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MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL REFERENCE PAMPHLET

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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
RANKS AND GRADES  
1775–1969



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HISTORICAL DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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United States Marine Corps

Ranks and Grades

1775-1969

by

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Preface

"United States Marine Corps Ranks and Grades, 1775-1969" is a concise history of officer and enlisted grade structure. Official records and appropriate historical works were used in compiling this narrative, which is published for the information of those interested in this aspect of Marine Corps history.



W. J. VAN RYZIN

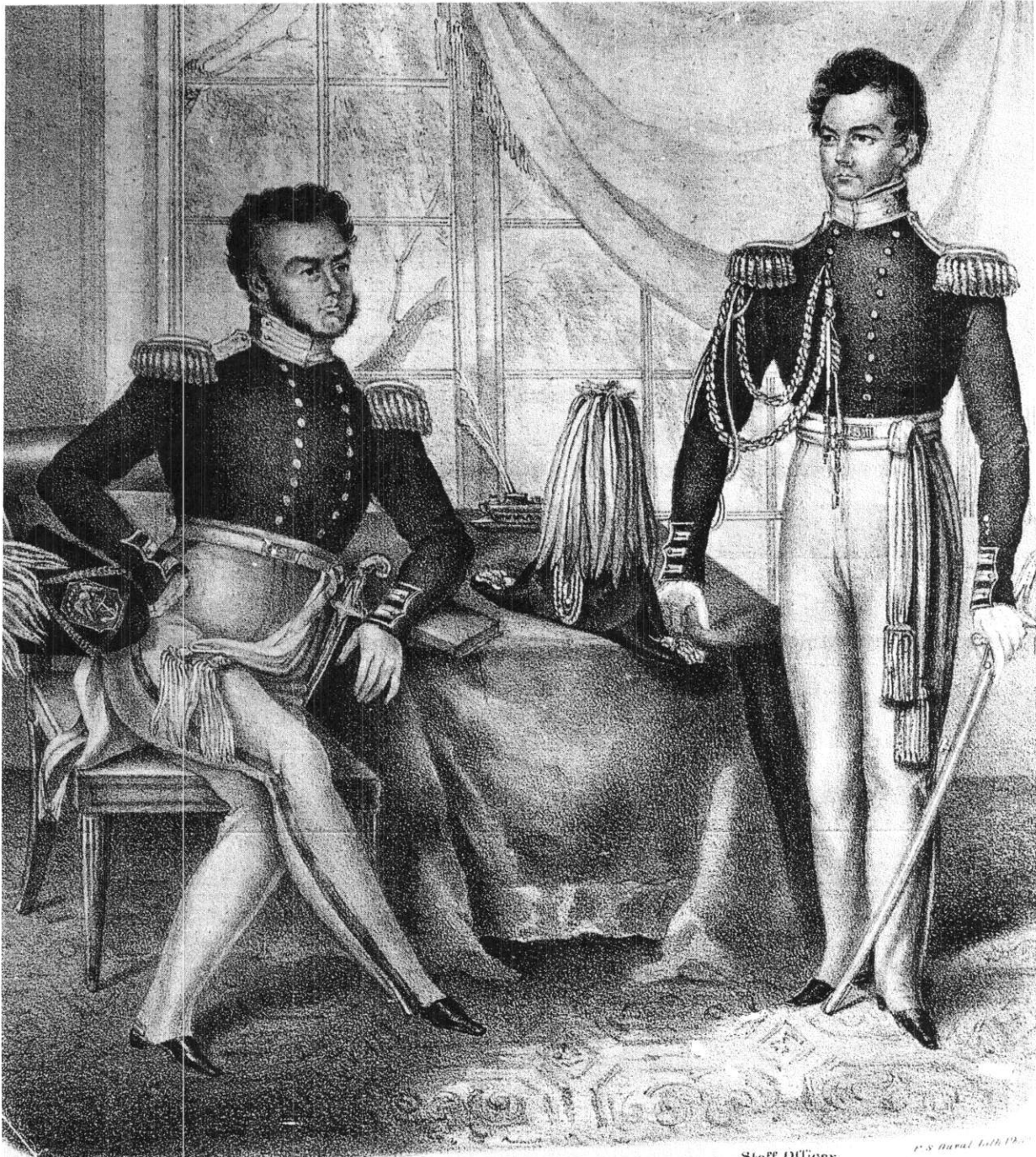
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From *Life on Stone* by A. Huffy. Lieutenant

Staff Officer.

*U.S. Naval Inst. Photo*

## U. S. MARINE CORPS.

U. S. Military Magazine

Army & Navy, Vol. 2<sup>nd</sup>

A contemporary representation of the officers' uniform in 1847  
(A Huddy & Duval Print)  
USMC Photograph #515043

## OFFICER RANKS AND GRADES

The resolution of the Continental Congress of 10 November 1775 which established the Continental Marines also established the basic officer grades for the Marines: colonel, lieutenant colonel, major, and "other officers as usual in other regiments."

(1) According to the practice of the day, the latter phrase probably meant captains, lieutenants (without differentiation, except between senior and junior lieutenants in the small units), and ensigns. In actual practice, it appears that the Marines never utilized the title of ensign and that there were titles of "first" and "second" lieutenant held personally and permanently by individual officers.(2)

Because of manpower shortages and various strategic considerations, the Continental Marines never achieved the regimental status originally prescribed; indeed, the two battalions were never raised as such. Thus, the highest rank achieved among the Continental Marines was that of major. This title was conferred 25 June 1776 on Samuel Nicholas who was the senior Marine officer of the Revolution and is reckoned as the first Commandant of the Marine Corps(3) (See Appendix A).

After the winning of Independence, the new nation no longer considered the Continental Navy or Marines of prime importance, and the various warships were gradually decommissioned. The sale in 1785 of the last one, Alliance, put an end to our naval establishment.

The struggling new republic, however, soon saw the necessity for a naval force large enough to protect its national interests and to prevent depredations by pirates. In the first naval legislation subsequent to the Revolution, the Act of 27 March 1794, Marines were again authorized. At this point, it was envisioned that Marine guards for individual ships were all that would be required. Thus, the only officer rank allowed was that of lieutenant, one to a ship.(4) As increasing international difficulties dictated the need for more naval personnel, more Marine officers were authorized for manning the new frigates. Thus, the Act of 1 July 1797 provided for two Marine lieutenants on the 44-gun frigates and one on the 36-gun frigate, then being completed.(5) Still there was no title

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\* The terms, ranks and grades, have been used interchangeably in this narrative as in most of the orders and correspondence used as sources, however, the Marine Corps Manual now uses grades and/or grade structure exclusively with reference to rank only as it relates to rank in precedence.

distinguishing one grade of lieutenant from another--if two lieutenants served on the same ship, rank insignia alone distinguished the senior from the junior in service.(6)

It was the Act of 11 July 1798, which created the Navy Department and organized the Marines as a corps, that established the basic commissioned grade structure which prevails to the present time.(7) It provided for the ranks of major, captain, and first and second lieutenant.

Increased importance of the Marine Corps caused by an expanding Navy and the demands of waging an undeclared war with France brought about an increase in rank for the position of Commandant. Thus, the Act of 22 April 1800 established the rank of lieutenant colonel for the Commandant, who was promoted on 1 May 1800.(8) At the same time, since the internal structure of the Corps did not call for an organization larger than ship guard or barracks detachments, the rank of major was abolished. This rank was not restored until 3 March 1809, when a major was authorized for the Marine post at New Orleans which President Jefferson had determined to raise to a strength of 300 men, a command, according to the Secretary of the Navy, "too extensive" for a captain.(9)

The next significant innovation was the brevet rank, adopted by the Marine Corps during the War of 1812. Of course, there had been brevet commissions during the American Revolution, and, in one case, definite proof that Captain John Paul Jones gave a brevet to a lieutenant of Marines,(10) but the War of 1812 first officially provided for the brevet in the Marine Corps. On 16 April 1814, the President was authorized by Congress "to confer brevet rank on such officers of the Marine Corps as shall distinguish themselves by gallant actions or meritorious conduct, or who shall have served ten years in any one grade," but brevets would not receive additional pay "except when commanding separate stations or detachments."(11)

Within a week, a Marine captain was appointed brevet major, starting a century of brevet appointments for the Marine Corps.(12) Although the brevet rank dated back to 1692 in the British Army, the task of identifying brevet prerogatives was to become a periodic vexation to Congress, which finally reduced the honor to a piece of paper.(13)

The Act of 16 April 1814 also included a specially significant clause, which stated that the adjutant, paymaster, and quartermaster of the Marine Corps "may be taken either from the line of captains or subalterns ("subaltern" was a British term for a lieutenant) and the said officers shall respectively receive thirty dollars a month, in addition to their pay in the line."(14) This was the first legislative notice of what proved a never-ending issue--line duty versus staff duty.



Second Lieutenant in the uniform prescribed by the regulations of 1859 (USMC Photo # 515334)

Second Lieutenant, Full Dress Uniform, ca. 1904 (USMC Photo #516925)





After this statement by Congress, the staff was not separated from the line until 2 March 1847. Congress then provided that officers of the staff 'receive the same pay and emoluments they now receive by law, and hold the same assimilated rank, to wit: quartermasters, paymasters, and adjutants and inspectors, the rank of major, and assistant quartermasters the rank of captain," and "the staff of the Marine Corps...is hereby separated from the line of said corps."(15)

"The Peace Establishment Act" of 3 March 1817, following the War of 1812, had again abolished the rank of major by omission when it prescribed that "the peace establishment of the Marine Corps shall consist of...one lieutenant colonel commandant, nine captains, twenty-four first lieutenants, sixteen second lieutenants..."(16) Any supernumerary officers, resulting from this law, were to be discharged from the service of the United States and receive three months' additional pay.

The rank of major again stayed vacant in the Marine Corps for 17 years, until Congress authorized four majors on 30 June 1834.(17) This act also provided for one colonel commandant and one lieutenant colonel, which ranks the Corps filled the next day.(18) In another attempt to restrain the too casual bestowal of brevets, Congress in this act also repealed that part of the law which authorized the granting of brevets for ten years service in grade. But the Mexican War, nevertheless, was to bring another flood of brevets. In the Marine Corps alone, brevet rank was conferred upon 27 officers, approximately 40 percent of the total number, for the Mexican War action.(19)

The highest rank in the Marine Corps through the Civil War was colonel. Although often referred to as "Brigadier General," Archibald Henderson, the fifth Commandant of the Marine Corps, held that rank by brevet and never held actual rank higher than colonel. Henderson's brevet dated from 27 January 1837 in recognition of his services in the Florida Indian Wars. Oddly enough, there is some indication that he drew compensation as a brevet, for a law of Congress on 10 August 1846 prescribed that "no payments shall hereafter be made to the colonel, or any other officer of said corps, by virtue of a commission of brigadier-general by brevet."(20)

Finally, on 2 March 1867, the Marine Corps obtained its first regular commissioned brigadier general, when the Commandant, Jacob Zeilin, was elevated by law to that rank.(21) The law passed in 1874 states that the succeeding commandant would have "The rank and pay of a colonel."(22) The post of Commandant, however, was definitely raised by statute on 3 March 1899 to that of brigadier general.(23).

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Marine Corps, like the other services, lost a number of officers to the Confederacy; in addition, the wartime expansion of the Corps

necessitated an increase of officers. Congress, therefore, approved the augmenting of officer strength on 25 July 1861--permitting the Marine Corps another colonel besides the Commandant, and two lieutenant colonels, as well as more captains and lieutenants.(24). The next day, the Marine Corps immediately appointed a new colonel and two lieutenant colonels.(25)

The Civil War, in addition, produced numerous brevet promotions, including 21 in the Marine Corps.(26) Congress, while authorizing such promotions on 3 March 1863, made sure to indicate that brevet rank would not entitle an officer "to any increase of pay or emoluments."(27)

Near the end of the Civil War, Congress provided a new recognition of bravery on 24 January 1865: "...any officer of the navy or marine corps may be advanced, not exceeding thirty numbers in rank, for having exhibited eminent and conspicuous conduct in battle, or extraordinary heroism."(28) He would be promoted, whether or not the number of said grade was full, but no further promotions would take place in that grade, except for heroism, until the number was reduced to that provided by law.

Shortly after the Civil War, Congress again struck at the brevet tradition, prescribing in 1 March 1869 that "commissions by brevet shall only be conferred in time of war."(29) This law, however, was apparently too late to prevent a Marine captain from being brevetted on 15 April 1869 as a major for gallant action on Formosa in 1867.(30) This officer appears to have been the only Marine brevetted between the Civil War and the Spanish-American War.(31)

Several times during the latter half of the 19th century, Congress returned to the problems concerning the brevet ranks. On 3 March 1869, it declared that "brevet rank shall not entitle an officer to precedence or command except by special assignment of the President, but such assignments shall not entitle any officer to additional pay or allowances."(32) Again, an Act of 15 July 1870 ordered that "hereafter no officer shall be entitled to wear while on duty any uniform other than that of his actual rank, on account of having been brevetted; nor shall he be addressed in orders or official communications by any title other than that of his actual rank."(33) Although Congress eventually, on 27 February 1890, authorized the conferring of the brevet rank in the Army for bravery in the Indian campaigns since 1867, it clearly stated that "brevet ranks shall be considered strictly honorary."(34)

After this, the Army evidently lost interest in the brevet, for it created none for the Spanish-American War service and only one for service in World War I.(35) The Marine

Corps, on the other hand, promoted a number of officers between 1899 and 1900, covering the War with Spain and other engagements in the Philippines and North China. Most of these brevetted officers soon were able to obtain line promotion to their brevet rank due to the subsequent increase in the strength of the Marine Corps.

The last gesture of honor to brevetted officers was made by the Marine Corps, when it awarded the Brevet Medal in 1921 to its 23 Marine officers still alive who had received brevet commissions.(36) No further Brevet Medals were awarded.

The War Department was inclined to consider that the new decorations of World War I were a substitute for brevet promotion. In a statement of policy on 17 May 1922, the Secretary of War expressed his belief that the Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Service Medal would provide "more valuable and suitable form of decoration for meritorious service" than a brevet rank.(37) The legal authority to award brevet commissions, however, lingered on the books until 1956, when Congress finally erased it as obsolete.(38)

The decline of honorary promotion coincided with the beginnings of promotion strictly by examination, both in the Marine Corps and the Army. On 28 July 1892, promotion to every grade of commissioned officer in the Marine Corps "below the grade of Commandant" was made subject to the judgment of an examining board, to consist of not less than five officers, three of the Marine Corps and two Navy medical officers.(39)

As early as 1 May 1891, the new School of Application had been organized at Marine Barracks, Washington, D. C., specially designed for newly commissioned officers.(40) Even earlier, the first 10 graduates of the United States Naval Academy to be appointed in the Corps had come from the class of 1883.(41) From then on, the Marine Corps was insured a steady influx of trained officers.

The Marine Corps staff received added prestige when the posts of adjutant and inspector, quartermaster, and paymaster were raised to the rank of colonel in 1899.(42) At the same time, the rank of first lieutenant was created for the Leader of the Marine Band, previously a drum major.

The prestige of the whole Corps was increased when the rank of the Commandant was raised to major general, which he received on 21 May 1908.(43) The previous Commandant, Charles Heywood, had been elevated to the rank of major general by Congress on 1 July 1902, but the same act specifically stated that the next commandant "shall thereafter have the rank, pay, and allowances of a brigadier-general."(44) Thus, Heywood's rank was solely of a personal nature. Later, during World War



I, the rank of major general, other than for the Commandant, was created for the Corps, and provisions were made for two officers of that rank, one permanent, and one temporary for the period of the war.(45)

With the passage of the National Defense Act of 29 August 1916, the Marine Corps staff underwent a number of changes.(46) From then on, no further permanent appointments were to be made in any grade in any staff department. A vacancy in a lower grade would be filled by the detail of an officer of the line for a period of four years, unless sooner relieved, and an upper grade vacancy was to be filled by an officer with the rank of colonel holding a permanent appointment in the staff department where the vacancy occurred. The heads of the three staff departments would have the newly created rank of brigadier general while so serving.

This major piece of legislation in 1916, just months before our entrance into World War I, also contained several other significant clauses. The proportion of commissioned officers to enlisted men was fixed at four percent, and staff officers were not to number more than eight percent of the authorized commissioned strength. Incidentally, Congress, for the first time, permitted a colonel, after 45 years on the active list, to have the rank of brigadier general upon retirement. This provision, the forerunner of what was to become known as the "tombstone promotion," underwent repeal, reenactment, and added requirements of combat service, but essentially, it stayed on the books until 1 November 1959.(47) This law was unique since it did not apply to Army or Air Force officers. Their resentment, after long efforts to make it generally applicable, probably helped to bring about its demise in 1959.

Another innovation of the 1916 act was the provision authorizing warrant officers in the Marine Corps. The warrant grades of marine gunner and quartermaster clerk were established, and 20 of each were authorized. In every way, the Marine Corps warrant officers would be equal to those of the Navy. Even before Congress had finally approved the bill, the Commandant issued an order setting forth the procedure to be followed in filling these grades.(48) The warrant rank of pay clerk was added in 1918.(49)

Finally, the Act of 29 August 1916 authorized the Marine Corps Reserve, an important provision which opened the way for the Corps' expansion in World War I. On 28 October 1916, the Commandant established the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve and promulgated regulations for procedures in enlisting former Marines.(50) A later Marine Corps order, of 21 March 1917, set forth detailed instructions and regulations fulfilling all of the stipulations of the Act of 1916 concerning the Marine Corps Reserve.(51)

Later during World War I, legislation provided that retired officers could be ordered to active duty in time of war.(52) Earlier, during the Civil War, one retired Marine officer, at least, had been returned to active duty for the national emergency.(53)

On 22 May 1917, "temporary appointments" were authorized for World War I.(54) Actually, the temporary rank had its beginnings earlier. During the war with Spain, 43 temporary officers were appointed in the Marine Corps from civil life or from noncommissioned officers of the Corps.(55) The last of these officers appointed only for service during the war was discharged on 16 March 1899.(56) Even earlier in the Civil War, the Navy made a large use of volunteer officers.(57) When the press of war had passed by 4 December 1865, most of these 7,500 volunteer officers had been discharged and returned to civilian life.(58) None of these volunteer officers, however, served in the Marine Corps.

In contrast to the easy promotion of the war years, the post-World War I years saw Marine officer promotion being resolved into a survival of the fittest. Beginning 4 March 1925, if an officer failed twice to qualify for promotion he would, if of less than 10 years service, be honorably discharged with 1 year's pay. If of service beyond 10 years, he would be retained but be ineligible for promotion.(59) Not until 30 June 1942 did Congress relax these stern provisions and then only for the period of World War II.(60)

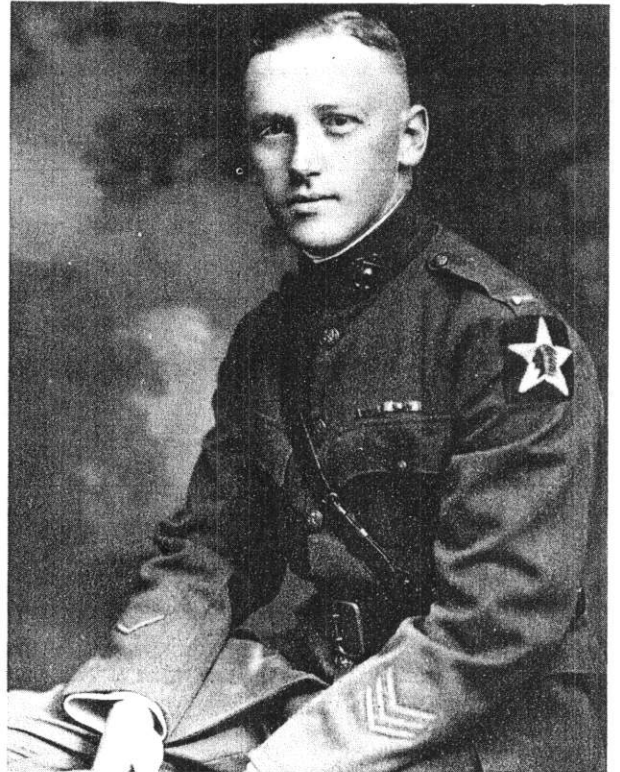
Life had become just as exacting for the new warrant officers in the 1920s, for Congress, although establishing the commissioned warrant grades of chief marine gunner, chief quartermaster clerk, and chief pay clerk on 10 June 1926, required six years of service, besides an examination, for promotion from warrant to chief.(61) Just a few months before Pearl Harbor, Congress provided that under a temporary appointment "in time of war or national emergency," warrant officers--like senior NCOs--could be jumped to captain, keeping such temporary status until six months after the end of the war or national emergency.(62) Later, in the middle of World War II, Congress abolished the grades of chief marine gunner, chief quartermaster clerk, chief pay clerk, marine gunner, quartermaster clerk, and pay clerk, effective on 21 October 1943.(63) In lieu of them, it established the grades of commissioned warrant officer and warrant officer.

During World War II, the office of Commandant was twice raised in rank. On 20 January 1942, Congress created the designation "Commandant of the Marine Corps," replacing "Major General Commandant," and it provided that the officer would be a lieutenant general while so serving.(64) The first lieutenant general in the Marine Corps, outside of the Commandant, was commissioned on 28 July 1943.(65) Then, on 21 March 1945, "the



Marine Gunner, ca. 1916-1917  
(USMC Photo # 530658)

Second Lieutenant, ca. 1920  
(note 2d Division shoulder  
sleeve insignia, wound stripe,  
and World War I overseas  
service chevrons)  
(USMC Photo #522327)



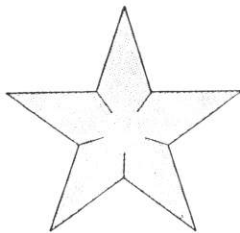
grade and rank of general" was established, but to be held only by the Commandant.(66) The first Marine to serve in the rank of general was Alexander A. Vandegrift, who was promoted on 4 April 1945.(67) This act was restricted in effect to six months after the war, but on 7 August 1947, the rank of Commandant was permanently fixed as general.(68)

The war years also saw redesignation of staff titles at Marine Corps Headquarters. The office of Adjutant and Inspector was abolished on 25 May 1943; its functions were transferred to the Director of Personnel, who would be a line officer on active duty in the Marine Corps.(69) Then, on 24 March 1944, Congress authorized that officers serving as heads of the Paymaster's Department and the Quartermaster's Department should receive the respective titles of "Paymaster General of the Marine Corps" and "Quartermaster General of the Marine Corps."(70) Later, the office and title of Paymaster General was abolished effective 16 July 1946, when the Paymaster's and Quartermaster's Departments were consolidated into the Supply Department.(71) This Department was to be headed by the Quartermaster General, who was designated on 1 July 1947 to be a major general while so serving.(72)

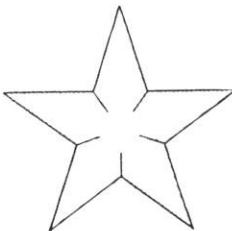
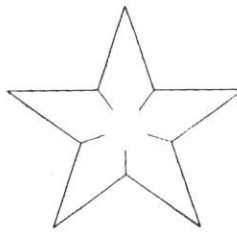
World War II also brought about another drastic innovation --the woman officer. Although World War I had introduced women into the Marine Corps, their highest rank then was NCO. On 7 November 1942, the Commandant approved a Marine Corps Women's Reserve, for Congress had given the authority for its establishment on 30 July 1942.(73) The first Director of the Women's Reserve, Ruth Cheney Streeter, was appointed to the grade of major on 29 January 1943, received promotion to lieutenant colonel on 22 November 1943, and colonel on 1 February 1944.(74)

By their versatility and outstanding performance of duty during World War II, these new women officers won a permanent place in the postwar Corps. On 12 June 1948, authorization was given for the Women Marines to become a component part of the regular Marine Corps, with provisions for the appointment of women officers in both the regulars and the reserve.(75) This program was initiated with the enlistment of eight former members of the Women's Reserve into the regular Marine Corps by the Commandant on 10 November 1948, the 173d birthday of the Corps. To date, the highest rank authorized for the Director of the Women Marines has been that of colonel.

By 1 July 1945, the Marine Corps had on active duty 2 lieutenant generals, 28 major generals, and 48 brigadier generals--all but 9 of the total, however, being at temporary rank.(76) This proportion approached the old law of 29 May 1934, which provided that "...of the authorized number of commissioned officers above the grade of colonel, one shall be the Major General Commandant, two thirds shall be brigadier



73.



74.



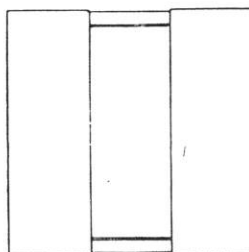
75. Right.



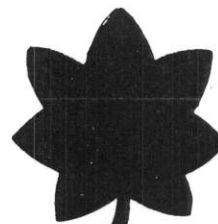
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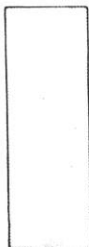
77.



78.



79.



80.



81.



82.

INSIGNIA OF RANK.

- 73. Major general.
- 74. Brigadier general.
- 75, 76. Colonel.
- 77. Lieutenant colonel.
- 79. Major.

- 78. Captain.
- 80. First lieutenant.
- 82. Second lieutenant.
- 81. Chief marine gunner, chief quartermaster clerk, chief pay clerk.

Officers' Insignia of Grade, from the Uniform Regulations of 1937



generals, and the remainder shall be major generals." (77) Shortly after the end of World War II, Congress readjusted this proportion under the sweeping "Officer Personnel Act of 1947." (78) Now, of the authorized commissioned officers above the grade of colonel, up to 50 percent could be major generals and the remainder brigadier generals.

The practice of temporary appointment, hitherto a wartime privilege, which was authorized for World War I and enormously increased in World War II, received sanction for peacetime use. On 18 April 1946, Congress had authorized that male officers of the Marine Corps Reserve, officers of the regular Marine Corps without permanent appointment, and warrants with temporary appointments in higher grades could receive permanent appointment in the regular Marine Corps--but not to a grade any higher than that held previously on active duty. (79)

Then, the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 provided that a peacetime temporary appointment could be received by any commissioned officer, by warrant officers, and by NCOs who were staff sergeant or above. But only the commissioned officer could be appointed to a higher temporary rank than captain. An officer holding a permanent appointment in one grade and a temporary appointment in a higher grade would be held to be serving in the higher grade. Regarding eligibility for selection, promotion, and involuntary retirement, however, he would be considered as at his old grade. An officer could be retired in the rank which he held on a temporary appointment, but no increase in retirement pay would accrue solely as the result of this advancement in rank. Any officer who had been commended for combat duty would be placed on the retired list with the rank, but not the pay, of the next higher grade.

With the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the Marine Corps again made wide use of the temporary officer, tapping its large source of qualified enlisted men and warrant officers. Notwithstanding their valuable wartime service, practical peacetime considerations directly related to personnel strengths and requirements of the Corps necessitated a gradual return to its normal officer programs with the goal of stabilizing its officer structure on a long-term basis. The various integration programs after the Korean conflict helped many temporary officers to attain permanent commissioned status, but as late as November 1956, there were still 1,900 Marine officers serving with temporary commissions. (80) Any future decreases in the temporary officer group were intended to be phased out in such a manner as to meet the best needs of the Corps, while at the same time allowing as many temporary officers as possible to retire at their current status.

Increased American involvement in Vietnam in the spring and summer of 1965 again caused the Marine Corps to turn to its greatest reservoir of potential officers--its experienced

active duty staff noncommissioned officers and warrant officers. In November 1965 it was announced that beginning immediately and continuing in three increments through February 1966 more than 2,300 new second lieutenants and warrant officers would be selected from the ranks of eligible warrant officers and staff NCOs. These temporary promotions were to be effective for three or four years unless the appointees were subsequently selected for a limited duty officer program or for permanent warrant officer.(80a)

The Officer Personnel Act of 1947 also authorized limited duty officers, although the number of LDOs was not to exceed 6.22 percent of the total officers holding permanent appointments on the active list. At any time a limited duty officer could apply for unrestricted duty.

Finally, attention was turned again to the warrant officer. In 1949, the pay grades of W-4, W-3, and W-2 for commissioned warrant officers and W-1 for warrant officers had been established, and then, in 1954, the title of "chief warrant officer" replaced that of "commissioned warrant officer" for those in the W-4, W-3, and W-2 pay grades.(81)

On 17 August 1956, the time-honored title of marine gunner was restored for qualified personnel appointed as nontechnical warrant officers.(82) As first drafted, the proposed directive would have permitted certain women Marines to be designated as marine gunners. Since the title was being revived specifically to lend deserved prestige to the old line fighting Marine, the word "male" was inserted, thus ensuring that only males would bear the title of Marine Gunner.(83) Just three years later, on 10 September 1959, new appointments in the nontechnical warrant officer military occupational specialties were discontinued with the adoption of a new warrant officer program, which did not provide for the appointment of marine gunners. As a matter of fact the conversion of all nontechnical warrants to technical specialties was begun, but personnel already designated marine gunner were permitted to retain the distinction. Thus, for five years there were to be no new "bursting bombs" awarded. Then in October 1964 the designation marine gunner was reinstated for warrant officers who were initially appointed in the infantry, artillery, tank and amphibian tractor, and operational communications fields.(83a)

The Vietnam War, in addition to calling for an increase in the officer strength of the Corps and re-introducing promotion from the ranks in large numbers had another significant effect

on the grade distribution structure of the Corps. As World War II had given the Marines their first active duty general and lieutenant general, so the strife in Vietnam was, in 1969, to provide the impetus for the appointment of an additional full general on the active duty rosters. Following a statement by the Secretary of Defense that the increased size and responsibility of the Marine Corps justified the appointment of an additional four-star general, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, L. Mendel Rivers, introduced legislation to permit a fourth star for the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps at Presidential discretion, whenever the active duty strength of the Corps exceeded 200,000 at the time of appointment. Final Congressional approval was given on 22 April (84) and on 2 June 1969 at the Marine Barracks, Washington, D. C., Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt was promoted to the grade of full general.

From the birth of the Corps in 1775 down to the present, no drastic revision of Marine Corps officer grades has been necessary. Certain innovations, such as "temporary officers," have appeared, but the basic structure has remained. The only noticeable change has been a steady upgrading of the ranks as the strength and missions of the Corps multiplied to meet new challenges. Indeed, officer titles seem the one unbreaking thread in the tradition-clothed services. From general down through the ranks, each officer title bears a great and colorful history, to be carried with a just pride.

The current officer grade structure is as follows:

Grade	Pay Grade
General	O-10
Lieutenant General	O-9
Major General	O-8
Brigadier General	O-7
Colonel	O-6
Lieutenant Colonel	O-5
Major	O-4
Captain	O-3
First Lieutenant	O-2
Second Lieutenant	O-1
Chief Warrant Officer, W-4	W-4
Chief Warrant Officer, W-3	W-3
Chief Warrant Officer, W-2	W-2
Warrant Officer, W-1	W-1



Captain, Paymaster's  
Department, 1931 (USMC Photo  
#527687)



Lieutenant Colonel, Aide to  
the Commandant, 1950s  
(USMC Photo #A-47241)

## ENLISTED RANKS AND GRADES

In establishing the Continental Marines, Congress specified that no person be enlisted "but such as are good seamen, or so acquainted with maritime affairs as to serve with advantage by sea." (85) This emphasis on ships' detachments meant that the proposed battalions would be broken up into small groups; and this in turn meant that the organizations would have a comparatively simple enlisted rank structure. The grades which evolved were those of sergeant, corporal, drummer or fifer, and private. The drummer and fifers, who performed an important function in "drumming up" recruits as well as serving aboard ship, were paid as much as corporals. These musicians, probably because of their needed skills, received 7 1/3 dollars, the same pay as corporals, while the privates drew only 6 2/3 dollars per month. (86)

With the close of the Revolutionary War, the American Navy disappeared from the seas; but the danger of war with Algiers in 1790 brought a new interest in seapower. To protect American merchantmen plying the Mediterranean, the Secretary of War--at the time there was no Navy Department--asked for estimates for the building of frigates. As was the practice in those days, each of the 900-ton vessels had a Marine guard. The Secretary proposed that a typical detachment include one sergeant, who was to receive five dollars per month, a corporal at four dollars, one drummer, one fifer, and twenty-one privates, each of whom was paid three dollars a month. The principal difference between this proposed system and the one used during the Revolution was the fact that drummers and fifers no longer received the same pay as corporals. (87)

In any event, the scheme was never put into practice, for the Algerine crisis ended with the signing of a treaty between the United States and the Dey of Algiers in the fall of 1795. (88) Work on the six new warships was halted at once, only to be resumed a year later when another war threatened.

France and England, embroiled in another of their global conflicts, were ignoring America's rights as a neutral; and as in the case of the troubles with Algiers, the War Department again began thinking of building a fleet. Late in 1796, the Secretary of War decided to complete three of the six frigates laid down two years before. Marine complements for these

vessels were organized in a peculiar manner. The old titles of sergeant, corporal, drummer, fifer, and private were retained; but for some unknown reason, both sergeants and corporals were placed in the same pay grade, each of them receiving 10 dollars per month.(89) Whether this was proposed for reasons of economy or out of the honest belief that all noncommissioned officers should receive equal pay is not known; but the scale soon was modified. By May 1798, the month in which Congress authorized the capture of armed French vessels lurking off the American coast, sergeants were being paid nine dollars, corporals eight dollars, drummers and fifers seven dollars, and privates six dollars.(90)

Meanwhile, Congress at last decided to take naval affairs out of the hands of the Secretary of War. A naval establishment was created, and on 11 July 1798, the United States Marine Corps came into being. As far as ships' detachments were concerned, the old pay grades and titles used by the War Department were carried over; but the new law also provided for staff noncommissioned officers. In the event that the Marine Corps or any part of it was called upon to serve on land with the Army, the Commandant might appoint a staff which would include a sergeant major, a quartermaster sergeant, a drum major, and a fife major.(91)

William Ward Burrows, the Lieutenant Colonel Commandant, lost no time in creating the enlisted ranks authorized by the law of 1798. As early as 21 January 1799, William Farr was serving as drum major,(92) and by May 1800, a quartermaster sergeant had been appointed.(93) On 1 January of the following year, Archibald Summers was appointed to the rank of sergeant major, and by August 1804, Antoine Duplessis was serving as fife major.(94)

The law of 1798 governed the arrangement of enlisted grades within the Marine Corps until long after the War of 1812. At the head of the list were the sergeant major and quartermaster sergeant. Next came the drum major and fife major, one of whom was detailed as leader of the Marine Band. Then came the sergeants, corporals, "drums and fifes," and privates.

Although the idea of military specialties is of recent vintage, it was Lieutenant Colonel Franklin Wharton, Burrows' successor as Commandant, who first proposed the appointment of a noncommissioned technician. On 27 March 1804, he suggested that a skilled tailor be enlisted to supervise the manufacture of Marine Corps uniforms. Designated "Tailor-sergeant," the specialist was to have received the pay of a sergeant, plus an additional eleven dollars, bringing his compensation to twenty dollars per month.(95)

During the War of 1812, authorization was provided for 115 sergeants, 233 corporals, 90 "drums and fifes," and 2,180 privates, in addition to the top four noncommissioned grades, (96) but no new enlisted pay grades were created. With the coming of peace came a natural reduction in the strength of the Corps and in the number of noncommissioned officers.

By 1832, the sergeant major and quartermaster sergeant each received ten dollars per month, while the drum major and fife major were granted the same pay as a sergeant, nine dollars. Corporals still earned eight dollars each month, drummers and fifers seven dollars, and privates six. (97)

Although these same enlisted grades dated from the re-establishment of the Marine Corps in 1798, and in spite of the fact that they had been used throughout the War of 1812, they nevertheless were inadequate. The flaw lay in the fact that there were no intermediate ranks between sergeants and sergeant major. There was only one sergeant major and one quartermaster sergeant, both of whom were stationed at Headquarters and not until 1899 were any additional men added to these ranks. (98)

Following the War of 1812, the Navy shouldered the heavy burden of protecting American interests throughout the world. Many of the naval vessels had no Marine officer. Instead, a sergeant was responsible for the conduct of the ships' detachment. Thus, a sergeant serving on a sloop-of-war off Java drew the same pay as a sergeant at the Washington barracks, but his responsibilities were many times greater. To remedy this situation, Congress, in 1833, created the grade of orderly sergeant. Thirty "orderly sergeants of the post, and first sergeants of guards at sea" were to be paid \$16 per month, the same amount as the drum major and fife major. The 41 "other sergeants received \$13 per month. (99)

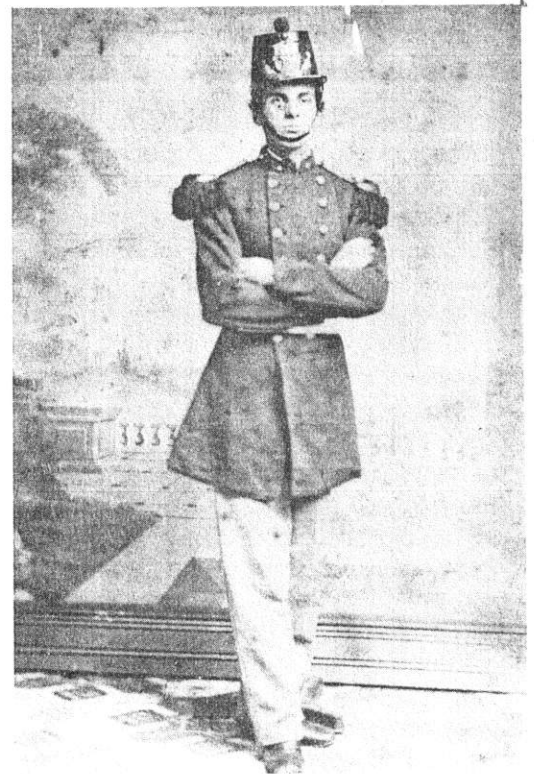
Legislation enacted in 1834 confirmed the right of the Marine Corps to issue warrants as sergeant major and quartermaster sergeant. That same year saw an important step in the evolution of the modern first sergeant, when three orderly sergeants were employed as clerks at Headquarters. One noncommissioned officer was employed by the Colonel Commandant, a second by the Adjutant and Inspector, and the third by the Quartermaster. (100) Although these men eventually were replaced by civilian clerks, their employment as administrative specialists did set a precedent.

Although the Act of 1833 referred to the noncommissioned officer in charge of a ship's guard as a first sergeant, he was as often as not called an orderly sergeant in official documents. (101) The term "first sergeant," however, came more and more into use over the years, especially when referring to the activities of Marine detachments at shore stations. In brief, the orderly sergeant was becoming recognized as "first



Field Officer, Blue  
Dress Uniform, 1963  
(USMC Photo #A410939)

Private, Dress Uniform,  
1870s (USMC Photo  
#526628)





sergeant" in every sense of the word. His greater responsibilities both in leadership and administration were reflected by his higher pay grade. He was a cut above the ordinary sergeant.

By the close of the Civil War, the orderly sergeant had vaulted above the quartermaster sergeant into the second pay grade. According to the pay tables in force on the day of Lee's surrender, 9 April 1865, the sergeant major was allowed \$348 per annum, an orderly sergeant \$312, the quartermaster sergeant \$288, a sergeant \$240, a corporal \$216, and each private, drummer, or fifer \$192 for a year's service.(102)

This arrangement of pay grades, however, was abandoned within a decade. Estimates for expenditures during the fiscal year beginning 1 July 1872, placed the sergeant major, quartermaster sergeant, and drum major in the highest bracket at \$300 per year, while orderly sergeants were dropped to second place at a yearly salary of \$264. Also, during 1872, the Marine Corps dropped the title "orderly sergeant" in favor of the more descriptive "first sergeant."(103)

First sergeants remained in the second pay grade until 1893, when, together with the drum major, they received a pay increase of three dollars per month. The sergeant major and quartermaster sergeant continued to head the list of Marine Corps noncommissioned officers, but they were drawing only \$23 each month, \$2 less than a drum major or first sergeant. (104) This unusual situation was further complicated by a wartime measure enacted on 5 May 1898, which authorized the grade of gunnery sergeant.

Not until 3 March 1899, long after the War with Spain had ended, was any attempt made to untangle the puzzle. A law enacted on that date, set forth the enlisted grades and the authorized strength of each, beginning with 5 sergeants major, 1 drum major, 20 quartermaster sergeants, and 72 billets for gunnery sergeants. Here, the legislators paused to place the gunnery sergeants on a par with first sergeants in everything but pay. The "gunny" was to receive \$35 each month to the latter's \$25.(105) Presumably, the additional ten dollars was in recognition of the gunnery sergeant's skill with naval ordnance. The addition of 4 sergeants major and 19 quartermaster sergeants was designed to stimulate the ambition of the enlisted men of the Corps as well as allowing the assignment of a quartermaster sergeant to each post.(106) With a quartermaster sergeant on each post, the keeping of records would be greatly facilitated and the commanding officer relieved of many tedious and time-consuming clerical tasks.

The same law which attempted to clarify the relationship between the enlisted ranks also struck a mighty blow at tradition by using the term "trumpeter" to refer to the partner in

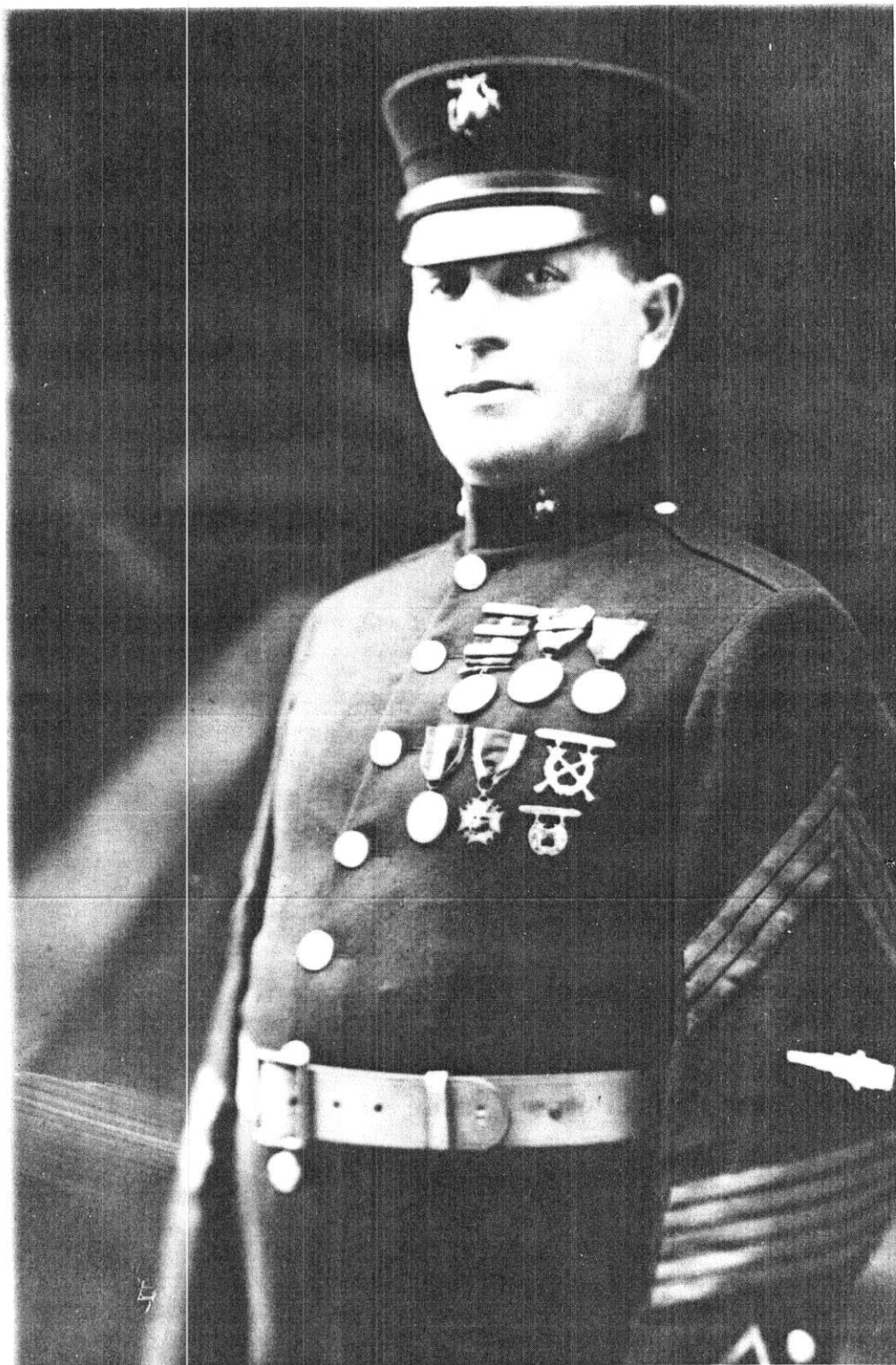
in melody of the Marine Corps drummer. Ever since the days of Major Samuel Nicholas and his Continental Marines, there had been Marine fifers. Although the word "musics" had been used as early as 1816, (107) and probably earlier, the official term designation remained "drummer" or "fifer." Actually, the fife had been officially abandoned in favor of the trumpet on 1 July 1881. The use of the bugle was encouraged officially as early as 1877, with its appearance in the Marine Corps probably occurring even earlier. (108) But these facts made no difference, for at least in official usage, the man who sounded the trumpet was a fifer regardless of the instrument he played. (109) From 1899, on, the correct titles were "drummer" and "Trumpeter." Then, on 26 November 1937, these titles were abolished, and from then on, all band personnel were retitled "field musics" in appropriate grades. (110) The members of the Marine Band, of course, continued to be called "musicians."

Thus, by July 1899, the Marine Corps enlisted rank structure definitely had been altered. Drawing base pay of \$34 each month, the sergeant major headed the list. Next, at the same salary, came the quartermaster sergeant, then the drum major at \$25 per month. Ranked with the first sergeant was the gunnery sergeant whose monthly pay, fixed by law at \$35, was the highest of any Marine Corps noncommissioned officer. First sergeants had to be content with \$25 per month, sergeants with \$18, corporals \$15, and drummers, trumpeters, and privates with \$13. (111) In brief, the first sergeant had assumed a more logical relationship, as far as pay was concerned, to the sergeant major. The gunnery sergeant, however, was being paid more than his rank would indicate; but this, perhaps, could be justified on the grounds of his technical abilities.

No attempt was made to adjust the relationship among the top noncommissioned grades until 1908. In the spring of that year, the base pay of sergeants major, quartermaster sergeants, first sergeants, and drum majors was raised to \$45 per month, while gunnery sergeants continued to draw \$35. (112)

In creating the rank of gunnery sergeant, the Marine Corps had recognized the fact that techniques of warfare were changing rapidly. On the eve of World War I, a conflict which would point out the need for enlisted specialists, a candidate for the grade of gunnery sergeant was tested primarily in the mysteries of naval ordnance; but with the development of new signal equipment, some gunnery sergeants were trained in operating and maintaining radios. Still others specialized in telephone communications or in using electrically controlled coast defense mines. (113)

Unfortunately, not every specialist could be a gunnery sergeant. Cooks, gunpointers, and signalmen posed a special



Sergeant, qualified as Gun Captain, in Dress  
Blue Uniform, 1920's  
(USMC Photo #530617)



problem; for, although they had certain valuable skills, they could not be promoted to the higher enlisted grades without working a grave injustice. The Marine Corps, in other words, faced the problem of rewarding skills without giving the specialist more authority than he could handle. The answer was found in 1908, when the Corps was authorized to give additional pay to certain enlisted men. This additional monthly pay was distributed as follows:(114)

#### MESS PERSONNEL

Mess Sergeant	Shore Duty Only	\$ 6.00
Cooks, first class	" " "	\$ 10.00
Cooks, second class	" " "	\$ 8.00
Cooks, third class	" " "	\$ 7.00
Cooks, fourth class	" " "	\$ 5.00
Messmen (Afloat and ashore)	" " "	\$ 5.00

#### GUN POINTERS (Afloat Only)

Heavy Gun Pointers		
first class		\$ 10.00
second class		\$ 6.00
Intermediate Gun Pointers		
first class		\$ 8.00
second class		\$ 4.00
Secondary Gun Pointers		
first class		\$ 4.00
second class		\$ 2.00

#### SIGNALMEN

First Class	Ashore and afloat	\$ 3.00
Second Class	" " "	\$ 2.00
Third Class	" " "	\$ 1.00

#### MISCELLANEOUS

Expert riflemen	Ashore and afloat	\$ 5.00
Sharpshooters	" " "	\$ 3.00
Marksmen	" " "	\$ 2.00
For each good conduct medal, pin, or bar		.75
Members of Marine Band playing at White House and public grounds		\$ 4.00

The system sought to reward proficiency with weapons as well

as special skills.

From 1908 until the armistice of 11 November 1918, there were but two major changes in the Marine Corps enlisted rank structure. By 1 January 1914, the gunnery sergeant had been returned to the top pay grade along with the sergeant major, drum major, quartermaster sergeant, and first sergeant;(115) and in 1917, the grade of private first class was authorized. (116)

In requesting the Secretary of the Navy to approve the grade of private first class, the Commandant based his argument on the fact that the Army had established a similar grade the previous year. Since the organization of the Marine Corps, at least for expeditionary service, was much like that of the Army, the Commandant felt that the new grade was necessary. (117) The Secretary of the Navy agreed; and the coming of the private first class sounded the death knell of another Marine Corps tradition, for the new rank ended the usefulness of the lance corporal.

Lance corporals and lance sergeants had been a part of the Marine Corps as far back as the 1830s and probably even earlier. (118) By 1877, the practice of detailing corporals to act as sergeants and privates to assume the duties of corporals had become so widespread that the Commandant directed that such appointments be only one month in duration. If, at the end of that time, the individual could not pass an examination for the grade in which he was serving temporarily, his appointment should go to someone else. (119) In spite of the creation of the private first class, lance rank died hard. A chevron for lance corporal appeared in uniform regulations of 1929, (120) and one writer on Marine Corps tradition asserts that privates were being detailed lance corporals as recently as 1937. (121)

After the increase in the pay of gunnery sergeants and the establishment of the grade of private first class, the enlisted grades were arranged as follows: sergeant major, drum major, first sergeant, quartermaster sergeant, and gunnery sergeant, \$540 per annum; sergeants, \$360; corporals, \$252; privates first class, \$216; drummers, trumpeters, and privates, \$180. (122) This, together with the additional pay program adopted in 1908 and set forth above, was the system in effect at the close of World War I.

World War I, with its poison gas, pursuit planes, trucks, and tanks, played hob with the existing enlisted rank structure by emphasizing the need for military technicians as well as troop leaders. The Army, because of its many branches, was sorely plagued by this problem until the passing, on 10 June 1922, of a law which prescribed seven military pay grades. (123) Influenced by the passage of this act, the Marine Corps re-examined the duties and command relationship of its noncommis-

sioned officers and arrived at an entirely new arrangement of enlisted ranks.

In the first pay grade at \$74 per month were placed sergeants major and quartermaster sergeants. First sergeants and gunnery sergeants, both of whom were paid \$53 each month, occupied the second grade; but there was no rank in the Marine Corps which corresponded to the Army's third pay grade. Sergeants, in the fourth grade, earned \$45 per month; corporals, fifth grade, \$37; and privates first class, sixth grade, received \$35 each month. Drummers, trumpeters, and privates, at \$30, formed the seventh or lowest pay grade.(124)

"Additional pay," the allowance adopted in 1908 to reward skills and proficiency, was still carried on the pay tables in 1920. There was, however, some pressure to scrap the idea once and for all since the practice of rewarding cooks and the like, who generally stayed in the rear, had stirred up discontent among those whose primary job was that of rifleman or machine gunner.(125) In spite of this objection, specialist pay was retained; but it was to be awarded on a more equitable basis. Effective in 1920, privates first class and privates performing extra duty in certain fields defined by law were to be rated as specialists. There were four categories for extra pay. A specialist third class was to receive an additional \$15 per month, a specialist fourth class \$12, specialist fifth class \$8, and a specialist sixth class \$3.(126) The following year, the Commandant established the practice of setting quotas for specialist ratings in each major unit. Commanding officers were cautioned to exercise great care in selecting men to receive the additional compensation.(127) These changes, though they did not prevent the privates from complaining, gave the system a greater degree of flexibility than was possible under the law of 1908. The Commandant, acting in accordance with current legislation, could reward men whose skills were vital to the Marine Corps without upsetting the existing command structure. During the 1920s specialist pay was extended to aviation personnel, members of post and regimental bands, and range armorers.(128)

Scarcely was the ink dry on the new tables of organization than the Commandant and his staff realized that this system was inadequate. The principal objection was the misuse of warrants for the grade of gunnery sergeant. Too often a sergeant was promoted to gunnery sergeant simply to give him the additional pay and authority. Because of this attitude, many gunnery sergeants were performing duties which had no connection with naval ordnance, some of them, in fact, were being detailed as mess sergeants.(129)

Another feature of the enlisted rank structure which cried for improvement was the fact that cooks had very little chance for advancement. The Marine Corps considered that it had justification for placing cooks in the second through

fifth pay grades; in fact, just such a plan was drawn up, but it was disapproved.(130)

A third major grievance was that of the first sergeant. Relegated to the second pay grade, many a capable first sergeant watched in disgust as sergeants and even corporals, men with a minimum of line experience, were at times jumped over to the grade of sergeant major or quartermaster sergeant for technical duties.(131)

Once the Marine Corps became aware of the weaknesses in its hierarchy of noncommissioned officers, it acted quickly. To fill the gap in the third pay grade, the first group of staff sergeants received their warrants in the spring of 1923.(132) The next year saw an unsuccessful attempt to provide greater incentive for cooks,(133) and on 10 December 1925, the Commandant requested the establishment of the ranks of master technical sergeant, first pay grade, and supply sergeant in the second grade. The purpose of requesting the new ranks was to reward men performing technical duties necessary to the operation of a large post; but in the case of the master technical sergeant, General Lejeune and his advisors felt that such a rank also would prove useful to Marine aviation.(134) The title "master technical sergeant," by the way, was a combination of two Army grades, master sergeant, which indicated the top pay grade, and technical sergeant, the title of a noncommissioned officer in the second pay grade engaged in technical duties.(135)

Another change occurred in 1926, with the creation of the title of paymaster sergeant. Actually this was a change in title rather than the creation of a new rank. Quartermaster sergeants had been detailed to serve in the Paymaster Department; but, as General Lejeune pointed out, the title "quartermaster sergeant, paymaster department" was both "unwieldy" and "not descriptive of the duty performed." The request for a paymaster sergeant, made on 6 October 1926, was approved by the Secretary of the Navy.(136)

Next, the Marine Corps turned its attention to the problems of the first sergeant and gunnery sergeant. Both were left in the second pay grade, but their duties were more clearly defined. The position of the first sergeant as "first or leading noncommissioned officer in the organization to which attached" was spelled out. Furthermore, the Commandant expressed his desire to replace all first sergeants holding technical warrants, that is, warrants issued for some special duty such as mechanical, with gunnery sergeants.(137)

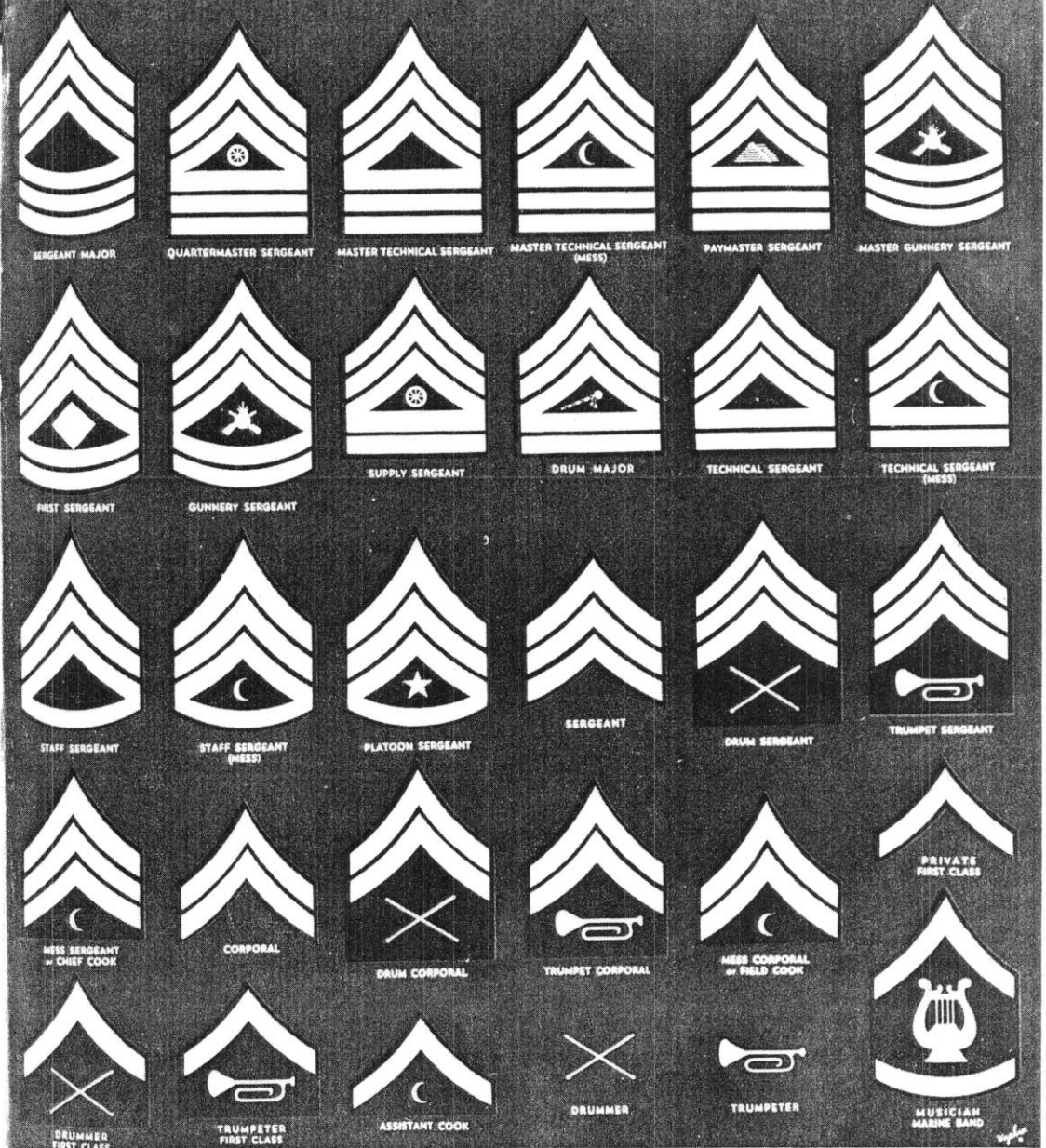
At the same time, the Commandant prohibited the employment of gunnery sergeants as clerks, orderlies, or chauffeurs, or in any type of duty connected with messes, commissaries, post exchanges, guards, or police. Instead, they were required to



# THE LEATHERNECK

August, 1936

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Noncommissioned Insignia of Grade  
1936

qualify in some phase of engineering or post maintenance, aviation, communications, motor transportation, or ordnance. To correct the existing injustices in promotion policies, the Commandant decreed that sergeants major should be selected from the list of first sergeants and gunnery sergeants.(138)

Many of the "housekeeping" duties once performed by disgruntled gunnery sergeants were assigned to staff sergeants. A staff sergeant (clerical) was capable of performing stenographic work; a staff sergeant (mechanical), who received his warrant because of his ability as an artisan, could be assigned such varied duties as carpenter, upholsterer, or plumber.(139)

Like cooks and bakers, drummers and trumpeters were not satisfied with their lot. In 1927, Second Lieutenant Floyd A. Stephenson submitted a plan for the creation of the rank of trumpeter first class in the sixth pay grade. His idea, although admittedly a good one, nevertheless was rejected; for the number of men in each pay grade was governed by the appropriations for that particular year, and the Commandant did not feel justified in reducing the number of privates first class to make room for musicians.(140) For a time, the problem lay dormant. Musicians, undergoing four to six months' training at Parris Island, toiled away, while men who enlisted with them left the post and its onerous restrictions after a mere eight weeks. This long period of training, plus the lack of opportunity for advancement caused many a musician to transfer to line duties.(141) At last in 1931, the Commandant authorized the promotion of field musics, as drummers and trumpeters often were called, to the grade of private first class, corporal, or sergeant. In 1934, the Secretary of the Navy approved the titles of drummer and trumpeter first class in the sixth pay grade, drum and trumpet corporal in the fifth, and drum sergeant and trumpet sergeant in the fourth grade.(142)

Another question facing the Marine Corps during the late 1920s and early 1930s was that of the type of warrant to be issued to a noncommissioned officer. By 1926, there were two types of warrants, regular and technical. Although a regular warrant might be either permanent or temporary, all technical warrants were temporary. Issued for some special duty, they were revoked when the holder was reassigned. In addition, all noncommissioned officers, whether they held regular or technical warrants, first were given a probationary warrant which could be revoked within six months.(143) This led to some confusion; a first sergeant, for example, might hold a technical warrant even though he was not, in the accepted sense of the word, a technician.

The manual of 1931, however, specified that technical warrants were to be issued for technical duties. Among those to hold technical warrants were master technical sergeants, gunnery sergeants and staff sergeants. Sergeants major, quarter-

master sergeants, paymaster sergeants, first sergeants, and supply sergeants could hold only regular warrants. Furthermore, warrants of noncommissioned officers above the grade of sergeant could be revoked only by order of the Commandant or by the sentence of a court martial.(144) This change gave added flexibility to the enlisted rank structure, for it paved the way for the advancement of specialists by means of technical warrants for specific duties.

An example of the use of the technical warrant to give added incentive to a group of specialists was the handling of the problem of promoting skilled cooks. Bad in the 1920s, the lot of the Marine Corps cook had grown worse by 1935. Once a skilled cook reached the grade of sergeant, he had no prospect of advancement. True, he could request transfer to line duties; but what commanding officer would part with a good mess steward to gain an untrained sergeant of the guard.(145) The Commandant, therefore, authorized master technical sergeants to hold technical warrants in that field. After the establishment of the grade of technical sergeant, also in the year 1935, the path of advancement for a cook was arranged as follows: sixth grade, assistant cook; fifth grade, field cook, mess corporal; fourth grade, mess sergeant, chief cook; third grade, staff sergeant (mess); second grade, technical sergeant (mess); first grade, master technical sergeant (mess).(146) This was a distinct improvement.

In addition to technical sergeant, the ranks of master gunnery sergeant and platoon sergeant also came into being during the autumn of 1935. These changes were necessary because of the continuing misassignments of gunnery sergeants.

The rank of master gunnery sergeant, in the first pay grade, was created to give opportunity for further advancement to specialists in ordnance and gunnery. Technical sergeant, like gunnery sergeant a rank in the second pay grade, was authorized for noncommissioned officers holding the title of gunnery sergeant but performing duties entirely divorced from ordnance. Platoon sergeants were placed in the third pay grade, to give to each platoon a higher ranking noncommissioned officer.(147)

A change in title occurred in 1937, when the Commandant obtained approval of the Secretary of the Navy to redesignate drum and trumpet sergeants as field music sergeants. By this change, the drummer and trumpeter at long last became known officially as field musics. Drum corporals and trumpet corporals, of course, were retitled field music corporals; and the drummer and trumpeter first class now were called field musics first class. This was a logical change. Since every musician was skilled at both drum and trumpet, there was no need for eight titles to describe four jobs.(148)

In 1939, the Commandant proposed the rank of staff sergeant (field music) in an attempt to provide an incentive for field music sergeants. The proposal, however, was disapproved by the Secretary of the Navy.(149)

The following year, the Marine Corps recognized the fact that the duties of bakers had become different from those of cooks and stewards by authorizing for bakers the same system of advancement which had been in effect since 1935 within the mess branch. The titles approved for bakers were master technical sergeant (baker), technical sergeant (baker), staff sergeant (baker), chief cook (baker), field cook (baker), and assistant cook (baker).(150)

By 1940, the technical warrant had become the special warrant. As before, it was granted for special duty; but it was valid for corporals and sergeants only at a particular post. A certain number of special warrants issued for duty in the Quartermaster Department, Paymaster Department, Aviation, Communications, and Bands, were not affected by transfer.(151) All noncommissioned officers above the grade of sergeant received permanent warrants.

By the eve of World War II, the titles and pay grades used by Marine Corps noncommissioned officers were varied and, because of the practice of inserting in parentheses after the title the nature of any special duty, they were both repetitive and confusing. In general, these were the titles: first pay grade, sergeant major, master gunnery sergeant, master technical sergeant, quartermaster sergeant, and paymaster sergeant; second pay grade, first sergeant, gunnery sergeant, technical sergeant, drum major, supply sergeant; third grade, platoon sergeant, staff sergeant; fourth grade, sergeant, mess sergeant, chief cook, and field music sergeant; fifth grade, corporal, mess corporal, field cook, field music corporal; sixth grade, private first class, assistant cook, field music first class; seventh grade, private, field music.(152) Sergeants major were promoted exclusively from the roster of first sergeants.(153)

The first readjustment of the Marine Corps enlisted rank, structure during the World War II period started early in 1941, some nine months before the war was declared. It began with a suggestion that the titles of bakers--chief cook (baker) for example--were ambiguous and should be changed to chief baker, field baker, and assistant baker.(154) Next came an examination of the duties of the mess corporal. Study disclosed that mess corporals generally did the work of mess sergeants. Since the corporals competed with field cooks for promotion to mess sergeant, this gave the former an unfair advantage. In the belief that every mess sergeant should be a skilled cook, the Division of Plans and Policies recommended that the grade of mess corporal be allowed to die of attrition.(155)



No sooner had this problem been settled than the mess branch was redesignated the commissary branch. The same month that this change occurred, January 1943, the Secretary of the Navy also authorized the creation of a messman or steward's branch.(156)

Pay grades established for commissary personnel, however, were much the same as those which had been branded as ambiguous two years before. In the first pay grade were master technical sergeants (commissary) and (baker). Technical sergeants in the second grade were designated in a similar manner. Placed in the third pay grade were staff sergeants (commissary), chief cooks (commissary), and, to the dismay of the foes of ambiguity, chief cooks (baker). Field cook (commissary) and field cook (baker) occupied the fourth grade; while assistant cook (commissary) and assistant cook (baker) were assigned to the fifth pay grade. Effective 1 July 1943, all mess sergeants were granted warrants as staff sergeants (commissary); and staff sergeants (baker) became chief cooks (baker).(157) In any case, the Marine Corps eliminated the mess corporal.

Titles finally selected for use in the steward's branch were: master steward and master cook in the first pay grade; steward first class and cook first class in the second; steward second class and cook second class in the third pay grade; and steward third class and cook third class in the fourth. This system of ratings was in effect by February 1944.(158)

In the meantime, early in 1943, other new titles had sprung up within the clerical branch. These were master technical sergeant (clerical) (line) for general duty, master technical sergeant (clerical) (SplW) a special warrant for duty in staff offices, master technical sergeant (clerical) (RW) for recruiting duty, and three similar classes of technical sergeants.(159)

This sudden mushrooming of subtitles within the seven pay grades was a result of the need for specialists during World War II. Since the old system of special pay had been abolished effective 1 June 1942, the Marine Corps could no longer separate technical skill from leadership ability except by use of the special warrant. In fact, the very letter which doomed extra pay also stated that specialities should be promoted to a grade in which their base pay would be greater than or equal to the sum of their old base pay plus their discontinued specialist allowance.(160)

During this period of special warrants and new ratings, the Marine Corps made a constructive move in advancing the first sergeant to the highest enlisted pay grade. Thus, on 10 February 1943, the first sergeant regained the ascendancy which that rank had held during World War I.(161) The sergeant major continued, however, to take precedence over all other enlisted



Platoon Sergeant,  
Dress Blue Uniform  
1938

(USMC Photo #530699)

Sergeant, qualified as  
Naval Aviation Pilot  
1938

(USMC Photo #530605)

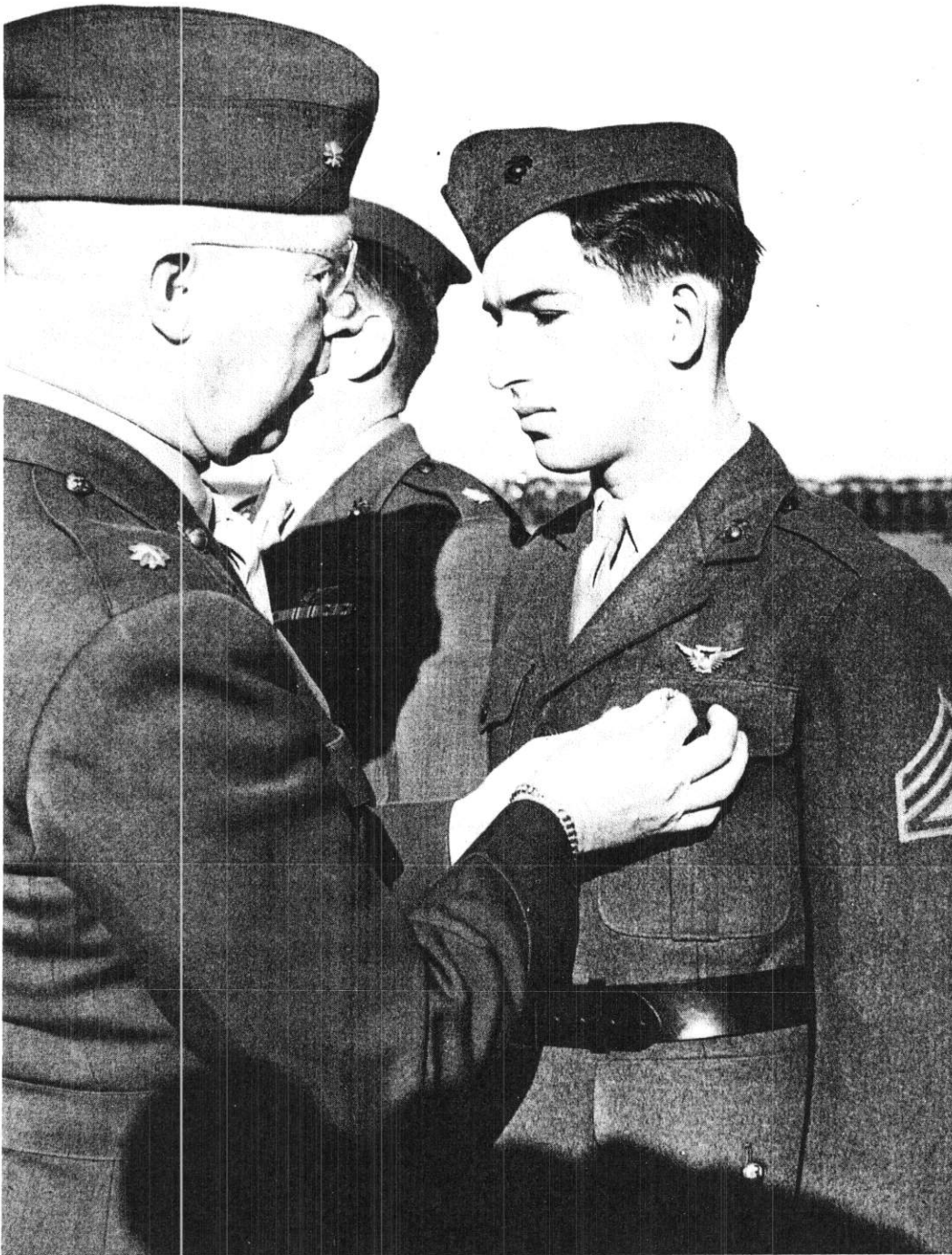


men in the first pay grade. None save first sergeants were eligible for promotion to sergeant major.(162)

Eyeing in dismay this wild profusion of ranks, the Marine Corps toyed for a time with the idea of junking the descriptive titles in favor of a system in which all except line noncommissioned officers would be given a specialist's rating. In engineering, for example, there would be a master engineering sergeant in the first pay grade, and an engineering sergeant in the second. The third through sixth grades would be occupied by technicians (engineering), first, second, third, and fourth class. A similar arrangement was proposed for the other technical fields such as ordnance, communications, or clerical. On the other hand, line noncommissioned officers in the first grade would be sergeants major, first sergeants, and master gunnery sergeants. In the other six line grades were gunnery sergeants, platoon sergeants, sergeants, corporals, privates first class, and privates. The principal reason for turning down this suggestion was the expense of changing not only the current tables of organization but also almost every personnel form then in use.(163)

The problem of finding adequate titles for each rank in the Marine Corps was not solved during the course of World War II. By mid-January 1944, enlisted rank structure was arranged as follows:(164)

Pay Grade	General Service	Ordnance	Aviation, engineering, communications, special staff offices
(1)	Sergeant Major 1st Sergeant Master Gunnery Sergeant Master Technical Sergeant	Master Gunnery Sergeant	Master Technical Sergeant
(2)	Gunnery Sergeant Technical Sergeant	Gunnery Sergeant	Technical Sergeant
(3)	Platoon Sergeant Staff Sergeant	Platoon Sergeant	Staff Sergeant
(4)	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant
(5)	Corporal	Corporal	Corporal



Lieutenant Colonel and Staff Sergeant, ca. 1943  
(Note the Sergeant's Combat Aircrewman's Badge)  
(USMC Photo #530667)

(6)	Private First Class	Private First Class	Private First Class
(7)	Private	Private	Private
*****			
Pay Grade	Steward	Commissary	Band and Field Music
(1)	Master Steward Master Cook	Master Technical Sergeant	Master Technical Sergeant
(2)	Steward 1st Class Cook 1st Class	Technical Sergeant	Drum Major Technical Sergeant
(3)	Steward 2d Class Cook 2d Class	Staff Sergeant Chief Cook	Staff Sergeant
(4)	Steward 3d Class Cook 3d Class	Field Cook	Sergeant Field Music Sergeant
(5)	Steward's Assistant 1st Class	Assistant Cook	Corporal Field Music Corporal
(6)	Steward's Assistant 2d Class	Private First Class	Private First Class, Field Music 1st Class
(7)	Steward's Assistant 3d Class	Private	Private, Field Music
*****			



Pay Grade	Quartermaster Department	Paymaster Department
(1)	Quartermaster Sergeant Master Technical Sergeant	Paymaster Sergeant
(2)	Supply Sergeant Technical Sergeant	Paymaster Sergeant
(3)	Staff Sergeant	Staff Sergeant
(4)	Sergeant	Sergeant
(5)	Corporal	Corporal
(6)	Private First Class	Private First Class
(7)	Private	Private

\* \* \* \* \*

This table does not include the master technical sergeants and technical sergeants issued warrants for clerical duty as outlined in a previous paragraph. The picture was further complicated in April 1945, when the Commandant authorized the grades of sergeant major (aviation) and first sergeant (aviation). (165)

No wonder that the Marine Corps found it difficult to draw this myriad of titles into a system compact enough to be processed by IBM machines! When the change to machine record accounting was contemplated in 1946, Marine Corps planners soon realized that the existing system of rank would require a great deal of modification before it would be adaptable for use with the new IBM machines. The old titles simply did not fit the jobs they were supposed to describe. In the fifth pay grade of the band and field music branch, for example, there were both corporals and field music corporals. Finally, the Corps decided to abandon such historically inspiring titles as gunnery sergeant and sergeant major and to adopt an entirely new method of indicating rank and assignment. (166)

The key to the new system was to be the specification serial number (SSN) which indicated both the abilities of the individual and the requirements of each billet in the Marine

Corps. Titles were to be used merely to indicate the various pay grades. Besides being better adapted to processing by IBM machines, such a system would end the confusion caused by the issuing of special warrants.(167)

By the end of World War II, certain branches had become somewhat lax in enforcing the requirements for promotion. This caused a great deal of dissatisfaction, since men performing the same duties in different fields were promoted by different standards. There also were a great deal of confusion within the branches. If, for example, there were vacancies for bridge carpenters in the third pay grade of engineers, and there was a shortage in that particular occupational field, plumbers might be promoted instead. What was needed was a uniform system of rank titles within which promotions could be made on the basis of occupational skill.(168)

In selecting the ranks within the new structure, the Division of Plans and Policies proposed the following titles: master sergeant in the first pay grade, technical sergeant in the second, staff sergeant in the third, sergeant in the fourth, corporal in the fifth, private first class in the sixth, and private in the seventh.(169) A counterproposal to call those in the first three pay grades simply chief noncommissioned officer, noncommissioned officer first class, and noncommissioned officer second class was rejected as being detrimental to morale, an important factor during the discouraging period of demobilization.(170)

Effective 1 December 1946, the new designations of rank went into effect. Branch titles such as commissary were abolished, but the old titles, such as first sergeant or platoon sergeant, could be used when applicable in informal conversation. The "square" or staff chevron was ordered discarded as soon as the supply was exhausted. In the future, all staff noncommissioned officers would wear the same "rocker" type chevron. The changes in official titles may be summarized as follows:(171)

Pay Grade	Old Rank	New Rank
(1)	Sergeant Major First Sergeant Master Gunnery Sergeant Master Technical Sergeant Quartermaster Sergeant Paymaster Sergeant Master Steward Master Cook	Master Sergeant



Musician, Marine Band, 1938  
(USMC Photo #530594)

Corporal, Field Music, 1953  
(USMC Photo #A413603)



(2)	Gunnery Sergeant Drum Major Supply Sergeant Steward 1st Class Cook 1st Class Technical Sergeant	Technical Sergeant
(3)	Platoon Sergeant Chief Cook Steward 2d Class Cook 2d Class Staff Sergeant	Staff Sergeant
(4)	Sergeant Field Music Sergeant Field Cook Steward 3d Class Cook 3d Class	Sergeant
(5)	Corporal Assistant Cook Field Music Corporal Steward's Assistant 1st Class	Corporal
(6)	Private First Class Field Music First Class Steward's Assistant 2d Class	Private First Class
(7)	Private Field Music Steward's Assistant 3d Class	Private

Although a drastic departure from tradition, this change accomplished its purpose of standardizing the enlisted rank structure.

Between 1946 and 1958, there were only three major alternations in the enlisted rank structure. First, the Career Compensation Act of 12 October 1949 turned the pay-grade numbering system upside down by placing privates in pay grade E-1 and master sergeants in grade E-7.(172) Second, the Marine Corps announced in December 1954 the establishment of two additional titles within grade E-7. The rank of sergeant major was to take precedence over the newly resurrected first sergeant, who, in turn, was placed above the master sergeant.(173) This last change was made to give recognition to noncommissioned officers acting in these important billets; the job of first

sergeant or sergeant major was too important to be classed merely as an administrative speciality. This re-emphasis on the role of the senior noncommissioned officers was followed by a sweeping revision of the enlisted ranks and grades of the Marine Corps in 1958, after Congress amended the Career Compensation Act of 1949 and authorized two new pay grades, E-8 and E-9.(174) This revision was designed to relieve the crowding at the E-7 grade, caused by the rapid World War II output of noncommissioned officers and, since then, by the moving up--appropriately enough--of the specifically skilled men which every service was requiring more and more. The end result, however, was an unbalanced structure, too heavy at the top.

By 1958, the proportion of NCOs in the Marine Corps had climbed to 58% of the total enlisted strength, a startling figure when compared to the 25% of 1941.(175) It is even more startling when one considers that the Marine Corps from its founding until World War I never had a proportion higher than 18.8%, with the usual percentage ranging between 13 and 15%.(176) The increased mechanized nature of World War I, however, had shown the need for military technicians in modern warfare. From then on, an increase in the proportion of NCOs resulted. By 1937, it had reached 27%, and a staggering 40% by 1954.(177)

This compression at the top, 58% in 1958, led to rank imbalance and confusion. There were E-7's supervising other E-7's, while some corporals continued doing the same job after promotion as they did before. In short, the prestige of the NCO, traditional and necessary to any military service, was declining at the very time when it should be increased.

The solution to this imbalance, plus other desirable changes, was ordered by the Commandant on 25 November 1958, to be effective 1 January 1959.(178) Substantially, it followed the recommendations of a study by the Enlisted Rank and Pay Structure Board, convened to adapt the new legislation to the Marine Corps. Besides revisions of rank structure, adjustments of proficiency pay were made in an attempt to meet competition for critical skills without inflation of rank, develop and maintain a balanced work force, and reward outstanding individual achievement.

A transitional period of dual grade structures, to end entirely on 1 January 1965, was worked out to insure that no Marine would lose stripes. This was achieved by establishing "acting" ranks, so that all Marines would be able to retain their existing titles, insignia, and privileges. Upon promotion, they would assume the new rank titles. The prefix "acting," however, was abolished by the Commandant on 1 August 1960, and the end of the transitional period for all grades was moved up to 1 July 1963.(179)



In this revision of 1958, the ranks of corporal through master sergeant were upgraded one pay grade each, making room for an additional private rank. The sergeant major/first sergeant program was retained, with its historic command prestige, but a new technical leadership was introduced into the top NCO levels, in recognition of the ever-increasing complexity of waging modern warfare, by permitting E-8 and E-9 billets to be filled also by occupational specialists. Since technical adeptness was now required of quite a few others besides the technical sergeant, this title ceased to have value and it was deleted. Marines holding that rank were designated acting gunnery sergeants.

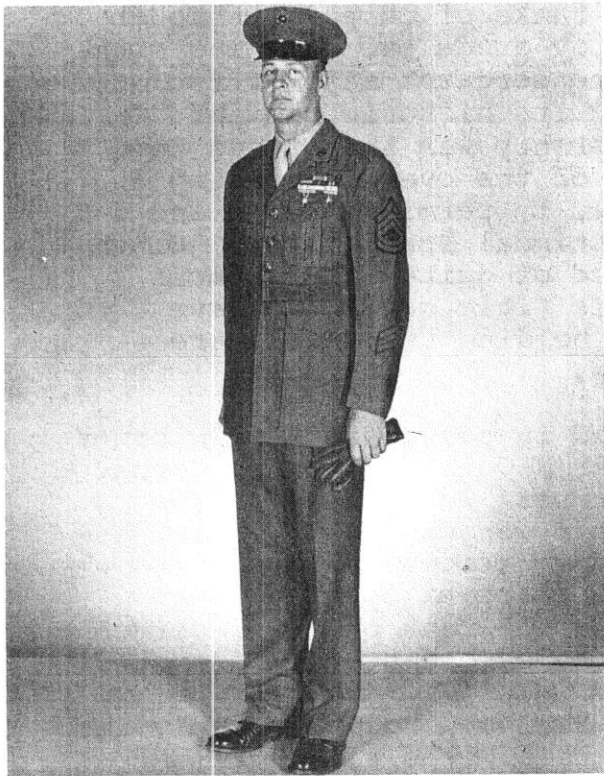
The rank of corporal was placed in pay grade E-4 in order to preserve his status as the junior NCO in the Marine Corps. The rank of sergeant with three stripes, formerly E-4, was selected to replace the rank of staff sergeant at E-5, in order to have two ranks of NCOs and to remove one rank from the ranks of staff NCOs which would start at Staff Sergeant in pay grade E-6. Personnel holding the rank of staff sergeant would carry the title of acting staff sergeant until promoted.

The occasion also enabled the Marine Corps to reapply its colorful history to the grade structure. The title of lance corporal, first used by the Marines in the Indian Wars of 1830s was revived. Now, for the first time, it was a permanent rank. In addition, the memorable "Gunny"--the gunnery sergeant and the master gunnery sergeant--was exhumed.

In E-7, the gunnery sergeant was used in place of the master sergeant, partly to restore the traditional rank and to move the title "master sergeant" from pay grade E-7 to E-8. As for the first sergeant, no change was involved except to raise the rank from E-7 to E-8. The rank of master gunnery sergeant, revived to provide leadership in occupational fields, was put at the top in E-9, alongside the sergeant major, raised from E-7 to E-9 and still the senior NCO.

Viewed in its entirety, the new enlisted structure enhanced career attractiveness which, for more than a century, had drawn volunteers to the Marine Corps. There was full acknowledgement of the modern military picture, yet no Marine could sadly say that "things aren't like they were in the old Corps." Also, the first year under the revised structure, fiscal year 1959, saw a new proportion of NCO's--a more logical 37.4%, (18) and as of 30 November 1961, it was still only 37.5%. (181)

Prior to 1958, the Marine was engaged in a seemingly endless struggle to develop an enlisted rank structure which offered privileges and pay commensurate with responsibility and skill. As the need evolved, new noncommissioned officer ranks were created, such as orderly sergeants and lance corporals. Later, improvements in naval ordnance brought the gunnery sergeant



Gunnery Sergeant, Winter  
Service Uniform "A," 1963

Sergeant Major of Women  
Marines, Summer Service  
Uniform "A," 1969  
(USMC Photo #A419493)



into being as well as proficiency pay for gun pointers.

Technical developments, however, came so rapidly after the turn of the century that the tables of organization could scarcely be kept up to date. Although such ranks as master sergeant and master gunnery sergeant helped to provide a suitable incentive for skilled individuals, the abandonment of specialist pay and the great degree of training required to operate and maintain new devices, such as radar, soon forced the Marine Corps into an awkward position. During World War II, the only method of rewarding specialists was to increase their rank. This caused dissatisfaction among line noncommissioned officers, but nothing could be done to remedy the situation until after the fighting had ended.

The system of combining titles of rank with SSNs instituted in 1946 helped to bring order to the enlisted rank structure, but to many it seemed that the new policies were no better than the old. Titles rooted in the tradition of the Corps were abolished to make way for the simplified structure. Two of these titles, sergeant major and first sergeant, were later revived; but noncommissioned officers with these ranks, although they took precedence over master sergeants, did not receive additional pay. The authorization of the two new pay grades, E-8 and E-9, provided a means of compensating these senior staff noncommissioned officers for their increased responsibilities and furnished an added incentive to the master sergeants. At the same time, the return of the "Gunny" and lance corporal ranks helped to bring back some of the time-hallowed tradition of Marine Corps ranks.

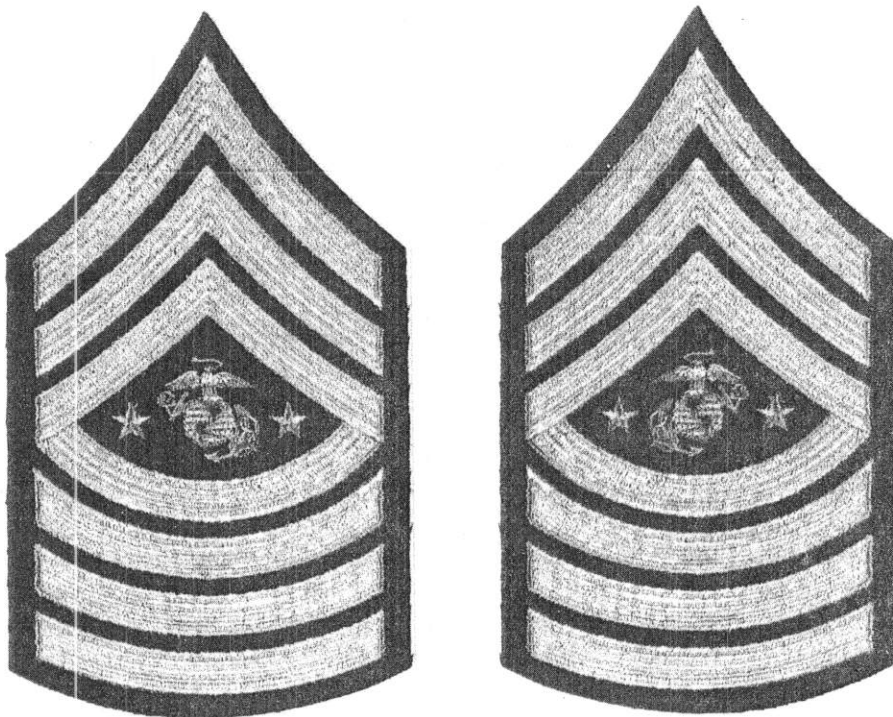
Another logical step in keeping with the practices of the early days of the Corps was the appointment of a senior NCO to the staff of the Commandant. The post of Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps was established by the Commandant as the senior enlisted billet in the Marine Corps in May 1957. The Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps serves on the personal staff of the Commandant of the Marine Corps at Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, D. C. He has no set duration of appointment; he serves at the pleasure of the Commandant. He performs a number of duties, primary of which is to advise the Commandant of the Marine Corps on all matters pertaining to enlisted Marines. He also accompanies the Commandant on all his major visits to field commands and on other official trips.

Sergeants Major of the Marine Corps have been selected by a board of Marine general officers which submitted to the Commandant several nominations for the post, with the Commandant making the final selection. In recognition of his increased responsibilities, the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps receives, while serving in this billet, an additional premium pay above all other sergeants major. (182)

Only five Marines have held the title in the modern era. The first was Sergeant Major Wilbur Bestwick (23 May 1957-31 August 1959). He was followed by Sergeant Major Francis D. Rauber (1 September 1959-28 June 1962), Sergeant Major Thomas J. McHugh (29 June 1962-16 July 1965), and Sergeant Major Herbert J. Sweet (16 July 1965-31 July 1969). The present Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major Joseph W. Dailey, has served in the post since 31 July 1969.

The current enlisted grade structure is as follows:

Grade	Pay Grade
Sergeant Major	E-9
Master Gunnery Sergeant	
First Sergeant	E-8
Master Sergeant	
Gunnery Sergeant	E-7
Staff Sergeant	E-6
Sergeant	E-5
Corporal	E-4
Lance Corporal	E-3
Private First Class	E-2
Private	E-1



Chevrons of the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, 1970, unique insignia worn only by the USMC's senior Marine NCO.



Drum Major, U. S. Marine Band  
1965 (USMC Photo #A412636)



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- (141) LtCol H. N. Manney to Maj R. M. Randall, dtd 10 Jun 1930, File 2165-15, ibid.
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- (143) MCM 1926, 6-22.
- (144) MCM 1931, 6-22, 6-23.
- (145) CO, 1st Bn, 6th Marines, FMF, to MGC, dtd 25 Feb 1935, File 2165-15, RG 127, NA.
- (146) MGC to all Commanding Officers, dtd 12 Sep 1935, File 2165-15, ibid.
- (147) MGC to all Commanding Officers, dtd 19 Nov 1935, File 2165-15, ibid.
- (148) MGC to SecNav, dtd 13 Nov 1937, File 2165-15, ibid.
- (149) Director, Division of Plans and Policies (hereafter Dir, Div P&P) to MGC, dtd 13 Jul 1939; MGC to CO, MB, Washington, D. C., dtd 13 Jul 1939, File 2165-15, ibid.
- (150) Dir, Div P&P to MGC, dtd 21 Oct 1940, File 2165-15, ibid.
- (151) MCM 1940, 6-25.

- (152) Ibid., 1-21.
- (153) Ibid., 6-24(12).
- (154) Dir, Div P&P to MGC, dtd 25 Feb 1941, File 2165-15, RG 127, NA.
- (155) Ibid., dtd 23 Sep 1941.
- (156) LOI 310, dtd 6 Jan 1943.
- (157) LOI 444, dtd 9 Jun 1943.
- (158) LOI 671, dtd 26 Feb 1944.
- (159) LOI 413, dtd 24 Apr 1943.
- (160) ALNAV NR127, dtd 23 Jun 1942.
- (161) ALNAV 26 cited in District Order 82-42, Ninth Naval District, dtd 13 Feb 1943.
- (162) MCM 1940, 6-24(12, 1-21(2)).
- (163) Memo to Dir, Div P&P, dtd 5 May 1943, File 2165-15, RG 127, NA.
- (164) LOI 638, dtd 15 Jan 1944.
- (165) LOI 1000, dtd 7 Apr 1945.
- (166) LtCol Robert D. Heinl, Jr. "Exhume the Gunnery Sergeant," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 33, no. 6 (Jun 1949), p. 26.
- (167) Memo, Dir, Div P&P to Commandant of the Marine Corps (hereafter CMC), dtd 18 June 1946, File 2165-15(P), RG 127, NA.
- (168) Ibid.
- (169) Ibid.
- (170) Memo, DirPers to CMC, dtd 29 Aug 1946, File 2165-15(P), ibid.
- (171) LOI 1361, dtd 21 Oct 1946.
- (172) 63 Stat. 806.
- (173) Change 18 to MCM 1949, dtd Feb 1957; Commandant's Conference of December 1956, File A19-1, Archives, HistDiv, HQMC; Change 2 to Marine Corps Memorandum 48-53, dtd 9 Dec 1954, File A2-6/1-5, Archives, HistDiv, HQMC.

- (174) 72 Stat. 122-132.
- (175) MajGen Robert B. Luckey, USMC, rept to CMC dtd 29 May 1958, enclosing study and recommendations prepared by the Marine Corps Enlisted Rank and Pay Structure Board (hereafter Luckey Report), Subject File, Archives, HistDiv, HQMC.
- (176) CMC, Annual Reports, 1825-1898, passim; "Strength and Distribution," Subject File, Archives, HistDiv, HQMC.
- (177) LtCol R. D. Heinl, Jr., "NCOs - A Challenge From Within," op. cit., pp. 42-43.
- (178) MCO 1223.1, dtd 25 Nov 1958; Luckey Report; "Bulletin Board," Leatherneck, v. 42, no. 4 (Apr 1959), p. 92; "Enlisted Rank Structure," Marine Corps Gazette, v. 42, no. 10 (Oct 1958), pp. 32-33.
- (179) ALMAR NR 21, dtd 1 Aug 1960.
- (180) CMC, Annual Report, 1959, p. 14.
- (181) Computed from statistics supplied by the Statistics Section, Personnel Services Branch, HQMC.
- (182) Sec. 205, 37 USC.



Appendix A

COMMANDANTS OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Initial Rank as CMC</u>	<u>Final Rank as CMC</u>
1st	Samuel NICHOLAS (1)	28 Nov 1775- 1781	Captain	Major
2d	William Ward BURROWS (2)	12 Jul 1798- 6 Mar 1804	Major	Lieutenant Colonel
3d	Franklin WHARTON (3)	7 Mar 1804- 1 Sep 1818	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel
4th	Anthony GALE	3 Mar 1819- 16 Oct 1820	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel
5th	Archibald HENDERSON (4)	17 Oct 1820- 6 Jan 1859	Lieutenant Colonel	Colonel
6th	John HARRIS (5)	7 Jan 1859- 12 May 1864	Colonel	Colonel
7th	Jacob ZEILIN (6)	10 Jun 1864- 31 Oct 1876	Colonel	Brigadier General
8th	Charles G. MC CAWLEY	1 Nov 1876- 29 Jan 1891	Colonel	Colonel
9th	Charles HEYWOOD (7)	30 Jan 1891- 2 Oct 1903	Colonel	Major General
10th	George ELLIOTT (8)	3 Oct 1903- 30 Nov 1910	Brigadier General	Major General
11th	William P. BIDDLE (9)	3 Feb 1911- 24 Feb 1914	Major General	Major General
*12th	George BARNETT (10)	25 Feb 1914- 30 Jun 1920	Major General	Major General
*13th	John A. LEJEUNE	1 Jul 1920- 4 Mar 1929	Major General	Major General
*14th	Wendell C. NEVILLE	5 Mar 1929- 8 Jul 1930	Major General	Major General

*15th	Ben H. FULLER	9 Jul 1930- 28 Feb 1934	Major General	Major General
*16th	John H. RUSSELL	1 Mar 1934- 30 Nov 1936	Major General	Major General
17th	Thomas HOLCOMB (11)	1 Dec 1936- 31 Dec 1943	Major General	Lieutenant General
18th	Alexander A. VANDEGRIFT (12)	1 Jan 1944- 31 Dec 1947	Lieutenant General	General
19th	Clifton B. CATES	1 Jan 1948 31 Dec 1951	General	General
20th	Lemuel C. SHEPHERD, JR.	1 Jan 1952- 31 Dec 1959	General	General
21st	Randolph McC. PATE (13)	1 Jan 1956- 31 Dec 1959	General	General
22d	David M. SHOUP (14)	1 Jan 1960- 31 Dec 1963	General	General
*23d	Wallace M. GREENE, Jr.	1 Jan 1964- 31 Dec 1967	General	General
24th	Leonard F. CHAPMAN, Jr.	1 Jan 1968-	General	General

(1) The resolution of the Continental Congress on 10 November 1775 provided for a colonel to command the two battalions of Marines authorized, but the highest rank received by any Marine during the Revolution was that of major. Samuel Nicholas was appointed "Captain of Marines" on 28 November 1775, and promoted to major on 25 June 1776. Because of his senior status among other Marine officers of the Revolution, he is numbered as the first Commandant. The year 1781 saw Major Nicholas' return to private life. By the summer of 1781, there were only three Marine captains and three lieutenants on active duty, and overall organization had ceased to exist.

(2) When Burrows was appointed under authority of the Act of 11 July 1798 (1 Stat. 72) he was not known technically as "Major Commandant." It was not until 1 May 1800, when Burrows was promoted to "Lieutenant Colonel Commandant" under the Act of 22 April 1800 (2 Stat. 29), that there was an alliance of rank and position for the head of the Marine Corps.

(3) Between Wharton's death and Gale's appointment, Brevet Major Samuel Miller, the Adjutant and Inspector and Brevet Major

Archibald Henderson served as Acting Commandants, 2-15 September 1818 and 16 September 1818 - 2 March 1819, respectively.

(4) By authority of the Act of 30 June 1834 (4 Stat. 32) the rank of Commandant was raised to Colonel. On 4 March 1843, Henderson was commissioned brigadier general by brevet for his services during the Florida Indian Wars. Subsequently, he was commonly referred to as Brevet Brigadier General Henderson. This was a personal rank in the nature of a decoration for gallantry. It had nothing to do with the office of Commandant; less, in fact, than the personal rank subsequently held by Heywood. In this connection, it should be noted that, in official correspondence, Henderson usually signed himself "Col. Commdt."

(5) Between the death of Harris and the appointment of Zeilin, Major Augustus S. Nicholson, the Adjutant and Inspector, served as Acting Commandant, 13 May -9 June 1864.

(6) The Act of 2 March 1867 (14 Stat. 174) provided that "the commandant of the marine corps shall have the rank and pay of a brigadier-general of the army." This law was repealed by the Act of 6 June 1874 (18 Stat. 216) when the office of Commandant was returned to the rank of colonel when and if a vacancy occurred. Thus, Zeilin retained his rank of brigadier general but his successor was slated to be a colonel.

(7) Because of Colonel McCawley's illness, Colonel Clement D. Hebb--as he wrote to the Secretary of the Navy on 10 September 1899--" assumed the duties of the office of Colonel Commandant of the Marine Corps in obedience to your order of the 4th instant." But he was evidently never more than Acting Commandant. When using the Commandant's letter form, Hebb always signed as "Colonel, Commanding U. S. Marine Corps," meticulously crossing out the word "Commandant." Lieutenant Colonel Heywood was promoted to Colonel Commandant to rank from 30 January 1891, the day after McCawley retired, but he did not assume command of the Corps until 10 February 1891. It appears, therefore, that Colonel Hebb was Acting Commandant until the 10th of February.

By the Act of 3 March 1899 (30 Stat. 413) the post of Commandant was again raised to that of brigadier general; Heywood was promoted as of that date. The Act of 1 July 1902 (32 Stat. 1368) accorded the Commandant the rank, pay, and allowances of a major general in the Army. This act, however, specifically provided that should a vacancy occur in the office "on the expiration of the service of the present incumbent, by retirement or otherwise, the commandant of the Marine Corps shall thereafter have the rank, pay, and allowances of a brigadier-general." Thus, Heywood's final rank must be considered to have been personal in character.

(8) The Act of 13 May 1908 (35 Stat. 166) provided for the post of "major-general commandant, in lieu of the present brigadier-general commandant." Accordingly, on 21 May 1908, Elliott was promoted to major general.

(9) From the time of Major General Elliott's retirement until his own appointment, Biddle served as Acting Commandant in his personal rank of colonel, 1 December 1910 -2 February 1911. During Biddle's tenure the term of Commandant was fixed for the first time--four years "unless sooner relieved"--by the Act of 19 December 1913 (38 Stat. 3).

(10) Barnett was the first Commandant reappointed after the expiration of a fixed term of office, see p. 155, Josephus Daniels, The Wilson Era: Years of War and After 1917-1923 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946).

(11) The Act of 20 January 1942 (56 Stat. 10) provided for the rank of lieutenant general for the Commandant, and Holcomb was accordingly promoted to rank from that date. The same act provided that the office henceforth should be known as "Commandant of the Marine Corps." Holcomb was advanced to general on the retired list effective 1 January 1944--the first Marine ever to hold that rank.

(12) The Act of 21 March 1945 (59 Stat. 29) permitted the President to appoint the Commandant to the rank of general. When Vandegrift was promoted on 4 April 1945, to rank from 21 March of that year, he became the first Marine to serve in the rank of general. The Act of 21 March 1945 was restricted in effect to "six months after the termination of the war in which the United States is now engaged..." Hostilities had not yet been officially terminated when, by the Act of 7 August 1947 (61 Stat. 880), the rank of Commandant was permanently fixed as general.

(13) The President in 1955 appointed Lieutenant General Pate to a two-year term as Commandant; in 1957, however, Pate's tenure was renewed for another two years.

(14) When Pate was due to be relieved, the President nominated Major General Shoup for a two-year term as he had done with General Pate. The Senate in confirming the nomination, however, invoked the four year provision of the 1913 law and fixed Shoup's tenure as 1 January 1960 -31 December 1963. (Hearing on H. R. 8189, 3 September 1959.)

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\* Graduate of the United States Naval Academy.

**APPENDIX "B"**  
**MINIMUM ANNUAL BASE PAY OF MARINE OFFICERS, 1775 - 1969**

	1775	1798	1812	1836	1848	1865	1875	1898	1918	1933	1942	1951	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
GENERAL												11,115	14,400	15,624.00	16,560.00	17,089.20	18,046.80	19,292.40	21,722.40
LIEUTENANT GENERAL											8,000	11,115	12,799.60	13,835.61	14,677.20	15,145.20	15,994.80	17,100.00	19,252.80
MAJOR GENERAL								8,000	6,800	6,800	8,000	11,115	11,559.60	13,542.40	13,294.80	13,719.60	14,486.40	15,487.20	17,438.40
BRIGADIER GENERAL							5,500	6,000	5,100	5,100	6,000	9,234	9,603.36	10,418.40	11,044.80	11,397.60	12,034.80	12,866.40	14,486.40
COLONEL				900	900	1,140	3,500	4,000	4,000	2,975	4,000	6,840	7,113.60	7,718.40	8,182.80	8,445.60	8,917.20	9,532.80	10,735.20
LIEUTENANT COLONEL			720	720	720	960	3,000	3,000	3,500	2,550	3,500	5,472	5,690.88	6,554.80	6,753.60	6,753.60	7,131.60	7,624.80	8,586.00
MAJOR		600	600	600	600	960 (4) 840 (5)	2,500	2,500	3,000	2,040	3,000	4,617	4,801.68	4,809.20	5,222.40	5,698.80	6,019.20	6,433.20	7,243.20
CAPTAIN	360	480	480	600 (2) 480	600 (2) 480	840	1,800	2,000 1,800	2,400	1,700	2,400	3,762	3,912.48	4,244.40	5,133.60	5,299.20	5,594.40	5,979.60	6,732.00
1ST LIEUTENANT	160 (1)	360	360	480 (3) 360	480 (3) 360	600	1,750 (6) 1,500	1,500	2,000	1,275	2,000	2,992.56	3,012.32	4,376.80	4,111.20	4,274.40	4,482.00	4,191.60	5,396.40
2D LIEUTENANT	160 (1)	300	300	300	300	540	1,400	1,400	1,700	1,275	1,800	2,565	2,667.60	2,094.40	3,535.20	3,646.80	3,852.00	4,118.40	4,360.80
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER, W-4											3,000	3,841.20	3,994.80	4,334.40	5,227.20	5,392.80	5,695.20	6,870.60	6,854.40
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER, W-3											2,400	3,492	3,631.68	3,932.00	4,752.00	4,903.20	5,176.80	5,533.20	6,231.60
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER, W-2											2,100	3,055.56	3,177.84	3,448.80	4,158.00	4,291.20	4,532.40	4,845.60	5,457.60
WARRANT OFFICER, W-1											1,800	2,531.76	2,633.04	2,858.40	3,466.80	3,578.40	3,780.00	4,039.20	4,546.80

Over the years, the many different types of allotments and special pay that were authorized for Marine officers, such as forage, rations, longevity, flight, etc., would often double or even triple the basic pay of the individual officer.

(1) The only differentiation between lieutenants in the Continental Marines was between senior and junior lieutenants in the small units.

(2) Commanding posts and at sea.

(3) Commanding guards or detachments at sea.

(4) Staff.

(5) Line.

(6) 1st Lieutenant and Aide-de-Camp.



**APPENDIX "C" - TABLE ONE  
TYPICAL, BASIC COMPENSATION,  
NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL, 1775-1898**

	SERGEANT MAJOR	QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT	DRUM MAJOR	FIFE MAJOR	TAILOR SERGEANT	FIRST/ORDERLY SERGEANT	SERGEANT	CORPORAL	FIFER/DRUMMER/TRUMPETER	PRIVATE
CONTINENTAL MARINES							8.00 PER MO	7.33 PER MO	7.33 PER MO	6.66 PER MO
1796							10.00 PER MO	10.00 PER MO		
1798							9.00 PER MO	8.00 PER MO	7.00 PER MO	6.00 PER MO
1804					20.00 PER MO					
1832	10.00 PER MO	10.00 PER MO	9.00 PER MO	9.00 PER MO			9.00 PER MO	8.00 PER MO	7.00 PER MO	6.00 PER MO
1833			16.00 PER MO	16.00 PER MO		16.00 PER MO	13.00 PER MO			
1865	348.00 PER ANN	288.00 PER ANN				312.00 PER ANN	240.00 PER ANN	216.00 PER ANN	192.00 PER ANN	192.00 PER ANN
1872	300.00 PER ANN	300.00 PER ANN	300.00 PER ANN			264.00 PER ANN				
1893	276.00 PER ANN	276.00 PER ANN	336.00 PER ANN			300.00 PER ANN				

Note: These entries reflect only authorized changes in grades and compensation as of the date noted. In some instances, even though a billet may have been authorized, there is no evidence of its having been filled.

**APPENDIX "C" - TABLE TWO**  
**MINIMUM ANNUAL BASIC COMPENSATION,**  
**NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL, 1899 - 1969**

	1899	1908	1917	1922	1940	1942	1946	1955	1958	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
SERGEANT MAJOR	388.00	540.00	540.00	988.00	1,512.00	1,656.00			4,560.00	5,936.40	6,127.20	6,469.20	6,915.60	7,786.80
QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT	388.00	540.00	540.00	988.00	1,512.00	1,656.00								
DRUM MAJOR	300.00	540.00	540.00		1,008.10	1,656.00								
MASTER TECHNICAL SERGEANT					1,512.00	1,656.00								
PAYMASTER SERGEANT					1,512.00	1,656.00								
MASTER GUNNERY SERGEANT					1,512.00	1,656.00				5,936.40	6,127.20	6,469.20	6,915.60	7,786.80
1ST SERGEANT	300.00		540.00	636.00	1,008.10	1,368.00			3,720.00	4,582.40	5,140.80	5,428.80	5,823.20	6,534.00
MASTER SERGEANT							1,980.00	2,476.68	2,476.68	4,582.40	5,140.80	5,428.80	5,823.20	6,534.00
GUNNERY SERGEANT	400.00	400.00	540.00	636.00	1,008.10	1,368.00				3,132.00	3,232.80	3,412.80	3,646.80	4,107.60
SUPPLY SERGEANT					1,008.10	1,368.00								
TECHNICAL SERGEANT					1,008.10	1,368.00	1,620.00	2,109.72	2,109.72					
PLATOON SERGEANT					864.00	1,152.00								
STAFF SERGEANT					864.00	1,152.00	1,360.00	1,742.80	1,742.88	2,700.00	2,786.40	2,941.20	3,142.80	3,538.80
SERGEANT / FIELD MUSIC	216.00		360.00	540.00	720.00	936.00	1,200.00	1,467.60	1,467.60	2,329.20	2,404.80	2,538.00	2,714.40	3,056.40
CORPORAL / FIELD MUSIC	190.00		252.00	444.00	640.00	792.00	1,080.00	1,192.44	1,192.44	1,962.00	2,023.20	2,134.80	2,282.40	2,570.40
LANCE CORPORAL										1,414.80	1,461.60	1,544.40	1,652.40	1,861.20
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS / FIELD MUSIC FIRST CLASS			216.00	420.00	432.00	640.00	960.00	1,029.60	1,029.60	1,170.00	1,206.00	1,274.40	1,360.80	1,533.60
DRUMMER / FIFER / TRUMPETER / FIELD MUSIC	166.00		180.00											
PRIVATE	166.00		180.00	360.00	360.00	600.00	900.00	936.00	936.00	1,054.80	1,087.20	1,148.40	1,227.60	1,383.40









