TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Without the aid of references, describe common terms, sayings, and quotations used in the Marine Corps without omission. (MCCS-HIST-1001)

2. Without the aid of references, identify significant events in Marine Corps history without omission. (MCCS-HIST-1002)

3. Without the aid of references, identify the historical significance of Marine Corps uniform items without omission. (MCCS-HIST-1003)

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Without the aid of references, match the given quotation to the specific battle, war, or time period from which it came without omission. (MCCS-HIST-1001a)

2. Without the aid of references, identify the effect of selected quotations or terms on the Marine ethos without omission. (MCCS-HIST-1001b)

3. Without the aid of references, identify significant events in Marine Corps history during the period 1934-1945 without omission. (MCCS-HIST-1002e)

1. Preparation for War

   a. Marines against the Nazis.

      (1) In late spring 1941, British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill asked President Roosevelt to send American troops to Iceland to relieve the British garrison there. Churchill sorely needed reinforcements to defend against an expected Nazi invasion of England. In July 1941, the 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) sailed to Iceland. The mission of these 4,095 Marines: serve "In cooperation with the British garrison, defend Iceland against hostile attack."

      (2) To warn of approaching German aircraft during the months in Iceland Marines employed radar - the first time in the Corps' history.

      (3) In February 1942, the Marines returned to the United States, took some leave, and then prepared to sail for the South Pacific. Through the rest of the war, Marines experienced in Caribbean guerrilla fighting served for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) alongside French and Yugoslav partisans. The German Gestapo captured four Marines. Marines also fought in small numbers during the North African and Normandy landings, and Marine detachments aboard two U.S. Navy cruisers captured 700 Germans during island raids in the Mediterranean.

2. U.S. Entry Into World War II

   a. Pearl Harbor. The United States was literally blasted into World War II by the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Throughout history there has never been a naval disaster to compare with the losses inflicted by the Japanese aerial attack on the American naval base on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. It began on a
quiet, calm Sunday morning, with a surprise aerial attack on our Pacific Fleet. From the time the first bomb fell at Ford Island until the last bomb exploded, two hours later, America’s losses were as follows:

- 4 battleships
- 3 cruisers
- 3 destroyers
- 188 planes
- 2,403 dead
- 1,178 wounded

The next day, 8 December 1941, the United States of America declared war on the Empire of Japan.

b. **Guam.** The island of Guam was attacked within hours of the Pearl Harbor strike. A small naval base was located on Guam, defended by a small group of naval personnel, civilians and 153 Marines. The heaviest weapons on Guam were .30 caliber machineguns. For two days the Americans held the island against heavy Japanese bombardments, followed by an attack of approximately 6,000 Japanese soldiers. This was the first ground combat action between American and Japanese forces. Guam would become the first American outpost to fall.

c. **China.** The handful of Marines still in China at the start of the war for the United States were ordered to surrender by the commander of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet and quickly captured. They spent the war in Japanese prison camps.

d. **Wake Island.**

(1) On 8 December 1941, the Japanese attacked Wake Island from the air. Three days later twelve Japanese ships, including a landing force, came to take Wake Island. The initial Japanese amphibious assault was repelled. Wake was another naval base defended by 375 Marines under the command of Major James P. S. Devereaux.

(2) The Japanese sent daily aircraft strikes against the island. On the first day of the attack, a Japanese air strike destroyed two thirds of the Marine aircraft and nearly all of the vital supplies. Captain Henry Elrod, a pilot with VMF-211, sunk a Japanese destroyer, shot down several bombers, and fought on the ground after his fighter had been destroyed. He became the first Marine aviator to receive the Medal of Honor in World War II for both air and ground combat. The road that runs parallel to the OCS parade deck has been dedicated to his memory.

(3) The Japanese sent daily aircraft strikes against the island until 23 December 1941 when Wake Island finally fell. The enemy paid dearly though: 4 ships were sunk, 11 damaged, 21 aircraft destroyed and almost 1,000 Japanese soldiers were killed. Only 49 Marines were killed along with three Navy personnel and 70 civilians. Those who survived became prisoners of war.

e. **The Philippines.**

(1) The Japanese launched their initial air attacks against the Philippines on 8 December. By 12 December they dominated the skies and had destroyed the Navy Yard at Cavite. They had also landed troops on Luzon, the main island. On the day after Christmas, General Douglas MacArthur, commanding the defense of the Philippines, declared the city of Manila an “open city,” not to be defended, and ordered U.S. forces to the Bataan Peninsula. The American defenders of the Philippines fought heroically but a complete lack of support in the face of overwhelming Japanese strength would eventually cause their collapse. Most of the remaining Marines were consolidated and assigned to the 4th Marine Regiment, which was on the island fortress of Corregidor in Manila Bay. The U.S. and Filipino forces defending the Bataan Peninsula were able to hold out for over three months until early April. Dazed by constant bombardment, suffering from disease and lack of rations, 75,000 Americans and Filipinos, including over 100 Marines, surrendered on 9 April and began the infamous Bataan Death March.

(2) The Japanese siege of Corregidor began the next day. The Marines were able to hold out for 27 days. Then, early in May the Japanese invaded the island and overwhelmed the defenders. The Marines destroyed as many of their weapons as possible before Major General Wainwright, U.S. Army, finally surrendered all forces in
the Philippines on 6 May 1942. The regimental commander ordered the regimental colors burned. The staunch defense of the Philippines and especially Corregidor became a symbol of American heroism and courage.

(3) Total losses for the 4th Marines in the Philippines were 330 killed and 357 wounded. Of those taken prisoner, 239 Marines died while in Japanese hands.

f. Midway. June 1942 marked the turning point of the war when the Japanese were handed a severe defeat in the battle of Midway. In this epic sea engagement, the Japanese lost four aircraft carriers and the bulk of their naval aircraft.

3. Island Hopping Campaign.

a. The term "Island Hopping" describes the strategy used by Marines to secure the Pacific during WWII. In 63 separate amphibious landings, the Marines literally dug the enemy out of their fighting holes, caves, bunkers and pillboxes. Teamwork, discipline, pride, esprit de corps, and in many cases, sheer guts won these battles. Not once did we fail to take an objective.


(1) On 7 August 1942, the First Marine Division under Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift made the first amphibious landing in the Pacific Theater at Guadalcanal. This was the first time that the principles established by the 1938 Fleet Training Publication 167 were applied. What began as a largely uncontested landing was to become the longest Marine engagement of World War II. In addition to landing on Guadalcanal, the Marines also landed on Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo and Florida Islands. These islands were secured within days. On the night of 8-9 August, the naval escorts suffered heavy losses in the battle of Savo Island. Because of the loss of the covering surface ships, the Navy was forced to withdraw its aircraft carriers. This left the amphibious ships without sufficient protection from air or surface attack and departed the following day carrying with it the majority of the Marines’ supplies as well as 1,400 men of the division reserve. Five battalions of the 1st Marine Division were left on their own.

(2) The Battle of the Tenaru River, 18 - 21 August 1942: The first major battle, the Battle of the Tenaru River, began with patrols making contact on 19 August. In the pre-dawn hours of 21 August, the Japanese attacked across the Ilu River (which was mistakenly identified as the Tenaru River on the Marines’ maps). The 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines repelled the initial attacks while the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines counterattacked in coordination with tank and air support, and eliminated the remaining Japanese. The Battle of the Tenaru River ended leaving nearly 800 Japanese dead including their commander, who committed suicide.

(3) The Cactus Air Force.

(a) The unfinished airfield at Guadalcanal was captured and named Henderson Field in honor of Marine Major Lofton R. Henderson who was shot down at the Battle of Midway. It was completed using captured equipment and supplies on 12 August. On 20 August, two Marine squadrons arrived at Henderson Field to set up an expeditionary airfield. Prior to the arrival of the aircraft, two Navy destroyer-transport vessels sneaked in and delivered necessary ground crews, maintenance equipment and supplies. The Marine fliers at Henderson Field nicknamed themselves the “Cactus Air Force,” for the codename for Guadalcanal. As the air war over Guadalcanal intensified, Japanese aircraft carriers joined the Tokyo Express and land based aircraft in pounding the beleaguered Marines. The Marines’ Grumman F4F “Wildcat” fighters were neither as maneuverable nor as swift as the Japanese “Zero” fighters yet the Marines continued to perform well.

(b) Lieutenant General Roy S. Geiger, USMC: The Marine Air Group on Guadalcanal came under the command of 57 year-old Lieutenant General Roy S. Geiger, USMC. Geiger had reported to flight school a few weeks behind Lieutenant A. A. Cunningham, the first Marine pilot. As the fifth Marine to earn his wings, then-Captain Geiger commanded a squadron in France. During the interim between the wars, he helped pioneer the development of Marine aviation during combat operations in Central America, and learned to command ground forces at several senior military courses and command tours.
(c) The Marine aviators of the Cactus Air Force distinguished themselves repeatedly over the Solomon Islands. Captain Joseph L. Foss was presented a Medal of Honor for air combat over Guadalcanal for shooting down 26 Japanese planes. Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington became the Marine Corps' top ace with 28 kills before being shot down and becoming a POW. For his heroism he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

c. The Battle of Edson's (Bloody) Ridge, 12 - 14 September 1942.

(1) Major General Kiyotake Kawaguchi, the Japanese commander, was planning on hitting the Marines where he deemed them the weakest--from the inhospitable ridges to the south of Henderson Field. The Japanese marched over extremely difficult terrain, attempting to position themselves to surprise the Marines. Despite the Japanese attempts at deception and surprise, Marine patrols and a captured Japanese map betrayed the plan. Vandegrift moved Colonel Merrit A. Edson's 1st Raider Battalion to the ridge. The Marines believed they were moved to a quiet sector of the lines for some rest.

(2) As dusk fell on 12 September 1942, Japanese naval forces unleashed a hellish barrage on the Marine positions holding "Edson's Ridge." At 2100, General Kawaguchi's force struck Col. Edson's left flank, probing for weakness. The fighting lasted all night, often at bayonet range. The enemy launched three different attacks; the Marine Raiders repelled each one. At dawn, 2nd Battalion 5th Marines reinforced the Raiders and together they prepared for another night of fighting.

(3) Convinced the Marines had no weak points on the ridge, General Kawaguchi changed his orders for the second night's assault. As dark fell, his troops converged on one single point, trying to break through the infantry and sweep down upon Henderson Field one mile away. Hand-to-hand combat raged around nearly every foxhole. The enemy pushed the Marines back 500 yards. Japanese slipped past the preoccupied infantry and attacked into the artillery positions. Three Japanese were killed as they tried to leap on General Vandegrift. Again, the Marines held. The Marines fell back to the last spur on the ridge. If the enemy overwhelmed their position, the airfield was doomed. The Marines held firm. At dawn, General Kawaguchi gathered his shattered forces and melted back into the jungle; 1200 of his men lay dead on the slopes of Edson's Ridge. On the American side, one of every five Marines on the ridge was killed; many more were wounded, and all were pushed to the limits of human endurance. The Marines' 1st Parachute Battalion was nearly destroyed; the Raiders and 2/5 had suffered nearly catastrophic casualties.

(4) Back in the jungle, General Kawaguchi split his remaining forces. The next two nights he attempted simultaneous attacks on the Ridge and along the Ilu River. Neither attack found success. The 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines caught his second force in the open on a grassy plain and killed almost 200 with artillery fire. After the last night's assaults, the enemy force was too weak to fight on. Colonel Edson and a company commander named Captain Kenneth Bailey received Medals of Honor for their heroic and inspiring leadership. The Marines renamed the ridge "Bloody Ridge."

(5) The four-day battle for Edson's Ridge proved a decisive Marine victory. At home, newspapers raised American morale and boosted Marine-recruiting efforts. President Roosevelt and others who had doubted the fate of the First Marine Division changed their minds and threw their weight behind them. To that point, JCS attention focused on the Allied landings in North Africa and New Guinea. The Navy and Army were ordered to increase their support of the Marines on Guadalcanal. Navy ships took increased risk of submarine and air attack to move more Marines and supplies to the island. U.S. Army units were ordered to prepare to join the Marines at Guadalcanal. President Roosevelt decided to ensure an American victory in the Solomon Islands at all costs. The enemy, too, took a second look at the Marine presence on Guadalcanal. They revised estimates that indicated only 2000 Marines on the island. Tokyo hastily committed sizable naval forces and two whole army divisions to driving the 1st Marine Division back into the sea.

d. The Marines Take the Initiative.

(1) Despite the new Japanese forces that were to be committed to Guadalcanal, the Marines were to receive the support that had been sorely needed from the start and would soon be able to grab the initiative. The President and the JCS made it clear that every possible effort would be made to ensure the success of the operation on Guadalcanal. With the arrival of the 7th Marines in mid-September as well as additional reinforcements to include
Marine and Army infantry regiments, artillery units and another Marine Aircraft Group, General Vandegrift was able to take the offensive.

(2) Despite signs of growing Japanese presence, General Vandegrift wisely refused to surrender the initiative. During the first week of October, he launched another offensive towards the Matanikau River. In two days marked by torrential downpours, five Marine infantry battalions killed almost 1000 enemy as they forced a crossing of the Matanikau and unwittingly preempted a planned Japanese offensive. The Japanese, who to this point had vastly underestimated the strength and fighting spirit of the Marines on Guadalcanal, had reinforced their presence on the island as well. General Haruyoshi Hyakutake, Commanding General, Seventeenth Army, himself landed to direct the campaign to recapture Lunga Point.

(3) Through a series of naval battles in the waters off Guadalcanal, the Navy, with substantial help from the Cactus Air Force, was able to stem the flow of men and equipment the Japanese were sending to the island. In early December the 1st Marine Division was finally relieved after more than 4 months of continuous action. By January 1943, there were almost 50,000 Americans on Guadalcanal to include the 2nd Marine Division. They faced an estimated 25,000 weary, battle-worn Japanese soldiers. The inability to effectively resupply and reinforce their troops on the island caused the Japanese High Command to order the evacuation of the remaining forces. The Japanese put up a stiff rearguard stand from the end of January through early February and by the night of 7 February, the Japanese Navy was able to evacuate 12,000 troops. Six months after it began, the Guadalcanal campaign was finally over. The Guadalcanal Campaign cost the Marines almost 1,200 dead and 2,800 wounded; the U.S. Navy lost twenty-four ships and a few thousand men during the eight major naval engagements fought around the island. The enemy lost close to 25,000 on the island, many died of disease and starvation. At sea the enemy lost 2 battleships, 3 carriers, 12 cruisers, 25 destroyers, and innumerable transports, all of them irreplaceable. Japan never recovered from these manpower losses. A grateful President Roosevelt presented Major General Vandegrift with the Medal of Honor. Vandegrift remains the senior Marine to receive the nation's highest military decoration. The Battle of Guadalcanal was the longest Marine battle of the war. The Marines proved they could defeat the best of Japan's military forces. Admiral Tanaka, leader of the "Tokyo Express," wrote later "There is no question that Japan's doom was Guadalcanal." More importantly, the Marines and Navy learned important lessons about amphibious warfare, lessons that paid dividends in future campaigns. By February of 1943, the Marines had full control of Guadalcanal. The U.S. now concentrated on the offensive in the Pacific.

c. The Tarawa Atoll, 20 - 23 November 1943.

(1) “A Million Men and One Hundred Years”: Japanese labor and ingenuity had converted the islet of Betio, which was the heart of the Tarawa defense, into a fortress. It was strongly fortified and heavily garrisoned. The islands, known as the Tarawa Atoll, consisted of coral formations surrounded by reefs nearly 1,000 yards in width. There were over 4,800 Japanese on Tarawa manning 32 large coastal artillery pieces, 106 machine guns and 14 tanks. On 20 November 1943, the 2nd Marine Division attacked. The first three assault waves were to ride Amphibious Tractors (AMTRACs) from their landing ships to the beaches while the remaining waves would ride landing boats. The landing boats, however, were unable to pass over the coral reef surrounding the island. The AMTRACs that carried the first three waves began to ferry the Marines from the reef to the shore but so many AMTRACs had been destroyed in previous waves that this became too time consuming and ultimately ineffective. The Marines were then forced to wade from the reef to the shore, over ¼ of a mile through chest deep water in the face of murderous machine gun and mortar fire. Despite horrendous losses the Marines were able to establish a beachhead. By nightfall there were 5,000 Marines ashore struggling to keep their toehold on Betio. Throughout the second day, the Marines pushed forward advancing pillbox-by-pillbox, bunker-by-bunker. More reinforcements landed. The Japanese launched several counterattacks, trying to drive the Marines back into the sea but the Marines held fast. Shortly after noon on 23 November, the last Japanese strongholds fell. Betio was in the hands of the 2nd Marine Division; Tarawa had fallen. The Japanese commander had boasted, "a million men assaulting for a hundred years could not take Betio." It took Marines just 76 hours. Only 17 Japanese surrendered; the rest fought to the death.

(2) The United States Marine Corps learned two important lessons from the Battle for Tarawa.

(a) Up to this point in the war, the Marine Corps had relied heavily on the Higgins Boat. At Tarawa these flat-bottom boats became stuck on the coral reefs, forcing Marines to wade ashore under murderous fire.
(b) The 2nd Marine Division had brought along an experimental amphibious landing craft, the Landing Vehicle Tracked (LVT). These were tracked vehicles with the capability of riding over coral reefs and continuing to shore. There were only 93 LVTs at Tarawa, not enough to transport the Marines to shore as quickly as needed. After Tarawa, the United States Marine Corps adopted the exclusive use of the LVT.


(1) Kwajalein Atoll, 31 January - 7 February 1944: Using lessons hard won at Tarawa, the 4th Marine Division launched its offensive on the Kwajalein Atoll in late January 1944. A massive naval bombardment combined with artillery fire from nearby islands preceded the Marine assault forces. Navy Underwater Demolition Teams scouted the beach defenses prior to the Marines’ arrival and the Marines used AMTRACs and Landing Vehicles Tracked (LVT) exclusively to transport Marines to the beaches. Planners of the operation believed that the Japanese defenses of Kwajalein would be tougher than Tarawa but those fears proved to be incorrect. The Marines were able to secure the entire atoll by 7 February with substantially fewer casualties than had been taken at Tarawa.

(2) Eniwetok Atoll, 17 February - 23 February 1944: With the same tactics used at Kwajalein, a Marine/Army amphibious force began the attack by seizing some lesser, undefended islets and using them to position supporting artillery. The landing teams then assaulted the main islands. As with Kwajalein, progress was quick and casualties light.

g. The Marianas.

(1) This island chain consists of about 15 volcanic islands much larger than the coral atolls previously encountered. Only the four southernmost islands were of military importance. The Marianas were needed primarily to provide bases for the Army Air Corps’ B-29 Superfortress bombers. From these bases, the B-29s would be able to reach the Japanese home islands. The U.S. Joint Expeditionary Force consisted of over 120,000 troops. Smith’s V Amphibious Corps, comprised of the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions, was tasked with taking Saipan and Tinian. Major General Roy S. Geiger commanded the III Amphibious Corps with the 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. They would take Guam. Two Army divisions would be the reserve force for the operation (27th Infantry within the Amphibious Task Force and the 77th Infantry based in Hawaii).

(2) Saipan, 15 June - 9 July 1944: Saipan was the first objective of the Marines. Termed "the decisive battle of the Pacific offensive" by Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, Saipan would prove to be well defended and very costly. The initial landing became confused and the assault battalions suffered heavy casualties in a short period of time. The 32,000 Japanese defending the island fought ferociously. The attack bogged down and by the end of the first day the Marines had gained only about half of the ground they were supposed to have taken. Attempts to drive east across the island and split it in half moved slowly and casualties continued to mount. Progress was slow and the Japanese launched numerous counterattacks. The U.S. Navy was able to seal off the island and prevent reinforcements from arriving; however, the Japanese continued to fight fanatically. With the southern half of the island secure, the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions along with one of the reserve Army divisions carried on the attack toward the north. As the Marines and soldiers approached the northern coast, the Japanese launched one final “Banzai” attack. On 7 July, an estimated 3,000 Japanese soldiers hurled themselves at the American lines and overran two battalions of an Army regiment and a Marine artillery battalion. The Banzai attack was stopped and by that evening, most of the ground lost had been recovered. On 9 July, the 4th Marine Division reached the northern coast and the island was declared secure.

(3) Tinian, 24 July - 1 August 1944: The island of Tinian lies only 3 miles south of Saipan. Once the southern tip of Saipan had been secured, American artillery pieces were pounding Japanese positions from across the 3-mile channel that separated the two islands. The assault did not require a ship-to-shore movement but a more unusual shore-to-shore movement from Saipan. Due to the proximity of the two islands, the Marines climbed aboard their AMTRACs on Saipan, instead of re-embarking on ship, to conduct the assault on Tinian. Despite some bitter fighting that occurred during the battle, the decision to attack the island directly from Saipan enabled the Marines to land at a pair of beaches that were not defended as heavily as other possible landing beaches. It also enabled them to bring heavy equipment and tanks with which to flank the main Japanese defenses. Although the
island was declared “secure” on 1 August, bands of die-hard Japanese continued to launch counterattacks and the final mopping up was not completed for several days.

(4) Guam, 21 July – 10 August 1944: The third phase of the Marianas campaign was the recapture of Guam. The 30,000 Marines of the 3rd Marine Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade would assault the 18,500 Japanese on Guam. It took three weeks of fighting to complete the conquest of the island. On 25 July, the Japanese commander launched the most massive counterattack of the war to this point. The overextended Marine lines crumbled. The Japanese overran a rifle company and hit that battalion’s mortar platoon and a tank unit. They struck hardest against 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines. They withstood seven major attacks that night. The assault was driven off and the Japanese had lost an estimated 3,200 men. On 10 August, the island was secured; however, several thousand Japanese remained on the island and died of starvation or were eliminated over months of guerilla warfare. Japanese soldiers were still surrendering in the mid 1970’s on Guam.

(5) The Marianas victories brought air power within striking distance of the Japanese homeland. The battle had cost the Marines over 5,000 killed and 21,000 wounded. The Japanese lost over 46,000 troops.

h. Peleliu, 15 September - 15 October 1944.

(1) Considered the “Forgotten Battle of the Pacific War,” Peleliu was to be used as a staging point for MacArthur’s invasion of the Philippines. It turned out to be unnecessary because shortly after the Marines landed on Peleliu, the Army found a better staging point that was undefended in the Ulithi Atoll. This mistake cost the 1st Marine Division dearly. Due to the Navy’s requirement to protect MacArthur’s flank as he advanced towards the Philippines, they were unable to isolate and neutralize Peleliu.

(2) The Navy’s inability to effectively blockade the island enabled the Japanese to establish a strong defense-in-depth. The Japanese also intended to change tactics. Instead of trying to fight the Marines at the beaches, the Japanese dug themselves into a network of well-stocked, heavily armed caves and tunnels along the Umurbrogol Ridges. The Marines felt compelled to dig them out. This change of tactics cost the Marines time and lives.

(3) On 15 September 1944, the 1st Marine Division hit the beach. The Japanese had the landing beach covered from the high ground of the Umurbrogol Ridge. They also had enfilading fire at both ends of the proposed beachhead. The Marines forced their way inland but still failed to meet their D-Day objectives. Oppressive heat, a lack of drinking water, and stubborn Japanese resistance slowed the 1st Marine Division’s advance and caused casualties to mount. In the first week, the Marines had taken the airfield and secured the southern portion of the island. By 29 September, most of the resistance on the northern side of the island had been eliminated but the Japanese still held the ridges. Digging them out would be a costly and time-consuming operation. It took the Marines over two weeks to finish digging the Japanese defenders out of their caves. On the morning of 15 October, one month after the initial landings, the 1st Marine Division was relieved. However, a pocket of defenders still remained and the Army units that had relieved the Marines methodically squeezed it until organized resistance ended on 27 November.

(4) Marine casualties were extremely high. Over 1,100 Marines were killed and 5,024 wounded. The Japanese had an estimated 10,200 troops lost of which only 302 had been taken prisoner. An unnecessary and ill-advised operation, it caused a great deal of bitterness among many Marines.

i. Iwo Jima, 19 February - 16 March 1945.

(1) The island of Iwo Jima, a pork chop-shaped volcanic rock only five miles long and two and a half miles wide, was strategically very important because it was 670 miles from both Tokyo and the Marianas Islands. It was able to provide B-29 bombers flying from the Marianas with an emergency landing field as well as a base for shorter-range fighters escorting the B-29s.

(2) As with Peleliu, the Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, had his troops dig themselves into caves and tunnels. He intended to make the Marines pay in blood for every inch. Coming against General Kuribayashi's' 23,000 elite troops were 800 ships carrying 60,000 combat hardened Marines of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Divisions. Six thousand of those would not leave Iwo Jima alive.
On the morning of 19 February 1945, the Marines of the 4th and 5th Divisions landed on loose black volcanic ash in which men sank to their ankles and vehicles were immobilized. It was the largest Marine amphibious landing to date, and the costliest. The Japanese, firing from their covered and concealed caves, punished the Marines on the beaches. On the first day, the Marines in forcing their way inland a short distance were able to land 30,000 troops and isolate Mount Suribachi in the south. However, D-Day objectives were nowhere in sight. About a week after the landings began, Suribachi was captured and the now famous flag-raising photograph was taken. With the fall of Suribachi, the Marines turned north towards Kuribayashi’s main force.

After Suribachi, the killing continued at Charlie--Dog Ridge, Turkey Knob, the Amphitheater and the meat-grinder. Kuribayashi directed the staunch defense from his command bunker. The island was declared secure in the evening of 16 March, but Marines still fought and died on the northwest corner of the island. The remaining Japanese were in a gorge that held Kuribayashi’s command post. The Japanese command post was destroyed with explosives on 21 March but the last enemy pocket of resistance was not annihilated until 26 March.

Casualties were enormous, totaling almost 26,000 dead and wounded. General Kuribayashi had intended to make the Marines pay for every inch of Iwo Jima. He accomplished this with one American casualty for each Japanese soldier on the island. There was a dead Marine or Japanese soldier for every square yard on the island.

Americans criticized the large number of casualties but praised the efforts of the Marines and sailors. Admiral Nimitz said, "Among the Americans who served on Iwo Island, ‘uncommon valor was a common virtue.’” Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal spoke of his “…tremendous admiration and reverence for the guy who walks up the beaches and takes enemy positions with a rifle and grenades or his bare hands.” Marine General Holland Smith said, “Iwo Jima was the most savage and the most costly battle in the history of the Marine Corps. Indeed, it has few parallels in military annals.” Other analysts stated, “To a greater degree than was necessary, taking Iwo Jima was like throwing human flesh against reinforced concrete.”

During this battle Marines raised the American flag on Mount Suribachi. An Associated Press photographer, Joe Rosenthal, snapped a picture, which has taken its place with the most famous pictures and paintings of our country’s history. This picture was the inspiration for the Iwo Jima Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Okinawa, 1 April - 21 June 1945.

Skinny and 60 miles long, Okinawa, the largest of the Ryukyu Islands, was to be the main advance base for the invasion of Japanese home islands. The 117,000 Japanese soldiers fortified the island by digging caves and tunnels and entrenching mortars in the reverse slopes. The Japanese had built three airfields on the western coast.

The Navy shelled Okinawa with over 27,000 rounds. Carrier aircraft flew over 3,000 sorties that destroyed the enemy air force by 29 March. On 1 April 1945, 500 carrier aircraft strafed and napalmed the landing beaches. More shells hit the beaches. Four divisions landed abreast, with two Marine divisions (1st and 6th MarDivs) on the left and two Army divisions on the right. The Marine divisions, along with the 2nd Marine Division, comprised the III Amphibious Corps commanded by Major General Roy S. Geiger. The first day there were few casualties. A beachhead four miles long and two miles deep was easily established. Fifty thousand troops landed. Yontan and Kadena Airfields were secured. Light resistance was encountered and by 10 April there were 160,000 American troops on Okinawa. Marine Aircraft Groups began to operate from the captured airfields.

The Japanese plan was to have kamikazes, which had been used since Peleliu, destroy the U.S. fleet. This would isolate the invasion forces; hence prolong the invasion of Japan. The kamikazes were extremely effective in the battle of Okinawa. They would eventually sink 36 ships and damage 368 more before the battle was over. More U.S. Navy sailors died in battle at Okinawa than either Marines or soldiers.

The Army divisions had turned south to secure the southern portion of the island while the Marines turned north. As kamikaze attacks continued, the Marines pushed north. They were searching for the main enemy force. It was not found until mid-April when the 6th Marine Division found the enemy holed up in the mountains of the Motobu Peninsula. They continued to push north and on 20 April elements of the 6th Marine Division, the 4th and
29th Marine Regiments reached the northern coast of the Motobu Peninsula. Organized resistance on the peninsula had ended. On 21 April, the 22nd Marines reached the northern tip of Okinawa.

(5) The 1st Marine Division was pulled out of the northern line and replaced an Army division in the south. The Army division was sent north to relieve the 6th Marine Division and enable them to move south as well. The two Marine divisions, along with two Army divisions, were now poised to attack the main Japanese defenses, centered on Shuri Ridge. Shuri was the core of the enemy’s defenses and the Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Ushijima, had constructed his defense in concentric rings, each heavily armed with interlocking automatic weapons and artillery fires. The Japanese line stretched from Shuri Castle west to Naha and from the Castle to Yonabaru. By the end of May, the Americans had forced the Japanese to withdraw from the Shuri defensive line to the south.

(6) Following the fall of the Shuri line, the Marines and soldiers continued to advance, slowly squeezing the enemy into an ever-tightening area at the southern end of the island. The island was declared secure on 21 June but the Army was still in the process of finishing off a last-ditch stand.

(7) Marine Corps casualties were over 20,000, of which 3,561 were battle deaths. It took 82 days and over 75,000 American casualties to secure Okinawa, the last major battle in the Pacific theater.

4. Ending the War

a. The Potsdam Declaration was issued 26 July, 1945 and amounted to a demand for unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire. Two days later, Prime Minister Suzuki announced that Japan would continue to fight. During the Potsdam conference, the atomic bomb was being tested in the United States.

b. The decision was made to use the atomic bomb against the Japanese. On August 6th, the B-29 “Enola Gay” took off from the island of Tinian, and dropped a single atomic bomb over the city of Hiroshima. After a second refusal by the Japanese to surrender, on 9 August, a second atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki. The death and destruction was widespread and complete.

c. On 10 August 1945 and as a result of the atomic bombs, the Japanese agreed to peace with a modification to the terms of the Declaration. On 13 August, President Truman accepted Japan’s proposal. On 15 August 1945, Emperor Hirohito made the final decision to surrender after quelling a small contingent of pro-war government members. The war was over. They were granted their concession -- the Emperor was allowed to retain his throne. Formal surrender ceremonies were held on the deck of the battleship Missouri on 2 September 1945.

5. New Marines

a. In August 1942, the same month the battle for Guadalcanal began, black Americans began arriving at Montford Point, North Carolina to begin recruit training.

(1) Executive Order 8802, signed by President Roosevelt on 25 June 1941, had signaled a black recruiting effort.

(2) That order, however, did not end segregation in the Marine Corps. Executive Order 9981, signed by President Truman in July 1948, accomplished this. In 1949, black recruits were fully integrated into the Parris Island training process.

b. WWII black Marines served in segregated units and served with distinction in all major campaigns.

c. Montford Point has been renamed Camp Johnson, honoring the famous black Sergeant Major.

d. Executive Order Number 9981

(1) On 26 July 1948, President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 that desegregated the armed services. Although there were only 2,200 blacks among a total of 93,000 Marines in mid-1947, the change wrought by
integration was fundamental. Athletic teams, recruit platoons, and noncommissioned officer (NCO) clubs were
desegregated. The deactivation of the camp at Montford Point in September 1949 marked the end of the seven-year
segregated era for blacks in the Marine Corps.

(2) By the end of the Korean War, the percentage of Blacks in the Corps rose from two to six percent. Major
General O.P. Smith, who commanded all Marine forces in Korea, stated after the war that of the one thousand black
Marines who fought in Korea, two were presented the Navy Cross, and many, the Silver and Bronze Stars. In
March 1945, three black Marines were sent to Platoon Commanders Class at Quantico, but they did not make it
through the course. The next three black officer candidates also did not make it through OCS. At last, on the Corps'
170th birthday, Frederick C. Branch of Hamlet, North Carolina, who had served in the 51st Defense Battalion,
became the Marines Corps' first black officer. Lieutenant Branch returned to active service in the Korean War. The
first black officer to lead Marines in combat was Lieutenant William K. Jenkins of Elizabeth, New Jersey, who
served with B Company, 7th Marines. The Marines in Korea had only one black pilot, Second Lieutenant Frank E.
Petersen, Jr., of Topeka, Kansas, who flew 64 combat missions with VMF-212 and earned the Distinguished Flying
Cross. Petersen was the fourth black man to become a naval aviator.

6. **Women Called to Serve**

a. On 7 November 1942, Commandant Holcomb signed an order that would enhance the efficiency of our Corps
and enable 20,000 women to respond to the call of patriotism. The Commandant's official announcement, however,
was not made to the American public until 3 months later on 13 February 1943.

b. On 13 March 1943, exactly a month after the initial public announcement of the Women's Reserve, the first
class of 71 women officer candidates entered Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts to begin training. Two weeks
later, 722 women recruits began their training at Hunter College, New York. The first half of training was
conducted in civilian clothes due to the unavailability of women's uniforms. In July 1943, the women officers and
recruits began training at New River, North Carolina.

c. During the war, women Marines performed their duties in a manner that evoked admiration and praise of their
fellow male Marines. Their conduct and appearance, both on and off duty, were exemplary and a source of pride to
all.

d. On 12 June 1948, President Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which allowed
women to serve in the regular armed forces. Previously, women had been restricted to reserve forces. By the end of
the Korean War, 2,800 were on active duty, mostly in administrative fields. Some served in weapons repair and
truck driving.

e. The summer of 1949 saw the enlistment of the first black women Marines. Now, at a time when male Marines
were still segregated by race, women's Platoon 7 of the 3rd Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island became one of
the first integrated units in the Corps. The third black woman Marine, who enlisted in Chicago in 1950, was Annie
L. Grimes. She was selected to Warrant Officer in 1968 and became the first black woman officer to retire from the
Corps with 20 years of service. From the beginning, black and white women Marines trained and lived together.

f. "Molly" Marine is the nickname of a statue dedicated to women who served as Marines. It has stood at the
intersection of Elk Place and Canal Street in downtown New Orleans, Louisiana, since it was originally dedicated on
the Marine Corps Birthday in 1943. Originally cast in marble chips and granite (because of wartime restrictions)
Molly became weather beaten. Molly was later refurbished in bronze finery. Her unveiling took place during the
Women Marine Association National Convention, 29 June - 1 July 1996.

7. **Summary -- The Post-War Era.** Congress cut the military drastically following the Second World War. The
Marine Corps went from 495,000 to 92,000 by 1948. The flag raising on Mount Suribachi at Iwo Jima forever
remains a symbol of American patriotism and probably the best-known symbol of the United States Marine Corps.
As the 28th Marines seized the summit, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal marked the event with the words, "...the
flag raising on Mount Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years." Despite this recognition, battles
for the Marine Corps' existence would rage in Congress during 1948-49. Enemies of the Corps called for its
disbanding. For the tenth time in its 170-year history, determined attempts were made to abolish the Marine Corps.

GMK 1042-10
Many congressmen aligned themselves with supporters of the Army and the newly created Air Force argued that the Marine Corps was obsolete in the nuclear era. Through a heavy public affairs effort and the introduction of new ideas and tactics such as vertical assault doctrine, the Marine Corps defeated efforts to disband or emasculate it.
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