UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
OFFICER CANDIDATES SCHOOL
TRAINING COMMAND
2189 ELROD AVENUE
QUANTICO, VA 22134-5003

HIST 1003
SEP 2014

MARINE CORPS HISTORY 3

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE(S)

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

2. Without the aid of references, identify significant events in Marine Corps history without omitting key components. (OCS-HIST-1002)

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Without the aid of references, identify the significance of the term "Uncommon valor was a common virtue" without omitting key components. (OCS-HIST-1001e)

2. Without the aid of references, identify influential contributors to the history of the Marine Corps from 1941 to 1949 without omission. (OCS-HIST-1002k)

3. Without the aid of references, describe Marine participation in Major Operations throughout Marine Corps history from 1941 to 1949 without omitting key components. (OCS-HIST-1002l)

4. Without the aid of references, trace the history of Marine Corps Amphibious Doctrine from 1941 to 1949 without omitting key components. (OCS-HIST-1002m)

5. Without the aid of references, trace the history of Marine Corps Aviation from 1941 to 1949 without omitting key components. (OCS-HIST-1002n)

1. PREPARATION FOR WAR (MARINES AGAINST THE NAZIS)

a. 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."

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

c. In February 1942, the Marines returned to the United States (U.S.), 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 (WWII) 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:

(1) 4 battleships

(2) 3 cruisers

(3) 3 destroyers

(4) 188 planes

(5) 2,403 dead

(6) 1,178 wounded

(7) 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 (Maj) 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 (Capt) 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 WWII for both air and ground combat. The road that runs parallel to the Officer Candidates School parade deck has been dedicated to his memory.

(3) The Japanese strikes against the island continued 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 3 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 (GEN) 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 (MG) 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.

b. **Guadalcanal, 7 August 1942 – 9 February 1943**

(1) On 7 August 1942, the1st Marine Division under Major General (MajGen) 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 WWII. 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 2d 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 Maj 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-transports 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 Aircraft Group on Guadalcanal came under the command of 57 year-old Lieutenant General (LtGen) 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-Capt 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. Capt Joseph L. Foss was presented a Medal of Honor for air combat over Guadalcanal for shooting down 26 Japanese planes. Maj 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.

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

(a) 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 (Col) 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.

(b) 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, 2d Battalion 5th Marines reinforced the Raiders and together they prepared for another night of fighting.

(c) 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 Gen 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; 1,200 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.

(d) 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 3d Battalion, 3d 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. Col Edson and a company commander named Capt Kenneth Bailey received Medals of Honor for their heroic and inspiring leadership. The Marines renamed the ridge "Bloody Ridge."

(e) The 4 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, Joint Chiefs of Staff (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 2,000 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.

c. **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, Gen Vandegrift was able to take the offensive.

(2) Despite signs of growing Japanese presence, Gen 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 1,000 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 2d 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 24 ships and a few thousand men during the 8 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 MajGen 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.

d. **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 2d 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 1/4 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 2d 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 2d 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.

(c) After Tarawa, the United States Marine Corps adopted the exclusive use of the LVT.

e. **The Marshall Islands**

(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 (officially designated LVT) exclusively to transport Marines to the beaches. Planners of the operation believed 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.

f. **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 Super Fortress Bombers. From these bases, the B-29s would be able to reach the Japanese home islands. The U.S. Joint Expeditionary Force consisted of more than 120,000 troops. Smith's V Amphibious Corps, comprised of the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions, was tasked with taking Saipan and Tinian. MajGen Roy S. Geiger commanded the III Amphibious Corps with the 3d 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 LtGen 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 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 sealed off the island and prevented reinforcements from arriving; however, the Japanese continued to fight fanatically. With the southern half of the island secure, the 2d 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" 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 3d 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 2d Battalion, 9th Marines. The Marines 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 during months of guerilla warfare. Japanese soldiers were still surrendering in the mid-1970s on Guam.

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

g. **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 toward 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 more than 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 relieved the Marines methodically squeezed it until organized resistance ended 27 November.

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

h. **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 important because it was 670 miles from both Tokyo and the Marianas Islands. It provided 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 3d, 4th and 5th Divisions. 6,000 of them would not leave Iwo Jima alive.

(3) 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 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 toward Kuribayashi's main force.

(4) 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 21 March, but the last enemy pocket of resistance was not annihilated until 26 March.

(5) 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.

(6) 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 Gen 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."

(7) 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 United States Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Va.

i. **Okinawa, 1 April - 21 June 1945**

(1) 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.

(2) 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 Marine Divisions) on the left and two Army divisions on the right. The Marine divisions, along with the 2d Marine Division, comprised the III Amphibious Corps commanded by MajGen Roy S. Geiger. The first day there were few casualties. A beachhead 4 miles long and 2 miles deep was easily established. 50,000 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.

(3) 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 ended. More U.S. Navy sailors died in battle at Okinawa than either Marines or soldiers.

(4) 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 22d 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 21 June but the Army was still in the process of finishing off a last-ditch stand.

(7) Marine Corps casualties were more than 20,000, of which 3,561 were battle deaths. It took 82 days and more than 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 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 6 August, 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 ended. 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 2 September 1945.

d. "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. Many congressmen aligned themselves with supporters of the Army and the newly created Air Force argued 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.

5. **A NEW WAVE OF MARINES FROM MONTFORD POINT**

a. In the early months of the war, African-Americans, migrating from the south to northern cities, continued to experience discrimination, sometimes progressing to violence as they attempted to support the war effort, and work in defense industry jobs. African-American labor leaders brought pressure to bear on the Roosevelt White House to codify the right of all Americans to work without fear of discrimination and violence.

b. In response, Executive Order 8802, signed by President Roosevelt 25 June 1941, directed:

"There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government because of race, creed, color, or national origin."

c. This Executive Order was passed to the military services as a matter of course. While the Navy had recruited African-Americans for segregated jobs as mess stewards, (one such Navy mess attendant was awarded the Navy Cross for rescuing a number of wounded shipmates and shooting down several Japanese planes from the deck of the USS West Virginia at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii), the Marine Corps had remained strictly segregated since their establishment in 1798.

d. Then-Commandant MajGen Thomas E. Holcomb resisted the efforts to force the Marine Corps to integrate, but was forced to begin an African-American recruiting effort. For a Marine Corps already struggling to assimilate thousands of new white recruits, the task of recruiting and training black Marines was daunting, but Commandant Holcomb's guidance was clear, "if it is forced upon us, we must make it a success."

e. Where the recruits would go, and more importantly, who would train them became the next weighty problems the Marine Corps had to wrestle with. The solution was a new camp at the Marine Barracks, New River, North Carolina (soon to be re-named Camp Lejeune). Training cadre would come from the fleet, with a mix of new and experienced officers and veteran staff noncommissioned officers (SNCO) as drill instructors. The first order of business was to evaluate and rapidly advance black Marines who showed the aptitude to replace the white cadre.

f. In August 1942, the same month the battle for Guadalcanal began, African-Americans began arriving at Montford Point, North Carolina to begin recruit training. They would serve as the nucleus of new battalions (still segregated) of Marines. By the end of April 1943, the last of the white drill instructors had been transferred out, and new black drill instructors were in charge.

g. One of the most well-known of these noncommissioned officer was Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson. A veteran of the Army's black 25th Infantry, who served through the 1930's as a Navy's mess attendant, Hashmark earned the title because of the prior service stripes he wore almost from the beginning. He was far from the only talented recruit who arrived.

(1) John T. Pridgen was a former member of the Army's black 10th Cavalry

(2) George A. Jackson had been a Second Lieutenant in the Army.

(3) Numerous college graduates included Charles F. Anderson, who would go on to become the first black Sergeant Major of Montford Point.

(4) Arvin L. "Tony" Ghazio, was a former bodyguard and jujitsu instructor who became the primary close combat instructor at Montford Point.

h. The road was not altogether smooth for these talented and dedicated Americans. By December, 1942, the first graduates of Montford Point were ready for some liberty in town. The sight in the south of a couple of hundred black men in Marine uniforms was too much for the town of Jacksonville, NC. They closed up the town rather than deal with these new Marines. In other places, as black Marines tried to go on leave, some were actually arrested for impersonating Marines.

i. The formation of the 51st Defense Battalion, heralded the first black Marine combat unit. The 51st was shipped to the Marshall Islands, an area in the rear of the island-hopping. They became known as expert artillerymen, eager to do their duty, but to the disappointment of many, this unit saw no combat action.

j. The second black combat unit, the 52d Defense Battalion followed the 51st to the Marshalls, and from there to the Guam, in the Marianas Island Group in early 1944. Here, they faced isolated pockets of Japanese hold-outs, and actively patrolled the surrounding islands, sustaining their first combat wounded Marine. Still, they were sidelined from the intense action occurring elsewhere in the Pacific.

k. The needs of the war effort led to the next black Marines forming into Depot and Ammunition Companies. Though their name sounds less warlike than others, these were actually the Marines who saw the most combat.

l. On the island of Saipan, they landed on D-Day after having helped to load the ships for the invasion. In the landing, they sustained casualties and were part of a defense against a Japanese night attack that disabled an enemy machine gun. Throughout the Pacific campaigns, areas traditionally defined as "safe" were often subjected to intense bombardment. Many Marines were killed and wounded on the beaches where the Ammunition and Depot Companies worked heroically to supply the troops inland.. The action of the black Marines under heavy fire and in a situation of unremitting toll and danger on Saipan did not go unnoticed at Headquarters Marine Corps or in the national press and news magazines. The Commandant, Gen Vandergrift, was quoted as saying:

"The Negro Marines are no longer on trial. They are Marines, period." Robert Sherrod, the war correspondent, reported in Time: "Negro Marines, under fire for the first time, have rated a universal 4.0 on Saipan." In the naval efficiency rating system there could be no higher mark."

m. In fighting on Pelelieu, the Montford Point Marines again displayed their bravery and mission accomplishment. By the end of the fighting, Maj Gen Rupertus, CG of the 1st Marine Division said:

"The Negro race can well be proud of the work performed by the 7th Ammunition Company [11th Depot Company] as they have demonstrated in every respect that they appreciate the privilege of wearing a Marine uniform and serving with Marines in combat. Please convey to your command these sentiments and inform them that in the eyes of the entire Division they have earned a Well Done."

n. On Iwo Jima, two black Marines received the Bronze Star for actions in clearing their area of a desperate attack by several hundred Japanese intent on killing as many Marines as possible before they too were killed. This, in addition to remaining exposed on beachheads unloading ships and landing craft under constant bombardment.

o. The final battle of the war, on Okinawa presented challenges aplenty to the supply Marines charged with keeping the front-line troops supplied. In addition to constant desperate air raids against the fleet and the beachheads, some Marines were hurt by shrapnel falling from the sky due to the intense anti-aircraft fire by the ships of the invasion force. Add to this, savage terrain, and roads that became quagmires in the spring rains, the Montford Point Marines faced great challenges with courage and dedication. Black mess cooks and stewards volunteered in droves to assist as stretcher-bearers, and many were wounded or killed for their dedication.

p. By the end of the war, many black Marines returned home and were de-mobilized, but many stayed to serve as career Marines. They continued to serve in segregated units until Executive Order 9981, signed by President Truman in July 1948, and finished de-segregation. In 1949, African-American recruits were fully integrated into the training depot at Parris Island. This integration, however, came at a cost from the point of view of some of the graduates of Montford Point. These "Montford Point Marines" had developed an affinity for the camp they had almost literally carved with their own hands out of the piney North Carolina woods. Montford Point had become a symbol of their excellence, and a tribute to their pioneering efforts in the civil rights.

q. In March 1945, three African-American Marines were sent to Platoon Commanders Class at Quantico, but they did not make it through the course. The next three African-American officer candidates also did not make it through Officer Candidates School. At last, on 10 November 1945, the Corps' 170th birthday, Frederick C. Branch of Hamlet, North Carolina, who had graduated from Montford Point, and served in the 51st Defense Battalion, became the Marine Corps' first African-American officer. Lieutenant Branch was commissioned too

late to serve in WWII, but he returned to active service in the Korean War.

r. Montford Point has been renamed Camp Johnson, honoring the famous African-American graduate and Sergeant Major.

6. **NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS**

a. At the beginning of the war, American radio codes were either too cumbersome for field use, or easily broken by the Japanese.

b. A white man who had grown up on a Navajo Reservation came up with the idea of using Native American code talkers.

c. They were perfect because:

(1) They had no written language.

(2) Their language was too complex to learn easily, and very few people outside of the tribe knew it.

(3) The language, even if known was difficult to pronounce for a non-native speaker.

(4) The Navajo in particular were patriotic and eager to serve their country.

d. Originally, 30 Navajos were recruited from 3 boarding schools. One was injured, so the first platoon to graduate from San Diego had 29 members. These formed the nucleus of what would later be 100 code talkers assigned per Marine Division.

e. First sent to Guadalcanal, where they proved the speed of their code-talk. A message that would take two hours to encode, send, and decode, took the Navajos less than two minutes. The concept was proved.

f. In every campaign thereafter, the Navajos performed flawlessly, and decidedly saved hundreds of Marine lives with their rapid and accurate ability to pass vital information.

g. Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona, was one of the flag-raisers on Mount Suribachi.

7. **WOMEN CALLED TO SERVE**

a. On 7 November 1942, Commandant Holcomb signed an order enhancing the efficiency of our Corps and enabled 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 African-American women Marines. Now, at a time when male Marines were still segregated by race, women's Platoon 7 of the 3d Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island became one of the first integrated units in the Corps. The third African-American woman Marine, who enlisted in Chicago in 1950, was Annie L. Grimes. She was selected to Warrant Officer in 1968 and became the first African - American woman officer to retire from the Corps with 20 years of service. From the beginning, African-American 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 to 1 July 1996.

8. **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.

NOTES:

REFERENCES:

1. Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders, MCRP 6-11B.
2. Marine Corps Uniform Regulations MCO P1020.34G W/CH 1-4
3. *SEMPER FIDELIS: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (1991) Millet, Allan R.
4. Blacks in the Marine Corps (reprinted 2002) Shaw Jr., Henry I., and Donnelly, Ralph W.,published by the History and Museums Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps
5. *Navajo weapon* (2001) McClain, S. Tucson, AZ: Rio Nuevo Publishers