

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 6TH MARINES



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

*COVER: British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill reviews the 6th Marines, the nucleus of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in Iceland in July 1941, as Marines replaced British occupation troops. Churchill later remembered that "there was a long march past in threes, during which the tune United States Marines bit so deeply into my memory that I could not get it out of my head."*

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by

Lieutenant General William K. Jones  
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)



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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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- A Brief History of the 2d Marines*, 1961, rev. eds. 1962, 1969
- A Brief History of the 3d Marines*, 1961, rev. ed. 1968
- A Brief History of the 4th Marines*, 1970
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- A Brief History of the 23d Marines*, scheduled for preparation
- A Brief History of the 24th Marines*, now in preparation
- A Brief History of the 25th Marines*, 1981

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# Foreword

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This historical monograph is the 13th in a series of 16 regimental histories. When completed, the series will cover in similar fashion each of the infantry and artillery regiments in the Fleet Marine Forces, active and reserve. The present narrative not only sets forth the significant actions of the 6th Marines, but also provides a general history of the Marine Corps activities in peace and war in which the regiment participated.

The author of this monograph, Lieutenant General William K. Jones, USMC (Retired), is exceptionally well qualified to write a history of the 6th Marines. General Jones, born in Joplin, Missouri, on 23 October 1916, received his A.B. degree from the University of Kansas in 1937. While at the university, he attended summer training courses in the Platoon Leaders' Class at San Diego, California. He accepted a Marine Reserve commission as a second lieutenant on 31 January 1938, entered active duty on 29 September 1939, and integrated into the regular Marine Corps in November 1940.

Upon his initial entry on active duty, he completed an abbreviated Reserve Officers' Course at Quantico, Virginia, before joining the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines at San Diego. He remained in that battalion for almost six years. In the process, he participated in the expedition to Iceland in 1941, saw combat on Guadalcanal, and commanded the battalion at Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian. On Tarawa, he earned a Silver Star Medal and a field promotion to lieutenant colonel (one of a handful given to Marine officers in World War II). For his actions on Saipan, he received a Navy Cross.

Some of his key post-World War II assignments included command of the 1st Marines (1953-54); The Basic School (1956-58); the Recruit Training Regiment at Parris Island, South Carolina (1958-60); the 3d Marine Division (1969-70) in Vietnam and Okinawa; and Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (1970-72). His personal decorations also include three awards of the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Purple Heart.

General Jones has been a prolific writer for many years. His "Baseplate McGurk" series of leadership articles in the *Marine Corps Gazette* has been widely read and reprinted.

He retired from active duty in 1972, and is at present the Vice President of the Marine Corps Historical Foundation.

In the pursuit of accuracy and objectivity, the History and Museums Division welcomes comments on the history from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and interested individuals.



E. H. SIMMONS

Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)  
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums



# Preface


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The famous 6th Marine Regiment was 70 years old in mid-summer 1987. This short history attempts to outline some, not all, of the remarkable accomplishments of this unit. The lateness of publishing such an account is due neither to a lack of interest on the part of the Marine Corps Historical Center nor insufficient effort by that organization. In fact, for several years a Washington-based Mobilization Training Unit (MTU) took on the project in an attempt to assemble available information. Unfortunately, the job had to be shunted from one reserve officer of the unit to another as events dictated. This became evident to the author when he attempted to proofread a final draft submitted by the MTU.

Having spent the first six years of my active duty, from second lieutenant to lieutenant colonel and battalion commander, in the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, I understandably have a deep attachment to the regiment. From my personal observation during World War II, I realized no association of men anywhere enjoyed a prouder combat record than ours. From my close association in the Marine Corps with respected leaders who were young Marines in World War I, I learned intimately about the founding of the heritage passed on to us by them. From younger Marines of yesteryear and today, I learned this heritage continues on to this day. I am confident it will do so well into the future. This great tradition continues among Marines in peace as well as in war, whether on active duty or in retirement. As a Marine veteran once wrote, "Indeed, the ordeal of not forgetting may well be the only heroism of the survivors."

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the distinguished members of the 6th Marines, whether on active duty, retired, or in civilian life, who contributed to this history. A full list of contributors may be found in the appendices. However, my particular thanks go to my editor, Dr. V. Keith Fleming, Jr., for his contributions, advice, and encouragement. Other Marines who especially provided support were Sergeant Major Lewis L. Michelony, USMC (Retired); Colonel Loren E. Haffner, USMC (Retired); Colonel James A. Donovan, Jr., USMC (Retired); and Colonel Thomas D. Stouffer, USMC. However, as author I am responsible for the contents of the text, including opinions expressed and any errors in fact.

To those members of the 6th Marines, dead, wounded, or remembering, this volume is respectfully dedicated.



WILLIAM K. JONES  
Lieutenant General  
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)





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## CHAPTER 1

# The First World War—The Beginning

*Background—Chateau-Thierry—Belleau Wood—Soissons—St. Mihiel  
The Meuse-Argonne and Blanc Mont Ridge—The Meuse-Argonne  
The March to the Rhine and the Occupation—Marine Achievements—Demobilization*

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### *Background*

So much has been written about World War I, and written so well by famous historians and novelists, it almost seems redundant, indeed presumptuous, to plow this ground again. A history of the 6th Marines would not be complete, nonetheless, without a recount of the regiment's beginning and its exploits in the First World War. To cover this period, even if in a cursory way, seems mandatory.

Prior to and well into World War I the U.S. Marine Corps closely followed the evolution of the British Royal Marines. In the 19th century, Marines of both nations served on board naval vessels, as guards of naval bases, and ashore in far-off lands on special assignments. Yet when World War I grew in ferocity, first the British and then the American Marines each provided a brigade for combat service with an infantry division in Europe as well as staff and command personnel for Army units. They also provided units for isolated outposts not related directly to the main battle effort against Germany.<sup>1</sup>

To refresh memories, the war had been going on for three years before the United States became directly involved on 6 April 1917.<sup>2</sup> Before the war, an anxious Europe watched Germany conduct what Winston Churchill called a "twilight war." By 1914 Britain, France, and Russia realized diplomacy had failed. In the United States, it only gradually became apparent that this country would be drawn into the conflict in Europe. Not until late summer of 1916, therefore, was the National Defense Act approved which finally provided substantial increases in the size of all of the military and naval services. The act authorized the Marine Corps to increase from 344 officers and 9,921 enlisted men to 597 officers and 14,981 enlisted. It further authorized the President, in the event of a national emergency, to increase the Corps to 693 officers and 17,400 enlisted men.<sup>3</sup> Recruiting was very slow. By the end of 1916 the enlisted strength was up to almost 11,000. No new officers were appointed until February 1917 and then only 10 were selected. When the United States entered the war the total Marine Corps strength was 419 officers and a little more than 13,000 enlisted men.<sup>4</sup>

The main training center development was at Par-

ris Island, South Carolina. The Marine Corps had, since 1915, maintained at an inactive naval station on the island a camp where it trained recruits from the eastern part of the country. Those from the western part were trained at Mare Island, California.<sup>5</sup> Now the Corps gradually acquired all of Parris Island—an area of about 10 square miles exclusive of marsh and tide lands. There were many difficulties. The isolated area had neither railway nor highway transportation. About all of the necessary facilities for water transportation had to be provided, including docks, barges, tugs, etc., to the nearest railroad terminal. Even the water for drinking and washing had to be barged in since the salty sea water so close to the surface of the island made wells impractical.

At first the recruits had to sleep under canvas. Finally temporary buildings were erected. By 1916 Parris Island was a beehive of activity. A major thoroughfare was cleared and later became known as the Boulevard de France. A new rifle range was constructed. A sand parade field was laid out and remained unpaved until 1943.<sup>6</sup>

A little over a month after the United States declared war on 6 April 1917, on 14 May, the Marine Corps leased 6,000 acres at Quantico, Virginia. On 14 June 1917 the 5th Marines sailed for France and full attention could be focused on forming and training the 6th Marines.

Recruiting new enlisted men proved to be no problem after war was declared. An unusually high quality of men presented themselves for enlistment, and many successful business and professional men were among their number. The recruiting of new officers proceeded more slowly. Many outstanding men from the enlisted ranks were promoted to officers, both at the beginning and during the war. Many made careers of the Corps after the war and became distinguished officers, some of whom even reached the rank of four-star general.

Consequently, when the 6th Marines was organized on 11 July 1917 at Quantico, over half the Marines were college men, with a large number of athletes among them. Two thirds of one company came straight from the University of Minnesota—300 students enlisted en bloc, for example.<sup>7</sup> Even though the new men were relatively inexperienced, there were plenty of noncom-

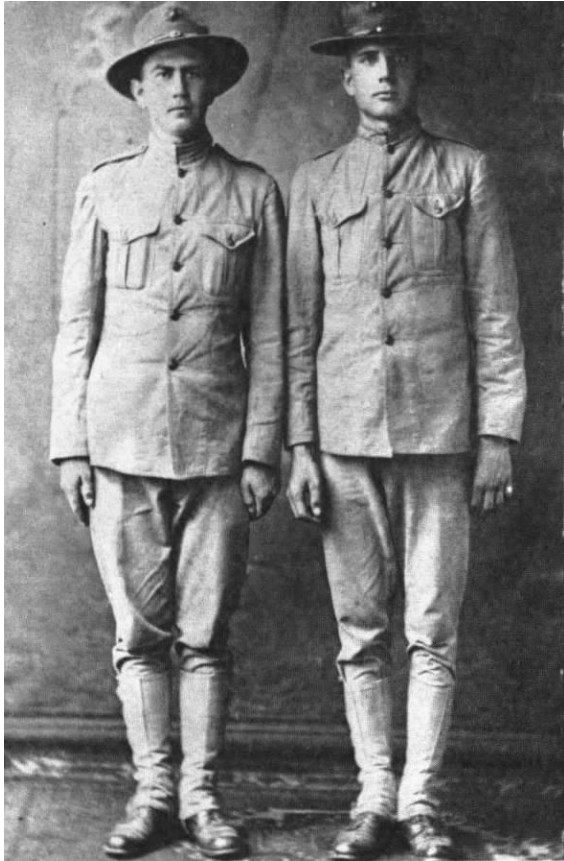


Photo courtesy of Mrs. Lathe W. Bennet

*Two new Marines on liberty pose in khaki summer uniforms during training on the 6,000 acres leased by the Corps at Quantico, Virginia, beginning in May 1917, to prepare Marines for combat in World War I.*

missioned officers and captains and above to provide the necessary leadership. Sergeant Major John H. Quick and First Sergeant Daniel Daly, both long-service veterans, already had won the Medal of Honor during earlier engagements. The regimental commander, Colonel Albertus E. Catlin, had earned his Medal of Honor at Vera Cruz. He wrote the following: "If we had time and opportunity to pick men individually from the whole of the United States, I doubt whether we should have done much better. There were as fine a bunch of upstanding American athletes as you can meet, and they had brains as well as brawn."<sup>8</sup>

According to First Class Private, later General, Gerald Cathrae Thomas, he and some friends enlisted among the above-mentioned group. This surge of patriotic fervor that swept the nation took the young student from Illinois Wesleyan University first to Parris Island for recruit training. Then, he and others moved to Quantico, where he joined the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines Intelligence Section. His battalion

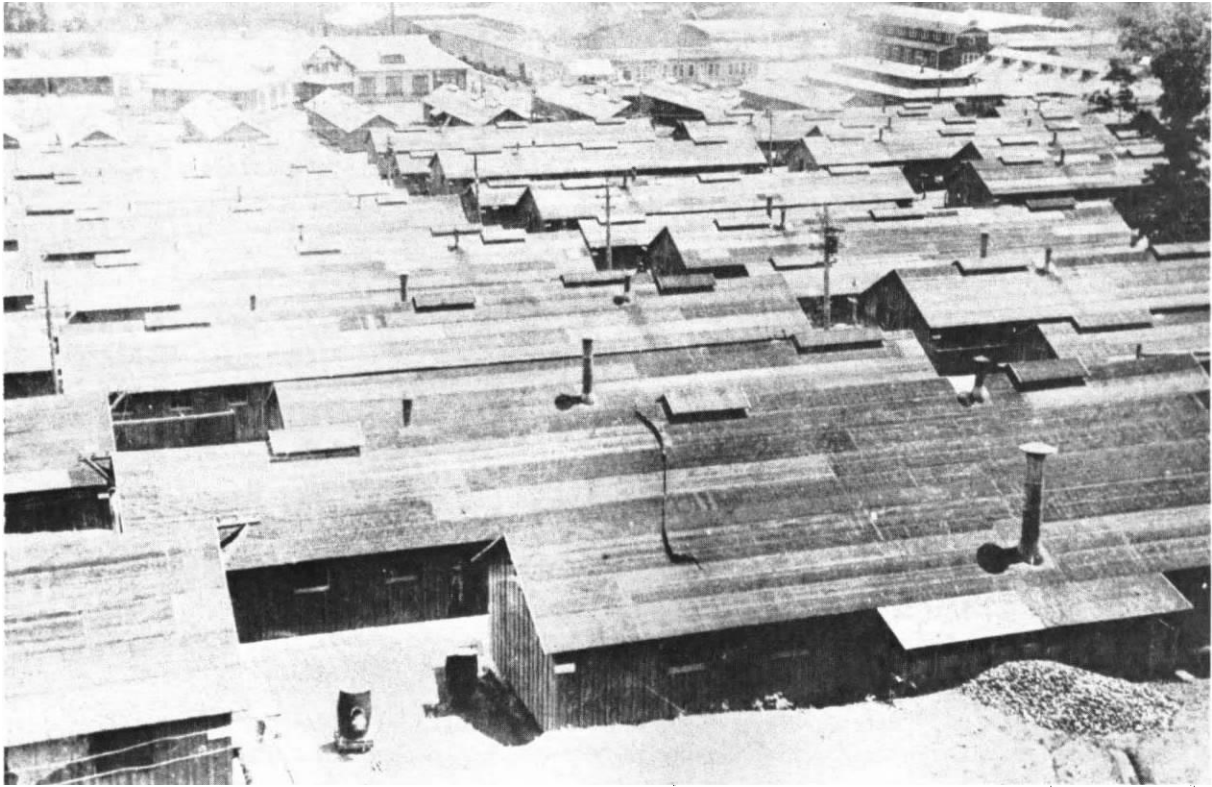
commander, Major John A. "Johnny the Hard" Hughes kept him busy. Years later while a colonel he argued with friends formerly in the 5th or 6th Marines who had been in France as to who had the toughest commander. They must have all been "tough" considering what they accomplished in France. At Quantico, Thomas was assigned to the Company Officers Course. He didn't find it very useful later.

He recalled they went by train from Quantico to Philadelphia where they embarked. Trained and ready, the 6th Marines together with the 6th Machine Gun Battalion arrived in France in late 1917. Ships had piled up waiting to be unloaded. Instead of immediately rushing to the front as they had expected, they unloaded cargo when they finally docked. When the 5th Marines arrived in France in mid-1917 they had expected to see action against the enemy in a short time. Instead the only action they had seen was as working parties unloading ships for the Army. They were disgusted. So with the arrival of the 6th Marines their hopes rose. In early 1918, the Marines were brought together as the 4th Brigade (Marines), 2d U.S.

*Second Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates, who later became Commandant of the Marine Corps, stands in front of the canvas tent which he used as quarters while in training with the 6th Regiment at Quantico in 1917.*

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*These clusters of temporary wartime-construction, tarpaper-covered wooden buildings house Marine units undergoing combat training for service in France in World War I.*

Division. Its 280 officers and 9,164 enlisted Marines made it a big brigade.<sup>9</sup>

On 17 March, the brigade went into the trenches southeast of Verdun, under the tutelage of the French, with well prepared trenches and other defensive positions. They learned quickly the grim realities of trench warfare—cooties, rats, “wire parties,” raids, and poison gas. They made many patrols and raids—both day and night. They also learned the difficulties of relieving troops in front-line positions, how to coordinate the fire of their weapons with supporting artillery fire, and how to best deal with German raiding parties. Their brigade commander was Brigadier General Charles A. Doyen, who had brought the 5th Marines to France as a colonel earlier. Although the Verdun defensive deserves longer treatment than given above due not only to the discomfort encountered but also to its length—March 17th to May 9th—space does not permit. Suffice to say the 4th Brigade suffered in that time 128 killed and 744 wounded. One 6th Marines company, in mid-April in a reserve position, was caught in a German gas barrage and 40 men died.

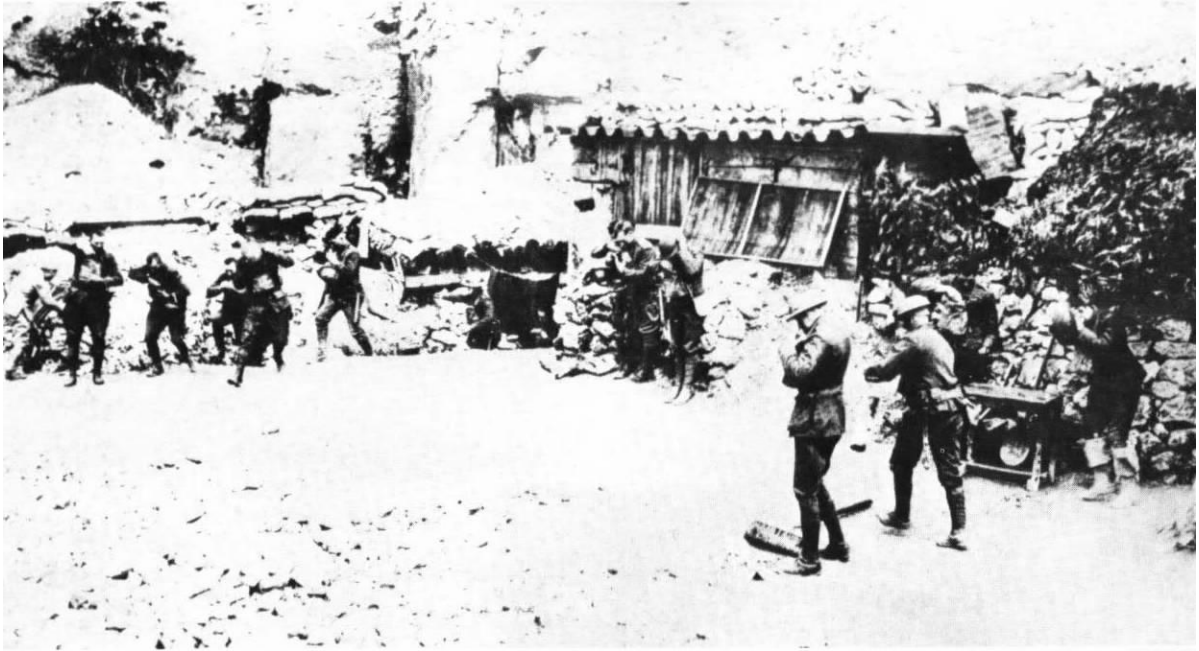
General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, was both demanding and unforgiving with elderly, ill officers so when

*Marines in training to fight in France line up outside one of the crude temporary buildings erected at Quantico. Many American college students enlisted.*

Historical Collection MCHC





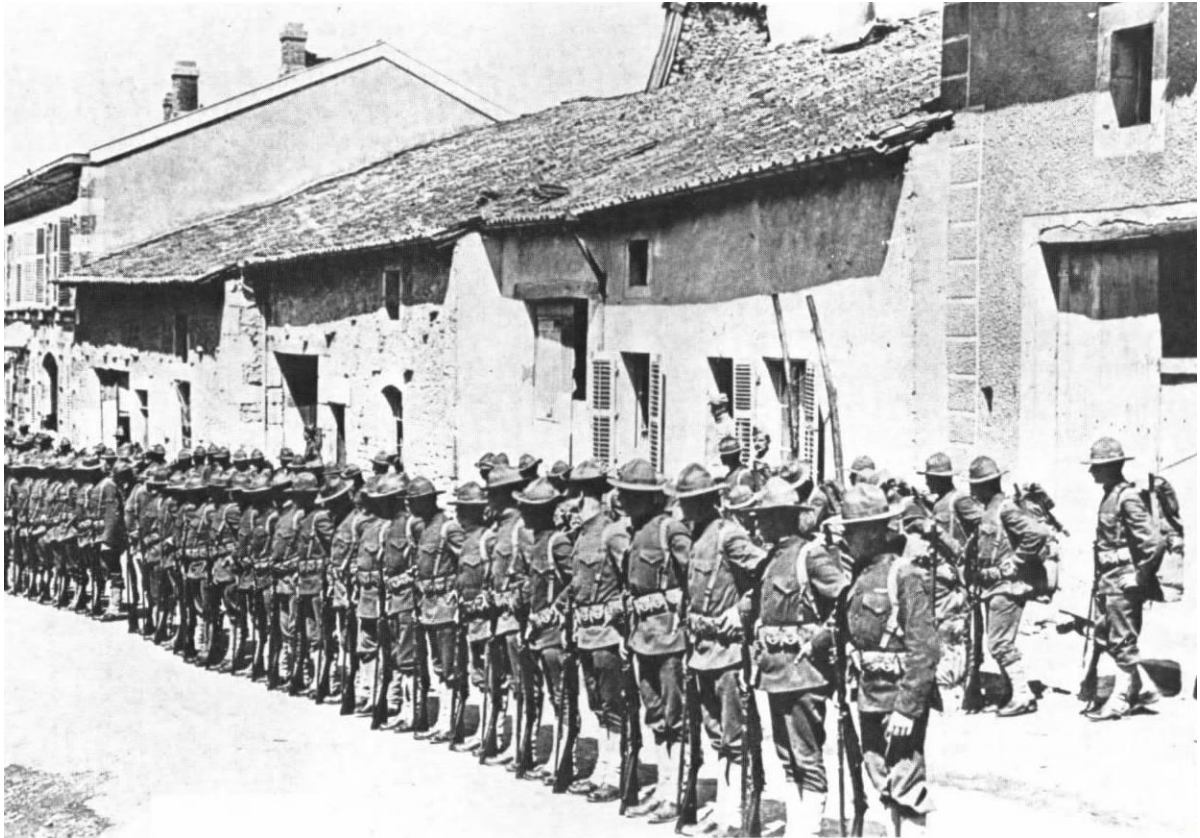


C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*A group of Marines go through a gas mask drill outside World War I dugouts in France.*

*Men of a newly arrived unit, whose Marine Corps green wool uniforms and canvas leggings have not yet been replaced by Army olive drab and puttees, dress ranks in France.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 514924





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*Posing for a photograph which illustrates the conditions under which the 6th Regiment of Marines gained its first exposure to combat, 2dLt Clifton B. Cates stands in a trench near Verdun in April 1918.*

Doyen fell ill he was invalided back to the United States. An Army officer, Brigadier General James G. Harbord, took command of the brigade. He had been Pershing's chief of staff.

Their familiarization period abruptly terminated. The first of the great German drives against the Western Front began in 1918. Nothing seemed to stop them as they advanced. On 27 May 1918, Ludendorff launched his Chemin des Dames offensive with over 50 divisions. It sliced the northern part of the Allies' front in half. A four-kilometer gap opened, allowing the Germans to reach the Marne River at Chateau-Thierry, perilously close to Paris. There was utter confusion as the allies tried to reorganize their lines.

Several reserve divisions were rushed into the breach including the 2d Division and its 4th Brigade of Marines.

#### *Chateau-Thierry*

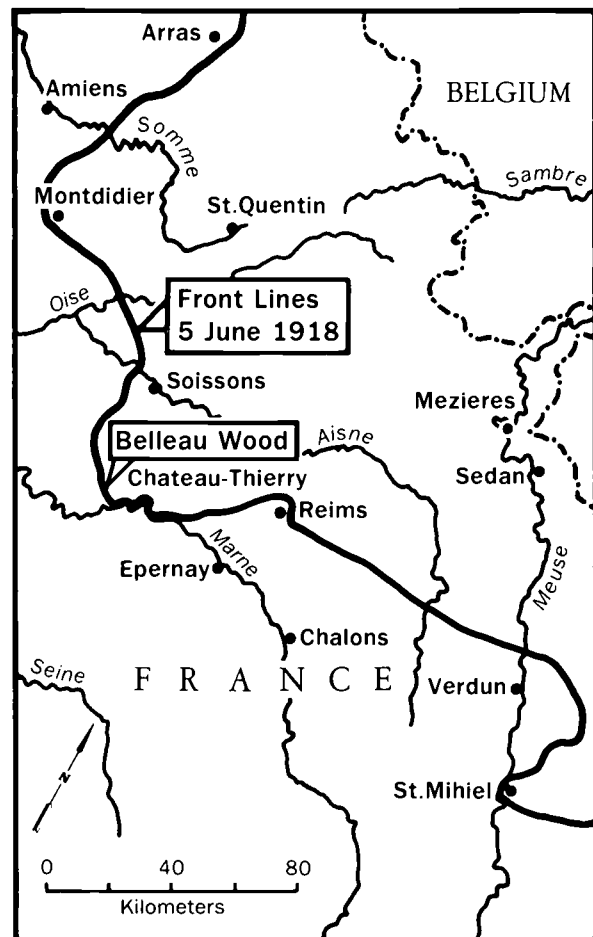
The 2d Division was deployed across the Chateau-Thierry-Paris road where it stopped the German advance on Paris. This is called the Aisne defensive. This

phase lasted from 31 May to 5 June 1918. It was a magnificent effort that had a tremendous psychological effect on the flagging morale of the French and British, both their armies and their civilians. The end of this defensive action still did not include Hill 142, Bois de Belleau, Bouresches, or Vaux.<sup>10</sup>

The French division commander in that sector thought he still had some soldiers fighting in Belleau Wood west of Chateau-Thierry. He asked the Marines to counterattack. A French colonel, however, advised Colonel Wendell Neville, commanding the 5th Marines, to retreat. He is supposed to have roared: "Retreat, hell! We just got here!" Other American soldiers and Marines subsequently claimed the quotation, but Neville himself later attributed it to Captain Lloyd W. Williams, commanding the 51st Company, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines.<sup>11</sup>

A French aviator reported that he saw the American lines falling back. The alarmed corps commander inquired down through channels, so the brigade com-

*Area of World War I  
Regimental Operations*





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*Marines peer out of the door of a French railroad car in May 1918. This is one of the famous "40 and 8" cars designed to transport either 40 men or 8 horses.*

mander asked Major Thomas Holcomb, who commanded the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines. "When I do my running," Holcomb answered, "It will be in the opposite direction."<sup>12</sup>

The stopping of the German advance that took

*Three Marine riflemen talk quietly while resting amid the vegetation of Belleau Wood.*

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC



place 2-5 June was a major victory for the allies. The enemy did roll back the French outposts into the 2d Division lines. Both long-range rifle fire and machine gun fire by the Marines made the Germans halt their offense and shift to the tactical defense along their front.

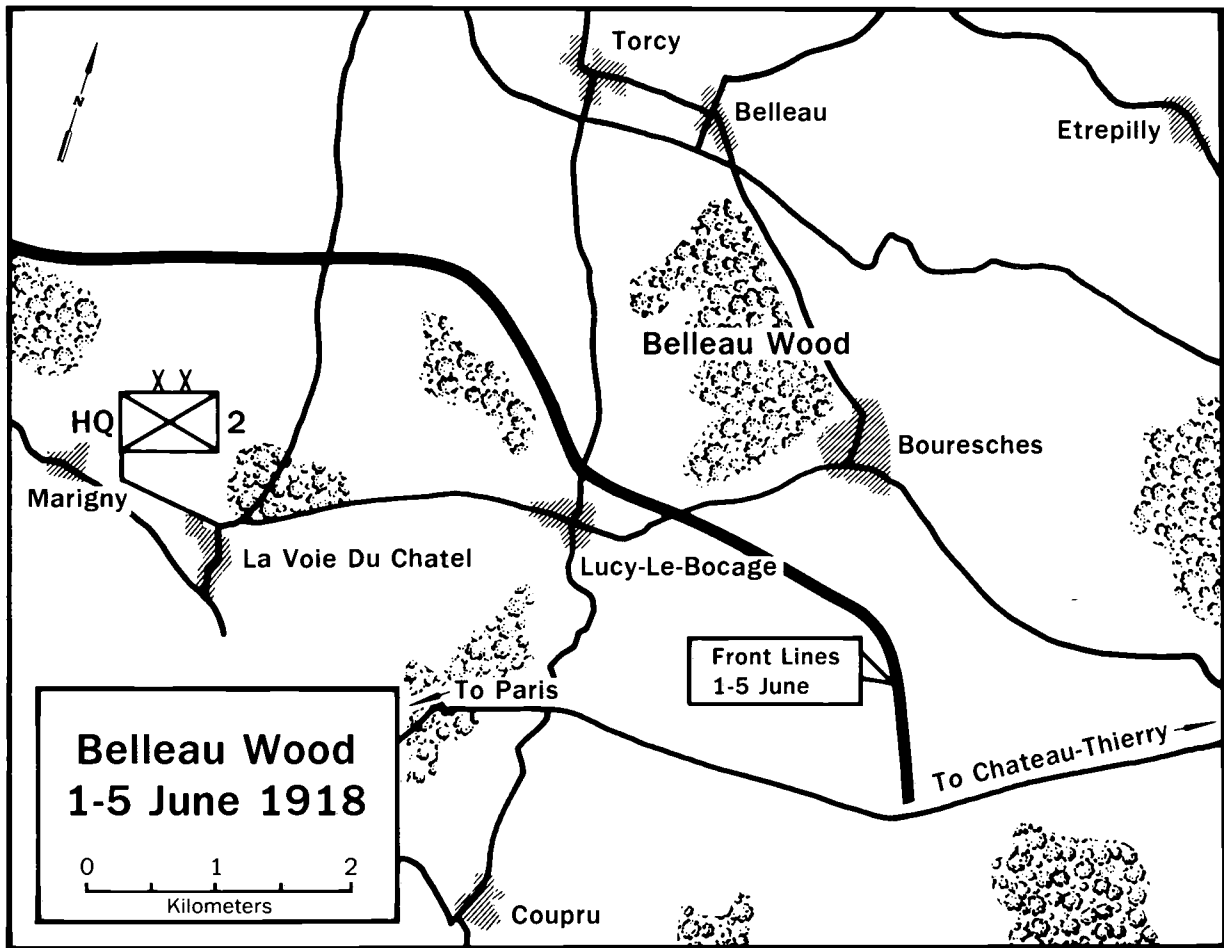
When Harbord took command of the 4th Brigade, Pershing told him he was getting the best troops in France and that if he failed Pershing would know whom to blame.<sup>13</sup> Neither he nor the 4th Brigade ever "failed" during their stay in France.

### *Belleau Wood*

The Germans attacked again on the 4th and 5th of June. They were unsuccessful. Finally the German offensive halted and they dug defensive positions. Belleau Wood, in front of the Marines, was a one-square-mile, easily fortified area full of trees and boulders. Two battalions of the *461st Imperial German Infantry*, strongly supported by Maxim machine gunners, occupied this formidable natural fortress.

The trees were so densely planted visibility was limited except where an axe or shell had cleared a portion. Unlike American forests, Belleau Wood had been cared for by a forester who cleared out the underbrush. Even though there was a lack of undergrowth for cover, the high rocky ground was full of gullies and crags in which the Germans could hide. Belleau Wood had once been a hunting preserve for the Chateau of Belleau, which was about a half mile north of the wood.

The American attack began on the morning of 6



June. The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines led the charge across wheat fields dotted with blood-red poppies. The enemy machine gunners waited for the Marines to get close before opening fire on their neatly dressed lines—offensive tactics still preached by the French but not practiced by them after they gained experience earlier in the war.<sup>14</sup>

When the Germans did open fire, casualties among the Americans were heavy. Retired Lieutenant General Merwin H. Silverthorn, an unusually religious man, claimed until his death in 1985 that it was during this episode that he suddenly became religious. His platoon, close to the left flank of the 6th Marines line, was commanded by an Army lieutenant named Coppinger. At the bottom of a ravine it was raked by enemy machine gun fire. Coppinger and Silverthorn hid behind a pile of wood. After five minutes, Coppinger shouted “Follow me!” and ran over the top of the ravine towards the Germans. He looked back and said in wonder, “Where the hell is my platoon?” He had started with 52 men. Only six were left. He said to Silverthorn, “I’m going back.” Silverthorn thought,

“Here’s where you and I part company, because we just got across that place and that’s the last thing I’m going to do—go back.” He kept going until he found the remnants of another platoon to join. The platoon he joined was commanded by another sergeant, named Gay. As they started forward across the field, Gay was hit in the back. Silverthorn bound the wound, which wasn’t too bad, and told Gay to stay still and he would come back for him after dark. He then took charge of the platoon and they charged ahead in rushes. The noise was awesome. Silverthorn was wounded in the knee. He told the only man he had left, an automatic rifleman, to move on into the woods where he was needed. Silverthorn said, “I’m going to stay out of sight where I am until it’s dark and I can get out under cover.” He thought of his father who was wounded at Gettysburg, yet lived to be 96.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the noise, casualties, and confusion, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, captured Hill 142, west of the woods, by noon and began to move into Belleau Wood itself.

On the right, Major Berton W. Sibley’s 3d Battal-

ion, 6th Marines, was doing better than Silverthorn's battalion. There was no yell or rush, but a relentless, steady attack. Although taking advantage of better cover, men were hit and fell; closer and closer they came to the wood.

The 6th Marines' commander, Colonel Catlin, hurried to a small rise where he could watch the attack through field glasses. He saw Sibley's Marines plunge into the wood. His French liaison officer begged him to find a safer place, but Catlin ignored the bullets flying around him. One struck him in the chest. It swung him around, knocking him to the ground. His right side was paralyzed and he couldn't stand. The French liaison officer dragged the big man to a shelter trench. The bullet had gone through Catlin's lung, but he never lost consciousness or experienced pain. Since the bleeding was internal, nothing could be done for him until treatment arrived. He was never able to return to the front.<sup>16</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee took over command of the 6th Marines. He kept it until demobilization in August 1919.

The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 6th Marines, together with the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, entered

the wood. War correspondent Floyd Gibbons heard Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Daly of the 6th Marines yell, "Come on, you sons of bitches. Do you want to live forever?"<sup>17</sup> Two platoons of the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, one of them commanded by then-Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates (later the Nineteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps) got into the village of Bouresches, and experienced repeated counterattacks. When their ammunition ran low, Sergeant Major John H. Quick brought some more to the platoons in a Ford truck. For this, he received the Army's Distinguished Service Cross to add to the Medal of Honor he already had received before World War I.

Since company designations in those days were listed numerically rather than alphabetically as they are now, it might be well to relate the two:

Sixth Marines		
1st Bn	2d Bn	3d Bn
74th (A) Co	78th (E) Co	82d (I) Co
75th (B) Co	79th (F) Co	83d (K) Co
76th (C) Co	80th (G) Co	84th (L) Co
95th (D) Co	96th (H) Co	97th (M) Co

*This damaged private hunting lodge, a landmark for those Americans who fought in Belleau Wood in World War I, stands near shell-scarred trees after the battle's end.*

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*A dead German soldier in his position after the hotly contested battle for Belleau Wood.*

Major Thomas Holcomb, later the Seventeenth Commandant of the Marine Corps, commanded the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, from August 1917 to January 1919. At Belleau Wood he instructed Sergeant Don V. Paradis of the 80th (G) Company to take a Private Slack across the wheat field, and find Major Sibley and the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. He desired their map location and other information. Paradis, followed by Slack, crossed the wheat field safely, and found Sibley. "For God's sake," Sibley said, "tell Major Holcomb not to take Captain Coffenberg and the 80th Company away from me! We've lost at least half of our battalion."

"Come on, Slack, let's get back," Paradis said, but the private was horrified: "You aren't going the same way we came?" "It's the shortest route," thought Paradis, as he headed back through the smoke alone. Wounded men kept calling for help. He found Holcomb, gave him the message, and requested permission to go back and help the wounded. Holcomb refused. He had more messages to be carried.

Lieutenant Cates, while leading his platoon across a wheat field towards Bouresches, had an enemy machine gun bullet knock off his helmet. It also knocked him unconscious. When he came to, he couldn't put his helmet back on properly because of a dent the size of a fist. Machine gun bullets were flying all around. Men were falling all around him. "My first thought was to run to the rear. I hate to admit

it but that was it," he said later. Seeing four Marines in a ravine, he got to them and fell at their feet. One took off the dented helmet and poured wine from his canteen over the lump on Cate's head, "God damn it," the lieutenant growled, "don't pour that wine on my head, give me a drink of it." It revived him. He grabbed a French rifle and led the Marines into Bouresches.<sup>18</sup>

Lieutenant Cates was both gassed and wounded. For his heroism at Bouresches and in the Belleau Wood fighting he received the Navy Cross, the Army's Distinguished Service Cross, and an oak leaf cluster in lieu of a second Distinguished Service Cross.<sup>19</sup>

The Marines had almost no information on the Germans' dispositions. The French had told them the wood was lightly held. The artillery fire supporting the attack was ineffective. During the afternoon the casualties climbed. The brigade losses for the first day were 31 officers and 1,056 enlisted men killed, wounded, or missing.<sup>20</sup>

Floyd Gibbons' left eye was shot out. Rumors started that he had been killed. Upon hearing them, the Army censor, thinking him dead, wanted to do Gibbons a last favor. He released Gibbons' previously-filed report of the action in Belleau Wood. Gibbons' article named the Marine Brigade, going against the AEF chief censor's edict forbidding mention of the kind of troops involved in any action. As a result, the fol-

lowing day's newspapers electrified the American public with Gibbons' colorful story of the fighting in which he praised the exploits of the Marine Brigade. This caused considerable jealousy in Army units even though nobody in the Marine Corps had anything to do with releasing the story.

On 7 June, preparations were made for resuming the attack. The Germans added fresh troops to their defense in anticipation of renewed assaults. They still held most of Belleau Wood, in spite of the loss of the town of Bouresches. American artillery shelled the enemy all night. At 0400 the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, one of the assaulting units on 6 July, attempted to advance its lines to the north, but each position they reached was flanked by German machine guns. The battalion finally withdrew even further to a ravine to allow friendly artillery to shell the enemy's front lines.

On 9 June, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, made a limited attack on the southern part of the wood. It was preceded by a heavy artillery bombardment. Actually, these Marines only reached the enemy's main line of resistance, which had successfully stopped the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, three days before.

On 11 June, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, with the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, on its right, advanced to a line across the narrow part of the wood which sepa-

rated the northern from the southern part. Their advance was stopped after heavy losses. The Germans still held the larger northern part. The troops of the German *28th Division*, which had been driven from the southern part of the wood, lost nearly 800 men. Their counterattack against the Marines to retake the southern part failed early the following morning.

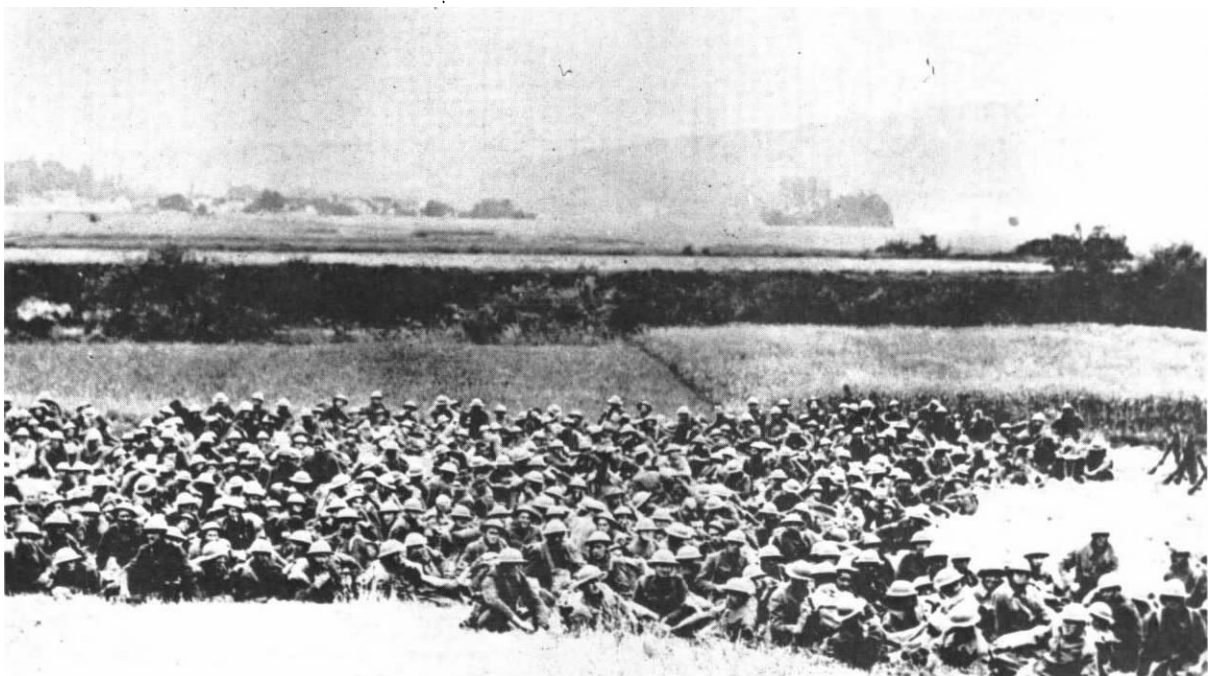
Within two days the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, captured more than 400 prisoners and 60 machine guns. A wounded captured German officer reported that the Germans planned to counterattack early on 13 June.

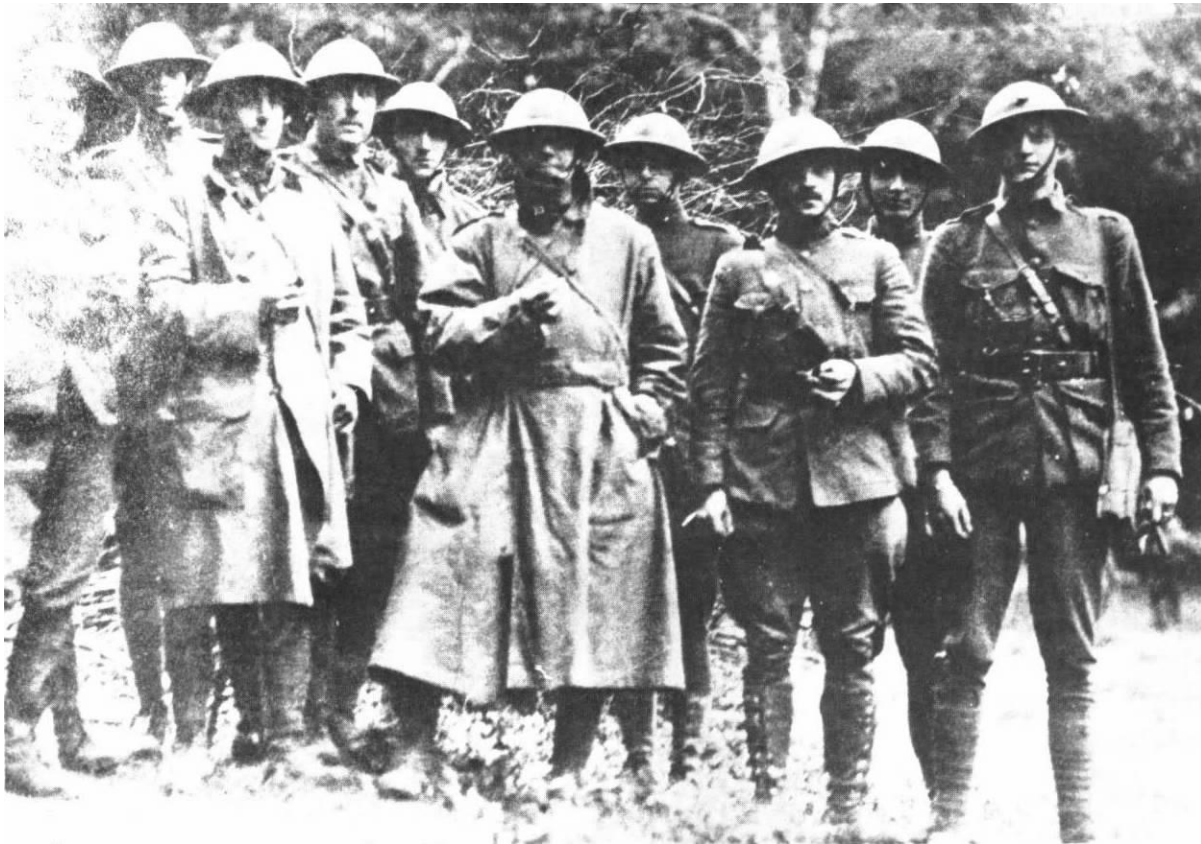
The counterblow occurred on schedule at 0400. It was preceded by a heavy artillery bombardment and extended as far south as the village of Bouresches. Except for the village, which they almost recaptured, the German infantry assault failed. The German artillery continued harassing fire throughout the day using high explosive and mustard gas shells. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, in the southeastern section of the wood, and in Bouresches particularly, had 450 casualties.

The Marine Brigade had experienced severe losses, its units were hopelessly mixed, and the men were exhausted from continuous heavy fighting. The enemy's harassing artillery fire continued while the Germans reinforced the small section of the northwest part of

*Survivors of Maj Thomas Holcomb's 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, pause while enroute to a rest area following the 20 days of intense fighting in Belleau Wood in June 1918.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 4938





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*A group of Marine officers in France in World War I, one of whom (right) has placed the distinctive Marine Corps emblem on the front of his British-style steel helmet.*

the wood still under their control. The German *Fourth Reserve Corps*, however, had also suffered heavy losses, its counterattack had failed, and they had been surprised by the determined Marines as fighting men.

During the gas attack and harassing artillery fire, the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, tried to relieve the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, but lost so many men from the gas they were unable to do so. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, refused to leave, so both battalions defended the eastern edge of the wood. Lieutenant Colonel Logan Feland took command of the three battalions—the 1st and 2d Battalions, 6th Marines, and the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. He reorganized the position and ensured a more sound defense of the area.

This was followed by a brief period when the 4th Brigade was out of the front lines. Its battalions received 2,800 Marine replacements, reorganized, and were given all available equipment. During this period the Marines were relieved by the 7th Infantry Division. The front lines remained unchanged.

On the night of 22-23 June the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, took over the line along the eastern edge of

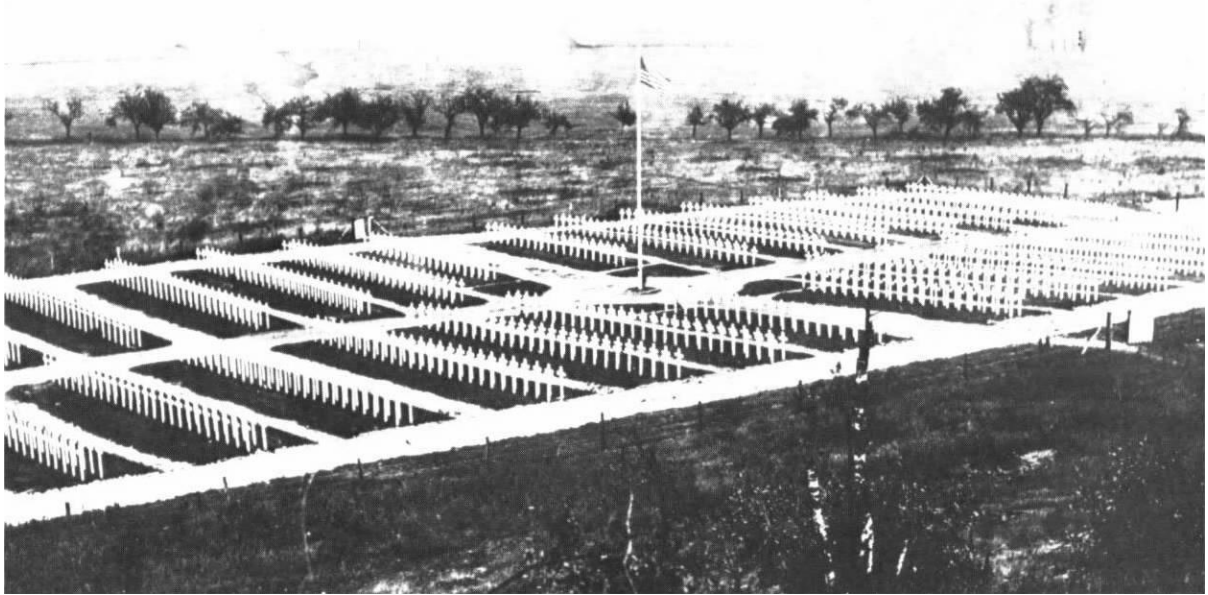
the wood, relieving the Army troops. A battalion of the 5th Marines was on each of its flanks.

At 1700 on 25 June an American artillery barrage lasting four hours fell on the German lines. It caused heavy casualties, demoralized the enemy, and prevented him from reinforcing his positions. By 2130 that evening the Marines controlled the wood and braced themselves for the expected counterattack. It never came.

On 26 June 1918 the American Expeditionary Force headquarters received a message, "Belleau Wood now U.S. Marine Corps' entirely." Twenty days of intense fighting were over. The Marine's tenacious attacks earned them the nickname "Devil Dogs" from the Germans.

The Marine Brigade had suffered almost 5,000 casualties—about 55 percent of its strength. These were the heaviest losses experienced by any American brigade during a single offensive in World War I. The 6th French Army issued an order on 30 June 1918, changing the name of the Bois de Belleau to the Bois





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*American cemetery near Belleau Wood, photographed in 1919.*

de la Brigade de Marine. The brigade received a citation for gallantry signed by General Henri Petain\*.

Now the site of an American cemetery, more than 2,200 men lie buried in Belleau Wood, with 249 of them listed as unknown. The interior walls of the chapel, located near the center of the cemetery, has the names of 1,060 men who were never recovered, among whom are those listed as “unknown” and buried in the cemetery.

Warrant Officer Arthur Martin, USA (Ret), grounds supervisor for the cemetery, says: “The Marines had been considering the idea of advancing in small groups, Indian style, instead of in line, as was common in World War I trench warfare. . . .

“When the fighting began, the Marines switched to what are now referred to as squad tactics.”<sup>21</sup>

The first fighting by the Marine Brigade in the Chateau-Thierry sector was a magnificent stubborn defense between 31 May and 5 June. The second phase was the capture of Belleau Wood. Together they were listed as a major operation called the Aisne Defensive.

During 31 days of intense fighting the 2d Division as a whole suffered an estimated 1,811 battle deaths, of which 1,062 were Marines, and 7,252 additional casualties, of which 3,615 were Marines. It was that fighting and 9,063 American casualties that made the

\*French maps still use the name, Bois de Belleau; however, a masonry marker at the entrance to the wood reads Bois de la Brigade de Marine. Robert Sherrod, *Fortitudine* (Summer, 1980), p. 8.

names Belleau Wood and Chateau-Thierry famous.<sup>22</sup>

After being relieved by another American division on 5-6 July 1918, the 4th Brigade moved to the rear area and took up defensive positions near Nanteuil-sur-Marne. It remained there until 16 July.

The Germans attacked the American line on 15 July. It turned out this was their last offensive and it failed. From that time on they were on the defensive.<sup>23</sup>

It is well to pause here and mention a famous book named *Through the Wheat*, a novel by Thomas Boyd. Boyd was born on 3 July 1888 in Defiance, Ohio. He enlisted in the Marine Corps 26 May 1919, and eventually ended up in the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. The hero, a Private Hicks, is an ordinary young man trapped by World War I. In recounting his own experiences through Private Hicks, Boyd created the archetype of the modern warrior. He used such burning, vivid strokes of realism that F. Scott Fitzgerald—a man impatient with bad writing—closed his review with these words, “*Through the Wheat* is not only the best combatant story of the great war but also the best war book since *The Red Badge of Courage*.” Retired Marine General Gerald C. Thomas, who also participated as a member of the 6th Marines in the battle for Belleau Wood, considered the book to be the best description of what the Marines experienced. Unfortunately the book has been out of print for some time. However, the Marine Corps Historical Center in the Washington Navy Yard contains the first edition of

Boyd's book, which contains illustrations by Captain John W. Thomason, Jr., another Marine who was also there.

### *Soissons*

General Harbord was appointed to the rank of major general, and took command of the 2d Division. Colonel Neville had been evacuated to a base hospital after leaving the Chateau-Thierry sector, but returned in time to resume command of the 4th Brigade for the forthcoming Aisne-Marne offensive. The Marine Brigade entered the front lines near Soissons.

This was to be a major operation in 1918 on the Western Front. The 4th Brigade was hurriedly and secretly sent to the Soissons sector. The 5th Marines moved by forced night marches through rain and mud. The roads were jammed with troops, artillery, and tanks. Although fatigued, the Marines arrived in time to attack on the morning of 18 July. The 6th Marines were transported by camions (trucks) with Vietnamese drivers, and remained in reserve the first day. It was a glorious victory. Rather than the preliminary bombardment, massed American and French artillery, firing by the map, laid down a rolling barrage, and the picked American and French divisions charged. The attack immediately broke through the most sensitive portion of the German line to the heights south of Soissons. The enemy infantry lines were overrun, as was his artillery. His communications were interrupt-

ed. The end result was a general, although stubborn German withdrawal from the Marne in order to prevent disaster. Paris was saved. The attack continued the next day. The results of the two days' fighting were 3,000 prisoners and 66 field guns. The tide of war was turned definitely in favor of the Allies.

The 6th Marines first moved from their corps reserve positions to the vicinity of Beaurepaire Farm. On the 19th, the second day of the attack, it was not until 0630 that the leading battalion of the regiment received orders to lead the attack that day. The Germans were still desperately attempting to stop the allies' drive.

The 6th Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Harry Lee, advanced on about a 2,500-yard front. The 1st Battalion, commanded by Major John A. Hughes, was on the left flank; the 2d Battalion, commanded by Major Thomas Holcomb, was on Hughes' right; and the 3d Battalion, commanded by Major Berton W. Sibley, was in reserve. The ground was level, and contained no cover except for an occasional wheat field. This attack started in full view of the enemy and with insufficient artillery support. The accompanying tanks slowed the infantry. German artillery and machine gun fire decimated the 6th Marines. Within a half hour so many men of the 1st and 2d Battalions had been cut down it was necessary to commit two companies from the 3d Battalion to fill the ever-widening gap. The losses to the 1st and 2d Battalions averaged more

*Part of the 3d Platoon, 96th Company, 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment rests at Ronvaux, France.*

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*A 1918 Marine command post occupies these dugouts in the Champagne region of France.*

than 50 percent. It was almost impossible to evacuate the wounded. Cates, now commanding a company, sent back a scribbled message from an abandoned trench: “. . . I have only two men left out of my company and 20 out of other companies. . . . I have no one on my left and only a few on my right. I will hold.”<sup>24</sup>

Lee ordered his troops to dig in, and they suffered from enemy artillery fire throughout the next day. The regiment was relieved by a French unit that night and moved to the rear. The 5th Marines had enjoyed pursuing a demoralized enemy the first day. The 6th Marines had the bitter experience of trying to overcome the enemy with little more than their bare bodies. The Marines were again cited in French Army Orders.

The 4th Brigade was relieved about midnight on 19 July. It remained in a reserve position still farther in the rear. Still in reserve, it remained in that area until 31 July. In spite of sleepless nights, long marches through rain and mud, thirst, and heavy casualties among friends, the Marines again had met the test of combat.

It was during this quiet period that the brigade was visited by Franklin D. Roosevelt, the young Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He had just toured Belleau Wood where he was impressed by the splendid work of the brigade. He authorized the enlisted Marines to wear the Marine Corps emblem on the collar of their

Army-issue uniforms (until then a privilege reserved only for the officers).<sup>25</sup>

On 25 July, Brigadier General John A. Lejeune, later the Thirteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps, assumed command of the brigade. Colonel Wendell C. Neville, later the Fourteenth Commandant, took command of the 5th Marines, relieving Colonel Logan Feland. General Lejeune retained command until 29 July 1918 when he became commanding general of the 2d Division. Colonel Neville then resumed command of the 4th Brigade.

When assuming command of the brigade, General Lejeune had issued a general order which read:

I have this day assumed command of the 4th Brigade U.S. Marines.

To command this brigade is the highest honor that could come to any man. Its renown is imperishable and the skill, endurance, and valor of the officers and men have immortalized its name and that of the Marine Corps.<sup>26</sup>

As recounted above, Lejeune's elation was short-lived, only four days, as he was promoted to major general and given command of the 2d Division when General Harbord was detached to take command of the A.E.F. Services of Supply. (Lejeune had arrived in France earlier expecting to take command of a Marine Division for which Marine Commandant George Barnett was pushing.) However, General Pershing

bluntly refused the idea and ordered Lejeune to take command of a National Guard brigade.

### *St. Mihiel*

During August 1918 the brigade rested and refitted. On 2 September it started to move to positions for participation in the St. Mihiel offensive through a series of night marches. From 12 to 16 September, the brigade was engaged in this battle.

The 6th Marines attacked in a column of battalions. The 2d Battalion led the attack with four companies abreast, followed by the 1st and then the 3d Battalion. It was during this attack that the 2d Battalion displayed extraordinary bravery. Some of its members performed some of the most outstanding acts of heroism seen in the American forces during the war.<sup>27</sup> It was 13 September, the second day of the offensive, when the 4th Brigade passed through the 3d Brigade which had led the attack the previous day. Compared to Belleau Wood and Soissons, it was an easy fight. Still, there were 706 fresh Marine casualties when it was over. On 20 September the brigade moved to a rear area and from there by train in boxcars. These were referred to as "40 and 8s" because they could hold 40 people or eight horses. The Americans began preparing for the Meuse-Argonne offensive.

### *The Meuse-Argonne and Blanc Mont Ridge*

The allies were now at the Hindenberg Line. The key terrain feature in the area was Blanc Mont—"White Mountain"—which had been in German hands since 1914. The Marines were to attack it frontally with French troops on their right and left.

*In a post-war snapshot, these little-damaged dirt-covered German bunkers, captured by men of the 6th Regiment in World War I, remain intact on Blanc Mont Ridge in France.*

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC





C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC  
*An unidentified Marine, wearing the Army woolen uniform, with cloth puttees around his legs, sits on a rooftop somewhere in France during World War I.*

The 2d Division's infantry units were sent to the rear where the depleted ranks of the 4th Brigade were refilled by replacements from the 1st Marine Training Regiment.

#### *The Meuse-Argonne*

The 2d Division was assigned to V Corps of the 1st Army for the final drive. This was to be the center corps of the 1st Army front. The 2d Division was assigned the left sector of the Corps, placing this division in the approximate center of the front.

The attack jumped off on 1 November 1918. The Marine Brigade led the division which attacked in columns of brigades. The 5th Marines were on the brigade's left with the 6th Marines on the right. Both attacked in columns of battalions. The 1st Battalion led the 6th Marines assault, followed by the 3d and then the 2d Battalion. The infantry attack started at 0530, preceded by a heavy artillery rolling barrage. The columns of battalions paused at each objective to allow the next battalion to leapfrog to the front line battalion.

The 2d Division sector averaged only two kilometers in width, and was supported by more than 300 artillery pieces of various calibers. Also, a company of 15 light tanks was provided to assist the infantry. The division was supposed to drive a wedge deep in the German lines for future exploitation.

The German Army was attempting to withdraw from France. It planned to set up a line on the east bank of the Meuse River. To do this, strenuous rear-guard action was ordered to delay the Americans. The German morale was broken, they were facing gradual starvation, and their fighting power was rapidly diminishing.

The artillery fire supporting the Americans was intense. The first objective was reached at 0800. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, and the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, passed through the front lines and assumed the lead. The second objective was reached about noon in spite of the heavy belts of barbed wire encountered, and the enemy artillery and machine gun fire. The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, passed through the 3d Battalion and continued the attack.

By now, all of the Germans' organized positions and a great deal of their artillery had been overrun. The enemy retreated from his sector during the night. A line of exploitation about two miles in front of the third objective was assigned.

On the third objective the Americans dug in and waited for the expected counterattack. Instead, the enemy covered his night withdrawal with the remnants of several divisions.

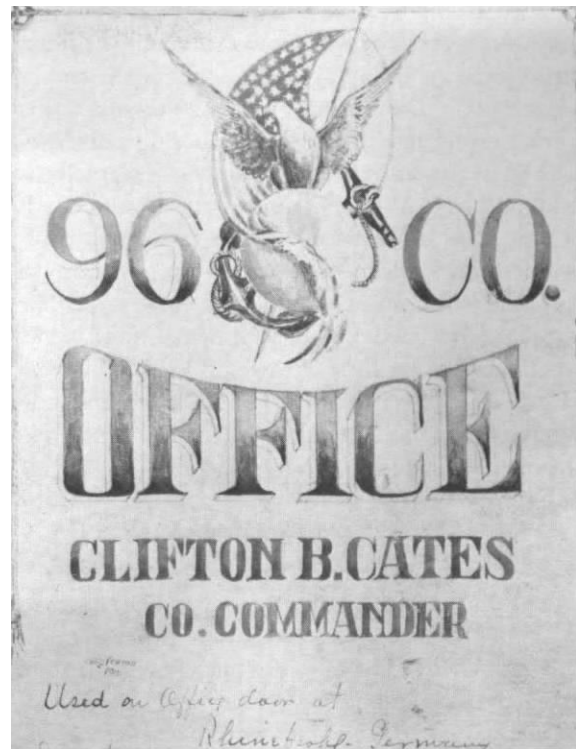
The Marines had made an advance against organized resistance at least equal to any made during the war by an American division in a single day. They were exhausted. Mud, rain, and sleepless nights made it all the more difficult. Their food, when they could get it, consisted of Argentine beef cooked with whatever vegetables their cooks could find. They called it "slop." It probably was. Boring, repetitious, but necessary for sustenance. They didn't have the luxury of "C" rations, "D" rations, "K" rations, or the modern MRE's (Meal, Ready-to-Eat).

The 4th Brigade took a day of respite and did not join in the follow-up exploitation. However, during their part in the attack the Marines established their front lines along the Meuse, facing the Germans on the other side of the river. The 4th Brigade was then relieved by an Army brigade, moved to the rear, and prepared to force a crossing of the river. This took awhile due to the utter confusion in the rear with its

poor roads, traffic jams, and supply echelons attempting to catch up with the advancing troops. It was impossible to even evacuate the sick and wounded. The crossing continued to be postponed from day to day.

Finally the orders for the crossing arrived. The infantry battalion commanders did not receive their orders until 0500 on the day of the crossing. Their men were still in bivouac under the cover of woods behind the river. There was confusion as to when the operation was to start. As a result the artillery began firing their preparatory fires an hour too soon. Most of the supporting fire had been delivered before the infantry even reached the designated crossing sites. The Army engineers were ready to throw two pontoon bridges across the river. The enemy soon located them and prevented them from being put into place by heavy artillery and machine gun fire. German artillery also pounded the roads leading to the river. Fortunately, the Marines followed a railroad track leading to their crossing site and were not hit. The three battalions of the 6th Marines and one of the battalions of the 5th Marines were assigned to make the main crossing. As dawn approached, the bridges still had not been constructed. The battalion commander agreed that there was nothing to be done but to withdraw to the cover of woods before daylight arrived.

Once they reached the woods, they learned that the

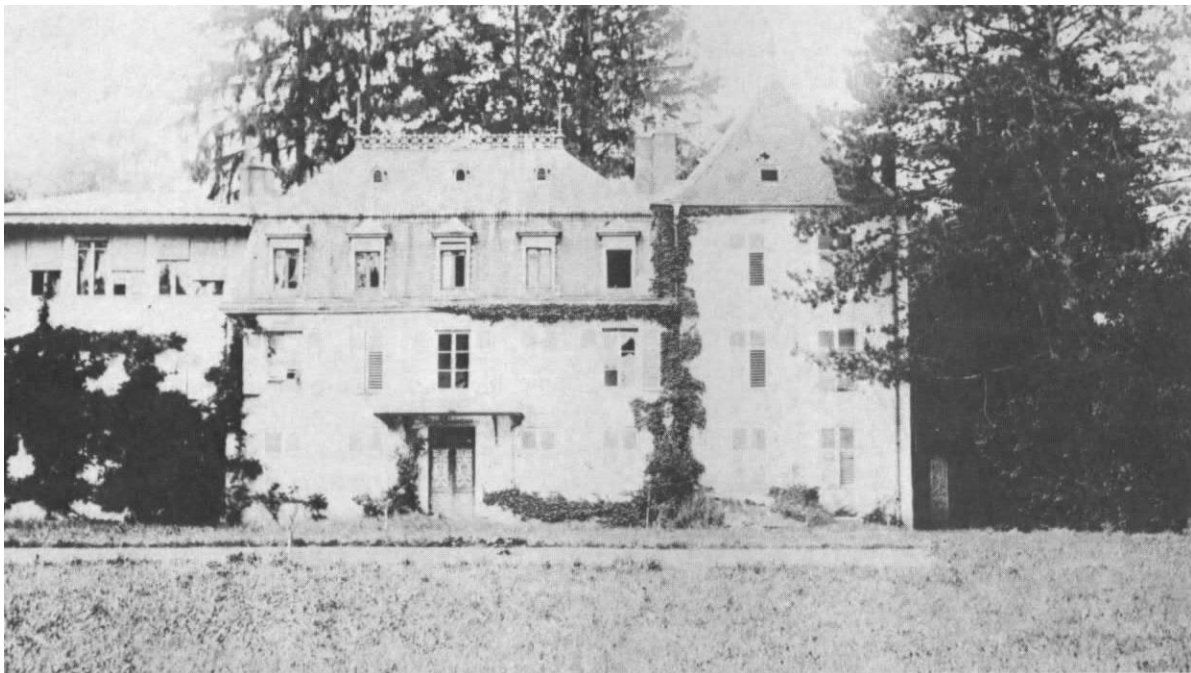


C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*This elaborately designed and painted sign hung on an office door of a U.S. Marine occupation force company in Rhinebrohl, Germany, in December 1918.*

*This post-war photograph of a chateau which once served as the command post of the 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment, belies the myth that Marines only lived in trenches.*

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC



armistice had been signed to become effective at 1100. They were lucky. The war was over without them trying to force a crossing against a stubborn enemy.

The news of the armistice was disseminated rather slowly to front line units of the opposing sides. Nobody knew the terms of the armistice—it seemed too good to be true. Most of the men were exhausted. After awhile, as the good news penetrated their consciousness, they began building bonfires for warmth and gathered in groups to talk and sing songs. The next night they fired most of their pyrotechnics in joy, although there was little of the enthusiasm being experienced in the civilian world. The Germans were in a quiet, depressed mood, although thankful it was all over. It was 11 November 1918.

### *The March to the Rhine and the Occupation*

On 17 November, the 2d Division began its march to the Rhine River.\* Through French villages, across the border into Belgium, everywhere the Americans were greeted by cheering civilians, dressed in their best, with tears running down their faces. Luxembourg was reached on 23 November where they were billeted in a barn. Marching distances were long, sometimes up to 52 kilometers. Roads were horrible, the weather cold and raining, the food irregular, the packs heavy, and the sleep spotty in super-ventilated hay barns. The German frontier was finally reached on 25 November. A short pause there and on 1 December the march pressed on. They reached the Rhine on 10 December 1918.<sup>29</sup>

Occupation duty quickly became boring. The most noteworthy accomplishment was the establishing of a Rhine River patrol manned and commanded by Marines.

Major Charles D. Barrett relieved Lieutenant Colonel Earl H. Ellis as brigade adjutant. Ellis was assigned to duty as second in command of the 5th Marines.

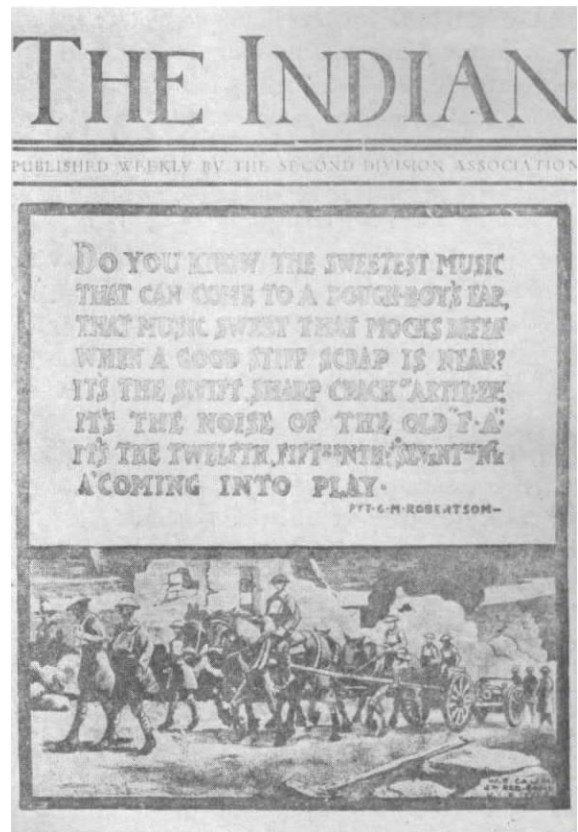
General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces ruled that the Marines serving with the 2d Division were entitled to silver bands on the staffs of their regimental colors for battle participation in the following engagements:

Toulon sector, Verdun, from 15 March to 13 May 1918

Aisne defensive in Chateau-Thierry sector, from 31 May to 5 June 1918

Chateau-Thierry sector (capture of Hill 142, Bouresches, Belleau Wood), from 6 June to July 1918

\*It was not a jaunt. The division marched about 200 miles. It was cold, raining, and snowing sometimes. The roads were muddy and slippery. Each man carried 100 pounds of equipment.



Historical Collection MCHC

*A soldier's poem decorates the cover of an issue of The Indian, a weekly magazine published by the American 2d Division in Germany during the months of occupation duty after the Armistice. The magazine's name derived from the division's shoulder patch, itself derived from a U.S. coin then in circulation.*

Aisne-Marne (Soissons) offensive, from 18 to 19 July 1918

Marbache sector, near Pont-a-Mousson on the Moselle River, from 9 to 16 August 1918

St. Mihiel offensive, in the vicinity of Thiaucourt, Xammes, and Joulay, from 12 to 16 September 1918

Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) including the capture of Blanc-Mont Ridge and Saint Etienne, from 1 to 10 October 1918

Meuse-Argonne (including crossing of the Meuse River), from 1 to 11 November 1918.<sup>30</sup>

The Marines, of course, were anxious to return home. In spite of extensive athletic programs, amateur theatrical productions, professional entertainers, and educational programs, occupation duty became more and more monotonous. Hagglng between the Germans and the allies continued at the peace conference concerning the terms of the final document.

The men were anxious to look like Marines again. When first in France they wore their green wool uniforms. Pershing soon made them switch to Army issue uniforms, claiming supply problems and the need



*Photographs from the album of Cpl George A. MacGillivray, sitting on the right in the front row of the top photograph taken in Germany in 1919. The photograph shows a working party from the 80th Company (later Company G), 2d Battalion, 6th Marines. These Marines are wearing a wide variety of uniform items, including (see third Marine from left) a German army belt. Posing for the bottom photograph are the 37 Marines left of the approximately 200 original members of the 80th Company. The remainder were killed or wounded in the various battles in France, and their positions filled with replacements. Standing on the right in the rear row is GySgt Don V. Paradis, a wartime volunteer who always claimed he originally became an NCO because he was bigger than anyone else in the company. His valor in France earned him two Silver Stars (precursors to the modern Silver Star Medal) for his campaign medal. Cpl MacGillivray kneels on the left of the front row. His son, in another, later war, fought on Guadalcanal.*







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*French sculptor Charles Raphael Peyre's "Crusader for the Right" (frequently erroneously called "Iron Mike"), paid for by donations from World War I Marines stationed in France and Germany, and later erected at Quantico, exemplifies those veterans' view of themselves and their contributions to victory in the war.*

to confuse the enemy as to unit designation. Except in rear areas, the field hat had to be replaced by the Army's soft overseas cap. They didn't mind wearing the flat British-style helmets, sometimes adorning them with Marine emblems.<sup>31</sup> They were suspicious of Pershing's reasons from the start. That suspicion increased as their fame as fighting men grew.

At last orders were received, and trains began taking Marines to Brest for the voyage home. This started in the middle of July.

The 4th Brigade arrived back in the United States in early August. It took part in a parade in New York City with the rest of the 2d Division shortly thereafter, and was reviewed later by President Woodrow Wilson in Washington, D.C. It then returned to Quantico, where demobilization began almost immediately.

#### *Marine Achievements*

Without a doubt, the arrival of the Americans in the latter stages of World War I bolstered the morale of the Allies. With the saving of Paris, the capture of Belleau Wood, and the breaching of the Hindenburg Line, even the most skeptical of the Allies became convinced that the Americans were first-class fighting men. This was also true of the German Army, particularly in regards to the more experienced American divisions. Their intelligence reports at first were contemptuous, but that opinion gradually changed. In the end, the Germans referred to the 2d Division as "a shock unit"—their highest classification. As Colonel Ernest Otto of the German Army said after the war in his writings, "The Second Division had answered the question, how would the Americans act in real bat-

*The star and Indian head design from the insignia of the American 2d Division decorates one of a number of similar monuments erected by the division soon after the Armistice.*

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C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC

*These Americans stand in formation after being awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the U.S. Army's equivalent of the Navy Cross, at a ceremony in Lutesdorf, Germany after the 11 November 1918 Armistice. Marine units stayed in Europe until August 1919.*

tle?" The rising morale of the allies with the appearance of the Americans on the Western Front was matched by the corresponding discouragement of the enemy.

The Marine Corps' long stress on rifle marksmanship paid off in France. The Marines coolly lay in their positions, adjusted rifle slings to their arms, estimated the windage and range, and carefully squeezed off shots from ranges up to 800 yards. The bewildered Germans sustained casualties and had never seen such marksmanship.

Because of the success of the 2d Division, the French wanted to break up the division and use the Americans as shock troops to lead their attacks. Lejeune soon learned about the idea and vigorously opposed it. The division was allowed to remain as a unit.

The Marines, nevertheless, did not hold the market on valor and fighting ability in the 2d Division. The Army brigades fought and bled equally as much. In fact, other American divisions besides the 2d Division made splendid records and contributed to the ultimate defeat of Germany. Nonetheless, as Army historian S. L. A. Marshall summarized the Marines' sense of motivation years later in his writings about World War I, "The Marine Brigade because it was unique—a little raft of sea soldiers in an ocean of army—was without doubt the most aggressive body of die-hards on the Western Front." Its losses were 1,514 killed in action; 778 dead of wounds; 8,529 wound-

ed; 161 carried as missing in action; and 986 injured from poison gas. The brigade's total casualties, 11,968, represented 127 percent of the 9,444 men with which it first entered combat. Few of the original men survived the war unscathed.

More important in the long run, the Marines' outstanding record in World War I, their sevenfold expansion, close combat against a sophisticated enemy, high casualty rate, generous publicity, and growing estrangement from the other services erased once and for all the image of being nothing but a small organization of ceremonial troops. As we shall see later, the experiences gained in World War I and the attacks on the Marine Corps after the war (almost causing its extinction) created an intellectual revolution in the officer corps. It was led by Lejeune and the enigmatic Pete Ellis, and caused an organizational search for a unique mission that highlighted both the newly proven combat capability ashore and the Marines' traditional maritime background.

#### *Demobilization*

The strength of the Marine Corps increased approximately seven and a half times during the war. In addition to performing regular duties such as recruiting, and officer and enlisted training, it had to guard naval stations all over the world, and provide detachments for sea duty, in France, and other places.

As soon as the armistice was announced on 11

November 1918, a clamor arose from parents, relatives, sweethearts, and families for the early return and discharge of all the men serving, whether they had been in France or not. Members of the Marine Corps Reserve and those of the regular service who had enlisted for the duration of the war caused particular concern. A wholesale reduction of the Corps overnight would be catastrophic. The 4th and 5th Marine Brigades were still in Europe under the Army's command. Troops were in far-flung places like Guam. A solution had to be found.

On 20 November 1918, only nine days after the armistice, Marine Corps Order No. 56 was issued, providing for at least limited demobilization. It stated that members of the Marine Corps Reserve and those men of the regular service who had enlisted for the duration of the war, who desired to complete their education or who had urgent family or business interests which required their immediate and personal attention would be demobilized. On 1 May this had

to be modified so that only those with urgent financial dependency reasons could qualify.

Following the issuing of the Act of 11 July 1919, which provided funds to sustain a Corps with an enlisted strength of 27,400 men with corresponding officers, Marine Corps Order No. 42 of 12 July 1919 promulgated detailed instructions for the establishment of demobilization centers and the procedures to be followed. This order also had special instructions concerning duration of the length of service of the wartime men and those serving in the tropics eligible for discharge. By the latter part of December 1919, practically all of those eligible had been discharged.

In August 1919, the 5th Brigade was returned to the Naval Operating Base, Hampton Roads, Virginia. The 4th Brigade, with the 6th Marines, was already in Quantico. The demobilization of these units was completed on 13 August, a remarkably short time.<sup>32</sup>

On that date, 13 August 1919, the 6th Marines was deactivated. So ended the regiment's World War I tour.

## CHAPTER 2

# Between the World Wars

*Background—China Duty—Second China Duty*

### *Background*

The “Great War” was over, and the country relaxed, including the Marine Corps. There was a decided let-down in the Corps, but it did not include the intellectual giants the Corps was fortunate to have. It was not long before attacks against the Marine Corps by the Army and the Navy threatened its very existence. The Army attacks were led by officers hostile to the great record made by the Marines in France, and particularly the favorable publicity it had generated. The Navy again tried to do away with ships’ detachments, as it had almost accomplished in 1908 during President Teddy Roosevelt’s administration. In fact, Roosevelt did not hide the fact that he thought the Marines should be absorbed into the Army. In that case, Congress saved the Corps. Now again the Corps found itself on the defensive.

One of the intellectual giants was Lejeune. When General Harbord was commanding the 2d Division in France, General Pershing sent for him. Pershing told Harbord he was putting him in command of the Services of Supply of the American Expeditionary Force, and instructed him to turn over command of the division to Lejeune, the senior brigadier general in the 2d Division. Harbord sent for Lejeune and urged that the latter be promoted to major general very soon so he could retain command. Lejeune told him that the new Naval Appropriations Bill had authorized two major generals in the Marine Corps—the Commandant and one more. Lejeune was promoted within a few days. He was, therefore, a major general when the war ended.

After reaching the States, participating in parades, and taking leave, he assumed command of Marine Corps Base, Quantico in October.<sup>1</sup> Upon the demobilization of the 4th Brigade, he gathered many of its most outstanding officers for his staff. Among them was Lieutenant Colonel Earl H. “Pete” Ellis.

Although Major General Commandant George Barnett had compiled a distinguished record during the war, and was esteemed by the President, Wilson had not yet recovered from the paralytic stroke that had almost closed his political career. The Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, first reappointed Barnett to another four-year term in 1918. He then turned on

Barnett. Two years later, on 18 June 1920, Daniels sent a letter to the Commandant. It said Barnett was to be relieved as Commandant “. . . one day next week most suitable . . .” to him. In the meantime, within three hours, would General Barnett please inform Daniels whether he intended to retire immediately or (as the law allowed) remain on active duty, taking a reduction to his permanent rank of brigadier general?

On 30 June 1920, General Barnett was relieved as the Twelfth Commandant of the Marine Corps, and was succeeded by Major General John A. Lejeune.<sup>2</sup>

While he had been at Quantico for less than a year, Lejeune already had begun solidifying his thoughts concerning the future of the Corps—both immediate and long range. It was his duty to rebuild the structure of the Corps, expand its thinking, increase both

*MajGen John A. Lejeune, shown wearing the shoulder insignia of the 2d Division, which he commanded in World War I, was a leading figure in the development of the Marine Corps’ amphibious doctrine.*

C.B. Cates Papers, MCHC



its efficiency and economy, protect it from its detractors, and prepare it to meet future emergencies. He had many problems.

During his three terms as Major General Commandant, Lejeune not only charted the future of the Marine Corps, he convinced Congress that the country needed a strong nucleus of Marines in the event of war. Internally, he improved the education of Marine officers and encouraged the development of the arms, equipment, and tactics needed for the Corps' unique amphibious mission.

Recognizing the great value of favorable publicity, the Commandant made use of the colorful Smedley D. Butler, the most senior brigadier general in the Corps. The 6th Marines was reactivated 15 September 1921 at Quantico. Together with the 5th Marines, they reenacted some of the great Civil War battles, The Wilderness, Gettysburg, New Market, and Antietam. The Marines' dress uniforms were a convenient blue for playing the part of the Northern soldiers, and cadets from Virginia military schools wore their grey uniforms to represent the Southern ones. Besides the long marches to many of these reenactments, strenuous sports such as boxing, football, and baseball were encouraged to keep the Marines in good physical condition.<sup>3</sup>

In 1921, work began on what is now known as Butler Stadium. General Alexander A. Vandegrift, then a major, recalled that, together with about 150 men from his battalion, he worked 80 days moving 19,307 cubic yards of earth; dug 200 excavations for concrete pillars; poured 197 pillars; laid 30 rails; laid 381 concrete slabs; and poured concrete footings for stone walls. The Marines also leveled the field and planted grass seed on the sanded base.<sup>4</sup>

The Marines gradually tore down and replaced the old World War I wooden barracks. Some of the then-lieutenants (later to become high-ranking Marine general officers) recall being given a detail of Marines, a blueprint, and instructions to build what are still the officers' quarters at Quantico. Of course, the base has repaired and modernized these quarters many times since then. Some veteran officers recall that as colonels they lived in the same quarters they had built as second lieutenants.

All of the Quantico activities involving the 6th Marines, however, were not concentrated on building a base, reenacting old battles, or fielding fine athletic teams. Late in 1921, Marines from Quantico, along with those from other posts in the Corps, were called upon to protect the United States mail. Heavily-armed Marines performed this duty until March 1922, when

the situation had dramatically improved. Concurrently in 1922, the Marine Corps established a Basic Course, a Company Officer's Course, and a Field Grade Officer's School. Lejeune also saw to it that the Corps' amphibious role advanced, with Ellis providing great impetus. Ellis had prophesied openly for many years that at some date the Japanese and the Americans would fight one another. So convinced was he that he developed Operation Plan 712-H, which was a step-by-step military plan for moving across the Pacific Ocean amphibiously against certain Japanese islands. He had the Commandant's complete backing and approval. Ellis died in late 1922, while on leave of absence, scouting out Pacific islands. He died in the Palaus without realizing that 20 years later Marines would storm Peleliu of that group as part of a plan which turned out to be remarkably similar to his Operation Plan 712-H.<sup>5</sup>

Another intellectual giant was Colonel Robert H. Dunlap. When the Advanced Base Force moved from Philadelphia to Quantico and expanded in 1921, he took command. He agreed completely with Pete Ellis, and set out to establish coordinated staff work, develop concepts, and test everything in maneuvers.<sup>6</sup>

On 23 September 1922, the 83d Company of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, represented the Marine Corps at the opening of the Brazilian Exposition in Rio de Janeiro. The company arrived earlier on 5 September to participate in a celebration commemorating Brazil's anniversary. Approximately two years later, in June 1924, the 3d Battalion performed expeditionary duty in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. In July 1924 this battalion performed expeditionary duty in Cuba. The 3d Battalion was stationed at Guantanamo from July until January, when it was replaced by the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, which returned to Quantico in September.

During this time, most of the Corp's energies were absorbed in extensive operations in several countries in the Caribbean area. This not only delayed the development of the Marine Corps' educational and training system, but it slowed the building up and training of an expeditionary force similar to today's Fleet Marine Force (FMF). Nevertheless, since the name of the Marine expeditionary units was later changed to the Fleet Marine Force, the 6th Marines participated in the very birth of today's modern force in readiness, even though the Fleet Marine Force itself did not become a reality until 7 December 1933 under Navy Department Order 241.<sup>7</sup>

All of these activities cost money. Congress's desire to restrict appropriations for military purposes during



Historical Collection, MCHC

*Members of the 6th Marines prepare to erect tents over wooden platforms after the regiment's arrival in China in 1927. A U.S. Navy destroyer is at anchor in the harbor.*

the post-war period made it impossible for the Corps to reach its authorized strength. In addition to the Caribbean area, the Marines were called upon to keep a force of varying size in China, provide security for the mail in 1921 and again in 1926, furnish guards for Presidents during visits to their favorite retreats, and join in Army and Navy maneuvers. However, on 15 March 1925 at Quantico, the 6th Marines once again was deactivated.

In March 1927, Lejeune concluded that the China forces needed to be built up to a brigade size. The 4th Marines, already there, were threatened by Cantonese troops menacing Shanghai. Serious disorders and attacks on foreigners were taking place.

#### *China Duty*

On 26 March 1927 the Marine Corps reactivated the 6th Marine Regiment at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Its men were veterans from east coast posts and stations, as well as graduates from Parris Island's recruit depot. Colonel Harold C. Snyder was in command.

Shortly after the 6th Marines arrived in China in May 1927, trouble arose in the north. The regiment shifted to Tientsin to protect the lines of communication to the American Legation at Peking.

The duty turned out to be little more than watchful waiting. Officers embarked on a routine of drills, exercises, demonstrations, gymkhanas, anything to fine-polish the troops and keep them happy.

Early in 1929, the situation in China had quieted, and the 6th Regiment moved to San Diego, Califor-

nia where, on 31 March 1929, it was again deactivated. It had been a good tour: peaceful, lots of sight-seeing, and plentiful and cheap servants available. Even the lowliest private could hire a "Coolie" to clean his rifle for him.

#### *Second China Duty*

Japan was successful in cutting off Manchuria from China in 1931-32. Keeping continuous pressure on northern China, the province of Jehol came under Japanese influence in 1933, and Chahar Province became a demilitarized zone in June 1936. The pressure continued.<sup>9</sup>

On 1 September 1934, the 6th Marines reactivated in San Diego. Lieutenant Colonel Andrew B. Drum was commanding officer of the two-battalion regiment. The regiment was the nucleus for the 2d Marine Brigade. Though badly understrength, this brigade formed the West Coast portion of the newly created Fleet Marine Force. Only three years later, the newly reactivated 6th Marines was needed in China. Since the regiment was understrength, a decision was made to bring it up to full wartime strength as the situation worsened in China. Many young officers had been sent to the San Diego FMF to play football. These men were transferred into the 6th Marines.

When China was reorganized in December 1935, Chiang Kai-shek became a virtual dictator. Using the expertise of German officers, he built a sizable army, and made every effort to build the defenses of the country. During the early summer of that year the

Japanese increased their efforts to control northern China. The small embassy guard of about 500 Marines, and other foreign troops in the Chinese capital, found themselves in the midst of fighting around Peiping. Fighting intensified. The then-commandant, Major General Thomas Holcomb (who commanded the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, in World War I as a major) decided to increase the size of the West Coast brigade to a reinforced brigade. Brigade Headquarters, under Brigadier General John C. Beaumont, and the 6th Marines sailed on the USS *Chaumont* on 28 August 1937. Other troops followed. The brigade's mission was to defend the International Settlement in Shanghai and to maintain its neutrality.

It was after this move that the 6th Marines acquired the nickname "The Pogy-Bait 6th," which it retains to this day. There are various versions of how the term "Pogy-Bait" came into being. The most logical is that the term is an old one developed by all of the services during the Philippine war. It seems the native ladies, referred to uncomplimentarily as "Pogeys," enjoyed American candy bars so much they would sell their charms for one or more bars. It is reputed that the post exchange supplies loaded hurriedly at San Diego for China duty in 1937 inadvertently included several thousand candy bars but only one case of soap. Although the nickname was not sought, it stuck.<sup>9</sup>

The Brigade and its 6th Regiment carried out their mission, although at times the situation was strained. General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., the Twenty-third Commandant, then a young officer, recalled an incident involving Lieutenant Colonel Clifton B. Cates, who later became the Nineteenth Commandant of the Marine Corps. When a Japanese machine gun crew set up their weapon across the street pointing at the Marine position, an angry Cates, ignoring the danger to his life, walked over to the position, seized the gun, and threw it across the street.

The 2d Brigade carried out its duties while trying to ignore the fighting of the Chinese and Japanese. As recounted by one officer who was still a bachelor second lieutenant, duty was pretty routine. Inspecting the sentry at the entrance to the compound, and waiting for liberty call were his main daily chores. He recalled that the 4th Marines did challenge the 6th Marines to a football game. The 6th Marines had all of the officers recently transferred to the regiment in San Diego on their team. The 4th Marines' team was primarily enlisted men. Transportation to practice was by Chinese ricksha. The players would put on their football uniform and call for a ricksha, a sight that startled even the placid Chinese. The 6th Marines won the game, but just barely.<sup>10</sup>



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 521056

*Two Marines, one of whom wears the fourragere of the 6th Marines, stand guard by an observation post of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines in Shanghai, China, in 1937.*

By February 1938, the war zone had moved west of the city. It was no longer necessary to maintain an entire Marine brigade in Shanghai. The brigade headquarters and the 6th Marines left Shanghai on 18 February 1938, proceeding via Manila and Guam to Honolulu, where they participated in fleet maneuvers. It was not until April 1938 that the regiment finally reached San Diego, California.<sup>11</sup>

The 6th Marines' Table of Organization called for only two battalions, the 1st and the 2d, in those days of a reduced Marine Corps. Each battalion had three rifle companies of three platoons each, and a machine gun and 81mm mortar company consisting of one mortar platoon and three machine gun platoons armed with World War I water-cooled .30-caliber machine guns. The company was equipped with Cole carts to haul the guns and ammunition. These were small, low, two-wheeled carts pulled by two men. The enlisted riflemen were armed with World War I .30-caliber, bolt-action M1903 Springfield rifles and Browning Automatic Rifles. Gunners were armed with Colt .45-caliber pistols, as were the officers. The field uniform was khaki shirt and trousers and a campaign hat (the same as the wide-brim types worn by today's DIs). Commissioned officers wore scarlet and gold braided bands on their hats. The enlisted men wore

canvas leggings, the officers riding pants with either leather boots or puttees.

Colonel Philip H. Torrey relieved Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Floyd, who had previously relieved Lieutenant Colonel Drum as commanding officer of the regiment. Lieutenant Colonel James L. Underhill relieved Torrey in 1938 and was in turn relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Alphonse DeCarre. Later in 1938 DeCarre was relieved by Colonel Harry L. Smith, who kept the regiment until relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Earl H. Jenkins in early 1939. He in turn was relieved by Colonel Samuel L. Howard. Fortunately, the turnover rate of the commanding officers of the two battalions was not as rapid.

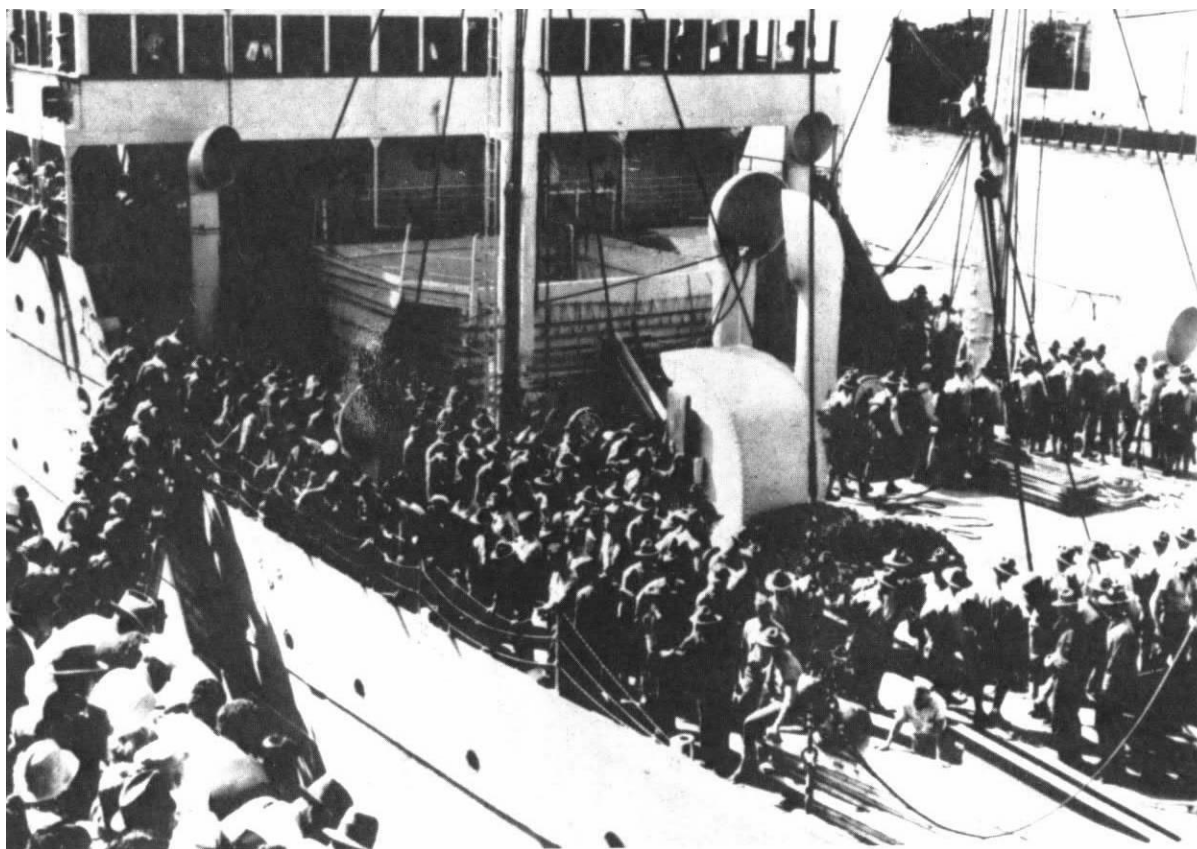
By late 1939, the 6th Marines was commanded by Colonel Howard; the 1st Battalion by Lieutenant Colonel William W. Ashurst, a distinguished marksman, and the 2d Battalion by Lieutenant Colonel John W. Thomason, Jr., the prolific writer and sketch artist. All three were Southerners—Howard from Virginia, Ashurst from Missouri, and Thomason from Texas. Mess nights, although seldom held, reminded

one more of a Confederate “the South will rise again” reunion than a get-together of Marine officers. All three colonels were courtly and gentlemanly. Ashurst encouraged rifle and pistol marksmanship. Thomason wrote articles and a book containing his own sketches. He drove around in a Ford convertible coupe with the top down, and wore his overseas cap tilted over one eye. He was very distinguished looking, and the subject of many rumors. One was that, as a young man before coming into the Marines, he rode with Pancho Villa, the Mexican bandit chieftain. Another was that he made so much money from his articles he forgot to draw his pay, making him the only Marine ever to have the paymaster beg him to draw his money so the books would balance. True or not, the commanding officers were a colorful lot.

In 1939, as the European war became more and more intense, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a limited national emergency. This caused a letter to be sent from Headquarters Marine Corps to each Reserve officer. It asked them if they were interested in volunteering to come on active duty for six months.

*The 6th Marines board the USS Chaumont on 29 August 1937 enroute to China duty.*

National Archives No. 127-G-529464







National Archives No. 80-CF-71765-4

*This photograph shows the Marine Corps base at San Diego at the time the 6th Marines were there in the late 1930s. The surrounding land, then largely rural, is now an urban area. To the left of the foreground building is an outdoor boxing ring. The white lines in the foreground are laundry hoisted up on a tall pole for drying and safekeeping.*

There were not many Reserve officers, but most of them, around 160 in number, volunteered and were ordered to Quantico in September 1939 to attend the first Reserve Officers Course. This course was originally due to run the entire six months of the Reserves' volunteer duty. The Basic School for Regular officers was still at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia. First the course at Quantico was shortened to three months. Finally, the length was cut to six weeks. The Twenty-second Commandant, General David M. Shoup, then a captain, was one of the instructors. On the first floor of one of the brick barracks was the school for the newly forming defense battalions, whose officer students were the most proficient in mathematics, as shown in their college records. On the second floor was the school for the artillery officers, who were the next most proficient. On the third floor was the school for the infantry officers, i.e., the rest of the Reserve volunteers. The first two floors devoted most of their time to classroom work. The infantry officers, while having some classes indoors, spent most of their time practicing close-order drill, on night compass problems, or on terrain studies.

In late October the class graduated in their new green uniforms. Half were assigned to remain at Quantico. The other half traveled to San Diego. Once they arrived in San Diego, the 6th Marines experienced an influx of these inexperienced officers in their new green or khaki uniforms—the only two types they were required to purchase.

Their arrival was greeted with a great deal of skepticism by the Regular lieutenants already in the regiment. The latter had been looking forward to wearing their required "mess dress" uniforms to their first Marine Corps Birthday Ball. When the commanding general put out an order shortly before the ball that the uniform would be "greens," not even their "blues," much less their "mess dress," their resentment of the Reserve officers grew.

Not only were the better-schooled Regular officers bemused, the NCO's were also aware of the challenge. One young Reserve officer rounding a building came upon his platoon sergeant, who had his back turned to the officer, telling his cronies, "I'm going to make an officer out of him if it kills me!" It nearly did.

So far, considering the fine record the 6th Marines

had made in World War I, the 1920s and 1930s had been pretty quiet: deactivations, reactivations, and a lot of personnel turmoil. Its expeditionary duties in the Caribbean had been pretty tame in comparison to the other Marine regiments involved in the 20-year occupation of Haiti and the intervention in Nicaragua. The 6th Marines' two expeditions to China, although eventful, were nothing compared to the everyday fare of the 4th Marines. Yet, life in San Diego was delightful.

The yellow stucco, Spanish-style barracks, still standing at today's Marine Corps Recruit Depot, were comfortable. The regiment shared these with the recruit depot and other units. On the second floor were the squad bays for the enlisted men. Double-decked iron cots with locker boxes at the end, and communal showers, sufficed. Bedding was aired once a week by hanging the mattresses and mattress covers over the low second-floor wall just off each squad bay. Offices were on the first floor. The men kept their rifles in rifle racks in the squad bay. Pistols, machine guns, mortars, and Cole carts were stored in company gun sheds under the watchful eye of the company gunnery sergeant.

Married officers and NCOs lived in the civilian community. Bachelor NCOs usually lived in the barracks. Bachelor officers banded together to rent civilian houses.

Both the staff NCOs and the officers had their own clubs on the base, which were the centers for social activities, particularly on the weekends. The more junior enlisted men found their entertainment in the city of San Diego. When the fleet was out, they were "top dogs" in downtown San Diego, under the suspicious eyes of the shore patrol. If a Marine did get into trouble, the San Diego police would lock him up for the night. The next morning his platoon leader was notified. This officer would go down to the jail, where the police would release the culprit to the lieutenant's custody. The most effective disciplinary step a platoon leader could take was to threaten that if the man got into trouble again, he would tell the rest of the platoon that it only took three or four shore patrolmen to subdue him. This was always effective, especially if the man in question was a sergeant or a corporal.

The drawback to military service then was that the pay was barely adequate. Privates drew only \$28.00 per month, though they got free room, board, and uniforms. Second lieutenants drew only \$143.50 pay, \$18.00 subsistence, and \$22.00 rental allowance, for a total of \$183.50 per month. From this they had to pay rent, eat, buy and maintain their uniforms, support a car as most of them did, and have something left over for recreation. A lot of them were married, which compounded the problem. More senior ranks, usually with families, didn't fare much better. Con-

*A group of Marines and a Navy medical corpsman (right) haul a heavily-laden Cole cart up a steep California hill during field training near San Diego in the late 1930s.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 400753





Author's collection

*Marine officers and wives put on a musical skit at a party at the base officers club at San Diego in the peaceful days prior to the 6th Marines' 1941 expedition to Iceland.*

sequently, dinner invitations from the regimental and battalion commanders and their wives were considered to be big events. After work, but before dinner, formal calls were made by those junior on their seniors. Cards were left. The length of the call was restricted to 15 minutes. The senior returned the call in due course, and also left his card.

Social life for everybody reflected the shortage of pay. The big event that started the weekend was the Friday Afternoon Parade. The entire brigade, which consisted of the 6th Marines; the 2d Battalion, 10th Marines; Headquarters; and other assorted elements, fell in on the parade ground in front of the barracks for a parade and review. Reviewing stands were set up on each side of the reviewing platform for the many spectators, including wives, sweethearts, dates, and interested civilians from San Diego. After the parade, the officers with their wives or dates moved to the Commissioned Officer's Mess for the Parade Tea. A long table was set up in the foyer, with cups and coffee at one end, and cups and tea at the other. Officers' wives took turns pouring the coffee and tea—acting as hostesses. This was a thankless job, since just about everybody walked past the table on their way into the bar and started their weekend. Every Saturday night there was a well attended dance. Once in a while a costume party would be held or a variety show would be put on by the officers and ladies. These were hilar-

ious affairs. One such was the night when one of the lieutenants, dressed as a flora-dora girl, insisted on putting two grapefruits in his dress to portray breasts. Slightly inebriated, after the show he sat on Major General Upshur's lap and one of the grapefruit fell out. The startled general, who had a front row table since he was the commanding general, was non-plussed. The officer's wife and his friends were frantically motioning for the lieutenant to come back on the stage and disappear behind the curtain, while everyone else was laughing and clapping. On another occasion, at a costume party, a different lieutenant sent his wife with another couple and said he would join them as soon as he tended to some matters. Unfortunately, he had chosen as his costume a sailor's uniform. Also unfortunately, he looked just like a sailor from one of the farm states. When he tried to go through the officers' gate to the officers club, the Marine sentry on duty, thinking he was from the Navy Recruit Station next door, refused to let him enter. The lieutenant finally persuaded the sentry to let him telephone the club and ask one of the other officers to come to the gate and identify him. When his friends understood his quandary and his request, they naturally told the sentry that they'd never heard of the guy. He was very late for the party.

The big event of the month was payday. Each platoon leader went to the paymaster and drew cash to

pay his platoon. The platoon sergeant stacked a couple of locker boxes on top of each other, covered them with an issue green blanket, and got a chair for the officer. The officer had a platoon roster in front of him. Each man stepped up in turn and signed his signature behind his name to receive his pay. If he could not read or write, he would make an "X" behind the name pointed out to him by the officer. Many Xs were not uncommon.

The area between the parade ground and San Diego Bay was a bare, sandy expanse. Gun drill, squad tactics, bayonet practice, field meets, and other activities were conducted in this area. The mosquitoes inhabiting the area were so large that, as one sergeant put it, "They could stand flat-footed and f--- a turkey."

Usually once a week the battalion commanders or the separate company commanders led their units off the base for a long conditioning hike through the sparsely populated foothills. Water discipline, as it was known, consisted of trying to make these grueling hikes on one canteen of water, carrying a pack, weapons, and wearing a World War I type of helmet. The old-time NCOs who had served in Nicaragua were unsympathetic, and would regale the troops about the heat, the bandits, and the mud. One platoon sergeant was heard explaining, "The mud was so deep, I was riding a mule on patrol down a road when we hit a mud hole. All you could see was the mule's ears, but we kept on going." Machine gunners and mortarmen pulled their Cole carts with their guns mounted. Once in a while, a simulated air raid with suitable reactions on the part of the troops would break the routine.

Morning colors started the day. The units formed on the parade ground facing the flag pole shortly before 0800. Young officers had to report at about 0730 to polish their riding boots or leather puttees, shine their Sam Browne belts, check their swords, and plan their day. Roll calls were held and suitable reports made to commanding officers. After "Present Arms," the flag was raised as either the band or a bugler sounded "To the Color." "Order Arms" was given and company commanders turned the platoons over to the platoon leaders. Usually a half hour of close-order drill was held before entering the other training activities scheduled for that day.

These were carefree times for the 6th Marines. Officers who were second lieutenants in World War I, such as Cates, were now battalion commanders. Field grade officers in that war, such as Holcomb, were now general officers. The horrors of the first World War gradually dimmed in memories. The terrors still to come could not even be imagined. "Live, love, and be

happy" was the prevailing mood. The country was slowly coming out of the Great Depression. The war in Europe seemed a long way off. Only the men in Washington knew what the future would hold. Consciously or unconsciously, a thoroughly new, larger, and more confident Corps was girding itself for the unknown coming challenges. This, in comparison to the Marine Corps which entered into and made such an outstanding record in World War I, time would tell and history would relentlessly document. Now, however, combat, privation, separations, killing, and maiming, i.e., war, were not really thought about or discussed. Indeed, it wasn't even comprehended. The Marines were having so much fun few people could see the storm clouds gathering on the horizon of their lives.

The days and nights were pleasant but routine. Finally the 6th Marines moved to quarters at the new Camp Elliott on Kearney Mesa. The galleys and mess-halls were screened wooden structures. The enlisted men slept in pyramidal tents set on wooden decks, with the sides of the tents rolled up for ventilation. Offices, except those of the very senior officers, were in similar tents. The bachelor officers and staff NCOs each had rooms in two-story wooden buildings. Their clubs were on the bottom floors of the structures.

Training took place in the sandy, scrubby area around the camp. Prominent terrain features were quickly given colorful names, such as the hill known as "Nellie's Tit." Rattlesnakes were plentiful. Sometimes, when the tent sides were rolled down for airing, a rattlesnake which had gotten into the rolled-up tent side for warmth would fall out. These reptiles gave the Marines many scares. Once, while taking a break during a hike, a Marine unknowingly sat directly on a rattler. When the snake rattled, the frightened Marine jumped so far the snake didn't even come close when it struck. The Marine, however, fainted from fright.

After a while the novelty started wearing off. Coyotes howled at night, the sleeping accommodations were hot, and not nearly as comfortable as those at the base. Days spent on the range qualifying and firing live ammunition were enjoyable, but came all too infrequently.

Some of the Reserve officers who were unmarried and 25 years of age or younger, were selected by their battalion commanders to take academic examinations in certain subjects. If they passed, they were to be given Regular commissions. Although they all had college degrees, very few had taken some, if any, of the subjects on which they were to be examined. These subjects included such things as solid geometry, quadratic

equations, English literature, and geography. This meant that most of the young officers had to hire tutors and cram at night to learn the subjects in the two months they were allowed. Their daily routine with troops and occasional night duty did not change. The great day came all too soon. Eventually 40 of them were commissioned Regular second lieutenants—and went to the bottom of the lineal list. (After World War II those Reserve officers who in 1940 had been either married or too old were commissioned Regular officers anyway, and those who had passed the test were realigned on the lineal list to regain their lost precedence.)

Few people followed the war in Europe closely. Those bachelors with civilian accommodations in town were allowed also to keep a room at the B.O.Q. Driving to Camp Elliott was usually done in car pools. Life was once again becoming monotonous. Everyone wished for a change, for some action.

The new parachute battalions were being formed and volunteers sought. Many Marines became interested, until one day, looking up at the sky above Camp Elliott, they saw a two-engine cargo plane circling over San Diego with a lone parachutist entangled in its tail. The man's name was Lieutenant Walter Ossipoff. After his men had deplaned during a practice jump, Ossipoff was about to follow when his main parachute inflated, pulling him out the open door. The shrouds caught in the tail of the plane, leaving Ossipoff hanging upside down. He was afraid to inflate his spare parachute for fear he would pull the tail off the plane

and kill all of the crew. He could not reach the shrouds with his knife to cut them. The Navy's North Island Air Station wouldn't let the plane land for fear Ossipoff would be killed. Finally, a pilot took off in a two-seater, open-cockpit plane with a Navy chief petty officer in the front cockpit. The pilot flew under and below the cargo plane, allowing the chief to grab Ossipoff and hold him across the fuselage. The pilot pulled up, cutting the shrouds and a part of the cargo plane's tail section. Both the plane and Ossipoff landed safely. However, the number of volunteers for the parachute battalion fell off.

In the summer of 1940, the decision was made to form the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, giving the regiment three battalions once again. Foreseeing that the 1st and 2d Battalions would unload their troublemakers if a certain number of the various ranks were requested, regimental headquarters decreed that the two older battalions would each have their companies send one platoon intact to provide the veteran nucleus of the new battalion. The lost platoons, as well as the additional platoon needed in each company of the 3d Battalion would be formed by replacements arriving from recruit depots and the newly mobilized Reserve battalions. The operation went smoothly, and the ensuing reorganization provided a welcomed change for a while from the routine of camp life.

Still, there was little excitement in the offing until orders came to prepare to move out. Everyone was excited. Although few knew where they were heading, they still looked forward to a new adventure.

## CHAPTER 3

# Iceland

*Background—Expeditionary Duty!—The First Marine Brigade (Provisional)—Arrival and Movement Ashore  
Camp Life—The Days Wear On—Assigned Priorities—Assigned to a U.S. Army Command  
Pearl Harbor—Heading Stateside*

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### *Background*

“It has been said,” wrote Winston Churchill, “whoever possesses Iceland holds a pistol firmly pointed at England, America, and Canada.”<sup>1</sup> He referred to what was called the “British lifeline,” i.e., the northern convoy route between Great Britain and the Western Hemisphere. This route, since it followed the Great Circle from North America to Britain, lay not too far from land in both its eastern and western portions. It was, therefore, possible to provide air cover, as well as surface protection for the ships for much of the trips. Although much shorter than the southern route with its fair weather, the northern trip was an arduous one because of gales, fogs, and the long days of the summer months. It was axiomatic, nevertheless, that the longer the time spent at sea, the greater the chance of being intercepted and destroyed by German submarines.<sup>2</sup> The submarines already were exacting a heavy toll against the flow of supplies and material vital to sustain the British in their struggle against Germany. The establishment of hostile air and naval bases on Iceland would render the northern route practically unusable to Britain and put tremendous pressure on the longer and more vulnerable southern route. To both Washington and London the threat was desperate and demanded immediate attention.

Early in May 1941, a month after the Icelandic Parliament voted to sever ties with Denmark because of the Nazis’ occupation of the latter, early-rising Icelandic fishermen discovered a reinforced battalion of Royal Marines had landed and was occupying their capital, Reykjavik. The Royal Marines seized the German Consul before he could destroy his papers, rounded up known Nazi sympathizers, and sent all on their way to England for the duration of the war.<sup>3</sup>

The Royal Marines departed 10 days later, following relief by a Canadian army brigade, which later handed over the responsibility to British army units. Soon, nearly 25,000 British troops occupied the island. Airfields near the capital became home bases for squadrons of patrol bombers which hunted German submarines. Hvalfjordur, a deep fjord 30 miles north of Reykjavik, was the site of a vital naval and repair base.<sup>4</sup>

During the first months of 1941, American and British staff officers meeting in Washington made con-

tingency plans in case the U.S. should be drawn into the war. In these plans, the defense of Iceland was the responsibility of the U.S., and American army units would relieve the British as soon as practicable. The plans stipulated that this would be no sooner than 1 September 1941, as the U.S. Army did not feel it would be ready to take on such a commitment before then.<sup>5</sup>

As the spring progressed, the U.S. moved closer to war through various measures, such as Lend-Lease. Polls showed that the large majority of Americans were in favor of helping Britain. The previous year, on 28 May 1940, the Belgian Army surrendered to the Germans, and the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) and some French units withdrew into a bridgehead around Dunkerque on the northern French Channel coast. Over a nine-day period the Allies evacuated 338,226 troops, despite heavy attacks by German ground and air forces. The effort involved more than 900 vessels of all sizes. Casualties were heavy.<sup>6</sup>

Churchill asked President Roosevelt in 1940 to send American troops to Iceland to replace the British units who were sorely needed in England to prepare for Germany’s expected cross-channel invasion. Britain had already withdrawn some and replaced them with units manned by survivors from Dunkerque, many of whom were still recovering from their wounds. On 4 June 1941, the President ordered a plan prepared for the U.S. Army to relieve the British garrison on Iceland. The Army, however, was completely involved in training and organizing raw draftees and recently mobilized National Guardsmen. In addition, legislation prohibited these men from being sent beyond the Western Hemisphere unless they volunteered for such service. The Marine Corps, by default, would have to furnish the initial force for replacing the British. Since all Marines, both Regular and Reserve, were volunteers, the restrictive legislation did not apply.<sup>7</sup> In September 1939, shortly after the President declared a Limited National Emergency, the Corps had started calling its Reserve officers to active duty. Throughout 1940, organized Marine Corps Reserve units were mobilized, disbanded, and absorbed into the Regular forces. Additionally, the recruit depots were bulging with volunteers.

On 5 June 1941, Roosevelt directed the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark, to fur-

nish a Marine brigade and the necessary ships in 15 days' time for relief of the British in Iceland.<sup>8</sup>

Iceland, slightly smaller than the State of Kentucky, is geographically rich in mountains, glaciers, volcanoes, geysers, hot springs, and lava beds. The remainder of the country has a limited road network, and consists of rapidly flowing springs, lakes, and tundra, with some flatlands used for sheep pasturage. The population in 1941 numbered 120,000.

#### *Expeditionary Duty!*

The beginning of 1941 found the 6th Marines comfortably settled in tents at Camp Elliott, California. When, on 1 February, the 2d Brigade, reinforced by the 2d Marines, became the 2d Marine Division, the daily routine of the regiment was unaffected. War engulfed Europe, and the news was full of what was happening—blitzkrieg, wolfpacks, Dunkerque, and all. Marines in California, however, found training on the parched Kearney Mesa becoming monotonous. Some officers and men, seeking greater excitement, volunteered for the newly formed parachute battalion. In addition, each battalion had to provide an officer to be sent to the Army's Communication School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. There were many volunteers. The regimental adjutant, Captain David M. Shoup, sent three officers' names to Headquarters Marine Corps, and posted a copy of the message on the regimental bulletin board. It provided welcome amusement for days over the way he had arranged the three names—Lovett, Petit, Prickett.

At this time, the Marine Corps was busily organizing, equipping, and training both the 2d Division at Camp Elliott and the 1st Division at Quantico.

Nevertheless, both divisions were still considerably understrength in the spring of 1941. So, when higher authorities selected the 1st Division for a proposed landing operation in the Caribbean, the Commandant had to bring it to full strength. On 24 May, he directed that the 2d Division provide a reinforced infantry regiment to augment the 1st Division. The 2d Division selected the 6th Marines (Reinforced) "for temporary shore duty beyond the seas with the 1st Division."<sup>9</sup>

The regiment, under command of Colonel Leo D. Hermle, was reinforced by the 2d Battalion, 10th Marines (armed with 75mm pack howitzers); Company A, 2d Tank Battalion; a parachute platoon; an anti-tank platoon; and the 1st Platoon, Company A, 2d Service Battalion. The regiment and the reinforcing units filled up to peacetime strength following arrival of a draft of 58 officers and 577 enlisted men from the 2d and newly formed 8th Marines.<sup>10</sup> The division ordered the regiment to take 10 units of fire for all weapons, gasoline, 30 days' rations, and other supplies.<sup>11</sup>

The excitement and activity around Camp Elliott was high. The reinforced regiment had to vacate its camp area, consisting of tents, mess halls, galleys, showers, and heads. No one at Camp Elliott, however, wanted to accept responsibility for the facilities. The safety of the expensive mess equipment was particularly worrisome to the regiment. Finally, it prevailed upon the Camp Inspector to look over the mess hall and galley, note whether all was in order, and simply lock them up.<sup>12</sup>

To add more to the confusion, the deployment order arrived when the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines was in the

#### *The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines parades at Marine Corps Base, San Diego before Iceland.*

National Archives No. 127-G-515852



midst of conducting a practice embarkation on the USS *Fuller*, tied up at the San Diego docks. The battalion had to remove the practice load from the ship and reload it with the designated quantity and types of ammunition and supplies.<sup>13</sup>

No mission or destination came with the message from Headquarters Marine Corps, so determining the uniform and equipment that the regiment might require was perplexing. Some officers thought the destination would be Guantanamo, others Martinique or even the Azores. In the end, Colonel Hermle decided each Marine would take his complete kit of winter and summer uniforms. There were those, however, who wished to be fully prepared for any conceivable challenge. As described by Major General Rathvon McC. Tompkins (then a first lieutenant):

The executive officer of the 2d Battalion, a man of full figure, carefully prepared himself to meet any type of contingency. In addition to the usual winter and summer service uniforms with breeches and boots, he came aboard with evening dress, mess dress, a civilian tailcoat, and a full set of golf clubs. He had often observed that there was no sense in a fellow getting caught short.

The 6th Marines took everything available, including a few of the new 60mm mortars, even though no sights and very little ammunition were yet available for these weapons. Transportation was woefully short, and the docks were 10 miles from Camp Elliott. Jeeps were not yet available.<sup>14</sup> The necessity of having to draw rations, gasoline, and ammunition from sources other than Camp Elliott further complicated the loading out. Regardless of this, the loading commenced and continued around the clock. Then, as usual, higher headquarters thought up new items for the regiment to take, which caused some crowding and disruption of accepted combat loading procedures.<sup>15</sup>

Although no particular precautions served to deny access to the docks by civilians, there was no publicity about the departure of the convoy on 31 May 1941. On the day of sailing, however, families, sweethearts, and envious Marine friends remaining behind were there to bid farewell. They had a long wait. Because of unexplained delays, it was not until early evening, 1845, that the ships cleared the docks and headed to the open sea.

The convoy transporting the 6th Marines (Reinforced) consisted of three attack transports (APAs), four fast destroyer transports (APDs), and two destroyer escorts (DEs). Each APA carried an embarkation team consisting of an infantry battalion and elements of the reinforcing units. The 1st Battalion was on the USS *Fuller*, the 2d Battalion on the USS *Heywood*, and

the 3d Battalion on the USS *Biddle* with the Regimental Headquarters.<sup>16</sup> The fast destroyer transports were the *Manley*, *Little*, *McKean*, and *Stringham*, each capable of transporting the equivalent of one rifle company.<sup>17</sup>

On the trip south towards Panama, days became carbon copies of the previous ones. The officers and NCOs exercised their imaginations to the fullest to keep the troops occupied and not bored. Competition for the limited deck space became intense. There was very little water for showers and below decks quickly became hot and odorous as the days grew warmer. Men risked getting soaked with a sudden shower in order to sleep on the weather decks. The monotony broke only when the Marines watched USS *Fuller* refuel the two escorting destroyers at sea. The ships held fire drills, collision drills, and abandon-ship drills frequently, more for their own crews than for the embarked Marines. Although the captain and executive officers of the APAs were experienced officers, most of the remaining officers and men were Reservists and ignorant of Navy customs, procedures, and shipboard routine.

When the President, on 5 June, recognized the approaching crisis and ordered that a Marine brigade be sent to Iceland within 15 days, the convoy was approaching the Panama Canal. When it embarked at San Diego, Washington planners considered the reinforced regiment's probable mission to be either the seizure of Martinique or the occupation of the Azores as part of the 1st Marine Division. The government of the French island of Martinique had been collaborating with the German-controlled Vichy government and Washington suspected Martinique was providing information to the German submarine packs operating in the Caribbean. Further, the Naval Governor of the island had issued a declaration to the inhabitants to "resist invasion by the United States."<sup>18</sup>

Events in Europe were changing rapidly. On 7 June, Roosevelt ordered suspension of planning for seizure of either of these islands. Emphasis shifted to the relief of the British forces in Iceland. Washington decided that the projected brigade would consist of the reinforced 6th Marines; the 5th Defense Battalion from Parris Island, South Carolina, less certain of its elements; and the necessary headquarters and support units. The port designated for the hurried assembly of units, supplies, and ships was Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, six days at sea, the 6th Marines' convoy darkened ships at dusk until sunrise. On 9 June, after floating around waiting for darkness, orders sent the



troops below decks at 2100 and the convoy began the transit of the Panama Canal. Washington didn't want the people ashore to know that a troop convoy was passing through the canal from west to east, hence the night passage and the order to keep the men below deck. This was a disappointment to the Marines since everyone had looked forward to the passage, as only a few ever had had the experience or even been in Panama. The ships completed the passage by early morning, but permitted no liberty or contact with the shore.<sup>20</sup>

From Panama, the convoy headed north, still observing "darken ship" at night. Those who had guessed that the destination was Guantanamo were hooted down as the western tip of Cuba passed. Conjectures ranged from Corpus Christi, to Galveston, to Charleston.<sup>21</sup> Excitement grew in expectation of liberty on the East Coast of the United States. Bachelors, both officers and enlisted, boasted of how they were going to give the southern belles the thrill of dating real combat Marines. After all, had they not been at sea for almost two weeks, transited the canal at night secretly, and were headed toward a highly secret, probably dangerous mission? Two more destroyers joined the convoy, adding to the sense of impending danger and adventure.

On 15 June 1941, the regiment arrived in Charleston harbor at about 1400. The Marines dressed up for liberty, but no liberty call sounded. Some did not give up until 2200. A shore patrol got ashore the next day around 1430, shortly before the granting of liberty for about 500 Marines from each APA.<sup>22</sup>

It is doubtful that so many U.S. troop transports (APAs), supply ships (AKAs), and their escorting destroyers had been assembled in one American harbor since World War I. The 1st Marine Division, having just completed practice landings in the Caribbean, also had put into Charleston for shore leave. The small, charming, southern town was teeming with young sailors and Marines looking for diversion. The local citizens had taken precautions, and not a young lady was to be seen, except as waitresses and clerks. The joint Navy-Marine Shore Patrol set up in the local police station. Besides a large room for the purpose, the police had loaned one of their police prisoner vans. Every hour, two shore patrolmen, one Navy and one Marine, cruised the streets and the city square, picking up drunks and taking them back to the station house. Once these men had sobered up enough to recall the name of their ship, they were taken to the docks and turned over to their ship's personnel. By and large, the local population stayed indoors, and sim-

ply let the servicemen have the run of their downtown. Surprisingly few and minor incidents occurred.

The senior officers held innumerable conferences, while the lieutenants, when not supervising endless working parties, spent their base pay (\$125.00 a month) at the naval base's officers' club and making long-distance phone calls to their new brides and sweethearts left behind in San Diego.<sup>23</sup>

#### *The 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional)*

In addition to the 6th Marines (Reinforced) and the 5th Defense Battalion (Minus), the newly formed 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) consisted of a company of engineers, a chemical platoon, and a platoon of scout cars from the 1st Marine Division. The 2d Marine Division furnished Company A, 2d Medical Battalion. The brigade detached its parachute platoon and sent it to the 1st Marine Division. A Brigade Headquarters and a Brigade Band completed the organization.<sup>24</sup> Brigadier General John Marston assumed command of the brigade. He informed the senior officers that Iceland was their destination, but that it must be kept secret until notified later. He also divulged the plans for the Army to relieve the Marines in September.<sup>25</sup>

The period 16-22 June saw the brigade's Marines maintaining continuous 300-man working parties on eight-hour shifts. They loaded supplies, lumber, camp material, weapons, equipment, and a miscellaneous collection of winter clothing—socks, fur caps, wind and rain-resistant clothing—on board the ships.

During the days in Charleston, when not on working parties, the Marines usually exercised on an abandoned golf course in the morning, and went on liberty in the afternoon. On the last day, the 21st of June, the brigade cancelled liberty at midnight.

Early the morning of the 22nd, the convoy sailed out of Charleston harbor. One battalion reported seven deserters. As it later turned out, most had had too much to drink and did not come to in time to make their ship.

On 23 June, the convoy, consisting of four transports, two cargo ships, and two destroyers met an imposing force of American warships; still more joined the following day. When the entire convoy began its movement north, it consisted of 23 vessels, including 2 battleships, 2 cruisers, and 10 destroyers.<sup>26</sup>

The Marines had to furnish the ships with 32 anti-aircraft and submarine lookouts on four one-half-hour watches, which lasted from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. They also furnished a few .50-caliber machine gunners. The weather became



Author's collection

*Ships of the armed American convoy carrying the 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) to expeditionary duty on Iceland in 1941 are silhouetted against a chill North Atlantic dawn.*

colder and the days longer as the convoy steamed north. On 27 June, the convoy anchored at Argentia, Newfoundland. Only the officers received a two-hour liberty ashore, as it was bitterly cold and no recreation was available for the troops. The stop at Newfoundland "to await further orders" continued until 1 July, when Iceland finally, and reluctantly, invited the American occupation that Churchill had promised.<sup>27</sup>

The convoy put to sea early on 2 July, and immediately ran into heavy fog, causing all ships to blow their whistles intermittently. In spite of this, there were several near collisions. The seas grew rougher, and the ships ordered all hands to wear lifejackets at all times, except in bunks.

On the way, the Marines improvised one of World War II's first parodies (of "The Caissons Go Rolling Along"):

Over sea, over foam, wish to Christ that we were home,  
But the transports go sailing along.  
In and out, near and far, wonder where the hell we are,  
As the transports go sailing along.  
So it's ho-ho-hum, Iceland here we come,  
Or maybe the Azores or Dakar.  
But where e'er it be, we'll get no liberty,  
As the transports go sailing along.<sup>28</sup>

The evening of 5 July, one of the 3d Battalion lookouts on the USS *Biddle* sighted a red flare, and then a lifeboat adrift in the convoy area. One of the escort destroyers went to check it out and found that the boat contained four American girls of the Harvard Red Cross Unit, who had volunteered for duty in Britain, and 10 Norwegian sailors. Their ship had developed engine trouble and could only travel at half speed. When it fell behind the convoy, the Germans had

torpedoed and sunk it.<sup>29</sup> Eleven Marines enroute to the Embassy Guard in London and seven of the girls also went down with the ship. The American convoy saw no other indication of the presence of submarines, although there were numerous reports of submarine contacts from the escorting destroyers.

#### *Arrival and Movement Ashore*

The transports anchored in the Reykjavik harbor about 1600 on 7 July 1941, and Marines crowded the railings. They could see green hills and mountains in the distance. The town looked clean, and people ashore were looking and pointing at the ships. By 2330, it was still light enough to read a book, and the troops had to be ordered to get some sleep in preparation for the unloading, which would start the next day.<sup>30</sup> The ships' radio had picked up the President's announcement that the Americans were there "to supplement and eventually to replace the British forces," and that the defense of Iceland was necessary to that of the Western Hemisphere. Unannounced was the obvious purpose of securing a naval and an air base in Iceland for use in our antisubmarine war in the North Atlantic.

The brigade commander called a conference for early morning on 8 July on the *Biddle*. There, the 6th Marines' battalion commanders learned that, because of the limited dock space in Reykjavik harbor, the *Fuller*, *Biddle*, and *Heywood* would unload over the shore at Bilboa Beach. This beach, on an inlet near Reykjavik, had only about 100 yards of usable width. Access to the beach consisted of a single road leading down from the bluffs. Although the beach was pebble rather than sand, and was gently sloping, its 14-foot drop in tide gave the Marines considerable

trouble. Because of the crowded condition of the beach, the Marines unloaded as much as possible directly from boats to trucks. The boats—a limited number of tank lighters and the then-standard Higgins boats without ramps—would gradually back off to keep up with the falling tide and the trucks would follow, thanks to the hard pebble bottom. This procedure reversed during a rising tide. The unloading progressed around the clock. In four days, Marines moved 1,500 tons of supplies and equipment from the three transports over the beach to the assigned camps of the battalions.<sup>31</sup>

The British units were very cooperative and loaned the 6th Marines all the trucks, with British drivers, that the regiment could use. The one platoon of motor transport attached to each battalion would have been wholly inadequate to haul the supplies and equipment to the 20 camps, some of them 15 miles distant.<sup>32</sup>

The Marines on the beach and the British, both officers and enlisted men present, took their measures of each other and liked what they saw. To the British this was the closest involvement of the Americans in the European war in which England was faring so

badly, and desperately needed American help. The Marines respected the British who were veterans who kept up their good spirits even through the Germans were bombing their country and threatening to invade.

### *Camp Life*

The regiment moved into various camps turned over by the British. These were in the only strategic and most defensible areas of the island—the southwestern corner near Reykjavik. During unloading, advance parties from each battalion went to their assigned camps to receive the supplies and equipment, and to ready the camp for the remainder of the troops. Headquarters, 6th Marines billeted in the same camp as the Brigade Headquarters—Camp Lumley nearest to Reykjavik. Further up the road, the 1st Battalion occupied two adjacent camps with a small parade field separating them—Camp Victoria Park and Camp MacArthur. They were about 10 miles from Reykjavik, near Alafoss, and on the western slopes of the Varma River Valley. The river itself was only about two miles long and about 15 feet wide. What was so unusual to the Marines was that it was a hot river, having a temperature

*LtCol Oliver P. Smith and his staff pose inside a Nissen hut on Iceland in 1941.*

Author's collection.





Photo courtesy of SgtMaj L. J. Michelony, Jr.

*Marines on expeditionary duty in Iceland in 1941 pause during their field training in the months before winter weather made heavier clothing a necessity. These Marines wear the polar bear shoulder patch on both shoulders of their forest green uniform coats.*

of 90 degrees at the source, but its tributaries were clear-running cold streams. Just below the camps was a dam, which provided a swimming pool with water at about body heat. When the first truckload of Marines drove by towards the camps, some of the local maidens were swimming in the nude. Although this was the custom in Iceland, as in much of Scandinavia, the girls took one look at the expression on the Marines' faces and turned up from then on in an assortment of odd, old-fashioned style bathing suits.

Camp Baldurshagi, which was closer to regimental headquarters, but in another direction from the 1st Battalion, held the 2d Battalion. This was a picturesque camp in a rocky stream valley, near a rushing river. The river was well stocked with salmon, but Icelanders owned the fishing rights. Lieutenant Colonel William A. Worton had some difficulty keeping his men from trying their luck.<sup>33</sup>

The 3rd Battalion was initially billeted in Halogoland Camp, which had been lent on a temporary basis by a British Signal Company. It lay in the midst of excellent pasture land on the main highway within two miles of Reykjavik. This battalion had to give up the camp in September and moved to a rocky knoll surrounded by wet swampland at the entrance of Hvalfjordur, north of Reykjavik. Balbos Camp, as it was called, was inadequate in size and facilities, and not until early in January did the battalion have bathing facilities.<sup>34</sup>

With the exception of a garage, galleys, and mess halls, all buildings were Nissen huts, the forerunner of the U.S. Quonset, but much more primitive in construction. A single pot-bellied stove which burned coal and coke heated each hut. Soft coal served as the basic fuel in the huts and galleys, with coke added to sustain the fire. The allowance was 30 percent soft coal and 70 percent coke. The Marines saved all boxes for kindling wood for at no time during the nine months the Marines stayed in Iceland could they dispense with a fire.<sup>35</sup>

Each Nissen held about 14 men with their canvas cots. The corrugated iron roof and sides were lined with composition or "beaver" board. The hut had a single door at one end. To prevent a cold blast of air from pervading the hut each time the door was opened, there was a small vestibule behind the entrance door, with another door opening into the sleeping area. There were two windows at each end, but none on the sides. The ventilation was poor.<sup>36</sup> Two bare electric bulbs hung from the ceiling for light. Dirt was banked halfway up each side, so the huts could withstand the high winds that often sprang up with little warning. Since the camps were located on tundra, indicating water close to the surface, the Marines could not dig holes for latrines. Defecation took place in large pails placed on a platform under wooden seats. The lucky camps arranged for local farmers to pick up these pails of "night soil." The unlucky ones had to

use Marine working parties to dump and clean them.

The galleys and mess halls were primitive and separated from each other by up to 100 feet. Marine cooks soon found that sealed containers were necessary to prevent loss of heat from the meals. There was no refrigeration, but Iceland needed none. There was no running water in the galleys, and until the Army later brought in hot water heaters, no way to heat water for cleaning the mess gear, except on the stoves. The mess halls had rough wooden benches and tables. Both the galleys and mess hall reeked of mutton.

The rations consisted of a 30-day supply of canned Navy B-rations and later, Army dehydrated rations, which made for a tasteless diet.\* This was supplemented by what could be provided locally, namely, mutton and fish. Mutton and spam were the main meat courses. Mostly mutton. In an attempt at camouflage, the mess sergeants served it in different ways. They would grind it and call it “ramburgers.” They would make a stew and call it either “lamb stew” or “mutton surprise.” A typical conversation in the mess line would be the query, “What’s for chow today?” And the messman’s answer, “mutton, lamb, sheep, or ram.” Local milk and cheese could not be consumed because many Icelandic cows were tubercular.

At first, there were no showers in the camps. About a half mile up the road from Camp MacArthur there was a mobile bath unit run by the British, who piped in water from a hot spring nearby and from an equally close cold spring. The brigade headquarters published a schedule for its use by units, so that everyone got a shower once a week. Since the water was sulphuric, it had a terrible, rotten-egg odor. Most of the men preferred to wash out of buckets. When they learned that U.S. Army units would not relieve the brigade in September, as expected, the Marines built showers in all of the camps.

The Marine Corps, at the time, numbered about 40,000 officers and men. While the Corps had made an earnest effort to equip the brigade for field duty just below the Arctic Circle, the results were startling. The artillerymen had civilian sheepskin coats they had brought from Camp Elliott. The supply system had purchased these for use during live-firing exercises on the Mojave Desert, where it became quite cold at times. The tank company wore a comfortable and warm twill windbreaker, but the infantry had only their tight-fitting uniforms and overcoats. Washing-

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\*Rations were divided into four categories. A-rations meant fresh food. B-rations came in large cans suitable for feeding units in a mess hall. C-rations consisted of small cans and packages for an individual’s field or combat use. D-rations were dehydrated foods.

ton finally provided flannel shirts, long underwear, parkas, and round, pile hats with ear-flaps similar to those worn by the China Marines. At first however, the Marine officers had purchased certain British items of clothing such as flannel pajamas, woolen shirts, scarves, trench coats, and beautiful, pebble-grained British battle boots, some of which went on to be worn in battle in the Pacific. In fact the Marines were buying out NAAFI—the Navy, Army, Air Force Institute, i.e., the British post exchange.

Recreational facilities were extremely limited in the city. Restaurants were small and just barely able to accommodate the local population and the British troops. With the coming of the Americans, it proved impossible to accommodate everyone. The same held true for the two moving-picture theaters. The Hotel Borg, the largest and finest in the country, served the local populace as a center of social life. It made every effort to serve the officers of the brigade, but it too could not meet the demands placed on it. The hotel was out-of-bounds to enlisted personnel. The staff NCOs soon had their favorite restaurant, and the junior enlisted men made do with what little was left. Transportation was so scarce that most Marines didn’t even make the effort to go into town after the first visit.

### *The Days Wear On*

The Icelanders were handsome people. The girls, called *stulkas*, were quite pretty, mostly blonde and blue-eyed. The females outnumbered the males almost six to one, so they were quite eager to date the American and British troops, over the objection of the native males. The men were tall, but knew nothing about boxing, so were no match against a smaller Marine if it came to a fight. The great majority of Icelandic citizens believed the American occupation to be in their best interests. In the younger generation, however, there was an element with a pro-German attitude. German engineers had built Iceland’s roads and piped in hot water from the geysers to heat the cities and villages, as well as the greenhouses in which Icelanders grew their fruits and vegetables. There was a Nazi-like youth group. One of its unpleasant habits was to spit on a British soldier as he went about his business in town. One day, they tried this insult on a couple of Marines. After the offenders had picked themselves up off the pavement, and had received as a bonus a series of swift kicks in the backsides, the spitting routine stopped—abruptly.<sup>37</sup>

One of the prime morale boosters was a small newspaper, “The Arctic Marines,” published by the brigade every Thursday. The paper was the only way,

besides the radio, to keep up with world news. Additionally, it was full of American sports news that the English radio broadcasts didn't cover. It published poems and Marine humor, and even had a "Dear Abby" type column.

The British good humor, different way of saluting, and precision were infectious. The Marines frequently had to be reminded to get back to doing things the Marine Corps way.

Even though entertainment facilities were sparse, the long winter nights found the Quonset-hut clubs echoing to the ribald singing of Marines and British friends.

The Marines never knew what to expect. For instance, one British officer asked his Marine counterpart if the Marines were equipped with an adjutant's gun. The Marine answered that the Corps had many types of guns but he'd never heard of that gun. The British explained that it was a weapon of exceedingly large bore, kept in the adjutant's closet, brought out twice daily, filled with b---s---, and fired in all directions, covering up the unit commanders. The Marine allowed as how the Corps was amply equipped with such weapons.

The one competitive sport the Marines engaged in with the British was boxing. These matches were a most welcomed diversion for the servicemen of both nations. The finals of the Anglo-American boxing tournament took place in the town hall of Reykjavik, kindly loaned by the City Fathers. Major General H.

O. Curtis and his senior British officers took their places along one side of the ring. Brigadier General Marston and his senior officers sat on the opposite side. The adjutant announced that the Marine Band would play the "Star-Spangled Banner." This was done with all present standing at attention. Then the adjutant announced that the band would play "God Save the King." The minutes ticked on, embarrassing all present, as the Marine musicians searched frantically through their sheet music. Finally, the mortifying silence was broken by the bandmaster's whispered instructions, "Play 'My Country Tis of Thee'—slowly."<sup>38</sup>

#### *Assigned Priorities*

Tactically, the brigade was attached to the British 79th Division and wore its black-and-white, polar-bear shoulder insignia. The 79th Division's commander was Major General H. O. Curtis, CB, DSO, MC. He became very popular with the Marines of all ranks. He often observed and sometimes tried his hand at bat at Marine softball games.

The brigade's mission was twofold. General Curtis designated the 6th Marines as a mobile column for use at any point along the road leading from Reykjavik to the naval base at Hvalfjordur. The 5th Defense Battalion served as an antiaircraft unit, with the mission of defending the city, the harbor, and the airfield against air attack.

Being veterans of Dunkerque and impressed with German air capabilities, the British were very air and

*A group of U.S. Marines, civilians, and British soldiers visit one of the hot springs and geysers which are so characteristic of the volcanically created geography of Iceland.*

Photo courtesy of SgtMaj L. J. Michelony, Jr.





Author's collection

*A machine gun crew from the 1st Marine Brigade practices on an Iceland road in 1941.*

parachute attack conscious. The landing of airborne troops on Iceland from Norway was quite feasible, as parachutists and gliders easily could land in the extensive flat gravel beds in southwestern Iceland, near Reykjavik. Consequently, the Marines' defense preparations reflected this concern, including locating machine gun positions for both antiaircraft and ground missions.

Usually on the weekends, one or two German planes would make reconnaissance flights over the island. They would cruise leisurely at high altitudes over the southwestern parts of Iceland and depart. Marines would man both the .30-caliber machine gun and the antiaircraft guns, but they were not permitted to fire at the planes, presumably because the United States was not yet technically at war with Germany. These flights served as the reason for not flying the American flag over any of the camps.

The advent of winter made it imperative that the first priority be given to constructing suitable living quarters, not only for the Marines, but also for the Army units already enroute from the United States. Since the native population had too small a labor pool to draw upon for this work, the job fell to the Marines.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately, the British Nissen hut was available in quantity. The wooden floor consisted of panels resting upon a two-by-four lumber frame. Curved I-beam steel ribs supported the corrugated metal panels that covered the sides and roof. The two ends were made of three wooden sections. Each hut came with a complete set of tools and hardware. The most time-

consuming requirement was the leveling and the pouring of the concrete pilings supporting the hut. The 1st Battalion improvised an assembly line technique and organized crews specializing in different stages of the construction. The Marines were soon completing 16 huts per day.<sup>40</sup> The British Royal Engineers were amazed and often came by in small groups to observe.

On 14 August, disquieting rumors set the "scuttlebutt" network buzzing. When the brigade finally confirmed the news, all hope of an early departure rapidly disappeared. The brigade had learned that its stay in Iceland would be "indefinite." Yet, at the time, the days were long, the weather pleasant, and there were interesting challenges to meet, and discoveries to be made each day. It was still an adventure.

A welcomed diversion from the daily work details building and expanding the camps occurred on 16 August. Prime Minister Churchill visited Iceland enroute to England, after the meeting with President Roosevelt aboard a United States warship in the North Atlantic, where they had agreed upon the Atlantic Charter. The 6th Marines stood in a platoon-on-line formation on the paved highway that ran northeast from Reykjavik. Winston Churchill and his party walked the entire length of both the Marine regiment and the British forces, stopping now and then to closely inspect individual men. The regiment then passed in review before a hastily built reviewing stand. Churchill wrote later: "There was a long march past, in threes, during which the tune 'United States Marines'

bit so deeply into my memory that I could not get it out of my head.”<sup>41</sup>

The first U.S. Army contingent to arrive in Iceland in early August was small, and went into quarters near the airfield. It was well over a month later, when larger Army units started to arrive, that life became complicated for the Marines.

*Assigned to a U.S. Army Command*

On 22 September 1941, President Roosevelt signed an order directing the Marine brigade to report for duty under Major General Charles H. Bonesteel, U.S. Army, the newly designated Commanding General, Iceland Base Command. The Marines had considerable misgivings because of the two Services' radically different systems of administration and discipline. The Commandant, Major General Thomas Holcomb, protested vigorously to the Chief of Naval Operations, but it was a losing fight, and Holcomb received directions to report to the Secretary of War on all matters pertaining to the brigade.<sup>42</sup>

The changeover proved to be an annoyance more than anything else, mainly because of the tremendous amount of paperwork coming out of the base command's staff sections. On the other hand, the quality

of the food improved and, to the delight of the bachelor officers, an Army field hospital, complete with a bevy of young nurses, arrived. Soon, the bachelor officers had made dates with the nurses, whose feminine presence enlivened Saturday nights in many of the officers' messes in the various camps. The married men also had their fun. In the 3d Battalion, two captains staged a mock argument in the bar, culminating in the smaller one inviting the larger one to “settle it outside.” Soon afterwards, they returned, having smeared catsup on the face of the small one. Clutched in his hand was a glass eye they had borrowed from a doctor. It was also smeared with catsup. When he staggered to the bar saying, “Look what the big bastard did to me” and opened his hand with the “bloody eye,” one of the nurses fainted. The others got mad, and despite Marine protestations that it was only a joke, the bachelors were without dates for some time.

One directive from General Bonesteel's headquarters seemed unfair to the Marines. Before turning over any camp to Army units, the Marines had to place new full-sized mattresses on each bunk and then make up each bunk with fresh sheets, pillows, and pillowslips (all supplied by the Army). Additionally, to make sure

*Marines repair a defensive position on Iceland in 1941. The muzzle of a .30-caliber, water-cooled heavy machine gun protrudes from the earth-covered bunker toward the camera.*

Author's collection







Author's collection

*Members of the 6th Marines erect their own Nissen huts after the regiment's arrival in Iceland in 1941.*

the Army troops were comfortable, the Marines had to lay fires in all of the stoves which needed only a match to set them off. These requirements angered many Marines, who saw them as a deliberate affront. During their entire stay in Iceland, the Marines had been living in almost field conditions, sleeping on folding canvas cots with thin pads rather than mattresses and using regulation-issue blankets. The Marines had no pillows, sheets, or pillowslips. They saw no reason the Army could not issue the equipment to their troops after they took over the camps. Marine commanders at all levels issued the necessary orders with great reluctance. The enlisted Marines, in many instances, took their own revenge by shaving toothbrush and comb bristles into the bunks as they made them, and building the fires in the stoves upside down—coal first, then kindling, with the paper on top.

Still another bone of contention was the base command's order for the Marines to furnish working par-

ties to unload Army units' equipment upon their arrival. Each battalion furnished large working parties, while the artillery battalion and other brigade units provided trucks and drivers. While the Marines worked, the Army allowed their troops to go on liberty in Reykjavik. Finally, the Army recognized that its units had the responsibility to unload their own gear.<sup>43</sup>

As the realization set in that the brigade would be in Iceland under Army command indefinitely, and with the onset of winter, spirits sagged. Daylight slowly diminished from almost 24 hours a day to about six. The wind seemed to blow constantly, with gusts up to 70 and 100 miles an hour, necessitating lifelines between huts and mess halls. Some of the huts didn't have electricity, and the men had to burn candles. They begged five-gallon tin drums from the British. These tins, filled with water and placed on top of the pot-bellied stove, were the only way for the Marines to take turns washing their clothes. Some improvement in morale occurred after installation of moving-picture equipment in all the camps, and when beer began to be available in plentiful quantities in the post exchanges. Further, there continued to be excellent relationships between the British and American servicemen, with men visiting back and forth between camps and sharing food and supplies with one another.

*Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill of Great Britain moves toward the reviewing stand for a parade by American and British forces honoring his Iceland visit.*

Author's collection





Author's collection

*A unit of the 6th Marines, with the white polar-bear patch on its uniforms, stands ready for an inspection on the dirt road outside its Nissen huts on Iceland in 1941.*

*Four Marine lieutenants, returned to the U.S. and still wearing the polar-bear patch on the sleeves of their uniforms, raise a toast to Iceland. They are, from left, Francis X. Beamer, William K. Jones, Jeff P. R. Overstreet, and John A. Ptak. The latter two later transferred from the 6th Marines to newly formed regiments, and Ptak, as a major, died on Guam.*

Author's collection



However, there were less beneficial aspects from the prolonged Arctic nights and availability of beer. In the 1st Battalion on 31 December 1941, a private first class tried to go into the sergeants' mess after leaving the beer hut. When the sergeants started to throw him out, he drew a pocketknife and cut two of them. Then he ran, with several sergeants in pursuit. He burst into one of the junior officers' huts, pleading, "Don't let them kill me." Unfortunately, the nearest officer was the most ineffectual and least respected second lieutenant in the battalion. The lead sergeant, who had not even had a drink, was one of the best in the battalion. Since he was boiling mad, he simply lifted the lieutenant by his elbows and moved him out of the way. As the sergeant moved toward the private, the man lashed out wildly with the knife and pierced the sergeant's heart, killing him.<sup>44</sup> The funeral of the popular sergeant, and the investigation and court martial that followed, cast a pall over the battalion for days.

In November, Washington decided to withdraw the Marines. Since a large number of Army personnel were scheduled to arrive early in the year, Washington decided to use those transports to bring the Marines back to the States. When the word spread, the Marines greeted it enthusiastically, and the anticipation helped make the cold, dark, damp winter months bearable. Furthermore, there was a strong affinity throughout the Corps towards the Orient. All of the older officers and NCOs had seen duty in the Orient and the younger Marines yearned to enjoy the adventures they had heard about. Lastly, there was the strongly rooted desire to rejoin their Corps and regain their identity, which many felt had been diluted by being part of an Army command in far-off Iceland.

#### *Pearl Harbor*

A group of young officers in the 1st Battalion were playing cards in their huts when a messenger burst through the door. "The colonel wants to see you immediately in the officers' mess."

"What's up?" one asked, as they scrambled to their feet.

"The Japs bombed Pearl Harbor," came the answer over the shoulder of the departing messenger.

Similar scenes were going on throughout the American forces, as people clustered around the few available radios in the messes and recreation huts. After the first shock, excitement took over. Confidently, and then anxiously, the 1st Battalion Marines followed the siege of Wake Island with its gallant garrison and aviators. Their battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver P. Smith's calm assessment, made quite early,



Author's collection

*Two members of the 6th Marines pose in heavy parkas following the onset of winter in Iceland in 1941.*

that "it was only a question of time until Wake Island fell to the Japanese," couldn't be believed by most of his younger officers. Surely, help was on the way. Surely, Wake would be saved somehow.

Even the grim losses at Pearl Harbor and the fall of Wake failed to dampen the excitement of leaving Iceland. The United States was at war, and a Pacific war at that. In the nightly bull sessions, the feeling of kinship grew. The Marines recalled friends, some on sea duty, others in barracks and detachments throughout the Pacific, and with the 4th Marines in the Philippines, all now in action. Both a vague envy of them and a strong desire to be helping them grew.

#### *Heading Stateside*

On 31 January 1942, the 3d Battalion became the first unit of the 6th Marines to sail from Reykjavik. The remaining two battalions, with attachments from brigade units, started loading out on 8 March, the 1st Battalion on the USS *Manargo*, Brigade Headquarters and the 2d Battalion on the USS *McCawley* (later sunk off New Georgia).<sup>45</sup> The weather was cold, and sporadic rain made the movement from camp to the docks and the loading itself both difficult and, at times, dangerous. Loading went on around the clock, however, since the ships had a tight turnaround schedule in order to join a convoy coming out from Ireland enroute to the United States.

The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, was the last element of the brigade to sail from Reykjavik. Its ships sailed at 0800 on 9 March, and proceeded to Hvalfjörður to wait for the convoy. There was no one living near this naval base, and ships could come in and out at night without being noticed. The Marines' ships remained at anchor until 14 March, and got underway that af-



Author's collection  
*Cards identical to this one carried holiday greetings from Marines in Iceland to friends and relatives in the United States during the first weeks after Pearl Harbor.*

ternoon. Some of the ships had been in the South Atlantic passenger trade, and had not been designed for the rougher North Atlantic, with its bigger swells and greater distance between swells. They were also lightly loaded. As a result, they plowed into a swell, taking green water over the bow with the propeller coming out of the water, causing the ship to shudder. They also rolled badly, and the gear had to be lashed

to withstand a roll of between 30 and 40 degrees. A good many of the Marines became seasick.

The 1st Battalion's ships made contact with the Irish convoy the morning of 17 March, almost due south of Iceland. The convoy then continued south to the mid-Atlantic before heading north and west to New York. This route, being out of the normal shipping lanes, avoided German submarines which were plentiful at that time.<sup>46</sup> The weather was quite rough, and since it was necessary to keep the ships battened down, the men had to remain below decks. There were no disciplinary problems, however, partly due to the fact that the Marines were glad to be leaving Iceland, but mainly because they didn't want to jeopardize their chances for leave upon returning to the United States.

The approved leave plan granted men living east of the Mississippi 15 days' leave upon arrival at New York. At the expiration of their leaves, they were to report to San Diego. Those living west of the Mississippi would receive 15 days leave after the battalions arrived in San Diego and unloaded their gear from the trains.<sup>47</sup>

As the convoy neared New York, the submarine contacts increased, and the destroyers' activity and the air cover intensified. A blimp remained on station continuously, and multi-engine airplanes on antisubmarine patrol flew over periodically.

The 1st Battalion arrived at Linda Vista Junction in midafternoon on 30 March for unloading and movement to Camp Elliott. The 3d Battalion, which had been back a month, took care of the unloading. The 2d Battalion arrived that evening. The band and a good many wives were on hand to meet the trains. The first adventure of World War II for the 6th Marines was over. At the time, few realized that the regiment and its attached units were the first American troops sent overseas as a result of World War II.<sup>48</sup>

## CHAPTER 4

# Guadalcanal

*Background—Preparing for Overseas Duty—New Zealand—The Baptism of Fire  
The Return to 'The Land They Adored'—McKay's Crossing*

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### *Background*

The members of the 6th Marines on leave savored the excitement of America at war. Their uniforms drew admiring glances, and the polar-bear patch on their shoulders promoted many questions. After explaining they had just returned from expeditionary duty to Iceland and were on their way to the Pacific War, the girls were impressed and older men sent many free rounds of drinks to the Marines' tables.

Those members traveling across country first became aware of their enhanced status when the train arrived in Los Angeles. There they were fed in the depot. As Colonel Oliver P. Smith, the commander of the 1st Battalion, wrote, "We were very much surprised when we found that the restaurant would accept no money, not even from the officers."<sup>1</sup>

The West Coast was intrigued by the war with Japan. Rumors of Japanese submarines observed lying off the harbors, enemy carrier task forces steaming towards California, and the presence of saboteurs, were as numerous as they were false. Blackout restrictions were enforced with varying degrees of success.

Enemy ships had been observed reconnoitering close to the vital Australian-American air and surface life-line near the Ellice Islands, Samoa, the Phoenix group, and Hawaii. While Hawaii was adequately defended against a ground attack, the others were not. Washington decided to send an expeditionary force to America Samoa. The Marine Corps reestablished the 2d Marine Brigade and formed it around the 8th Marines (Reinforced).<sup>2</sup> On 6 January 1942, the brigade sailed from San Diego. This left the 2d Marine Division with only one regiment, the 2d Marines (Reinforced), until the return of the 6th Marines. The 9th Marines was in the process of forming with cadres from the 2d Marines and later from the 6th Marines.

On the East Coast, the 1st Marine Division practiced amphibious landings and was in a high state of readiness. In June 1942, because of the Japanese threat to Australia, Washington prepared for an offensive against the lower Solomon Islands. By this time, one reinforced regiment of the 1st Marine Division was on the high seas approaching New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> On 2 July 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff designated the first objective of the offensive to be the islands of Guadal-

canal and Tulagi, and set 1 August 1942 as the planning date for the attack. The commanding general of the division, Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, and his headquarters arrived in New Zealand with the 5th Marines in mid-June. He attended a planning conference in Hawaii on 26 June, and received the dismaying 1 August execution date. The division's 7th Marines (Reinforced) was in Samoa as part of the 3d Marine Brigade, which had joined the 2d Brigade. The third regiment, the 1st Marines, had just embarked on the East Coast and was on its way to join the division.<sup>4</sup>

Three weeks after the Battle of Midway on 4-6 June 1942, the 2d Marines (Reinforced) sailed from San Diego to rendezvous with the understrength 1st Division in the vicinity of Guadalcanal.<sup>5</sup>

On 3 August 1942, the 9th Marines detached from the 2d Division and moved to Camp Pendleton to serve as the cadre for forming the 3d Marine Division. The 2d Division had only one infantry regiment left—the 6th Marines.

### *Preparing for Overseas Duty*

While the regiment was in Iceland, the Marine Corps adopted a new field uniform. This consisted of a herringbone cotton cloth long-sleeved jacket with matching trousers. The Marine emblem was stamped in black on the left breast pocket. The web belt and buckle and the canvas leggings remained the same. The shoes were ankle-high, sand-colored, with the rough side of the leather out—polishing boots no longer required! A major, welcomed change was the discarding of the old World War I helmet—"the skimmer"—with its hard leather knot that relayed the weight pressing squarely on the top of the head. The new Army helmet adopted, with its comfortable protection, also was useful for other purposes. It is still in use at this writing.

The Reising sub-machine gun and the air-cooled machine gun had been added, and the 60mm mortar was standard issue. The Browning automatic rifle and the .45-caliber pistol remained. The hand-pulled, two-wheeled Cole carts for crew-served weapons and ammunition were replaced by the new jeeps.

In April 1942 the regiment received many gradu-



Author's collection

*Humor, a common phenomenon amid the rigors of military service, shows up in this 1942 cartoon about the author by his friend and fellow captain, Loren E. Haffner.*

ate recruits and newly commissioned officers. Other factors also contributed to the personnel turbulence. A large number of the Iceland veterans were now non-commissioned officers. As soon as they returned from leave, a third of these were due to be transferred to new units forming. Later, as promotions began to come in for officers and NCOs alike, the regiment was stripped of a large proportion of its experienced personnel for use as cadres for still more new units. Of the three battalions, the 1st Battalion fared the best in retaining experienced personnel. This stemmed from members' status as the rubber boat experts in the regiment, a basis strongly defended by the battalion, and just as strongly decried as a spurious claim by the other two battalions.

The previous month, a system of division training schools began operating, and more than 4,000 men received specialized training in many techniques, including demolitions, intelligence, and chemical defense. The Marine Corps was desperately short of officers, and an officers' training school for specially selected NCOs opened at a location called Green's Farm. While many outstanding NCOs declined to be commissioned, the school eventually graduated 335 officers.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after returning to Camp Elliott the 6th Marines was stripped of its polar-bear patches, but they still proudly wore the fourragere. Excitement was high, for there was no doubt in anyone's mind that soon the regiment would be in action against the Japanese. The Navy assigned three converted President liners to the 2d Marine Division for practicing amphibious landings. Near the end of June the 2d Marines (Reinforced) combat loaded the liners, along with two additional ships—the *Crescent City*, an APA, and the *Athens*, an AKA. The convoy sailed to reinforce the 1st Division in the southern Pacific.<sup>7</sup>

Colonel Leo D. Hermle, still commanding the 6th Marines, knew that the days were few before he would be ordered to move his regiment to war. Training was strenuous and every effort was made to stabilize the personnel turnover so that meaningful unit training could be accomplished. Yet all that summer, demands were made for additional cadres of officers and enlisted men for the 3d Marine Division, then being formed at newly acquired Camp Pendleton. As men departed the regiment, newly commissioned officers from Quantico, Reserve officers' classes at The Basic School in Philadelphia, and Green's Farm, as well as gradu-

ates from the Marine recruit depot at San Diego, took their places.\*

Gradually, the personnel situation stabilized. Unit pride built as competition sprang up. The conditioning hikes grew longer as battalions sought to set records, both as to distance and time. Intracompany and intrabattalion "field days," pitting infantry squads, gun crews, and individuals against one another, added zest to the training. The 1st Battalion hiked 20 miles to the Delmar Race Track, which had been closed for the duration of the war. The officers were billeted in the Jockey Club. The enlisted men bedded down on canvas cots in stables, four to a stall. They never tired of whinnying, kicking the stall door, and announcing they were "Man-of-War" or some other famous race horse of the period. During the day, trucks carried the rubber boats to the beach, while the companies marched to meet them. Gradually the battalion became proficient in handling rubber boats in the surf, albeit not before first suffering from sore muscles unaccustomed to paddling the unwieldy craft.

Despite the strenuous training and the rapt following of the war news from both Europe and the Pacific, the Marines' mood was ebullient and contagious. Liberty was granted freely. The Saturday night dances at the Commissioned Officers' Mess at San Diego were crowded. Combat was a tomorrow somewhere in the hazy future.

While this occurred, vehicles were prepared for loading, weapon boxes were readied for the crew-served weapons, and crates were built for other equipment. Classes were held for junior officers on the art of combat loading ships.

When the order to move out came, it turned out that the destination was Wellington, New Zealand. The 6th Marines' regimental headquarters and the 1st Battalion were to sail on the Matson luxury liner, the *Matsonia*. Colonel Gilder D. Jackson, highly decorated as a captain in World War I, was now the commanding officer. Colonel Hermle moved to the division headquarters as chief of staff. All were delighted that there would be time in New Zealand for some more badly needed unit training before the regiment engaged the enemy. On 19 October 1942, the *Matsonia* left San Diego harbor. Few of its passengers realized that it would be almost four years before their regiment would return home, and then for duty on a different coast.<sup>8</sup>

Shipboard life aboard the *Matsonia* was a far cry

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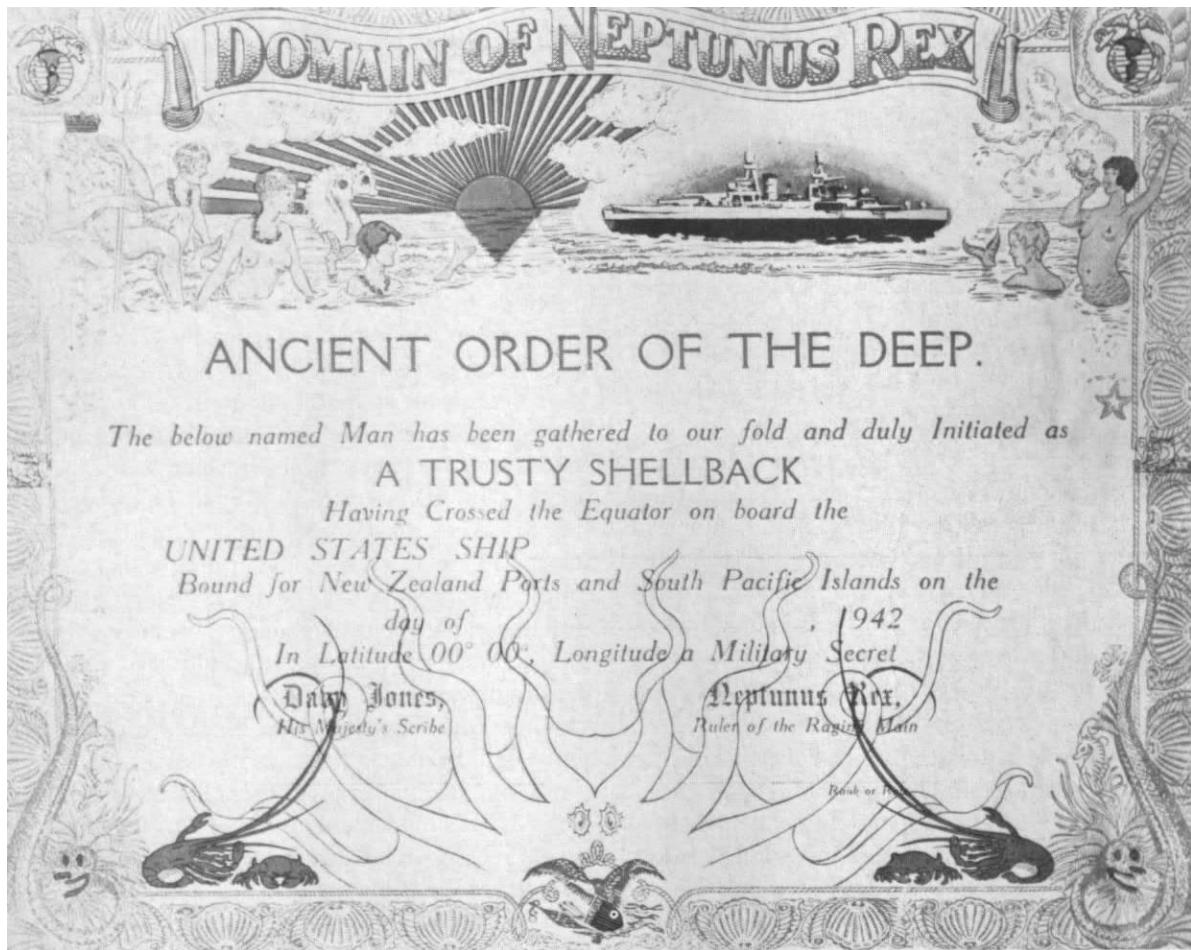
\*San Diego was not named a recruit depot until after World War II. Its official title was Marine Barracks, San Diego, until 1924, and Marine Corps Base, San Diego, until 1948.

from what the remaining nucleus of Iceland veterans experienced when they had embarked from San Diego 16 months earlier. Although the cabins had been stripped and their beds replaced with steel double bunks for the company-grade officers, even these were cared for by cabin stewards. The officers ate in the spacious dining room, ordering from a bountiful selection on the prewar daily civilian passenger menu. The enlisted men's accommodations and mess areas, though less luxurious, were bright and well ventilated in comparison to the converted President liners. With so many Marines aboard, the available weather deck areas for exercising and relaxation were limited.

The 3d Battalion was not so fortunate. Embarked on the Dutch charter ship *Brestagi*, it also set sail in mid-October, but in convoy with the 2d Battalion's ship and others. Also on board were a U.S. Navy gun crew, signal crew, and a Reserve commodore with a small flag staff. Because it was much slower than the *Matsonia*, the convoy's course was farther south of regular shipping lanes to avoid enemy submarines.

The crew of the *Brestagi* was Dutch, and the mess stewards were tiny Indonesians who squatted in the dark passageways when off duty, to the annoyance of the sweltering Marines. The ship was impossible to black out, even with blankets, canvas, or other material over ports, hatches, and ventilators. As a result, the officers' wardroom-lounge could not have lights after dark and they sat in the dark each night. The officers' meals, unlike those of the 1st Battalion, consisted mainly of rice and curry dishes. Like the Dutch crew, the Marine officer passengers did receive a daily ration of Bols gin. The staff NCOs did not appreciate this arrangement.<sup>9</sup>

The standard procedure at sea for friendly allied ships crossing each other's course was to turn about and head away from each other. Not to do so indicated the ship was probably unfriendly. The *Brestagi* sighted a ship which continued on course, so the captain ordered a change of course at flank speed. As a result, the engines broke down, and the other ships in the convoy continued on their way and soon disappeared over the horizon. Under pressure from the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur D. Chalacombe, to complete the job quickly, the ship had been loaded in an unprofessional manner, with boxes and crates in a jumble in the holds. As the ship wallowed in heavy swells for hours during the engine repairs, the cargo began to shift. The potato locker on the boat deck broke its lashings, slid around the deck, and almost crushed a Marine, sending him to sick bay. Eventually the ship got under way with its uncomfortable passengers luckily unaware of the rela-



Author's collection

*Each member of the 6th Marines received one of these certificates after his ship crossed the equator during the regiment's 1942 voyage from San Diego to New Zealand.*

tive comfort enjoyed by their fellow Marines on board the *Matsonia*. "The entire mountout, passage, and unloading was at times comical and not very professional."<sup>10</sup>

The 2d Battalion's passage was somewhere between that experienced by the other two battalions. Embarked on the *Mariposa*, a converted passenger liner similar to the President Line's ships, the accommodations were remarkably better than the *Brestagi*, while falling far short of those provided on the *Matsonia*.<sup>11</sup>

Upon crossing the equator, abbreviated "Shellback" ceremonies were held on all of the ships for the "Polliwogs." The comparatively few sailors and Marines aboard who had previously been initiated into the Domain of Neptunus Rex did the best they could. A suitable Shellback certificate was issued at the conclusion of the ceremony.

The 12-day voyage of the *Matsonia* was unescorted because her speed was in excess of 20 knots. "Darken ship" measures and frequent change of course com-

prised the only antisubmarine precautions observed. On 1 November 1942, the ship arrived in Auckland harbor.

It was a beautiful harbor and a clear, bright day. Tugboats and ferries surrounded the ship. The 2d Marine Division Band, also on board, played stirring marches. Everything was quite festive, until everyone learned that the ship had come to the wrong place—it was supposed to be in Wellington, 500 miles to the south.<sup>12</sup>

The order of arrival of the battalions in New Zealand was the 1st Battalion on the speedy *Matsonia*, and the 2d Battalion on the *Mariposa*. Staying with the convoy and not making the mistake of stopping first in Auckland, the latter battalion arrived in Wellington within a week of the 1st Battalion. Lastly, after almost three weeks at sea, the 3d Battalion happily disembarked from the *Brestagi*. The crowded and boring shipboard routine behind them, the 6th Marines looked eagerly to the adventures that lay ahead.



## *New Zealand*

The first sight of Wellington after the *Matsonia* swung around the headlands into the harbor was reminiscent of San Francisco—hills climbing to the sky. As the evening wore on while the ship waited to move to the quay, lights from the private homes covering the hills seemed to send a warm welcome. The usual excited and ill-founded rumors of an early liberty immediately became the main, if not the only topic of conversation. Later that night as working parties and advanced echelon groups were posted on the bulletin boards, the realization set in that first there was a great deal of work to be done.

The ship tied up at the Aotea quay during the night. Early in the morning, the unloading commenced. The difficulties with the highly-unionized stevedores, previously experienced by the 1st Marine Division in its movement from Wellington to Guadalcanal, resulted in the unloading being done by Marine working parties.<sup>13</sup> As each battalion arrived, advance echelons from company-sized units were dispatched to the assigned camps.

A light drizzle had started at first light, making the town look dreary. As the shops began to open, many people came to the quay and watched the unloading in spite of the rain. Conversations were struck up and acquaintances were made that later grew into friendships. New Zealand army trucks assisted in moving the supplies and equipment to the assigned camps.

The camps, formerly occupied by New Zealand army troops, were ready for the Americans. They were located along the railroad that ran from Wellington for about 35 miles, first to McKay's Crossing, and then on to Paekakariki. Trains moved many of the troops and their equipment from the ships. The regularly scheduled passenger trains later became the main transportation to and from town for Marines on liberty.

The huts in the camps held up to eight enlisted men. Captains and above had small but adequate individual huts. The galleys, messhalls, and showers were clean and functioning properly. The "old timers" from Iceland remarked that it was a far better beginning than the Nissen huts and greasy galleys that had greeted them before. It wasn't long before the regiment was comfortably billeted, liberty parties were regularly appearing on the streets of Wellington, and attention to training began.

The training areas included portions of a large sheep ranch. Foothills of forest-covered mountains a few miles away, part of a government reservation, provided excellent challenges for conditioning hikes. Even

closer was a near-primeval forest ideal for scouting and patrolling. Combat veterans came back from Guadalcanal to lecture on their experiences in fighting the Japanese, jungle hardships, and malaria-control measures. Invariably, these were almost scarecrow-thin Marines with gaunt faces. Their skin had a yellowish tinge from the preventive medicine, atabrine. Their words were followed with rapt attention by officers and enlisted men alike who knew their turn would come soon.

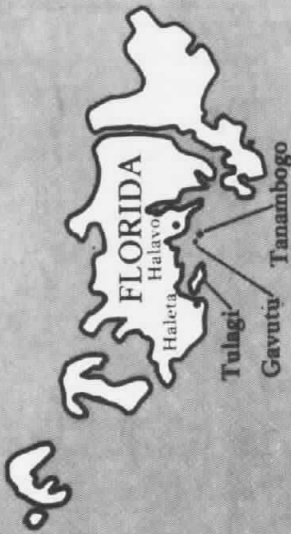
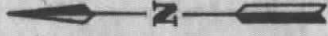
Liberty in Wellington was enjoyable. The girls were pretty and eager to date the Marines. Their countrymen of the same age had been overseas for more than three years, fighting the Germans. The restaurants and hotels served excellent meals which broke the monotony of camp menus. Steak and eggs, a local specialty, rapidly became a favorite with the Marines. "Milk bars," serving ice cream sodas and milk shakes, were numerous and popular. The movie theatres played to full houses. Without the reminder of the few visiting Guadalcanal veterans, the war would have seemed to be in another world.

The Marines and the New Zealand girls realized quite rapidly that words and phrases had different meanings in their two cultures. Having picked up "bloody" as a mild epithet from the British in Iceland, the Marines soon learned that it was a word not to be used in polite company in New Zealand. On their part, the girls learned not to use the word "screwed" as slang for "paid."

Early in December the gray transports began appearing in the harbor. Shipping-out preparations commenced, and liberty became curtailed, as the number of working parties increased. Although the Christmas season was at hand, families who had "adopted" a Marine into their homes started planning to celebrate it early. Their premonition was correct, as the 6th Marines ate their Christmas dinner on board ship. The following day, 26 December 1942, the advance echelon of the 2d Marine Division Headquarters, under command of Brigadier General Alphonse DeCarre, together with the 6th Marines, sailed from New Zealand to Guadalcanal.<sup>14</sup>

Lost in their own thoughts, the Marines lined the rails watching Wellington's familiar hills grow smaller as the transports exited in column from the harbor. From the houses and apartments dotting the hills worried eyes peered and thoughts flowed from ship to shore and back again, seeking some sort of one last communication. The 6th Marines were on their way to combat, would they return to what had become their home away from home? If so, certainly not all. What indeed did the future hold?

# GUADALCANAL and FLORIDA ISLANDS



CHANNEL

SEALARK

Savo Island

Cape Esperance

Luaga Point

Point Cruz

Maitanaku

Tanaru

GUADALCANAL

### *The Baptism of Fire*

Enroute, debarkation plans were prepared and rehearsed. Since it was to be an administrative landing, no full scale rehearsal was held. The regiment knew that on 9 December command of the Guadalcanal campaign passed from Vandegrift to Major General Alexander M. Patch, USA. So as not to have a Marine major general ashore who was senior to Patch, Marston remained in New Zealand, giving the mission to his assistant division commander, DeCarre.<sup>15</sup>

On 4 January 1943, the 6th Marines landed on Guadalcanal, still under the command of Colonel Jackson. General DeCarre established the division headquarters just east of the Matanikau River, and assumed command of all Marine ground forces. The 2d Marine Division was complete again after more than a year.

The regiment bivouacked the first night at Kukum, near Lunga Point.<sup>16</sup> Occasional artillery and small-arms fire could be heard from the direction of the ridges to the west. The C-ration dinner was a far cry from the hot meals on the transports, yet few Marines were worrying about food. The sound of the distant gunfire pushed to the front of their thoughts the age-old questions of men first entering combat. "How will I react when I see the enemy? Will I freeze and be killed? Will I be brave or a coward?" But their time was yet to come. Although the original plan had been for the 6th to relieve the 2d and 8th Marines on the front lines so these two exhausted regiments could displace to New Zealand, General Patch wanted to use them for one last drive to Cape Esperance. In the three weeks this effort took, the division was therefore united as a fighting force for the first time.<sup>17</sup>

While waiting to move up to the front, the 6th Marines became acclimated to the hot, muggy weather. Patrols were sent out, and not always with the mission to look for the enemy. Colonel Gilder D. Jackson had a mean little black "Scotty." The dog was forever disappearing, first on the *Matsonia*, then in camp in New Zealand, and now here in the jungle. Search parties would be sent out, but now they were armed patrols. The men fervently hoped the Japanese would catch the dog and eat it. One day, when the colonel was crossing a coconut log spanning a stream while carrying the Scotty, the dog nipped him on his stomach. The dog flew in one direction while the colonel yelled and fell into the stream. The story was told and retold for days. The men felt they had finally had their revenge.

"D-day" was set for 10 January. Patch decided to move the newly arrived 25th Infantry Division inland

to attack northward toward the beach and Cape Esperance. The Marines, with their right flank on the beach and units of the Americal Division inland on their left flank, attacked westward towards the Cape. The 2d Marines were on the inland portion of the Marine attack, with the 8th Marines anchored on the beach. Two days before "D-day" DeCarre ordered the fresh 6th Marines to relieve the battle-weary 2d Marines. The 1st Battalion was assigned the left flank of the regimental front, with the 2d Battalion on its right in contact with the 8th Marines. As the 1st Battalion moved in a column of twos up the narrow road through the damp jungle, it encountered its first smells of the battlefield—of unburied, often undiscovered enemy dead in the thick jungle growth. Some men gagged. Faces were grim. They were finally near combat.

The relief took place on a grassy ridge with a wooded ravine to the front. Foxholes marked the outline of the front lines, with occasional machine gun emplacements interspersed. The area was filthy with half-eaten C-ration cans rotting in the hot sun. A few shallow graves were partially uncovered by the periodic heavy rains. Since the only water available for bathing or shaving was the Matanikau river well to the rear, the veterans of the 2d Marines were dirty, bearded, and also needed haircuts. They stared at the freshly shaven faces and clean uniforms. Then the derisive taunts began: "Well, if it ain't the Pogey Bait Sixth! How did they get you darlings out of Hollywood?" The 2d Marines were happy to see the 6th. It meant the scutlebutt was true that they would soon be leaving "this stinking island."

The first night on the line most men only pretended to sleep when not on watch. After dark a whisper was passed along the line from the outposts in front. "Tell the colonel there must be 200 Japs in the ravine just ahead. You can see them smoking cigarettes!" Barrage after barrage of artillery fire blasted the ravine. "Still see them smoking," the outposts reported back. Finally a Southern voice rang out "Chee-rist! Ain't none of you f---- people ever seen lightning bugs?" The front was quiet the rest of the night.

At 0645 on "D-day" the attack jumped off inshore in the 25th Division's zone of action. The 6th and 8th Marines had a holding action to contain the enemy while the Army wheeled through the foothills into position. By the night of 12 January the Army had reached its objective. The next morning the Marines launched their attack. Both regiments met scattered resistance. What was not known then was that the Japanese were making frantic efforts each night to ex-



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 53384

*Two dead Japanese soldiers, clothed in rags and emaciated from lack of food because the Americans cut off the flow of enemy supplies, lie in their bivouac on Guadalcanal from which they had continued to fight until killed by advancing Marines in early 1943.*

tricate their command and as many troops as possible on submarines and fast surface craft from Cape Esperance. Those covering their withdrawal were the expendables—most of them sick or wounded, but all determined to sell their lives dearly.

On 15 January the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, under Major William A. Kengla, relieved the 8th Marines on the beach. The 2d Battalion under Major Raymond L. Murray took the center, and the 1st Battalion under Major Russell Lloyd was inland. There, the terrain was the principal deterrent, with only scattered sniper fire encountered. That night, those Marines who had not bothered to dig foxholes wished they had around midnight. The enemy had located the 1st Battalion's position and fired a battery of land-based 8-inch naval guns at it. Company A had six dead and 11 wounded in about thirty seconds.<sup>18</sup>

The 3d Battalion's procedure was to blast the jungle and coconut groves to the front with artillery and cannister rounds every morning before starting the attack. Most of the time it met only light resistance, but it received some nasty casualties from mines it encountered on the coast road. Since its command post was usually near the road, it had many more visitors from the rear than did the other two battalions. These were

mainly Army sightseers and souvenir collectors. Occasionally naval personnel from the ships or SeaBee units would hitch a ride up to the front. None of them apparently realized there could still be enemy to the rear of the lines. For example, one morning a private attached to the command post went to relieve himself and ran into a fully armed Japanese officer asleep behind a log. The private pulled up his pants, left to get his rifle, returned, and kicked the officer on the foot. When he sat up, the private shot him and returned, proudly bearing the officer's sword. Instead of the acclaim he expected, he was sternly reprimanded by his officers since few, if any, Japanese officers had been captured. Other examples of valuable intelligence being lost were frequent occurrences because of the Marines' tendency, early in the war, not to take prisoners.

The Marines' front narrowed steadily. On 18 January the 1st Battalion reached its objective and was relieved by an Army battalion from the 182d Infantry Regiment.<sup>19</sup>

The three previous days had been successful. The 6th Marines had relatively few casualties and, in addition to finding numerous enemy dead, seized large quantities of ammunition and equipment. One patrol

from the 1st Battalion had located and destroyed the 8-inch battery that had caused so much damage the first night.<sup>20</sup>

The relief of the 1st Battalion took place during the noon hour. The Army set up mess flies and trucked in metal containers from the rear with hot food. The Marines who had had nothing but C-rations for two weeks immediately sized up the situation. Word spread along the line—"Tell the doggies [soldiers] that if anyone hollers 'Condition Red!' that means a Jap air raid is coming and they'd better jump in the nearest foxhole." Shortly thereafter, tray after tray of chocolate-covered doughnuts were being unloaded from a truck. Someone yelled, "Condition Red!" The soldiers jumped in the foxholes. The Marines grabbed the doughnuts, ran down the line passing them out and eating them as fast as they could. The Army lieutenant colonel was livid, and yelled at Major Lloyd demanding the food be replaced. Major Lloyd, convulsed with laughter, finally raised a huge hand, waved at a stack of C-ration cases and choked, "Help yourself."

For the first time the enemy had to be dug out of coconut log emplacements. The 1st Battalion, 18th Marines\*, which was attached to the 6th Marines, had experimented with the flame thrower assault team. The technique involved using a flame-thrower, smoke grenades, and demolitions in combination against the enemy bunkers. It proved to be most effective and was used for the remainder of the war.<sup>21</sup>

The first eight days of the assault had moved the American lines 5,000 yards beyond Point Cruz. The last battalion of the 8th Marines had been withdrawn. The 6th Marines and two Army regiments, the 182d and the 147th, continued the drive towards Cape Esperance. In the following five days of sometimes brisk fighting, the assault became a pursuit.<sup>22</sup>

The 6th Marines advanced along the beach in column of battalions with the 1st Battalion leading. It was a dubious honor, as the battalion encountered many ambushes. The first day Company A ran into a skillfully laid trap. Thirty to 40 enemy soldiers tied themselves high in trees of a coconut grove where they were concealed by the palm fronds. Another force with machine guns was on a small ridge to the front and left flank. When the Japanese opened up the Marine company received fire from the front, the rear, and above. As one Marine described it, "You didn't know which side of the log to get on." The snipers were finally killed, some dangling from the trees but many falling to the ground. The Marines' losses were considerable, including the company executive officer.<sup>23</sup>

\*The 18th Marines was a combat engineer regiment.

The ferocity, even savageness, displayed by the enlisted teenage Marines on Guadalcanal stands in stark contrast to the cool professionals they became in later battles. Gold teeth of the enemy dead were knocked out with rifle butts, collected, and traded. Many enemy wounded, too weak from starvation and malaria to flee, much less fight, tried to surrender but were summarily shot. Japanese skulls were wired to the radiators of jeeps. The officers thought little about it, or if they did, took little action. Although personnel were instructed to take prisoners when feasible, all reports stressed the treachery of the enemy and their fanaticism, so on Guadalcanal, in effect, no quarter was given or received.

Beards began to appear and "jungle rot"—running sores on the wrists and hands—drew flies. The river crossings were welcomed for a chance to clean up. Malaria began to take its toll. The men hated the bitter-tasting atabrine tablets. Although the officers passed out the daily dose and watched each man take a swallow of water from his canteen before moving on to the next man, many held it under their tongue and spit it out at the first opportunity. Few bothered to put on insect repellent or use the mosquito head nets at night, although both were in plentiful supply and readily available. The anopheles mosquitoes swarmed nightly.

Colonel (later General) Edwin A. Pollock recounts riding in a jeep at night on Guadalcanal along the coastal road during the period enemy warships were shelling almost nightly. The jeep's headlights had been covered with flat black paint with narrow slits to let slivers of light show. Every few minutes a voice would come out of the darkness. "Turn off them f----- lights." After awhile the young driver, at the end of his patience, bellowed back "I can't! I'm driving the f----- Colonel!"

Throughout early January 1943 there had been no Japanese aircraft over Guadalcanal; this changed abruptly on 26 January. Earlier the 6th Marines had captured a dazed Japanese engineer sergeant who told intelligence officers his command had called for one last big air raid. His warning was heeded, and Marine and Army planes were airborne on station. Forty Zeros appeared and violent dog-fights rolled through the sky. The Marines watched the show with fascination, thrilled at being spectators to an unusual sight for an infantryman. However, the Zeros had been only bait. Seven Mitsubishi 97 bombers, flying near tree-top level, suddenly swept in, scattering their bombs. They caused some casualties, but it was mainly only a gesture.

The 6th Marines and the 182nd Infantry were well



Author's Collection

*Members of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, unshaven in an effort to conserve fresh water, pose on Guadalcanal prior to the regiment's return to New Zealand.*

west of the Poho river. They made contact with the 25th Division attacking down the ridges towards Cape Esperance.<sup>24</sup> Resistance continued to be sporadic. On 28 January Company A of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, sent out a patrol before digging in for the night. Almost at once the patrol ran into trouble. It was about 1600 hours, a few hundred yards southwest of Tassafaronga Point, where three Japanese transports had been beached during the main naval engagement in November. When the firing began, the company commander, Lieutenant Baine P. Kerr, sent a runner to the platoon leader with instructions to withdraw. Kerr, with another platoon leader, Lieutenant Robert B. Patrick, and a runner then went forward to investigate. Lieutenant Kerr immediately was wounded in the leg and knocked to the ground. As he was crawling back to his lines, Patrick and the runner ran over. Each grasped him by an arm and started running to the rear. The enemy machine gun fired another burst. Patrick was hit in both legs, and the runner squarely in the small of his back. Eventually litter bearers were able to evacuate all of them to the aid station.<sup>25</sup> These sharp, quick skirmishes took their toll. They also turned the men of the 6th Marines into seasoned veterans for future battles.

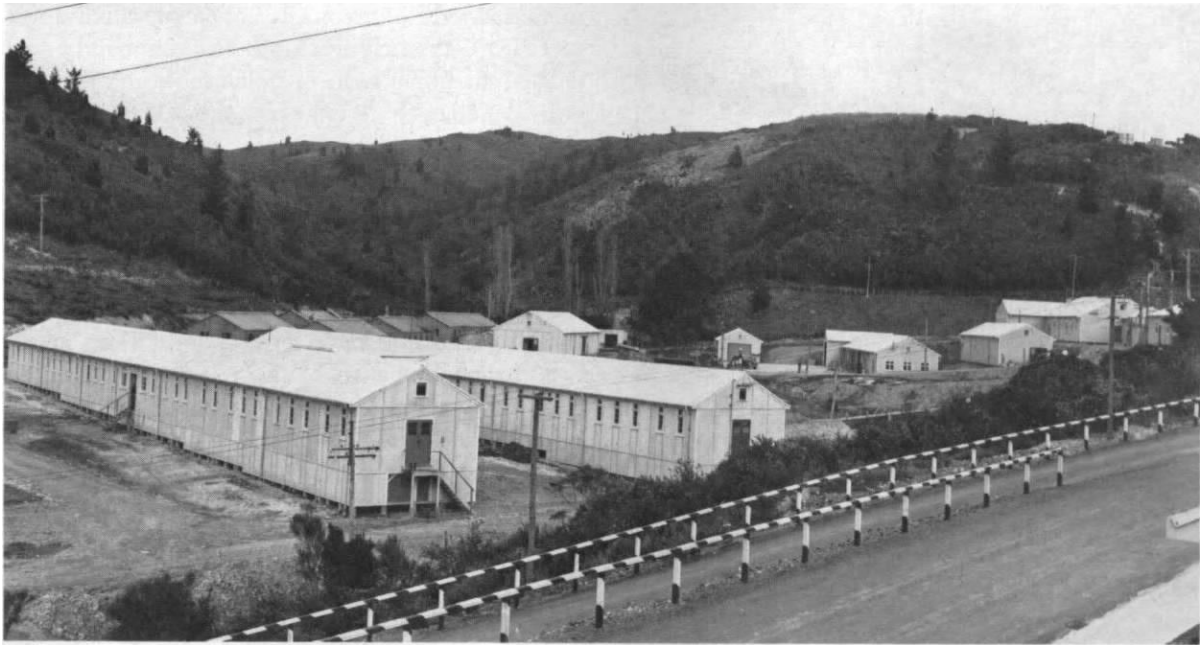
On 7 December 1941, the young men on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico had no idea that they would ultimately play a significant role in the prosecution of the war against Japan. These young Indians were

soon selected to become combat communication specialists—the first of a kind. The commanders on Guadalcanal were aware of stolen codes and that the enemy could easily decipher new ones. One writer said, “Military communications were being made available to the enemy like sand sifting through a sieve since many of the Japanese could speak English fluently.” Yet in short, fierce encounters there wasn’t time for the enciphering and deciphering that ordinary code requires. The Navajo Code Talkers “speaking their native dialect became the secret weapon.”<sup>26</sup> Two were assigned to each infantry battalion. One traveled with the lead patrol or one of the assault company commanders, and one stayed with the battalion commander. On the advance to Cape Esperance, however, an unanticipated difficulty arose. The two Navajos with the 1st Battalion had an argument and refused to speak to one another. No amount of cajoling by big burly Major Lloyd, a former Annapolis football player, could get them to shake hands and make up. As his temper rose, their obstinacy grew; the more he threatened, the stonier their expressions became as they glared alternately at him and each other. Finally, completely exasperated, he sent them to the rear in a jeep, calling the wrath of Custer’s ghost down on their heads and on all of their brethren.

The end was in sight. The 2d Marines boarded ship the 31st of January. The 8th Marines followed shortly thereafter. The 6th Marines traded assignments with the 147th Infantry on the left flank, releasing the Army unit for the final sweep to Cape Esperance.

On 9 February 1943, Guadalcanal was declared secured.<sup>27</sup> The next day the regiment marched from the Cape Esperance area to the fine camp near the original beachhead, which the 2d and 8th Marines had vacated. There was time to stop and bathe in the rivers enroute. From the 10th to the 19th of February the 6th Marines was assigned the mission of coast defense. Hot food rather than C-rations was now on the daily menu. Mail calls were regular, if not daily. More and more men, however, lay awake at nights with malaria attacks, alternately bathed in sweat or shaking from a chill. Those with dengue, also called breakbone fever, groaned with pain. Some men’s eyes were turning yellow, and weakness set upon those with jaundice.

All of the Marine units suffered a great deal of sickness, from malaria carried by the anopheles mosquitoes that attacked at night, dengue fever that developed from the bite of daytime mosquitoes, and jaundice from unsanitary eating conditions. Fungus, acquired quickly in the hot, moist climate, was aggravated by sweat. Everyone had “the crud.” The 6th



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 58051

*A portion of Silverstream naval hospital, the facility in New Zealand which helped many members of the 6th Marines recover from wounds and diseases acquired on Guadalcanal.*

Marines was less severely hit by all four of these maladies, but every day new cases appeared.

A little more than six weeks had elapsed since the regiment landed, but it seemed like six months. Only about four weeks had been spent in actual combat against a sick and already defeated enemy, but that thought was not allowed to dampen the Marines' feeling of accomplishment. The regiment's casualties were 53 KIA and 170 WIA, out of the 2d Marine Division's total of 342 KIA and 776 WIA.<sup>28</sup> They had been bloodied. They had carried out all assigned missions promptly and efficiently. Their "baptism of fire" was over. They were now combat veterans, and they were proud of it.

#### *The Return to "The Land They Adored"*

The day everyone looked forward to—19 February—finally arrived.<sup>29</sup> Although rested, washed, and well fed, many of the Marines were too ill to savor the day of departure from "that f----- island." Embarkation was made from small craft up cargo nets slung over the sides of the transports, while wearing full field transport packs. The upper and lower portion of a field transport pack, complete with blanket roll and entrenching tool, weighed approximately 80 pounds. Combined with web gear and an individual weapon, it became a crippling load to have on one's back while crawling up the 40 foot side of a ship. Remarkably, no one fell between the bobbing small craft and the

huge bulk of the transport. Many of the sick Marines made it only with the help of two or three solicitous buddies. Once aboard, the ship's sick bays were filled immediately, mainly with jaundice victims.

With the ship's laundry working at full capacity, it wasn't long before everyone was in clean utilities. With showers and sunbathing on the weather decks, "jungle rot" sores soon cleared up. Men cleaned weapons and equipment, wrote letters, and swapped tales of their experiences.

The rails were lined with smiling faces as the transports tied up at the quay in Wellington. Eyes searched for girlfriends dated earlier. Unfortunately, few were spotted in the gathering crowd of waving middle-aged couples coming to welcome "their Marines" into their homes again. The regiment soon discovered why more of the young ladies who had previously been so friendly had not shown up. The 2d and 8th Marines had spread the word that the 6th *had* to wear the fourragere, that it was not awarded for bravery in World War I as they had been told, but meant that the wearer had a venereal disease.

Silverstream hospital, 12 miles outside of Wellington, was the first destination for many men of the 6th Marines. Soon filled to capacity, this U.S. Navy Base Hospital had to be augmented by one established by the division at Anderson Park nearer Wellington. The Marines with milder cases of malaria and dengue fever



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 62883

*A unit of the 6th Marines passes through the main gate of Camp Russell, which housed the headquarters of the 6th Marines in New Zealand in 1943, prior to the Tarawa battle.*

*The various company offices of the 1st and 2d Battalions, 6th Marines occupy these wooden framed buildings in New Zealand in the months before the Tarawa campaign.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 62872





were treated by corpsmen in the battalion areas. The jaundice cases, because of the infectious nature of the disease, were treated at the hospitals. Few officers and men escaped one or more of the three maladies. A large number of the more serious cases requiring extended hospitalization were invalidated to Hawaii or to the United States. For several weeks, strenuous training activity had to be curtailed. Maximum liberty was granted, and soon the 6th Marines had convinced their girls that the 2d and 8th Marines had told a monstrous lie about them because they were jealous of the great combat record the 6th had compiled on Guadalcanal in the short time there. This, of course, infuriated the other two regiments.

#### *McKay's Crossing*

The New Zealand Army camps previously occupied by the 1st and 2d Battalions were near Paekakariki, while the 3d Battalion's camp was at McKay's Crossing. Upon returning to New Zealand, the regiment moved into new camps which had been constructed at McKay's Crossing on the opposite side of the railroad tracks from the original 3d Battalion camp. These

camps extended from McKay's Crossing to Paekakariki on the sea- and beach-side of the tracks. Personnel were billeted in pyramidal tents with wooden decks and strongback wooden frames. Offices, mess halls, galleys, showers, and officer messes were in wooden buildings. Some of the senior officers rented beach houses. The 1st Battalion acquired the use of a farm house on the leased training area. Some of the officers lived in this house which was also used as their commissioned officers mess. Saturday in all of the C.O.M.'s was party night. Many officers brought dates out from Wellington. Friends from other units often showed up on the spur of the moment. The cleaner songs learned in Iceland were sung with gusto, together with college songs and new ones learned from their New Zealand dates.

Replacements, both officer and enlisted, arrived. As the sick regained their health, the tempo picked up. Promotions were made. Units were reorganized. Raymond L. Murray, now a lieutenant colonel, retained command of the 2d Battalion. Russell Lloyd, also now a lieutenant colonel, and senior to Murray, moved to

*Mr. and Mrs. Lipsham of Manurewa, New Zealand, host Marines and their dates at a quiet party in their home in July 1943, an event similar to ones shared by many Marines.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 59374



the regimental executive officer's position. He was relieved by newly arrived Lieutenant Colonel John W. Easley. Major Kengla, also promoted, left the regiment and was replaced through an intradivision transfer from another unit by recently promoted Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth F. McLeod. Colonel Gilder D. Jackson was succeeded as commanding officer of the 6th Marines by Colonel Maurice G. Holmes, who had commanded the 3d Battalion in Iceland.

There were other promotions and intradivision transfers which took place. The Guadalcanal wounded soon recovered, and were released from the Auckland naval hospital. As they returned, they were warmly greeted by old comrades and newcomers alike. The battalions received many newly commissioned second lieutenants.

The only hard liquor readily available in New Zealand was an Australian concoction officially named *Corio*, but nicknamed "jump whiskey" by the Marines (one drink would "make a man jump like a kangaroo"). One of the first questions posed to a newly arrived lieutenant was whether he brought any whiskey from the States. They all replied in the affirmative, each having brought at least one, and sometimes several, cases. Parties were immediately organized and spirits were high—until the first taste. The "high-class Scotch" expected turned out to be a villainous green Mexican distillation called "Juarez." Since the New Zealand girls always drank their whiskey in Coca-Cola or ginger ale, they didn't mind it. The Marines gagged, and drank it anyway.

It is doubtful that a New Zealand division would have received as warm and sincerely friendly a reception in the United States as was accorded the 2d Marine Division in Wellington. Thousands of homes were opened to them. As often as they could, Marines put on their green winter service uniform and enjoyed dinner or weekend invitations in Wellington or Paekakariki and other suburbs. In the field of romance, hundreds married their New Zealand sweethearts in spite of the obstacles deliberately instituted by their officers.

The logic behind these obstacles was to do what was fair and best for both of the young lovers. It became apparent early on that some of the girls, well-educated and sophisticated, had grown towards maturity without the company of the boys their own ages who were fighting a war on the other side of the world. Often these young ladies became enthralled with an unsophisticated but handsome boy from a farm or ranch who had barely finished high school. Other mismatched situations occurred which indicated very little chance for a successful marriage. Consequently, a



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 62871

*A Marine officer conducts an equipment inspection of a lieutenant's platoon in October 1943 as the 6th Marines' stay in New Zealand draws to a close.*

Marine first had to get his regimental chaplain and one of his company officers to interview the young couple, and then go with them to visit the girl's parents. Final approval had to be obtained from the battalion commander. The 6th Marines' Catholic chaplain was a huge Irishman from New York City named Father William O'Neill. He decided to try humor to reduce Marines' resentment at having these strangers butting into their love affairs. On the bulletin board outside his office, he displayed a large centerfold from *Esquire* magazine showing Rita Hayworth, a Hollywood movie star, wearing a sheer negligee and reclining on a chaise longue. Underneath he printed, "Unless the girl you want to marry is as pretty as this, wait until you get home." Usually the Marine entered for his interview with a grin on his face.

The movie theaters in Wellington were popular with the Marines, both those with and without dates. The movies ran on a set schedule, with intermissions between showings. At the beginning of each show, the lights dimmed, a picture of the King came on the

screen, and the British national anthem was played. Everyone stood and remained standing. Then a picture of President Roosevelt was shown while the American national anthem was played. Everyone then took their seats and the movie started. During May, a Maori battalion, 400 strong, returned from more than three years in the war in the African theater. These Polynesian natives of New Zealand were known to be fierce fighters. One evening in one of the movie theaters the Maoris present stood for the British national anthem but sat down during the American one. The Marines demanded that they stand and show the same respect to the American anthem. The Maoris refused. A brawl resulted, which rapidly spread to the streets, with other Maoris and Marines joining the fight. Both American and New Zealand MPs were unable to break it up. With the approval of the Wellington Police, a four-square-block area of the downtown was closed off and the combatants allowed to fight it out. The injured from both sides staggered to the edges of the area, where military ambulances waited to take them to first-aid stations. There was no property destruction and very few serious injuries. From then on, however, the Maoris remained standing during the American anthem. The fight cleared the air.

A comprehensive sports program had been deve-

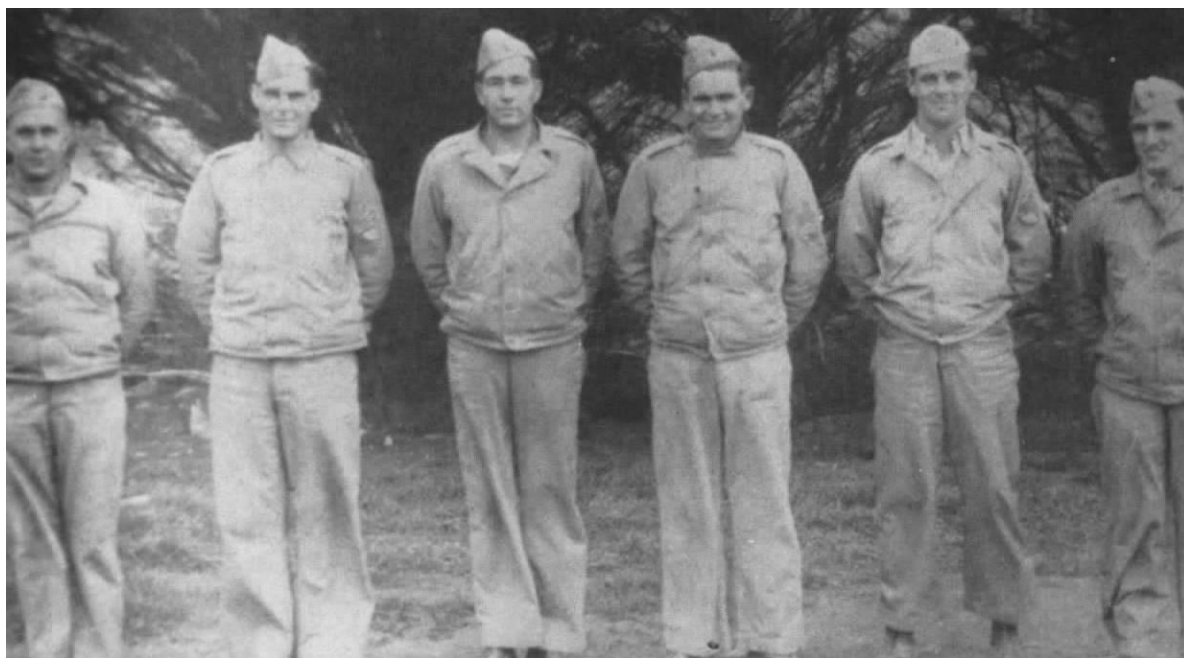


Author's collection

*A racing form from the racecourse in Wellington, New Zealand, provided one form of diversion for members of the 6th Marines as they recovered from combat on Guadalcanal and prepared for future campaigns.*

*The staff NCOs of Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, warmly jacketed against a blustery day in New Zealand, pose for a group photograph before sailing for Tarawa.*

Photo courtesy of SgtMaj L. J. Michelony, Jr.





Author's Collection

*Marines parade through sunny streets of Wellington, New Zealand, in September 1943, as they near the end of training for their next amphibious campaign.*

loped by the Division Special Services office. It not only provided diversion and exercise for the Marines, it also contributed to good public relations with the New Zealanders. The 2d Division Boxing Squad under Lieutenant Shannon Burke fought 110 bouts all the way from Auckland in the north to Dunedin in the south, winning 80 and losing 30.<sup>30</sup>

The Marines' had a distinguished American visitor in New Zealand. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt toured some of the camps and visited the wounded who were still in the hospital in July.<sup>31</sup>

In September 1943, the 2d Marine Division paraded through downtown Wellington, led by the Division Band. The Marines marched in battalion mass formation in their green uniforms, with rifles slung,

and wearing steel helmets. The streets were lined with cheering crowds; balconies and office windows along the route of march were filled with pretty waving girls. In a short two months many of these fine young men strutting so proudly would die for their country on a tiny island far away.<sup>32</sup>

During the months before the parade Marines who still had unused leave on their records took weekend trips to Rotorua, the valley of geysers; visited friends in the 3d Marine Division encamped near Auckland; or toured Christchurch, an overwater trip to the next island.

The Red Cross sponsored dances at the Hotel Cecil, which had been converted into a club. These were very popular. Occasionally a USO show turned up, to the delight of both the Marines and their New Zealand friends. The division produced and staged a musical comedy called "The Fourragere Follies." Those Marines not lucky enough to have an overnight pass joined the commuter's rush for the last train to Paekakariki at 1201. If they missed the train, they had to share the expense of a long taxi ride. Additionally, if they missed the train and then had difficulty locating a taxi, it could mean they would be logged as being "absent over leave" when they checked through the camp's gate. In at least one battalion, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, a hole had been cut in the barbed wire surrounding the camp. This hole was in a remote section, and secretly crawling through it added spice to the liberty. Not until near the end of the war did the culprits using it discover that officers and senior NCOs knew about it all along—in fact, some of them had used it themselves.

Memories of Guadalcanal faded into the distance; unit spirit was high. The 6th Marines not only felt like professionals, they also looked professional. They were, to a man, cocky, self-confident, and enjoying themselves. Yet always lurking in the backs of their minds was the thought that this couldn't go on much longer. There was a war out there, a big one, and they had a part to play.<sup>33</sup>

## CHAPTER 5

# Tarawa

*Background—Off to The Gilberts—Helen—D-Day, 20 November 1943—D Plus 1, 21 November 1943  
The 6th Marines Attack—D Plus 2, 22 November 1943—D Plus 3, 23 November 1943  
Mopping Up—Apamama—The 6th Marines Leave Tarawa—Lessons Learned*

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### *Background*

*Time* magazine, in its 6 December 1943 issue, said: "Last week some 2,000 or 3,000 United States Marines, most of them now dead or wounded, gave the nation a name to stand beside those of Concord Bridge, the *Bon Homme Richard*, the Alamo, Little Big Horn and Belleau Wood. The name was Tarawa."<sup>1</sup> Actually the breakdown was:

	USMC		USN	
	OFF	ENL	OFF	ENL
KIA	56	701	2	24
WIA	87	1954	2	48
MIA	1	202	0	3
Total	144	2857	4	75

(Total dead, 783; Total WIA, 2,091; Total MIA, 206; Total casualties of Tarawa, 3,080)<sup>2</sup>

Of the above, the 6th Marines had:<sup>3</sup>

	USMC		USN	
	OFF	ENL	OFF	ENL
KIA	3	91	0	5
WIA	10	237	0	9
MIA	0	0	0	0
Total	17	328	0	14

As a battleground, the islands of the Central Pacific posed much different and much more complicated problems than did the islands in the mountainous, jungle-clad Solomons such as Guadalcanal. Their strategic value was obvious since they provided an avenue westward. Also important, the flat terrain of atolls makes them tempting for building airfields, and their lagoons provide protected ship anchorages.<sup>4</sup>

Tarawa is such an atoll, some 2,500 miles southwest of Pearl Harbor. It was the most strategically important atoll in the Gilbert Islands.<sup>5</sup> In August 1943, at the Quebec Conference, "the line of advance for the central Pacific offensive was marked out as from the Gilberts, to the Marshalls, to the Marianas, and thence to the Carolines."<sup>6</sup> Of the 25 small islands making up

the atoll of Tarawa, the most important and heavily fortified was Betio.<sup>7</sup> It also had an airstrip.

Betio is two miles long and one-half mile wide, almost at sea level and at no point higher than ten feet. Betio had to be seized. It was tough!

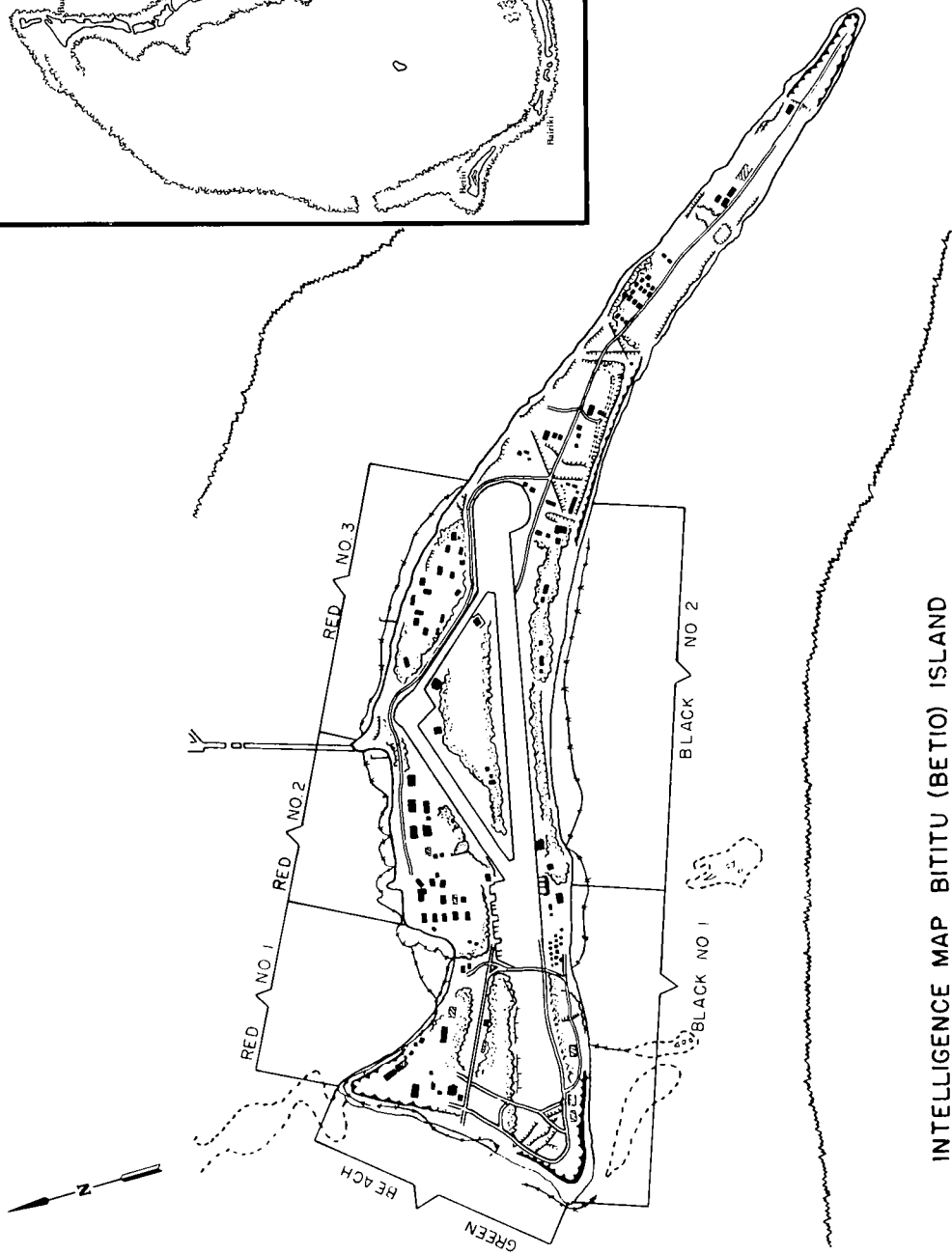
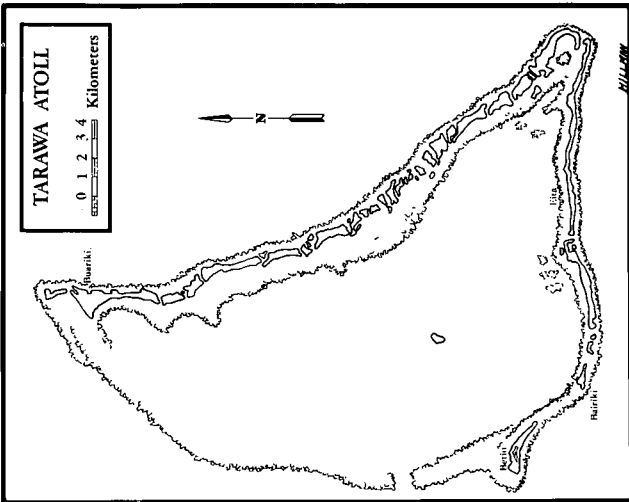
The job was assigned to the V Amphibious Corps commanded by Marine Major General Holland M. Smith. It consisted of two divisions. One, the Army's 27th Infantry Division, under Major General Ralph C. Smith, was to land at Makin, approximately 100 miles to the north of Tarawa. The other, the 2d Marine Division, commanded by Major General Julian C. Smith, drew the tougher job of seizing Betio.

Holland Smith, as corps commander, did not accompany the Betio expedition. He had been ordered by Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner, USN, to embark on his flagship, the battleship USS *Pennsylvania*. Turner, in overall charge of the Gilbert Islands operation, had designated the Makin expedition the Northern Attack Force and the Betio (Tarawa) invaders the Southern Attack Force, under Rear Admiral Harry Hill. Both operations had been given the code name "Operation Galvanic." The Central Pacific war was about to begin.

Turner reasoned that Makin, being closer to the Marshalls, would be the scene of the most action.<sup>8</sup> He turned over full tactical control of operations at Tarawa to Hill and Julian Smith. The worst news, from the Marine division's point of view, was that the 6th Marines (Reinforced) would be taken from Julian Smith's control and held as corps reserve. Fortunately, as it turned out, the regiment's ships were ordered to the transport area off Tarawa, rather than to Makin.

### *Off to the Gilberts*

For security reasons the 2d Marine Division made no secret of an amphibious exercise planned for Hawke's Bay, located a short distance up the coast from Wellington. Only a few trusted officers and men knew the division would not return to Wellington, even though the approximately 500 Marines with New Zealand brides suspected that this would happen. The division actually made arrangements for rail transportation from Hawke's Bay back to Wellington as a means of increasing the plausibility of the cover story. Japanese spies if any, may have been convinced,



INTELLIGENCE MAP BITITU (BETIO) ISLAND  
TARAWA ATOLL, GILBERT ISLANDS



TAKEN FROM 2D MAR DIV  
SPECIAL ACTION REPORT

as were most of the single Marines expecting to rejoin their girl friends once again.

Hawke's Bay, for a transport convoy traveling at 14 knots, is only 24 hours' sailing time from Wellington. By 2 November, even the most optimistic Marine was persuaded that "this was no drill."<sup>9</sup> Cruisers and destroyers started joining the convoy. Very few officers and none of the enlisted men knew the destination. Soon the island of Efate in the New Hebrides loomed into view. More warships had already assembled there. The Marines were now certain that their next stop would be "the target." Scuttlebutt had it that it would be Wake Island.<sup>10</sup> Spirits soared! The Marines had a score to settle there, so the gossip was eagerly believed.

Only the Marines of the 2d Regiment (Reinforced) had a chance for a rehearsal at Efate. The new amphibian tractors (amtracs or LVTs) were waiting there for them. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines did get to inflate its rubber boats and paddle around in the lagoon. Although already apparent, it was at Efate that it was agreed upon that the outboard motors were useless and unreliable once they had been used in sea water. A technique using ropes and Navy small boats (LCVPs) to haul the rubber crafts was developed. Each LCVP towed six rubber boats.

Rear Admiral Hill and Major General Julian Smith moved their flags aboard the old battleship, the USS *Maryland*. More than the big men-of-war assembled, Marine conversation centered on a strange-looking new vessel. It was named the USS *Ashland*, and it was a landing ship, dock (LSD). Inside were 14 General Sherman medium tanks and their crews. During the afternoon of 12 November the word was passed, "Make ready to sail at 0600." They were on their way to a destination few people knew about, and to whatever fate the future held for them.

On 14 November, Admiral Hill flashed a message to the transports: "Give all hands the general picture of the projected operation and further details to all who should have this in execution of duties. This is the first American assault of a strongly defended atoll and with northern attack and covering forces, the largest Pacific operation to date."<sup>11</sup> Maps, aerial photographs, and rubber relief maps appeared from where they had been stored under heavy around-the-clock guard. There was Betio, code name "Helen," and on its northern shore three landing beaches were marked "Red 1," "Red 2," and "Red 3." The 2d Marines (Reinforced) under Colonel David M. Shoup would lead the assault. The Marines showed little interest in briefings on the Army's planned assault of Makin. The most unhappy regiment was the 6th Marines when it discovered it was to be the corps reserve. The men were

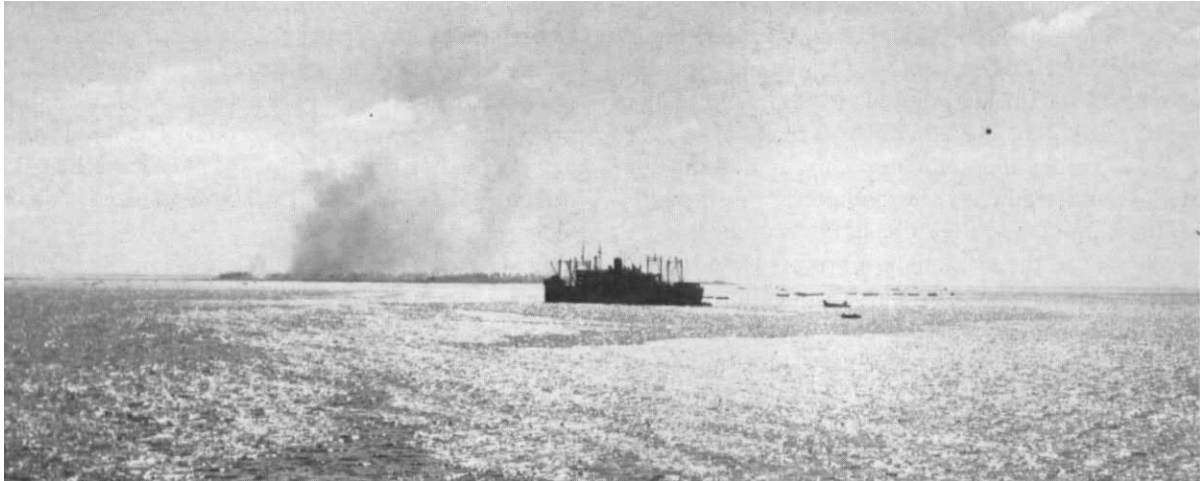
certain there would be nothing left for them to do on Tarawa—or during the rest of "Operation Galvanic" for that matter.

### *Helen*

Real occupation of Tarawa by the Japanese did not occur until September 1942. On 15 September 1942, the *Yokosuka 6th Special Naval Landing Force* (SNLF) landed on Betio. (The SNLF were the closest Japanese equivalents of the U.S. Marines. Most of the men came from the northern Japanese home islands. They were tall, around six feet, tough and proud.) In December the *111th Pioneers* arrived and immediately commenced construction of the island's defenses. In February 1943, the *6th SNLF* was redesignated the *3d Special Base Force*. It was joined on 17 March 1943, by the *Sasebo 7th SNLF* and in May of the same year by the *4th Construction Unit*. All were under the command of Rear Admiral Keichi Shibasaki. By this time, his command had 2,619 first-class fighting men.<sup>12</sup> In addition to these combatants there were airfield specialists and labor troops bringing the total to 5,236. Shibasaki did not overlook the possibility that an attacker might gain a foothold on the island. Anti-tank ditches and other obstacles were arranged to confine the assault force so it could be destroyed.<sup>13</sup> His orders, nevertheless, were those given earlier to the *Yokosuka 6th SNLF*: "to wait until the enemy is within effective range (when assembling for loading) and direct your fire on the enemy transport group and destroy it. If the enemy starts a landing, knock out the landing boats with mountain gunfire, tank guns, and infantry guns, then concentrate all fires on the enemy landing point and destroy him at the water's edge."<sup>14</sup>

Admittedly, the Marines' landing on Betio might be rough, considering the number of Japanese troops, the uncertain tides, the long fringing reef, big dual-purpose guns, and some coast artillery, yet the general plan of the Southern Attack Force was to take the island by storm, get as much land as possible in the shortest time, and obtain immediate use of the airfield.<sup>15</sup>

The intelligence was confusing—the Army bombers had received *no* anti-aircraft fire when they dropped their 1,000-pound "Daisy Cutters." Then, they *had* received heavy fire. A battleship commander at Efate had boasted, "We are going to bombard at 6,000 yards. We've so much armor we're not afraid of anything the Japs can throw back at us." A cruiser commander had said, "We're going in to 4,000 yards. We figure our armor can take anything they've got." Nobody bothered to check with the Japanese!



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 63610

*Smoke rising over the heavily defended island of Betio provides the 6th Marines, then in corps reserve, with its first view of combat in the Central Pacific in World War II.*

Before the battle Rear Admiral Shibasaki boasted, "a million men cannot take Tarawa in a hundred years." Rear Admiral Howard F. Kingman, commanding the ships ordered to deliver the preinvasion bombardment, promised, "Gentlemen, we will not neutralize Betio. We will destroy it. We will obliterate it!"<sup>16</sup> Both were wrong!

On the day before the battle, a mimeographed message appeared on all bulletin boards on the transports.<sup>17</sup> It read:

To the officers and men of the Second Division: a great offensive to destroy the enemy in the Central Pacific has begun. American air, sea, and land forces, of which this division is a part, initiate this offensive by seizing Japanese-held atolls in the Gilbert Islands which will be used as bases for future operations. The task assigned to us is to capture the atolls of Tarawa and Apamama. Army units of our own Fifth Amphibious Corps are simultaneously attacking Makin, 105 miles north of Tarawa . . . .

Our Navy screens our operation and will support our attack tomorrow with the greatest concentration of aerial bombardment and naval gunfire in the history of warfare. It will remain with us until our objective is secured and our defenses are established. Garrison troops are already enroute to relieve us as soon as we have completed our job of cleaning our objective of Japanese forces.

This division was especially chosen by the high command for the assault on Tarawa because of battle experience and combat efficiency. Their confidence in us will not be betrayed. We are the first American troops to attack a defended atoll . . . . Our people back home are eagerly awaiting news of our victories.

I know you are well trained and fit for the tasks assigned to you. You will quickly overrun the Japanese forces; you will decisively defeat and destroy the treacherous enemies

of our country. Your success will add new laurels to the glorious traditions of our Corps.

Good luck and God bless you all.

Julian C. Smith,  
Major General, USMC  
Commanding

*D-Day, 20 November, 1943*

On D-day, the 6th Marines were on the horizon watching from a distance history being made. The Marines cleaned their rifles again for lack of better things to do. Final letters had already been written, but the regiment's Marines were really only spectators. Even the news of how the battle was progressing was sparse. They were disgruntled!

H-hour was set for 0830, yet when the hour came the Japanese shore batteries were not yet quiet, so H-hour had to be postponed, even though the battleships USS *Colorado* and USS *Maryland* had swung their main batteries into action and lesser fire-support ships were blazing away furiously.

The three assault battalions were: 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, under Major Henry P. "Jim" Crowe, which would land east of the pier (Red Beach 3); 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Herbert R. Amey, Jr. (a former member of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines in Iceland), which would land in the center, just west of the pier (Red Beach 2); and, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, under Major John F. Shoettel, which would land next to Amey (Red Beach 1). The 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, was to strike straight across the airfield to the southern shore, thereby getting the Marines the greatest amount of land in the shortest



possible time. The 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, under Major Wood B. Kyle, would land, if needed, as regimental reserve. Colonel David M. Shoup, the commander of the 2d Marines, was in command of the assault battalions. The 2d Division's reserve consisted of the two remaining reinforced battalions of the 8th Marines and regimental headquarters.

Fifteen minutes before the assault battalions were to reach shore, the division's scout-sniper platoon, under Lieutenant William D. Hawkins, reinforced with engineers equipped with flamethrowers, would go to work. Their job was to clear the pier jutting out about 500 yards from the north side of the island and which divided Crowe's and Amey's battalions. In doing this, they were only partially successful.

Then the bad news began to arrive on the 6th Marines' transports. They had observed some of the heavy naval gunfire. When it lifted, all they could see was the dust and flames on the island. Then naval dive bombers began to arrive and started strafing and bombing the beaches. But the Japanese were firing back! More than one Marine muttered, "There's always some bastard who doesn't get the word!"

The transports carrying the three assault battalions first stopped at an area to the north of their assigned position, which delayed those battalions' debarkation. After the ships were finally in position, the first waves away from the transports had to transfer from their boats to amphibian tractors for their journey to the beach. After much confusion, the Marines loaded the tractors, formed up at the line of departure, and, at 0824, headed for the beaches. It was impossible for the assault units to reach the beaches by 0830, the time now set for H-hour by Admiral Hill and General Julian Smith. They changed it to 0845, which was still too early. Again H-hour was delayed, until 0900.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the defenders' dual-purpose antiaircraft guns were out of action, as were many of the antiboat guns due to the excellent firing of support ships prior to H-hour. At 0854 Hill gave orders to cease all naval gunfire except for that by the destroyers inside the lagoon. Further, the strafing of the planes had stopped. Unfortunately, Hill didn't know that the pre-H-hour supporting fires had not destroyed the many smaller beach defense guns and pillboxes. Due to the heavy blanket of smoke which acted like a curtain between the *Maryland* and the beach, as well as the imminent landing of the first assault waves, it was the only course of action possible for Hill and Julian Smith.<sup>19</sup> The assault waves began to come under heavy fire while still 3,000 yards from the beach.<sup>20</sup>

The first battalion to hit the beach was the 3d Bat-

talion, 2d Marines, at 0910. About 500 yards from the beach, the boats carrying the battalion ran aground on the reef and the troops began wading ashore. The two companies in amphibian tractors, "I" and "K," lost more than 50 percent of their men. The third company in landing craft, Company L, lost more than 35 percent.<sup>21</sup> The battalion was disorganized. Major Shoettel lost control.

Crowe's 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, on Red Beach 3, fared better. Its leading LVTs made the beach at 0917. Crowe was able to get his first waves ashore with light casualties.<sup>22</sup>

The 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, caught intense enemy fire before finally beginning to land at 0922 on Red Beach 2. Its commander, Lieutenant Colonel Amey, was killed while wading ashore.<sup>23</sup> All three rifle companies were unable to advance because of enemy fire from the flanks and the front. Their beachhead was only about 300 yards wide and 75 yards deep; the executive officer, Major Howard Rice, and one wave were deflected to Red Beach 1. Radios on Red Beach 2 were inoperative either from salt water or enemy machine gun bullets.<sup>24</sup>

Some of the later waves transferred to amphibian tractors, while sometimes an entire landing team (consisting of a reinforced infantry battalion) waded the 400 to 500 yards of water from the reef to the shore through intense enemy fire. The confusion at the reef and beyond to the shore was unbelievable: units became separated, units were mixed, officers lost control.

This bad news slowly reached the 6th Marines' transports hovering on the horizon. Colonel Shoup ordered his reserve, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, to land on Red Beach 2, work its way to the west and assist the 3d Battalion. There were not enough amphibian tractors left for more than two companies. These encountered heavy enemy fire from the left of Red Beach 2. About an hour later, around 1030, Julian Smith put part of his reserve, the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, under Shoup's command. The reserve battalion was ordered to land on Red Beach 3 to support Crowe's 2d Battalion, 8th Marines. As soon as the boats grounded on the reef, the men began to wade. Many drowned after stepping into deep holes. Enemy 40mm guns, machine guns, and small arms, plus mortar fire, caused heavy casualties and scattering of the men. The battalion was badly shaken and disorganized.<sup>25</sup>

Only two of the six medium tanks that had headed for the beach finally made it, but not without great effort. They fell in with the disorganized elements on the small part of Red Beach 1 held by the Marines. Major Michael P. Ryan quickly reorganized these ele-

ments and started clearing out a foothold on the western part of Red Beach 1.<sup>26</sup> Ryan, the Weapons Company officer with the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, worked throughout the afternoon of D-day expanding his perimeter. He had no flame throwers or demolitions, but by skillfully employing the firepower of the two medium tanks, he made steady progress.<sup>27</sup>

At Julian Smith's request during the afternoon of D-day, Holland Smith released the 6th Marines from corps reserve back to the 2d Marine Division. This allowed Julian Smith to commit his division reserve, the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, together with the rest of the 8th Marines. Smith asked Shoup whether night landing of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines was feasible on Green Beach, or if he would rather have the battalion as reinforcements on Red Beaches 2 and 3. The message never reached Shoup. This and other messages from the division failed to reach their intended recipients. Consequently, the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, and regimental headquarters, lay idle at the line of departure awaiting orders until past midnight. When the division received no response from Shoup, Julian Smith directed Colonel Elmer E. Hall, commanding the 8th Marines to land his remaining ele-

ments on the north shore of the extreme eastern end of Betio, where the tail of the island was only about 200 to 500 feet across. Here again the message was not received.

The evening of D-day, the Japanese commander, Rear Admiral Shibasaki, apparently made a big mistake. He failed to counterattack the slim Marine beachhead during the night. By morning of D + 1 it was too late. Shibasaki was killed on that day.<sup>28</sup>

*D Plus 1, 21 November 1943*

The 8th Marines' headquarters and the regiment's 1st Battalion spent D-day night at the line of departure. The regimental commander finally received a message from the division at 0200 on D + 1, inquiring about the location of his still uncommitted 1st Battalion. Based on his answer, the regiment received another message from division around 0430 ordering a landing on the eastern end of the island at 0900 on D + 1.<sup>29</sup> In the meantime, Shoup had informed the division that he desired the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, to land on Red Beach 2. The division cancelled the landing on the eastern tip of the island and ordered the 1st Battalion to immediately land and then attack to the west. At 0615, the 1st Battalion started wading

*A section of palm trees devastated by naval gunfire, bombs, and artillery provides a rifleman's eye view of the Tarawa battlefield in November 1943, and illustrates why it could be so difficult to locate the tenacious Japanese defenders until they opened fire.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 63591



ashore at Red Beach 2. Heavy enemy fire from the front and both flanks disorganized the battalion. The battalion commander, with more than half of his troops ashore, reported to Shoup for orders. He was told to attack to the west and establish contact with the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines. However, the 1st Battalion had lost all flame throwers, demolitions, and heavy equipment while wading ashore. Worse, it had suffered heavy casualties.<sup>30</sup>

On the morning of D+1, Shoup ordered the 1st and 2d Battalions, 2d Marines, to attack south and seize the southern coast of the island. At 1600, Lieutenant Colonel Walter J. Jordan, an observer from the 4th Marine Division who had taken command of the 2d Battalion when Amey was killed, arrived at the southern coast. He had only about 200 men, little ammunition, no water, and no rations. Soon after this force's arrival, the Japanese attacked from the east, causing heavy casualties. Fortunately, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, joined Jordan and his men. The 1st Battalion also had many stragglers from both the 8th Marines and the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines. Since most of the troops belonged to the 1st Battalion, Jordan turned over command to Major Kyle and reported to Shoup's command post.<sup>31</sup>

#### *The 6th Marines Attack*

Julian Smith had not seen fit to commit any elements of the 6th Marines to the battle until he could obtain more definite information concerning the situation ashore.<sup>32</sup> Many possible missions were discussed at a conference on the *Maryland* the morning of D+1. Colonel Maurice G. Holmes, Commanding Officer, 6th Marines, attended, and left with the understanding that he was to be prepared to accomplish any of them. He then called a conference on his ship of all his battalion commanders. After the conference, the commander of the 1st Battalion, Major William K. Jones, was halfway down the cargo net when he was recalled. He had left the conference understanding he was to be prepared to land in rubber boats on the narrow tail of the eastern end of the island. Holmes had received a message from the division informing him that Ryan had seized all of Green Beach. It also ordered Holmes to land one of his battalion landing teams in rubber boats immediately on Green Beach and to boat another battalion landing team, which was to be prepared to land in support of the first team. The 2d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, was designated the support battalion to land behind Jones.<sup>33</sup>

Murray had hardly started to boat his battalion when he received a message from the division “. . .

to boat and land Landing Team 2/6 on Beach Blue 1 or 2 immediately.”<sup>34</sup> Realizing that Beach Blue was on Bairiki, the island adjacent to Betio, he issued the necessary orders to his company commanders and directed his executive officer, Major LeRoy P. Hunt, Jr., to query the division as to whether he was to land his entire landing team, i.e., tanks, artillery, etc. It turned out the division only wanted his battalion to go ashore. Around 1330 the division had received a message from Shoup that the enemy was attempting to leave Betio and wade across to Bairiki, hence Murray's change of orders.<sup>35</sup>

The 3d Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth F. McLeod, took over Murray's initial mission and started loading in boats to support either Jones or Murray.<sup>36</sup>

Because of an ordered shift in his transport's anchorage, which was later cancelled, Jones was unable to reach the beach in his rubber boats until 1835, when it was starting to get dark. He tried using rubber boats to guide two amphibian tractors through the mine field protecting Green Beach. The rubber boats simply paddled over the mines, which could be seen easily, although the barbed wire did give the boats some trouble. One of the LVTs made it unharmed. The other hit a mine and was destroyed.<sup>37</sup> Both tractors were loaded with badly needed water, rations, ammunition, medical supplies, and spare radio equipment. Upon reaching the beach, Jones checked in with Ryan, who notified Shoup. Jones then had his Marines dig in and form a line behind Ryan's defense. Fortunately, the 1st Battalion immediately unloaded the contents of the amphibian tractor that had successfully made the beach, as it was destroyed later that night by an enemy air raid.

The air raid which hit Green Beach on D+1 night rained bombs from high altitude. The Marines had scooped out shallow foxholes in the sand and the raid didn't cause much damage. The sound of the bombs whistling down through the darkness was eerie, and succeeded in keeping the battalion awake a good part of the night.

Meanwhile the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, landed on Bairiki at 1655, encountering some machine gun fire from one pillbox. Murray called in an airstrike, which ignited a can of gasoline in the pillbox, burning all of the Japanese. Landing, therefore, against no resistance, the battalion secured the island without finding any more enemy.

The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, had completed boating by 1600. The order to land didn't arrive that day

and the battalion spent the night of 21-22 November in its boats at the line of departure.

The chief of staff of the 2d Marine Division, Colonel Merritt A. Edson, arrived at Shoup's command post at approximately 2030 on D+1. He assumed command from Shoup of all the troops on the island. This not only took much of the responsibility off Shoup, it also allowed him to give full attention to his disorganized troops, which had not only suffered many casualties but also were scattered and mixed with other units.<sup>38</sup> Communications ashore were still mainly by runner, but Shoup was now in contact with the division headquarters. Shoup and Edson immediately worked out the plan of attack for the next day.

#### *D Plus 2, 22 November 1943*

The orders for the morning of D+2 were as follows:

1. At daylight the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, would pass through Ryan's line, attack to the east along the southern shore, pass through the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, and report progress to Edson and Shoup's command post.

2. Also at daybreak, Major Lawrence Hayes' 1st Battalion, 8th Marines (Reinforced), would attack to the west along the north beach into Ryan's line and eliminate the pockets of resistance separating Hayes and Ryan on the border between Red Beach 1 and Red Beach 2.

3. The 8th Marines (less the 1st Battalion still attached to Shoup's 2d Marines) would continue the attack to the east along the northern shore.

The 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, had landed on Betio on D+1. This 75mm pack howitzer battalion proved to be invaluable in supporting the infantry battalions. To increase the amount of artillery, the attack order for D+2 directed the 2d Battalion, 10th Marines, to land on Bairiki at Beach Blue 2. Upon landing, this battalion was to operate under the fire direction center of the 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, on Betio.

Early in the morning of D+2 the planned attack began on Betio. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, moving in a column of companies, passed through the southern part of Ryan's line, but not before Jones had borrowed the two medium tanks from his old friend by making him a promise that he would return them—a promise Shoup later overruled. The battalion attacked viciously and rapidly, bypassing troublesome strong points to be finished off by following companies. The airstrip on its left and the beach on its right prohibited using more than one company at a time in the assault. By mid-morning it had made

contact with Kyle's battalion. By noon it had passed through Kyle's battalion and continued its attack to the east. Just before 1300 enemy resistance stiffened. Captain George D. Krueger, the commanding officer of Company B, had passed through the assault Company C, and was now in the lead. Although Company C had killed about 250 of the enemy, its own casualties had been light.<sup>39</sup> Now with the enemy's increasing resistance, casualties in the battalion began to mount. Captain Krueger was shot through the neck by an enemy sniper hiding in a coconut tree [It paralyzed him from the waist down for the rest of his life.] The sniper was killed. First Lieutenant Norman K. Thomas, the executive officer, took over and pressed the attack.

Jones had been called to a conference at Shoup's headquarters. Colonel Edson promised Jones all available tanks and direct support from the artillery battalion. Edson was to arrange for air and naval bombardments on the objective before the assault jumped off. The time for the assault was set for 1330.

During Jones' absence, Major Francis X. Beamer, the acting executive officer, took charge and continued the attack.\* He moved Company A through Company C.<sup>40</sup> Company C's men were hot, exhausted, and running into stiffer enemy opposition.

Jones had commandeered one of the medium tanks to take him to the meeting since the airfield was swept by enemy small-arms fire. He used the same medium tank to return to his command post in order to use its radio to control the other tanks.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly after jumping off at 1330, Jones' battalion ran into continually increasing enemy resistance. Only about 300 to 400 yards were cleared of the enemy that afternoon. At 1530 Jones was ordered to relieve Crowe's 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, on the north side of the airstrip. Company C was assigned that mission.<sup>42</sup> From 1545 on Jones had no communication with Company C because its TBY radio went out of commission.<sup>43</sup>

Company B, with its right flank on the beach, had so many casualties it was impossible for Company A

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\*Beamer did a great job of backing up Jones throughout the campaign, an important example of trust and confidence in the functioning of the Marine Corps. Here were two old friends who had been together on Iceland and Guadalcanal, and even vacationed together. One ends up being commanding officer. The other, who commanded the weapons company, was the battalion commander's choice for his acting executive officer rather than a more senior major replacement he was furnished, who was probably just as competent and just as smart. The known versus the unknown won out. In a tight situation, that is what the Corps is all about. We have to rely on one another. We have to have trust in one another. With it all obstacles can be overcome—as was done at Tarawa.

to relieve them for a rest. Company A could only go around it while keeping contact on the right with Company B and anchoring its left flank on the airstrip. Now all three rifle companies were committed, leaving the battalion without a reserve. Jones ordered Lieutenant Lyle E. Specht of the 81mm mortar platoon to use his platoon as a nucleus and form a battalion reserve by using all available cooks, clerks, and runners.

Initially, some Company A personnel had advanced beyond several wrecked enemy trucks. Both the trucks and other equipment were aflame. Realizing that it was getting dark and that the fire would silhouette any movement in front of the trucks, Captain Charles R. Durfee decided to pull these Marines back in order to be better prepared for the expected Japanese attacks after nightfall. This extremely hazardous operation was successfully executed except that one mortally wounded BAR man, Private First Class Glenn White, could not and would not be removed from the shellhole where he had taken cover. The next morning his body was found, still clutching his BAR, in the midst of a number of dead Japanese.

It was growing dark and the 1st Battalion was ordered to dig in for the night. Everyone expected a "Banzai" attack. At 1830 all of the tanks were recalled. At about the same time, Company A reported that it had visual contact across the airstrip with Company C. The two companies used heavy machine gun sections on their closest flanks to interdict the airstrip in case the enemy tried to use it to turn their flanks. This evidently never occurred to the Japanese.

Around 1930 the Japanese started their first attack. Only about 50 men were involved.<sup>44</sup> The Marines figured the enemy was trying to locate the machine guns and main line of resistance of the 1st Battalion. They withheld their small-arms fire and called down artillery. The enemy did succeed in locating where Companies A and B met and managed to open a gap between the two companies. Jones committed Specht's reserve to close the gap and consolidate the line. At the same time, he had the destroyer assigned to direct support of the battalion fire naval gunfire into the area not covered by Marine artillery. Artillery fired smoke shells as reference for the destroyer. Most of the enemy pressure was on Company B. Under the cover of darkness, Jones was able to start evacuating his wounded, using amphibian tractors to carry them across the airstrip. More than 200 enemy were killed during the afternoon attack but still they counterattacked.<sup>45</sup>

During the first attack, Jones asked Kyle to place a company of his battalion about 100 yards to the rear

of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and establish a secondary line. This was accomplished about 2030. This company was subsequently relieved by McLeod's 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, which had been ordered to move up, pass through Kyle, and support Jones.

Colonel Holmes established the 6th Marines' command post ashore during the afternoon of D + 2. He then reported to Shoup's command post, where a conference was in progress. General Julian Smith, who had assumed command ashore, informed Holmes that all elements of his regiment would revert to his control about 2100, 22 November. Holmes also received orders to continue the attack to the east the following morning by passing the 3d Battalion through the 1st Battalion. All available tanks were to support the 3d Battalion. Before leaving Shoup's command post, Holmes made all the necessary arrangements for the next morning's attack. The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, was to be relieved of its mission on Bairiki, move to Betio via Green Beach, and be available if required.<sup>46</sup>

For the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, the night of D + 2 was one few would ever forget. The Marines evidently were correct in believing the small show of force around 1930 was only a preliminary to the main attack, in spite of the damage it inflicted. During that attack, Jones had called for the 75mm pack howitzers to fire as close as 75 yards in front of the battalion's lines. The naval gunfire ship was ordered to move its fires in as close as 200 yards to the line. These two maneuvers, while probably initially not causing many enemy casualties, did, at least, serve as a screen to prevent the Japanese from exploiting the gains made by the initial penetration between Companies A and B. Most of the close-in fighting was done with bayonets and hand grenades.<sup>47</sup>

At 2300 the enemy attempted to create another diversion in front of Company A and, at the same time, in front of Company B. Each Japanese group contained only about 50 men. It seemed that the Japanese were still attempting to get the information their earlier show of force had failed to obtain. During these skirmishes, Jones used a medium tank to replenish water, small-arms ammunition, and grenades. He was able to build a small supply dump about 50 yards to the rear of Company A.

Between the first and second small attacks on the 1st Battalion, Company I of the 3d Battalion relieved the company that the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, had placed to Jones' rear as a second line of defense.

The attacks at 2300 on Companies A and B evidently served their purpose, as it was against the right sector of the front line that the enemy launched the

heaviest and final attack of the battle for Betio.<sup>48</sup> Around 0300, 23 November, the Japanese began firing machine guns into the Marines' line. These guns were set up in some wrecked trucks only about 50 yards in front of the Marines' line. Three of these were destroyed by NCOs who voluntarily crawled out to silence them with hand grenades.<sup>49</sup> A few others were probably destroyed by Marine small-arms fire—both rifle and machine gun.

At 0400, approximately 300 Japanese attacked Company B and the right front of Company A. Thomas stated that Company B couldn't hold, and asked Jones to either let him pull back or to send reinforcements. "We are killing them as fast as they come at us, but we can't hold much longer," Thomas said. Jones answered "You have to hold."<sup>50</sup> Thomas replied, "Yes sir!" He held.

Artillery fire again was called in to within 75 yards of the front line. The direct support destroyer placed itself on line with the Marines' front line and brought its fire to within 100 yards of the Marines. It alternately fired high explosive and illuminating shells. There was a great deal of noise: explosions, screams, Japanese yelling "Banzai," as well as curses by the Americans. By 0500 the counterattack was over. Within 75 yards of the front line there were more than 200 dead Japanese. At 75 yards—the point where the artillery coverage began—out to where the naval gunfire coverage began there were at least 125 more Japanese bodies missing heads or limbs.<sup>51</sup> The enemy had come down the beach in a column of threes as part of their attack. They were mowed down by the Marines' heavy machine gun fire.

When it grew light, Jones set the tanks to work on the enemy pillboxes and emplacements to his front, which allowed the battalion to evacuate its wounded and then its dead. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, had 3 officers killed and 6 wounded, and 52 enlisted men killed and 138 wounded during the campaign—most of them during the night attacks.<sup>52</sup>

With the casualties evacuated, Jones walked his front line, patting his men on the shoulder, and fighting back tears as he saw the carnage. The breaking dawn revealed red-eyed, grime-coated Marines, some with a haunted expression. Several came up to Jones and muttered, "They told us we had to hold . . . and, by God, we held."<sup>53</sup> Jones could only nod in return, while marveling that everything seemed so quiet!

#### *D Plus 3, 23 November 1943*

A first sergeant named Lewis J. Michelony, Jr., permanently lost his sense of smell and almost his life on D + 3. His experience graphically tells what the Ma-

rines experienced in clearing the enemy from their concrete and log emplacements. "Mickey," as he was affectionately called, had been the lightweight boxing champion of the Atlantic Fleet and was certainly an outstanding Marine. Before the war ended, he earned two Silver Star Medals. In his own words he describes the events as they took place:

This was the third day of the Tarawa Campaign [and our] second day on the beach when this incident occurred. Three of us were in the process of crossing an area eastward from Green Beach. . . . We were establishing what we thought was a position for the mortar platoon to set up. The mortar platoon was like another rifle platoon, reinforced. The temperature was way above 100°, at least 105°F. There seemed to be no circulation of air which made breathing difficult. The sun's rays were directly overhead, scorching, and seemed to be saying "I have more heat in reserve" as a token of punishment for our being there. Our dress was that of green/brown camouflaged dungarees, the helmets having a similar type of camouflage covering. Despite the climate, our movement (the three of us) was relatively easy, as we had not yet encountered any opposition. At this moment I wasn't sure what the hell we were doing as the rifle companies were out of earshot from our position. The only communication the three of us had was word of mouth. We found ourselves in a position within an opening that was covered by four bunkers. In this opening we encountered our baptism of fire. The movement into the area was too easy, until this time we hadn't been drawing enemy fire from any sector or any of the bunkers. Feeling cocky and quite secure in what we were doing would have been approved by John Wayne but not "Willie K." [Major William K. Jones]. At this time we were walking straight up, as though we were on parade. For all intents and purposes we didn't have a thing to fear and would have made a wonderful movie scene: Three Marines walking blindly through the Japanese lines. To our immediate front was a bunker about two and a half feet above the ground, made out of logs, with a slit opening for a machine gun about two feet high and maybe three or more wide. To our right, left, and rear were similar bunkers made the same way. They were all made out of coconut logs with sand all over them from the shellings. They looked like little places on the ground that had been lifted up by nature for a play ground. We had thrown grenades in the bunker to our rear and received no reactions. By now we were located in the immediate center of this clearing covered by bunkers. There were dead Japanese soldiers, Japanese rifles, and helmets in the area. . . . Suddenly, out of nowhere, all hell broke loose. The front bunker opened fire with a machine gun, grenades hailed in from nowhere. The area was like a western movie. The lieutenant never managed to hit the dirt. Instead, what had been his head smiling was no longer there. It happened so fast it's difficult to say exactly what happened. A helmet rolling similar to a bowling ball going down an alley for a strike. The difference was the helmet had what remained of a once smiling head bleeding in it. There was no question to whom the helmet belonged. I had hit the sand face down trying to bury my head into the sand hoping I could escape the same fate. This resulted in nothing more than getting a mouth full of sand. The other Marine fell. [At first] I didn't

know if he was hit also. Seeing him crawl out of the area like a reptile . . . I knew he was going for help. Should I crawl, run, play dead, or what? . . . Now I was both mad and scared. Mad at myself for not having been more observant and scared because of a possibility of there being no way out. . . . I dove into the nearest bunker. What I didn't realize before making the leap was what might be inside the bunker. . . . It was a room about 15x12 feet and five feet high. The light inside was semi-dark. . . . I entered an opening they had constructed to the rear for entry. I landed in a mess of water was my first impression. Only upon getting a mouthful I discovered it wasn't. It was a combination of water, urine, blood and other material. . . . Some of it was from the bodies of the dead Japanese and other from the live ones. I could hear strange mumblings as I was spitting the vile liquid from my mouth. . . . In a few seconds I had a clear idea of the predicament I was in. . . . The taste of blood and smell of this place distressed me into a state of nausea. . . . How long did I stay? Five to ten minutes. The live ones were too punchy from the shelling to realize I wasn't one of them. . . . Somehow I managed to get out. To this day, I know not how. I crawled out of this cesspool, dripping wet . . . into the hot, welcome sunlight. It didn't take long for the equatorial sunlight and heat to dry the mess covering me. The drying of my clothes left me feeling as though my dungarees had been starched. For months after I could taste and smell, as well as visualize, the scene. I never did manage to remove the stains from my dungarees. . . . After this incident, I never have been able to smell again.

The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, had three casualties from bypassed snipers on their way from Green Beach to relieve Kyle in back of Jones. At 0300, McLeod received orders to relieve Jones, and, when ordered, continue the attack to the east and secure the remainder of the island. Picking up all available tanks and flame throwers from Jones, McLeod jumped off at 0800, 23 November.

McLeod had two medium and seven light tanks in support of his battalion. It experienced very little resistance for the first 200 yards. Although there were still a lot of well-dug-in Japanese, they seemed to be dazed with the events of the night before. They would fire a round or so at the advancing Marines and then kill themselves, either by their own weapons or by grenades. The battalion met resistance in Company I's sector on the north shore of the island. In a series of supporting bombproof shelters, a group of Japanese were determined to make one last stand. McLeod simply left Company I to take care of the opposition and moved on with the rest of his battalion.<sup>54</sup>

McLeod, in reporting on his move to the end of the island stated, "The only opposition was a few snipers. At no time was there any determined defense. I did not use my artillery at all, and called for naval gunfire for only about 5 minutes. . . . We used flame

throwers, and could have used more. Medium tanks were excellent. My light tanks didn't fire a shot. I did not fire a machine gun out of my Weapons Company."<sup>55</sup> However, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, suffered 11 killed and 31 wounded before reaching the tail of the island around 1330. At that hour Major General Julian Smith declared the island of Betio secured on D + 3, 23 November 1943.<sup>56</sup>

The Navy destroyers moved closer, blasting the shallow sand spit between Betio and the neighboring island of Bairiki in order to shut off the only escape route for the few Japanese trying to run from the fury of the Marine assault. "The best guess" of their number, made by war correspondent Richard W. Johnston, who was there at the time, is contained in his history of the 2d Marine Division entitled *Follow Me!* On page 150 Johnston says that about 500 Japanese held out in dugouts, blockhouses, log and dirt emplacements, and rifle pits on the eastern part of Betio. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, during its morning attack is credited with taking 14 prisoners, most of whom were Korean laborers, and killing 475 Japanese, while having 9 Marines killed and 25 wounded.<sup>57</sup> It is interesting to note that the foregoing nine killed and 25 wounded, which is from *The Battle for Tarawa*, differs from Lieutenant Colonel McLeod's after-action report in which he states that he had 11 killed and 31 wounded. Even the three casualties he reported before starting his morning attack don't make up the difference.

During his conference on 22 November, Julian Smith, besides informing Holmes he would regain control of the 6th Marines, also ordered the 8th Marines, less the 1st Battalion, to move to Bairiki and take over Murray's mission.

Only about half of that plan worked out. The first elements of the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, did not reach Betio until the 3d Battalion had secured the latter island. This occurred because of a misunderstanding with the Navy about boats. Most of the boats were still unloading supplies from the transports. The available Marine shore party personnel on Betio were unable to unload the boats fast enough. Shoup and his reinforced 2d Marines did clean out the pocket of resistance on the Red Beaches, taking very few prisoners. During the afternoon of 24 November, instead of the previous day, the 8th Marines, less its 1st Battalion, was able to move to Bairiki by 1615, and Lieutenant Colonel Murray moved the rest of his battalion to Green Beach, where he bivouacked for the night.<sup>58</sup> When he reached there, however, he learned



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 70172

*Two of these four Marines wear gas masks despite the tropical heat as they recover the bodies of Marines killed in the fierce three-day battle for Tarawa in November 1943.*

his landing team would operate under division control and would move back to Bairiki the next day and start the long job of cleaning up the remaining islands of the atoll. The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, was the freshest in the division, and had seen the least combat.<sup>59</sup> It was a good choice and the reinforced battalion was ready to go.

Throughout the afternoon of D + 3, all of the battalions moved to their assigned defensive areas, dug their foxholes, and prepared for the Japanese stragglers they knew would crawl from their holes after dark. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, defended the south beach from the airstrip to the eastern tip of the island; the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, defended the northern coast opposite Jones; and the 2d Marines with the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, and 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, took care of the rest of the island. Back of the beaches, each battalion kept a mobile reserve, which proved unnecessary. Throughout the afternoon Marines carried their dead to the designated burial area, moved in supplies, and started burying dead Japanese. The island seemed quiet and peaceful, but

it was a devastated, filthy, hell-hole. The unburied had begun to smell foully.

During the evening someone on the eastern end of the island threw a thermite grenade into what he thought was an enemy dugout. Actually it was a Japanese magazine containing 5-inch ammunition. The grenade started the ammunition exploding, which continued throughout the night. The explosions not only kept the Marines in their holes, but also allowed the few remaining enemy to emerge from their holes and strike one last blow for their emperor.<sup>60</sup>

The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, had set up its command post in an abandoned enemy tank trap. It comfortably held Jones, Major Beamer, the battalion intelligence officer, some runners, and the necessary radio personnel with their equipment. A few more officers were in the tank trap, but the remaining command post personnel dug foxholes around the perimeter. First, the intelligence officer was killed when he peered over the lip of the tank trap. He could not be evacuated because anyone moving above



ground was thought to be an enemy. Jones finally fell asleep. When he awakened at daybreak, he was met by an angry Beamer holding a large brushhook he had found abandoned in the tank trap. "All night long," Beamer glared, "while you snored, the damn Japs kept lobbing grenades at us. Luckily, they went long but you'd better not visit the men in the foxholes up there. They didn't get any sleep either!" Then Beamer took him to the rim. Peering over they could see a dead Japanese soldier who had crawled within six feet of the tank trap and another a few feet further. Approximately 14 Japanese were killed that night in the center of the area occupied by the 6th Marines.<sup>61</sup>

### *Mopping Up*

Tarawa atoll is shaped like an "L" running mainly north and south, with Betio being the most western island on the short leg of the "L." Preliminary reconnaissance of the small islands east of Betio—Eita, Buota and some smaller, unnamed islands—had determined that whatever Japanese combatants remained had moved north of the island of Buota near the bottom of the north-south portion of the atoll. Instead of starting at Bairiki, therefore, Lieutenant Colonel Murray and his 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, landed at the island of Buota to begin their trek to the north.

This preliminary reconnaissance included a patrol on some of the small islands led by previously mentioned First Sergeant Lewis J. Michelony, Jr. He reported that at one point they came upon a native in a lava-lava. Michelony asked him (in pidgin English) if he had seen any Japanese. He replied in excellent English, "No, they have all taken to the bush."

The landing occurred on 24 November. By nightfall the battalion had started moving north. On the 25th, the march resumed. By the end of that day the battalion had progressed well up the atoll without making any contact with the enemy. By late afternoon of the 26th, they had reached the south end of the last large island of the Tarawa atoll—Bauriki.<sup>62</sup> Along the way they had met only friendly natives. Now, the remaining Japanese, if there were any, had to be on this island. They were!

Before bivouacking for the night, Murray sent Company E to the north as a covering force. At sunset, a Company E patrol encountered a Japanese patrol. In the sudden exchange of shots two enemy were killed and two Marines were wounded.<sup>63</sup> After dark, all of Company E's patrols returned to the company

perimeter. The entire battalion dug in for the night in case of an expected enemy night attack. It never came.

The next day the battalion continued its advance. Companies E and G were in the assault with Company F in reserve. The enemy was in small groups and not well organized. They were everywhere—in pits, behind coconut logs, in the trees. They were difficult to see and they held their fire until the Marines could almost touch them. The vegetation was dense. Fighting was at close range and fierce.<sup>64</sup> Company E was hardest hit, so Murray passed Company F through them. Company E, when reorganized, became the reserve. Not until near nightfall did the island become quiet. It had been typical jungle fighting so familiar to those who were veterans of Guadalcanal. The day had cost Murray three officers killed and one wounded. Enlisted losses totaled 29 killed and 58 wounded. The Marines killed 175 Japanese and took two prisoners, both of whom were Korean.<sup>65</sup> By 0800 on 28 November, the last little island was checked out and the capture of Tarawa atoll was complete.

### *Apamama*

Apamama, another atoll in the Gilbert chain of islands, lies 76 miles south of Tarawa. The whole atoll is about 12 miles long and 5 miles wide.<sup>66</sup>

On 19 November, a large troop-carrying submarine, the USS *Nautilus*, with Captain James L. Jones and his V Corps Reconnaissance Company (less one platoon) was aboard. They left the Betio area to scout out the neighboring atoll of Apamama. Jones was to land the night of 19-20 November, reconnoiter the atoll for any sizable number of enemy, select and mark suitable beaches and channels to be used later by other Marine forces, but to withdraw, if necessary, and avoid an engagement.

The submarine was unavoidably late in reaching Apamama, so it was long before dawn on the night of 20-21 November that Jones' company left the submarine in their rubber boats and headed for shore. Once ashore they began patrolling and ran into a three-man Japanese patrol. One enemy was killed, the rest escaped. The Marines moved on to the next small island. Here they learned from the natives that there were 25 Japanese on a large island in the center of the chain making up the atoll. The enemy were heavily entrenched, so Jones was unable to cross the sand spit connecting the islands because of the enemy's heavy machine gun fire. Since night was falling, the Marines

broke off the attack. On the morning of 24 November he called in 70 rounds from the *Nautilus's* 5-inch, 35mm deck gun. All day the *Nautilus* fired and the enemy held the lightly-armed Marines at bay.

Also on 24 November, Major General Julian Smith ordered his assistant division commander (ADC), Brigadier General Leo D. Hermle, to seize and occupy Apamama. His landing force was built around the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. At 1500 on 25 November, General Hermle, aboard the USS *Maryland* with Admiral Hill and the 3d Battalion on the USS *Harris* (an assault transport ship) left for Apamama.<sup>67</sup>

The morning of the 25th of November, a native reported that all of the Japanese were dead. When another native brought the same glad tidings, Jones took his company to investigate. The stories were true! A few enemy had been killed by the previous day's shelling and the rest, about 18, had committed suicide.<sup>68</sup>

Early on the morning of 25 November, Hermle and Hill arrived with their forces off the atoll. They spotted a rubber boat coming out from shore and heading their way. In it was Captain Jones bearing the happy news that all 23 of the Japanese were now dead and the Marines would be welcomed ashore by the na-

tives. Jones' losses had been one Marine dead, one wounded, and one injured.<sup>69</sup>

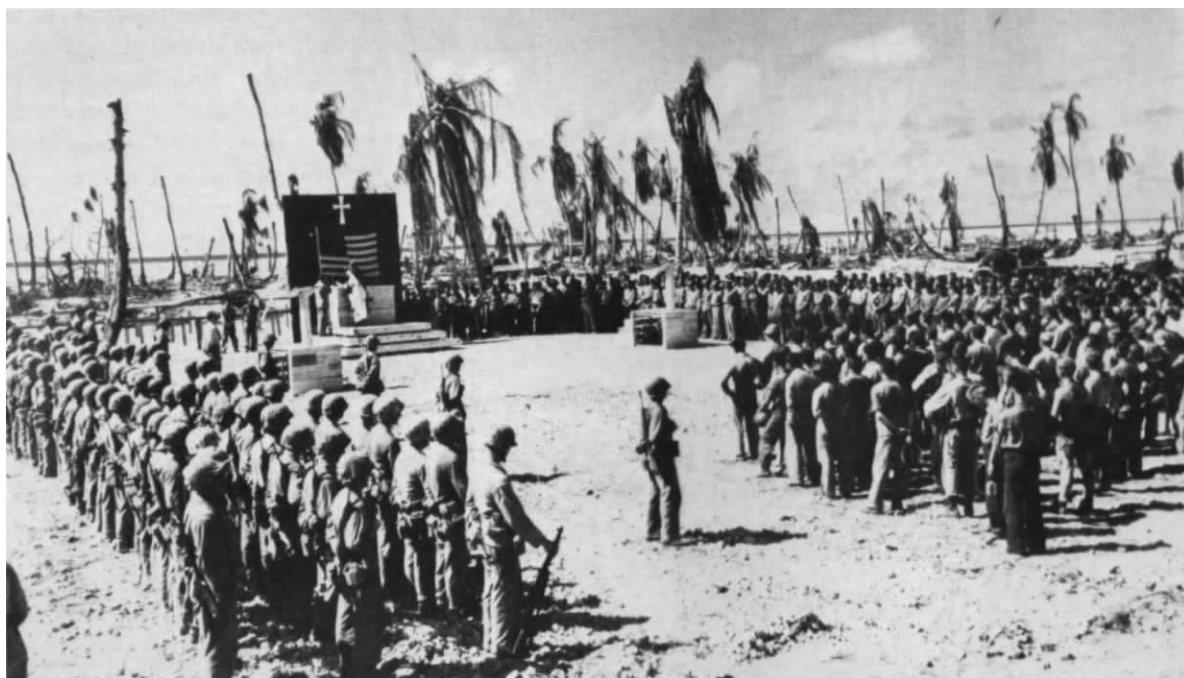
Early that afternoon, Hermle and the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, indeed welcomed by the friendly natives. The reception couldn't have been better. Small boys tossed down green coconuts for other small boys to open. The fresh cool milk was offered to the hot Marines. The island was clean, the air sweet, and the people friendly. It was totally different from Betio. Further, missionary influence had worn off under the Japanese occupation of Apamama, so the many brown-skinned Polynesian maidens were dressed in nothing but grass skirts. Unfortunately, the 3d Battalion had to leave Apamama only a few days later.<sup>70</sup>

#### *The 6th Marines Leave Tarawa*

With the 2d and 8th Marines already on transports heading for the new camp awaiting them on the island of Hawaii, the 6th Marines, minus its 2d Battalion, comprised the only infantry left on Betio. The smell of death and scenes of destruction still lingered. Burial parties worked daily. The smell of dead flesh was nauseating. Marine working parties from the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, improvised mouth masks from parachutes. Some of the graves of deceased Marines had been marked with mess gear bottoms and the

*Marines hold a memorial service for their fallen comrades following the capture of Tarawa and prior to the 2d Marine Division's departure for Hawaii in November 1943.*

Author's collection



name, serial number, and date of death of the Marine. Something like this:

2dLt John Doe  
KIA-Betio  
21 Nov 43  
GSW-Head

The above had been carved into the metal mess gear with either a bayonet point or the mess gear knife. This was a painful duty for the Marines to perform, and one could see tears in the eyes of many hardbiten NCOs. The division's temporary cemetery grew in the area of the battle cemetery started during the fighting. White crosses replaced the simple stakes marking the bodies of Marines. The cemetery was 200 yards west of Shoup's original command post (which was later taken over by the division). Bulldozers dug deep mass graves in which the bodies of the Japanese were placed.

During the last week in November all of the remaining members of the 6th Marines (less the 2d Battalion, which stayed for two more months) loaded on one transport. There was even enough room for Captain James L. Jones and his V Corps Reconnaissance Company<sup>71</sup>. He and his brother, Major William K. Jones, had their first reunion since leaving the United States. Major John E. "Monk" Rentsch, executive officer of the 3d Battalion, had "borrowed" a case of the new instant coffee from the stores of the division commander, and brought it aboard. One had only to mix it with hot water from the tap to have coffee. The men cleaned their weapons, wrote letters, exercised, or just loafed in what little deck space was available. Because of the shortage of fresh water, the ship provided only salt-water showers, but even these seemed a luxury after Betio. Soon the ship's laundry had washed the stench of death from the Marines' uniforms. It was good to be alive.

But the voyage wasn't all fun. Particularly for the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, who had the most casualties in the regiment during the Tawara campaign. Major Jones had a problem finding out how many of his battalion were actually on the transport. Casualty lists had to be made out. Many of his wounded were on other ships. Some of the casualties from the other two battalions were aboard the transport. It was a terrific job locating men aboard a transport, a lot of

whom belonged to other units. He kept pushing his sergeant major, an old China Marine who had been with him since Iceland, for an accurate list. The sergeant major in turn kept pushing the first sergeants for their lists. Every day there were changes in the battalion's strength. Adding to the confusion was the fact that no one wanted his friends to leave the unit even though said friends had already been evacuated as wounded. It really wasn't until the battalion had finally settled in camp on Hawaii that a worthwhile muster roll could be created.

On 4 December 1943, Major General Julian Smith turned over the command of the Tarawa area to Commander, Advanced Base, Tarawa, Captain Jackson R. Tate, USN.<sup>72</sup>

### *Lessons Learned*

There were many lessons learned during the Battle of Tarawa—most on Betio, but some also on the adjoining islands of the atoll and on Apamama. True, the cost of taking Tarawa raised some heated criticism in the United States when the casualty figures were published. The press, as usual, raised a "hue and cry." The American people were both shocked and surprised.<sup>73</sup>

In retrospect, the Battle of Tarawa saved untold lives in subsequent campaigns—both in the Pacific and also during the Normandy landings. The example of perseverance over adversity, which proved that individual courage and collective know-how could defeat a strong enemy, put steel in the backbones of all of America's fighting men.<sup>74</sup> How to demolish an enemy strong point with flamethrowers and demolitions was a specific, but a most valuable lesson used throughout the remainder of the war. The imperative need for better, more trustworthy, and waterproofed communication equipment was underscored. The absolute necessity of having a well organized shore party ashore early was apparent in order to provide the supplies and replacement equipment needed to press the attack. Additional naval gunfire, better and more closely coordinated air support, together with more precise intelligence, would also save many lives in future operations. Even though the overall commander of ground operations, then-Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, was quoted after the war as saying, "Tarawa was a mistake," many others who lived through it disagree.

## CHAPTER 6

# Saipan-Tinian

*Background—The Island of Hawaii—Training for 'The Next One'—The Marianas—Shipping Out D-Day, 15 June 1944—D Plus 1, 16 June 1944—D Plus 2, 17 June 1944—D Plus 3, 18 June 1944—D Plus 4 to D Plus 6, 17-20 June 1944—D Plus 7, 22 June 1944—Mopping Up On to Tinian—Lessons Learned*

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### *Background*

While the 2d Marine Division was licking its wounds from Tarawa and getting ready for training in its new camp area on Hawaii, a great deal was happening elsewhere in the Pacific. As mentioned in the previous chapter, "the line of advance" set out at the Quebec conference in August 1943 was the Gilberts, then the Marshalls, next the Marianas, and finally the Carolines. The Gilberts were now secured. The advance continued.

In February 1944, Marines seized Kwajalein, Majuro, and Eniwetok in the Marshalls. These atolls provided forward area anchorages, together with sufficient land area for airstrips and staging areas. Additionally, far-ranging carrier strikes had attacked first the major Japanese bases at Truk atoll (16-17 February) and the Marianas (22 February). All of these actions revealed the relative weakness of Truk, while keeping the enemy off balance. Another carrier raid against the western Carolines (30 March-1 April 1944) also exerted an impact on the Japanese even though the Carolines were being bypassed and saved until after the Marianas.<sup>1</sup>

Early in December 1943, bombers started flying off the previously built Japanese airstrip on Betio, hitting into the Marshall Islands—Mili, Nauru, Wotje, and Maloelap. Hawkins Field, as it now was called in honor of a Marine lieutenant Medal of Honor recipient, became a busy place.

At the same time, many people were still asking questions about the Tarawa operation. What about the tides? Why wasn't the prelanding bombardment more effective? Why was Betio attacked by storm? Was it even necessary to attack across the Central Pacific?<sup>2</sup> Some of these questions were never answered fully. And yet, the war ground on. Further, as it did so, it became more and more apparent that the Marines who had died at Tarawa had made a great and lasting contribution to history.

"If the Marines could stand the dying, you'd think the civilians could stand to read about it," one sergeant remarked bitterly.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Island of Hawaii*

29 December 1943

Dear Mother and Dad,

We're sitting around eating my Christmas nuts and candy and trying to answer the last batch of mail, by the light of a Coleman lantern. Lots of your November letters arrived today. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Early December had been busy. The 2,000-mile journey from Tarawa was not easy. The transports stank most of the way with the smells of blood and death. There were no fresh uniforms for unwounded Marines. Every day saw funerals aboard ships and flag-covered bodies slipping into the sea.

The campsite was 65 long, dusty miles out of Hawaii's port of Hilo. The battle-weary Marines expected to find large, comfortable camps waiting for them just as they experienced upon their return from Guadalcanal. They didn't.<sup>5</sup>

Platforms for tents were stacked in long rows and the pyramidal tents had not been unfurled. Most of December the Marines worked at building Camp Tarawa. They worked all day in chill mist or rain because the camp was located in a saddle between the two Mauna volcanoes—Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. Snow was on the peaks of both; at night it became bitterly cold.<sup>6</sup>

At first local Army commanders refused to loan blankets from their supply in Hilo until overruled by their superior in Honolulu.<sup>7</sup> Some Seabees were sent over from Pearl Harbor to assist the division engineers. Soon mess halls, heads, and showers were operating. Nevertheless, Christmas 1943 was not one that many in the 2d Marine Division like to remember.

The camp was on part of the Parker Ranch. The site was chosen both because the cold climate would help those Guadalcanal veterans still suffering from malaria and because the ranch provided excellent terrain for training.

Hilo and Kona, a city on the opposite side of Hawaii from Hilo, were the only liberty spots for the Marines. At first there was trouble. Many of the men had found and brought with them Japanese money from Tarawa. To them the Japanese-Americans living in Hawaii were the same as those Marines had just defeated on

Tarawa. When tavern and restaurant owners refused to accept payment in anything but American money, arguments ensued. It didn't take the Marines long to adjust. Despite such problems the local populace soon accepted the Marines as the brave young Americans they really were. For the most part, however, the division had to depend on itself for entertainment. The regiment quickly organized an extensive athletic program. Colonel James P. Riseley, who had relieved Colonel Holmes as the commanding officer of the 6th Marines, was a sports enthusiast. Insisting that his executive officer and three battalion commanders live in individual tents next to his and join his mess, he also required that they support the regimental sports program. He expected their religious attendance at any boxing match involving a member of the regimental team. As a result, the 6th Marines boasted a first-class boxing team.

"Uncle Jim," as he was later fondly called, was a unique character. An ardent horseman, he was a graduate of the Army's cavalry school at Fort Reilly, Kansas, before World War II. Although a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, he was more at home on the ground than on the sea. Of medium height, he sported a neatly trimmed "cavalryman's mustache." He believed in creature comforts, when practical, and always seemed to have a plentiful supply of Cuban cigars and excellent Scotch whiskey. Only one project flared back on him, literally.

In the area containing his tent and those of his four lieutenant colonels a two-seater "head" had been built for their use. It was similar to the outhouses found on farms in the old days. It had been built on top of a deep pit into which a small shovelful of lime was deposited daily. Each week a working party used diesel fuel to burn the accumulated refuse. The seats were simply two round holes cut into rough timber. They weren't very comfortable, so "Uncle Jim" sent to Pearl Harbor for regular toilet seats to be placed over the holes. Although he was able to secure only one seat, he was very proud of having the only one in all of Camp Tarawa. Then disaster struck! The working party, either unwittingly or on purpose, went through their weekly ritual of burning out heads. In doing the colonel's, they completely scorched the sole toilet seat, thereby making it unusable. He was furious!

The 6th Marines had a new command setup by this time, with Colonel Riseley as commanding officer, plus a new executive officer, since Lieutenant Colonel Russell Lloyd had been made commander of the shore party groups after Tarawa. The new executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth A. McLeod had been the commanding officer of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines

on Tarawa. He had been replaced by Lieutenant Colonel John W. Easley, the former commander of the 1st Battalion. Major William K. Jones retained command of the 1st Battalion, and Lieutenant Colonel Murray still led the 2d Battalion.

There had been several shifts in the battalion executive officer billets. Both Semmes and Beamer had been transferred from the 1st Battalion. The weapons companies were disbanded and the machine gun sections made integral parts of the rifle companies. Consequently, each battalion required only one major instead of two. Major James A. Donovan had been transferred from the 3d Battalion to the 1st Battalion to be its executive officer. Major LeRoy P. Hunt in the 3d Battalion had been replaced by Major John E. Rentsch, who also had been in Iceland, Guadalcanal, and Tarawa with that battalion. Major Hunt moved over to be the executive officer of the 2d Battalion, replacing Lieutenant Colonel Richard C. Nutting, who had been given command of another battalion in the division. All in all, it was a very strong top command echelon in the regiment, and this was equally true throughout the entire division. Every effort had been made to fill the gaps caused by casualties and promotions by at least keeping the officers in the same regiment.

The same was true regarding the company grade officers; however, their higher number of casualties did not make it entirely possible. As a result, there were many new faces in all of the lower officer ranks, not only in the 6th Marines but also throughout the entire 2d Marine Division.

While Julian Smith still commanded the division and kept most of his division staff intact, Brigadier General "Red Mike" Edson had replaced Brigadier General Hermle as assistant division commander. His position as chief of staff was filled by Colonel David M. Shoup. Colonel Walter J. Stuart had command of the 2d Marines. The 8th Marines also got a new commanding officer, Colonel Clarence R. Wallace. So did the 10th Marines, Colonel Raphael Griffin, because Colonel Thomas E. Bourke had been promoted. Consequently, all of the regiments had new commanding officers while the battalion commands remained fairly stable.

As spring warmed the atmosphere, General Smith arranged with the Parker Ranch to have a rodeo. The Hawaiian ponies were there and presented a real challenge along with their skillful regular riders, the Hawaiian cowboys. There were plenty of Marines from the West and Southwest with rodeo experience. There were even some from South Boston who were determined to prove they could do anything that the



Photo courtesy of SgtMaj L. J. Michelony, Jr.

*1stSgt Lewis J. Michelony, Jr., former Atlantic Fleet lightweight boxing champion, receives the Silver Star Medal (his second) for heroism on Saipan from MajGen Thomas E. Watson, the commander of the 2d Marine Division in 1945 near the end of World War II.*

Southern and Western Marines could do. But, they didn't know the trickiness or meanness of a bucking bull or pony. Although there were many failures, there were no major casualties.

Early in 1944 decorations for the Tarawa campaign started to arrive in camp. Formations were held where the citation was read and the medal pinned on, usually by General Smith. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the Pacific Theater, appeared at one formation and pinned on the medals himself. Additionally, Major Crowe of the 8th Marines and Major Jones of the 6th Marines were given "spot" promotions to lieutenant colonel. ("Spot" really meant it was only good so long as the recipient stayed in the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.) The other major battalion commanders were not given spot promotions because they had either already been selected for promotion, or were on the verge of being selected by a regularly constituted board at Headquarters, Marine Corps. Still it was quite a pleasure for the more junior Crowe and Jones since they got to wear the silver leaves and received the increased pay and privileges.

Before and during this period, but not until the

camp was almost finished, leave to both officers and enlisted men was granted freely. A large number headed for the island of Oahu, but some just went to Hilo or Kona. Replacements and promotions also caused personnel turbulence. Finally, the 6th Marines and the rest of the 2d Division seemed to settle down and look towards the future. Their confidence and spirits once again soared. The horrors of Tarawa were pushed aside in their minds. The war was still a reality and there was a lot of work to be done. Few could even guess what the next challenge would be. But, everyone agreed, it was bound to be tough. We were getting closer to the home islands of Japan!

#### *Training for 'The Next One'*

Training in all fields intensified. The ranges provided by the cattle ranch were ideal for live firing exercises, artillery and mortar firing, and tank maneuver and target practice.

One reorganization of the infantry battalion brought institution of the fire-team concept. The fire team consisted of four men organized around a Browning Automatic Rifle. This concept is still very much

alive after all these years, although the size and mission has changed fairly recently. This, together with the disbanding of the Weapons Company in the infantry battalions, were the direct result of lessons learned by the Marine Corps not only on Guadalcanal and Tarawa but also on Eniwetok and other Central Pacific atolls.

An article written by the Twenty-third Commandant, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., USMC (Ret), in the December 1984 issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette*, explains in detail the evolution of the fire team. General Greene, while a second lieutenant stationed at Marine Barracks, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, "with day-on, day-off duty" became fascinated in studying the role of the four-man "fighting team" in history. Over time, he learned that the origin of the fire team goes back 3,000 years to the four-man fighting team of Greek Marines employed by Ulysses in the Aegean Sea. During the American Civil War, General Hardy of the Union Army introduced a four-man team into the organization of the Army. It was later recognized and adopted by the Confederate Army. The concept was best described by General Hardy who noted that "Comrades in battle forming groups of four men will be careful to know and to sustain each other."

The basic idea has had an evolutionary growth under various conditions of warfare. General Greene notes, "Small tactical groups were used in the Spanish-American War, in the Philippines, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Nicaragua. But, the earliest practical concept of what was to become the fire team occurred early in the Nicaragua campaign (1927-1933) which called for a lot of patrol duty on narrow trails through rugged, bush covered terrain."

Later General Greene, who in Shanghai, China, was a captain in the battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Clifton B. Cates (later the Nineteenth Commandant), was able to refine the idea in reorganizing his company in defense of the American sector in Shanghai.

Early in 1942, Greene was one of the observers sent to the British Commandos, some of whom had two-man teams. Later, based on these reports, Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson, commander of the 2d Raider Battalion, advocated the use of three-man teams, but did not initially use the automatic rifle as the base of fire.

After much experimentation and study by talented officers, the Marine Corps published the "F" series of tables of organization on March 1944. It was preceded by a Commandant's letter of 17 January 1944 which stated that the forthcoming T/Os had been ap-

proved. About this time, February to May 1944, General Greene, then a senior colonel, was G-3 of the 2d Division. He wasted no time in seeing that the formation of four-man fire teams was implemented in the reorganization then taking place. Thus, the battle for Saipan was to provide the test of combat. The fire-team concept surpassed all expectations. With few changes it has functioned smoothly and efficiently. As General Greene says, "Its validity has been battle-tested."

In addition to the development of the four-man fire team, one of the major problems at Tarawa had been the breakdown of communication and early logistical support during the initial stages of the landing before either regimental or division command posts and shore parties and supplies had come ashore. Accordingly, during this training period, procedures were developed to have logistical control officers (LCOs) stationed in patrol craft at or near the line of departure. The LCO had available at this location a floating supply dump in LCVPs of belted ammunition, extra communication gear, blood plasma, and other items likely to be required at an early stage. Additionally the LCO had direct communication by radio with division headquarters, each assault battalion, and each transport and hospital ship supporting the division. A transport quartermaster with the loading plan of each transport and cargo ship was also on board. It was his duty to immediately dispatch needed supplies ashore from the floating dump or from the appropriate ship, as well as direct the evacuation of casualties to the appropriate hospital LST, hospital ship, or transport. This arrangement was successfully employed at both Saipan and Tinian.

Tarawa had had a great impact on the 2d Division's organization, morale, self-respect, and group confidence. Few of the wounded had been returned to the division. (Almost all of those sent to hospitals went to other units upon their release.) Furthermore, the Corps had been proud that its ranks were filled only with those who had "chosen to be Marines." Although there were still plenty of 17-year-old replacements arriving who fit that category, there were also many older Marines in the group who had joined through the Selective Service System. The fact that they had preferred the Marine Corps to the other services did not make them volunteers in the old sense.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, the "old timers" lost no time in seeing that the "new comers" were thoroughly indoctrinated in the achievements of the past. Cold as it was, Camp Tarawa rapidly became a good camp—better than either Guadalcanal or Tarawa, even though no-

where near the dream that had been New Zealand. The camp newspaper, the *Tarawa-Boom-De-Ay*, reminded the Marines of their heritage, and they were surrounded by souvenirs brought from all of the places the division had been. Soon the old esprit-de-corps grew. The past was prologue. They were expected to help write the epilogue.

The training at first was largely conditioning, getting the sick and weakened back into shape to meet the physical demands awaiting them. Then came the reorganization of units and fitting in the replacements. By mid-spring, dugouts and other fortifications had been built on the training ranges. The Navy had its carrier pilots engage in drills with the Marines using live ammunition. Real training took off in earnest. As one Marine wryly remarked, "We'll always get the tough beaches, and we'll never dare retreat. Not after Betio."<sup>9</sup>

General Smith could see and sense the way his division was recovering from its Tarawa wounds. He had one burning ambition: to again lead his Marines in battle. That desire was fervently shared by his veterans who had grown to both love and respect "their general." But to no avail. In April 1944, the Commandant of the Marine Corps relieved Julian Smith "for more urgent duties elsewhere" and replaced him with Brigadier General Thomas E. Watson. Watson had commanded a brigade composed of the 22d Marines and the 106th Infantry Regiment of the Army during the successful assault on the Eniwetok atoll in the Marshall Islands. Starting as an enlisted man, as he progressed through the ranks he had gained the reputation of a stern disciplinarian. The replacement and loss of "General Julian" was not a popular one.

Preparations began for the change-of-command ceremony. Although General Watson still had one star, a second one was on the way. In addition to the formal military ceremony involving the passing of the division's colors, and a huge troop formation, a social ceremony sponsored by the officers of the division was planned. A large vacant Quonset storage hut was picked as the site. Each regiment set up its own bars and stocked them for its officers. A small stage with microphones was erected. A combo band to play popular music was located. Following the morning formal ceremony, which was held in sunny but cold weather, the division officers gathered in the Quonset hut to say "farewell" to their old commander and to greet the new one.

Colonel Shoup, now chief of staff, was the master of ceremonies. In due course, he assembled everyone

around the stage after having dispensed with the music. At his request, Generals Smith and Watson joined him. First he said the Division's farewell to General Smith. He was lavish and lengthy in his praise. Tears came to his eyes, as they did to those of many of the assembled officers. When eventually finished and General Smith had made his appropriate remarks of thanks and farewell, Colonel Shoup's introduction of General Watson was both brief and formal. General Watson's answering remarks were equally brief. The social event, which had progressed throughout the afternoon on a happy note, became subdued, and shortly dispersed.

During February and April, schools for transport quartermasters and unit loading officers were held. In March, amphibious exercises were conducted at Maalea Bay on the nearby island of Maui where the 4th Marine Division was camped. Intelligence training intensified. Suddenly Marines were ordered to train in the many sugar cane fields made available by the plantations on the island of Hawaii. Not all of the islands that were possible "next targets" had sugar cane. Saipan and Tinian did.<sup>10</sup>

At this time several key Japanese phrases were becoming a part of everyone's vocabulary: "Tay-oh-geh-tay koi" (put up your hands) and the equivalent of such things as "hurry up" and "come out and we'll give you food and water." These lessons were administered to the Marines at their most receptive time, before the evening movies.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Marianas*

The Mariana Islands are a series of volcanic mountain peaks and uplifted coral reefs in the far Pacific forming a chain from Guam to Japan. Discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, they were visited often but were not occupied by the Spanish until 1668. Originally called Ladrone Islands (Islands of Thieves) because the natives stole everything they could from visiting ships, the name was changed to honour Queen Marie Anne (Mariana), who was then Regent of Spain. Guam was ceded to the United States as a result of the Spanish-American War. Germany bought the Northern Marianas from Spain in 1899. After World War I the League of Nations mandated Germany's islands to Japan, which kept control until the islands were conquered by the United States in the summer of 1944. Except for Guam (a territory of the United States), the islands mandated to Japan later became part of the United States Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands. They have been administered as a trusteeship from the United Nations since 1947.<sup>12</sup>



After long negotiations with the various islands that make up the Trust Territories, the United States finally reached an agreement with the Northern Marianas involving the islands of Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and seven smaller islands to their north. This agreement was signed on 17 June 1975 after 78 percent of the inhabitants had voted in favor of it. On 24 March 1976 the United States Congress approved the creation of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas in Public Law 94241.<sup>13</sup> Since that time the 14,500-plus inhabitants of the islands making up the Commonwealth are proud of the linkage to the United States which freed them from Japanese rule in 1944. They now have the prerogative of governing themselves. They have their own elected governor, lieutenant governor, Senate, and House of Representatives which function identically to our democratic system of government.

Interestingly, although recognized and treated as a United States Commonwealth through the Public Law mentioned above, technically the Northern Marianas are still part of the Trust Territories mandated to the United States by the United Nations in 1947. The United Nations has insisted on not treating the break-

up of the Territories on a "piecemeal" basis, and therefore will not recognize the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas at this writing. Consequently, negotiations between the United States and the United Nations are ongoing.

Ironically, because of their proximity to Japan, their beautiful beaches, and warm climates, the Commonwealth islands depend heavily on Japanese tourist trade. Hotels have sprung up and related businesses flourish.

As part of the agreement setting up the Commonwealth, a large piece of real estate was set aside as a memorial park to commemorate the American war heroes who fought for their liberation. Also, approximately \$2.5 million was appropriated to construct the memorial park just north of the main city of Garapan on Saipan. The Interior Department has erected a small monument in honor of the Americans who fought in the battles of Saipan-Tinian.<sup>14</sup> Although there are numerous Japanese monuments dedicated to their dead scattered throughout the Commonwealth, this is the only American one. Efforts to do more fell on deaf ears when a monument was erected

*Col James P. Riseley (center, front row), commanding the 6th Marines, poses with his battalion commanders and principal staff officers shortly before the invasion of Saipan.*

Author's collection





Author's collection

*LtCol William K. Jones and the staff officers of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, pose for a group photograph prior to their departure from Hawaii for the assault on Saipan.*

on Guam honoring all of the American battles fought in the Pacific War.

The Saipan monument reads:

*In Memoriam*

On June 15, 1944 United States Armed Forces invaded Saipan. That day on this spot the 6th Marines encountered stiff resistance and suffered heavy losses in personnel and equipment. The island was declared secured on July 9th. Total Army, Navy and Marine Corps personnel killed in the battle for Saipan was 195 officers and 2,349 men.

This memorial is in honor of those who with unselfish devotion gave their lives in the service of their country.

It is interesting that the 6th Marines is the only unit mentioned specifically on the monument.

The original inhabitants were small in stature, brown-skinned with oblique eyes, as found ethnologically in the Micronesian group along with the Carolines, Marshalls, and Palau. German, Spanish, and Japanese genes intermingled with that of the natives increased their stature and changed some of their features.<sup>15</sup>

*Shipping Out*

On 10 April 1944 the plan for the invasion of the

Marianas came down to the 2d Marine Division. It called for the invasion of Saipan on 15 June, to be followed by subsequent assaults on Guam and Tinian. Saipan and Tinian were about 100 miles to the north of Guam. Since the Marines (other than a handful in the top commands) could not be briefed until actually at sea, even the codename was kept secret.

In late April a full-scale mock-up of beaches and a dummy city were laid out on a range for the 2d Division. As explained by Major General Watson:

In preparation for the exercise, the successive phase lines which had been designed to control the advance of the Division from the landing beaches to the Force Beachhead Line were laid out on the ground exactly to scale. In front of the staked-out beaches were marked the adjacent water areas over which the ship-to-shore movement was to take place off Saipan. Over this terrain game board the entire division was moved in accordance with the time schedule calculated for the actual assault and employing the scheme of maneuver designed for attack. In this maneuver, every officer and man learned the part he was to play in the landing and came to appreciate the time and space factors involved. Yet only a few commanders and staff officers of the thousands of men who participated in this rehearsal actually knew the name of the target.<sup>16</sup>

It was an ambitious and worthwhile effort, but it was too optimistic. In the first place, no one knew what the Japanese reaction to the landing would be, so no allowance was made for their actions. In the second place, of “the thousands of men who participated” only a few fully understood what the exercise was about. As far as the many veterans in the division were concerned, they were skeptical that the entire drill had any real meaning, primarily because of the first reason given above.

By the first week in May all major training had been accomplished. The troops were embarked and headed for the east coast of Maui where the rehearsal was to take place. Because of the habitation on that island, the D-day bombardment plan was scheduled for the uninhabited island of Kahoolawe. Consequently, the main object of the rehearsal was to practice the ship-to-shore control of the eight “amtrac” battalions—four Marine Corps and four Army (some 700 LVTs). In addition, it was hoped that communication and the maneuver of the landing force in the limited maneuver area on the beaches would be tested.

In spite of what some histories of this period report, the rehearsal was a disaster in the view of this writer, who had command of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines at the time. So, disillusioned by the inability of the LVT drivers to stay on course with their front bullet proof shields down and blocking their vision, he demanded and got agreement on a practical innovation. Taking lengths of cord, he had one end tied around one of his shoulders and the other end around the corresponding shoulder of the driver. This “bridle” was steered by an officer in the open bay of each LVT who could take quick looks over the top with a clear view rather than a limited view through the slit in the front armor plate. A simple code—a tug on the left shoulder meant go to the left, two tugs on both shoulders meant stop, etc.—this “system” turned out to be invaluable in getting his LVTs through the surf and over the reef at Saipan without broaching, and thereby drowning Marines.

Aboard LST 485, which carried elements of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, men were sleeping in Landing Craft, Tank (LCT) 988. It was thought to be secured on the deck of the LST, but it came loose from its cables in the rough weather. Nineteen men were either missing or killed and five injured as the craft was rammed and sunk by the next LST in column. Similar accidents occurred aboard LSTs 71 and 390 when LCTs 999 and 984 slipped overboard. Fortunately,

ly, after an all-night search for survivors of these two accidents, many were rescued, although 11 were injured.<sup>17</sup> None of these accidents involved members of the 6th Marines.

When the rehearsal was completed on 19 May, the troop transports and about one-half of the LSTs put into Pearl Harbor for rehabilitation. These were insufficient facilities and space for exercising the troops, but liberty was granted freely. At the same time, the remainder of the loading was accomplished.

On 21 May with the ships clustered tightly, LST 353, tied up at West Loch unloading 4.2-inch mortars and ammunition, suddenly burst into flames and exploded. Other nearby ships hastily got under way, but not until six other LSTs caught fire and sank. The resultant heavy losses in personnel and equipment was a blow to both the Navy and the 2d Marine Division, as sailors and Marines aboard the burning ships dived into the water. Fortunately, most of the LVTs and DUKWs had debarked for routine checkups before the fires occurred. Nevertheless, the 2d Marine Division's casualties numbered 112 in this disaster.<sup>18</sup> No troops from the 6th Marines were involved.

The Northern Attack Force, consisting of the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions, plus supporting arms, was to assault Saipan, while the Southern Attack Force would attack Guam later. The Army's 27th Infantry Division was the Expeditionary Troops reserve, to be prepared to land at either Saipan or Guam. The 77th Infantry Division was held in the Hawaiian Islands as strategic reserve, prepared to be called to the Marianas, but not until D-day plus 20 since it would take that long for the ships carrying the assault echelons to return from Saipan to Oahu.

The Northern Attack Force departed Pearl Harbor in echelon in accordance with their speed capabilities. The LSTs left on 25 May followed by the transports of the 4th Division on 29 May. On 30 May the 2d Division and Headquarters, Northern Attack Force, left Pearl Harbor on their transports and battleships. The force arrived at Eniwetok atoll on the 6th and 11th of June for final staging. Enroute, officers held school for all hands so everyone became familiar with the plans for the attack on Saipan. All units were furnished photographs, relief maps, charts, and other intelligence material. During the six days it took for the assault elements to reach Saipan, intense naval bombardment and air strikes were directed against the island.

One hundred ships were required to transport the Northern Attack Force, plus four to five times that number of supporting vessels.<sup>19</sup> It was truly an awesome armada.

The night of 14 June 1944 was cloudy, and the blacked-out ships moved silently towards their destination awaiting the arrival of the assault forces. As the night began to wane, the bulk of the island took shape like a brooding hunch-backed dinosaur balefully awaiting its victims' assault. Meanwhile, the "victims," blissfully ignorant of what lay in store, tried to sleep, wrote final letters home, and contemplated the steak and eggs breakfast they knew they would be served early the next morning. Services by the different denominations had been held earlier in the evening. All the months of preparations were rapidly drawing to a close. Veterans and newcomers alike in the 2d Division were confident that the costly lessons learned at Tarawa would be heeded. The bombardment group, using a higher trajectory, rather than skipping the shells across the island as they had at Tarawa, had blasted Saipan on 13 June (D minus 2). The fast battleships fired their main and secondary batteries for almost seven hours, tearing up the impact area. At night, they harassed the Japanese, denying them any rest. The air strikes of 11, 12, and 13 June had already caused heavy damage to Garapan City and the Aslito airfield. The enemy's cave life began. Nothing above ground was safe from the air and sea bombardments. However, a well camouflaged pillbox did not represent the same type of target as an enemy airfield. Consequently, the overemphasis on covering all assigned targets (area shooting) and the neglect of specific point targets within those areas was to prove costly.

Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs) performed their hazardous tasks during daylight on 14 June, removing or destroying mines, obstacles, and the like from the beaches selected for the landings.

These beaches, on the west side of Saipan, ranged southward from the main city of Garapan, past the sugar mill at Charan-Kanoa down almost to Agingan Point near the tip of that part of the island. Starting with Red Beach 1 in the north, the 2d Division was also assigned Red 2 and 3, followed by Green Beaches 1, 2, and 3. The 4th Division continued southward with Blue Beaches 1 and 2 (opposite Charan-Kanoa), followed by Yellow Beaches 1, 2, and 3. The plan envisioned a swinging gate movement hinging on Red Beach 1, attacking across the island and gradually turning northward. As the gap between the two Marine divisions opened, the 27th Infantry Division in reserve was to be fed in. Therefore, while the 2d Division was

capturing the mountains Tapotchau and nearby Tipo Pale, the 4th Division would push eastward to the coast, seizing Aslito airfield on the way. Both divisions were ordered to seize objective O-1 after landing since it embraced the first commanding high ground. Unfortunately O-1 was 1,200 to 1,500 yards from the middle beaches, tapering at both ends to the beaches on the flanks, and the enemy had different ideas.

Prior to landing, Lieutenant Colonel Murray had cautioned his 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, that they must dig in on D-day night and to expect a "Banzai" attack. "They'll throw everything they've got at you," he warned, "including the kitchen sink." Later on his words were to be proven prophetic.

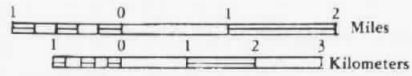
The 6th Marines was assigned the Red Beaches on the left (northern) flank of the division. The 2d Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Murray was assigned Red Beach 2 and the 3rd Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Easley was to land on Red Beach 3. The 1st Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Jones was the regimental reserve. The adjoining regiment, the 8th Marines, was scheduled to land on Green Beaches 2 and 3. A northerly current unreported by the UDTs the previous day, together with an error by the Navy boat guide officer responsible for guiding the LVTs to the proper beaches, caused unforeseen confusion on D-day.

#### *D-Day, 15 June 1944*

The report from the UDTs on their dangerous mission of the day before arrived at 0400 on 15 June. It was generally encouraging—the reef itself offered no great obstacle, natural or artificial, and the swimmers had found no mines. The report said the Japanese had organized the area behind the beaches with occasional pillboxes and many trenches. What the report failed to mention were numerous mortar and artillery registration flags on the reef and in the water between the reef and the beaches. These flags enabled the enemy to place accurate fire on the assault waves. Perhaps the Japanese installed the flags after the UDTs' reconnaissance. Although the report didn't mention them, they could be seen plainly from ships thousands of yards offshore.

As it grew light, fire support ships climaxed their previous efforts. At 0542 Admiral Turner ordered "Land the landing force." H-hour was set for 0830. Shortly after 0700 the LST flotilla moved into position about 1,250 yards behind the line of departure. Troops and LVTs began to debark from the LSTs. Control vessels, with both Navy and Marine representa-

# SAIPAN



HILLMAN

tives embarked, took their assigned positions. They all flew flags to designate the beach approaches which they controlled.

At H-hour minus 90 minutes, all naval gunfire lifted and the air bombardment began—first a bombing strike, followed by a strafing attack. After 30 minutes the planes departed and the warships resumed their bombardment.

Armored amphibian tractors (LVT(A)s or amphibian tanks) constituted the first assault wave, with 24 light gunboats, firing 4.5-inch rockets as well as 20mm and 40mm guns, backing them up as far as the reef.

At 0753, Admiral Turner ordered a delay of H-hour from 0830 to 0840 to allow the boat waves more time to get into position.<sup>20</sup> At 0812 the first wave headed full speed towards the beaches. The unreported enemy registration flags on the reef and in the water fluttered in a slight breeze.

“We’ll always get the tough beaches and we’ll never dare retreat. Not after Betio.”

As the assault waves started over the reef, it seemed to explode. Well registered artillery and mortar shells from hidden and camouflaged enemy guns turned the barrier into an inferno of fire, thunder, and water cascades. The LVTs moved relentlessly on, leaving many of their numbers either broached or destroyed.

As the leading assault wave neared the shore the friendly main battery fires lifted when the LVTs were 1,000 yards from landing and the 5-inch fire lifted at 500 yards. Until the first LVTs landed, the beach area was strafed almost constantly by friendly aircraft. As the assault waves closed to within 100 yards of the beaches, the aircraft moved their attack inland, trying to keep a minimum safety interval.

Now the effect of the northerly current flow entered into and compounded the mounting confusion. The two assault battalions of the 6th Marines scheduled to land on Red Beaches 2 and 3 landed about 400 yards too far north, almost on Red Beach 1. Likewise, the two assault battalions of the 8th Marines landed to the north on Green Beach 1 instead of Green Beaches 2 and 3.<sup>21</sup> This caused a dangerous massing of troops. After running the gauntlet of heavy enemy fire which caused serious losses, the confusion was intensified as all four assault battalion commanders were wounded. Lieutenant Colonel Murray, of the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines; Lieutenant Colonel Henry P. Crowe, of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines; and Lieutenant Colonel John C. Miller, of the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, were seriously wounded and had to be evacuated. Lieutenant Colonel Easley, less seriously wounded, still commanded his 3d Battalion, 6th Ma-

rines; however, command of the 2d Battalion passed to the executive officer, Major LeRoy P. Hunt, Jr. Despite the confusion, loss of leaders, and mixing of units, the Marines moved forward to carry out their assigned missions. They encountered stiff resistance and took heavy losses. The 6th Marines could force only a shallow beachhead, 75 to 100 yards deep, just across the coastal road.

At 1000 Colonel Riseley landed and established his regimental command post near the center of Red Beach 2. The command post, the wounded on the beach, and elements of the 2d Battalion were immediately attacked by a group of approximately 20 Japanese. Once the Marines eliminated this threat, Riseley ordered his reserve, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, to land.

Already loaded in LVTs at the line of departure Lieutenant Colonel Jones and his men headed for the beach. The 1st Battalion experienced the same warm enemy reception as the assault battalions. Jones lost key personnel to an enemy tank hidden in a bush on the northern flank of Red Beach 1 which had been unnoticed by the Marines already ashore. All of the LVTs were tightly packed with Marines. The men had only enough room to stand hunched over beneath the armored gunwales of the LVTs, a position necessary because of the steady drum of small arms fire on the sides. Once in a while a mortar or artillery shell would score a direct hit on an LVT. Survivors waded ashore without their equipment.

Enroute to the beach, Jones noticed an ammunition box on the deck beside him, and decided he might as well sit down rather than stand hunched over. As he sat, he was thankful for the makeshift bridle arrangements he had insisted upon for guiding the LVT drivers. Because of this, he reflected, none of his LVTs had broached on the reef, and his battalion definitely was heading for Red Beach 2, where he had been ordered to land and report to the regimental command post.

Suddenly, there was a flash over his head. He looked at his hand which was covered with blood. After wiggling his fingers he decided he wasn't wounded. Looking up to his left he saw a round hole in the armor plate where his head had been seconds before. Looking to his right he discovered where the blood was coming from. Two bodies, unable to fall because of the press of other bodies, were standing with their heads blown off by the shell which passed through the other side. Blood gushed from their necks as other men tried to make room to gently lower the bodies to the deck.

The LVT ground to a halt just short of the beach. Jones ordered the occupants to disembark over the starboard gunnel by rolling over it, since enemy small-arms fire was peppering the port gunnel where the tank shell had made the hole. When his turn came, Jones ordered the LVT to take the bodies and other wounded back to the ship, then rolled over the gunnel into fairly shallow sea water, where he washed himself and his uniform as best he could.

Proceeding to the beach he rapidly located the regimental CP just inland of the berm. Before reporting to Colonel Riseley for orders, he sent runners to find the commanders of his companies and guide them to him. He also sent a runner to locate Major Donovan, who had the rest of the battalion command post personnel with him.

Riseley informed Jones that both of the assault battalion commanders had been wounded. Easley, although wounded, was trying to move the 3d Battalion inland to set up a line opposite Red Beach 3. The 2d Battalion, under Major Hunt, was setting up a defensive line from Red Beach 1, facing Garapan to the north. Riseley ordered Jones to attack inland, tie into the flanks of the other two battalions, and push east towards the first objective.

Soon a runner returned to guide Jones to the battalion command post. Donovan was setting it up close to the regimental one. The company commanders started to arrive. All had survived the harrowing trip from the reef to the beach, but in the process all companies had lost many killed and wounded. They had interesting accounts of what they had seen on the beach. One reported that Lieutenant Colonel Jim Crowe was lying on the beach awaiting evacuation with his thumb stuck in a hole in his chest, and a back pack protecting his belly from shrapnel. A runner saw a Catholic chaplain with a canvas gas-mask carrier slung over each shoulder. He obviously had left the gas mask on the ship, for in one carrier he had fried chicken and in the other bottles of Scotch whiskey. As he knelt by a young, scared, wounded Marine, he was invariably asked "Am I going to be O.K.?" "Sure you are," came the cheerful answer, "Now, would you rather have a drumstick or a wing while you're waiting?" The startled youngster was so surprised he forgot his troubles, and when the priest asked him if he'd like to "wash it down with a swig of Scotch," he couldn't believe what he was hearing amidst all of the noise, confusion, shrapnel, and explosions. A young doctor listening to the story observed, "That man probably saved more young lives from dying of shock today than will ever be known!"

The 1st Battalion reorganized quickly and carried out its orders—Company C under Captain Joseph T. Golding on the right, Company A under Captain Charles R. Durfee on the left, and Company B under Captain Claude G. Rollins in reserve. The attack moved against trenches and enemy pillboxes. Within the hour Jones received word that Golding had been killed. The company executive officer, 1st Lieutenant Peter F. Lake, took his place. The battalion continued on, while evacuating its killed and wounded as quickly as possible. The beach behind it was beginning to become less cluttered. The enemy artillery and mortar fire shifted from the beach to the advancing Marines. LVTs were able to speed the evacuation of the wounded from the beaches to the ships and return with much-needed supplies. The battalion pushed on, keeping contact with the 2d Battalion on the left and the 3d Battalion on the right. The 3d Battalion, in turn, had established contact with the left elements of the 8th Marines. After noon three enemy tanks attacked companies A and G, 6th Marines (adjacent flank companies of the 1st and 2d Battalions). Marines armed with rocket launchers soon destroyed all three tanks.<sup>22</sup> The 2d Battalion, with its flank on Red Beach 1, gradually swung to the north, facing toward Garapan, and started digging in for the expected night "Banzai" attack. The 1st Battalion had passed through a clump of trees behind Red Beach 2 and were advancing through undergrowth to the east towards the foothills and the first objective. It was dusk. Jones halted the line and ordered the battalion to dig in for the night. The command post registered defensive fires while the companies dug foxholes. Everyone drew food, ammunition, and water.

After eating cold C-rations, the battalions put out listening posts and settled down for a restless night. Few slept. The day had been too exciting. They were still alive, but what of the families of their dead friends and the fate of their wounded buddies?

Around midnight the 2d Battalion started hearing movement to its front from the direction of Garapan. Supporting destroyers fired illumination shells over the area. The Marines dimly saw a mass of humanity moving their way. The command post recalled all listening posts. The battalion held its fire. When about 500 yards away from the Marines' front lines, the enemy halted. It was as if they were working up courage to charge. The chants and yelling could be heard clearly—some of it sounding drunken. Then a lone tank appeared. The turret opened and a Japanese bugler appeared.

A Marine yelled, "Tell the colonel the kitchen sink is here!" The bugler sounded the charge, the cry of

“Banzai” rang out, and the enemy attacked. The Marine line, amused at the kitchen sink cry, was relaxed and held its fire until ordered. The enemy force was wiped out before it could break the Marine line. A few enemy survivors made their way back to Garapan. At morning’s light, a Marine patrol found the destroyed tank with a dead bugler hanging out of its turret. A bullet had gone straight up the stem of the bugle. The battlefield itself was littered with nearly 700 Japanese dead, indicating that a force of battalion strength had been committed to the attack.<sup>23</sup>

The rest of the night was quiet. As it grew lighter, the Marines ate cold food, cleaned and checked their weapons, and prepared to continue the attack.

*D Plus 1, 16 June 1944*

On the morning of 16 June, Lieutenant Colonel Easley was finally evacuated from the 3d Battalion. The executive officer, Major John E. Rentsch, took command.

*A Marine from Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, inspects one of the Japanese light tanks destroyed on Saipan during the Japanese attack on the night of 17 June 1944. The tank turret, blown off by an antitank round, and two Japanese soldiers lie to the left.*

Photo courtesy of SgtMaj L. J. Michelony, Jr.

Rather than continuing the attack to the O-1 line, the 6th Marines received orders to consolidate and reorganize its front lines since it was on the left pivot flank of the corps. It did spend some time mopping up bypassed Japanese.

It turned out that 238 Marines had died on D-day in the two assault divisions, with an untold number wounded. By nightfall of that day the hospital ships and many of the transports were filling up with wounded. The day of the landing, 15 June 1944, turned out to be the roughest day in Marine Corps history to date for majors and lieutenant colonels.<sup>24</sup> Of the first seven battalion commanders ashore, only Jones of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and Lieutenant Colonel Guy Tanneyhill of the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, escaped injury on D-day. Tanneyhill was wounded two days later.<sup>25</sup> Several battalions and staffs had their majors killed or wounded. Yet the regiments never became disorganized or hesitant in their attack.

Everyone welcomed using the day of D + 1 for some reorganizing and resting because who knew what that





night or the next day would bring. Lieutenant Colonel Wood B. Kyle rejoined the division from a corps assignment and landed his battalion, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. It later relieved the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, which had taken losses and had been hurt by the Japanese counterattack. The Japanese still enjoyed the use of the height of Mount Tapotchau and the safety of its many caves. Therefore, every American unit coming ashore took some casualties, and the Marines digging in on the plain had the enemy looking down on them and firing at all available targets.

*D Plus 2, 17 June 1944*

It was a hazy night; thin clouds muted the moonlight. The Marines were nervous, and no one slept very much. All night the artillery of both sides dueled with each other. Jones' 1st Battalion was about in the middle of the line, with Kyle's 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, on his left. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, was in regimental reserve, but located about even with Jones' CP. His Company A was on the left of his line, with Company C directly behind in battalion reserve. Company B was on the right of Company A, and tied in with Company F of the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, still attached to the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. The entire area between the front lines and the beach was packed with Marine units of every description.

The 1st Battalion had received warning of a possible enemy tank attack. In the early evening hours, the battalion's supporting destroyer fired illuminating shells spasmodically once the listening posts were in place.

At 0330 Captain Claude G. Rollen of Company B called Jones on the field telephone to notify him that enemy tanks and troops could be heard approaching from his direct front. Jones gave him permission to withdraw his listening posts, and sent word to Company A to do the same. All hands were alerted. The battalion notified the regimental headquarters, and requested constant illumination. Regiment agreed to get a reserve support destroyer on station. At the battalion's direction, artillery, the battalion's own 81mm mortars, and an attached platoon of 37mm guns began firing their prepared fires in front of both Companies A and B. Even though Company A had not discerned an approaching enemy, Jones didn't want the attack to slide northward to Company A's front, and he wasn't yet certain that this was not just a feint. It wasn't.

By 0345 the first wave of tanks, closely followed by enemy infantry, hit Company B. The prepared interlocking bands of machine gun fire on their final pro-

TECTIVE lines, combined with all of the high explosives raining down in the sector, rapidly removed most of the enemy infantry threat. However, the machine guns, rifles, and shrapnel from friendly guns had no effect on the enemy tanks.

One of the first tanks headed straight for Captain Rollen's command post. He rose from his foxhole to fire at it with his carbine's grenade launcher. When he rose to fire a Japanese bullet detonated the rifle grenade on the end of Rollen's carbine. The explosion punctured both of his ear drums, and he could not hear. He had this fact relayed to Jones as his usefulness as a company commander was gone. The tank missed the command post, and rolled on, burning furiously from another hit. By this time the entire sector was full of noise—burning tanks, exploding shells, and yelling Marines. Another tank, leaking oil heavily, soaked a Marine when it went over his foxhole. A Marine stuck a coconut log in another tank's bogey wheels as it passed his foxhole. This caused the tank to spin around in a circle. The bewildered tank commander opened his turret top to look out and see what was happening. The Marine jumped on top of the tank and hurled a thermite grenade down the open turret. The tank erupted like a volcano.

After receiving the information on Rollen's incapacitation, Jones ordered his Headquarters Company commander, Captain Norman J. Thomas, to lead a carrying party with replacement ammunition on their stretchers to Company B. Once there, Thomas, who had commanded Company B creditably at Tarawa, was to take command and send the litter bearers back with Rollen and any wounded Marines they could find. Thomas was killed before reaching Company B, and command of the company fell to its executive officer.

It later turned out that while Captain Thomas was leading his party to Company B's command post they ran into a Japanese machine gun which fired, instantly killing Thomas. The Headquarters Company First Sergeant, Michelony, took control and moved on to Company B. When the party reached the command post it was being pursued by Japanese tanks and some infantry. Captain Rollen was sitting on top of his foxhole directing his company until evacuated as ordered by Jones.

By this time, the entire company position had been penetrated by tanks and a few enemy infantrymen foolishly trying to guide them in the dark. Luckily the burning tanks silhouetted other tanks, making them easier targets. The 37mm gun section attached to Company B had mixed luck. One of its two guns jammed but the squad held its position and fired its



Photo courtesy of SgtMaj L. J. Michelony, Jr.

*Marines of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, look over the bodies of Japanese soldiers killed on Saipan when they attacked American lines on the night of 17 June 1944.*

two rocket launchers and two antitank grenade launchers. The other gun fired rapidly with the men sighting down the barrel as it was too dark to use the sights. The section made many hits but the armor piercing ammunition merely made holes in the tank unless they were able to hit a vital spot. This squad claimed four tanks.<sup>26</sup>

Private First Class Herbert J. Hodges, a gunner on one of Company B's rocket launcher teams, hit seven tanks with seven rounds.<sup>27</sup> Another team got three hits out of four. The rocket launcher teams left their foxholes and hit the tanks from many angles. Because of this, and the fact that one tank often drew the fire of several sources, it was impossible to tell exactly how many tanks were destroyed by rocket launchers, 37mm guns, grenades, or other means. Also, the regiment had requested support from 75mm gun half-tracks when first warned, and by 0415 these vehicles were making a slow advance over irrigation ditches and trenches. They eventually joined the fight, and when dawn broke any Japanese tank attempting to escape back to the hills was usually destroyed.

Before the dawn, the scene was one of many savage little fights and bayonet encounters with what few determined enemy infantry had been able to penetrate

the Marine lines. The 2d Marine Division's command post and the division artillery were only about 500 yards behind this action, so a large-scale enemy penetration could have been disastrous. The regimental headquarters was between the division elements and the battalion sector, therefore, even closer to the fighting. Many Marines were run over by the tanks but few were crushed. Deep foxholes, quick thinking, and determination won the battle.

During the battle, a little more than an infantry battalion of Marines, reinforced by artillery and other weapons destroyed at least 24 Japanese tanks and about 700 enemy infantrymen. It was the largest tank attack of the Pacific War up to that time.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the tank attack, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, jumped off in a new offensive at 0730 on that day with the rest of the division. The 1st and 3d Battalions moved forward towards the O-1 line, but could move only as fast as the 8th Marines to their right could advance. The 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, had been attached to the 6th Marines when it relieved the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines the morning of D+1. Now the 2d Marines regained control of its 1st Battalion, and took over the left, beach sector of the hinge of the swinging-gate movement. Enemy fire was heavy from the hills,

making evacuation of the wounded and the landing of supplies on Red Beaches 1, 2, and 3 extremely hazardous. It was vital that the Marines gain control of the high ground. During its advance, the 1st Battalion spotted the only remaining Japanese tank from the attack as it climbed the winding road on the hill immediately to the battalion's front. Jones sent for his naval gunfire officer, who quickly adjusted 20 salvos on the target. The tank sent up an oily smoke and burned the rest of the day.<sup>29</sup>

At the close of the first two days, the 2d and 6th Marines were nearing the O-2 line with the 8th Marines on the division's right on the O-1 line. By this time the U.S. forces had suffered about 3,500 casualties, or almost 20 percent of the total for the entire operation.<sup>30</sup> The tank battle had cost the 2d Division a total of 55 killed and 218 wounded.<sup>31</sup> Added to this, the severe casualties suffered in landing as well as the casualties taken by the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, on the night of D-day, meant that the division as a whole, and the 6th Marines in particular, had suffered more than the 20-percent figure above.

#### *D Plus 3, 18 June 1944*

Lieutenant General Holland Smith's orders for 18 June called for an attack by all three divisions: the two Marine divisions at 1000 and the one Army division at 1200 (to allow the 27th Infantry Division time to move one of its regiments into position).<sup>32</sup>

The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, started up the winding road to the top of the hill keeping contact with 2d Marines on its left and the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, on the right. As the gap opened between the 3d Battalion and the 8th Marines to its right, it was filled by the 6th Marines' reserves, the 2d Battalion.

*A Marine unit moves across relatively open, rolling terrain during the battle for Saipan.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 81836



Jones' command post element was at the foot of the hill, preparing to move to the top as he had been advised that Company A was on top of the hill. A radio call came in from the company executive officer, 1st Lieutenant Albert Wood, to Jones. He stated that Captain Durfee had been killed directing friendly tank fire at an enemy machine gun emplacement. Jones told Wood that he was in charge, and immediately went up the road with a small command group to find that Wood was himself wounded. Jones had Wood evacuated and appointed the next senior officer as the company commander. The 1st Battalion had lost five of its seven captains in three and a half days—four killed and one wounded and evacuated. The two remaining captains were in important staff positions. The battalion was now short of officers of any rank, with NCOs leading many of the platoons and lieutenants commanding companies. The other two 6th Marines battalions had also suffered heavy casualties, with both of them having lost their battalion commanders and one its executive officer.

#### *D Plus 4 to D Plus 6, 17-20 June 1944*

The swing-gate movement and the need to maintain contact on both flanks slowed the fighting in the 6th Marines sector to mainly patrol action. Many frightened civilians were convinced they could safely leave their caves by Marines using the phonetic phrases taught to them at Camp Tarawa. The Japanese had told the native Chamorros that Americans would torture them, causing some to commit suicide. Those that surrendered were sent to the rear where they were cared for. Othertimes, foolish Marine or Navy souvenir hunters would enter caves only to have themselves killed by a Japanese soldier who was either wounded or left behind for harassing purposes.

Patrols from the 2d Marines moved almost to the outskirts of Garapan on D + 5, and the entire 2d and 6th Marines line crept slowly forward, its speed being held back not by the enemy but by the progress of the units to its right. By this time, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Rathvon McC. Tompkins, who had relieved Tanneyhill when the latter was wounded on D + 2. The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, had been squeezed out by Tompkin's battalion, and was now in regimental reserve. Tompkins tied in with the 8th Marines on his right.

By the evening of 20 June, both the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions were facing north on the O-4 line. The wheeling movement had been completed.<sup>33</sup> Aslito Airfield was in American hands. Mount Tipo Pale and nearby Mount Tapotchau loomed straight in front of the Marine lines.

Both of the Marine divisions systematically cleaned out the caves to their front, cauterizing them with flame throwers and sealing them with demolitions. The work was slow and dangerous. Some caves had compartments at different levels, allowing the Japanese to retreat from one cave to another. Some caves, inaccessible on the sheer cliff side, could not be reached by infantrymen. These were left to the tanks for destruction by fire.

During the afternoon of D + 6, the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, was relieved on the right side by the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines. Patrolling the extremely rough terrain to their front became an everyday chore, particularly for the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, and the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, who were in the foothills. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, tied into the 3d Battalion on the right and the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, on the left, had easier terrain to navigate, but it was open and in clear view of the enemy. After the almost successful Japanese tank and infantry thrust on the early morning of D + 3, 18 June, Jones had become very concerned about command post security. Some days the lines of the 1st Battalion didn't seem to move at all. Since the battalion was near the hinge of the swing-gate, he wasn't allowed to move forward. Of course, there was plenty of Marine patrol action during the day and enemy probes of his lines at night, but he worried about his command post security. He realized to let the post stay static invited heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire since the enemy had the advantage of good observation. So, the command post moved daily. Reasoning that it was easier to hit a target moving away than one moving forward or sideways, he kept the movement of his headquarters to forward when

possible, or at least sideways. Additionally he had great confidence in the human fear of flame. Consequently, in setting up the night defenses, Jones had his men emplace 50-gallon drums and five-gallon cans of fuel along his front. The Marines could set off these with an 81mm or 60mm incendiary shell triggered by a blasting cap on either a pull wire or trip wire. This not only foiled the nightly Japanese patrols probing for a weak spot in the line, but also kept the machine gunners happy to stay on their final protective lines rather than act as free guns upon hearing any unusual noise.

#### *D Plus 7, 22 June 1944*

The battle for the mountain began at 0600. The division's lines had compressed by the insertion again of the 8th Marines. The battalion line-up, reading from west to east was: 2d Marines on the beach and plains; next, the 6th Marines with the 1st and 3d Battalions in that order and the 2d Battalion in reserve; then, the 8th Marines with its 1st Battalion tied in with the 6th Marines on the left and its 3d Battalion tied in with the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, on the extreme right flank of the division.<sup>34</sup> The 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, was the regimental reserve.

Straight ahead towered grim Mount Tapotchau. It was a mass of needled coral, lava heads, and limestone crags which were almost as much a threat as the Japanese themselves. Sharp and rough, the terrain was no place for tanks and jeeps. It would have to be captured by infantrymen, and Tompkins' 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, had to hit it head on. On down the line towards the ocean, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, had to take the subsidiary peak called Mount Tipo Pale. Not as towering as Tapotchau, it nevertheless had similar terrain filled with desperate enemy soldiers fighting from invisible positions, caves, and underground forts. As Richard W. Johnston described it in his history of the 2d Marine Division, *Follow Me!*, "The terrain ranged from the improbable to the impossible, but somehow the Marines dragged themselves up over it, and at the same time fought and hacked their way through gigantic pandanus roots that shielded machine gun nests and seemed as big as pyramidal tents and as impenetrable as pillboxes."<sup>35</sup>

The next day the 27th Infantry Division moved in between the two Marine divisions. The right flank elements of the 2d Division continued to assault Mount Tapotchau, and on 25 June the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, was to attack the mountaintop. It was tough going, but it was vital that this prime observation spot be in friendly hands. Below it spread the slopes where the 6th Marines fought, and, further on, the plain

where the 2d Marines, after hard house-to-house fighting, was in control of the capital city, Garapan. By the night of 25 June, Tompkins' battalion was on top of Tapotchau where it relieved the small group of division scouts who had previously reached the tiny plateau at the peak.

On 22 June, Colonel Riseley had moved his 6th Marines headquarters to Mount Tipo Pale soon after Rentsch had captured it. By 25 June, Jones had moved the 1st Battalion forward several thousand yards in concert with the 3d Battalion's advance on his right. On the morning of the 25th, a Japanese sniper had killed Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth F. McLeod, the 6th Marines executive officer. Earlier Tompkins had been seriously wounded in the fighting for Mount Tapotchau. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel George R. E. Shell of the 2d Battalion, 10th Marines, had been seriously wounded, and Lieutenant Colonel Ralph E. Forsyth, executive officer of the 10th Marines, had been killed in fierce counter-battery exchanges—four more lieutenant colonels were lost to the 2d Marine Division.

It was during the rapid advance of the 1st Battalion that Jones discovered that Company A had advanced too far and too rapidly. About this time Sergeant Michael A. Convertino reported that Company A had been cut off by a Japanese counterattack. He and the battalion communication officer, Lieutenant Edward L. Walsh, reported to Jones that in addition to the company being cut off, the telephone line was cut, and the company radioman, Private First Class Billy Laird, didn't answer, which indicated he was dead or badly wounded.

When asked what could be done, Sergeant Convertino, who was on his second tour in the Pacific, answered: "I know about where they were cut off. They went through a small ravine, and were near the top of a hill several hundred yards ahead. I can try to get up there with a SCR 300 [a heavy walkie-talkie] and a spool of field wire. I was a pretty good broken field runner when I played high school football."

Walsh, noting Convertino's build, suggested he should send one of the few communication men still alive.

"No, Mr. Walsh," he insisted, "I volunteered for the job. I've got a pretty good idea where the company is, and nobody else does."

With that, he picked up the radio and spool of wire and headed for the jungle. It seemed like an eternity until they heard a voice asking for Billy Red 1, the code name for Jones. The accent was Brooklyn, and it had to be Convertino.

"Put on Tom Carroll (the Company A executive

officer), Jones fumed. Captain William E. Schveren had advanced his company too far and got cut off. Jones wanted someone who would follow orders.

Carroll, the captain and former star of the basketball team at La Salle College in Philadelphia, gave Jones the company's location, and asked for an air strike and artillery support. Jones made sure he got them, forthwith, and sent reserve units to help break the ring around the entrapped company.

When Convertino returned to the battalion command post, his jacket had several bullet holes in it, but he was not seriously wounded. He reported the radioman had been killed, the radio put out of action, and the wire cut many times.

Jones recommended him for a Navy Cross.

The Marines were no longer physically fresh or psychologically eager. They had been ashore almost two weeks, always under enemy fire, seldom out of the front lines. Casualties had been heavy, and the replacements sent up were eager but untested in actual warfare. No hot meals, and just enough water for drinking and brushing teeth, also made daily living rigorous. The mosquitoes, while not as bad as on Guadalcanal, were a nuisance. The tired, bearded Marines were in the same uniforms (by now board stiff) they had worn on D-day. Still, Jones and Rentsch pushed the 1st and 3d Battalions over successive ridges, cleaning out caves and occasional Japanese machine gun nests.

On 2 July the attack to the north jumped off. The 6th Marines and the 8th Marines were to move out at 0830, followed by the 2d Marines on their left at 1030. At first it seemed easy. Jones' 1st Battalion wheeled slightly to come up against the eastern base of what was called Sugar Loaf Hill. On his left was Kyle's 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, forming an arc around the hill's long southern side. Immediately to Kyle's front was a small flower-covered hill. It turned out to be full of Japanese. Kyle's Marines took it in a furious assault and looked across the valley floor at the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, preparing to assault Sugar Loaf Hill. It was a prelude to Iwo Jima—a stone mountain hollowed into a fortress.<sup>36</sup> Japanese mortar shells from the fortress and the guns in hidden positions peppered the Marine lines. Marine 75mm half-tracks fired against the towering sides but couldn't see any targets.

The Marines came up off of their bellies and charged—the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, from the west and the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, from the east. During the assault many dead and wounded Marines fell to the sharp coral below, where their bodies were shattered. Surviving Marines clutched stony knobs, silen-



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 84974

*A Marine infantry unit advances toward the ridge on Saipan known as Sugarloaf, scene of heavy fighting by the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, during conquest of that island.*

cing the caves with grenades thrown with their free hands. Lieutenant Raymond M. Graves led Company A in a furious assault, and was wounded himself. (Graves was the fourth commander of Company A killed or wounded on Saipan.<sup>37</sup> Company C was under the command of Lieutenant Peter F. Lake, one of the few officers left in the company. Company B was in equally bad shape).

A Company A platoon leader had an unforgettable day. As he was advancing, he felt his runner, who was directly behind him, grab his belt and whisper, "Don't move. Now look between your feet." Alfred A. (Al) Mannino saw between his feet a Japanese land mine only about an inch from each foot. Had he stepped on it, both he and the runner would have been killed. Later, as they neared Sugar Loaf Hill they came under heavy enemy fire. The Japanese had a mountain gun in a cave halfway up the sheer cliff. It was protected by a steel door that tanks or artillery couldn't penetrate. The enemy would open the door, run the gun out, fire, and duck back in the cave. Jones called for an air strike from a carrier lying offshore. Six planes reported on station and were briefed on their mission. The first five planes were right on target and silenced the gun. The sixth plane dropped his bomb too short, and hit the Marines' front lines. Mannino heard the bomb coming and dove into a fox hole. The bomb landed a few yards away, so close, in fact, that Mannino was lifted out of the hole. Both

of his eardrums were broken. (In his right ear he has lost 45 percent of his hearing to this day. He swore at the time if he lived through the day he would live to be a hundred years old.)

During the attack of the 1st Battalion, either a Marine grenade or a stray bullet ignited an underground Japanese ammunition bunker filled with shells. It exploded, killing or wounding several Marines nearby. One entire fire team, of which Private First Class Robert Lee Barker was a member, required evacuation to the aid station. Barker later talked his way out and rejoined his unit.

Finally the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, camped on the top at nightfall. The two Marine battalions had killed all but a handful of the Japanese hiding in the many caves and hallways of the fortress.

The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, swept on to the west of Sugar Loaf Hill, while the 3d Battalion, on its right, continued attacking to the north. Here the 6th Marines encountered a Japanese lighthouse defended by many rapid-fire guns. The Marines killed the enemy soldiers and settled down for the night.<sup>38</sup>

While this fighting was happening in the front lines, there was plenty of activity in the rear, where bypassed Japanese continued to take their toll. A good example comes from an account by then-First Sergeant Lewis J. Michelony (mentioned in the previous chapter).

Early in the afternoon of 3 July, Michelony, the first sergeant of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, had just moved forward with the rear command post to a new location selected by Jones. It was Jones' custom early each morning to take with him a small group he called his forward command post to guide his companies in the day's attack. The bulk of Headquarters Company, including such things as the aid station and supply activities, remained in the location of the previous night under the supervision of the executive officer, Major Donovan. Michelony's duties included assigning a specific area of the new command post to each section of the company. Each section then was responsible to see that its area was secure and cleared of the enemy before nightfall. After handing out these assignments one day, he began supervising the digging-in and the internal security arrangements of the command post.

Suddenly a private from the Joint Assault Signal Company (JASCO) ran up to Michelony shouting that his entire group led by their lieutenant had been checking out their area and suddenly found themselves unable to move because of heavy enemy fire. Nearby was a series of cliffs about 50 feet high which covered the approach to a valley. Michelony moved toward the area, followed by the JASCO private, a sergeant, a Marine with a flamethrower, and two riflemen. The group came upon the body of the lieutenant, apparently dead of a head wound. As Michelony bent over him checking for any signs of life, the enemy opened fire from both cliffs with rifles and machine guns. The Marines were caught in a crossfire, which wounded the sergeant. Michelony, giving an order to the JASCO Marine, said, "Return to the command post and send up a few men with another flamethrower." Then, not knowing how many men the dead lieutenant initially had taken with him or their present location, Michelony called out, "If there are any of you alive up there give me a loud yell or a moan." Finally there was a response from a JASCO sergeant, whose voice Michelony recognized. The sergeant yelled, "Help me, Micky!" This man was right underneath a cave entrance which concealed an enemy machine gun. Use of the flamethrower would destroy the sergeant and the enemy alike. Michelony charged the cave, silencing the machine gun with a well thrown hand grenade. The sergeant was bleeding from both legs, couldn't walk, and had wounds in his head and sides. Picking up the sergeant in a "fireman's carry" Michelony ran down the trail under the supporting fire of the two riflemen with him. A corpsman and additional Marines met him and took charge of the wounded man.



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 83447

*A small patrol from the 6th Marines passes through a tree-covered area on Saipan on 22 June 1944.*

Michelony, by now quite angry, returned to the cave with a few more men and two additional flamethrowers. Throwing grenades he silenced a machine gun in one cave. A second cave started firing at the Marines. He threw a grenade in that cave and ordered a flamethrower man to burn it. He then had all three flamethrowers burn all the caves. Upon later investigation charred bodies lay both in the caves and around them—approximately a platoon of the enemy.

The next day the 6th Marines attacked from the foothills to the harbor above Garapan. During the afternoon the 1st Battalion pinched out Kyle's 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. At 1630 the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, pinched out Jones' 1st Battalion and tied in with the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, in Garapan.

Lieutenant Colonel Easley, who had been wounded on D-day, returned and was once again in command of the 3d Battalion. Fighting furiously, the battalion broke across the coastal road by sundown and captured the shattered concrete apron of what had been a great Japanese sea-plane base. It was deserted except for the wrecks of huge enemy four-engine bombers. The Marines enjoyed dipping their crusty heads and grimy hands in the cool sea water.

"Son of a bitch!" exclaimed a Marine private to no one in particular. "Tomorrow is the 4th of July!"<sup>39</sup>

The 6th Marines, with the rest of the division, had accomplished its mission. Although the battle of Saipan was not over, there was now a breathing spell of sorts. The men rested, washed and swam in the ocean, shaved, and wrote letters home. There were plenty of

war stories to exchange among companies, battalions, and even regiments.

The 1st Battalion had some of the best, but not all of them stories of heroism. The men were now camped inshore on the sloping red foothills, and the stories were told and retold. On 25 June around 0200 three machine gunners—Private First Class Harold G. Epperson of Ohio, Corporal Malcolm Jonah of Connecticut, and Private First Class Edward Bailey of Washington, all members of Company C, were hit by a small enemy force. The Japanese were able to sneak very close because of the nearness of the jungle and the blackness of the night. Young Epperson manned the gun and maintained a steady stream of devastating fire against the Japanese. A supposedly dead Japanese body near the muzzle of the gun suddenly threw a hand grenade directly in the machine gun emplacement. Before Jonah or Bailey could move, Epperson dived headlong onto the grenade, spreading his body to deliberately absorb its blast. He died in so doing. He received a posthumous Medal of Honor.<sup>40</sup>

Many heroes were not rewarded, however. Some

were dead, but others like Private First Class Robert Lee Barker, mentioned earlier, are very much alive at this writing. He walked straight into machine gun fire to rescue a wounded buddy.<sup>41</sup> The wounded Marine, Private First Class Mignault, had taken cover behind a coral head. He raised his head to try to locate the enemy machine gun holding up their fire team. The Japanese machine gun fired, hit the coral head, and blinded Mignault with splinters of coral. He cried out to Barker, who dashed over, carried Mignault to cover, and saw that he was taken to the aid station.

The soldiers of the 27th Infantry Division had cut across to the ocean on the western side of the island, pinching out the 8th Marines, who went into bivouac as the 6th Marines had. All of the 2d Marine Division was now out of the line and contact with the enemy. Division artillery, including the 3d and 4th Battalions, 10th Marines, had emplaced behind the 105th Infantry in the coastal area north of Tanapag harbor. The Army regiment dug in for the night with two battalions forward, but leaving a large gap between them which they planned to “cover by fire.” The

*LtCol William K. Jones, commanding the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, studies a map while discussing the tactical situation with his battalion staff officers during the Saipan battle.*

Author's collection







Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino  
*Second Lieutenant Alfred A. Mannino and another Marine from the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, display a small Japanese flag acquired during the Saipan battle.*

Japanese discovered the gap and launched their final desperate attack in the battle of Saipan at 0300 on 7 July.<sup>42</sup>

Approximately 1,500 mixed Japanese Army and Navy survivors, all poorly armed, took part in the "Banzai" attack. Besides hitting both forward battalions of the 105th Infantry, they poured through the gap they had discovered. The first Marine battalion to be hit was the 3d Battalion, 10th Marines. The gunners could not set the fuses fast enough to fire so they lowered the muzzles and produced ricochet fire by bouncing the shells off the ground. Those not manning the guns fired every type of weapon they could get their hands on. The 4th Battalion, 10th Marines, further inland in the foothills, were experiencing the same attack. The fire direction center of the 3d Battalion was almost wiped out. The canefield just ahead of the 3d Battalion was swarming with enemy troops. The Americans spent the rest of the morning and most of the afternoon killing them. The Army division moved up the reserve battalion of the 105th Infantry and parts of the 106th.

The "Banzai" charge cost the 3d and 4th Battalions, 10th Marines, 45 killed and 82 wounded, but they

killed more than 300 enemy and stopped their advance. The commander of the 3d Battalion, Major William L. Crouch, was killed.

The 6th and 8th Marines came out of bivouac at first light. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, was attached to the 27th Infantry Division.<sup>43</sup> The 1st Battalion was attached to the 8th Marines, which was charged with advancing to the coast and cleaning up the mess made by the enemy behind the lines of the 27th Infantry Division. Dead and wounded Americans and Japanese littered the battlefield. As one Marine recalls, "You could hardly take a step without walking on a body."

The only intact battalion was the one of the 105th Infantry. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, was "to advance only to conform to the movement of the right of the 106th Infantry."

By noon of 7 July the 106th Infantry still had not made contact with the two battered battalions of the 105th Infantry. These two battalions were therefore evacuated by IVTs. By nightfall the last survivors had been evacuated and the 27th Division's (Reinforced) line ran unbroken from the beach to where it tied in with the 4th Division in the mountains.

The next day, 8 July, the 2d Marine Division passed through the Army division with the 6th and 8th Marines in the assault. Upon passing through the 27th Infantry Division the 2d Division regained control of the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines.

### *Mopping Up*

The mop-up really started on 8 July. The Marines encountered large numbers of poorly armed and disorganized enemy soldiers, but no real organized resistance except in a woody swamp east of Tanapag Village. Company F of the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, remained behind to contain and destroy the enemy. The rest of the regiment reached the water's edge and set up security for the night.

Many Japanese had waded out to the reef to avoid the assault. Marine infantry patrols and language officers in amphibian tractors went out to try to induce them to surrender. Those who refused were killed. Unfortunately, only 14 prisoners were taken. About 100 either took their own lives or were killed by their officers. "One Japanese officer was observed beheading four of a group of his soldiers before he himself was killed by the Marines."<sup>44</sup>

The 6th Marines conservatively estimated there were about 1,500 Japanese dead in its area on 8 July. During the night small groups of Japanese survivors attempted to breach the Marine lines. The 6th Marines reported killing "50 or more" the nights of the 8th and 9th.

Lieutenant Merrill R. Frescoln, a platoon leader in Company A, was assigned the job of separating the many bloated bodies of the dead which were attracting horse flies, maggots, and other insects. Working furiously with natives and Koreans (used as a work force battalion by the Japanese) Frescoln used bulldozers to bury the Japanese dead in one large grave. The dead Americans were buried individually in the division cemetery.

Many small groups of Japanese were bypassed by the 4th Marine Division in its sprint to the O-9 line on the extreme northwestern tip of Saipan. The division reached O-9 on 9 July. Admiral Turner, the Expeditionary Force Commander, declared the island secured at 1615, 9 July 1944.<sup>45</sup> True, all organized resistance had been shattered, but the mopping-up continued for days.

On 10 July interpreters, using public address systems, begged the enemy soldiers and natives in the caves to come out and surrender. This effort was made from both the land and the sea. The results were not encouraging. The Japanese military and the native Chamorros had been thoroughly propagandized into believing the Americans would torture and kill them.<sup>46</sup> Hundreds of civilians killed themselves. Flinging their children ahead of them, they jumped to their deaths on the jagged rocks below the cliffs at Marpi Point. Many times Japanese soldiers would not permit the civilians to surrender, and would kill them if they tried to do so. Also on 10 July American units killed more than 2,000 additional Japanese soldiers on this "secured" island, more than 500 of them by units of the 2d Marine Division. Tired Marines who had been

*Rugged cliffs on Saipan serve as the last battleground of the 1944 campaign on that Central Pacific island.*

Author's collection



fighting for 25 straight days nevertheless laid down their guns to carry wounded civilians or lost children to camps where they could receive care.<sup>47</sup>

In Tanapag harbor lay Maniagassa Island—250 yards wide, 300 yards long. It was about 2,500 yards north-east of the seaplane base, and the enemy still occupied it. It had to be captured. Even one radio set could send information to Japan on United States harbor activities and ship movements.

This assignment went to the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. The battalion, supported by amphibian tractors and a 20-minute artillery preparation by the 10th Marines, landed at 1100, 13 July. Companies I and K were in the assault waves and landed unopposed. Within one hour, the island was overrun by the Americans. Of the 31 Japanese defenders, the Marines captured 15 and killed 16. One Marine died. One rifle platoon, with a 60mm mortar platoon attached, remained behind to garrison the island. The rest of the battalion rejoined the division.<sup>48</sup>

The American units on Saipan had lost a total of 3,126 killed; 13,160 wounded; and 338 missing. The 2d Division had the most killed, and the 4th Division the most wounded.<sup>49</sup> The 2d Division had 73 officers and 1,077 enlisted men killed, 226 officers and 4,688 enlisted men wounded, and 1 officer and 105 enlisted men missing in action. The division had lost a total of 300 officers and 5,870 enlisted men.<sup>50</sup> Some of the battalions' casualty rates approached 60 percent of their strength. As an example, the 3d Battalion rated 35 officers and 841 enlisted men by table of organization. On Saipan it had 22 officers and 513 enlisted men either killed or wounded. The 6th Marines' casualties totaled 356 killed and 1,208 wounded officers and enlisted men. This was more than any other regiment or unit in the 2d Marine Division.

#### *On to Tinian*

A steady stream of replacements had arrived on Saipan, both during and after the battle. As units moved into bivouac they were fleshed out with newly arrived officers and men. Some had been wounded on Guadalcanal or in later battles and were returning to the fight. Most, however, were new replacements yet to experience the horrors of war. A typical infantry battalion in the 2d Division which had participated in Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan had suffered 137 percent casualties for the war thus far.<sup>51</sup>

The 2d Division got seven new battalion commanders but the 6th Marines only needed one of them, since Lieutenant Colonel Easley had returned to command the 3d Battalion, and Jones of the 1st Battalion was neither killed nor wounded. Lieutenant



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 90505

*Fields of sugar cane on Tinian make visual contact difficult for these advancing Marines.*

Colonel Edmund B. Games received command of the 2d Battalion. Lieutenant Colonel Russell Lloyd, the executive officer of the regiment on Tarawa, returned and took up his old job when Lieutenant Colonel McLeod was killed.

Although Saipan was declared secured on 9 July, the exhausted Marines had their hands full rooting out stragglers and bypassed enemy soldiers. Yet they also were expected to make a fresh assault on 24 July against a nearby Japanese garrison of an estimated 8,000 fighting enemy, 3,000 laborers, and an undetermined number of Japanese civilians.<sup>52</sup> There was a great deal of reorganization to be accomplished in a relatively short time if the units were to undertake even rudimentary training with the new personnel. It was not a period of rest and rehabilitation as one might have hoped.

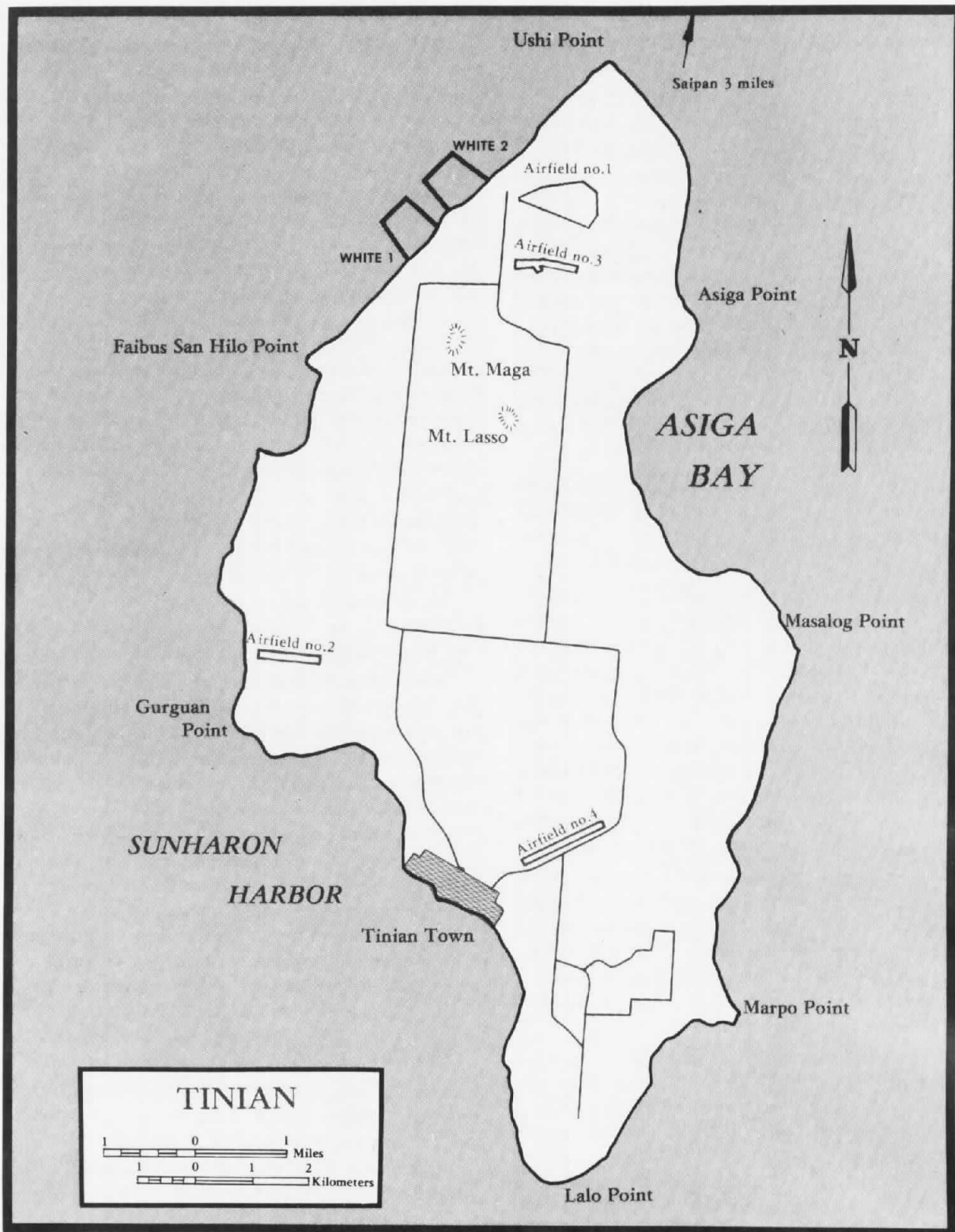
Tinian, the nearby next target, could be seen easily. It was only slightly smaller than Saipan, eleven miles long by five miles wide, but it was almost flat. No Mount Tapotchau. No Sugar Loaf Hill. It was a series of gently sloping plateaus covered, for the most part, with canebrakes. The highest plateau was about 500 feet on the southern end, and it had crags and sharp escarpments. On the southwestern beach was Sunharon, or Tinian Town. On its flat northern coast, just across from Saipan, was Ushi airdrome, the finest Japanese airport in the Central Pacific.<sup>53</sup>

For three days before J-day (D-day was for Saipan and William-day for Guam) the battleships and destroyers concentrated on Tinian Town. The beaches there on the southwestern coast were by far the best and most likely choice for an amphibious assault.

While this was going on, the daring members of the Corps Reconnaissance Battalion, under Major James L. Jones, stole ashore in blackface and carrying only knives so as to not give away their presence. They landed from a submarine on the northwest and eastern beaches. They found two narrow beaches on the northwest coast backed by cliffs with but no enemy installations—only barbed wire and foot patrols.

On J-day, 24 July 1944, the 2d Division put on a demonstration off Tinian Town, using the 2d and 8th Marines. The enemy got hits on a battleship and on a destroyer, so when 60 minutes before H-hour the U.S. forces suddenly withdrew, the Japanese thought they had scored a victory. The rest of the division and the 6th Marines became corps reserve as the 4th Division was chosen to lead the assault across the two small northwestern beaches. Carrier aircraft and Army fighters from Aslito airfield on Saipan began bombing and strafing Ushi airdrome. Thirteen battalions of corps and division artillery reversed their positions and fired across the straits in support. Now battleships and destroyers which had been bombarding Tinian Town added their weight to the supporting fires. Armored amphibian tanks lead the way. Very little enemy fire came from either of the White Beaches, as the two were named. The 4th Division was safely ashore and dug in by the night of J-day. The demonstration evidently had succeeded. Meanwhile the 6th Marines boarded LSTs at Garapan to make the short trip to Tinian.

The Japanese attacked the Marines the night of J-day, but the 4th Division and supporting artillery from the 2d Division (2d Battalion, 10th Marines) were



ready for them. The next morning the Marines found more than 1,500 Japanese bodies. The same day, J+1, the rest of the 2d Division started landing.

The 6th Marines landed during the afternoon of J+1 and went into division reserve in back of the 2d and 8th Marines. The following morning the two divisions attacked eastward. The Marines overran the Ushi airdrome virtually without losses. By midafternoon the eastward objectives had been taken. The 6th Marines moved in on the right of the 2d Marines. Both wheeled to the south. By nightfall they were almost up to the 4th Division's line across the right flank of the island.<sup>54</sup> The next day the two regiments advanced more than 2,000 yards against little enemy opposition. That night they tied in with the 4th Division. The Marines had a line across the island while controlling the entire northern portion, including the fine airfield pointing right at Japan.

During the next two days of advancing, the two divisions ran into only light opposition. Some of the maps turned out to be faulty, causing some arguments between adjoining battalion commanders.

Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd, executive officer of the 6th Marines, had brought along a fine pair of Japanese long-range binoculars mounted on a stand which he had found on Saipan. Once, when he couldn't spot the position of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, in the canebreak in front of the small hill on which he was standing with the binoculars, he told Jones to wave his map. Jones demurred, pointing out it would show the enemy his location. Lloyd insisted. Jones waved his map, which immediately got riddled by Japanese machine gun fire. No more map-waving occurred.

When the two divisions halted to consolidate on the afternoon of J+5, they occupied two-thirds of the island. On the left was the high escarpment of the last plateau. On the right was Tinian Town. The enemy had to be waiting to make a last desperate stand in those two places. There was still a large number of them unaccounted for.

The 6th Marines attacked towards the escarpment. The closer it approached this last rugged plateau, the more opposition it encountered. While moving towards the base of the escarpment, Company A received enemy artillery and mortar fire, as did the battalion headquarters. The commander of Company A was wounded and had to be evacuated. He was the fifth commander of this company to be either killed or wounded since landing on Saipan. Casualties increased.

The Japanese had mounted a mobile cannon in a

cave and were holding up the advance of the 1st Battalion. Again the battalion radio went out. Convertino took a jeep to the rear to get both a radio and some more wire. Jones was stymied in calling for an air strike. Soon he spotted the platoon's jeep loaded with wire and a radio running wide open as it crossed in front of the battalion line. It was Convertino and the driver, Private First Class Chick Ciekelenki. "You silly bastards," Jones roared as they drove into the battalion command post, "You could have been killed by us or the Japs." "It was the only road that wasn't mined that we could use to get to you in a hurry," Convertino explained. Jones then called for an air strike by the B-25s on Saipan. With their nose cannons and machine guns blazing, they soon cleaned out the caves in the cliffs. The mystery of the dead radio was solved shortly after dark. Private First Class Chick Bursa, the youngest man in the communication platoon, crawled to the 1st Battalion lines with his battered radio. "I got pinned down, and they even shot off my short antenna, making transmission impossible," he told Jones with a soft Cajun accent. "I hid in the sugar cane until it got dark enough for me to return."

The weather turned for the worse. The monsoon had begun. It was 27 July. Now the Marines had to dig their foxholes in the mud and sleep in the rain.

The division attack jumped off at 0830 on J+7, 31 July. The 8th Marines, on the right with the 6th Marines in the middle, started to climb. The 2d Marines held its position on the left flank at the base to contain the enemy. There was no way to assault the eastern part of the escarpment in front of them, so the attempt was made on the western approach.

The 6th Marines reached the approaches to the plateau on the top of the escarpment at 1330 without meeting very much enemy resistance. On its right, in the 8th Marines' sector, it was a different story. The Japanese resistance was heavy. Equally bad, because of the canebreaks at the base and jungle on the sides of the escarpment, it was difficult for the battalions of this regiment to maintain contact. One of its battalions was the first to claw its way to the top.

Early on J+8, 1 August, the 6th Marines made the top and reinforced the 8th Marines. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, along with the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, swept across the plateau and established a line on its southern rim.<sup>55</sup> Below them were numerous caves in the face of the rocky cliff. Grenades could be heard popping in many of them. On the narrow beaches civilians were jumping out in the water to drown. Once again the Japanese and natives were committing suicide rather than surrender.

The news came from Corps: Tinian was declared secure as of 1855.<sup>56</sup> By this time both the 1st and 2d Battalions, 6th Marines, had fought their way to the top. The 2d Battalion was fed into the line along the rim, closing the gap between the 3d Battalion on its right and the 2d Marines holding position at the foot of the escarpment. The 1st Battalion became the 6th Marines' reserve.

On the top of the plateau was a hedgerow of short, windstunted trees. It ran mainly from south to north. Two branches ran from the main line almost to the rim where the 3d Battalion was dug in. The rest of the plateau was like a pasture. The hedgerow had probably been planted to cut down on the wind sweeping the plateau, thereby making the rest more useful.

The night of 1 August, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, chose to locate its command post in the open field to the west of the main hedgerow. Emplacing a ring of listening posts equipped with field telephones and thermite grenades around the position, it strung as much concertina barbed wire as possible before dark. This wire, located just behind the listening posts, would act as a second line of defense in front of the men's foxholes.

The 3d Battalion set up its command post in the southern-most grouping of trees which ran along the main south-north line. The Marines did have clear fields of fire to both the north and south.

Before midnight, enemy forces made several probes

of the 1st Battalion's position. These were probably bands of Japanese coming from the jungle-covered escarpment to the south in the sector of the 8th Marines. These groups broke off their probes in the face of liberal use of thermite grenades thrown by members of the listening posts. Early in the morning of 2 August this band or bands of enemy congregated in the main tree line to the east of the 1st Battalion's command post. About 0500 a large number attacked the 3rd Battalion's command post by moving down the tree line leading to the Marine position. The fight was brief and violent. Before a tank rolled up to the rescue, the defending Marines had killed more than 100 Japanese. The 1st Battalion, hearing the fighting a little above and just to the east of them, called on the field phone to offer help. It was not needed, and the fighting was quite brief. In a subsequent phone call shortly thereafter the battalion executive officer, Major Rentsch, informed Jones that his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Easley, had risen up on his knees to see what was going on and had been shot.<sup>57</sup> He was at that time being put on a stretcher on the back of a jeep on his way to the rear via a dirt road just in back of the main hedgerow.

Jones walked up to the road and waited for the jeep. It stopped when it reached him. Easley, stripped down to the waist, was attended by a corpsman. The wounded man appeared to be unconscious. The corpsman shook his head when his eyes met Jones'. Jones took Easley's right hand in his, tears blurring his vision. He could see a small purplish dot about the size of

*The invasion fleet is clearly visible from the high ground on Tinian following the Americans' near-perfect amphibious assault on the Japanese-held island in the Marianas in 1944.*

Author's collection



an eraser on a pencil just above the heart. Holding his hand, Jones watched his old friend die. The battle for Tinian was indeed over and costly to some.

Marine units spent that day and others trying to neutralize the caves in Tinian's rugged southern cliffs. In fact, the mopping-up took elements of the 2d Marine Division a full three weeks to accomplish. Hundreds of Japanese and some Marines died in the effort.<sup>58</sup> Marine language teams with loudspeakers convinced many civilians to surrender. The battle for Tinian had ended officially in only nine days. The Marines had counted and buried 5,000 Japanese, rescued more than 9,000 civilians, and captured 152 Japanese prisoners, as well as 103 Korean laborers. The 2d Marine Division lost 22 officers and 268 enlisted men, for a total of 290 killed, and had 79 officers and 1,435 enlisted men wounded, for a total of 1,514.<sup>59</sup> Of the 24 Americans originally carried as missing, all but three were still missing at war's end. Of these totals, the 6th Marines had 34 killed and 165 wounded.

The week immediately following the incidents on the plateau, the 6th Marines moved down to the flat area immediately inland of Tinian Town. Time was now available to clean up and pack. The 2d Division started moving back to Saipan on 9 August, except for the 8th Marines which stayed on Tinian to clean out the caves and to garrison the island. By 13 August the move was over.<sup>60</sup> Men of the division heard they were not going back to New Zealand, or even the camp they had finally assembled on Hawaii. The word was out—they were to remain in the Marianas and build another camp!

### *Lessons Learned*

Probably the best lesson learned was what could be accomplished by a group of determined and well led Marines. After almost two months of fighting a tenacious enemy in rugged terrain, in spite of many losses and an influx of replacement personnel, the Marines were ready for the next task.

Most of the specific lessons learned came from fighting on Saipan, reinforced by action on Tinian. Fighting in mountains, jungles, caves, and bad weather had drawn these Marines closer together, as well as hardening them into veterans.

The surviving officers and enlisted men had learned that caution was more laudable than bravery; patience more important than aggressiveness. The unspoken maxim applied: "Look before you leap."<sup>61</sup> They realized beforehand that the canned rations would be monotonous—they were. Naval gunfire was much more effective as a result of lessons learned at Tarawa, as was the air support. The very weight of both astounded the Japanese. The artillery units showed that they were not only well led but also well trained. Here, as on Tarawa, the Japanese found their hands tied by the failure of their communications, due mainly to the incessant air, ground, and naval bombardments. Its importance was pointed up in the breakdown of contact between the higher Japanese headquarters and the enemy's tank-led assault on the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, on D + 3 on Saipan.

Later the division learned that the decisive defeats at Saipan and Tinian had really shaken Tokyo. Most informed Japanese concluded that the war was lost.<sup>62</sup> It was indeed "the beginning of the end."

## CHAPTER 7

# What's Next?

*Background—Camp Life, 1944-45—Okinawa*

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### *Background*

Can you believe it? No New Zealand! Not even the camp we built on Hawaii. We're going back to Saipan, where we just had our bloodiest battle so far. Worse than that, we have to build another camp. It ain't ethical, it ain't logical, but it's Marine Corps.

Quit your bitchin', Marine, what did you expect?

The battles of Saipan and Tinian were over. The United States now had airfields on both islands from which bombers could reach the home islands of Japan only 700 miles away. The B-29 raids from those airfields increased daily. Only trouble was, some of them didn't make it back. So, an intermediate airfield at Iwo Jima, almost at the midpoint between Japan and the Marianas, had to be captured for the morale and safety of the Army Air Forces. The Navy and Marines did so at a cost of 5,931 killed and 17,372 wounded.<sup>1</sup>

During that battle, 19 February to 26 March 1945, the 6th Marines and the rest of the division remained in area reserve, usually on Saipan. During that battle and before, they constructed new camps, sent out daily patrols to mop up bypassed Japanese stragglers, and absorbed a steady flow of officer and enlisted replacements for the casualties suffered on Saipan and Tinian.

Nobody knew where he would be involved next. Few cared. They licked their wounds, mourned lost friends, and thanked God they were still alive. They also welcomed the replacements, mostly untested in battle, but a few returning veterans wounded in previous battles. Maybe they didn't know when or where they would be sent next, but by now they knew they surely would be called upon eventually. Anyway, it was still just late 1944, and they were a long way from the home islands of Japan.

At the end of the northern part of the Marianas operation members of the 2d Division were spread all over. Some of the wounded had been flown to the hospitals in the Hawaiian Islands, principally near Honolulu. Some had continued on eventually, if not immediately, to the continental United States. More went south on hospital ships to naval hospitals in the Russell Islands north of Guadalcanal. The attached 1st Battalion, 29th Marines, which had fought so valiantly with the 2d Division on Saipan, rejoined its parent

outfit, the 29th Marines of the 6th Marine Division. Even the 2d Division was split, with the 8th Marines staying on Tinian while the rest of the division moved back to Saipan. On 9 August the division command post moved to Saipan. By 13 August the entire division, less the 8th Marines, was back on Saipan.<sup>2</sup>

The Marines were greeted with the familiar stacks of tent decks and furled tents. Unlike Hawaii, where they built a single, huge Camp Tarawa, the division spread from the northern end of the island near Mapi Point to the southern plateau near Aslito.<sup>3</sup> Consequently there were many smaller camps. These were clustered close together near their regimental headquarters. In between were the die-hard Japanese survivors hiding in the jungle-covered ravines and caves. The 6th Marines were near the southern ridges of Mount Tapotchau, but on a cliff facing east, looking out over the ocean.

### *Camp Life, 1944-45*

About a week after moving over from Tinian, the 2d Division relieved the 27th Infantry Division in mopping-up operations.<sup>4</sup> The first month the division killed or captured many Japanese, but the number grew smaller as the days wore on.

At the same time, camps had to be built. Strong-backed tents sprung up. The engineers erected mess-halls, cookshacks, and heads. A natural amphitheater in the 1st Battalion's area served as the 6th Marines' combination movie theater and stage on which visiting USO shows could perform. Filled sandbags served as seats. There was a stage platform and movie booth to house the projector. Luckily, the rainy season the Marines had endured in August and September was about over. The effects of hot chow, showers, and plenty of sleep began to show. Morale rose. Life wasn't so bad after all.

There were nightly movies, mostly old, but welcomed entertainment. Occasionally a USO show would appear. Betty Hutton and the comedian Joe E. Brown were both big hits. Still, "a poor trade for Wellington," the old timers muttered.<sup>5</sup> A Catholic chapel was built in the 1st Battalion's area and a Protestant chapel was located in the 3rd Battalion's camp, just across a road which ran along the eastern edge of the island and divided the two camps. Both chapels consisted



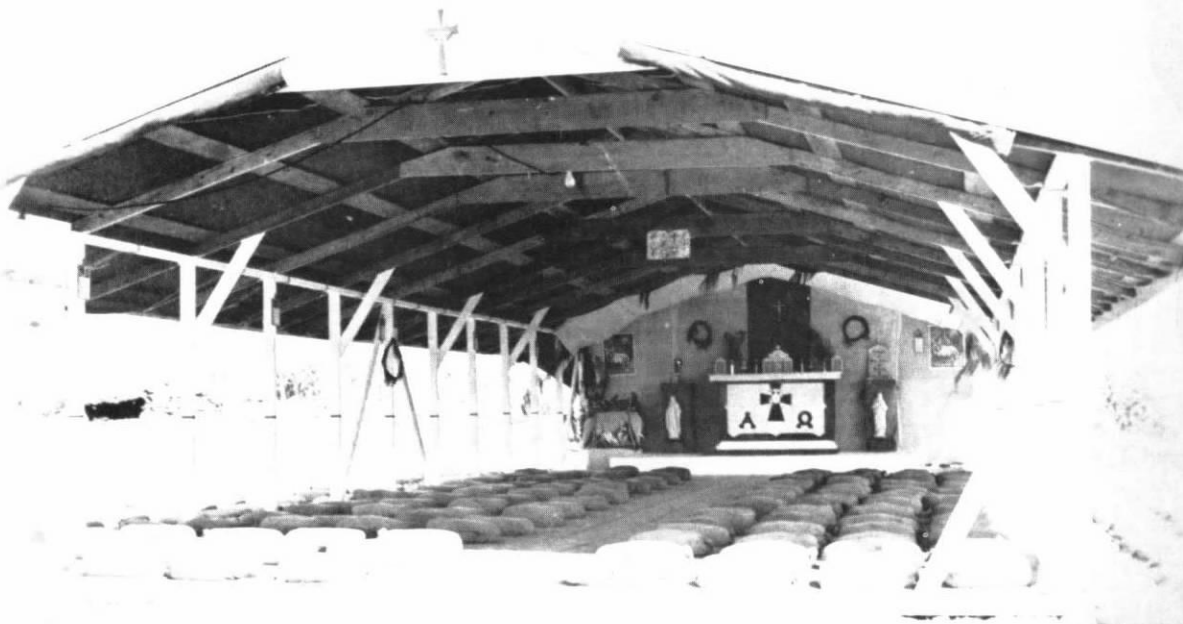


Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino

*An open-sided temporary shed, with sandbag pews, serves as the first Catholic chapel built for the 6th Marines on Saipan. A new chapel replaced it not long afterwards.*

of a large tent-fly over pews made of filled sandbags. Both had wooden altars and pulpits.

There was a great deal of sickness. Some malaria lingered from Guadalcanal, but dengue was the main problem. The latter, also carried by mosquitoes, was referred to as "breakbone fever." The command used DDT and other preventatives liberally, but with little success. Gradually the 6th Marines settled into the camp and daily patrolling routine.

One night, after enjoying a movie in the 6th Marines' outdoor theater, the lights came on and the Marines sitting on the last row of sandbagged seats were surprised to see a Japanese soldier sitting next to them. They yelled, and grabbed him. They led him to the Regimental 2 [Intelligence] office tent, turned him in, and returned to their battalion area. Later, regiment reported that the interrogation hadn't provided any new information. The Japanese captive complained mostly about the old movies and "lousy chow" with which he was getting bored. It turned out that he had been living in the wooded ravine separating the 1st and 2d Battalion areas. Each night he would come out after dark, see the movie, and steal food from the 1st Battalion's mess area. The next day the regiment ordered the 1st Battalion to thoroughly clean out the ravine. No urging was required, and no more Japanese

were caught complaining about the quality of the movies and food.

Shortly after returning from Tinian, Colonel James P. Riseley was relieved as commanding officer of the 6th Marines by Colonel Gregon A. Williams. The latter served as an assistant naval attache at the American Embassy in China at the beginning of World War II because he was a Japanese language officer. The Japanese captured him, claimed he was a spy, and threw him in prison. They beat him on the cheeks until the insides of his cheeks were raw. Then they pulled a beggar off the street, and made him run his filthy fingers around the inside of Williams' mouth. In due course, however, the Japanese released all American diplomatic personnel, including Williams. After months of medical care and recuperation, he was now joining the shooting war.

Colonel Williams, a bachelor, made all of his battalion commanders and his principal staff officers live in tents in the vicinity of his, and eat their meals in his regimental mess, a wooden building with open, screened sides because of the heat.

Although Lieutenant Colonel Jones retained command of the 1st Battalion, he lost his executive officer, Major Donovan, to an awards board assignment at Fleet Marine Force, Pacific headquarters on the island



Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino  
*Members of the 6th Marines leave Sunday services at the second, more permanent Catholic chapel built for the 6th Marines on Saipan near World War II's end.*

of Oahu, Hawaii. In place of Donovan he received a replacement major named Lawrence V. Patterson. Lieutenant Colonel Edmund B. Games, who had relieved Major Leroy P. Hunt, Jr., just before Tinian, relinquished command of the 2d Battalion and moved

up to the regimental executive officer's position. His place in the 2d Battalion was taken by Lieutenant Colonel James R. Clark, another replacement. Major John E. Rentsch, who had commanded the 3d Battalion after Easley had been wounded on Saipan, and again after Easley was killed on Tinian, was relieved on 1 September by Lieutenant Colonel Loren E. Haffner, who had been the regimental operations officer as a major. Both Majors Hunt and Rentsch left the 6th Marines for other assignments.

Shortly after Haffner took command of the 3d Battalion he was talking to his sergeant major about the untidy appearance of some of his Marines. He decided to do something about it, and told the sergeant major to march in the few replacements who had reported for duty that day. The sergeant major marched them briskly to the front of Haffner's desk, commanded "left face, stand at ease," and waited for Haffner to make his welcoming remarks. Haffner cast a baleful stare at them and launched into a heated discourse on how sloppy and unkempt they looked. Finishing off with a demand that all of them get haircuts and report back to the sergeant major for inspection, he nodded for them to be marched out. After they had departed, he complained to the sergeant

*1stLt Alfred A. Mannino of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, stands beside the wind-powered washing machine he built on Saipan overlooking the ocean near the end of World War II.*

Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino





Author's Collection

*Officers of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, construct their own wood-frame officers' club, nicknamed the "Willie K Club" on Saipan in the months preceding the end of the war.*

major, who had remained behind, that a new executive officer was supposed to have reported aboard by now to help him out.

"He just did," the sergeant major replied. "He was the first one in the line you just finished reading off."

And he was. He was the same Captain Bill Scherin who had been wounded on Tinian while commanding Company A. Now a major, he soon cleaned himself up and reported to his new commanding officer, albeit a bit apprehensively.

In early October the Japanese resistance dwindled to infrequent sniper fire, mainly on Tinian. The 8th Marines, less its 1st Battalion, moved to Saipan in preparation for a division-wide offensive to complete the mopping-up of Saipan. As late as early November, Marines were killed at regular intervals and supplies were still being stolen. On 15 November a division offensive jumped off. It was really little more than a series of large patrol actions; however, when it ended the Marines had killed 255 Japanese and captured 47. The Marines lost nine killed and 40 wounded.<sup>9</sup>

By then, rotation to the continental United States finally began for a lucky few. Many others transferred to newer divisions in various parts of the Pacific. Yet

the character of the 6th Marines and 2d Division did not change. Although veterans of previous campaigns were fewer and fewer, the new arrivals soon learned through the daily patrols and from the war stories of the veterans what lay in store for them. The training grind continued. Still, there was time for an occasional dip in the pools made in the coral rocks by the ocean.

By the end of July, Army engineers were working around the clock enlarging the old Japanese Aslito airfield on Saipan and the Ushi airdrome on Tinian. They also had started building a giant airfield on Kagman Peninsula on Saipan's eastern coast south of the 2d Division's various camps. Night after night the Japanese attacked both Saipan and Tinian with all of the planes they could muster. These raids lasted throughout the fall, winter, and into the spring of 1945. Obviously we were getting closer to the home islands of Japan, and the Japanese didn't like it. Yet the work went on.

On 12 October 1944 the first of the huge B-29s came to Saipan. Marines gawked at the sky as the biggest planes they had ever seen flew over them. The climactic air offensive against Japan was starting. One of the favorite diversions of the Marines became going down to the new airfield on Kagman Peninsula

and watching the returning B-29s. After completing five missions over Japan, the Army Air Forces awarded each crew member an Air Medal. The bomber squadrons held military formations as soon as the planes returned, and pinned the Air Medal on those who qualified. The Marines called these "cluster musters" and watched them from the grassy ridges near the airfield with great mirth and slapping of knees.

Camp life droned on. Boxing matches became very popular, as were the various organized sports. Anything to keep busy. A group of officers in the 1st Battalion built a fine officers' club with a bar, an ice machine, and cement deck. If they couldn't obtain things by trading liquor with the Seabees, they found other ways to secure the necessary materials. The war in Europe was progressing nicely, and any news of this was consumed eagerly by the Marines. They wanted the war in Europe to end soon so some assistance could be sent to the Pacific to help them defeat the Japanese. Everyone fully expected that final victory would require a landing on Honshu and Kyushu islands of the Japanese archipelago. That would be tough, for the enemy would be all the more stubborn in defense of his homeland.

Jones had a boxing ring built in the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, area. Here the 6th Marines Boxing Team would assemble every afternoon under the direction

of First Sergeant Michelony. It became an extremely popular place every afternoon. Soon the 1st Battalion placed more winners in the boxing bouts than any other unit in the division. Saturday nights were boxing nights, and the Marines would gather atop sandbags to watch their tentmates fight it out. Boxing rated second only to the movies for recreation. Concerts by the division band would also be held here weekly.

Once in a while an incident would break the monotony of camp life. One day at lunch in the regimental mess, Colonel Williams announced that he had been visited that morning by the Protestant chaplain, who had a complaint. Pointing out that his chapel was in the 3d Battalion's area, the chaplain stated that he frequently visited the 3d Battalion's officers' mess. He said that although no liquor was served during working hours, he never looked into the place without seeing several officers loafing around, drinking coffee. This being so, the chaplain said, he saw no reason for his designation as the regimental war bond officer. He had many more important things to do, and there were obviously plenty of officers with not enough to do.

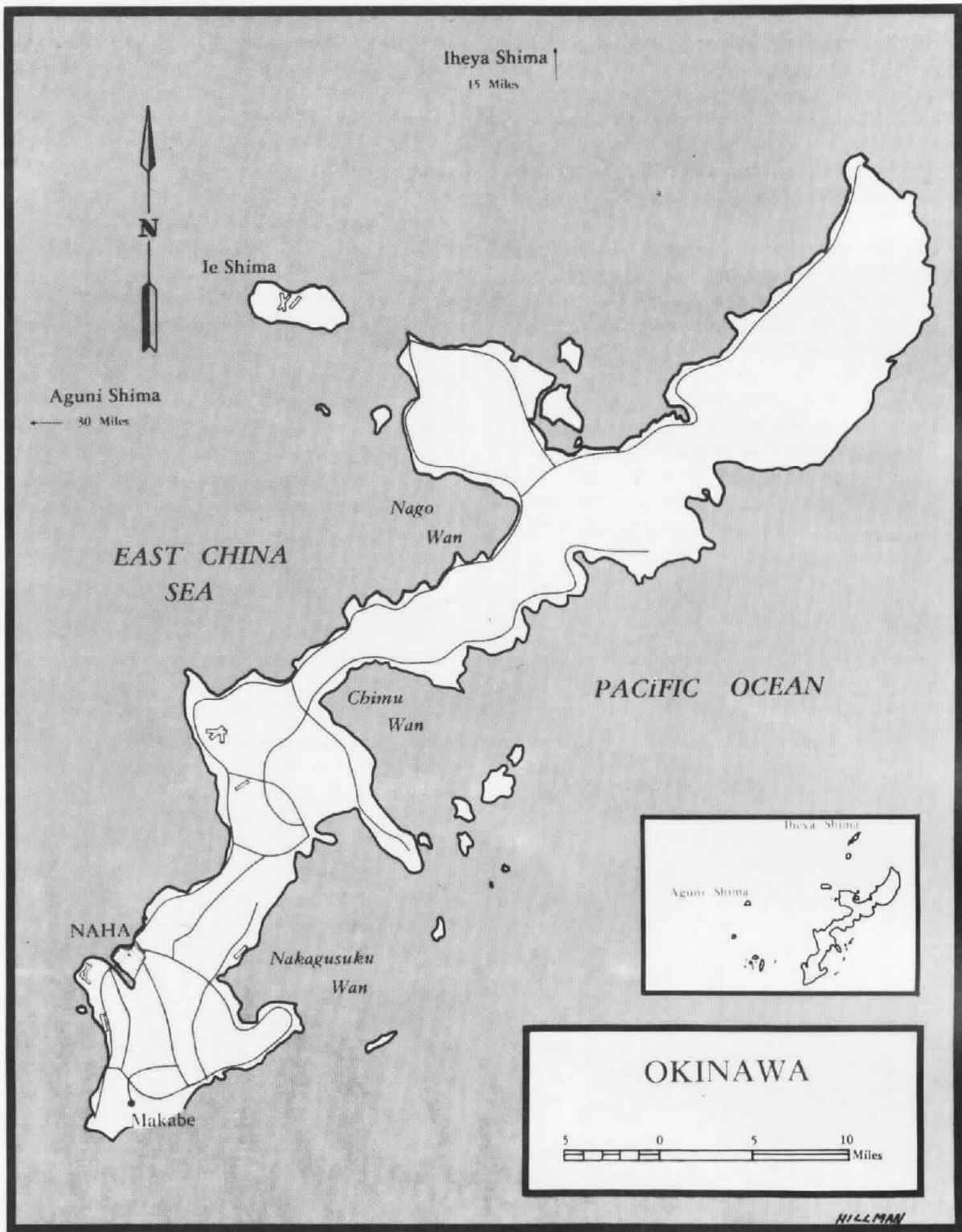
All the officers in the mess laughed except Lieutenant Colonel Haffner. He was furious.

Haffner returned to his office and sent for a special working party. It consisted of an NCO in charge, a Marine with an aiming circle, a Marine with a sledge hammer, and one with plenty of wooden stakes and chalk

*1st Sgt Louis J. Michelony, Jr., (right, front row) served as the boxing coach of the regimental boxing team formed after the 6th Marines returned to Saipan after conducting a landing feint on Okinawa. Father J. P. Gallagher, a Navy chaplain with the regiment, stands at right.*

Photo courtesy of SgtMaj L. J. Michelony, Jr.





line. He then gave his instructions. The aiming circle man was to chart a course straight through the existing Protestant chapel. At regular intervals the two other Marines would drive stakes in the ground and connect them with the chalk line. The NCO in charge also was carefully briefed as to what his answer would be to the expected question from the chaplain.

As predicted the chaplain saw the line being staked through the center of his chapel. He rushed over and asked, "What are you men doing?" The NCO answered, "We're laying out where Colonel Haffner plans to build the new battalion beer garden." The chaplain ran to Colonel Williams. Williams called Haffner and told him to quit teasing the chaplain. The chaplain not only kept the job of being the regimental bond officer, he never again crossed Haffner.

### *Okinawa*

During its time in camp, the 2d Division shifted from the V Amphibious Corps to the III Amphibious Corps. Early in 1945, the latter corps became part of the U.S. Tenth Army. Soon the transports and supply ships began to tie up at the floating piers on Saipan's west coast to load the 2d Division. The Tenth Army decided that the 2d Division would carry out a diversionary feint on L-Day (which was how the day of landing was to be designated for Okinawa). Two Marine and two Army divisions would make the main landing on Okinawa's southeast coast. If needed, the 2d Division, designated as corps reserve, would make a covered landing on the western beaches on an unspecified date. This was the largest number of troops ever launched against the enemy in the long Central Pacific drive.

The amphibious armada of ships converging on Okinawa was huge. The uneventful trip north provided the usual dull shipboard routine. After their mission became known, there were many disgruntled Marines in the 2d Division. After all, hadn't they proven that they were the world's best fighting outfit? The handful of veterans from Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian were happy. A similar feint at Tinian had been successful, yet there was plenty of fighting to be done once they got ashore. Anyhow, it would be fun to fool the Japanese once again. Also, Okinawa was considered one of the Japanese home islands, although the people were ethnically different. This would be another first.

L-day was set for 1 April 1945, April Fool's Day and Easter Sunday combined. Okinawa was needed both as a great stationary air base close to Tokyo and the main Japanese homeland, as well as a close-in staging

area for the final troop assault against the enemy. Best guesses were that the Japanese garrison ranged between 50,000 and 75,000 men. The civilian population was believed to be about 435,000 Okinawans. The Tenth Army had 182,112 men, of whom 81,165 were Marines. All landbased air was grouped under a Tactical Air Force, Tenth Army, commanded by Marine Major General Francis P. Mulcahy.<sup>7</sup>

The 2d Division was at early chow on its various APAs and LSTs. It was still dark when general quarters sounded, but the sky was beginning to get light. The noise of Japanese airplane engines grew louder. Another enemy bombing attack, the Marines thought. But these were kamikaze pilots flying one-way missions. They were the first encountered off Okinawa. At 0520 a kamikaze pilot dove his plane into the unarmored side of the APA *Hinsdale*. It struck the ship at the waterline and just forward of the engine room. A short time later, a Zero fighter smashed through the hull of LST 884, and another plane exploded on a second LST, blowing two Marines off the stern. Many Marines and Navy personnel were killed. One APA and one LST sank. Landing craft filled with survivors dotted the sea. These craft desperately followed the other ships, which had increased their speed. Eventually the other ships picked up the survivors, but the "joke on the Japanese" had backfired. No member of the 6th Marines was hurt.

The 2d Marine Division began its diversion. LCVPs, each containing a handful of Marines, lowered from the APAs. The LSTs disgorged their LVTs. The principal commanders from company level or higher stayed on the ships. Very few Marine lieutenants participated. It was mainly a Navy show. All landing craft approached the designated line of departure and started forming waves. Navy control boats were on station. American airplanes strafed the beaches, and naval bombardment ships started firing. The signal was given and the waves started towards the beaches. About 1,000 yards before reaching the beaches, all waves split in the middle to the right and left, and returned to their mother ships. The feint was over. There were no casualties after the earlier attack and ship sinking.

Ironically, across the island above Naha near the Yontan airfield, the main force landed unopposed. Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima had elected not to defend the beaches and airfield. His *32d Army* included two divisions, a brigade, a tank regiment, and a great amount of artillery. He had concentrated his strength to the south.<sup>8</sup>

The next day, L + 1, the feint was repeated. The ene-

my was not interested. The 2d Division's ships reloaded their boats and the entire armada sailed south to keep out of range of the kamikaze pilots being launched against the Americans assaulting Okinawa. There the ships circled in the East China Sea for a month, waiting for a call to land. Finally the decision came: back to Saipan, but keep the ships combat-loaded in case Tenth Army needed the division.

This time Saipan was a welcome sight. The Marines knew they might still be called back to take part in the Okinawa fight, and there was always the grim fate they suspected awaited them on the home islands of Honshu and Kyushu. Even bloodier fighting was a possibility around such cities as Nagasaki, Yokahama, and Tokyo. Only a few men in the United States and at a place in New Mexico called Alamogordo had any reason to believe that an assault landing against those islands might not be necessary. So, to the Marines on Saipan, even the monotony of training and the easy camp life were acceptable for now.

A month after returning to Saipan on 16 May, the 8th Marines shipped out to seize some small islands off Okinawa. This operation turned out to be nearly a resort vacation. The islands held nothing but frightened civilians. By mid-June, the Marines were relieved by Army troops, and the regiment encountered the savage realities of Okinawa while attached to the 1st Marine Division. It was during a visit to the 8th Marines' command post that Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner, the commander of the U.S. Tenth Army, was killed by a salvo of enemy artillery shells. The day was 18 June 1945.<sup>9</sup>

On 22 June, Okinawa was declared secured. The 6th Marines did not begrudge this final victory for the 8th Marines, who had been among the first to fight on Guadalcanal. The 6th Marines had been the last, so it seemed proper to rejoice with their sister regiment.

When the 8th Marines finally returned to Saipan in mid-July, it found the 6th Marines and the rest of the division engaged in heavy training. The division command already had begun its planning for the next big operation, called Olympic, the invasion of the Japanese homeland. It was a poorly kept secret. Everyone knew there was only one worthwhile target left. Nevertheless, leaves up to a month's duration in the United States were available to those veterans who had been out of the country 33 months or longer. There would be plenty of time for them to return during the big invasion as replacements. This time the 2d Division would be in the assault.<sup>10</sup>

The men were still chuckling about an incident that happened upon the return from Okinawa. The division commander, Major General Watson, who was

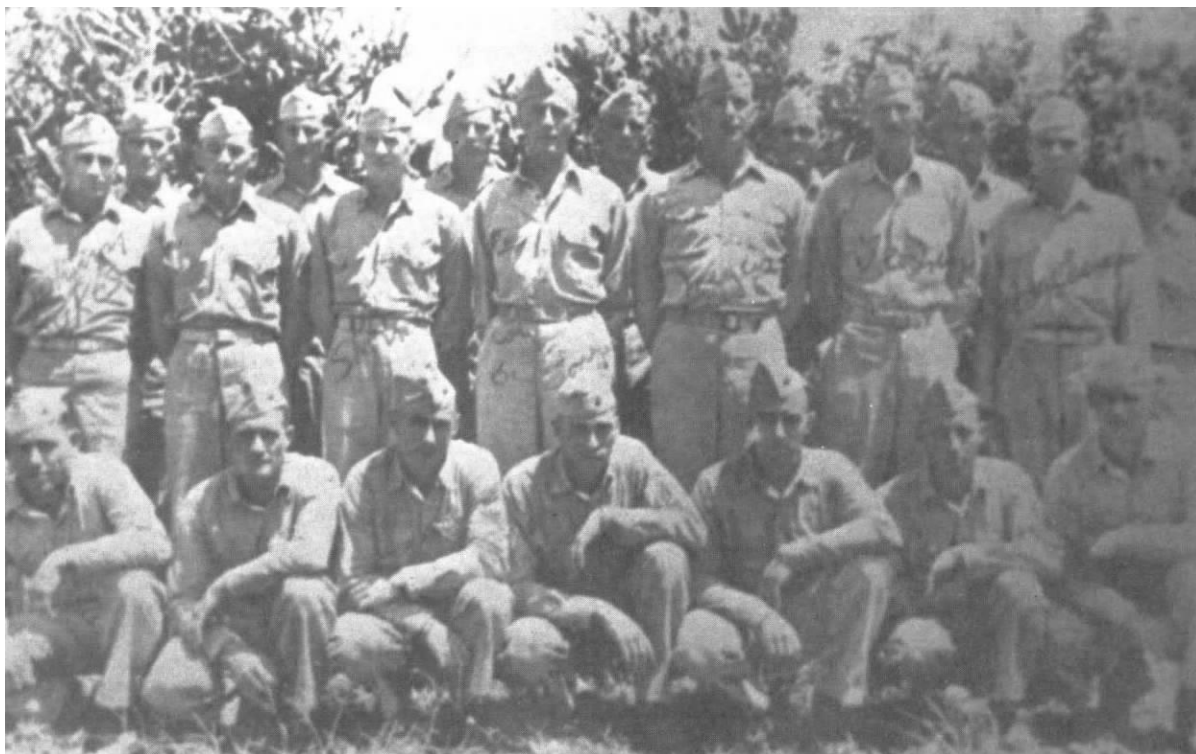
rather short in stature, had a tall, lanky aide-de-camp. The aide was never seen to smile, and everybody called him "Laughing Boy." He sat in the back seat of the general's jeep as they bounced around the island, and always had a sad expression on his face like a basset hound.

While bringing the general's jeep ashore from the transport to the pier on Saipan, "Laughing Boy" had a terrible mishap. One of the sailors had forgotten to secure the ramp of the LCVP carrying the jeep and the aide. About 10 feet from the pier, the ramp let down, and the LCVP sank with the jeep and "Laughing Boy." The aide only got wet, but it took people on the pier a while to raise the jeep. When the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, landed on the pier "Laughing Boy" was a dejected sight. Still dripping wet, and sitting on an equally soaked footlocker, he stared glumly into the distance. When Lieutenant Colonel Jones learned what had happened, he asked the aide if he had informed the commanding general. He received an affirmative answer, followed by this unsolicited remark, "The way he hollered you'd think the old son-of-a-bitch believed I did it on purpose. Anyhow, how was I to know he had three wrist watches in his foot locker?"

During the afternoon of 17 July 1945, Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, received a telephone call from American cabinet officer Henry L. Stimson. Churchill glanced at a sheet of paper before him on which he had written "Babies satisfactorily born." By Stimson's manner he knew something extraordinary had occurred. "It means," Stimson said later in the phone call, "that the experiment in the New Mexico desert has come off. The atomic bomb is a reality." No one then could measure the immediate military consequences of the discovery.<sup>11</sup> The final decision lay with President Truman. The British had given their concurrence to its use as a weapon even before the test had taken place.

None of this was known, of course, to the 6th Marines or any other members of the vast accumulation of military power poised for the final thrust at Japan. Once Okinawa was declared secure, the ships unloaded and departed from Saipan. However, the many weapons cases, crates, jeep windshield protectors, and other items, were set aside and kept ready for the next order to mount out. In the meantime training continued, commanders held regular inspections of personnel and equipment, and the camps settled down to a daily routine.

During one such inspection of the 1st Battalion's gun shed, there was suddenly a series of unexpected



Author's Collection

*This photograph, taken on Saipan at the end of World War II, shows the few remaining officers and men of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, who had been with the battalion through all its Pacific campaigns. The battalion commander, LtCol William K. Jones, who joined as a second lieutenant in 1939 before Iceland, is in the center, first standing row.*

popping noises. Lieutenant Colonel Jones didn't crack a smile. After the inspection party had departed, the gunnery sergeant in charge breathed a sigh of relief. Then the new executive officer, Major Lawrence V. Patterson, returned highly indignant. "I want to know which of you men dared pass gas during a battalion commander's inspection," he said. The gunnery sergeant was in a quandary. He knew, and he suspected Jones did also, that the popping noises were caused by a batch of bottled homebrew beer they had aging under the tent deck. A few of the caps blew when the beer fermented too soon.

Lieutenant Colonels Jones and Haffner were old friends who had been in the 6th Marines ever since they came on active duty in 1939. Now that Haffner had command of the 3d Battalion, their tents were close together near the cliff in the regimental headquarters area. The normal routine meant that Haffner, a powerful man who stayed in great physical condition, got up before breakfast and did exercises with a barbell he had fashioned from a set of wheels from one of the island's small Japanese sugarcane railroad cars. Jones in the next tent would roll over and

complain that his sleep was being disturbed. In the evening before dinner Haffner went through another set of strenuous exercises. Jones again complained about the deep breathing, grunts, and other noises, only this time while relaxing on his canvas cot sipping a glass of "liberated" Japanese cherry wine. This went on for some time. Finally, fitness report time came. One evening Haffner came into Jones' tent and inquired if he had gotten his fitness report. When Jones answered, "Yes," Haffner asked, "What did the Colonel give you for physical fitness?" Jones answered, "Outstanding," and, guessing something was wrong, asked, "What did he give you?" "Just 'Very Good,'" replied Haffner angrily. "I'm going to talk to him about it," he said as he stomped out.

A little while later Haffner returned muttering to himself. "What did the Colonel say?" Jones asked, chuckling. "You won't believe this," Haffner replied, "but when I asked why he only gave me 'Very Good' he had the nerve to say that he did so because any man who had to spend as much time as I did exercising couldn't be in very good shape!"

Haffner walked angrily out of the tent, got his



weights, went to the edge of the cliff and threw them over. He then returned to the tent where Jones was convulsed with laughter, flopped down on the extra cot, and demanded a glass of cherry wine. *C'est la guerre!*

In March 1945 Major General Curtis LeMay started firebombing Yokohama and Tokyo a little before the American invasion of Okinawa. It brought the war close to home for the Japanese civilians who previously had grown used to high explosive bombs. Since they lived mainly in flimsy wooden houses, the firestorms caused by the American incendiary bombs brought utter devastation and the loss of many civilian lives. This and the subsequent loss of Okinawa brought the realization to many Japanese that they had lost the war.

During the summer of 1945, many changes took place in the command structure of the 6th Marines. Although Colonel Williams remained as the commanding officer and Lieutenant Colonel Games was still the executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jones of the 1st Battalion and Lieutenant Colonel Haffner of the 3d Battalion received orders to the United States. Jones was relieved by Lieutenant Colonel Richard D. Strickler, and Haffner by Lieutenant Colonel Glenn R. Long. Clark remained in command of the 2d Battalion. Major Patterson, the 1st Battalion executive officer, also returned to the States after relief by Major Patrick Laughlin.

On the night of 5-6 August 1945, a B-29 named the *Enola Gay* took off from Tinian and dropped its atomic bomb on Hiroshima.<sup>12</sup> Beginning on 10 July the hundreds of planes of Admiral Halsey's Task Force 38 bombed the islands from Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south. They also battered the remnants of the Japanese fleet in the Inland Sea. U.S. battleships were bombarding the home islands at will. The naval blitz, together with the savage B-29 strikes from Saipan and Tinian, drove the Japanese to their knees. With their cities aflame, their fleet destroyed,

and the remnants of their once-powerful army dispersed, there was no way for the Japanese to strike back effectively. They wanted to quit, but they were not ready for unconditional surrender. They tried to negotiate.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. pressure continued.

All of this was well known in the 6th Marines. Excitement grew as letters from home inquired as to when they would be coming home for the long-awaited reunion. Soon they thought. Now an assault landing wouldn't be necessary. The previous 2 May the Germans had surrendered and the war in Italy ended.<sup>14</sup> The U.S. Army was the logical one for occupation duty, the Marines thought. The Marines would go home and be demobilized. Wishful thinking! The old timers didn't let themselves be caught up in the enthusiasm of the moment. They knew there was work yet to be done.

On the day Okinawa was secured, Major General Watson was transferred to Washington. Brigadier General LeRoy P. Hunt, the assistant division commander, got another star and took command of the 2d Division.<sup>15</sup> He was well liked and morale remained high.

A second atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, this time on Nagasaki, on 9 August 1945.<sup>16</sup> The Japanese agreed to the Allies' terms for surrender. The war was over. The long trek from the cold winds of Iceland, through the jungle hell of Guadalcanal and the bloody fighting at Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian had finally ended in victory. The men of the 6th Marines were elated, and both surprised and glad they had survived.

Soon the word came from division, "Prepare to load out." The crates, weapons boxes, and jeep windshield protectors which had been kept after moving back from Okinawa were broken out. But less-welcome word also came. They were not going home, they were going to be part of the occupation force for Japan.

"That Tinian was a good investment, I guess," one Marine said.<sup>17</sup>

"Yes, but I'd just as soon be going home," answered another.

## CHAPTER 8

# The Occupation

*Background—The War Ends!—The Occupation—Just Marking Time—Heading Home*

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### *Background*

When the first atomic bomb to hit Japan was dropped from the *Enola Gay* on Hiroshima early on 6 August 1945, it missed its aiming point by a few hundred feet, according to the one man, then-24-year-old Lieutenant Jacob Baset, who was on both the *Enola Gay* and *Bock's Car*, the plane that dropped the second bomb two days later on Nagasaki. The first bomb was nicknamed "Little Boy"; the second one, "Fat Man." Baset's responsibility on both planes was to monitor the working of the fuse device that set off the bombs. This occurred when radar beams bounced off the ground indicated that the weapon had fallen to a precise altitude for an air burst which would give maximum destruction. The first drop, although off the mark, went very well. The Nagasaki drop suffered from visibility problems. Actually, the target was to be Kokura. However, the city of Yawato had been fire-bombed two nights before and Kokura, downwind from Yawato, was obscured by smoke and haze from the still burning city of Yawato. Rather than drop "Fat Man" in the sea and abort the mission, the crew received orders to try Nagasaki. Since the second drop was to be "the convincer," they were supposed to bomb the residential parts of the city, causing maximum casualties. Instead, when the plane got over Nagasaki they found that it was still closed-in by weather. They had to make a radar run. During the last 10 or 15 seconds of the run, a hole opened in the clouds and Behan (the bombardier) said "I got it, I got it, I got it," and he dropped visually. The hole was too small. Behan missed his aiming point, and dropped the bomb in the middle of the industrial area near the Mitsubishi Shipyards. This was three miles southeast of the residential area.<sup>1</sup>

At this time all the 6th Marines knew was that the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis* had stopped at Tinian on a special mission. Actually, it later turned out that she had dropped off the final parts for the atomic bombs. When men asked the 8th Marines, still on Tinian, about the *Indianapolis*, they didn't know any more than the Saipan Marines knew.

When the *Enola Gay* dropped the first bomb, the common question in the 6th Marines was, "What in the hell is an atomic bomb?" Naturally, no one knew.

Even the power of the blast and the damage it could cause were beyond imagination.

This was near the 14th of August since President Truman announced the end of the war on that date. Four days earlier, 10 August 1945, Japan had sued for peace under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, i.e., unconditional surrender. The war had cost the Marines a total of 86,940 dead and wounded.<sup>2</sup>

The occupation of northern Japan went swiftly and smoothly. The Japanese cooperated to the fullest with Supreme Commander, Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur. There was a complete lack of overt signs of resistance. This allowed considerable changes in the operation plans of the U.S. Sixth Army and the Fifth Fleet. It permitted an administrative landing without the show of force initially planned. Nevertheless, amongst the men who had fought the Japanese since Guadalcanal days, there was considerable skepticism.<sup>3</sup>

### *The War Ends!*

Back on Saipan before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the men of the 6th Marines still believed that they were preparing to invade Japan. This caused a great deal of apprehension among both the new officers and men and the veterans. The new men were uneasy because they couldn't understand the seriousness of combat when they hadn't had a chance to experience it. The veterans also felt uneasy because they were beginning to wonder if they had used up their luck, and if the law of averages would catch up with them during the major encounter the invasion of the homeland of Japan would certainly be.

Around July and August they began to hear rumors that perhaps they wouldn't have to invade Japan because the war would end. These rumors were coming from the Army Air Forces officers flying the B-29s.

One night the Marines were at the outdoor movie when suddenly an announcement ordered them to return to their areas immediately. Once there, they combat loaded on 6x6 trucks and rushed to defend the airstrip. It was an emergency maneuver that proved costly since one jeep turned over during the rush, killing a Marine. Much later they learned the event occurred on the night the first atomic bomb was leaving for Japan. The Army Air Force had heard rumors that



Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino

*American warships lie at anchor in the harbor of Nagasaki, Japan, in September 1945 after bringing the 6th Marines to that atom-bomb-destroyed city for occupation duty.*

the Japanese were going to try to blow up the bomb before it left.

Shortly after the dropping of the two bombs, the men of the 6th Marines started to believe the rumors about the war ending. Surprisingly there wasn't as much celebration as one would expect. There were mixed emotions. The veterans were happy the war was over, but suspected that someday we would have to fight the Russians. Since they had self-confidence and had already proven themselves in combat, why not do it now and save their children from getting involved in the future? The new and mostly young joinees were still in an excited mood and thought in their ignorance that combat would be fun. Overall there was mild excitement and happiness for those veterans who felt their luck might not last through another major campaign.

In early September, the 6th Marines got the word to prepare to move to Nagasaki to police the area and make sure there was no resistance. Few Marines liked the assignment. The oldtimers wanted to go home and rejoin their families. The newer replacements believed the Army would make better occupation troops, and they also wanted to go home. Nevertheless, preparations began for the move to Japan.

#### *The Occupation*

Lieutenant General Harry Schmidt, still commanding the V Amphibious Corps, received the responsibility of occupying Kyushu island. The major objectives were the cities of Nagasaki and Sasebo, a major naval base. On 22 September the 5th Marine

Division arrived off Sasebo and landed. The next day the 2d Marine Division landed at Nagasaki, just three weeks after the atom bomb explosion.<sup>4</sup>

The ships carrying the 6th Marines came up the river to the Mitsubishi Shipyard, which was near the center of the city. They had a Japanese pilot who, however unsurprisingly, many thought acted as though the war was still on. Everyone could see a lot of debris and bodies floating out to sea. The ships moved slowly through the mine fields with embarked Marines awed by the sights.

A group of nuns in full habit waved to them from the right bank as they neared their destination. They were apparently attached to a large Catholic church in the area. The scene was incongruous.

Finally the ships reached the Mitsubishi Shipyard. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, was the first to land of the 2d Division units. The Marines debarked and moved to a large, heavily damaged building for billeting. The Japanese had used it for building midget submarines. The atom bomb had blown off the roof and the structure was in poor shape.

The Marines moved into the best remaining parts of the building. They set up billets for officers and enlisted men. The regimental headquarters moved into a steel-reinforced concrete building within a half mile of the center of the atomic blast. Although badly damaged it was usable.<sup>5</sup>

The Japanese still had four million men under arms after the surrender, and the cooperative spirit of these

men was a surprise. Many Americans had expected that at least some of the heavily armed men might resist the Emperor's order to lay down their arms. None did.

First Lieutenant Alfred A. Mannino, who had command of a machine gun platoon in the 1st Battalion, recalls that he landed with his machine guns loaded. They fully expected resistance. Since they believed they had better be prepared, all Marines were combat loaded. They saw no Japanese women or children during the first three days. After that, the women and children started to come out of the caves and sheltered areas slowly and cautiously. By the fourth or fifth days there was a fair amount of traffic in the streets.<sup>6</sup>

Further north and closer to Tokyo was Yokosuka, a great naval base and shipyard. At 0930 on 29 August the reconstituted 4th Marines landed there. At 1018 it raised the U.S. flag and Commander, Task Force 31, Rear Admiral Oscar Badger, on the USS *San Diego*, took the surrender of the area.<sup>7</sup>

The U.S. Sixth Army, which had the responsibility under Supreme Commander Allied Powers for the southern island of Kyushu, followed the SCAP direc-

tives for the disposition of Japanese military equipment. They divided all material into the following categories:

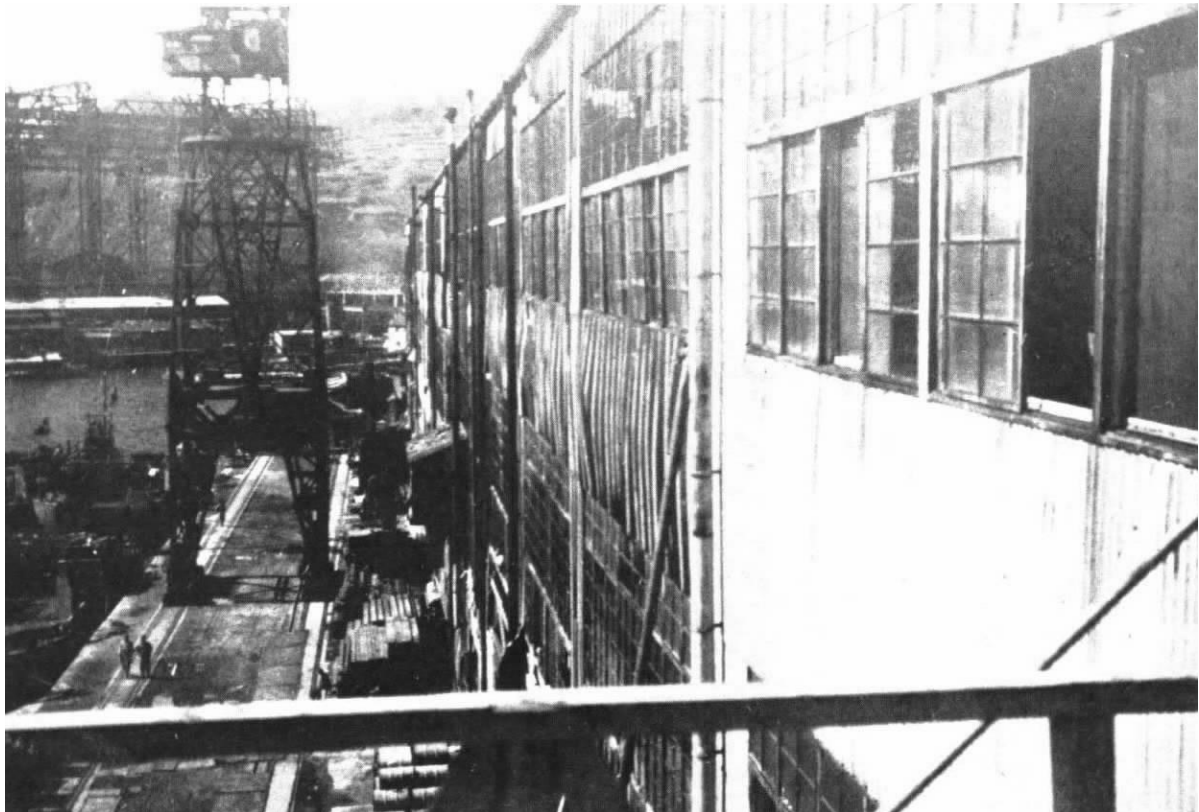
1. That to be destroyed or scrapped (explosives and armaments not needed for souvenirs or training purposes).
2. That to be used for our operations (telephones, radios, and vehicles).
3. That to be returned to the Japanese Home Ministry (fuel, lumber, etc.).
4. That to be issued as trophies.
5. That to be shipped to the U.S. as trophies or training gear.<sup>8</sup>

During the first couple of weeks in the Mitsubishi factory, Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, had set up its cots on the second floor with nothing but the sky above since the building had no roof. To make matters worse, a typhoon approached the coast of Japan. The rain came. Water on the deck rose almost to cot level.

Early in September the weather turned cold, and the Marines were still in their summer-weight com-

*This warehouse on the docks of Nagasaki, Japan, itself damaged by the atom bomb, serves as a barracks for units of the 6th Marines at the beginning of the occupation of Japan.*

Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino



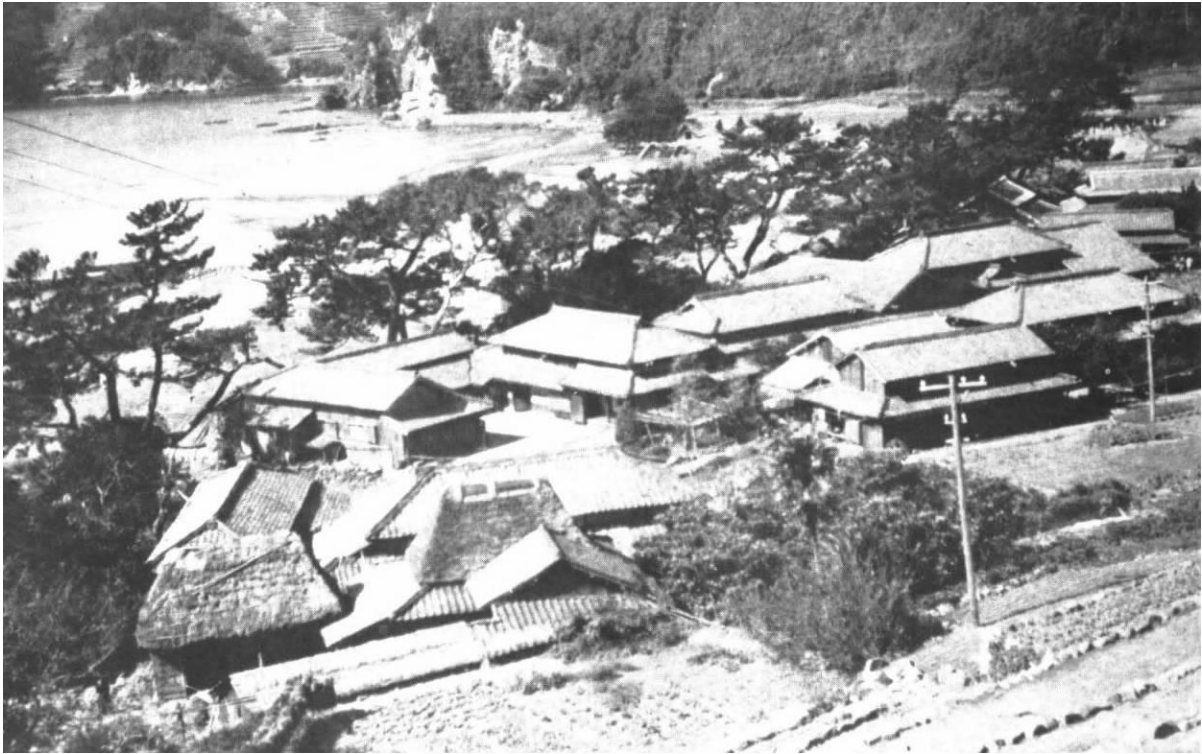


Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino

*A Marine's snapshot records a small Japanese army camp near Nagasaki, one of several the 6th Marines disarmed at the beginning of occupation duty in Japan in 1945.*

bat uniforms, and living in a damaged factory. A temporary warehouse for supplies was in operation. The officer-in-charge had jackets and blankets, but he wouldn't release them because, according to regulations, this shouldn't be done until 1 October. Major General Hunt came through on an inspection. When he asked the routine questions, "Are you happy, son? Are you getting enough to eat?" he was told they were cold. When the general asked why, a sergeant told him that although there were warm clothing and blankets in the warehouse, they could not be released until 1 October. The next day the supply officer issued the clothing and blankets.

General Walter Krueger, who commanded the Sixth Army, which originally was scheduled to attack Kyushu, was well pleased with the progress of the occupation in the area of the V Amphibious Corps (VAC). At 1000 on 24 September he assumed command of all U.S. forces ashore on Kyushu. His other corps began landing the next day.<sup>9</sup>

Under the plans made when it became apparent American forces would receive the cooperation of the Japanese, direct military rule was abandoned. Instead, the responsible occupation force commanders were to supervise the execution of SCAP directives by the

Japanese government. These directives implemented the MacArthur policy of using but not supporting that government.

American infantry regiments became the "Chief instrument of demilitarization and control. The entire plan for the imposition of the terms of surrender was based upon the presence of infantry regiments in all of the prefectures within the Japanese homeland."<sup>10</sup>

This then was the general plan employed by the 6th Marines. After it established initial liaison with the local Japanese authorities, the regiment moved into bivouac areas, some prepared by Japanese labor. Reconnaissance patrols located military installations and checked inventories of war materiel submitted by the Japanese. The regimental commander then divided his zone into battalion areas of responsibility. Before moving units into these areas, however, the Marines ensured there were proper billeting and sanitation measures in existence. The company commanders had the authority to seize any military installations in their zones, and to use both Japanese military personnel not yet demobilized, and laborers furnished by Home Ministry representatives, to dispose of materiel.

In addition to the already explained duties of the

occupation forces, they also were responsible for the processing of hundreds of thousands of military and civilian personnel returning from the once far-flung empire. Additionally there were thousands of Korean, Chinese, and Formosan prisoners and impressed laborers requiring care and return to their native countries. In these movements the Americans primarily used Japanese vessels and crews to conserve American manpower and resources.

One scene that vividly impressed members of the 6th Marines when they first docked at Nagasaki were several American hospital ships taking on board severely emaciated former American prisoners of war, many of whom had to be carried on stretchers. The tasks assigned to the Marines as occupation forces took on even new meaning as the days wore on.

As the regiment settled down into the new routine, the days at first were action-packed. Quonset huts, rejuvenated Japanese barracks and buildings, messhalls, heads, showers, and the other necessities started to appear. The Navy had been examining women in the Nagasaki houses of prostitution and was ready to reopen them. General Krueger heard of this and put a stop to it. As one Marine remembers it, "You could hear the howl that went way back to San Francisco."

Early in September the regiment moved from the dilapidated Mitsubishi dock area to a former Japanese army camp. Reconnaissance patrols went to the surrounding small towns and villages in furtherance of SCAP directives. In some cases any weapons found would be piled in the center of the village and destroyed. Many of them were rifles, and old ones at that. The search for some wood or coal that the Marines could burn in stoves at night was not ignored by company commanders, in spite of SCAP directives. It was

*Occupation duty in Japan went smoothly, as shown in this informal snapshot of 1stLt Alfred A. Mannino and another Marine officer with a young Japanese.*

Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino



turning bitterly cold. On one such quest, the commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, First Lieutenant Alfred A. Mannino, went into a village, looked up the mayor, and told him in his best Japanese that he needed wood or coal to keep his men warm. When he had finished, the Mayor smiled and in perfect English said, "You speak very good Japanese." When Mannino expressed surprise, the mayor said he was a graduate of Saint Louis University, and had enjoyed four years there. He also said he had played on the university golf team, and even had an engraved golf club he had won as an award.

During the visit the children of the town kept coming up to Mannino's jeep and touching the tires. They had never seen anything like it. In fact, the Mayor said, the Marines were the first western people ever to have visited the village. He was very cordial and gave up the necessary coal to burn in the company's barracks.

The Marines' barracks at this time consisted of Quonset huts. Young Japanese girls, teenagers, came in every day at noon to clean the buildings. The officers' huts were set aside from the rest of the battalion and regimental headquarters areas. One of the girls who came regularly to one of the officers' huts spoke reasonably good English. The officer asked her to help him speak better Japanese. After several months she worked up her courage and asked him permission to ask a question, "Which one of your parents did you kill before you were allowed to join the Marine Corps?" The astounded officer asked her why she asked such a question. She replied that she had been told that before you could join the Marines you had to prove how nasty you were by killing either your mother or father. She believed this, as did some of her Japanese friends.

There were other surprises in this strange land for the Marines. On another occasion as the officers returned to their billeting area, the battalion commander asked an officer to get a stick and kill a snake coming out from under one of the Quonset huts. He pointed to the snake which was about three feet long. The officer he asked was at the same time looking at another snake he thought to be about 20 feet long. When he pointed to the huge snake the Colonel hollered for him to get a rifle and kill it. The officer got the rifle but the snake disappeared into a cave before he could kill it. They didn't investigate any further.

As the days wore on the regiment slowly returned to peacetime activities. The occupation duty had become boring and tedious. There was considerable exchanging of personnel as the older veterans, who were



Photo courtesy of Mr. A. A. Mannino

*The historic Kinkakuji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, sits beside its lake, and serves as one of the many scenic attractions visited by members of the 6th Marines during rest and recreation (R&R) leaves granted during the early months of the American occupation of Japan.*

going home, were replaced by newer Marines. It became more and more important to keep the men busy. Otherwise, to relieve their boredom, they would leave camp and seek trouble. In addition to beginning a regular training routine, the regiment emphasized intramural sports. Typically, complaints continued in spite of every effort made by the officers.

#### *Just Marking Time*

Since the regiment and battalions were spread out into different assigned areas, the companies didn't see much of one another. This made it very difficult for the regimental chaplains, both Catholic and Protestant, to hold services each Sunday. "Lay leader" Marines, provided with suitable literature, would hold meetings and read to those assembled in place of a regular service.

Every Saturday the regiment would hold an inspection during which the attached units displayed their tanks, artillery, and equipment. The Japanese would come from miles around to see the show. They seemed to appreciate not only the display of power but also the precision drill of the Marines.

No one knew of the possible side effects of an atomic explosion. The Marines walked around the ruins of

Nagasaki with nothing on but their dungarees and issue shoes. Some girders in the wrecked Mitsubishi shipyard were still too hot to touch when the Marines arrived. In the center of the bomb blast everything had been evaporated except the wheels of a street car. It was a dead city, with people too stunned to talk much about what had happened. One former U.S. Navy steward who had retired there but still spoke good English said, "We all thought the world had come to an end. There was first an intense flash followed by an unbearable heat wave that almost cooked us. We had all been through conventional bombing before and could not account for what had happened. It was like hell."

Later on, groups of Marines were allowed to go on rest and recreation (R&R) leaves to nearby points of interest, such as the city of Kyoto. An officer would accompany these R&R groups. The train which picked up the Marines stopped in each area to pick up the ones that qualified. Each such area group had a sergeant in charge. The officer and the sergeants were responsible to see that all personnel returned safely to their units. Once in a city like Kyoto the officer and sergeants had very little to do since all activities were supervised by R&R personnel. On one such trip the

roll call for the return trip revealed five Marines missing. The officer refused to let the train leave until he had accounted for all of the men. At the end of 30 minutes of holding the train the engineer told the officer he was going to leave without the missing men. The officer took out his pistol and told the engineer he would shoot him if he moved the train. Of course, the officer had no intention of carrying out his threat, but the engineer fell for the bluff. After another half-hour the five Marines arrived. They admitted that they had liked Kyoto so much they told the R&R personnel that they had missed their train and intended to stay for another R&R period. They didn't get away with it.

During the long R&R periods (approximately three weeks) a number of Japanese women would attach themselves to the group. In this case, as the Marines boarded the train, around 200 women also climbed aboard. Since it was a three-day train ride, the officer-in-charge decided to let them stay, as it was his responsibility to bring the Marines back. Nobody had said anything about civilians being involved. At the end of the line there were still two dozen women on board. These he turned over to the Red Cross and asked them to see that the women were safely returned to their villages. It is easy to understand why officers dreaded being assigned to supervise R&R groups.

After a few months, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, moved to Sasebo, another coastal city. There Company C took over the naval airbase and with it the responsibility for looking after the equipment that was being unloaded from U.S. ships. This consisted of thousands of jeeps; trucks of all sizes, including 6x6s; armored half-tracks; and other types of Marine Corps vehicles. These vehicles covered many acres and had to be guarded. Fortunately the Japanese were most cooperative and caused few problems.

On a few occasions, an officer would be invited to be the guest of honor at the homes of local dignitaries. There the officers were given the traditional "first head," of steamed fish. Besides not finding the dish particularly appetizing, very few Americans could eat the eyes, as was expected of them.

In spite of the occasional R&R outings and intensive efforts by their officers to relieve their boredom, occupation duty was becoming more and more tedious for Marines. The oldtimers waited for their discharge papers and transportation back to the states. The future of the new joinees in the regiment was uncertain and the subject of many rumors.

In 1945, after the surrender, Congress set the peacetime strength of the Corps at 107,000. This was nearly six times its prewar strength, but less than a quarter

*These buildings at Hadnot Point house the headquarters of the 2d Marine Division as they have since 1946 when the division returned to the United States from occupation duty.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A452656





of its top wartime strength of 485,053. There would be two Fleet Marine Forces—one in the Pacific with headquarters in Hawaii, and one in the Atlantic, headquartered in the Norfolk, Virginia area. Each force was to have a division and wing plus a few supporting combat and combat service units.<sup>11</sup> Even with this reduction in the number of units, peacetime strength ceilings eventually cut these division, wing, and support units down to almost skeletal size.

In late 1945 Colonel Gregon A. Williams moved up from the 6th Marines to become Chief of Staff of the 2d Marine Division. Colonel Jack P. Juhan relieved him for a short time as commanding officer. Colonel James P. "Phil" Berkeley in turn relieved Juhan in early 1946, and retained command of the regiment until it returned to the United States.

As the other divisions returned to the United States, they shrank to cadres before the Marine Corps deactivated them. The 4th Division deactivated in November 1945, followed by the 3d Division in December, the 5th Division after returning from Japan in January 1946, and the 6th Division in April 1946.<sup>12</sup> This left only the 1st and 2d Divisions on the active list. The 1st Division was in the occupation force for China and the 2d Division in Japan.

This was all known to the members of the 6th Marines as they fretted to get home. They received their discharges based on a point system which considered their length of service, time overseas, wounds, and medals.

In February 1946 the 6th Marines dropped to its peacetime strength, as did the other units in the 2d Division. Soon afterwards the 3d Battalion returned home for disbandment. On 15 June 1946, the 2d Division turned over its zone of occupation for loading out and returning to the United States.

### *Heading Home*

At first it was exciting. The veterans knew that it was much preferable to an assault landing against a stubborn enemy. Even the newcomers who had never experienced combat knew in their hearts that this was true.

Occupation duty had now become a grind. Old friends and respected veterans were already home enjoying the reunion with their families. Some were even planning new entrances into the civilian world. Now that the regiment was on the way to the United States, all its members were eager for either a discharge or to continue their careers in the Corps and face whatever the future held.

The 2d Marines left Sasebo on 13 June 1946, and the 8th Marines soon after. Both were bound for Norfolk, Virginia. The division headquarters, also bound for Norfolk, left on 24 June. Once in the States, the 2d Division would occupy Camp Lejeune.

The 6th Marines parted company with old comrades, for it was going to the west coast rather than the east coast. The regiment arrived at Camp Pendleton on 15 July 1946. Initially it was attached to the Marine Corps Base. On 11 September it became part of the 3d Marine Brigade. When the brigade disbanded on 16 September 1947, the 6th Marines transferred to the 1st Marine Division, also at Camp Pendleton. On 1 October 1947 the 6th Marines dropped to battalion size (the 1st Battalion) when its Headquarters and Service Company disbanded and its 2d Battalion became Headquarters, 7th Marines. For a short time, 1 October to 17 October 1949, the 6th Marines went out of existence. However, on 17 October the Marine Corps reactivated a new 6th Marines as part of the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune.<sup>13</sup>

The 6th Marines had been the last of the 2d Division to reach the Pacific fighting at Guadalcanal, the last to leave occupation duty in Japan, and the last to reach the 2d Division at Camp Lejeune, where it comfortably resides today. Not only had it been one of the three infantry regiments of the 2d Division which had fought hard battles, it had provided the infantry elements for two Marine brigades—the 1st Provisional and the 3d. The regiment had covered itself with honors and distinction in World War II as it had done previously in World War I, and as it continues to do today. It passed on to today's 6th Marines not only the Croix de Guerre from World War I, but also a Presidential Unit Citation and a host of stars on additional campaign streamers for its battle flag from World War II.

The spirit of the World War I and World War II 6th Marines lives on today not only in its active-duty members but also in its retired and former members. Every 20 November, or on a weekend near that date, some of the survivors of Tarawa meet at Center House, Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., to commemorate that historic battle. A moment of silence is a traditional ritual of remembrance from those still left to those who never came home. In June 1984 the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines' veterans held a reunion in Kansas City, Missouri, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the landing on Saipan. More than 100 survivors from places as far away as Hawaii attended. There were many former Navy corpsmen in the crowd. Fifty percent of those attending brought their wives.

As John Toland, the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, wrote in his first novel, *Gods of War*, "Much of the action centers around the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. I chose this outfit not only because of its outstanding

history prior to World War II but because its performance in the Pacific typified, in my opinion, the U.S. Marine Corps. It was a true band of brothers in battle, and remains so in peace."

## CHAPTER 9

# 1945-1965

*Background—Korea—Rebuilding the 6th Marines—Action in Lebanon—Cuban Crisis  
The Quiet Time—Dominican Crisis—Lessons Learned*

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### *Background*

As had happened before, after World War II was won the country, and a lot of the world, relaxed. A euphoria set in. Congress again decided to restrict appropriations for military purposes as it had done so often in the past. This action actually fit in with the prevailing view of the populace. The country was sick of war and all it meant. Surely World War II was "the war to end all wars." Those who had served were anxious to get home, pick up their civilian careers, and forget about fighting. Once again the United States' great balanced military force was allowed to rapidly disintegrate.

The reduction of the vast store of equipment built to support and win the war took various forms. The ships that constituted the greatest navy the world had ever seen were sailed to the United States and "put into mothballs," i.e., dead storage, sold, or, in the case of a few, kept in active service. Many ships, from battleships and aircraft carriers to cargo ships and tankers, were retired from active duty as the numbers of Navy personnel shrank. Similar action was taken by the other services. It was claimed that it was cheaper to throw things in the ocean or bury heavy equipment, tanks, and ammunition overseas, than to ship them home.

As determined as the country was to disarm itself rapidly, it was equally as dedicated to spending millions of dollars to rebuild the cities and economies of war-ravaged allies and former enemies alike. In April 1948 a law was enacted to set up a European recovery program, known as the Marshall Plan after the Secretary of State, Army General George Catlett Marshall. The Greek and Turkish aid programs, recognition of Israel, and the initial discussions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also came during his secretaryship.<sup>1</sup>

Marshall later became Secretary of Defense under President Truman and, some felt, continued his efforts to emasculate the Navy and Marine Corps as he was thought to have done as the trusted military advisor to Truman. He was followed in this sensitive post by James Forrestal, with whom the Corps had not been particularly satisfied. Nevertheless, Forrestal's regime was looked on with nostalgia in comparison to that of his successor, Louis A. Johnson.

It was the 28th of March 1949, when Johnson was sworn in as Secretary of Defense. Truman was surfeited with both the Navy and the Marine Corps. He expressly directed Johnson to remember that economy was the watchword, and that he particularly wanted the Navy and the Marine Corps "brought to heel." Johnson's attitude was expressed to Admiral Richard L. Connally shortly after Johnson was appointed Secretary of Defense. He said:

Admiral, there is no reason for having a Navy and a Marine Corps. General Bradley (then Chief of the Joint Staff) tells me amphibious operations are a thing of the past. We'll never have any more amphibious operations. That does away with the Marine Corps. And the Air Force can do anything the Navy can do, so that does away with the Navy.<sup>2</sup>

As had happened so often in the past, the Corps was under siege. Actually these attacks began in 1946 almost immediately after the end of World War II. Then-Commandant General Alexander A. Vandegrift, who earned the Medal of Honor at Guadalcanal, assembled his most trusted advisors. Together they fought the merger battles during the 1945-47 phase of the Marine Corps' struggle for survival. Once again the Corps was saved by Congress.

However, Truman and Johnson decreed that the Corps be cut from almost 75,000 to 65,000, its infantry forces cut from 11 to 8 battalions, and its aviation squadrons from 23 to 12.<sup>3</sup>

On the international scene other events would also take place during this period which would vitally affect the Marine Corps. In the Middle East waning British and French influence brought the rise of constant strife. Israel was born, setting off Jewish and Arab conflicts continuing to this day. In the Caribbean area, always a hotbed of revolutions and coups, the United States had a near-to-home strategic problem which still confronts the nation. In the Far East-Pacific area many problems, spawned by World War II and its aftermath, would test a nation rapidly disarming and preoccupied with its own social and economic problems.

### *Korea*

Although the 6th Marines did not fight in the Korean War as a regimental name, its former members were in the Inchon landing just the same. It is well, therefore, to consider what went on to better understand the evolution of the regiment.

When the war started on 25 June 1950, the 5th and 1st Marines were stationed at Camp Pendleton. Then-Commandant General Clifton B. Cates offered a regimental combat team and an aircraft group for immediate service during the first frantic hours. The Navy, Army, and Air Force were silent. Finally, General Cates persuaded the Chief of Naval Operations to give the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Far East authorization to offer General MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief Far East, a Marine air-ground brigade. MacArthur fired off a dispatch to the Joint Chiefs of Staff asking for the Marines. It wasn't until 3 July that the approval was given.<sup>4</sup>

At Camp Pendleton, the 1st Marine Division, already skeletonized, stripped out the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Edward A. Craig. The core of the ground element was to be the 5th Marines, then under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray of World War II fame.

As early as 10 July, MacArthur told Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., who visited him in Tokyo as the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Pacific, that if he only had the 1st Marine Division he would land it at Inchon.<sup>5</sup> Shepherd told him the rest of the division could be ready by the first of September, and went back to his headquarters to start badgering Cates to help him keep his promise to MacArthur.

The brigade sailed from San Diego on 12 July.<sup>6</sup> Army General Walton J. Walker's Eighth Army had been pushed back to a perimeter at the southern end of the Korean peninsula around the town of Pusan. The North Korean Army could not be stopped, it seemed. By the last week of July the perimeter threatened to collapse. MacArthur ordered the Marine brigade to Pusan as the last of his available reserves.

At the time, the strength of the Marine Corps was 74,279 on active duty, with 27,656 of them in the Fleet Marine Force. This was before Secretary Johnson's threat to reduce the Corps even more to 65,000 in his next fiscal year's budget. Nevertheless, to accommodate this force, which had been cut from 107,000 decreed by Congress at the end of World War II to the 75,000 limit set by executive order, the "J" tables of organization, slightly revised, had come into being. The original "J" tables did away with the regimental echelon while trying to experiment with a brigade echelon in its place.

Now the number of infantry regiments in a division was cut from 3 to 2, the number of battalions in a regiment from 3 to 2, the number of companies

in a battalion from 3 to 2, etc., right on down the line. The Marine aircraft wings were similarly affected. This was the state of the Marine Corps when North Korea invaded South Korea on Sunday, 25 June 1950.

Truman, remembering it had been only five years since World War II ended, refused to reinstate the draft. Faced with the imminent collapse of South Korea and thousands of Americans being killed, captured, or wounded, Truman gave permission to mobilize the Reserve and National Guard units. Such a mobilization took time, however, and there was no time to spare.

Meanwhile Headquarters Marine Corps, under constant pressure from MacArthur through Shepherd to build up the 1st Division for deployment to the Far East, took some unusual steps. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, was away from Camp Lejeune on Mediterranean duty with the Sixth Fleet. It and its ships were ordered to proceed through the Suez Canal directly to Korea. Personal baggage, etc., was to return to Camp Lejeune on a LST for storage. Once in Korea, the battalion reported to the 7th Marines and fleshed out that regiment, serving under its new designation as 3d Battalion, 7th Marines.

The division headquarters and the 1st Marines were put together in 10 days from the Camp Lejeune 6th Marines' battalion already sent out to Camp Pendleton and filled out with reserves and drafts of Marines from posts and stations. The Marine brigade sailed from San Diego on 12 July 1950.

Meanwhile, Colonel Homer L. Litzenberg, Commanding Officer, 6th Marines, was told to form the 7th Marines from what was left at Camp Lejeune and be prepared to move to Korea.

So, the assembling of the 1st Division for the Inchon landing consisted of the 5th Marines, being pulled from the Pusan perimeter and loading out of Pusan; the 7th Marines, still on the high seas, with one of its battalions coming by way of the Suez Canal; and the 1st Marines, which was staging out of Kobe, Japan. The division was literally formed on the battlefield and one of its regiments, the 7th Marines, had recently been the 6th Marines.

MacArthur unfortunately had other detractors in Washington, D.C., besides Truman and Johnson. In his memoirs he said:

The target date, because of the great tides at Inchon, had to be the middle of September. This meant that the staging for the landing at Inchon would have to be accomplished more rapidly than that of any other large amphibious operation in modern warfare. . . . My plan was opposed by powerful military influences in Washington. The essence of the operation depended upon a great amphibious movement,

but the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley, was of the considered opinion that such amphibious operations were obsolete—there would never be another successful movement of this sort.<sup>7</sup>

The outcome of this difference of opinion is well documented in the history of both the Inchon landing and MacArthur's career.

The 6th Marines at Camp Lejeune began to rebuild immediately. As was true for the rest of the 2d Division, this process was slowed by the necessity to provide replacements for the 1st Division fighting in Korea.

### *Rebuilding the 6th Marines*

Colonel Russell N. Jordahl was the first new regimental commander, followed almost immediately by Colonel Henry W. Buse, Jr., who then turned over command to Lieutenant Colonel William F. Prickett, who held command for a short time. Colonel Ormond R. Simpson then took command from 1952 to 1953. He was then sent to Korea to command first the 1st Marines and then serve as G-3 in the division. Then the slogan was "There are only two kinds of Marines—those who have been to Korea and those who are going." These were hard times for the understrength 6th Marines.

Colonel Simpson relieved Colonel Prickett, who had been executive officer to Colonel Buse in 1952. Buse had already moved to become the division's G-3. When Simpson examined the regimental colors behind his desk, he made a startling discovery. Although all of the bands on the staff were correct for World War I—silver, with the name of the engagement engraved thereon—those after World War I were homemade. A lot of them were copper, some were brass, and the etching was obviously done free-hand by an amateur. He sent for his sergeant major.

"Sergeant Major," he said, "what do you think of the bands?"

"The bands look terrible," the sergeant major answered.

Colonel Simpson said, "Alright, get some new bands, Sergeant Major."

With an "Aye, aye, sir," the sergeant major left.

In two months he showed up with a box of silver bands going back all the way through the history of the 6th Marines. Deciding that the emplacement of the bands deserved a ceremony, Simpson, through a great deal of effort, eventually located a Marine who had been in the regiment each time a band was awarded after World War I. Somewhere he found a Marine who had been there by scouring the entire division.

Some were old, grey-haired colonels, some former enlisted men now officers.

The division commander and his staff showed up along with the commanding officers of the other regiments. When Simpson launched into his speech covering the history of the regiment, it went fine at first. As each campaign was mentioned the appropriate silver band was slipped on the staff by the Marine he had found who had been there. He got through page six of his script, and the rest was missing. With more than 2,500 Marines looking on, Simpson had to speak without notes. It went off well and was a very impressive ceremony.

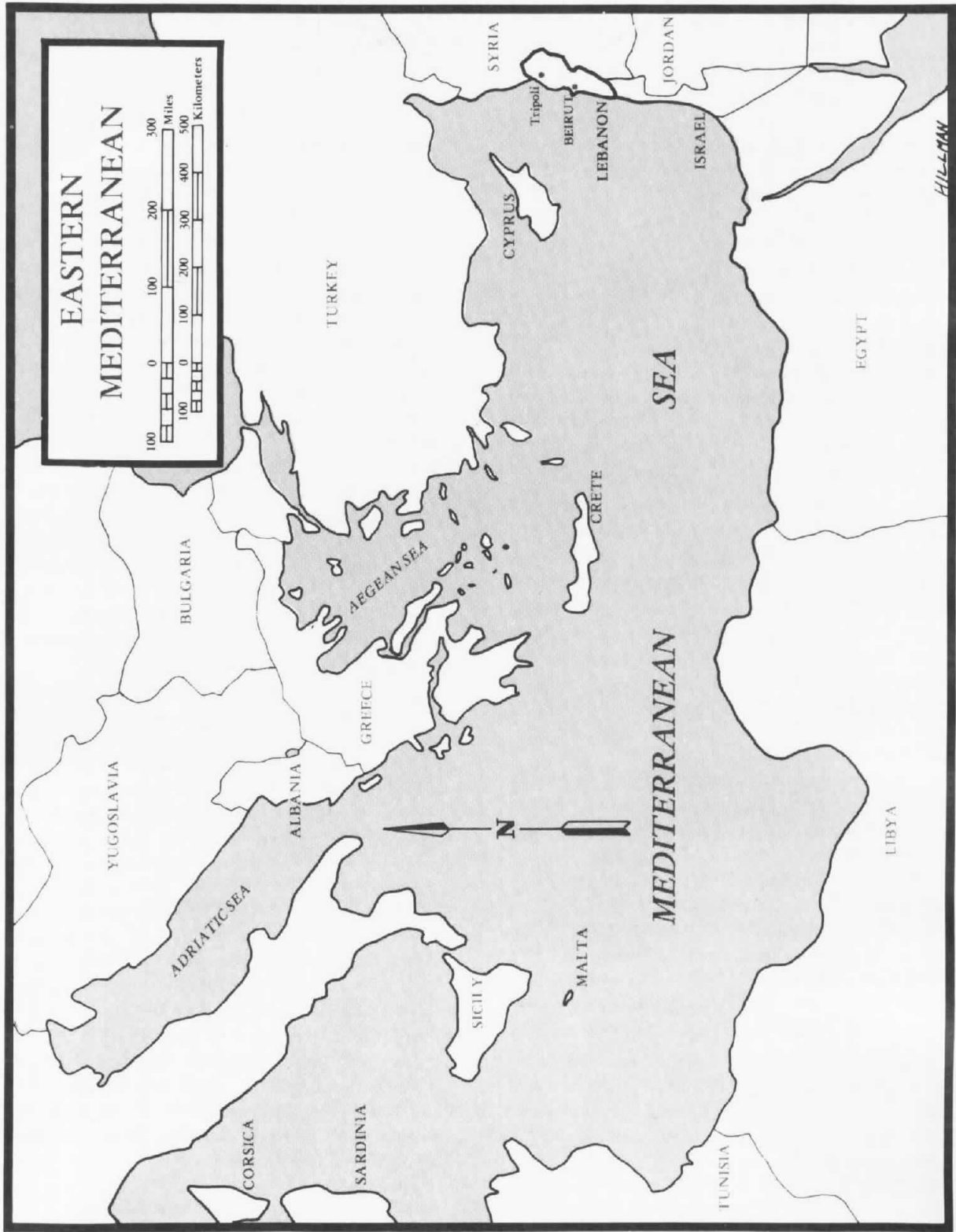
Although interesting, it was a frustrating time to be in command of the 6th Marines. The regiment had to take its turn in furnishing a battalion for either the Mediterranean or the Caribbean ready battalion. Drafts of enlisted men had to be furnished because of the war in Korea. Officers were ordered out by name.

A third responsibility was to train what was left, and participate in landing exercises with the rest of the division. The entire regiment went to Vieques and trained as a unit for three months. Then what was left of the division came to Vieques for an amphibious operation. The 6th Marines were designated the aggressors, and ordered to defend against the landing. At the time Major General Edwin A. Pollock was the division commander.

Simpson was in a quandary. It being a controlled war game, he knew the aggressors were supposed to defend against a landing, but lose eventually. He also knew that Lieutenant General Graves B. Erskine, as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, would be the Exercise Commander. General Erskine had the reputation of being fair, but tough. Whether or not to show Erskine his defensive plan posed a problem for Simpson. He called the Force chief of staff and asked him if the "Big E" wanted to see his plan. The chief said, "I don't know. Hold on, I will ask him."

He came back to the phone chuckling. "General Erskine," he said, "told me to tell you that he will arrive in Vieques two days before the landing. If he doesn't like your plan then, he will get another colonel to command the 6th Marines Reinforced." That made Simpson's day!

The exercise went well and the 6th Marines left for a well deserved rest in Panama. It had been in the field for almost four months. Panama was considered to be the best liberty port available. It could absorb a large number of people, and the reinforced regiment numbered about 5,000.



They had a good liberty. When the ships were ready to move out, one outfit reported two Marines missing. Although Simpson didn't know what to expect, he had military police all over the place checking jails, hospitals, etc. Then, just as the last ship was casting off lines from the dock, a Panamanian taxi came roaring over the hill. It pulled up to the dock, and two Marines jumped out. The lines had been cast off, but the ship put down a plank, and the two Marines climbed aboard. All present!<sup>8</sup>

On 21 August 1950 came the news about the victory of the 1st Marine Brigade in the Pusan perimeter at the First Battle of the Naktong. Congressman Gordon L. McDonough, a staunch friend of the Corps, took the occasion to write a letter to the President praising the Marines' fighting ability, describing how they were saving the Army from being pushed into the sea, and declaring that the Corps should have its own representative on the Joint Chiefs.

This infuriated Truman, who was coming under heavy criticism for the unpreparedness of our forces in Korea and Japan. He vented his frustrations on the Marines by writing the Congressman a furious response in which he belittled the Marine Corps. McDonough immediately had the letter inserted into the *Congressional Record*, thus making it public property. Senators and Congressmen from both sides of the aisle, the general public, and veterans' organizations, all excoriated the President. Although Truman did apologize formally to Commandant Cates, the attention the affair generated caused Senator Paul H. Douglas and Congressman Mike Mansfield, both former Marines, to introduce a bill providing that the Fleet Marine Force be composed of four combat divisions and four aircraft wings. Also, the bill provided that the Commandant should be a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed the bill. As enacted, the legislation (Public Law 416) stated that the Fleet Marine Force should have no less than three combat divisions and three aircraft wings. Truman signed the law.

The Marine Corps couldn't afford to gloat. Although allowed to expand, and to get rid of the "J" tables of organization, the bill provided many headaches, primarily caused by the rapid expansion. For example, the Corps grew from 75,000 in 1950, to 192,600 in June 1951, to 231,967 in 1952, and to 249,206 by June 1953.<sup>9</sup> However, all of this did let the 6th Marines accelerate its rebuilding to a full-strength, three-battalion regiment.

Consequently, throughout the 1950s and 1960s to the present day, the 2d Marine Division at Camp

Lejeune has provided the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean with a reinforced battalion. The 6th Marines provided one of its battalions when its turn came. The normal requirement for the "Med Battalion" was to conduct landing exercises and training exercises on friendly shores, sometimes in conjunction with the armed forces of those nations.

Also involved were some humanitarian missions. For example, the Greek Ionian Islands have frequent earthquakes. In August 1953 the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John K. Lynch, was ordered to the Greek islands of Zante, Cephalonia and Ithaca, which had experienced severe earthquakes. They found widespread destruction and loss of life. The naval group's medical personnel and supplies, together with the Marines, divided into six separate rescue teams, each team operating independently in its assigned disaster area. After administering to the dead, injured, and hungry, the Marines assisted in restoring power, repairing water mains, instituting sanitation measures, erecting temporary shelters, and clearing roads. The new battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Wilson F. Humphrey, who had relieved Lynch, and the rest of his battalion demonstrated that the Marines were combat-trained and ready, but they were equally effective in providing humanitarian aid.

In 1957, the 6th Marines (Reinforced), commanded by Colonel Austin C. Shofner, sailed 5,500 miles to Saros Bay in the vicinity of the World War I Gallipoli operation in Turkey. Operation Deepwater, as it was called, was a test of the military defensive capabilities of NATO's amphibious force. Gallipoli, a World War I disaster which was the first modern amphibious operation attempted, had long been a fascination for the United States Marine Corps. By studying the many mistakes of that operation, the Corps had slowly evolved the concept, tactics, and equipment between the two world wars that were so successful in the march across the Pacific in World War II. Here, however, in Operation Deepwater, the 6th Marines also chalked up their own "first." It was the first exercise in Europe to amphibiously use all elements of a joint task force — land, sea, and air — since World War II. The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, also became the first unit in the Marine Corps to participate in an amphibious tactical helicopter-borne operation overseas.

#### *Action in Lebanon*

Lebanon, geographically and historically a crossroads for Africans, Europeans, and Asians, not only has strategic importance, but also is unique among the other countries of the area as a composite of various reli-

gious factions. There are Catholics, Maronites, Chaldeans, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Syrians, and Arabs of different Moslem factions. The National Constitution of 1926 recognized this by requiring the allocation of government jobs and appointments among religious beliefs. This action mainly represented a division of power between the Christian and Moslem communities. Normally, it was agreed, there would be a Maronite Christian president, a Sunni Moslem premier, and a Shiite Moslem speaker of parliament. Parliamentary seats were to be allocated on the basis of the relative numerical strength of religious communities in each electoral district.

Strongly influenced by the western world, Lebanon became a center of learning and wealth, and the pleasure capital of the Middle East. It became noted for its beautiful beaches, and luxurious hotels and resorts, some of which were high in the mountains. Under French mandate after World War I, Lebanon became independent after World War II. Since its independence, the rivalry between the Moslem and Christian communities had risen. On 22 March 1945, Lebanon joined the Arab League Pact, and in 1948 it aligned itself with the other nations of the league in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. The country's international position was, therefore, precarious, and its internal situation delicate. It tried to play honest broker between competing camps, which caused it to receive diverse pressures from all sides.

In early May 1958, revolution on the part of the Moslems broke out against the administration of President Camille Chamoun, a Christian. The threat to Lebanon was not just internal. Reports of infiltrators from Syria and their aid to the rebels started to surface. The Lebanese government complained to the United Nations Security Council which, after much debate, decided to send a group of observers to Lebanon to investigate. The group was unable to obtain the necessary evidence. A coup d'etat in Iraq destroyed the only Arab member of the Baghdad Pact, which put an end to the Iraq-Jordan Federation and threatened the throne of King Hussein of Jordan. The only counterbalance to the Egypt-Syria union no longer existed. President Chamoun appealed to the United States and Great Britain for help.<sup>10</sup>

In November of 1957, the Joint Chiefs had cautioned Admiral James L. Holloway, Commander in Chief Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (CinC-NELM) of the possibilities of the overthrow of the Jordanian government and perhaps a coup d'etat in Lebanon. He was directed to plan for limited action if these contingencies occurred. Headquarters, 2d

Provisional Marine Brigade, under the command of Brigadier General Sidney S. Wade, was established at Camp Lejeune on 10 January 1958. Originally tasked to plan a combined operation in the Mediterranean, it was abruptly ordered to that area due to the riots and coup in Lebanon and the threat to Jordan. The brigade's infantry battalions, the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, and the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, were then afloat in the Mediterranean with the Sixth Fleet. On 25 June 1958, the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Jenkins, left Morehead City to relieve the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, which was due to return to the United States.

On 14 July 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower directed CinC-NELM to land the Marines on the beach near the Beirut International Airport, seize the field, and, if possible, secure the water supply systems, bridges, and the northeastern sector of the city. The landing took place as ordered on 15 July 1958.

The 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, seized the airport, followed by the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. The Marines had to be prepared to meet armed resistance on the beach. However, witnessing the assault were bikini-clad sunbathers, workmen, and other observers. They all waved as the Marines charged ashore. Soft drink vendors were soon out in force. One young Marine was heard to say, "It's better than Korea, but what the hell is it?"

The morning after the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, came ashore, the 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, moved towards the city and took control of the dock area, while putting guards on critical bridges and the United States Embassy. The rebel stronghold in the center of the city was left alone by the Marines.<sup>11</sup>

The 31st of July an election was held, and General Fuad Chehab took over from Chamoun. He formed a coalition with the rebels, and took office on 23 September.

In the meantime, Army troops started to arrive at the International Airport on 19 July. From their arrival to the assumption of command of American Land Forces by an Army general on 26 July, Marine Brigadier General Wade was in command.

During this period there was no serious combat activity, but the Marines' forward positions were harassed. Further, rebel groups had been firing at American aircraft when they came in for landings. There were no American casualties, although firefights with the rebels erupted occasionally. The biggest problem facing the Marines was an outbreak of dysentery among the battalions. By the end of August strict



hygienic controls adopted by the Marines had brought the ailment under control.

The Marines' fire discipline was outstanding, and proved to be a stabilizing feature of the American intervention. General Creighton W. Abrams described the Lebanon operation as a "show of force with psychological overtones."<sup>12</sup>

The 29th of September, the 6th Marines (Reinforced), commanded by Colonel William B. McKennon, composed of regimental headquarters and 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William Wilkes, arrived in Beirut harbor. On the same day the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, departed for Camp Lejeune.

On 8 October, the United States announced it was withdrawing all its forces from Lebanon. By 18 October all the Marines in country were gone.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Cuban Crisis*

In October 1962, President John F. Kennedy issued an ultimatum to the Soviet Union requiring that offensive missiles be removed from Cuba. The garrison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba was reinforced to regimental strength. The 6th Marines and the rest of the 2d Division went to sea in amphibious ships. The division was reinforced by the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade from the 1st Division, which had joined it by coming through the Panama Canal from California. The Soviet Union and Cuba backed down, and the rest is history.

#### *The Quiet Time*

After the Cuban crisis and the Lebanon excitement, things seemed to quiet down a little for the 6th Marines. General David M. Shoup, the twenty-second Commandant, who had commanded the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, as a major from 19 February to 23 June 1942, was a shrewd fundamentalist. He was skeptical of the counterinsurgency doctrines then in vogue. This included the United States doctrine toward Castro's Cuba. As regards Vietnam, which was starting to receive political and media attention, he considered it a rat hole, and sought to hold the Marine commitment to a minimum.<sup>14</sup>

The 1st of January, 1964, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., became the Twenty-third Commandant. He had been Shoup's chief of staff, and had made a fine record in World War II. He was more of an internationalist than Shoup and was soon put to the test.

#### *Dominican Crisis*

The Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti at a strategic location in the

Caribbean. Furthermore, it is within a 1,000-mile radius of southern Florida, the Panama Canal, and the oil fields and refineries of Venezuela, Columbia, and the Netherlands West Indies. It is obvious why the region has always been of vital interest to the United States. Although often acting unilaterally to protect that interest, more recently the United States had tried to act in concert with other American neighbors.

When Fidel Castro seized control of Cuba in 1959, he installed the only Communist government in the Western Hemisphere, thereby introducing a new element to be reckoned with. This caused the United States to resolve that there would be no opportunity for another such government to come to power in the hemisphere.<sup>15</sup>

Before and after President Raphael L. Trujillo's assassination in the Dominican Republic in May 1961, showing the flag and ships' visits had kept the lid on a very volatile situation. In 1961, when a civil war appeared to be imminent, a well-timed amphibious operation calmed things. This action had to be repeated in 1963.

Late on Saturday, 24 April 1965, the 6th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), on board ship and anchored south of Puerto Rico's Vieques Island, received word that a Communist-inspired coup was taking place in Santo Domingo.<sup>16</sup>

The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, shortly before the Communist-attempted coup effort started to materialize, had been designated the "Ready Battalion" in the 2d Marine Division. This meant that the battalion was brought up to full strength in both men and equipment. In view of the increasing tempo of the conflict developing on the other side of the world in Vietnam, such an effort was a major undertaking for the east coast Marine Corps.

The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Robert D. Bohn decided to take his command on a long conditioning march from Camp Lejeune to Fort Bragg, both in North Carolina. After receiving permission from division, he energetically organized the march by reconnoitering the route, selecting bivouac areas and getting permission from the respective farmers, arranging for jeep ambulances, trucks at the head and end of the troop column, and the numerous other details involved.

Shortly before he planned to start the march, Bohn was told that the commanding general, Major General Ormond R. Simpson, wanted to see him. Reporting to the chief of staff, Colonel John R. Chaisson, he was ushered into the general's office. Simpson looked up, and informed Bohn that he had been thinking about the march, and that he had decided against it. Simp-



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A450193

*Unarmed members of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines (left), in charge of the evacuation of American citizens from the Dominican Republic in late April 1965, as well as some of the civilians themselves, await the arrival of the next flight of UH-34D helicopters from HMM-264 which will fly them to the safety of the USS Boxer (LPH 4) offshore.*

son did not like the idea of road marches; he considered them too dangerous. Bohn was astounded, and argued vehemently in favor of the march, citing all the safety precautions he had made, planning and reconnaissance time already expended, and any other reasons that came to his mind. Simpson was unmoved. Bohn looked at the chief of staff, who had been a staunch supporter of the idea. Chaisson, looking at the ceiling, offered no help. Bohn continued to argue. Finally, Simpson, swayed by Bohn's explanation, gave his permission for the march. Bohn was elated, and congratulated himself.

Lieutenant Colonel Bohn's battalion was only about two days on the march when the Dominican crisis broke. Bohn, who had maintained constant radio contact with the division headquarters, radioed back and asked General Simpson if he should return to Camp Lejeune. Simpson replied, "No, continue to march." Bohn did continue, but called in every hour to see if he should return to camp. Simpson kept replying, "Continue to march." When the battalion arrived at Fort Bragg, Bohn heard that the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, had replaced his as the "Ready Battalion." Some time later, Chaisson informed Bohn that both Simpson and Chaisson had received word that the 6th MEU might be needed in Santo Domingo, but both were sworn to secrecy. By arguing so strongly and getting Simpson's permission for the march he had

unknowingly cheated the 2d Battalion out of seeing any action in Santo Domingo.

The infantry element of the 6th MEU was the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines (Reinforced), under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Poul F. Pedersen. The battalion was backloading on its ships after participating in a training exercise on Vieques. Company K had finished flying by helicopter back to the USS *Boxer* (LPH-4). Company L, the battalion headquarters, and the MEU staff were also on the *Boxer*. Company I was on one of the other ships, and configured for a surface landing. Company M had been left at Guantanamo Bay to be part of the base defense force. Before leaving Camp Lejeune the Marines in Company M needed the Marines in the rest of the 3d Battalion that while the latter were cruising around the Caribbean, Company M would be "guarding the line" at "Gitmo." Even though such duty was routine, Company M Marines delighted in questioning the manhood of the rest of the battalion's members. So, as will be seen, Company M missed action in the Dominican Republic. The revenge felt by the other Marines was sweet indeed. Now it was their turn to chide them for sitting on their duffs at "Gitmo" while the rest were in "combat." Foreseeing this, the Company M commander practically had a mutiny on his hands when his Marines learned they were missing the action in the Dominican Republic.

Back at the 6th MEU, its commander received orders to proceed to Santo Domingo and to evacuate up to 1,200 U.S. citizens. The MEU had its own helicopters, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 264 (HMM-264), but fixed-wing support would have to come from Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico. By the time the Navy amphibious squadron and its embarked Marines reached the waters off the capital, Santo Domingo, the rebels had gained control of the downtown area and the President had quit. Even so, only an unarmed rifle platoon from Company K was sent ashore to direct the evacuation by helicopters. To their dismay, they discovered the number of U.S. citizens and foreign nationals to be evacuated had increased to 3,000.

The designated evacuation point was the Embajador Hotel. It had a polo field next to it which was used as a landing zone (LZ). As the civilians were flown in helicopters to the *Boxer*, the Marine junior officers were forced to give up their quarters to the civilians and sleep wherever they could.

Early in the afternoon of 29 April, the U.S. Embassy received heavy small-arms fire. Not until the next day did the battalion headquarters, the rest of Company K, and Company L come ashore. By nightfall all were ashore. Company I landed the next day by small boats or amtracs.

At that time the perimeter included only the hotel and the LZ. It was decided to extend it and to set up a roadblock on the road leading into the hotel from the north to prevent the rebels from entering the area. The Marines not only had to man the perimeter and roadblock, but also reinforce the small Embassy guard in protecting the Embassy itself.

Company I was still aboard ship with the heavy equipment of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines (Reinforced). Reports revealed that the rebels were expanding their operations while the still-loyal armed forces were stalled. It was then decided that the heavy equipment might be needed ashore. The company landed in LVTs on a beach, designated Red Beach, that was 13.5 miles southwest of Santo Domingo at the mouth of the Rio Haina. Tanks and Ontos also landed across Red Beach. Immediately after landing, the units formed an armored column, and moved north to join the perimeter around the Embajador Hotel.

Two Army airborne battalion combat teams (BCT) from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, were flown to Ramey Air Force Base in Puerto Rico, prepared to make an air-assault drop near the San Isidro airfield early on 30 April.<sup>17</sup> The two airborne BCTs were diverted from

*The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, having landed in the Dominican Republic in April 1965, finds itself in an environment different from pine-covered training areas of Camp Lejeune.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A19573





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A19576

*Capt William G. Davis (with hand on holster) of Company I, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines talks with 1stLt Harry J. Shane (right), the battalion adjutant, before moving to straighten the line of the International Safety Zone in Santo Domingo in the 1965 intervention.*

Ramey and told to land at San Isidro rather than air drop there since the airfield was still in the hands of loyal troops. This brigade was to secure the airfield and screen the east and north from rebel fire.

The 6th MEU was directed to continue the protection of the LZ and move west to establish an International Safety Zone (ISZ), from the sea north along Calle Sacorro Sanchez, Calle Navarro, and Avenida Presidente Rios to the juncture at Avenida San Martin.

The first day ashore seemed a long one to the 3d Battalion Marines. The battalion was issued live ammunition before going ashore. In the excitement, the ammunition for the .45-caliber pistols was issued by boxes of 50 rounds instead of the 21 rounds per gun planned by the supply people. Consequently those at the end of the line got no ammunition when there was no more available. Those lucky enough to have a box of 50 rounds were most reluctant to give any of theirs to their unfortunate fellow Marines. The unfortunates had to do some fast talking to get their buddies to share.

U.S. forces were forbidden to use any weapons larger than small arms, unless specifically authorized by higher headquarters.<sup>18</sup> Loyal Dominican troops patrolled the area between the U.S. Army and Marine perimeters.<sup>19</sup> These forces soon, however, moved back

to the safety of the airfield, leaving the Army and Marine perimeters isolated from one another.

The men of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, were very well trained, but most of them were "green" troops unaccustomed to hostile fire. Consequently, when they received fire they returned it by firing every small-arm weapon they had. After a couple of days, however, fire discipline improved. The normal response to incoming fire thereafter was to put everyone on line and try to determine the source. Usually the hostile fire came from the windows of nearby buildings. These windows all had built-in louvered blinds with slats about three inches wide, which could be opened just enough for a sniper to poke the muzzle of his rifle through. After a couple of hostile rounds the sniper usually would be located. The first round from an M-79 grenade launcher would blow the entire set of blinds into the room. The second M-79 round quieted things down nicely. The rebels soon got the message—you shoot at the Marines and they will kill you.

The 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, moved eastward when ordered. Expecting heavy resistance, the infantry was preceded by Ontos, tanks, and LVTs. Soon the companies advanced in single file, moving from tree or lamp post to lamp post. While approaching the objective, Company I received small-arms fire from an

area of low-income housing. The company commander, Captain William G. Davis, requested permission to use heavier caliber weapons so he could clear the area of rebels. It wasn't until 1530 that authorization was granted, since the request had to go up the chain of command. Even then, he was limited to using only 3.5-inch rocket launchers.

Advancing by a series of squad and fire team rushes, the company cleared the area of all rebel activity, but not until the 1st Platoon had four Marines wounded. The rebels were seen withdrawing from the area, carrying their wounded with them. Two rebel dead were found. This area was only about a block and a half north of the U.S. Embassy.

Moving on, Company I seized the next objective with one platoon. This objective was about five blocks north of the U.S. Embassy. Here again heavy rebel resistance was encountered. Using their 3.5-inch rockets, the Marines drove the rebels away to the north. One Marine was killed and four more wounded during this action. The Marines had to cross an open area—an old airfield—to flush out the rebels in the buildings on the other side. Since the airfield was impossible to defend with only a company, Company I was permitted to withdraw and consolidate its position on the first objective.

Company K, commanded by Captain Robert C. Cockell, advanced and set up a roadblock approximately three blocks south of the U.S. Embassy. At first no opposition was encountered. Later that evening sniper fire was received.

Company L, under the command of Captain Horace W. Baker, advanced about four blocks south of the roadblock established by Company K, and set up another roadblock, initially without opposition. The company then established contact with Company K to the north. Once in position, Company L received sniper fire. It cleared a building near the company command post, killing one rebel. During the night, the Marines received more sniper fire.

On 1 May, the Army and Marine units started to effect a linkup of their separated positions. The Marines suffered no casualties, but the Army had two men killed and two wounded by sniper fire.

By this time, command of the task force had shifted from the Navy to Army General Bruce Palmer, Jr. It became apparent to him that additional troops would be needed. Anticipating this, the Commanding General, 2d Marine Division, activated the 4th MEB on 29 April. The MEB was to consist of a headquarters and the 6th Marines commanded by Colonel George W. Daughtry, as the ground elements. Since

*A team of Marines carrying a 3.5-inch rocket launcher and rocket rounds crouch behind a masonry wall for protection from sniper fire as they move forward in Santo Domingo.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A19502





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A19986

*Members of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines wait to board KC-130s for the flight to the Dominican Republic in May 1965 to reinforce American forces already committed there.*

*First in, first out; a unit of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines waits to board UH-34D helicopters from HMM-264 in May 1965 for the welcome flight back to the USS Boxer (LPH 4) at the end of the battalion's participation in the intervention in the Dominican Republic.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A19992





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A450322

*The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines prepares to leave the USS Chilton (APA 38) at Morehead City, North Carolina on 9 June 1965 as it returns from the Dominican Republic.*

the regiment's 3d Battalion was already on the scene, the regiment consisted of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines; the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines; and the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and the MEB headquarters traveled to Santo Domingo by air via Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and then by surface ships to the Dominican Republic. The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William F. Doehler, landed the evening of 1 May and throughout the night.

The next four weeks were uneventful. The two Marine battalions improved their positions. Company C provided a security detachment to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to protect the building it used for storing food and medical supplies, and to protect their distribution points until relieved by OAS forces. The Army moved more units from the 82d Airborne Division to the Dominican Republic. JTF-122 and TF-120 were dissolved by

CinCLant, who designated General Palmer as USCom-DomRep.

The first cease-fire between the rebels and the military junta acting as the government was attempted by the United States on 30 April. Finally, a formal truce was signed on 5 May. It tasked the Organization of American States with its supervision. Fighting continued anyway between the rebels and the junta. One Marine was killed by sniper fire, Private First Class Michael Feher. He was at his post on a balcony trying to determine the location from which sniper fire was coming when he was killed. This sobered the rest of the 3d Battalion.

Lieutenant Colonel Pedersen, of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, directed that a modified people-to-people program be established. It was welcomed by the people.

An Inter-American Peace Force (IAPE) was formally established on 20 May 1965. It consisted of units

from many Latin American countries. This laid the groundwork for the withdrawal of United States Forces from the Dominican Republic.

The 6th MEU with its 3d Battalion, 6th Marines (Reinforced), was reconstituted as the Caribbean Ready Force. Six days later, the 4th MEB departed by amphibious ships, arriving at Camp Lejeune on 6 June 1965.

#### *Lessons Learned*

The majority of casualties occurred during the first week of the landing. The 6th Marines had four killed and 19 wounded in the 3d Battalion. The 1st Battalion had one killed and one wounded.

Members of the 6th Marines who did participate, being mostly young and therefore confident of their

invincibility, were sobered when they had buddies killed or wounded. They now considered themselves combat veterans. Back at Camp Lejeune they talked about their experiences incessantly. Few knew that their predecessors had done the same upon their return from Iceland at the beginning of World War II. None in either case realized what grim battles lay ahead.

There were other valuable lessons learned during the operation. Most important, however, the 6th Marines had responded swiftly and efficiently to all tasks assigned it, and with a minimum of casualties.

The Commandant, General Greene, was soon put to an even bigger test. The Vietnam situation was steadily worsening.



## CHAPTER 10

# 1965-1985

### *Background—The Late 1960s—The 1970s—Conclusion*

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#### *Background*

During the 1950s the French reoccupied what was known as French Indo-China—part of which was Vietnam. When the northern rebels defeated the French, and set up a Communist regime, a mass exodus was put into motion from north to south by anti-Communists. A demarcation line and demilitarized zone (DMZ), at about the middle of the long axis of Vietnam, separated North from South Vietnam. The United States supported South Vietnam, first with money for an armed force of 90,000 men. Then the size was upped to 100,000, then to 150,000. There it remained until an expansion of the United States' support in 1961.

The Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and other Communist-bloc countries supported North Vietnam. It soon became apparent that the North intended to conquer the South by military force and internal subversion. The North started to rearm and expand its armed forces while at the same time forming the Viet Cong in the south to carry out the internal subversion.

The Marine Corps was ordered to furnish a helicopter squadron to support the southernmost South Vietnamese Army Corps, which was responsible for all of the Mekong Delta region. A former Japanese fighter airstrip at Soc Trang in Ba Kuyen Province served as the Marine base of operations. The unit was to be in place by 15 April 1962. The operation was given the name "Shu-Fly."<sup>1</sup>

Shu-Fly represented the first direct Marine involvement in the war which was going on between the north and the south. It was necessarily an antiguerrilla operation. But, as the years went on, the conflict grew more heated.

On 6 March 1965 the U.S. Defense Department announced that two battalions of Marines were being sent to South Vietnam at the request of the government in Saigon.<sup>2</sup> On 8 March 1965 the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade started landing at Da Nang. On 3 May 1965 the III Marine Expeditionary Force, later renamed the III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) began landing, with the 3d Marine Division as its ground element.<sup>3</sup> From then on, the size of the force

grew. This growth had a profound effect upon the entire Marine Corps including the 6th Marines.

III MAF was in charge of the South Vietnamese I Corps area for the American command. It contained the five northern provinces of South Vietnam up to the DMZ. This area was to become the scene of heavy fighting in the years ahead. The military population in the I Corps area grew to more than 205,000 people by August 1968.<sup>4</sup>

#### *The Late 1960s*

To understand how the 6th Marines was affected even though it did not deploy to Vietnam as a regiment, it is necessary to grasp the huge demands on the entire Marine Corps that were being made in both personnel and material. At the peak of the war, 317,400 Marines were in the Marine Corps. This was in 1968. Of these, III MAF had 85,755. Although the size of the Corps was far under the 485,053 peak of World War II because peacetime personnel policies were in effect, more Marines actually served in the Marine Corps during its seven years of involvement in Vietnam than served in four years of World War II: 800,000 as opposed to 600,000.<sup>5</sup> Here again the saying was, "There are three kinds of Marines—those there, those who have been there, and those who are on the way."

This personnel turbulence affected the 6th Marines greatly. Still, as far as the regiment was concerned, furnishing replacements for III MAF was only part of it. A Mediterranean battalion afloat had to be furnished, and contingencies both there and in the Caribbean had to be planned for by 2d Marine Division units. Training, both ashore and afloat, had to be carried out.

In June 1969, the President announced he intended to withdraw 25,000 U.S. servicemen from South Vietnam. The first Marine units to go were aviation. Three months later, 17 September, the President announced he was withdrawing 40,500 from South Vietnam. The 3d Marine Division was ordered to redeploy to Okinawa and set up in Marine Corps camps from whence it had originally come. This was accomplished by 10 November. Some Marine aviation units also withdrew. Later on, the rest of III MAF moved either to Iwakuni, Japan, or El Toro or Camp Pendleton, both in California.



Photo courtesy of Capt Douglas R. Doerr

*The 6th Marines regimental headquarters on River Road at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.*



Photo courtesy of Capt Douglas R. Doerr

*These World War II era buildings, which long have served the 2d Marine Division as barracks, now are best known as the location for headquarters of the units of the 6th Marines.*

*This brick mess hall continues to serve the 6th Marines today as it has in the decades since the regiment arrived at Camp Lejeune after occupation duty following World War II.*

Photo courtesy of Capt Douglas R. Doerr





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A450359

*ICpl Roger Lotter (holding ammunition) and PFC Willie James of Company G, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, watch for "aggressors" during training on the island of Vieques in 1965.*

*Company M, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, which missed the Dominican intervention, hikes up a hill overlooking a fjord during a NATO exercise in Norway in September 1965.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A450350





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A451611

*In a scene repeated many times since 1946, a squad from the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, moves forward behind a medium tank during training among the pines of Camp Lejeune.*

On the east coast the 6th Marines continued its training at Camp Lejeune. The three battalions deployed at various times to the Mediterranean and the Caribbean.

CPXs and an amphibious landing demonstration were held in the Camp Lejeune area during 1966. LanForMed 2-66, during which the 3d Battalion was deployed for an extended period in the Caribbean, was also held in 1966.

In 1967, in addition to routine training, several special operations were held. These were FirEx-67, involving regimental headquarters and both the 2d and 3d Battalions; PhibLEx 10-67, involving regimental headquarters, and the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, on the island of Sardinia; LanForMed 1-67, which saw the 1st Battalion deploy to the Mediterranean; and lastly the deployment of the 3d Battalion to Guantanamo Bay during May and June as the GTMO Defense Force.

In 1968 the 6th Marines deployed first the 3d and then the 1st Battalion for maneuvers in the Caribbean. FirEx-68, involving portions of the regimental staff on Vieques, Puerto Rico, and regular field training in the Camp Lejeune area, made this another busy year.

But there were many problems ahead. A strong anti-Vietnam War movement developed during the 1960s in the United States. It affected the attitude of the average citizen and created difficulties for the armed forces, both in Vietnam and in the United States. When the United States withdrew its forces entirely,

and left the defense to the South Vietnamese Armed Forces, the Communist North soon invaded and defeated the Republic of Vietnam.

#### *The 1970s*

Many returning American veterans of the war believed that they were not honored as they had been in previous wars. Some felt they had risked their lives in vain, and were embittered by the memory of the approximately 55,000 of their buddies who had been killed. They were angry over an amnesty for draft-dodgers who had fled to Canada, Sweden, and other countries to avoid the war.

As antiwar sentiment developed in the country, drug usage also was making progress in all classes of society and in various age groups. There was a growing drug problem among the troops both at home and abroad. As it grew, morale and discipline declined. As troops were rotated from abroad, they brought the problem with them. Other factors strongly influencing military affairs in the early 1970s were the ending of the draft and the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973.

The Armed Forces were experiencing many difficulties. Pressure was strong to keep up the level of manpower. Yet during the last phases of the American presence in Vietnam, the antiwar movement had gained great influence. There were numerous racial incidents. Some troops refused to carry out their orders if there was danger involved. Fraggging (directing

a fragmentation grenade at an unpopular officer or NCO) resulted in some deaths. It also took other forms such as boobytrapping a jeep and even shooting some men in the back. Through fear of retaliation and the dislike of informing against another man, it often was extremely difficult to locate the culprit.

Back in the United States, racial incidents grew at the various camps. Gangs of black Marines would roam Camp Lejeune or other posts and stations, and beat up white Marines found to be alone. Soon there was a backlash, continuing the violence.

Traditionally high morale was sadly shaken. A true crisis was threatening the 200-year-old Corps. Many of the problems could be traced to the end of the draft and the pressure of keeping up the size of the Marine Corps. In the process, a number of society's misfits had been recruited.

A commanding officer of the 6th Marines from those challenging days, Colonel Paul B. Haigwood, recalls that the regiment spent approximately 50 percent of its time in the field with every regimental unit available participating. Although the training was extreme and repetitive, it was necessary because of the high personnel turnover, and the requirement to meet the many commitments referred to earlier. Further, it served to lessen the racial tensions as the Category IV (less intelligent) Marines seemed to forget their problems and concentrated on being Marines. Maybe they were too tired to do anything else. In any event, over time the regimental incident rate, desertions, and

other indicators of discipline improved to the point where the 6th Marines could truthfully be called the most combat-ready unit in the division. The regiment won almost every divisional contest such as football, basketball, boxing, and marksmanship.

Nevertheless, there still were unfortunate incidents. Following a movie at the Camp Lejeune post theatre, there was a gang fight among some 25 to 30 black and white Marines from the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. It ended with one Marine being killed. This, of course, was labeled a riot by the press, and caused unfavorable publicity for the Corps.

It was not easy being a commanding officer in those days, but as usual in Marine Corps life, there were many responsibilities to be met, and there was always a belief in a better future.

Further, amusing incidents occurred to lighten the load. During a Headquarters Marine Corps Inspector General's inspection, Colonel Haigwood was showing the Inspector General around his area. When they visited the 2d Battalion armory, they found everything to be outstanding—weapons, records, cleanliness—everything. The Inspector General announced to everyone present that this was “the best” armory he had seen in a long time, and that he would personally like to shake the hand of the NCO in charge. A young Marine stepped forward immediately, and said, “General sir, I am Corporal \_\_\_, MFICC of the Armory.” The general congratulated the corporal, praised him for what he had accomplished, and the inspection

*The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines comes ashore on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, in one of the many such landing exercises on that island in the years since World War II.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 452634





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A452280

*Riflemen of Company K, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines practice small unit tactics at Porto Scuda, Sardinia, during a Mediterranean deployment with the Sixth Fleet in March 1974.*

party moved on. Approximately two blocks down the street the Inspector General stopped, turned to Haigwood and said, "What in the hell does MFICC mean?" Taking a deep breath, the regimental commander answered, "It stands for M----- F----- In Complete Charge." The general laughed until he almost popped a button from his blouse.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the many problems encountered, training continued during the 1970s. Not only were deployments made to the Caribbean and Mediterranean, but training was also held with the 82d Airborne Division, both at Fort Bragg and in the Camp Lejeune area. In 1973, during DesEx Alkali Canyon, USMCR units from the 4th Marine Division were successfully integrated into a major exercise. This was valuable to all the participants. Also, planning was started for Alpine Warrior 74, to be held at Camp Drum, New York. In 1974, training with U.S. Army units at Camp Pickett, Virginia, took place during Exercise Solid Punch, involving Army armor and armored infantry units. Cold-weather training at Camp Drum took place, as did other types of routine training.

Finally, the Twenty-sixth Commandant, General Lewis H. Wilson, took office. He had earned the Medal of Honor on Guam during World War II, and was

a strict disciplinarian. This was on 1 July 1975, after his predecessor requested an early retirement.<sup>7</sup>

Wilson immediately started to clean out the true misfits from the Marine Corps. The 6th Marines themselves offered a typical example. An article by Walter V. Robinson of the *Boston Globe* staff, dated 6 June 1976, set forth the situation. It was written from Camp Lejeune. Mr. Robinson was writing about an amphibious operation conducted by the 6th Marines. Commenting on the high seas encountered, and the fact that five Marines were injured by lightning, he still felt that the operation was more satisfactory than a similar one the year before. He said:

Last year the same could not be said. Although 2,500 men of the 3,000-man 6th Regiment were slated to participate, only 1200 them waded ashore in Operation Solid Shield 1975. Of the remaining 1,300 men, 800 were back in their barracks awaiting undesirable discharges. More than 200 others were over the hill—AWOL.

Still others were on the regimental rolls—they had been classified as deserters. And 267 6th Regiment Marines had been administratively reassigned to the brig where they were imprisoned for a variety of offenses.

The career officers and NCOs previously had been disgusted. The reforms instituted by General Wilson, however, got rid of more than 6,000 problem Marines

out of a total strength of 196,000. Enlistment standards were raised. Physical training and discipline were improved. The percentage of high school graduates in the 2d Division had dropped to 38 percent. Their commanding general had estimated perhaps 80 percent of the Marines had tried marijuana. One rifle company commander recalled he had only 17 of 189 men available for training because of personnel problems. The 2d Division discharged as undesirable 2,400 men in 1975. Of those, 1,027 belonged to the 3,000-man 6th Marines. Since December of 1975 another 600 2d Division Marines had left early under an "expeditious discharge program" initiated by the Commandant.<sup>8</sup>

When Colonel (later Major General) Harold G. Glasgow took command of the 6th Marines in May 1975, he found 294 of his Marines were carried in an unauthorized leave status and 231 more were either confined or under restraint. He told a reporter later that at the time he was lucky if one in every five Marines saluted him. Between 10 percent and 15 percent were intentionally trying to fail their physical fitness tests.

The problems encountered by the commanders in training and administering their units were complex and challenging. Their strength of character was tested many times in a variety of ways. In fact, company commanders were so involved in Office Hours, Request Masts, and writing up administrative discharges it was difficult to maintain a semblance of a training program.

Nevertheless, operational and training exercises were held, including a Mediterranean deployment of the 1st Battalion; Solid Shield 75 locally; two battalion-size exercises at Fort Pickett; two special exercises (reinforced rifle companies) to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; a combined-arms exercise at Twentynine Palms, California; a cold-weather exercise at Fort Drum; and a Division CPX. A full schedule indeed, and one to cut down on the time the Marines had to be drawn into unwanted incidents.

During August 1976, the 36th Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) was formed around the 6th Marines. The 2d Battalion became the ground element, a composite squadron from MAGs 26 and 29 became the aviation combat element, while the MAU Service Support Group (MSSG) was formed from the 2d Force Service Support Group (FSSG). After the very detailed planning required and appropriate training, the 36th MAU deployed to Europe for participation in Operation Straffe Zugel and Operation Triple Jubilee.

Operation Straffe Zugel was part of Reforger Exer-

cise 75 and was conducted in the central plains of West Germany near the city of Hanover. The 36th MAU's participation represented the first Marine Corps maneuver elements in Germany since World War I. This exercise further paved the way for subsequent Marine participation in larger training exercises in Germany—Teamwork/Bonded Item and Northern Wedding/Bold Guard. The Marine Corps was again becoming involved in the defense of western Europe, as it was in World War I.

Operation Triple Jubilee was conducted in three separate locations in the United Kingdom. According to the account of then-Colonel Glasgow, the first phase was near Plymouth. This exercise concentrated on small-unit training with the Royal Marines. A memorable occurrence was the celebration of the 200th Marine Corps Birthday at the Royal Marines' Stonehouse Barracks. The Royal Marines were hosts, then-Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps General Samuel Jaskilka was the guest of honor, and the other guests included both General Peter Whiteley, Commandant General of the Royal Marines, and General A. C. Lammers, Commandant of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps.

The second phase of Triple Jubilee was conducted on Salisbury Plain near Portsmouth and Southampton. The 3d Brigade of the Royal Marines both controlled the exercise and acted as aggressors. It was a rewarding, excellent exercise.

The third phase of Triple Jubilee consisted of an amphibious landing across the beach at Barry Buddon, Scotland, near Arbroath. The North Sea was rough, and the weather cold, but the 6th Marines looked like real professionals. After liberty at Dundee, the regiment returned to Camp Lejeune exhilarated by the many interesting and satisfying times it experienced.

Between the two main operations, 36th MAU made port visits to Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Brest and Le Havre in France.<sup>9</sup>

The stiffer enlistment standards paid off. The 2d Division's high-school-completion rate jumped to 60 percent within a year. The greater emphasis on physical fitness soon made a leaner, stronger, and more confident Marine Corps.

Already a marked change could be seen. The quality of the Marines had improved, morale was high, the disciplinary rate was falling—the Marine Corps had won its fight. As the *Boston Globe* article of 6 June 1976 had labeled it—"The Marines' Toughest Fight: Long Battle for Respectability."

Another important change had taken place. General Wilson established the Combined Arms Training Pro-



Photo courtesy of Capt Douglas R. Doerr

*This CH-53 hulk serves the 2d Marine Division as a training device for teaching units and vehicle drivers the proper techniques of helicopter embarkation and debarkation. As a tribute to Capt Douglas R. Doerr, some members of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines painted his name prominently on the front of the fuselage beside the pilot's seat.*

gram at Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California. The 6th Marines looked forward to its turn for participation in this training program. In the meantime, the 1st Battalion went to Guantanamo Bay on a special reinforcement exercise and the 3d Battalion went to Fort Drum, New York, for a cold-weather exercise.

In late 1981, a particularly unusual exercise took place. The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines (Reinforced), was the ground element of 32d MAU afloat in the Mediterranean in three ships—an LHA, an LST, and an LPD. Two-thirds of the reinforced battalion embarked on the USS *Saipan* (LHA-2). Talks were held previously over the Marines taking part in an annual Rapid Deploy-

ment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) exercise, Bright Star (The RDJTF is now Central Command, or CentCom). The exercise was scheduled to culminate in an amphibious landing on the southern coast of Oman. The Government of Oman and the planners at the highest levels feared that Marine Corps participation in the exercise might send the wrong signals to other friendly Arab nations, as well as to potential adversaries in the area. Finally, the decision was made that the Marines could land, but could not advance more than one mile inland, or stay ashore more than 24 hours. The Marines eagerly accepted this chance to show their stuff and meet Omani military personnel.

During late November 1981, 32d MAU departed the

*The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines occupies brick buildings amid Lejeune's oaks and pines.*

Photo courtesy of Capt Douglas R. Doerr







Photo courtesy of Capt Douglas R. Doerr

*This brick barracks, dating back to World War II but modernized to modern habitability standards, currently serves as the headquarters of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines.*

Mediterranean via the Suez Canal, sailed the Red Sea, and entered the Indian Ocean. Exhaustive and detailed plans were made while in transit. Two rifle companies would land via helicopters a few meters inland, and seize key terrain features in order to isolate the beachhead. The remaining rifle company, plus the various reinforcing attachments, were to land by surface to secure the beachhead.

On D-day, the Marines held reveille at 0330; H-hour was set for midmorning around 0930. Before H-hour, much had to be done, including checking the men

and their equipment. Lieutenant General Robert Kingston, Commanding General, RDJTF, and his staff were due aboard at 0800 for a briefing on the scheme of maneuver, and to observe the landing from the *Saipan*.

At H-2 hours, the first waves were called to their debarkation stations. The ship suddenly went dark—and quiet. The *Saipan* was dead in the water.

Without command, Marines turned on the flashlights hanging from their web gear, and others broke out battle lanterns. Soon the word went out that the

*Assault amphibian vehicles and helicopters bring the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines ashore during an exercise while it was on a unit deployment to the 3d Marine Division in 1983.*

Photo courtesy of LtCol W. L. Fox, USMC





Photo courtesy of LtCol W. L. Fox, USMC

*LtCol Wesley L. Fox (left), leads the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines on a training hike down a road on Okinawa while his battalion was on unit deployment to the 3d Marine Division.*

ship had sailed into a huge school of jellyfish. The ship's water system had sucked hundreds of the slimy creatures into the water system which fed the ship's main condenser. No one could tell how long it would take the ship's engineers to clear the system. Even if the ship was able to backflush its water system, it still could not move without sucking in even more fish and clogging the system once again.

Consequently, with no power, communication could not be initiated to start the heliborne phase, the ship could not ballast down to debark the landing craft loaded with tanks for a rendezvous with the surface assault forces, and there was no communication with the aircraft carrier several miles away. The operation came to a standstill!

There was only one thing for Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Tschan, the battalion commander, to do. Using the backpack radios, he had his air liaison officer, Captain Dennis Tedder, coordinate the fixed-wing air from the carrier and the heliborne forces from the *Saipan*. He then contacted the commander of the surface force, Captain Harold W. Laughlin, Jr., USMC, to inform him of the situation, and to assist in coordinating the surface assault.

While this was going on, the ship lowered small boats into the water to circle the ship at high speed

and hopefully drive the jellyfish away. At first, nothing happened. Finally, the seemingly solid wall of fish broke up, power was restored, the ship got underway, and the operation was back on track. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

The amphibious landing was flawless. The reinforced battalion received high praise from the Omani and British military officials who witnessed the landing. These people, of course, had no knowledge of the near disaster that had almost cancelled the operation.

It was a splendid example of the teamwork necessary in an amphibious operation and a tribute to the resourcefulness, flexibility, and cooperation of both the Navy and the Marines.<sup>10</sup>

On 11 June 1982 the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, got a new commanding officer. His name was Lieutenant Colonel Wesley L. Fox. He decided before very long that something was needed to unify the battalion as an entity—there was too much individualism. For example, on battalion runs many Marines just fell out and quit running. Once a company commander, rather than falling out himself, simply slowed his company to his own speed. This broke up the battalion formation with the company running on its own, five minutes behind the rest of the battalion.

Fox had observed that the battalion motto was "At-

tack!" and was not initially impressed. However, he hit upon the idea of turning the motto to his advantage. He directed that, at formations, upon the termination of his return salute to the company commanders turning their companies over to them, the entire battalion would sound off with "Attack! Attack! Attack!", loud and clear. He had to make the battalion practice it several times before it was loud enough for his satisfaction that morning.

In addition to the practice of sounding off upon the termination of all battalion formations, it was used as a greeting with the salute between officer and enlisted men and at major events as a motivator. In Fox's opinion, this use of the motto brought individuals of the battalion closer together and developed the camaraderie he had been seeking.

In January 1983 the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, became the first East Coast unit from the regiment to deploy to Okinawa as a Marine Corps rotation battalion. Its place in the regiment was taken in February of that year by the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Peter M. Hesser. This was the first time since 1927 that this battalion had returned to the United States.

While overseas as a battalion of the 3d Division based on Okinawa, the 1st Battalion participated in

two joint training exercises—Team Spirit in Korea (winter training with the Korean Marines at Pohang) and a Joint Airborne Air Transport (JAAT) exercise with the U.S. Air Force on the islands of Tinian, Guam, and Japan. The Marines were well received by the natives everywhere.

Fox also led his battalion on a tough forced march to the top of Mount Fuji in Japan before the official climbing season began. They made it up and back down on the same day, in spite of the 40-mile-an-hour wind and extreme cold at the top. A service record book entry was made on all Marines who made it to the top. Liberty in Tokyo for all hands finished the event.

Upon departing from his inspection when it came time for the battalion to return to Camp Lejeune, the commanding general, Major General Robert E. Haebel, surprised everyone by asking loudly to the battalion, "What do you do best?" The battalion immediately shouted "Attack! Attack! Attack!"<sup>11</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Fox, a 35-year veteran, was first an enlisted Marine. In 1966, Fox, then a gunnery sergeant, was commissioned along with other outstanding NCOs as a second lieutenant. As commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, he earned the Medal of Honor in Operation Dewey Canyon in Viet-

*The 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, temporarily deployed to the 3d Marine Division, climbs Mt. Fuji in Japan. Each Marine is using a "Fuji stick" as an aid in making the climb.*

Photo courtesy of LtCol W. L. Fox, USMC





Department of Defense (USMC) Photo DM-SN-82-07426

*A group of parka-clad Marines from Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, refills small fuel containers for squad stoves during cold weather training in Norway in 1981.*

nam. He turned over command of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, after it rejoined the regiment. The ceremony took place on 26 July 1983. His relief was Lieutenant Colonel Thomas D. Stouffer, a Naval Academy graduate and a former graduate-level Fulbright scholar at the University of Vienna, Austria. Fox, at this writing, is the Director of the Marine Corps Staff NCO Academy, Quantico, Virginia. Stouffer is serving at Headquarters Marine Corps. Since the 1st Battalion was fortunate in having two outstanding commanders follow each other, 1983 would be a good year to examine some of the experiences an infantry battalion might encounter.

Since unit rotation was in effect now for the 2d Division units, elements of the 6th Marines were sometimes spread among Okinawa, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and Camp Lejeune.

Although no units of the 6th Marines were present at the Beirut Marine headquarters bombing on 23 October 1983, the huge loss of Marine lives pulled everyone at Camp Lejeune even closer together. The many families of the Camp Lejeune area who lost their Marines had to be taken care of. Casualty assistance officers, neighbors, and friends took care of that

responsibility. The 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, which had been the ground element of the 28th MAU, was replaced in that assignment by the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. Elements of the 2d Battalion, under Navy Cross recipient Lieutenant Colonel Edwin C. Kelley, Jr., were flown to Beirut as replacements for the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines. Kelley took command of that battalion. Although recently returned from a major deployment for jungle warfare training in Panama, the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, had to assume the mission of the 2d Battalion in Operation Ahous Tara II in Honduras.

On 10 November 1983, the 28th MAU mounted out from Camp Lejeune and embarked at Moorehead City, North Carolina. The MAU commander was Colonel Randall W. Austin, formerly Commanding Officer, 6th Marines. Both the MAU Headquarters and most of the 1st Battalion (to include Company G of the 2d Battalion, which was attached) were on the USS *Nassau* (LHA 4).<sup>12</sup> Rumors were rampant that they were going to war. Hurried arrangements had been made with the ships to provide at least a semblance of a birthday for the embarked Marines on this very memorable day. Cakes were prepared, streamers hung in the messhall, and steak dinners cooked. The

pageant which was provided was dramatized by the stormy seas and the rolling and pitching of the ships. The Marines were truly soldiers of the sea. Many got seasick, especially those on the LST. On the latter ship, when the oldest and the youngest Marines came up for the cake cutting, their skin was said to be the same color as their green uniforms. The oldest Marine bravely did his duty when presented with the first piece of cake. However, when the youngest Marine was presented with the second piece, he quickly accepted it, hesitated, and said to his company commander, "I do appreciate the honor, sir, but please don't make me eat it!"<sup>13</sup> The birthday celebration on the heaving ocean forged even more the esprit that bound the battalion together.

The landing in Honduras occurred shortly afterwards. Prior to the landing, the battalion had been briefed on the situation ashore. In addition to a possible threat from terrorists, the Marines had been cautioned not to drink or eat anything indigenous. In the advance inland, the Marines passed through small villages, and saw many lonely huts. The poor people they saw obviously led a hard life. At nightfall, while the Americans ate their rations, ragged, but alert and friendly children and a few older people began to drift into their lines. Soon the Marines began to give them their candy, crackers, and extra food. The Hondurans

eagerly ate the food, and tried to talk in broken English. Soon more food was being given away than was eaten by the Marines.

Dawn came slowly to the Honduran jungle, and a soft, cold fog hugged the ground. Just before first light the young Hondurans from the night before reappeared. They carried blue enamelled pots of coffee and stacks of hot tortillas on wax paper plates. These were offered to the cold, hungry Marines. At first, remembering their caution and afraid of possible contamination, they tried to refuse. Finally, their translator told them that in the Honduran culture to refuse was an insult to the children. The Marines gratefully ate and drank their fill. Not a single case of an upset stomach was reported.<sup>14</sup>

The honesty and friendship displayed by these people impressed everyone. They enthusiastically assisted the Marines in recovering any equipment "left adrift" in the heat of "combat." Sometimes, the natives returned the recovered item with fresh grapefruit for the relieved owners. This was done even though the Marines were using land that bordered the natives' property, which sometimes received live ammunition from the Marines' weapons. After seven days ashore, the 28th MAU was back on board the ships in time to enjoy the Thanksgiving dinner waiting for it.<sup>15</sup>

The most significant event in 1984 was the deploy-

*Three men from Company K, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, talk with two Peruvian boys during Operation Unitas XXII, one of a series of exercises involving units from other countries.*

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo DM-SN-82-11297



ment of the 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, to Okinawa, and the return of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, to Camp Lejeune in January. The regiment once again had all of its battalions. Routine training took place at such facilities as Twentynine Palms and Fort Pickett, in addition to that conducted at Camp Lejeune. In late September, the 3d Battalion deployed to Panama for jungle warfare training, and the 1st Battalion went to Bridgeport, California, for mountain warfare training. By year's end, all of the regiment's battalions had returned to Camp Lejeune.

In February 1984, the regiment had played host to the 7th Naval Reserve Construction Regiment. This unit contained 1,100 Seabees. Regular training, both formal classes for officers conducted by a Mobile Training Team from Landing Force Training Center in Little Creek, Virginia, and regular training exercises at various places, took place. These are mentioned to show that there was a constant requirement for planning ahead.

By mid-year two battalions were getting ready to deploy on major exercises or commitments, and one other was returning from a six-month deployment to Okinawa.

The year 1985 saw the regiment once again with all of its battalions. As before, a demanding training and exercise schedule had to be planned for and executed.

As the 6th Marine Regiment approached its 69th Birthday, it could look back on battles won in the past, and enjoy a sense of satisfaction for having been involved in numerous exercises in the present to test, train, and strengthen its Marines.

The training in the 1970s and 1980s was intensive in all of the areas mentioned before. Fort Drum, Fort Pickett, Vieques, Twentynine Palms, and Fort Bragg became as familiar as Norway and other far-flung places. Regimental CPXs, various ceremonies such as the Marine Corps birthday, division exercises, squad competitions, all at Camp Lejeune, fell into whatever gaps could be found in the training schedule. Exercises with the Army, Navy, and Air Force became more and more common. All in all, these were active, exhilarating times that built the Marine Corps into what it is today.

### *Conclusion*

The 6th Marines has trained in varied climates and places in recent years. They have participated in un-

usual and imaginative exercises ranging from fire team to MAF level. Planning continues for the future, utilizing the lessons learned in the past.

The regiment has had many Medal of Honor recipients, listed in Appendix E. Those who have received the Navy Cross, Silver Star, or Bronze Star in combat simply are too numerous to list. The same goes for the many who earned the Purple Heart the hard way. This also holds true for those dedicated stalwarts who have won meritorious decorations both in peace and war. Without the devotion to duty of all of these people, the fame of the 6th Marines would not exist.

In sum, the regiment has been fortunate in the quality of its leadership ever since its inception. In addition to three Commandants, the list of its members who attained general officer rank of from one to four stars is again too long to enumerate. Some, who, because of personal reasons, chose to pursue civilian careers have risen in their professions to creditable heights and are still proud of their Marine Corps and 6th Marines heritage.

But taking all of the above into account, as well as everything which has been narrated in this history of the 6th Marines, what are the intangibles that have made such a great regiment? At the top of the list one must put patriotism. In a recent article in the *Washington Times Magazine*, author Jennifer Harper covers this subject nicely. In the article, Colonel Robert C. Johnston, commanding officer of the Marine Corps Officer Candidate School in Quantico, is quoted as saying, "We don't have a course entitled 'Patriotism 101' here. It is instead something that has to be experienced.

"Patriotism is present on a daily working basis—it's reinforced by a sense of history, by seeing the flag, by working on a team, by knowing that you've made a commitment to your country.

"Patriotism is a very complicated emotion, really, and there are a lot of qualities that parallel it—loyalty to your unit, your Corps, teamwork, pride in the organization. Pride in the Marine Corps or pride in any of the services is really pride in the United States."<sup>16</sup>

All of these apply not only to the officers and enlisted Marines who have been written about in this history. It also applies to the wives and children who make up the military family and who bravely support their Marines.



# Notes

## CHAPTER 1

### THE FIRST WORLD WAR — THE BEGINNING

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## CHAPTER 3

### ICELAND

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#### Helen

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## Mopping Up

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## Lessons Learned

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## CHAPTER 7

## What's Next?

## Background

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## Okinawa

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## CHAPTER 8

## THE OCCUPATION

## Background

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The War Ends!  
The Occupation

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## Heading Home

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## CHAPTER 9

### 1945-1965

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Most of the material contained in the section on the "Dominican Crisis" is taken from Jack K. Ringler and Henry I. Shaw, Jr., *U.S. Marine Corps Operations in the Dominican Republic, April-June 1965* (ms, Reference Files, MCHC, Washington, D.C.)

The more detailed personal accounts in the section on the "Dominican Crisis" were furnished by Dr. V. K. Fleming, Jr., of the Marine Corps Historical Center. Dr. Fleming was the platoon commander of the 1st Platoon of Company K, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, in the Dominican Republic.

#### Background

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#### Korea

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#### Action in Lebanon

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#### Cuban Crisis The Quiet Time

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#### Dominican Crisis Lessons Learned

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## CHAPTER 10

### 1965-1985

#### Background

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10. LtCol R. E. Tschan, USMC, notes furnished author, n.d. (fall 1985).
11. LtCol W. L. Fox, USMC, ltr to author, dtd. 30Jan86.
12. LtCol T. D. Stouffer, USMC, notes furnished author, n.d. (fall 1985), hereafter Stouffer notes.
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#### Conclusion

16. "Patriotism Reborn," *Washington Times Magazine*, 16Jan86, p. 5.

# Appendix A

## Commanding Officers

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Col Albertus W. Catlin . . . . . 11 Jul 1917 - 15 Nov 1917  
Maj Frank E. Evans . . . . . 16 Nov 1917 - 15 Jan 1918  
Col Albertus W. Catlin . . . . . 16 Jan 1918 - 6 Jun 1918  
LtCol Harry Lee . . . . . 7 Jun 1918 - 12 Jul 1918  
Maj Thomas Holcomb . . . . . 13 Jul 1918 - 15 Jul 1918

LtCol Harry Lee . . . . . 16 Jul 1918 - 12 Aug 1919

### Deactivated

Capt Charles B. Hobbs . . . . . 15 Dec 1920 - 22 Mar 1921  
Capt Francis S. Kieren . . . . . 23 Mar 1921 - 20 Jul 1921  
Maj Calvin B. Matthews . . . . . 21 Jul 1921 - 8 Sep 1921  
Capt Thomas E. Wicks . . . . . 22 Nov 1921 - 6 Jan 1922  
Maj Calvin B. Matthews . . . . . 7 Jan 1922 - 14 Aug 1922

Maj Harold L. Parsons . . . . . 15 Aug 1922 - 4 Sep 1922  
Maj Calvin B. Matthews . . . . . 5 Sep 1922 - 19 Feb 1923  
Maj Thomas S. Clarke . . . . . 20 Feb 1923 - 31 Jul 1923  
Maj James J. Meade . . . . . 1 Aug 1923 - 8 Oct 1923  
LtCol Edward A. Greene . . . . . 9 Oct 1923 - 25 Nov 1923

Maj Ralph S. Keyser . . . . . 26 Nov 1923 - 25 Feb 1924  
Maj Howard C. Judson . . . . . 26 Feb 1924 - 4 Jun 1924  
LtCol Edward A. Greene . . . . . 5 Jun 1924 - 14 Mar 1925

### Deactivated

Col Harold C. Snyder . . . . . 26 Mar 1927 - 2 Aug 1928  
Col Charles H. Lyman . . . . . 3 Aug 1928 - 9 Jan 1929  
Maj Calhoun Ancrum . . . . . 10 Jan 1929 - 31 Mar 1929

### Deactivated

LtCol Andrew B. Drum . . . . . 25 Oct 1935 - 30 Oct 1935  
Col Philip H. Torrey . . . . . 31 Oct 1935 - 7 Jun 1937  
Col Thomas S. Clarke . . . . . 8 Jun 1937 - 12 Jan 1938  
LtCol James L. Underhill . . . . . 13 Jan 1938 - 11 May 1938  
LtCol Alphonse De Carre . . . . . 12 May 1938 - 15 May 1938

Col Harry L. Smith . . . . . 16 May 1938 - 31 May 1939  
LtCol Earl H. Jenkins . . . . . 1 Jun 1939 - 20 Jun 1939  
Col Samuel L. Howard . . . . . 21 Jun 1939 - 2 Jun 1940  
LtCol Franklin A. Hart . . . . . 3 Jun 1940 - 21 Jun 1940  
LtCol Oliver P. Smith . . . . . 22 Jun 1940 - 28 Jun 1940

LtCol Franklin A. Hart . . . . . 29 Jun 1940 - 23 Jul 1940  
Col Leo D. Hermle . . . . . 24 Jul 1940 - 31 Dec 1941  
LtCol William McN. Marshall . . . . . 1 Jan 1942 - 24 Mar 1942  
Col Leo D. Hermle . . . . . 25 Mar 1942 - 31 Jul 1942

Col Gilder D. Jackson, Jr. . . . . 1 Aug 1942 - 13 Apr 1943  
 LtCol Lyman G. Miller . . . . . 14 Apr 1943 - 30 Apr 1943  
 Col Maurice G. Holmes . . . . . 3 May 1943 - 16 Dec 1943  
 Col James P. Riseley . . . . . 17 Dec 1943 - 3 Sep 1944  
 Col Gregon W. Williams . . . . . 4 Sep 1944 - 5 Nov 1945

Col Jack P. Juhan . . . . . 6 Nov 1945 - 24 Jan 1946  
 Col James P. Berkeley . . . . . 25 Jan 1946 - 26 Mar 1946  
 Col John F. Hough . . . . . 27 Mar 1946 - 30 Mar 1947  
 Col George H. Potter . . . . . 31 Mar 1947 - 6 Apr 1947  
 Col John F. Hough . . . . . 7 Apr 1947 - 11 Jun 1947

LtCol Thomas C. Kerrigan . . . . . 12 Jun 1947 - 29 Jun 1947  
 Col Hewin O. Hammond . . . . . 30 Jun 1947 - 15 Jul 1947  
 Col James P. S. Devereux . . . . . 16 Jul 1947 - 30 Sep 1947  
 Col George H. Potter . . . . . 1 Oct 1947 - 31 Oct 1947  
 Maj Norman R. Nickerson . . . . . 1 Nov 1947 - 13 Nov 1947

Col George H. Potter . . . . . 14 Nov 1947 - 30 Apr 1948  
 LtCol George D. Rich . . . . . 1 May 1948 - 23 May 1948  
 Col George H. Potter . . . . . 24 May 1948 - 6 Jul 1948  
 LtCol William N. McGill . . . . . 7 Jul 1948 - 8 Mar 1949  
 Col John H. Cook, Jr. . . . . 9 Mar 1949 - 29 Sep 1949

Deactivated

Col Homer L. Litzenberg . . . . . 17 Oct 1949 - 7 Jul 1950  
 Col Russell N. Jordahl . . . . . 8 Jul 1950 - 13 Aug 1950  
 LtCol William F. Prickett . . . . . 14 Aug 1950 - 10 Sep 1950  
 Col Henry W. Buse, Jr. . . . . 11 Sep 1950 - 13 Dec 1951  
 Col William F. Prickett . . . . . 14 Dec 1951 - 16 Jan 1952

Col Ormond R. Simpson . . . . . 17 Jan 1952 - 23 Apr 1953  
 Col Charles M. Nees . . . . . 24 Apr 1953 - 27 Jul 1954  
 Col Jean H. Buckner . . . . . 28 Jul 1954 - 1 Jun 1955  
 LtCol Wilson F. Humphreys . . . . . 2 Jun 1955 - 9 Jul 1955  
 Col Edward L. Hutchinson . . . . . 10 Jul 1955 - 5 Jul 1956

Col Max C. Chapman . . . . . 6 Jul 1956 - 10 Jun 1957  
 LtCol Theodore F. Beeman . . . . . 11 Jun 1957 - 16 Jun 1957  
 Col Austin C. Shoffner . . . . . 17 Jul 1957 - 11 Aug 1957  
 Col William J. McKennan . . . . . 12 Aug 1958 - 1 Dec 1959  
 Col Melvin D. Henderson . . . . . 2 Dec 1959 - 7 Mar 1961

Col Maxie R. Williams . . . . . 8 Mar 1961 - 6 Jun 1961  
 Col Jonas H. Platt . . . . . 10 Jul 1961 - 19 Jul 1962  
 Col Robert W. L. Bross . . . . . 8 Aug 1962 - 26 Jul 1963  
 LtCol Anthony A. Akstin . . . . . 27 Jul 1963 - 23 Aug 1963  
 Col Glenn R. Long . . . . . 24 Aug 1963 - 13 Jul 1964

Col George W. E. Daughtry . . . . . 14 Jul 1964 - 14 Jul 1965  
 Col John N. McLaughlin . . . . . 15 Jul 1965 - 28 Dec 1965  
 Col James B. Ord . . . . . 29 Dec 1965 - 6 Jul 1966  
 Col James C. Short . . . . . 7 Jul 1966 - 1 Jun 1967

Col Oscar T. Jesen, Jr. . . . . 2 Jun 1967 - 11 Mar 1968  
Col Richard H. Kern . . . . . 12 Mar 1968 - 26 Mar 1968  
Col Robert M. Platt . . . . . 27 Mar 1968 - 6 Aug 1969  
Col Paul B. Haigwood . . . . . 7 Aug 1969 - 14 Oct 1970  
Col Francis R. Kraince . . . . . 15 Oct 1970 - 1 Jun 1972

LtCol John J. Peeler . . . . . 2 Jun 1972 - 19 Mar 1973  
Col Ezra H. Arkland . . . . . 20 Mar 1973 - 20 Feb 1974  
Col David M. Ridderhof . . . . . 21 Feb 1974 - 7 May 1975  
Col Harold G. Glasgow . . . . . 8 May 1975 - 3 Jun 1976  
Col Daniel J. Ford . . . . . 4 Jun 1976 - 23 Sep 1977

Col Leemon D. McHenry . . . . . 24 Sep 1977 - 18 Jul 1978  
Col Francis V. White, Jr. . . . . 19 Jul 1978 - 20 Jun 1979  
Col Louis J. Piantadosi . . . . . 21 Jun 1979 - 19 May 1980  
Col Frederic L. Tolleson . . . . . 20 May 1980 - 20 Aug 1981  
Col Randall W. Austin . . . . . 21 Aug 1981 - 19 Oct 1983

Col William M. Keys . . . . . 20 Oct 1983 - 6 Feb 1986  
Col James E. Livingston . . . . . 7 Feb 1986 - present





# Appendix B

## Chronology

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- 6 April 1917 U.S. declares war on Germany and its allies.  
11 July 1917 6th Marine Regiment activated at Quantico, Virginia.  
15 March - 13 May 1918 6th Regiment enters active combat, Toulon sector, Verdun.  
31 May - 5 June 1918 Aisne Defensive, Chateau-Thierry Sector (Capture of Hill 142, Bouresches, Belleau Wood).  
18-19 July 1918 Aisne-Marne Offensive (Soissons).  
12-16 September 1918 St. Mihiel Offensive (vicinity of Thiaucourt, Xammes, and Joulay).  
1-10 October 1918 Meuse-Argonne Offensive (Champagne), including capture of Blanc Mont Ridge and St. Etienne.  
1-11 November 1918 Continuation of Meuse-Argonne Offensive.  
11 November 1918 Armistice ends hostilities in World War I.  
17 November -  
10 December 1918 March from the Meuse River in France to Rhine River for occupation duty in Germany.  
13 August 1919 6th Regiment deactivated at Quantico, Virginia.  
15 September 1921 6th Regiment reactivated at Quantico, Virginia.  
23 September 1922 83d Company, 3d Battalion, 6th Regiment, represented USMC at opening of Brazilian Exposition, Rio de Janeiro.  
June 1924 - March 1925 Elements of 6th Regiment participated in expeditionary duty in Cuba and Dominican Republic.  
15 March 1925 6th Regiment deactivated at Quantico, Virginia.  
26 March 1927 6th Regiment reactivated at Philadelphia Navy Yard for duty in China.  
1927-1929 Duty in China.  
31 March 1929 6th Regiment deactivated at San Diego, California.  
1 September 1934 6th Marines reactivated at San Diego, California.  
28 August 1937 6th Marines sailed for China on USS *Chaumont*.  
18 February 1938 6th Marines departed China for San Diego.  
31 May 1941 6th Marines sailed from San Diego for Iceland.  
7 July 1941 Transports bearing 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional), including the 6th Marines, reached Reykjavik, Iceland.  
7 December 1941 Japan attacked U.S. Forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, bringing the U.S. into World War II.  
31 January 1942 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, departed Iceland for the U.S.  
9 March 1942 Last elements of 6th Marines departed Iceland.  
30 March 1942 All elements of 6th Marines were again together, at Camp Elliott, near San Diego.  
19 October 1942 6th Marines departed U.S. for New Zealand.  
1 November 1942 Elements of 6th Marines began arriving in New Zealand.  
26 December 1942 2d Marine Division, including 6th Marines, departed New Zealand for Guadalcanal.  
4 January 1943 6th Marines landed on Guadalcanal to help replace elements of the 1st Marine Division.  
19 February 1943 6th Marines began embarking on ships for movement back to New Zealand.

- 21 November 1943 Late in the day (D +1), elements of 6th Marines began landing on Tarawa to reinforce units already fighting there.
- 23 November 1943 Tarawa declared secured; 6th Marines, less 2d Battalion, began preparing for reembarkation.
- 26 November 1943 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, completed mopping-up of remaining islands of Tarawa Atoll.
- December 1943 - May 1944 6th Marines, along with the rest of the 2d Marine Division, re-equipped and trained replacements at Camp Tarawa in Hawaii.
- 25 May 1944 The 6th Marines departed Pearl Harbor enroute to Saipan in the Marianas.
- 15 June - 10 July 1944 6th Marines participated in the battle for Saipan.
- 24 July - 1 August 1944 6th Marines participated in the battle for Tinian.
- 1 April 1945 6th Marines participated in a turn-away landing on Okinawa before returning to Saipan.
- 6 August 1945 Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, followed three days later by a second bomb dropped on Nagasaki.
- 14 August 1945 President Harry S. Truman announced the surrender of Japan.
- 22 September 1945 The 2d Marine Division arrived in Japan for occupation duty.
- 15 July 1946 6th Marines arrived at Camp Pendleton, California for duty with 3d Marine Brigade. (The remainder of the 2d Marine Division went to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.)
- 16 September 1947 3d Brigade disbanded; 6th Marines transferred to 1st Marine Division.
- 1 October 1947 6th Marines temporarily disbanded.
- 10 October 1947 6th Marines reactivated at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, as part of 2d Marine Division.
- June-July 1950 6th Marines sent virtually all units and personnel to 1st Marine Division for Korea, and then began rebuilding the regiment.
- 15 July 1958 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, as part of 2d Provisional Marine Brigade, landed at Beirut, Lebanon to intervene in a civil war.
- 29 September 1958 The reinforced 6th Marines arrived in Beirut, while the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, departed for the continental U.S.
- 18 October 1958 All Marine units departed Lebanon.
- October 1962 Elements of the 6th Marines embarked in amphibious ships during the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- 28 April - 6 June 1965 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, landed in the Dominican Republic to intervene in a civil war. Other elements of the regiment deployed to the Dominican Republic shortly afterwards.
- 1965-1983 6th Marines participated in a long series of training exercises at Camp Lejeune, other bases within the United States, and during numerous deployments with the fleet to the Caribbean, Norway, and the Mediterranean.
- October 1983 Elements of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, transferred to Beirut, Lebanon, as replacements for Marine casualties.
- 1980s Elements of 6th Marines placed under the operational control of the 3d Marine Division at various times throughout the 1980s for deployment to the Western Pacific.

# Appendix C

## Lineage

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1917-1919

ACTIVATED 11 JULY 1917 AT QUANTICO, VIRGINIA, AS THE 6TH REGIMENT.  
DEPLOYED DURING OCTOBER 1917-FEBRUARY 1918 TO FRANCE AND ASSIGNED TO THE 4TH MARINE BRIGADE,  
2D DIVISION (ARMY), AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

PARTICIPATED IN THE FOLLOWING WORLD WAR I OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS:

    AISNE

    AISNE-MARNE

    ST. MIHIEL

    MEUSE-ARGONNE

PARTICIPATED IN THE FOLLOWING WORLD WAR I DEFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS:

    TOULON-TROYON

    CHATEAU-THERRY

    MARBACHE

    LIMEY

PARTICIPATED IN THE OCCUPATION OF THE GERMAN RHINELAND, DECEMBER 1918-JULY 1919.

RELOCATED DURING AUGUST 1919 TO QUANTICO, VIRGINIA.

DEACTIVATED 13 AUGUST 1919.

1921-1925

REACTIVATED 15 SEPTEMBER 1921 AT QUANTICO, VIRGINIA.

ELEMENTS PARTICIPATED IN EXPEDITIONARY DUTY IN CHINA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,  
JUNE 1924-MARCH 1925.

DEACTIVATED 15 MARCH 1925 AT QUANTICO, VIRGINIA.

1927-1929

REACTIVATED 26 MARCH 1927 AT PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA.

DEPLOYED DURING MAY 1927 TO SHANGHAI, CHINA, AND ASSIGNED TO THE 3D BRIGADE.

RELOCATED DURING MARCH 1929 TO SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, AND DETACHED FROM THE 3D BRIGADE.

DEACTIVATED 31 MARCH 1929.

1934-1949

REACTIVATED 1 SEPTEMBER 1934 AT SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, AS THE 6TH MARINES, FLEET MARINE FORCE.

ASSIGNED 1 JULY 1936 TO THE 2D MARINE BRIGADE, FLEET MARINE FORCE.

DEPLOYED DURING SEPTEMBER 1937 TO SHANGHAI, CHINA.

RELOCATED DURING APRIL 1938 TO SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA.

2D MARINE BRIGADE REDESIGNATED 1 FEBRUARY 1941 AS THE 2D MARINE DIVISION, FLEET MARINE FORCE.  
DEPLOYED DURING MAY-JULY 1941 TO REYKJAVIK, ICELAND, AND ASSIGNED TO THE  
1ST PROVISIONAL MARINE BRIGADE.  
RELOCATED DURING FEBRUARY-MARCH 1942 TO SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, AND ASSIGNED TO THE  
2D MARINE DIVISION, FLEET MARINE FORCE.  
DEPLOYED DURING OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1942 TO WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.  
PARTICIPATED IN THE FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II CAMPAIGNS:  
GUADALCANAL  
SOUTHERN SOLOMONS  
TARAWA  
SAIPAN  
TINIAN  
OKINAWA  
REDEPLOYED DURING SEPTEMBER 1945 TO NAGASAKI, JAPAN.  
PARTICIPATED IN THE OCCUPATION OF JAPAN, SEPTEMBER 1945-JUNE 1946.  
RELOCATED DURING JULY 1946 TO CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA.  
REASSIGNED 11 SEPTEMBER 1946 TO THE 3D MARINE BRIGADE, FLEET MARINE FORCE.  
REASSIGNED 11 JULY 1947 TO THE 1ST MARINE DIVISION, FLEET MARINE FORCE.  
DEACTIVATED 1 OCTOBER 1949.

1949-1984

REACTIVATED 17 OCTOBER 1949 AT CAMP LEJEUNE, NORTH CAROLINA, AND ASSIGNED TO THE 2D MARINE  
DIVISION, FLEET MARINE FORCE.  
ELEMENTS PARTICIPATED IN THE LANDINGS IN LEBANON, JULY-OCTOBER 1958.  
PARTICIPATED IN THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1962.  
ELEMENTS PARTICIPATED IN THE INTERVENTION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, APRIL-JUNE 1965.  
PARTICIPATED IN NUMEROUS TRAINING EXERCISES THROUGHOUT THE 1970S AND INTO THE 1980S.  
ELEMENTS PARTICIPATED AS PART OF THE MULTINATIONAL PEACE-KEEPING FORCE  
IN LEBANON, FEBRUARY-JUNE 1983.  
ELEMENTS PLACED UNDER THE OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE 3D MARINE DIVISION  
AT VARIOUS PERIODS THROUGHOUT THE 1980S FOR DEPLOYMENT TO THE WESTERN PACIFIC.

# Appendix D

## Honors

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PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION STREAMER  
WORLD WAR II  
TARAWA-1943

WORLD WAR I VICTORY STREAMER WITH ONE SILVER STAR

ARMY OF OCCUPATION OF GERMANY STREAMER

YANGTZE SERVICE STREAMER

MARINE CORPS EXPEDITIONARY STREAMER WITH TWO BRONZE STARS

CHINA SERVICE STREAMER

AMERICAN DEFENSE SERVICE STREAMER WITH ONE BRONZE STAR

EUROPEAN-AFRICAN-MIDDLE EASTERN CAMPAIGN STREAMER

ASIATIC-PACIFIC CAMPAIGN STREAMER WITH ONE SILVER AND ONE BRONZE STAR

WORLD WAR II VICTORY STREAMER

NAVY OCCUPATION SERVICE STREAMER WITH "ASIA" AND "EUROPE"

NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE STREAMER WITH ONE BRONZE STAR

ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY STREAMER WITH TWO BRONZE STARS

FRENCH CROIX DE GUERRE WITH TWO PALMS AND ONE GILT STAR



# Appendix E

## Medals of Honors

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Note: During World War I, when the 6th Marines was detached from the Navy Department for duty with the U.S. Army in France, some Marines received Medals of Honor from both the Army and the Navy for the same action. In such cases, both citations appear herein.

**Private John Joseph Kelly, USMC**  
Unit: 78th Company, 6th Regiment  
Birth: 24 June 1898, Chicago, Illinois  
Citation:

*(Army Medal)*

Private Kelly ran through our own barrage 100 yards in advance of the front line and attacked an enemy machine-gun nest, killing the gunner with a grenade, shooting another member of the crew with his pistol, and returning through the barrage with eight prisoners.

*(Navy Medal)*

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the Seventy-eighth Company, Sixth Regiment, Second Division, in action with the enemy at Blanc Mont Ridge, France, 3 October 1918. Private Kelly ran through our own barrage a hundred yards in advance of the front line and attacked an enemy machine-gun nest, killing the gunner with a grenade, shooting another member of the crew with his pistol, and returning through the barrage with eight prisoners.

**Corporal John Henry Pruitt, USMC**  
Unit: 78th Company, 6th Regiment  
Birth: 4 October 1896, Faderville, Arkansas  
Citation:

*(Army Medal)*

Corporal Pruitt single-handedly attacked two machine guns, capturing them, and killing two of the enemy. He then captured 40 prisoners in a dugout nearby. This gallant soldier was killed soon afterwards by shellfire while he was sniping at the enemy.

*(Navy Medal)*

For extraordinary gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the Seventy-eighth Company, Sixth Regiment, Second Division, in action with the enemy at Blanc Mont Ridge, France, 3 October 1918. Corporal Pruitt single-handedly attacked two machine guns, capturing them, and killing two of the enemy. He then captured 40 prisoners in a dugout nearby. This gallant soldier was killed soon afterwards by shellfire while he was sniping at the enemy.



**Gunnery Sergeant Fred W. Stockman, USMC**  
Unit: 96th Company, 2d Battalion, 6th Regiment  
Birth: 16 March 1881, Detroit, Michigan  
Citation:

During an intense enemy bombardment with high explosive and gas shells which wounded or killed many members of the company, Sergeant Stockman, upon noticing that the gas mask of a wounded comrade was shot away, without hesitation, removed his own gas mask and insisted upon giving it to the wounded man, well knowing that the effects of the gas would be fatal to himself. Despite the fact that he was without protection of a gas mask, he continued with undaunted courage and valor to direct and assist in the evacuation of the wounded in an area saturated with gas and swept by heavy artillery fire, until he himself collapsed from the effects of gas, dying as a result thereof a few days later. His courageous conduct undoubtedly saved the lives of many of his wounded comrades and his conspicuous gallantry and spirit of self-sacrifice were a source of great inspiration to all who served with him.

**Private First Class Harold Glenn Epperson, USMCR**  
Unit: Company C, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, 2d Marine Division  
Birth: 14 July 1923, Akron, Ohio  
Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the First Battalion, Sixth Marines, Second Marine Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces on the Island of Saipan in the Marianas, on 25 June 1944. With his machine-gun emplacement bearing the full brunt of a fanatic assault initiated by the Japanese under cover of predawn darkness, Private First Class Epperson manned his weapon with determined aggressiveness, fighting furiously in the defense of his battalion's position and maintaining a steady stream of devastating fire against rapidly infiltrating hostile troops to aid materially in annihilating several of the enemy and in breaking the abortive attack. Suddenly a Japanese soldier, assumed to be dead, sprang up and hurled a powerful hand grenade into the emplacement. Determined to save his comrades, Private First Class Epperson unhesitatingly chose to sacrifice himself and, diving upon the deadly missile, absorbed the shattering violence of the exploding charge in his own body. Stout-hearted and indomitable in the face of certain death, Private First Class Epperson fearlessly yielded his own life that his able comrades might carry on the relentless battle against a ruthless enemy. His superb valor and unfaltering devotion to duty throughout reflect the highest credit upon himself and upon the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

**Private First Class Robert Lee Wilson, USMC**

Unit: Company E, 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, 2d Marine Division

Birth: 24 May 1921, Centralia, Illinois

Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the Second Battalion, Sixth Marines, Second Marine Division, during action against enemy Japanese forces at Tinian Island, Marianas Group, on 4 August 1944. As one of a group of Marines advancing through heavy underbrush to neutralize isolated points of resistance, Private First Class Wilson daringly preceded his companions toward a pile of rocks where Japanese troops were supposed to be hiding. Fully aware of the danger involved, he was moving forward while the remainder of the squad, armed with automatic rifles, closed together in the rear when an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the group. Quick to act, Private First Class Wilson cried a warning to the men and unhesitatingly threw himself on the grenade, heroically sacrificing his own life that the others might live and fulfill their mission. His exceptional valor, his courageous loyalty and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of grave peril reflect the highest credit upon Private First Class Wilson and the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.



# Appendix F

## Contributors

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### Active-duty Marines

MajGen Harold G. Glasgow  
Col Robert E. Tschan  
LtCol Wesley L. Fox  
LtCol Thomas D. Stouffer  
Capt Douglas R. Doerr  
Capt Richard P. Mills

### Retired Marines

Gen Gerald C. Thomas  
LtGen Ormond R. Simpson  
MajGen Robert D. Bohn  
MajGen Raymond L. Murray  
Col James A. Donovan  
Col Loren E. Haffner  
Col Paul B. Haigwood  
Col Gerald C. Thomas, Jr.  
Col Ronald B. Wilde  
LtCol William D. Mears  
LtCol Robert J. Vroegindewey  
MSgt Lewis J. Michelony

### Former Marines

Mr. Baine P. Kerr  
Mr. Alfred A. Mannino  
Mr. Edward Walsh

### Civilians

Mr. David M. Sablan  
Mr. Robert L. Sherrod



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