of serving as a Jedburgh officer in France. Jedburgh teams consisted of three members: a French officer, an American or British officer, and a radio operator. They parachuted into occupied France shortly after the Allied landings at Normandy to link up with resistance forces, harry German forces, and provide valuable intelligence to the advancing Allies. At least, that was the idea.

Dreux's team landed without much trouble. His troublesome ankle was not injured in the landing and, after a few tense moments, they managed to identify their resistance reception committee as friends, rather than foes, and thereby avoided a firefight. What followed was a kind of tragicomedy in which the team attempted to reach its assigned targets. The problem was that the resistance was highly localized, a patchwork of cells, often from rival groups. It is no easy feat to get passed from one group to another in order to cross the countryside and avoid detection by the Germans. But in spite of the challenges the team experienced, at times it seems like a lark, with French villagers constantly pulling out alcohol to share with the Jedburghs. At one point, the men found themselves drinking and singing with a priest who sheltered them for the night.

Ultimately, the team failed to destroy any of the 12 bridges they were assigned, in part because American forces advanced quickly enough to overtake them before resistance forces could get properly organized. One village was "liberated" by the team, but only because, unbeknownst to them, as they entered one side

of the village, the Germans withdrew out the other. But it was hardly all fun and games. At one point, a wounded German prisoner died in the team's custody. In another instance, two young men—boys, really—in Dreux's resistance patrol became casualties. Most haunting for Dreux, he ignored a woman whose husband was grievously wounded, passing by to get care for his own troops. While Dreux's team all made it out alive, other Jedburghs they knew were not so lucky.

Nor were some of the civilians with whom the Jedburghs worked. Two members of Dreux's reception committee were killed by the Gestapo a few days after Dreux's team left the area. In another instance, a local resistance group kidnapped a *Schutzstaffel* (SS) officer; in retaliation, the SS entered a village—not, as it turned out, the village of the kidnappers, as they believed—and killed 600 people, most of them women and children. Dreux notes that

the official report covering our operations during the next few weeks states that the Maquis groups [French resistance] in our sector took more than fourteen hundred prisoners and destroyed over one hundred trucks. As so often with Army reports this statement is misleading. Many of the prisoners must have been service troops, and most of the trucks were probably destroyed by American artillery or even by our Air Corps. The pilots and bombardiers did not always miss the target, particularly if there was no flak. (p. 229)

But if the Jedburghs did not live up to their full potential, why not? Dreux blamed poor plans which, among

Dr. A. R. B. Linderman is a historian of modern Britain, the British Empire, and irregular warfare. He is the author of *Rediscovering Irregular Warfare: Colin Gubbins and the Origins of Britain's Special Operations Executive* (2016).

other things, indicated a weak grasp of the state of the resistance and were more concerned with politics than military effectiveness. “What got us, sir,” he complained to a colonel back in London, “was not so much that our reception committee had no contacts with Brittany—that was bad enough—but as it turned out it looked as if they had orders not to let us get in touch with the [rival Communist] F. T. P. there.” The colonel had a different take: “First, at one time a second landing in Brittany was contemplated. That was changed. Second, the Americans got there much sooner than anticipated. Third, when they did get there they found a lot more [Germans] than expected” (pp. 286–87). In other words, war is complicated and its fog means nothing is ever certain.

In theory, the Jedburghs were supposed to help alleviate such uncertainty, and sometimes they did; for example, scouting routes for advancing American infantry. But often, the Jedburghs were victims of uncertainty, having to contend with villagers who claimed to be eyewitnesses to diametrically opposed information. Deficient planning, faulty information, squabbling resistance forces, and dead civilians: this is hardly material from which to fashion a defense of the Jedburghs. Can one read Dreux’s account and still justify the use of special operators and resistance forces in their century or our own?

Dreux was not a narrator inclined to glory. “This morning I . . . had gone into action,” he noted at one point, “but there had been nothing dramatic and hero-

ic, and it had all ended with my standing over a frightened enemy bandaged with a blood-soaked towel, a man who would soon be a corpse” (p. 206). Reflecting on the beautiful Chartres Cathedral and the medieval citizens who built it, Dreux concluded, “I had to remind myself of the squalor and misery of those days, the callousness and hypocrisy, the ignorance. Yet we still had all of that—except that our ignorance had expanded with our knowledge. We also had Buchenwald and Auschwitz, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki” (p. 319).

Amid such darkness, are there any grounds for hope, existentially or at least for the utility of special forces? Describing some of the French villagers who met his team while they were behind enemy lines, Dreux recalled, “I had the odd feeling that to these people in their conquered land we and our weapons were the long awaited sign, the first flash of light in the darkness that had enveloped them for four years. And I realized that the farmers who had come to the barn with their Calvados bottles were moved by the same feelings” (p. 153). Or, as one officer noted of Dreux’s partner, “He understands the irresistible power of a cause. . . . Because he does, because he himself believes, men will listen to him. And they will follow him. . . . Without such an ideal, all those German 88s, and your Sherman tanks too, they’re not worth much” (p. 228). No matter how many bridges were or were not blown, the mere presence of the Jedburghs kindled the spirit of resistance and helped restore the dignity of a free people too long in captivity. That is worth something.

Commander Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret)

The Fighting Corsairs: The Men of Marine Fighting Squadron 215 in the Pacific during WWII. By Jeff Dacus. (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2021. Pp. 295. \$27.95, cloth; \$19.95, paperback; \$19.00, e-book.)

Many books and articles have been written about the Marine Corps' Vought F4U Corsair fighter aircraft squadrons in the Pacific. There has even been an enduring television series on what qualifies as the most well-known squadron of all, Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington's Black Sheep of Marine Fighter Squadron 214 (VMF-214). This new book concerns one of the rank-and-file units, which had its own cadre of colorful and successful Marine aviators, one of whom is of admittedly personal interest to this reviewer, as we share the same hometown: First Lieutenant Robert M. Hanson, who scored 25 kills in the F4U Corsair, the most of any aviator.

There is no denying VMF-214's colorful story, and retired Marine master sergeant Dacus's deeply researched account is welcome, with some technical and stylistic reservations. His somewhat rough writing style eventually smooths out by the middle of the book, although his starting each chapter with odd quotations without telling the reader the background of whom he is quoting is annoying.

For example, there is Group Captain Geoffrey Leonard Cheshire, who received the Victoria Cross, the top British award for valor, was a highly decorated Royal Air Force (RAF) bomber pilot, definitely a highly skilled military aviator, whose record is cited in a history of a U.S. Marine Corps fighter outfit in the Pacific. The author begins one chapter with a quote by Adolph G. Malan, known as "Sailor" because of his

prewar merchantman service, and one of the RAF's first World War II aces, which Dacus does not explain. Erwin Rommel was one of Nazi Germany's highest-ranking and most respected field commanders, known as the "Desert Fox," and a ground commander whose fame extends to this day. Then there is Erich Hartmann, the highest-scoring ace of all time flying as part of the German *Luftwaffe*, with 352 kills in Russia and the western front, none of which is included in the author's brief note beginning chapter 13. The list goes on. The author should have offered a separate appendix with short biographies of the individuals he saw fit to use to introduce each chapter. This reviewer wonders if the editor had suggested that addition.

The photographs are poorly printed within the text, allowing many details of aircraft to be somewhat obscured, and the few maps supplied from other sources are small and sometimes difficult to read. However, as many maps are from Marine publications, they may have been free from copyright concerns, a requirement by many publishers.

This could have been a much better book if the author had been offered and taken guidance in handling his subject's history and vernacular. He writes about a period in World War II that involved a number of Corsair squadrons in the Pacific that were dealing with an unfortunately high number of pilot losses or injuries that were really not the fault of their big complex fighter, early models of which had rough areas that were soon addressed and cleaned up.

One of the most enjoyable portions of the book is how the author describes the development of the squadron, how the pilots came to know each other and became a fighting unit as they went up against the still-dangerous Imperial Japanese Army and Navy squadrons that had taken hold of the Pacific right

Cdr Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret), has been the editor of the "Professional Reading" column in *Naval Aviation News* since 1982 and was a writer and editor of *Approach*, the Navy and Marine Corps safety magazine, from 1984 to 2000. He is the author of *U.S. Marine Corps Aviation since 1912*, 4th ed. (2009); *Israeli Fighter Aces: The Definitive History* (1997); *F-8 Crusader Units of the Vietnam War* (1998, 2009); *F-8 Crusader vs MiG-17, Vietnam 1965–1972* (2014); and *Whitey: The Story of Rear Admiral E. L. Feightner, a Navy Fighter Ace* (2014).

after Pearl Harbor in early December 1941. We meet the young, inexperienced aviators, as well as the up-and-coming younger pilots, and go through their experiences as they develop into the fighters who took the war to the enemy, losing some of their number and their aircraft in doing so. Their time on leave in Sydney, Australia, is also described well, as the Aussies welcomed their American comrades and took the young Americans into their hearts, offering them comfort and solace, renewing their fighting spirit before they returned to the front.

Chapter 11 is one of the longest in the book and gives a running description of what it was like to fly

and fight a midwar escort mission against the Mitsubishi A6M Zero long-range fighter aircraft, many of whose Imperial Navy pilots remained skilled in using their once-top-line fighters against the Marines' F4Us that were completely counter to their enemy's design philosophies.

As the book heads toward its final chapters, Dacus's descriptions of almost-daily multiplane engagements take on lives of their own. And once we get past the chapter quotations, we get into the meat of the book and its purpose, namely, to tell a squadron's story and those of the aviators who manned the unit and its Corsairs at a desperate time.

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Sarah E. Patterson, PhD

Rain of Steel: Mitscher's Task Force 58, Ugaki's Thunder Gods, and the Kamikaze War off Okinawa. By Stephen L. Moore. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2020. Pp. 426. \$39.95, cloth.)

Recent historiography has taken pains to relate both the horrors and the significance of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, the final major conflict of World War II. Works by Rodney Earl Walton, Saul David, Joseph Wheelan, and others taking on this battle have generally either focused primarily on the ground invasion by elements of the U.S. Tenth Army or they have split their attention between the intense ground combat and the naval battles occurring just off shore. Other authors have focused on the U.S. Navy in the Pacific more broadly, considering the history of naval battles in the Pacific theater at large. Stephen L. Moore's *Rain of Steel: Mitscher's Task Force 58, Ugaki's Thunder Gods, and the Kamikaze War off Okinawa* is one of a few books that takes a slightly different perspective on the battle, highlighting the deadly naval and air battles taking place over Okinawa and Japan even as Tenth Army soldiers and Marines painfully fought their way through the island. Moore's book tells the story of Task Force 58 from about February to June 1945 as these U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aviators supported Operation Iceberg, the planned invasion of Okinawa by U.S. forces, and battled the insistent threat from multiple waves of Japanese kamikaze pilots, both through defensive radar picket stations and offensive raids on Japanese airfields from which kamikaze pilots might originate. While *Rain of Steel* primarily emphasizes the American perspective of this battle, it incorporates discussion of Japanese strategic choices and the perspectives of Japanese military leaders, explaining how leaders on both sides arrived at certain

choices, which had important consequences for the outcome of this battle.

While Moore argues that Admiral Marc Andrew Mitscher was vital to the continued development of naval aviation in the years after World War II, his reasoning could be laid out more clearly. The evidence included in this book compellingly shows the significance of Navy and Marine Corps aviators to the success of the U.S. military in this battle, but it does not entirely explain why Moore argues that Mitscher was more significant than any other Navy leader involved in the Pacific theater. Moore credits Mitscher with bringing about “‘revolutionary change’ in bringing aviation to the forefront for the U.S. Navy,” and states that “Pete Mitscher’s role in advancing naval aviation could not be denied,” but does not include substantive explanation for these assertions (p. 359). While Mitscher was clearly a significant influence on Task Force 58 and generally on lessons learned from World War II, the author could go further in connecting Mitscher’s specific actions with increased interest in naval aviation in the postwar era. Moore also hints at the growing tension between the leadership of ground forces and those of the Navy as naval casualties climbed as a result of wave after wave of Japanese air attacks—but does not go into much detail. Further discussion on how this tension played into choices being made by both ground and naval military leaders would have been an interesting addition to the story. In spite of these minor issues, Moore’s book provides a good exploration of the Battle of Okinawa from a naval and naval aviation viewpoint.

Moore’s writing is engaging and draws readers into the intense air battles in which Task Force 58 took part to support the Okinawa invasion. He incorporates interviews, diaries, and letters from Task Force

Dr. Sarah E. Patterson is a research historian for a government contractor who is currently researching gender and the U.S. Marine Corps from World War I to the Korean War, as well as prisoners of war and those missing in action in the Pacific theater of World War II.

58 veterans, including their voices and perspectives. Additionally, Moore weaves in the voices of several Japanese pilots who participated on the opposing side of this battle. The combination creates the possibility of seeing some of the motivations behind both parties and the points where those conflicting motives intersected at Okinawa. The author also includes a number of photographs that illustrate the ferocity of these battles and makes the individual anecdotes and interviews feel more alive for the reader. Moore takes the time to explain how these images fit into the narrative.

The book is organized in a mostly chronological manner and, where many books on this battle become

a bit muddled and confused due to the large number of events happening simultaneously, Moore's book maintains a more linear and easier-to-follow narrative than many. The book's readability lends itself well to assignment in courses about World War II, especially those centered on the Pacific theater. Overall, Moore's book is definitely worth reading. It provides a clear telling of Task Force 58's story at Okinawa and the incredible obstacles these individuals faced, and it incorporates the memories and insights of veterans who lived through these battles.

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Lawrence Provost

Victory Without Peace: The United States Navy in European Waters, 1919–1924. By William N. Still Jr. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018. Pp. 392. \$73.00, cloth; \$42.63, e-book.)

William N. Still Jr.'s stellar work *Victory Without Peace: The United States Navy in European Waters, 1919–1924* is one of the few books written on the role of the U.S. Navy in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. It is also one of the most in-depth texts on the topic and incorporates the historical mission of the Navy in its deployment in European waters in the postwar period. *Victory Without Peace* thoroughly covers the dual logistics of what it took for the Navy to achieve demobilization while maintaining a strong peacekeeping presence in various waters around Europe, all the while dealing with almost continuous political intrigue. In missions that could almost seem to have been set up for failure due to logistical constraints and political strife, the Navy performed superbly.

The post–World War I missions of the Navy outlasted, albeit by a short time, that of the American Army of Occupation in the Rhineland with missions that were much broader in scope. The Navy did participate in three types of missions postwar. The first was showing the flag, a mainstay of Navy operations that notifies foreign powers that the United States is offshore and projecting strength. Similar to showing the flag, the second mission was coercive, gunboat diplomacy where the actual threat of force was more formalized in response to a specific crisis or threat.

Both of these operations, however, increasingly gave way to humanitarian missions—the third and final type of mission. These humanitarian operations are a reminder that post–World War I Europe was one of famine and chaos. Herbert Hoover, an American hu-

manitarian and future president, played a large role in determining where American relief was needed, and he worked closely with the Navy to achieve such ends. Other historical figures also appear in *Victory Without Peace*, such as another future president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was serving as assistant secretary of the Navy during the entirety of World War I and for nearly two years afterward.

The author writes without agenda save chronicling that the United States, through the power of its Navy, can be a force for good in the world. While the primary role of the Navy is to deter wars, or in the absence of that, to fight and win wars, the Navy also performed well in providing aid to starving civilians and evacuating refugees when necessary. The Navy continues this legacy of being a force for good up to the present day.

Aside from the portrayal of the Navy as a powerful weapon of military and even humanitarian policy, *Victory Without Peace* is a masterful text in the logistical complexities of such missions while drawing down in nearly every area, most especially personnel, ships, and funds. Navy units, made up of the active force and activated reservists, were on both sea and land, while the overall stretch of the Navy actually increased. Few officials, if any, foresaw this, including chief of naval operations Admiral William S. Benson.

This stretching of operations was compounded by the fact that many of the Navy's operations took place in the immediate vicinity of not only nations that had been defeated in World War I, but also nations such as Austria, Turkey, and Russia that had seen their empires dismantled. The Navy was just about everywhere in European waters immediately after World War I, from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea and even the Baltic Sea. Its ships docked on the coasts of cities such

Lawrence Provost is a chaplain candidate (second lieutenant) in the U.S. Army National Guard. He completed 20 years of enlisted service and is currently a student in the master's of divinity program at Liberty University in Virginia.

as Constantinople, Murmansk, Riga in Latvia, and other locales. *Victory Without Peace* is a reminder that, in a sense, the Navy is never at peace. The American fleet always has a role in the projection of power, especially with the advent of air operations.

Victory Without Peace is organized chronologically and by theme, with topics primarily being geographical locations of operations in the waters in and around Europe. *Victory Without Peace* is thoroughly researched and uses government documents and letters, as well as newspaper and magazine accounts of the time to

make its case. Author William Still has published an extensive academic work in *Victory Without Peace* and achieves success in not only thoroughly documenting his extensive research but presenting it in a way that is clear and concise to the reader. *Victory Without Peace* will undoubtedly serve as the principal and central source for naval post–World War I operations. The book is highly recommended for anyone interested in post–World War I and interwar period history, peacekeeping, and the projection of naval power in support of national objectives.

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Neville Taylor

On Contested Shores: The Evolving Role of Amphibious Operations in the History of Warfare. Edited by Timothy Heck and B. A. Friedman. (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2020. Pp. 430. Free, paperback; free, e-book.)

There have been decades of speculation about the future of amphibious operations in times of conflict and humanitarian assistance. Editors Timothy Heck and B. A. Friedman have compiled 23 diverse papers from sixteenth-century operations in Tuscany (a siege) and the Netherlands (assault by land and relief by ships over deliberately flooded land below sea level) through to consideration of the changing physical, climatic, demographical, and technological landscapes that come with the twenty-first century. As so much has been written about the major amphibious landings of last century, the authors have deliberately lightly treated their inclusion. All writers acknowledge that mounting amphibious operations are extremely demanding and require incredible attention to detail.

The events of 11 September 2001 (9/11) in the United States has resulted in a shift in focus of many military forces from traditional force projection to counterinsurgency. In the last two decades, many nonstate actors are resorting to insertion of their terror forces by sea. General David H. Berger, the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, has tasked the Corps with “a return to the sea, increasing naval integration, and expanding its ability to fight not just from the sea but for sea control from the shore” (p. 4). Five types of amphibious operations are in current U.S. doc-

trine: the assault, the withdrawal, the raid, the demonstration, and amphibious support to other operations.

Amphibious operations cannot be conducted in isolation. Reconnaissance and securing a beachhead before a landing or evacuation are essential. So, too, is having the firepower to prevent interdiction during the operation. One of the earliest amphibious multidomain operations was Germany’s Operation Weserübung (the invasion of Norway in April 1940). Germany’s land, sea, and air services were all involved in planning the five-objective assault: with heavy warships providing protection for the landing vessels, paratroopers seizing airfields for air resupply, and the *Luftwaffe* protecting the troops on the ground. Germany was also involved in huge naval evacuations from the eastern front during 1943–45.

The final six papers examine the role of amphibious operations in conjunction with naval forces, operating in various environments such as the Arctic, the Cold War, the Information Age, and a summary of the Marine Corp’s advanced base operations in the past, present, and future. The editors, in their conclusion, look at the impact of precision-guided munitions, unmanned systems, machine learning, and artificial intelligence in influencing opportunities and threats for amphibious warfare.

This is a thoughtfully compiled work on historic, current, and future amphibious operations. It ticks all the boxes as an academic work: with excellent footnotes, included original maps, an extensive list of works for further reading, index, and CVs for all the contributors. It deserves its place in any collection of military history.

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Neville Taylor is a retired teacher of mathematics, science, and computer programming. In 1968, he enlisted in the Australian Defence Force in the Royal Australian Infantry in the Citizen Military Forces (now the Australian Army Reserve), rising through the ranks in various infantry and headquarter postings to lieutenant colonel. He commanded the 5th/6th Battalion, the Royal Victoria Regiment, from 1985 to 1987 before retiring from the Army Reserve in 1992. He has retained a keen interest in the military, serving on the Defence Reserves Association until 2017, and is currently a vice president of the Royal United Services Institution–Victoria, where his energy is devoted to organizing the review of books of all military persuasions. The RUSI Victoria Library of Victoria, Australia, thanks the publisher for furnishing a copy for review.

Gregory J. Urwin, PhD

How the Few Became the Proud: Crafting the Marine Corps Mystique, 1874–1918. By Heather Venable. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019. Pp. 352. \$41.95, cloth.)

Most books pertaining to U.S. Marine Corps history address what Marines do, rather than who Marines are and what made them that way. How did a force that began as a miniscule collection of seagoing military police and naval yard guards transform into arguably the most revered branch of the U.S. military? Craig M. Cameron's *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951* (1994) and Aaron B. O'Connell's *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (2012) pointed to World War II as the epochal moment that invested leathernecks with their coveted identity as America's warrior elite. As Heather Venable demonstrates, however, Cameron and O'Connell failed to dig deep enough into the Corps' past to solve the mystery of Marine distinctiveness.

Authoritatively researched, gracefully written, and persuasively argued, *How the Few Became the Proud: Crafting the Marine Corps Mystique, 1874–1918*, recounts how the qualities that set Marines apart from other Americans in uniform coalesced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880–1898* (1993), Jack Shulimson argued that the Corps reinvented itself after embracing the dual mission of base seizure and defense, which led to pioneering a strategically important specialty in amphibious warfare. Venable, on the other hand, demonstrates that while Marines adopted new missions, they stubbornly refused to relinquish old ones, and that became integral to their self-image and the one they projected to the public. Com-

binning perspectives offered by institutional, cultural, and gender studies, Venable offers a multifaceted approach to exploring the historical roots of the Marine Corps mindset.

Doubts regarding the necessity of the Marine Corps developed early in the nineteenth century. Although Marines performed well in the War of 1812, they played a largely peripheral role in the Mexican-American War and Civil War. Critics spoke of abolishing the Corps or absorbing it into the Army, while some wags taunted Marine officers that "USMC" stood for "useless sons made comfortable" (p. 37). In response to these pressures, several Marine officers turned to their Service's history, trusting in its achievements to justify its existence. The emerging narrative often devolved into mythology. For instance, Marines claimed 10 November 1775, the day the Continental Congress established the Continental Marines, as their birthday, conveniently forgetting the predecessor organization that disbanded in 1783 and that authorization for the U.S. Marine Corps had to wait until 11 July 1798. This convenient fiction facilitated the powerful Marine maxim "First to Fight," which not only implied that Marines were the first Americans to stand for independence but could also be counted on to strike the first blow in future military crises.

The onset of the Spanish-American War in 1898, which triggered the republic's romance with imperialism, provided Marines with the opportunity to prove that they could tackle any mission that came along. They secured an anchorage for the U.S. Navy at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba; helped impose American rule on the Philippines; and battled Boxers in China, acquiring a reputation as hardened fighters prepared to go to any trouble spot at a moment's notice. Men who had once identified as soldiers now described them-

Dr. Gregory J. Urwin is a military historian and professor of history at Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, where he teaches U.S. and British military history. He received the Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award from the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation for *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island* (1997).

selves as a special breed: “soldiers of the sea” (p. 105). They were supposedly tougher, more aggressive—able to do anything ordinary soldiers could do but do it better and do it anywhere around the world. As for the Navy, it simply existed to transport Marines to wherever they were needed.

Seeking recruits of sufficient character and physical strength to justify these pretensions to elite status, the Marine Corps pioneered sophisticated advertising techniques to sell that image to the public and the men that filled its ranks. The Recruiting Publicity Bureau, established in 1912, became a formidable force multiplier in that process. Marine advertising drew on the themes developed by Marine officers in the previous century, but the bureau’s magazine, *Recruiters’ Bulletin*, enabled enlisted men to shape their Service’s image. This meshed with the Corps’ posturing as an institution suffused with democratic values in which the rank and file could aspire to become officers. In effect, anyone able to favorably impress Marine recruiters and survive rigorous training joined a noble order—a knighthood whose members epitomized a brand exuding genteel masculinity, rock-hard but well-mannered.

During World War I, the Marine Corps seemed

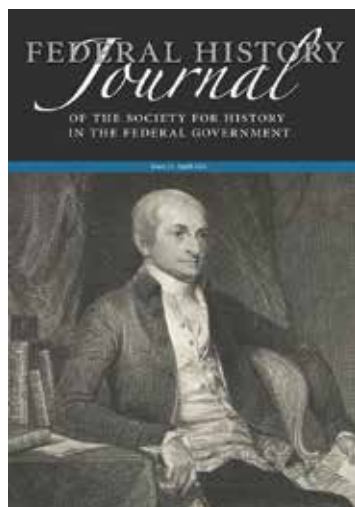
to break with its hypermasculine model by enlisting 305 women. This move reinforced the notion that the primary purpose of a male Marine was to carry a rifle in battle. With the United States engaged in the (then) largest war in human history, it made no sense to assign first-class fighting men to function as clerks and secretaries. In other words, women Marines would free men to fight. That was a catchy slogan, but it hid the fact that most of the work in Marine offices was performed by males declared unfit for combat. Nevertheless, the Corps successfully manipulated ideas about gender to promote the notion that every male Marine was a rifleman ready for a combat posting.

How the Few Became the Proud is a field-changing book that should be considered a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the Marine Corps as an institution and the cult-like culture that turns its motto, *Semper Fidelis*, into something more than mere words. As Venable tells the story, what it means to be a Marine derived from the Corps’ history and traditions. No single person can be credited with concocting the organization’s mystique. The standards that shaped it emanated from both officers and men who preached a compelling message and validated it by practicing what they preached.

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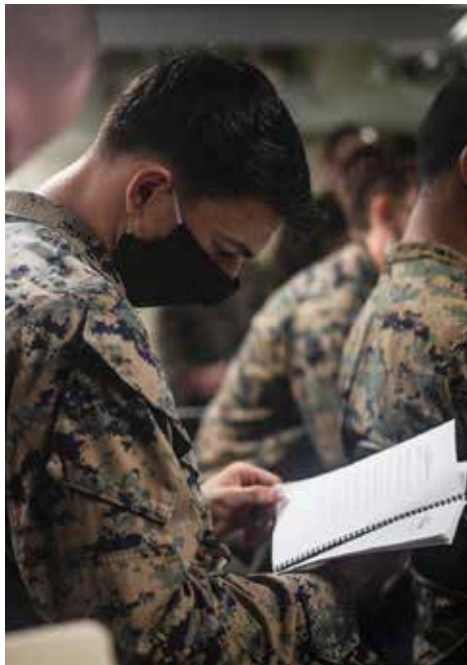


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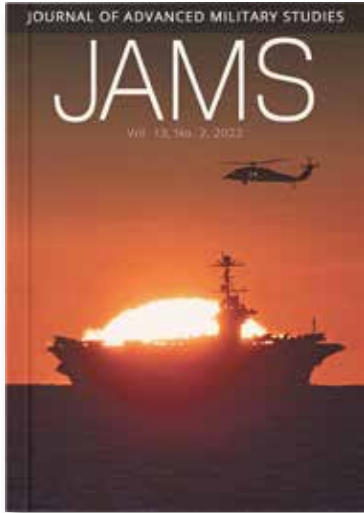
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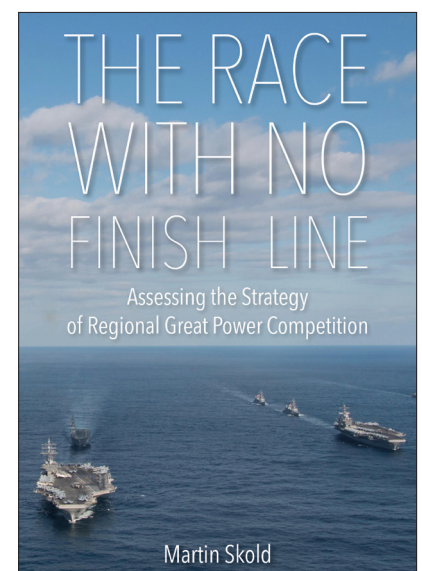
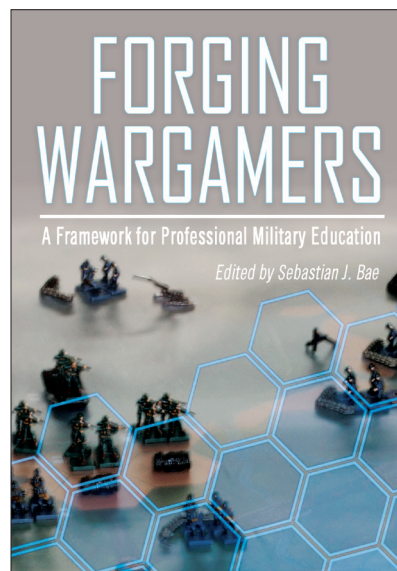
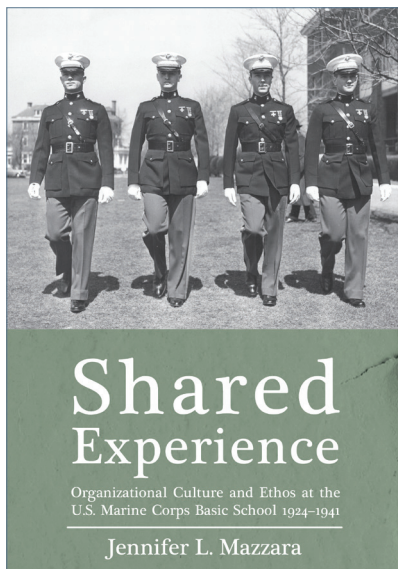
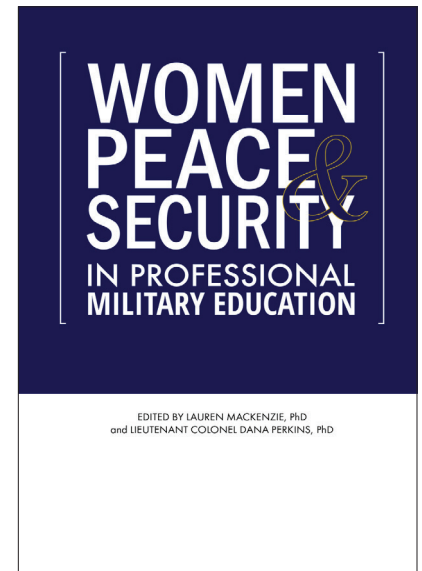
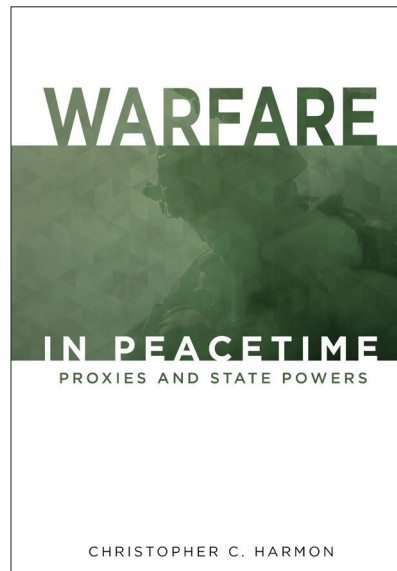
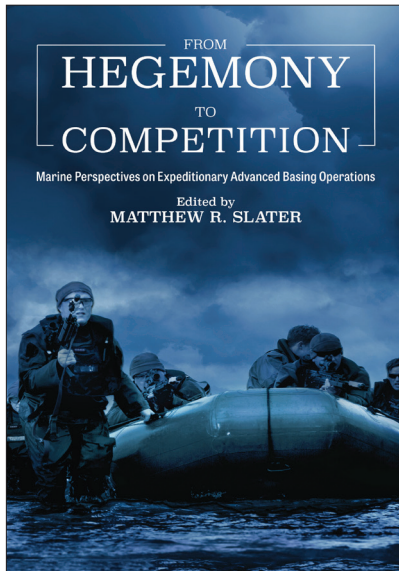
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