

# US Marine Rifleman 1939–45

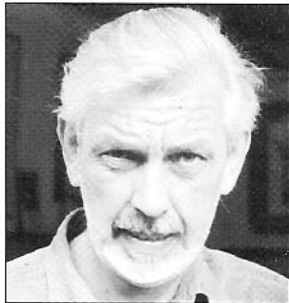
Pacific Theater



Gordon L Rottman • Illustrated by Howard Gerrard



**GORDON L. ROTTMAN** entered the US Army in 1967, volunteered for Special Forces and completed training as a weapons specialist. He served in the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam in 1969–70 and subsequently in airborne infantry, long-range patrol and intelligence assignments until retiring after 26 years. He was a special operations forces scenario writer at the Joint Readiness Training Centre for 12 years and is now a freelance writer.



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Warrior • 112

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## Artist's note

Readers may care to note that the original paintings from which the color plates in this book were prepared are available for private sale. All reproduction copyright whatsoever is retained by the Publishers. All inquiries should be addressed to:

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## Abbreviations

IIIAC	III Amphibious Corps
VAC	V Amphibious Corps
amtrac	amphibian tractor
BAR	Browning Automatic Rifle
head	bathroom
CO	commanding officer
CP	command post
Dago	Marine Corps Training Center, Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California
DI	Drill Instructor
FMF	Fleet Marine Force
FMFPac	Fleet Marine Force Pacific
HBT	Herringbone twill
LCVP	Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel
LSD	Landing Ship, Dock
LST	Landing Ship, Tank
MarBde	Marine Brigade
MarDiv	Marine Division
PFC	private 1st class
PI	Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Marine Barracks, Parris Island, South Carolina
PX	Post Exchange
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
Taps	the last bugle call blown at night, signaling lights out
USMC	United States Marine Corps
WP	white phosphorus

## Editor's note

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# US MARINE RIFLEMAN 1939-45: PACIFIC THEATER

## INTRODUCTION

On December 7, 1941, the headline of the *New York Daily News* proclaimed "JAPS BOMB HAWAII" – few people at the time knew where Pearl Harbor was. Thousands of young men flocked to recruiting stations anxious to get into the fight. Many who wanted a crack at the Japanese "before the war was over" signed up with the United States Marine Corps (USMC), counting on a Corps slogan, "First to Fight," to fulfill its promise. For the men of the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions (MarDivs) this would hold true. By February 1942 the recruiting station lines had dwindled. Those who wished to get into the fight early had already enlisted. Most others, beyond enthusiastic youngsters coming of age, would wait for a letter of invitation from Uncle Sam. Two days short of the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, President Franklin Roosevelt signed an order ending voluntary enlistment of draft age men. By February 1943 intake at Marine recruit depots had reduced to a trickle of 18-year-olds who had enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve at 17, or younger if they had lied about their age (this was an era in which birth certificates were not always rendered). The Corps' age-old tradition of accepting only volunteers had ended.

Since its formation the Corps had provided ships' detachments, landing parties, expeditionary forces, and naval station guards. In 1933 the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) was established to provide a dedicated expeditionary and overseas base defense force.

The Marines were not a second land army, but a specialized amphibious force with its own service elements and air arm to support the Navy. By 1944 there were over 472,000 marines in two amphibious corps, six divisions, and a large service force. The US Army had 89 divisions, of which 21 served in the Pacific Theater. On the eve of the Pearl Harbor attack, the Corps had consisted of 65,881 officers and men. Ten days later it was authorized a strength of 104,000. There was much to do to bring the two existing divisions and the recently authorized and yet to be activated third division up to strength and achieve the necessary training.

With the mission of supporting the Navy in mind, it was originally envisioned that one Marine division would serve with the Atlantic Fleet and

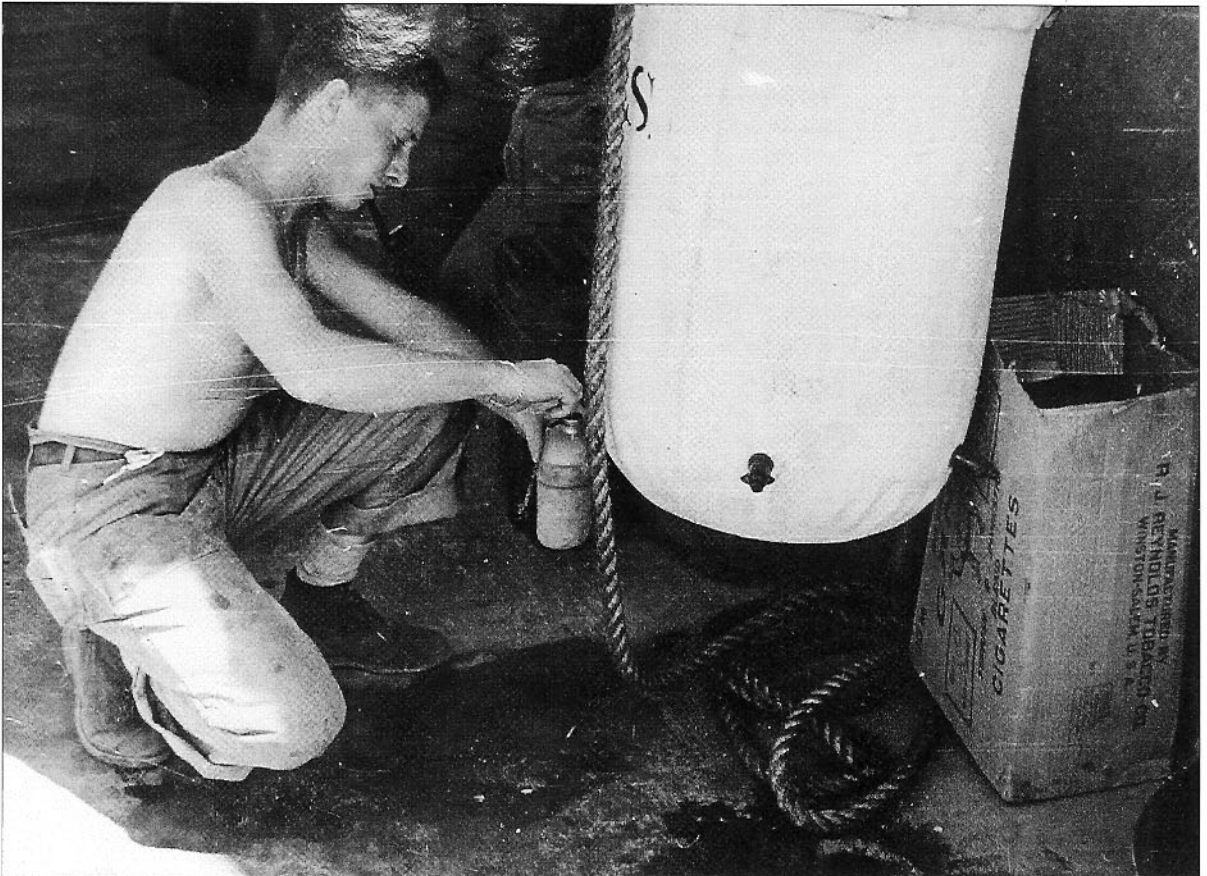
A typical Marine Corps recruiting poster offered no illusions as to what marines did. Many young men were attracted to the Corps because of the promise to get into the fight first.



participate in the North Africa landings. The FMF, though, would be entirely committed to the Pacific Theater: the ultimate naval campaign. The 3d MarDiv was activated in September 1942. The need for additional Marine divisions was soon realized. Existing and new units began to assemble on the east and west coasts in early 1943, and in August 1943 the 4th MarDiv was activated. It was followed by the 5th MarDiv in January 1944 and the 6th MarDiv, organized around an existing brigade, in September.

The marines manning these units were just average American boys, mostly from low- or medium-income families. Some came from the southern states, but the states that contributed the most troops to the Corps were New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California, and Texas. They had spent their childhood and early adulthood under the cloud of the Great Depression. They came from farms, small towns, or big cities: their backgrounds reflected the diverse society of the country they would fight for. These young men, being raised during the Great Depression, had often led a tough life and were used to some degree of privation. Many were as tough as the Drill Instructors (DIs) who would turn them into marines. Their average age was 18 to 22. They were patriotic, dedicated, and willing to fight for the duration. They took the battle cry "Remember Pearl Harbor" seriously. To the average American, the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor was a worse transgression than all other Japanese acts of aggression combined.

**A marine fills his canteen from a 36-gallon (136-liter) Lister bag. These canvas bags were slung from tree limbs or tent pole tripods to provide water in rear areas. They were fitted with six spigots and were provided with cone-shaped canvas covers to protect them from dust.**





# CHRONOLOGY

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## 1939

*Sep 8* US President declares "limited emergency" to strengthen national defense in response to German invasion of Poland. USMC Reserve ordered to mobilize in stages.

## 1940

*Sep 16* Selective Training and Service Act established, authorizing conscription.

## 1941

*Feb 1* 1st and 2d Marine Brigades (MarBdes) redesignated as 1st and 2d MarDivs in Cuba and San Diego, California, respectively.

*May 27* US President declares "full emergency" and authorizes armed forces to readiness levels to repel a threat to the Western hemisphere.

*Jun 30* Last USMC reservists mobilized.

*Dec 7* Japan attacks Pearl Harbor and the Philippines.

*Dec 8–10* Japan assaults Guam; US forces surrender.

*Dec 12* Japanese Army lands on Luzon.

*Dec 23* Japan assaults Wake Island; US forces surrender.

## 1942

*Apr 9* US–Filipino forces surrender Bataan.

*May 5–6* Japan assaults Corregidor; US–Filipino forces surrender.

*Jun 1* USMC ordered to accept African-Americans.

*Jun 4–5* Battle of Midway.

*Aug 7* 1st MarDiv assaults Guadalcanal–Tulagi.

*Sep 16* 3d MarDiv activated at Camp Elliott, California.

*Sep 25* Camp Joseph H. Pendleton, California established.

*Dec 5* Voluntary enlistment terminated.

## 1943

*Jun 20* New Georgia operations commence.

*Jul–Aug* Units to be assigned to 4th MarDiv concentrate at Camp Pendleton.

*Aug 16* 4th MarDiv activated at Camp Pendleton.

*Nov 1* 3d MarDiv assaults Cape Torokina, Bougainville.

*Nov 20* 2d MarDiv assaults Tarawa Atoll.

*Dec 26* 1st MarDiv assaults Cape Gloucester, New Britain.

## 1944

*Jan 6–13* 4th MarDiv departs for Central Pacific.

*Jan 21* 5th MarDiv activated at Camp Pendleton.

*Jan 31* 4th MarDiv assaults Roi–Namur.

*Feb 13* 4th MarDiv departs for Hawaii.

*Feb 21–25* 4th MarDiv arrives at Maui, Hawaii.

*Apr 19* 1st Prov (Provisional) MarBde formed on Guadalcanal.

*May 29* 4th MarDiv departs for Saipan.

*Jun 5* Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPac) established as type command for Marine forces in the Pacific Ocean Areas.

*Jun 15* V Amphibious Corps (VAC) with 2d and 4th MarDivs assaults Saipan.

*Jul 21* III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC) with 3d MarDiv and 1st Prov MarBde assaults Guam.

*Jul 24* VAC with 4th and 2d MarDivs assaults Tinian.

*Aug 7–14* 4th MarDiv departs Tinian.

*Aug 18–Sep 1* 4th MarDiv arrives at Maui, Hawaii.

*Sep 6* 1st MarDiv assaults Peleliu.

*Sep 7* 6th MarDiv activated on Guadalcanal.

*Sep 15* 1st MarDiv assaults Peleliu.

## 1945

*Jan 27* 4th MarDiv departs for Iwo Jima.

Feb 19 4th, 5th, and 3d MarDivs assault Iwo Jima.  
 Mar 20 4th MarDiv departs for Hawaii.  
 Apr 1 IIIAC 1st and 6th MarDivs assault Okinawa with Army troops.  
 May 7 Germany surrenders (V-E Day).  
 Aug 6 Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.  
 Aug 9 Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki.  
 Aug 14 Japan announces its intention to accept unconditional surrender terms.  
 Aug 30 Task Force A (4th Marines) lands at Yokosuka on Tokyo Bay.  
 Sep 2 Japan surrenders (V-J Day).  
 Sep 22 2d and 5th MarDivs begin occupation of Kyushu Island, Japan.  
 Sep 30 1st and 6th MarDivs begin occupation of North China.  
 Oct 6–Nov 3 4th MarDiv elements depart for California.  
 Oct 12–Nov 9 Last 4th MarDiv elements arrive at Camp Pendleton.  
 Nov 28 4th MarDiv is deactivated.

## CONSCRIPTION

President Roosevelt declared a "limited emergency" in response to the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. This permitted voluntary mobilization of Marine reservists. The Marine Corps Organized Reserve was ordered to active duty in October 1940 to be followed by the Fleet and Volunteer Reserves. The Marine Corps Reserve as an organization was terminated in order to eliminate distinctions between regulars and reservists – to form a single unified Marine Corps.

The President directed the implementation of peacetime conscription in the form of the Selective Training and Service Act in September 1940. The act provided for 12 months' service. All men between the age of 18 and 65 were to register, and those aged up to 45 were liable for induction, although the maximum authorized age of induction was 38. In late 1941 after the President declared a "full emergency," the draft period was extended to 18 months.

Prior to the war and the authorized expansion of the Marine Corps, the draft was of no concern. With the country just coming out of the

### NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION App. Not Req.

(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)  
 Order No. \_\_\_\_\_ has been classified in Class \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Until \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_\_)  
 (Insert date for Class II-A and II-B only)  
 by  Local Board.  
 Board of Appeal (by vote of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_).  
 President.  
 \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Date of mailing) (Member of local board)

*The law requires you, subject to heavy penalty for violation, to have this notice, in addition to you're your registration Certificate (Form 2), in your personal possession at all times—to exhibit it upon request to authorized officials—to surrender it, upon entering the armed forces, to your commanding officer.*

DSS Form 57. (Rev. 3-29-43)

A Notice of Classification or "draft card," which all registered men carried and turned in when conscripted.



Marines practice descending a simulated ship's side on a cargo net. Note the diamond-shaped rope pattern, making footing difficult. Most landing nets were a square pattern.

Great Depression, many young men found the Corps' pay of \$21 a month appealing, even with a four-year enlistment, and hungered for travel, challenge, and adventure. Hollywood movies about the Corps enticed others. To many the Corps seemed more attractive than the Army or Navy. They volunteered before the draft caught them, or because they wanted to sign up with the best. Many did not bother to register for the draft and would find themselves receiving warning letters as they fought on South Pacific islands. Seventeen-year-olds could enlist with their parents' or guardian's permission. Some quit high school to join up, and many had not even made it that far in school before they enlisted. Some were attracted by the recruiting NCOs' blue uniforms, or the image of the "Devil Dogs" of the Great War, or the "old salt" marines serving in exotic lands during the recent Banana Wars (1898–1934). The influx of volunteers immediately after Pearl Harbor was huge. They soon exceeded the Corps' authorized strength. There were examples of entire high school football teams signing up together. The pre-Pearl Harbor volunteers, even if they had been in the Corps only a year, were the "old timers" that brought the

traditions and *esprit de corps* of the "Old Corps" into the new, rapidly expanding force. With the declaration of war, service was extended to the "duration plus six months."

On December 5, 1942, voluntary enlistment in all armed services was ordered to cease. This measure provided a more efficient means of mass induction by not distracting recruiting personnel. There was a final rush to volunteer before the order took effect on January 1, 1943. However, even after the order, conscripts received by the Marine Corps were in practical terms still volunteers. Headquarters, Marine Corps detailed liaison officers to state draft boards, and NCOs to Armed Forces Induction Centers to coordinate the assignment of draftees preferring the Corps. If current Corps quotas did not provide a billet for called-up individuals, the draft boards often deferred the applicants until such openings were authorized. In this way the Corps received 224,000 inductees, whom the Corps called Selective Service Volunteers (SS-V) or, less formally, "draftee-volunteers" or "hand-cuffed volunteers." From the beginning of 1943, recruiters could also sign up 17-year-olds in the Marine Corps Reserve. Some 60,000 enlisted, and on turning 18 they reported for active duty. The four regional Recruiting Divisions were redesignated Procurement Divisions in May 1943, overseeing the draftee-volunteers, recruiting 17-year-olds, and procuring officers. Each division had six or seven recruiting stations co-located with Navy recruiting stations in major cities. Men classified 4-F (unfit for service) lived with a sense of shame, and there were even occasional suicides.

The draft was conducted by a national lottery system. After draft registration numbers were assigned, a draw was held on October 29, 1940. A total of 365 dated capsules were drawn in random order and



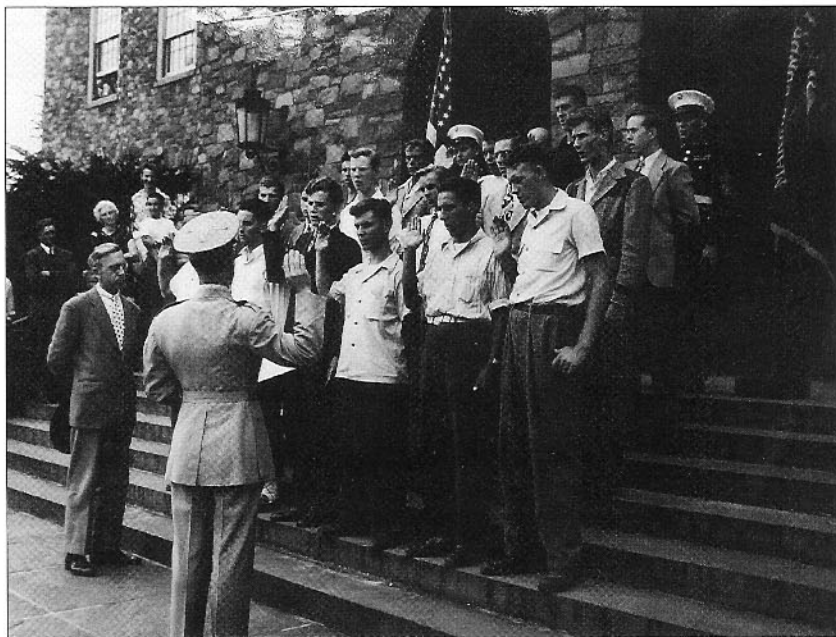
the dates announced in newspapers. Each date was assigned a number from 1-365 in the order drawn. The 1-As (available for military service) were called in the order their birth date was drawn: most inductees and volunteers were born between 1919 and 1926. This was repeated each year with the age bracket extended until the draft was canceled in 1947. When their number was drawn, the men received an eight-page questionnaire, used to determine their eligibility for military service.

There was a complex system of deferments and exemptions based on physical qualifications, religious grounds, and essential employment, which included those involved in defense industries and farm workers. Draft exemptions were determined by local draft boards; there was usually one board per county, or several in large cities. There were no education exemptions, although college students undertaking Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) or other officer training programs were deferred. Nor were there exemptions for family hardships such as caring for ill or elderly parents. Inducted conscientious objectors were mostly assigned to medical services.

If selected, a draftee received an Order to Report for Induction and would report to his local draft board. This fateful letter could have been received as few as ten days before the reporting date. At this point it was not certain whether he would actually be inducted. From the draft board office he would be taken by bus or train to the nearest Armed Forces Induction Center, usually at a major city Post Office, federal building, National Guard armory, or local military base, for a simple physical examination and some administrative paperwork. Those who were selected were assembled and, if they desired, were allowed home for a week to put their affairs in order. Most accepted this option, but could be sent straight on to the reception center if they so requested. The others would return the next week and take part in a mass swearing-in alongside men going into other services.

<b>Selective Service classifications</b>	
<b>1-A</b>	Available for military service
<b>1-A-O</b>	Conscientious objector, available for non-combatant service
<b>1-B</b>	Available for limited military service
<b>1-B-C</b>	Conscientious objector, available for non-combatant limited service
<b>1-C</b>	Land or naval forces coast guard
<b>1-H</b>	28 years of age prior to July 1, 1941, and not inducted by that date
<b>2-A</b>	Necessary man in his civilian category
<b>2-B</b>	Necessary man in national defense
<b>3-A</b>	Man with dependents
<b>4-A</b>	Man who has completed service
<b>4-B</b>	Official deferred by law
<b>4-D</b>	Minister of divinity student
<b>4-E</b>	Conscientious objector fit for service, available for work of national importance
<b>4-E-ES</b>	Conscientious objector fit for limited service
<b>4-H</b>	Conscientious objector over 28 years of age prior to July 1, 1941
<b>4-F</b>	Morally, mentally, or physically unfit

A Marine officer swears in young recruits at an Armed Forces Induction Center. Marine recruiting NCOs wearing dress blues stand at the rear of the formation. The American and Marine Corps colors flank the ceremony.



#### ORDER TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION

##### GREETING:

Having submitted yourself to a Local Board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the armed forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service in the

\_\_\_\_\_

(Army, Navy, Marine Corps)

You will, therefore, report to the Local Board named above at \_\_\_\_\_

(Place of reporting)

at \_\_\_\_\_ m., on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_.

(Hour of reporting)

The inductee would say his goodbyes after a farewell family dinner, and report again to the induction station. Transportation costs were paid. The young man's volunteering or induction was often announced in the local newspaper. Families with sons in the military displayed a Blue Star Service Banner in their windows, a small rectangular banner with a blue star for each serving son. If a son was lost a gold star was displayed.

Marine recruits were transferred to one of two places by bus or train. If they lived east of the Mississippi River they went to Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Marine Barracks, Parris Island, South Carolina, or if to the west, to Marine Corps Training Center, Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California. They had a change of clothes, a toilet kit, perhaps a few dollars, some meal tickets provided by the induction center, and a sense of apprehension.

There has been a great deal of debate over the differences between the two recruit training centers, an argument that still continues today. The Commandant of the Marine Corps permitted both to develop their own curricula. There were differences in the hours allotted to subjects, with more or less emphasis in certain areas, and a few minor techniques were taught differently. One officer commented that the only real

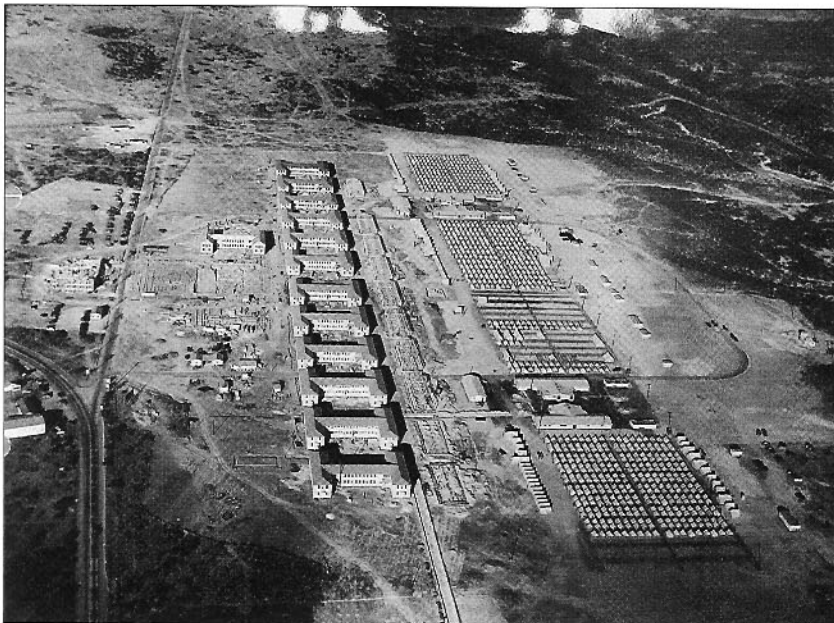
difference was that San Diego (“Dago”) taught marines to jump from a sinking ship with both hands protecting the face, and Parris Island (“PI”) to use one hand for face protection and the other to protect the crotch. There were other differences, of course, but the variance in instruction made less difference than the environment. PI was in a remote area, essentially a big sandbar mostly surrounded by swamps. It was hot and humid, infested with sand fleas, flies, and mosquitoes in the summer, but enduring a cold winter and Atlantic storms. It was 55 miles (88.5km) southwest of Charleston, with the small town of Beaufort 5 miles (8km) distant for the rare liberty. Dago, on the other hand, was in sub-tropical southern California with a year-round pleasant climate. San Diego was immediately outside the gate. Marines training there and at camps Elliott and Pendleton were called “Hollywood marines,” even though Los Angeles was a considerable distance away. There was a degree of competition and resentment between PI and Hollywood marines.

Many of the marines who found themselves on the bus to PI or Dago were away from home for the first time, with few having ever been farther from their birthplace than the neighboring county. They were from major urban, suburban, and rural areas, and small towns. Many accents sounded strange to them and the sights they saw were equally as strange as they traveled westwards.

To modern eyes the Corps was bigoted. It strongly resisted the enlistment of African-Americans and women, and was the last service to accept either. “Colored troops,” as African-Americans were then officially designated, were kept completely segregated and were seldom seen by most marines. Hispanics were integrated into the Corps, but were few in number. Fewer still were Native-Americans – most Marines were not aware of the Navajo Code-Talkers. Sometimes ethnic minorities were singled out for harassment. Men with noticeable physical differences were also often picked on. Those with a college education, or who appeared to come from families of means seemed to be



**The 8x14-in. (20x35.5cm) Blue Star Service Banner (red border, white center, blue star, gold fringe and cord) as displayed in the windows of homes with a family member in the military; one star for each service member. If a serviceman was killed the blue star was replaced by one of gold. (Military/Tactical & Outdoor)**



**Camp Elliott, California, with its H-shaped barracks and administrative buildings still under construction. To the right are the tent encampments (“tent city”). Camp Elliott was where west coast infantrymen were trained, along with tankers.**



particularly targeted for harassment by DIs. Eighty percent of a platoon would be teenagers, but there were a few over the age of 20. They generally proved to be the platoon's unofficial internal leaders, keeping the youngsters in line when they cut-up or "grab-assed" (caused mischief or perpetrated pranks) too much when DIs were not present.

## TRAINING

In the spring of 1943 a new batch of recruits rolled into Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD), at the San Diego Training Center, to be astounded by the palm-lined entrance road and Spanish-style architecture. The first few days were a blur. They were turned off the bus by a sergeant, herded into a formation by lining their toes up on a white stripe, and told to ground their bags on their right side. The introduction to discipline was immediate. The recruits or "Boots" (there were worse names) learned quickly never to smile, to look straight ahead, to speak only when spoken to, to answer "Yes, Sir" or "No, Sir." There were no excuses for mistakes or infractions, and they had to pay very close attention to what was being said. "Boots" were already being dropped for 25 push-ups for the slightest transgression. Names were checked off, the recruits were broken down into squads, and then marched into a large two-story stucco barracks. Double-stacked bunks or "racks" lined both walls and an end-to-end double row of bunks stretched down the center, leaving two aisles. Next to each pair of bunks were two olive-drab plywood locker boxes and two 3-gallon (11.4-liter) galvanized buckets. The men were given the opportunity to turn in any contraband items, no questions asked (weapons, knives, straight razors, liquor, obscene materials).

With buckets in hand, they followed the sergeant single file to the Post Exchange (PX) – "ge-dunk shop." They were told what to place in their buckets: scrubbing and shoe brushes, bath soap, box of laundry powder, toothbrush, toothpaste, safety razor and blades, bag of Bull Durham® tobacco, Zigzag® cigarette papers (they would roll their own, no "ready-mades"), brown boot polish, Brasso® polish, two white bath towels embossed "U.S. MARINE CORPS" on a red strip, and other necessities.

They also bought a copy of *The Marine's Handbook* ("Red Book") for \$1. After learning that \$15 would be deducted from their \$50 a month pay for these PX purchases, they were led to the barber shop. Seated in the chairs, they were asked if they would like a trim around the ears while their scalps were sheared bare.

The recruits' next visit was to the quartermaster. Entering the warehouse-like building, they were confronted with shelf after shelf of uniforms and equipment. Ordered to strip, they were given a cardboard box on which they wrote their addresses and put their "civvies" in to be sent home. They were issued with green dungarees, a utility cap,

**Recruits stand in formation after unloading from the train as a local boy looks on. Here NCOs from the recruit depot will pick them up, bussing them into a very different world.**



white underwear, and white socks. The quartermasters issuing the uniforms merely "eyeballed" their clothing sizes. Care was taken, though, for the fitting of leather service shoes or "boondockers." Carrying buckets in their right hands, clothing in the left, and their two pairs of boondockers hanging around their necks, the recruits returned to barracks. They were given padlocks for the locker boxes and drew bedding: two sheets, two wool blankets, and a pillow case. A key was placed on their "dog tag" chain – the tags could never be removed, even to unlock a locker, a task requiring the recruit to get down on all fours to do so. A second key was retained by the sergeant with the man's name on a tag. The men spent the rest of the day learning how to make bunks, stow gear, and the dos and don'ts of barracks life. They could not sit or lay on their bunks until "lights out," when an instructor entered the squad bay. The first to see him would shout "Attention" and they would all remain in that position until told "As you were" or "At ease." The recruits could only smoke when told the "smoking lamp is lit" and cigarettes were extinguished when the "smoking lamp is out." They could not leave the barracks unless told. The squad bay and head (bathroom) were to be kept spotless at all times. They also learned what it meant to be part of the naval services. The floor was the "deck," the walls "bulkheads," the ceiling the "overhead," stairs were "ladders," etc.

Over the next couple of days the recruits completed more paperwork and signed up for National Service Life Insurance at \$6.40 a month for a \$10,000 payout, a benefit the service had provided since October 1940. They received a complete physical, dental examination, and seemingly endless inoculations. They also took a simple mental skills test, and, unknown to them, their paperwork was being examined by classification specialists to determine their fate. Their actual assignment, though, would have more to do with the needs of the service at the given moment, rather than any particular qualifications or skills they might possess.



The issue of uniforms was the first step towards becoming a marine. Here recruits are issued forest-green and khaki service uniforms. The marine wearing the sun helmet is not a Drill Instructor, but an NCO guiding the recruits through their first days until assigned to a recruit platoon.



**Mass uniform and equipment issue. Recruits freshly shorn of their hair pack their basic issue into sea bags.**

Many of the recruits had assumed they would spend boot camp in the barracks, but one morning they were ordered to fall out with everything, including bedding, packed in their canvas sea bags and lockers. They lugged the impossible loads across the broad, blistering drill field to rows of green-painted steel Quonset huts. Platoons of recruits on the drill field shouted a disparaging, "You'll be sorreeee!" One of the new groups of 60 men in ill-fitting dungarees found themselves facing a tough-looking sergeant and two plain, mean-looking corporals wearing starched khaki

uniforms and dark olive-drab field or "campaign" hats – these men were their DIs. They quickly learned that Sergeant "Sandbag" and corporals "Tightlips" and "Barbedwire" held absolute authority of life and death over them. The DIs informed the recruits that they were an insult to the Corps and all the real marines who had gone before them, and were no doubt here because their god-fearing families had thrown them out in embarrassment. They were now members of a numbered recruit platoon<sup>1</sup> organized into three 20-man squads. After a period of screaming, yelling, and being dropped for push-ups, the platoon was herded into the two 20×48ft (6.1×14.6m) Quonset huts assigned to them. The head and showers were in a separate building. The men made their bunks and stowed their gear, with the corporals all the time shouting that they were too slow. Seemingly they could do nothing right; they were too slow, too sloppy, and plain dumb. Over the coming miserable days a desire grew to please the DIs no matter what, not to halt the harassment (they knew that would never end) but to prove they had what it took to be marines. They pushed themselves. A small number were washed out.

The DIs are a Marine Corps institution and they are the means by which young men are turned into marines. Prior to the war there was more time available to train and indoctrinate recruits – up to ten weeks. DIs coached and, in effect, mentored recruits. They were hand-picked and used a fair, but firm methodology. There was harassment, but it was meted out in doses and only when necessary. At the time there was only a small number of recruits, and they were motivated by more professional considerations of duty; they were not driven by a war of preservation. In the early 1940s, however, with an unprecedented influx of thousands of green young men pouring into the Corps, a means had to be found to hammer them into battle-ready marines; and hammer was the right word. The Corps' training mechanism could barely handle the load. Even training areas, ranges, quarters, support facilities, and equipment were in short supply. Recruits could not be "nurtured" into marines. It had to be done fast and effectively. DIs were no longer hand-picked, but selected for their gruff appearance, loud voices, and lack of concern over

<sup>1</sup> Recruit platoons were numbered in sequence through the war at San Diego and Parris Island. Though assigned to a lettered training company as part of one of seven recruit battalions at Dago, recruits only identified with their platoon.



hurting feelings. They were relentless disciplinarians. Many had only been in the Corps for a limited time; some DI corporals had only just graduated from boot camp. In the early days few had combat experience. The old salts, the career marines with Banana Wars experience, fleet marines, and "Old China" hands were needed in the combat units to train and lead the first marines into combat. It would not be until mid-1943, when veterans from the South Pacific were rotated back to the States, that vets began to be assigned as DIs in any numbers. The early, less-experienced DIs were often unsure of themselves, having little practical experience leading men, and they relied on their position of authority to bully recruits and to make up for their own lack of confidence. There were abuses and humiliation, which were often ignored; the job at hand was too critical to allow concern about niceties and there was little time in which to accomplish the job. Boot camp had been cut back to three weeks before the war to accommodate the build-up; insufficient time to train and condition a recruit to any acceptable level – they were only given a week's rifle and marksmanship training. Boot was lengthened to seven weeks by the end of 1940 and eight in 1944.

The new recruits spent the evening scrubbing down their quarters until lights out was ordered and Taps sounded over the base loudspeaker at 2200hrs. There were seven or eight double bunks on each side of the squad room. The rifle racks were at the back wall and there were two 30-gallon (114-liter) galvanized garbage cans in the center aisle, which were cleaned with brass polish. The DIs had their own rooms in the huts and nothing escaped them. Men were assigned two-hour fire-watch shifts through the night, ensuring that no one smoked, and guarding the racked rifles. They would holystone (soft sandstone block) the deck once a day. Each evening they would wash a set of dungarees, skivvies, and socks.

The lights came on at 0400hrs with DIs screaming for the men to fall out of their racks, amid buckets being kicked across the deck: "Hit the deck!" The dreary-eyed platoon had 30 minutes to wash before falling out in formation. They had to shave even if a razor had never before touched their faces. Roll was called by the glare of a flashlight and they marched to the chow hall. The men sat down on benches at plank tables when ordered, and other recruits, obviously "senior" as they were sun-tanned and fuzz was growing back on their heads,<sup>2</sup> served them platters of eggs, bacon, and pancakes and pitchers of coffee, milk, and orange juice. They were not to speak unless asking for food to be passed. They were told "take all you want, but eat all you take." Most began to gain weight, not just from the food, but also from exercise. They ate a lot of chicken, pork chops, and ground beef, had plenty of potatoes in all forms, and lots of vegetables and fresh breads. On Sunday there was



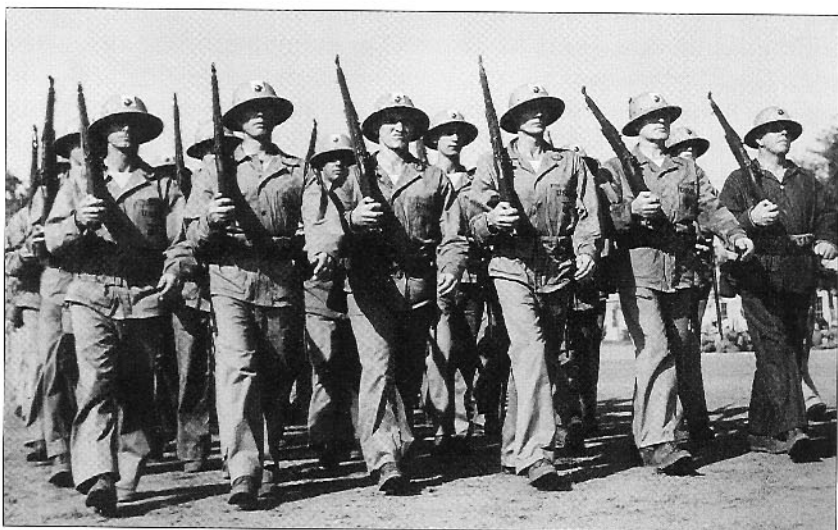
**Here marines descend a landing net, from a high wharf constructed to simulate a ship, into a Landing Craft, Personnel (Large).**

<sup>2</sup> These recruits had completed their week of range firing and would pull a week of mess duty.

always chicken and on Monday chicken leftovers. There was fish on Friday even though the "Mackerel-snappers" – Catholics – were given wartime dispensation to eat meat. Likewise, Jews were allowed to eat non-Kosher foods. It was a seven-day week, although Sundays were dedicated to church call, administrative requirements, and cleaning quarters, gear and uniforms.

In formation in front of their huts they were told that here was a landmark day: they would be issued with their rifles. At the armory they received a .30-cal. M1903 Springfield rifle and a long bayonet. They had to memorize the rifle's serial number by the time they returned to barracks, and there they learned the difference between a rifle and a gun. The first recruit making this error in nomenclature demonstrated the difference by holding each piece of equipment in opposite hands reciting, "This is my rifle, this is my gun. This is for fighting, this is for fun." The day was spent learning to disassemble and assemble the rifle and how to meticulously clean it. They were told they would have to disassemble and assemble it blindfolded, that they must be able to correctly name every single part, and that the rifle would become their best friend. To drop or otherwise mistreat a rifle was a cardinal sin.

The first four weeks were spent at the depot undertaking a great deal of close-order drill, manual of arms, physical fitness drills, bayonet training, obstacle courses, lectures on field sanitation, military courtesies (when and whom to salute), recognizing rank, military law (Articles of the Government of the Navy – "Rocks and Shoals"), and guard duty. Field training was conducted in the form of forced marches, first aid, signaling, gas warfare, cover and concealment, scouting and patrolling. They were taken to the nearby Del Mar Race Track, closed for the duration of the war and now called Camp C.J. Miller, where they were taught combat swimming and water survival. Harassment continued relentlessly. The DIs' goal was to break these young men down to the lowest level and then gradually build up their confidence and self-esteem. They had to work as a team and put aside individual concerns and comforts. The recruits, even though they had to work together, had little time to talk to one another and discover personal details.



Recruits during their two weeks at the rifle range march in formation with the M1903 rifle. Their rifle scorecards are pinned behind the globe and anchor on their sun helmets.

Barrack and full equipment layout inspections were held on Saturdays. The early inspections were disasters. DIs raked meticulously displayed gear off bunks with a sweep of the arm and threw locker boxes down the aisles, scattering the contents. The DIs seemed to introduce them to new punishments daily: one DI telling them to dig a 6ft-cubed (1.8m-cubed) hole and another DI telling them to fill it in; running around the drill field or on the spot with the rifle at high port (held at arm's length over the head); holding two partly filled buckets of water in outstretched arms; and ice-cold showers. Some punishments were reserved for specific infractions. Failure to shave resulted in a "dry shave" without lather or water. If the DI wished to make a deeper impression he had another recruit do the shaving. A recruit found with his hand in his pockets had the pockets filled with sand and sewn shut. A "Boot" who could not seem to do things correctly would stand to attention in front of his hut clad in "skivvies" with a bucket over his head shouting, "I am the platoon screw-up" to all passing by. Passing DIs would rap their swagger sticks on the bucket. A man continually causing problems, one who could not get it right, brought grief on the entire platoon. DIs were not beyond group punishment to make the point that they were all in this together. A "blanket party" might be called for, a late-night visit by the nonconformist's platoon mates. A blanket would be thrown over the transgressor and he was held down as others applied fists. Even with the draft the Marines considered themselves a volunteer service. Men could gripe, but only to a point. They would be reminded that they asked for this, they volunteered. In the eyes of the Corps the fact that they were volunteers meant they could be driven harder and more could be expected of them.

For the fifth and sixth weeks the company moved to Camp Calvin B. Matthews, 13 miles (20km) north of San Diego. They lived in squad tents with wooden decks, a "tent city." Here they focused totally on rifle marksmanship, conducting known-distance (KD) range firing. This was extremely important, as all marines were considered as riflemen first, regardless of specialty. Harassment here was reduced to allow them to concentrate on qualifying as Marksmen, Sharpshooters, or Expert Riflemen, and they would *all* qualify. As motivation to fire Expert, they would receive \$5 extra a month. They also fired the .45-cal. M1911A1 Colt pistol for familiarization. Most marines have fond memories of this period.

Upon their return to Dago the recruits pulled a week of mess duty and post work details. Yet again they had not seen the PX, had any "poggy bait" (candy), soda, or beer, and liberty was beyond hope. The DIs, however, were starting to treat them somewhat like humans, even joked with them sometimes; they were feeling like they might become marines. They conducted their first parade in forest-green service uniforms. It was their first time seeing officers. They were given a speech about what they had achieved and the service they would soon provide the country, and they were also given their globe and anchor insignia. They were now marines because the DIs actually told them so, and even drank a brew with them. This is when the platoon photograph was taken, with the new marines in their service uniforms and sun helmets, gripping their rifles in their hands, and standing on a five-tier bleacher with their DI front row center, behind the sign bearing their platoon number and the year.



**Water survival training included basic swimming (enough to stay afloat and to swim away from a sinking ship), abandoning a ship by jumping, and assisting a wounded man. Here recruits have removed their trousers, tied off the legs, and inflated them.**

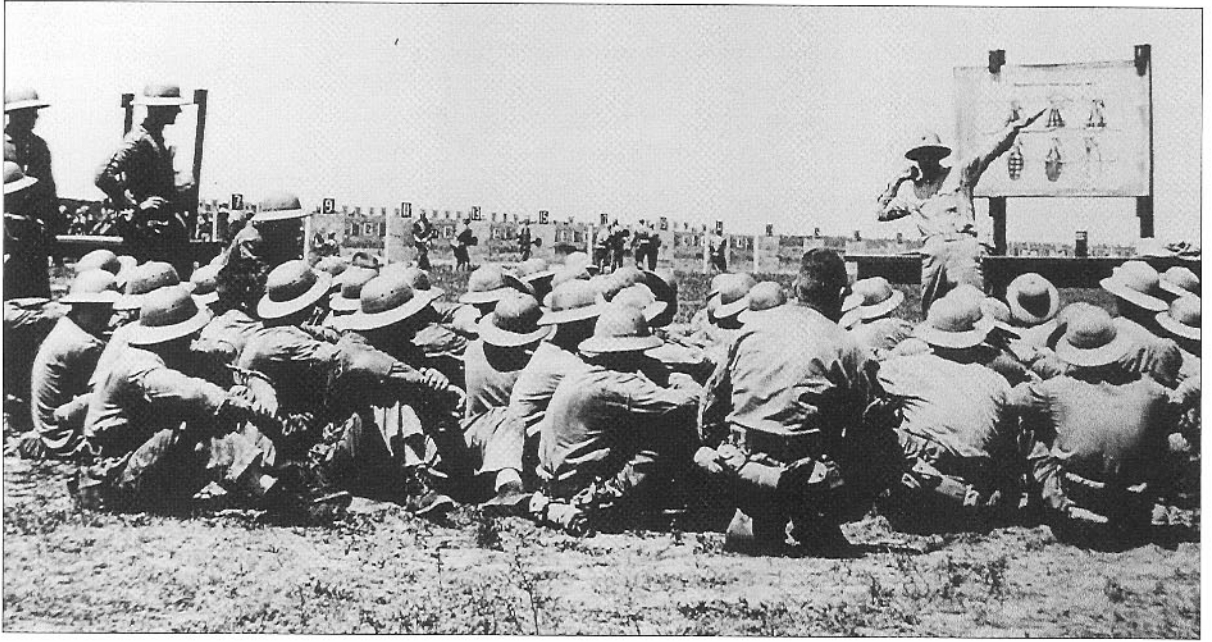
The recruits were quite proud of themselves at this point. They were in the best physical condition of their lives, they were sun-tanned, had put on weight, and had a great deal of self-confidence. Through it all the enemy was seldom spoken of. There were no propaganda speeches or political exhortations other than the occasional Hollywood movie, which offered more in the way of propaganda than any government effort.

Much to their surprise, the recruits were given a week's leave and they headed home wearing their unadorned khakis via bus and train. This was new to the Corps, as leave after boot camp had only begun to be granted in the spring of 1943; previously they had gone directly to specialty training, then were assigned to a unit and deployed, often without any leave. They all returned at the appointed time, by midnight. They had been sternly lectured about what would happen if they failed to return on time – they were not told they had a 24-hour grace period to return from leave and were dismayed when one man came in a day late and nothing was said. He had been informed of the grace period by an older brother. If an individual failed to report in from leave or liberty at the required time, he was declared Absent Without Leave (AWOL) and was subject to disciplinary action. If he had still not reported in after 30 days, he became a deserter, subject to arrest by the police and sought after by the FBI.

It was after leave that the men learned their future assignments, which had been much anticipated. The Marine Corps had 21 occupation fields, each with numerous individual specialties. Some men found themselves going to Camp Pendleton, 32 miles (51km) north of Dago, for artillery, scout and sniper, engineer, amphibian tractor, or signal training. Most, though, were assigned to the Infantry Training Battalion at Camp Elliott, 12 miles (19km) northeast of Dago.

Camp Elliott covered 32,000 acres (12,928 hectares) on Kearney Mesa, a dry area of scrub brush, rolling hills, and ravines. The infantry students were housed in two-story H-shaped wooden barracks with squad bays in the arms of the "H" and heads in the crossbar. The training was straightforward and practical, and no time was wasted on harassment. The instructors, mostly combat vets, were there only to teach them their trade. They usually had evenings off, plus weekend liberty. The three weeks' training qualified each young man as a Rifleman, Specification Code No.745. He was issued an M1 rifle and would carry it to his next assignment. He conducted more rifle firing integrated into tactical live-fire exercises, and received introduction to squad and platoon tactics, scouting and patrolling, hand and rifle grenades, basic judo and knife fighting, and familiarization firing with all battalion weapons. Other men were trained on the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR; never pronounced "bar"), light and heavy machine guns, 60mm and 81mm mortars, or 37mm antitank gun. They were given first and second choices in which weapon they wanted to train on.





## APPEARANCE

The image an observer would first note was the youth of these marines. They were kids – when the war started in 1939 they were in junior high or had just entered high school. They were lean because of the Depression years and the lack of “fast foods.” Their average height was 5ft 6in. (1.67m) – the average today is 5ft 8in. (1.72m) and average weight has increased. They were proud of their Spartan uniforms and went to the expense of having them tailor fitted. There was not much on their uniforms – no shoulder insignia, name tags, or ribbons. They wore only a silver Marksman, Sharpshooter, or Expert Rifleman badge on the left breast pocket flap, bronze globe and anchor or “bird on a ball” insignia on their collars, and another on the left side of the garrison cap.<sup>3</sup> If qualifying on other weapons, the marine would wear a Basic Weapons Qualification Badge with bars signifying the weapons and level of qualification. Once assigned to a division they would receive a “battle blaze” for their left shoulder. A private 1st class (PFC) wore a point-up chevron on both upper sleeves – red on forest green on the winter service uniform and forest green on khaki on the summer shirt. Even old salts bore few adornments: more chevrons and diagonal hash marks on the coat’s left cuff, one for each four-year hitch. Ribbons were few in number, even for prewar and South Pacific veterans.

The most distinctive Marine uniform was the “blues,” the uniform that attracted many young men to the Corps. It was a uniform that most would never wear, as its general issue ceased in early 1942. From that point they were issued only to Marine Barracks, Washington; Marine Detachment, London; Marine Band, and recruiters. Individuals could purchase them, but few could afford blues.

**While one recruit platoon runs the bayonet course in the background, another awaits its turn, receiving instruction on the operation and throwing of hand grenades. Every minute of time was spent in training.**

<sup>3</sup> Recruits were not issued with globe and anchor insignia until they graduated from boot.

**RIGHT** Marine dress blues worn by a 1st sergeant, sporting two service stripes ("hash marks," each for four years' service) and the NCO's 30-in. (76cm) sword, used in the Corps since 1875. Arguably one of the most appealing uniforms in US service, it attracted many men to the Corps, but few would actually wear it.

**FAR RIGHT** The wool forest-green winter service uniform, here worn on guard duty with rifle, cartridge belt, haversack, bayonet, and leggings.



The forest-green winter service uniform, or "greens," was the formal uniform issued to most marines. No doubt recruits were disappointed to find they would have no blues in their sea bag, but greens were an attractive uniform. The forest green was more appealing to the eye than brownish olive-drab. The kersey wool coat or blouse had epaulettes, Marine-style (Polish-style) cuffs, pleated breast pockets, and large box-style pockets on the skirts. The buttons were dark bronze adorned with the globe and anchor insignia. A 2-in. (5cm) wide cordovan belt with an open brass buckle was worn with the coat, and was known as the "fair-weather belt." In 1943 a cloth belt with a dark bronze buckle replaced the leather item. A tan wool shirt was worn with the greens in winter. In the summer a khaki cotton shirt could be worn with the forest-green trousers without the coat. Much to the marines' chagrin the trousers had only front pockets and no hip pockets (which only officers' trousers boasted). A tan field scarf (necktie) was worn with both shirts. A 3-in. (7.6cm) long "battle pin" held the collars and scarf in place. Garrison or overseas caps were provided in forest-green wool and khaki cotton for wear with the appropriate uniform. Caps were referred to as "covers," and prior to the issue of the utility cap they were worn in the field. Ankle-high, rough-side-in cordovan service shoes were worn with greens and khakis. These dark-brown shoes were to be highly "spit-shined."

The utility uniform – “utilities” or “dungarees” – was the uniform that marines spent the most time in. The two-piece dungarees were made of cotton herringbone twill (HBT) in sage green (grayish green). The hardwearing fabric proved to be effective camouflage in the jungle. It was in this uniform that the Marines stormed Guadalcanal; previously they had worn khakis in combat. The coat (shirt) had three flapless pockets on the skirts and left breast. On the breast pocket was stenciled a black globe and anchor over which was written “USMC.” Rank insignia were sometimes stenciled or crudely hand-painted in black on the upper sleeves. The front opening was secured by four black metal buttons. The trousers were unusual in that they had both front and hip pockets. The utility cap began to be issued in early 1943. It was inspired by a railroad worker’s cap, had a short bill, pleats around the crown, and usually a black globe and anchor stenciled on the front. The tan web trousers belt was 1/4-in. (3.2cm) wide with a brass buckle and tip, both blackened. This was worn on dungarees, khakis, and greens. Since recruits were issued two belts, they would rub off the blacking on their belt’s buckle and tip, which they would Brasso® to a shine. This belt would be worn with khakis and greens. Marines became quite familiar with the sharp odor of Brasso®, a canned liquid metal polish applied with a rag and rubbed briskly. Marines would also purchase a Blitz Cloth®, a square of soft cloth impregnated with brass polish. Jeweler’s paste was used to polish bronze devices.

The tan fiber tropical helmet was worn by recruits during much of their training, especially on the rifle range. A large bronze globe and anchor insignia was fitted on the front. Often, the recruits did not receive the M1 steel helmet and resin-impregnated duck liner until infantry training. For field duty recruits wore tan canvas leggings and rough-side-out dark-tan leather-laced ankle boots with non-slip composite rubber soles.

Undershirts, under drawers, and socks were white. These were often dyed in some shade of green by marines using Rit® powdered dye. In combat coffee grounds were used to dye skivvies tan or light brown. Late in the war the marines were issued with green underwear and tan socks.

All items of clothing were marked in specified locations with the owner’s first and middle initials and last name in 1/4-in. (6.5mm) block letters. This was done with a Carter’s® permanent marking outfit with rubber letters that could be set in wooden stamp blocks.

Each marine was issued two 1/4×1 1/2-in. (3.2×3.8cm) oval dog tags to be worn around his neck. There was a hole in both ends of the monel alloy, brass, or stainless steel tag. The second tag was attached by a short loop to the lower hole of the first. Prior to 1942 only one tag was issued with an acid-etched right index fingerprint on the back. Five lines of data were stamped on the tags: 1) surname (family name); 2) given name and middle initial (sometimes first and middle initials); 3) six-digit service number<sup>4</sup> and religious preference (C – Catholic, H – Hebrew [Jew], P – Protestant, or blank); 4) Tetanus inoculation date (T. or TET-month/year; e.g. T.4/43) and blood type (TYPE A, B, AB, O); and 5)

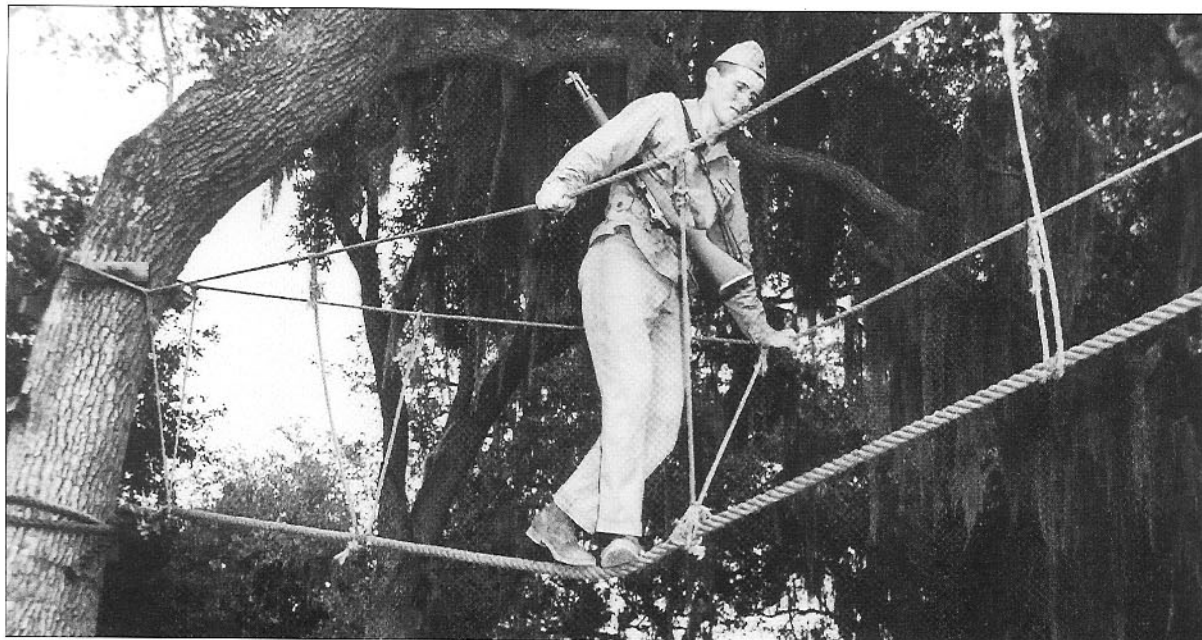
#### Recruit Clothing Allowance, Summer<sup>4</sup>

Bag, clothing (sea bag)	1
Belt, trousers, woven	2
Belt, service	1
Blanket, wool, green	2
Cap, garrison, service, summer	2
Cap, garrison, service, winter	1
Cap, utility	1
Helmet, fiber	1
Coat, rain	1
Coat, service, winter	1
Coat, utility (dungaree shirt)	2
Drawers, cotton	6
Leggings, canvas	1 pair
Ornament, cap and hat <sup>5</sup>	1
Ornament, collar <sup>5</sup>	1 pair
Overcoat	1
Scarf, cotton (necktie)	1
Shirt, cotton	3
Shoes, field	2 pairs
Socks, cotton	6 pairs
Trousers, service, summer	2
Trousers, service, winter	1
Trousers, utility	2
Undershirts, cotton	6

<sup>4</sup> Recruits at PI in the winter received a third wool blanket and lined leather gloves. After boot camp, marines were each authorized one additional pair of summer service trousers, an additional scarf and cotton shirt, and a pair of leather shoes. They could purchase further clothing items at their own expense from Quartermaster Sales.

<sup>5</sup> The Marine Corps bronze globe and anchor insignia.

<sup>6</sup> Officers substituted their rank prior to October 1943; later replaced by letter “O” and five-digit serial number.



A recruit traverses a three-rope bridge. Khaki garrison caps were often worn in training with the dungarees. In 1944 recruits began receiving M1 rifles rather than the M1903.

#### Marine Corps serial number blocks

100000–600000	Regular volunteers
500000	17-year-old volunteers
700000	Woman Marines
800000	Reserves on active duty and volunteer inductees
900000	Inductees

USMC or USMCR. If the marine was killed, one tag would remain with the body and the other be turned in to the company command post (CP) to be forwarded to Division of Personnel (Personnel Department from July 1944).

The Marine Corps utilized a complex system of enlisted ranks with numerous specialty ranks in each of the seven pay grades. The basic ranks were private, private 1st class, corporal, sergeant, platoon sergeant, gunnery sergeant (“gunny”), and master gunnery sergeant. Pay grades 1–5 were non-commissioned officers – “noncoms.” Corporal and sergeant ranks were “line NCOs,” holding leadership positions and identifiable by arches (“rockers”) beneath their chevrons. The others were “staff NCOs” with a bar rather than a rocker beneath their chevrons or identifiable by some other device. Originally a 1st sergeant, the senior NCO in a company or battery, could be graded 1–3, but on February 10, 1943, the 1st sergeant became grade 1 only. The 1st sergeant’s diamond, which had been used between 1857 and 1937, was restored to the Corps on February 8, 1944.

#### Combat garb

The marine in combat was stripped down to the bare essentials. Packs were often left in the company rear to be brought up at night. In the rugged jungle terrain and across broken ground, speed and agility were essential. The marine wore faded dungarees bearing only the black





“Spit and polish,” the endless task of maintaining uniforms, equipment, and weapons, is practiced in the barracks. The “T” bar at the end of the right bunk is for a mosquito net.

### Enlisted Ranks, after February 10, 1943

Rank	Abbreviation	Pay Grade
Field music	FM	7
Private	Pvt	7
Field music 1st class	FM1cl	6
Assistant cook	ACk	6
Private 1st class	PFC	6
Mess corporal	MessCorp	5
Field music corporal	FMCorp	5
Field cook	FldCk	5
Corporal	Corp	5
Field music sergeant	FMSgt	4
Mess sergeant	MessSgt	4
Chief cook	CCk	4
Sergeant	Sgt	4
Staff sergeant	SSgt	3
Platoon sergeant	PlSgt	3
Technical sergeant	TSgt	2
Drum major	DrumMaj	2
Supply sergeant	SupSgt	2
Gunnery sergeant	GySgt	2
Master technical sergeant	MTSgt	1
Quartermaster sergeant	QMSgt	1
Paymaster sergeant	PMSgt	1
Master gunnery sergeant	MGySgt	1
First sergeant	1stSgt	1
Sergeant major	SgtMaj	1

globe and anchor and no rank insignia. Officers often removed their pin-on collar rank because of snipers. The utility cap was often worn under the olive-drab-painted steel helmet. A photo of his wife or girlfriend might be tucked into the helmet webbing. Reversible helmet camouflage covers began to be issued in late 1942. The more commonly used "green-side" was dark green, light olive-drab, and dark and light browns on a pale green backing, while the "brown-side" was dark and light browns, and tan on a sand backing. These same colors were used in other camouflage clothing and equipment. In monochrome photos the "brown-side" appears much lighter than the "green-side." The camo cover became a distinction of the Corps, as the Army used bare helmets or camouflage nets. The shirt was always worn outside the trousers. The marine discarded the leggings, as they chafed, restricted circulation, were too hot, and retained water after wading ashore or through swamps and streams. His trousers were unbloused and perhaps rolled up to his ankles. His boondockers were scuffed and scarred, but broken into a comfortable fit. He may have discarded his skivvies altogether, or at least the drawers. They held sweat and did not dry out, causing rashes – "jungle rot." His only gear was a cartridge belt, perhaps with suspenders (not always issued), one or two canteens, a first aid pouch, often a jungle first aid kit, a KA-Bar fighting knife, and a couple of grenades.



**A typical field uniform:**  
dungarees with helmet, M1 rifle  
with M1 bayonet, cartridge belt  
with canteen and first aid pouch,  
and haversack. Here the leggings  
are worn unbloused, but they  
might be worn with the trousers  
bloused (tucked into leggings),  
or discarded.



Frontline troops received their water in 5-gallon (19-liter) cans. Water was treated with chlorine or halazone tablets before being sent forward. Most water was provided by transport ships' salt water distillers, and troops were cautioned about drinking water found on the islands.

A marine's physical appearance in prolonged combat was near appalling. Weight loss was a given. He was unshaved for days or weeks, his hair grew mangy; the opportunity to bath did not exist. While sun-tanned, those fighting in dense jungle were frequently pale or their skin took on a yellow-cast owing to the tiny, bitter bright yellow atabrine anti-malaria tablets. His eyes may have appeared yellow due to jaundice. Small cuts and abrasions might develop into tropical ulcers and coral cuts could become infected. He was dehydrated, making him susceptible to shock, and took salt tablets because of excessive sweating.

## EQUIPMENT

The marines used a combination of Marine and Army individual equipment. The latter came into increasing use late in the war as Army and Marine units conducted frequent joint operations. Army web gear was mostly khaki, with olive-drab gear being introduced in 1943. Marine web gear was tan, a darker shade than Army khaki. It was seldom marked with "U.S." in a high-visibility location as Army gear, but with "U.S.M.C." under flaps or on the back. Collectively, marines called their web equipment "782 gear," after the quartermaster form on which they signed for it. When a marine received his gear it was a bewildering pile of belts, straps, bags, and containers. The DIs had the platoon form up at double-arm intervals and dump their gear out of their sea bags. One of the corporals would hold up an item and the sergeant would bellow out its nomenclature. Then they talked the men through assembling and fitting it. It would require a couple of forced marches before it was adjusted to some degree of comfort. Once fully loaded with

ammunition, rations, and other gear it would all have to be readjusted and rebalanced.

The M1941 pack system was the basis for load carrying. It consisted of two packs: an upper haversack with integral shoulder straps and a lower knapsack, which could be secured beneath the haversack. A full prescribed haversack load held a set of underwear, socks, poncho, rations, mess kit, knife, fork and spoon, towel, and "ditty bag" (toilet kit). A bayonet and entrenching tool were attached to the haversack. The knapsack held a set of dungarees, another set of underwear, socks, and spare shoes. A third component was the bedroll, consisting of a shelter-half ("pup tent"), three-section tent pole, five wooden tent stakes, tent guy line, mosquito net, and blanket. The M1941 pack could be configured in five assemblies:

- Light marching pack – haversack without cartridge belt
- Marching pack – haversack, cartridge belt, entrenching tool
- Field marching pack – marching pack with bedroll
- Transport pack – haversack, cartridge belt, knapsack
- Field transport pack – transport pack with bedroll

What pack configuration to carry on a given training day was spelled out on the training schedule, along with the uniform of the day. Other 782 gear included an M1912 first aid pouch with a field dressing and sulfa powder or tablets, M1941 suspenders, 1-quart (roughly 1-liter) steel canteen with a metal or black plastic cap, a canteen cup with a folding handle (carried nested on the bottom of the canteen), canteen carrier, M1928 ten-pocket cartridge belt with each pocket holding two five-round M1903 rifle stripper clips or an eight-round M1 rifle clip, and a non-folding M1910 entrenching tool or "e-tool." Marines soon learned it was *never* called a "shovel." From late 1943 a folding e-tool began to be issued.

The jungle first aid kit was issued after 1943 in an effort to provide individuals with first aid and preventive medicine items necessary in the tropics. The poncho and shelter-half were olive-drab, but in 1943 reversible camouflage versions began to be issued.

Alternative web gear items were provided to accommodate weapons other than rifles. Automatic riflemen carried an M1936 six-pocket belt with each pocket holding two BAR magazines. Individuals armed with pistols, carbines, and submachine guns used a pistol belt with special pouches: a two-pocket pistol magazine pouch, two to four two-pocket carbine pouches, or three- or five-pocket submachine gun magazine pouches.

### Weapons

The Marine Corps, first and foremost an infantry force, considered its most important weapons to be those arming its infantrymen: rifle, bayonet, automatic rifle, machine gun, carbine, rifle grenade launcher, and hand grenade. Other

**Marines in the frontline seldom attempted to shave, but when pulled out of the line, or the combat zone was secured, they reverted to normal grooming. The steel helmet universally served as a wash basin.**







The Marine Corps did not possess bath units. Streams, rivers, ponds, and, in this instance, a 1,000lb (454kg) bomb crater, served the purpose.

weapons were also available to the infantryman: bazookas, flamethrowers, and demolition charges.

The rifle was the marine's basic arm. While country boys tended to have some experience with firearms, it was by no means near the level of skill required by the Corps. Most city boys had little if any firearms experience. A fair percentage of those familiar with firearms, though, had some degree of experience with bolt-action deer rifles, and they found the "03 Springfield" easy to operate.

The .30-cal. M1903 Springfield rifle had been in use by the Corps since 1908, providing legendary service. The old hands held it in reverence and recruits were expected to likewise regard it highly and learn everything there was to know about it. It was relatively light and compact at 8lb 11oz (3.95kg) and was 43 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (110cm) long, with a five-round magazine loaded by stripper clip. A slightly improved version, the M1903A1, was put into production in 1939, and in 1942 the M1903A3 was standardized to speed up production. While better finished and more refined than the Japanese Arisaka rifle, the two weapons were not dissimilar in capabilities. The Japanese 6.5mm round had less penetration and knockdown power, but their 7.7mm was about equal to the US .30-cal. Their rifles, though, were longer, and in the hands of smaller troops were a bit more awkward to handle in the jungle.

The Springfield armed the Corps through Guadalcanal. In early 1943 the semi-automatic .30-cal. M1 Garand rifle began to replace the "03." By late 1943 the FMF was completely armed with the M1. To the old timers the introduction of the M1 foretold the doom of the legendary Marine Corps marksmanship. They decried the M1 as too heavy and bulky at 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb (4.32kg; it was only a half-inch longer than the M1903), for being inaccurate, and too complex for dumb recruits to understand. The M1, however, proved to be a highly effective weapon, being fast to reload with an eight-round *en bloc* clip, and pumping out a higher rate of fire than an enemy armed with a five-shot bolt-action rifle.

An M1 rifle-armed infantry training squad rests after completing a night infiltration course. The marines behind them wearing gray sweat shirts were the exercise "enemy."



An M1-armed marine could snap off 15–18 aimed shots in one minute, compared to an Arisaka-armed Japanese soldier's eight to ten rounds. While a bit heavier than he would have liked, most marines thought very highly of the M1, deeming it rugged and reliable, and they took extremely good care of it, as their lives and the lives of their buddies depended on its functioning.

With the rifle came a more basic weapon, the bayonet. The Japanese possessed a well-earned reputation for bayonet fighting, which they practiced for long hours, and the Marines were determined not to be outmatched. The 16-in. (40cm) bladed M1905 and M1942 bayonets were used on both the M1903 and M1. The 10-in. (25.4cm) M1905E1 and M1 bayonets began to be issued in 1943 to make them more usable at close-quarters. The Japanese had a 15½-in. (39.4cm) bayonet and a longer rifle, but their small stature limited their reach somewhat, and this was additionally countered by the typical marine's longer reach. The M1 carbine was not provided with its M4 bayonet until almost the war's end.

Springfields remained in use into 1944, as M7 rifle grenade launchers were not initially available for the M1 rifle, and stayed in use with ships' detachments, Marine barracks guards, and training and service units for some time. Rifle squads retained an M1903 with an M1 grenade launcher. The launchers gave the squad the ability to project grenades farther than hand-thrown grenades. Grenade types included M9A1 antitank, M17 fragmentation, M19 white phosphorus, and colored smoke and signal flares. Fragmentation hand grenades could also be fitted to a tailboom adapter and fired by grenade launchers. The M8 launcher was provided for the M1 carbine in 1944.

A weapon actually seeing wider use than the M1 rifle was the .30-cal. M1 carbine. A Marine division in 1943 had 8,000 rifles, but over 11,000 carbines. Officers, weapons crewmen, artillerymen, and most service

and support personnel were armed with this light, compact weapon – a better alternative to the pistol. In fact, from April 1943 pistols were no longer issued to infantry and artillery regiments, being completely replaced by carbines. The semi-automatic carbine was fed by a 15-round detachable magazine. (The semi and full-auto M2 with a 30-round magazine did not see combat in World War II.) The “baby Garand” was initially popular and much sought after by marines. It was light, compact, had a high-capacity magazine, and also looked slick. Once used in combat it was found wanting: while reliable enough it lacked range, penetration, and knockdown. It used a smaller .30-cal. cartridge than the M1 rifle – BAR, and Browning machine gun, little more than a pistol round. Another problem was that it sounded like a Japanese 6.5mm rifle. From early 1944 the squad’s three assistant automatic riflemen were armed with carbines, but these weapons were soon replaced by M1 rifles. Squad and platoon leaders were armed with carbines, but many units replaced these too with rifles or submachine guns. While both the rifle and the carbine were designated M1, marines called the rifle simply the “M1” and the carbine just the “carbine.”

Thompson submachine guns were not common in rifle platoons: in 1943 a division had a pool of 78. The Thompson had long been in use by the Corps, who had found it useful in the Banana Wars, but it was little used in the Pacific. Three versions of the .45-cal. “Tommy gun” were employed by the Corps, the M1928A1, M1, and M1A1. They used 20- and 30-round magazines and were heavy, almost 11lb (5kg), and complex to disassemble and assemble. Its penetration through bamboo and brush was limited and it unfortunately also sounded like a Japanese 6.5mm machine gun.

The .30-cal. M1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifle was the second most important weapon in the squad. Two were assigned, and, from early 1944, three. It was heavy at 19lb 6oz (8.9kg), and bulky at 4ft (1.22m) in length. The flash suppressor was often removed to reduce its length by 3in. (7.6cm), and detaching the bipod knocked off 2½lb (1.14kg). Its 20-round magazines were heavy and deemed too small for sustained fire. It was accurate, though, and offered two rates of fire: the high 500–650rpm rate and the low 300–450rpm, which allowed single shots to be squeezed off. Yet it was complex and difficult to maintain. Marines were thankful that regulations prohibited white-glove inspections and timed disassembly and assembly. It was too easy to lose and damage the many small parts.

The hand grenade was another essential weapon. Grenades included the Mk II and Mk IIA1 “pineapple” fragmentation, Mk IIIA1 offensive “concussion” (½lb/0.23kg TNT) for blasting pillboxes, AN-M8 white smoke for screening, AN-M14 thermite incendiary for destroying enemy equipment, M15 white phosphorus (WP), and Mk 1 illuminating



**Automatic riflemen were trained separately from riflemen, although the latter were familiar with and could operate an M1918A2 BAR. Here an instructor provides advice on the intricacies of stripping this complex weapon.**



**An M1 carbine-armed marine demonstrates the kneeling throwing position with the Mk II “pineapple” fragmentation hand grenade. Grenades proved to be a key weapon on the Pacific islands.**

burning for 25 seconds at 55,000 candlepower to illuminate a 100-yard (90m) radius area. The WP was especially useful for knocking out pillboxes and attacking troops in uncovered positions. Burning WP particles showering into positions stuck to whatever they came in contact with. Panicked soldiers hit by WP might try to wipe the sticky substance off, burning at 5,000°F (2,760°C), only to smear it over a wider area as it burned through them. M16 and M18 colored smoke grenades were used to mark positions and provide simple signals. The M16 came in red, yellow, green, violet, orange, blue, and black. The M18 generated a more vivid smoke cloud more rapidly and was issued in only the first four colors. Colored smoke rifle grenades, and hand grenades, fitted to rifle grenade adapter tailbooms, were used to mark targets for tanks. Marines would remove the fuse and scrape out half the smoke compound, as the full load obscured the target. A basic load of “frag” grenades was two per man, but

it was common to carry a “double-dose,” a double load. Grenades were used in such enormous numbers that during some island fighting their use rate far exceeded forecasts and an emergency resupply of grenades had to be flown in, sometimes depleting depot stockpiles. A common technique was to “cook-off” frags, that is, pull the arming pin, release the safety lever, count to two or three, and chuck it into a firing port. Because the grenade had a 4.5–5-second delay the enemy did not have time to recover it and toss it out.

Using demolitions was an important skill. Each platoon had a trained demolition corporal in anticipation for a raiding mission. Raiding was not to be an infantry role in the Pacific, but the emphasis on demolitions served the Corps well, owing to the enemy’s extensive use of pillboxes and caves.<sup>7</sup> The two most common demolition items were the ½lb (0.23kg) TNT block, issued 100 in a wooden box, and the satchel charge. Multiple TNT blocks could be taped together, placed in sandbags or in other bags, or linked together with detonating cord, and detonated by a delay fuse ignited by a friction fuse lighter. Marines sometimes taped a TNT block to a “frag” grenade as a more potent pillbox popper. Satchel charges contained eight 2¼lb (1.14kg) M2 tetrytol demolition blocks linked together by detonating cord at 8-in. (20cm) intervals as an M1 chain demolition charge. The 20lb (9kg) of explosives, slightly more powerful than TNT, were usually sufficient to destroy pillboxes. Another assault technique was to tape demolition charges to 81mm mortar shells and chuck them into caves.

Famethrowers – “Zippos” or “Blowtorches” – did not see much use until the November 1943 Tarawa assault, but they proved invaluable for defeating pillboxes and caves. The M1A1 flamethrower was heavy – 70lb (32kg) with 4 gallons (15 liters) of thickened fuel. It was quite a load for a man to carry. An assistant operator would carry a 5-gallon (19-liter)



refill fuel can and a spare compressed gas propellant tank. The range with thickened fuel was up to 50 yards (46m), but in practice it was shorter. In a continuous burst the flamethrower could burn for eight to ten seconds, but two-second bursts were normal. Rather than waste fuel by burning it as it was fired at targets, operators would sometimes "wet-down" the pillbox with a spray of un-ignited fuel and then WP grenades or Molotov cocktails were thrown. It is an understatement to say flamethrower operators led a dangerous and often short life. The Japanese would put the hated weapon under intense fire (detonation of the fuel tanks seldom occurred, that is a Hollywood invention). Heat exhaustion from bearing the load was common.

The 2.36-in. M1A1 antitank rocket launcher was another key weapon. The "bazooka" or "stovepipe" was introduced in time for Tarawa and for the first time infantrymen had a light, portable direct-fire weapon capable of knocking out a tank or pillbox with a shaped-charge warhead. It had a range of 250 yards (226m) although more practical ranges were 50–70 yards (46–64m).

Flamethrowers and bazookas did not have dedicated crewmen; instead specially trained riflemen were assigned. The two weapons were pooled at battalion level and there were sufficient numbers to provide one per squad, although the Marines did not always use this many. Two more weapons found at company level, however, were provided with dedicated crews. The .30-cal. M1919A4 Browning light machine gun was a tripod-mounted weapon, of which three were assigned to the weapons platoon. Normally one would be attached to each rifle platoon. There were also three 60mm M2 mortars, the company commander's "hip-pocket artillery." These operated as a section under central control and could deliver high-explosive and WP rounds out to 1,985 yards (1,814m).

There is one final weapon that was important to the infantryman, the KA-Bar fighting knife, virtually a symbol of the Corps. The Union Cutlery Company offered its heavy-duty fighting knife to the Corps in 1942. The Marines adopted it and other companies also manufactured



**Quartermasters inspect KA-Bar fighting knives, virtually a symbol of the Corps. The man to the right is checking the edge of a hospital corps knife.**



**Pillbox assault training on Maui, Hawaii. Mock-up fortifications like this flamethrower-scorched concrete pillbox were constructed, with most concealed in vegetation.**

it, but it became popularly known as the "KA-Bar." The name came from a customer's endorsement, a fur trapper who crudely wrote that his rifle had jammed and he used their knife to kill a wounded bear attacking him. In thanking the company the trapper described using the knife to "kill a bar." The way his writing was scrawled across the paper, it looked like "ka bar." The Quartermaster General advised against its adoption, claiming it was too expensive for the good it would do, and that too many marines would be injured by their own knives. Fortunately the Commandant ignored the recommendation.

## **BELIEF AND BELONGING**

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Faith in the Corps and loyalty to squad and platoon were the primary motivating factors for most marines. Some veterans compare their indoctrination and compulsory dedication to the Corps to brainwashing, but few bear any regrets. They understood the necessity for cohesion, and the sense of belonging this instilled. Marines did not fight for America, the flag, democracy, or their families: they fought for one another, for their comrades, and the Corps recognized this.

Their motivation against the Japanese was another thing. It was basic – veterans simply said the "Japs," or "Nips" as they called them, were doing a wrong that had to be righted. If the enemy wanted to die for their emperor, the marines would help them. The more the US troops heard about the Japanese, the more determined they were. Young marines liked to win, and they did not like to see buddies killed. By this time the stories of the Japanese being supermen had been dispelled. Nor did the stories of Japanese snipers, atrocities against Americans, and the fact that the Japanese never took prisoners, frighten them. The marines felt they were better trained and equipped, and that right was on their side.

It was the old hands, the old salts among the NCOs and the prewar Marine officers with long service in Latin America, China, and at sea with the fleet, who instilled the traditions of the service that were so important to making the new Corps what it was. Nonetheless, they endlessly bemoaned the demise of the "Old Corps" prior to the 1940 expansion.

There is no disputing that life in the Corps was rough and demanding. The Corps came first, over family and self. Only the barest concerns were paid to comfort and diversions. The hours were long, the work hard, and the discipline harder. They hated Army "dogfaces" only because they were told by their NCOs that they were worthless, that they lacked pride and tradition. They really had no idea about the Army, having never worked with soldiers and only having seen some on leave, mainly anti-aircraft and coastal artillery troops while on liberty.

The marine's squad was his immediate family, a dozen men in whom he developed absolute trust. His platoon became an extended family under the guiding eye of its patriarch, the platoon commander, and even more so, the platoon sergeant, usually an old hand with prewar experience in exotic lands. The company commander, the "Skipper" or "Ol' Man" (usually in his mid-20s), oversaw his fiefdom aided by the 1st sergeant ("Top"). The marine was imbued with a sense of total loyalty to his unit and the Corps. There is an old saying, "Once a marine always a marine." There is more truth to this than mere hype.



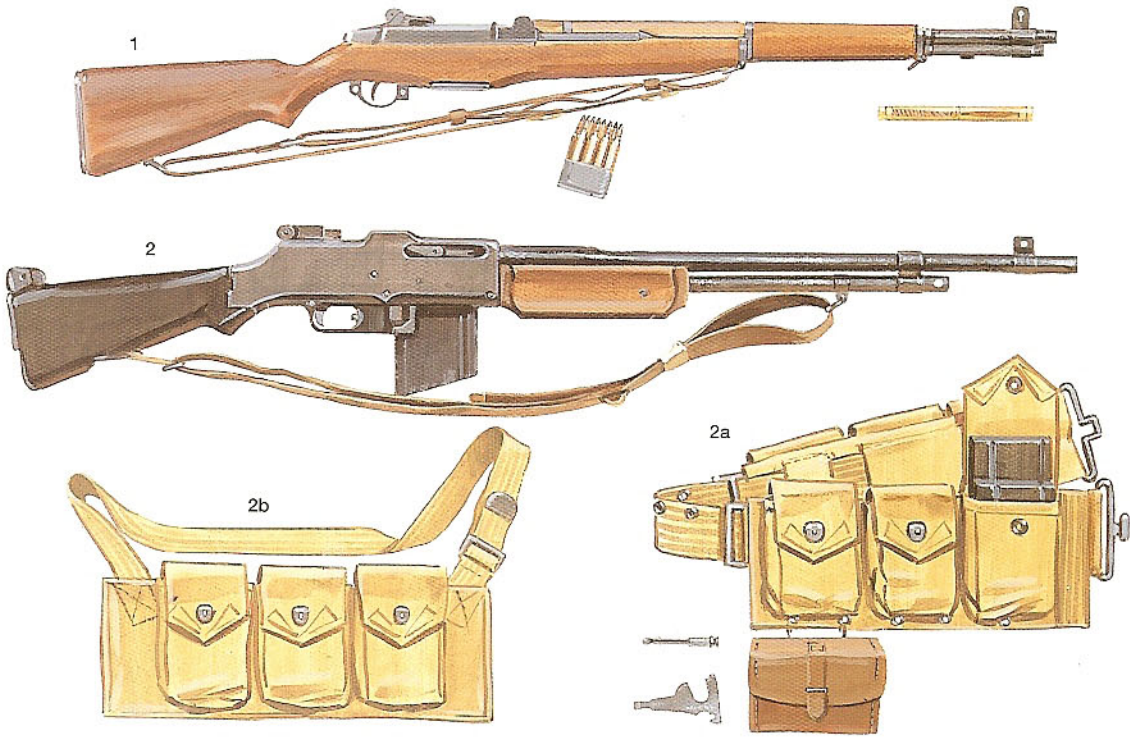


Marksmanship training, Camp Elliott





The infantryman's weapons









Namur blockhouse assault



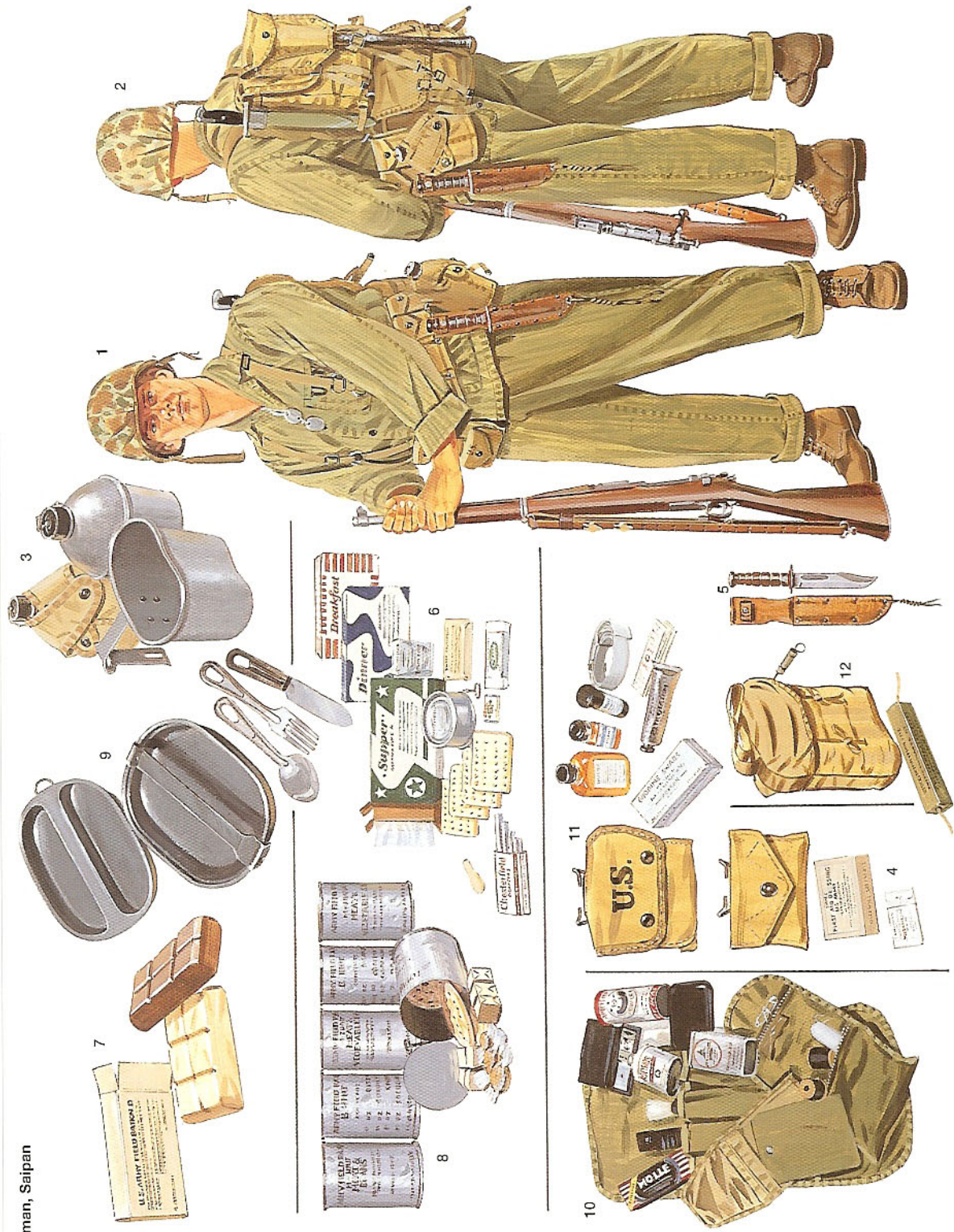


"Duty beyond the sea"





Rifleman, Saipan





Saipan aid station







The entrance to Camp Joseph H. Pendleton, California. The symbol beside the American flag is the old cattle brand for Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores y San Onofre, which had been purchased by the Marine Corps.

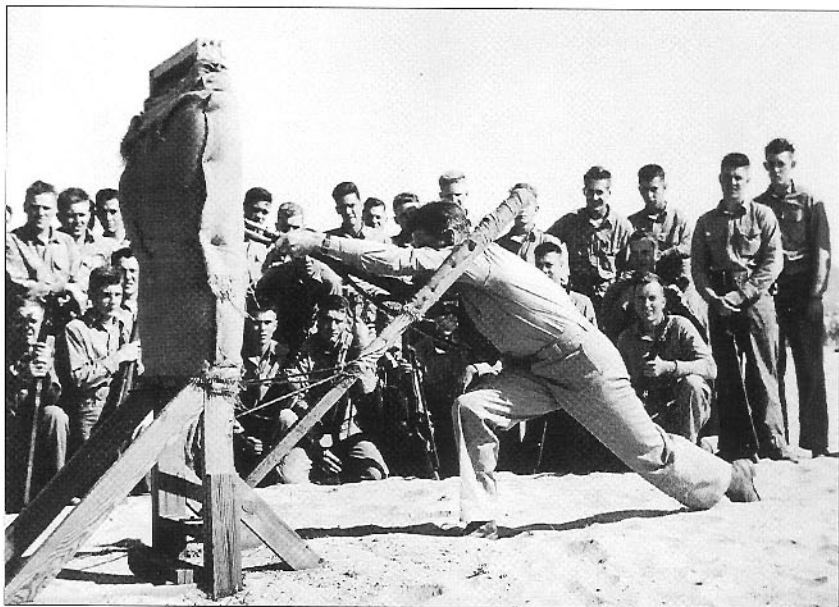
## CAMP PENDLETON

The regiments that would comprise the 4th MarDiv – the focus of our study for the rest of this book – were organized prior to the creation of the division. The Corps had planned for three wartime divisions, but the escalating war resulted in the need for more. The first regiment to be activated was the 23d Marines in July 1942 at New River, North Carolina.<sup>8</sup> In February 1943 it was reassigned to the yet to be activated 4th MarDiv. In May 1943 the 23d Marines was split to create the 25th Marines. This was a common practice, achieved by preparing two rosters and splitting every unit in half down to squad level. The old regiment's current commander would not know which roster he would draw, something decided by the flip of a coin with the commander of the new regiment. The next month, 14th and 20th Marines were raised, the future division's artillery and engineer regiments. In July and August the four regiments moved by train to Camp Pendleton, California. There they joined the 24th Marines raised in March 1943. The 24th was organized from an unusual source. The 1st–3d Separate Battalions (Reinforced) had been raised between October 1942 and February 1943 at Camp Lejeune to train infantrymen. They were shipped to Camp Pendleton and formed the 24th Marines. The 4th MarDiv was activated on August 16, 1943.

The Marine recruits on which we are focusing were assigned to the new regiment's 1st Battalion. This was a unit that had been together for several months and was well into its small unit training when the new marines joined. Not only were they new fellas, but they were also "Hollywood marines," outsiders. Each marine was assigned to a unit in which the men were familiar with one another and were comfortable with their chain of command; the outsider knew no one. To make matters worse, the recruit's new comrades would have trained at Parris Island and come from the eastern United States. Their attitude towards the new marine would not be unlike that of students from a rival high

<sup>8</sup> Redesignated Camp Lejeune on December 20, 1942.

**A DI demonstrates the parry and long thrust with an M1905 bayonet on an M1903 rifle. The marine had to knock (parry) the enemy spring-loaded "rifle" away and thrust his bayonet into the rag-filled dummy's vitals.**



school on the other side of town. He was not only a new man, but he was green, having just come out of training, and would have lived the despicable "soft life" the Hollywood marines enjoyed at Dago. A new marine would have to prove himself all over.

The 24th Marines had the benefit of not being split or providing large cadres for new units. It focused on training without too many disruptions. There were a few personnel shifted to other units within the regiment, while others were sent off to specialist schools and a few volunteered for Officer Candidate School (OCS). The specialist schools – division schools – provided one- and two-week courses on demolitions, scouting, machine guns, mortars, bazookas, flamethrowers, and antitank guns. Unit training progressed from squad to platoon, company, battalion, and finally regimental exercises, along with Command Post (CP) exercises to fine tune staffs. Sprawling Camp Joseph H. Pendleton provided the necessary maneuver space and ranges. It was on the coast 32 miles (51.5km) north of Dago, with plenty of beach space to practice amphibious landings. The marines would come to know Pendleton's semi-desert hills and canyons well. The 200-square-mile (518sq.km) former ranch had only been acquired in 1942 and facilities were still under construction. Regardless of the echelon of training underway, the squads and platoons practiced their skills, movement formations, fire and maneuver, patrolling, and living in the field. Small-unit training included night attacks, pillbox assault, and rubber-boat training. The marines undertook small-arms firing both on ranges and as part of unit maneuvers – live-fire exercises – in which supporting weapons were employed. These included practice on moving-target ranges.

Individual training was not ignored. There were organized sports, plus training in hand-to-hand combat, bayonet and knife fighting, scouting, map reading, compass land navigation, map symbol identification, first aid, water survival, gas mask drills, signaling techniques, hand and rifle grenades, demolitions, barbed wire breaching, and familiarization with all weapons within the company. There were full-equipment forced marches

up to 25 miles (40km). While the artillery regiment moved to Camp Dunlap some 100 miles (160km) to the east for range firing, the infantry organized into Regimental Combat Teams (RCTs), and with engineers, pioneers, medical personnel, joint assault signalmen, and amphibian tractors (amtracs) they boarded transports in San Diego and conducted practice amphibious landings on Pendleton's Aliso Beach. Later the entire division loaded aboard transports and conducted landing exercises supported by live naval gunfire, several times, on San Clemente Island. They knew this was a rehearsal.

While the days were mild to hot, the nights were cold, and extra blankets were issued for the unheated tents. When there was no night training scheduled, troops had free time for movies at the six theaters, milk shakes at the PX, beer,<sup>9</sup> sandwiches and snacks at the enlisted club ("slop chute"), arguments, card games, billiards, crap games, fist fights over the most trivial incidents (more for letting off steam and reinforcing unit reputations), and weekend liberty. There were endless talks about their lives and hopes, likes and dislikes, unfair policies, how they would run the Corps, talk of families, school day pranks, women, and what they would do after the war. Just about everyone had a nickname. There were no name tags. It was not uncommon for veterans to remember their squad buddies only by nicknames or last names at the most. Many nicknames were attributable to physical characteristics (Four-Eyes, Red, Blackie, Leftie, Curly, Big...), character traits (Joker, Lover Boy, Slugger), or ethnic or cultural background (Wop, Dago, Wetback, Redneck, Hillbilly, Chief, Ski, Pedro, Dutch, and many more). These racial epithets may be difficult for today's readers to understand, but they were accepted and not considered offensive if used among buddies.

Liberty was special; the division's almost 18,000 men knew they were soon bound for "duty beyond the seas." Some felt they were on borrowed time. Others were going to enjoy what time they had before shipping out. Traveling by bus, train, or hitchhiking they flooded into San Diego, Los Angeles, and Oceanside beyond the main gate. Liberty was granted for 24 or 48 hours; seldom was a 76- or 96-hour liberty given. Friday afternoons at 1700hrs they hit the showers, cleaned up, and made certain their uniforms were shipshape. Bars, night clubs, boxing matches, and movies were popular. Professional prostitutes ("street-walkers") and amateur prostitutes ("victory girls") at \$3-\$10 were plentiful, as was a cheap local wine called "Dago Red." Contracting a venereal disease was a chargeable offense. It was the marine's responsibility to use condoms and visit a prophylaxis station or use a pro-kit after his "date." "Short arm" inspections were conducted, with marines falling out wearing only raincoats and jock straps for inspection by medical personnel. A toilet stall in the head was reserved for those contracting VD.

They crawled back by midnight on Sunday and fell in for reveille in various states of alertness. Most of the east coast marines soon forgot their animosity toward their Hollywood marine brethren, especially when it was found that they were not really issued sunglasses. The new antagonists were the sailors and marines comprising the Shore Patrol (SP). Any misconduct on liberty brought them charging in, followed by fist fights and arrests. SPs showed no favoritism regardless of their parent branch.

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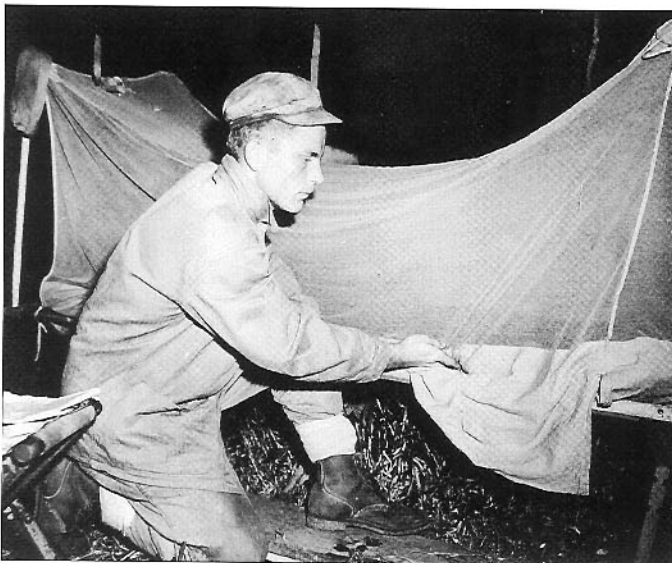
9 3.2 beer (percent of alcohol content) was sold on military posts, as opposed to civilian 4.7.

## CONDITIONS OF SERVICE



Marines did their own laundry. Here a sergeant makes do with a food serving tray, a salvaged refrigerator storage tray, and a homemade wooden scrub board.

Folding cots were used in tent cities, here with a mosquito net rigged. A cot's taut canvas was akin to sleeping on a board and in cold weather was chilly unless insulated with layered blankets, which also served as padding.



The inside of a barracks was something a marine seldom saw. While his training unit may have been assigned a Quonset hut, a wood-frame and tar paper hut, or wooden or even brick barracks with indoor head, his squad more likely lived in a squad tent in a remote part of the base. They spent so much time in the field living under two-man "pup tents" that marines often forgot what a four-sided room looked like. On larger bases, tent cities or simple wooden barracks housed infantry and other units in scattered sub-camps. These were self-contained with headquarters and administrative buildings, mess halls, warehouses, dispensary, PX, movie theater, chapel, sloop chute, and NCO and staff NCO clubs (highest three grades).

Life in the field was preferred by many marines. There was not so much spit-shine and the priority was on training, not work details and harassment by NCOs. If not living in pup tents, they lived in tent cities among neat rows of squad tents, divided by grid pattern into company streets. The eight-man pyramid tents were 15x15ft (4.5x4.5m), square in shape with wooden decks. Their sides could be rolled up in hot weather, but this exposed them to the persistent dust. Even with the sides up the sun made them uncomfortably hot, but the marines spent little time in them during the day. The marines slept on folding canvas cots or sometimes regular barrack bunks, and lived out of their sea bags. It was a continuous battle to keep uniforms, gear, and quarters clean. With the rains the dust turned into a particularly gummy mud that was no less troublesome than the dry dust.

Marines were encouraged to write home, and likewise families were urged to write frequently to their servicemen. Aboard ship and overseas, postage was free except for parcels. Of the many lectures marines received, one was concerned with safeguarding military information. They were cautioned not to write about unit location, strength, equipment, military installations, transport facilities, convoys (particularly their routes and destinations), plans for future operations, or the effect of enemy actions. They were also urged not to discuss the names of casualties for fear of family members receiving word before military authorities notified them of details. Most of all they were warned not to give out their location other than "somewhere in the Pacific." Mail was censored by officers. They were also told to keep their mouths shut and not talk about these aspects to anyone. An official directive cautioned, "If you come home during the war your lips must remain sealed and your written hand must be guided by self-imposed censorship. This takes guts. Have you got them or do you want your buddies and your country to pay the price for your showing off? You've faced the battle front; it's little enough to ask you to face this home front."

## Marine Pay - 1942-45

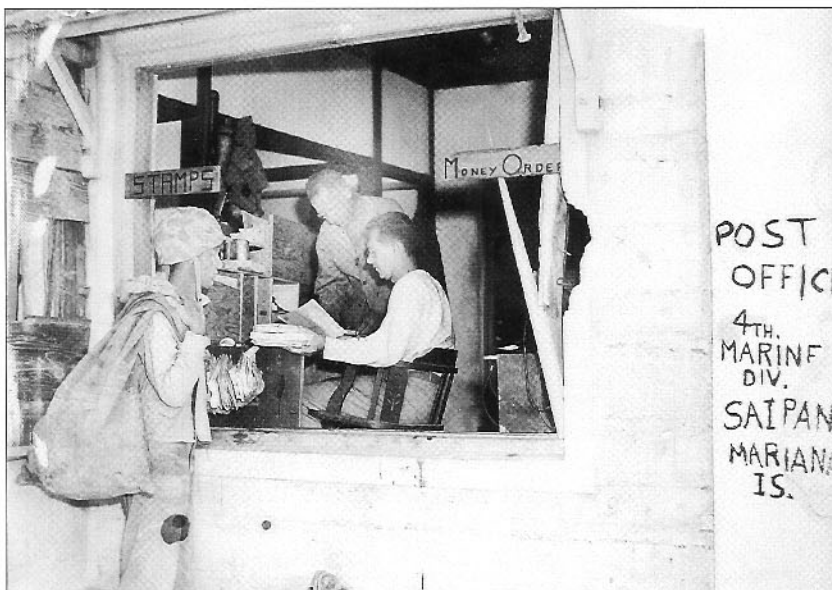
This scale provides the monthly base pay for the grades found within a rifle squad. For comparison, a 2d lieutenant with under five years' service was paid \$150.

Private	7th Grade under 3 years	\$50.00
Private	7th Grade over 3 years	\$52.50
PFC	6th Grade under 3 years	\$54.00
PFC	6th Grade over 3 years	\$56.70
Corporal	5th Grade under 3 years	\$66.00
Corporal	5th Grade over 3 years	\$69.30
Sergeant	4th Grade under 3 years	\$78.00
Sergeant	4th Grade over 3 years	\$81.90

On July 1, 1942, US servicemen of all branches of service received a considerable boost in pay. Prior to that date a private was paid \$31 a month. They now drew \$50 (\$1.67 per day) on pay day - "eagle s\*\*ts" - the month's last Friday.

Pay was also based on time in service, with a 3 percent increase given every three years to a maximum of 50 percent of base pay. After one year's service, a \$35-a-year clothing allowance was paid in quarterly installments of \$8.75 to replace worn-out items. Those so fortunate as to qualify as an Expert Rifleman received another \$5.

Overseas a marine's finances improved somewhat. He received an additional 20 percent over his base pay for Sea or Foreign Shore Pay - "overseas pay." For a private this was \$10 a month. Awards of the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, or Navy Cross earned a man \$2 per month. When engaged in combat marines were not paid until they returned to base. This system resulted in numerous crap and poker games with Japanese souvenirs also offered as bets. There was no specific combat pay during the war. Servicemen did not pay Federal Income Tax or Social Security. While their souls



A company mail clerk picks up his unit's mail at the 4th MarDiv Post Office on Saipan. Mail call was one of the most anticipated events for deployed marines.



belonged to the Corps, marines did retain certain rights. These included the right to vote in national elections, and all but three states (Delaware, Kentucky, and New Mexico) permitted absentee voting in local elections. Most marines, however, did not bother to vote.

A marine could elect to allot an automatic pay deduction to his wife or parents. For wives and unemployed parents or a widowed parent the government would match the deduction. The Servicemen's Dependent's Allowance of July 23, 1942, allowed men in grades 4-7, the four lowest grades, to make automatic pay deductions up to \$27.50 for certain relatives (unemployed parents, siblings) or dependents (wife, children). A marine's wife with no children received \$50 a month, a wife with one child \$62, wife with two children \$72, and wife with three children \$82. Out of his remaining pay the marine paid \$6.40 for National Serviceman's Life Insurance and roughly \$5 for laundry. After shoe polish, cigarettes, toothpaste, stationery, postage stamps, other necessities, and the occasional soft drink, beer, candy bar or visit to the base theater, there was not much money left for liberty. This explained why many simply stayed on base at the slop chute or visited the off-base United Service Organization (USO) Club for free entertainment and snacks.

Since the Marine Corps was a component of the Navy Department, it relied on the Navy for some of its support. Much of the equipment, some weapons, and most general supplies were used by the Navy. Some equipment was Army-issue and only a small percentage was unique to the Corps. All medical personnel supporting the Corps were of the Navy Medical Corps (physicians and surgeons), Dental Corps, Medical Service Corps (medical administrative officers, pharmacists, technologists, etc.), and Hospital Corps (hospital warrant officers and enlisted medical corpsmen). Apart from providing most of the personnel for FMF medical units, naval personnel operated base

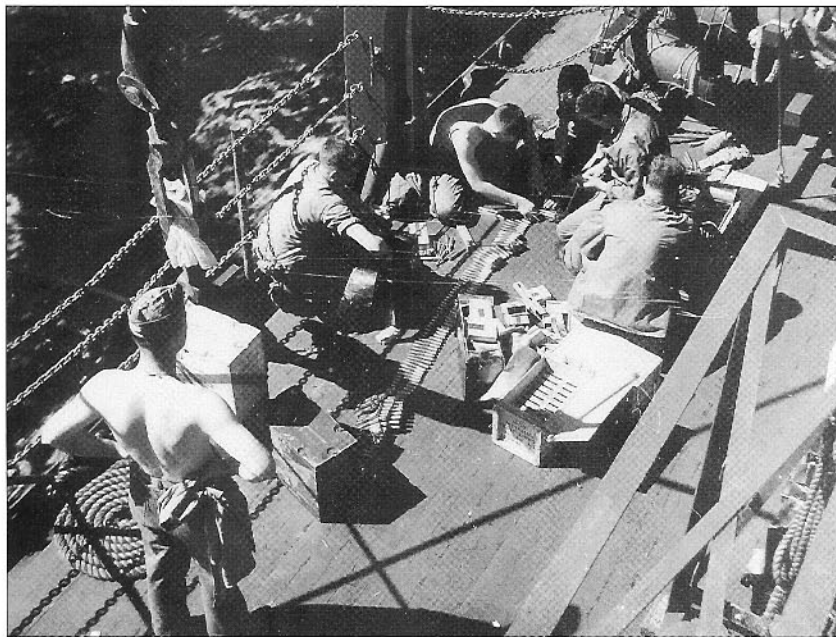
hospitals, dispensaries, and dental clinics. A Marine division contained almost 1,100 Navy medical personnel. The medical battalion was assigned almost 600 personnel, but about four-fifths were Marine service troops. An infantry regiment headquarters and service company had 24 Navy medical personnel, and a battalion 44.

Navy chaplains ministered to the Corps and the Judge Advocate General's Office provided lawyers, although there were some Marine lawyers. Another naval element was the Naval Construction Battalion (NCB - "Seabees") assigned to divisions until the fall of 1944. This battalion was manned by over 800 specialized construction personnel. An NCB would remain attached to divisions for combat operations.

Sailors assigned to Marine units wore Marine uniforms with Navy rank and undertook tactical training provided by the Corps. Navy hospital corpsmen were detailed from battalion to each rifle platoon. The corpsmen were considered the integral part of each platoon and were universally known as "Doc" or "Bones." Most marines did not realize their corpsman was often a conscientious objector.

War souvenirs were much sought after; here an M1928A1 Thompson-armed marine examines a prized 8mm Nambu Type 14 (1925) pistol with its holster and a Type 94 (1934) canteen. His tent is constructed of shelter-halves and ponchos.





En route to an island objective. Marines spent much of their time undertaking innumerable tasks to prepare for action. Here marines belt .50-cal. machine gun ammunition, inserting tracers every fifth round.

## ON CAMPAIGN

A lot of men had hoped for a Christmas leave in 1943. It would be the first time home for many of them since joining the Corps. “Scuttlebutt,” or rumors, however, were spreading fast about deploying. They were given a short liberty and began ferrying loaded trucks to the port of San Diego where details were formed to combat-load transports, LSDs (Landing Ship, Dock), and LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank). Amtracs and tanks were railroaded south to the port. The slow LSDs and LSTs with the artillery and amtracs departed on January 6 and 7, 1944, followed by transports on the 13th. The 4th MarDiv was about to make history by being the first US division in the Pacific to be committed directly to combat from the States, and would cover the longest distance of any amphibious assault, 4,300 miles (6,920km; surpassed only by the British Falklands expedition in 1982).

Once America had disappeared below the horizon, the troops were informed of their objective, the twin islands of Roi-Namur on the north end of Kwajalein Atoll, located inside the Marshall Islands. They would also conduct the first assault on territory held by the Japanese before the war. These two small islands were linked by a sandbar and causeway. Roi possessed a Japanese Navy airfield and Namur was crowded with support facilities and quarters. Operation *Flintlock* was in motion.<sup>10</sup>

The marines aboard their transports were getting used to their new world. Few had been to sea for a prolonged period. The exercises had seen them aboard ship no more than a night or two. With the focus on exercises there had been no need to fall into shipboard routine. Quarters were tight, with troops bunked in three- to five-tier racks. Their sea bags were in the hold and the slung 782 gear and weapons made

<sup>10</sup> See Rottman, Gordon, Osprey Campaign 146, *The Marshall Islands 1944*. Osprey, Oxford (2004).

Rear-area tent camps were built of shelter-halves rigged as fly tents and cots with mosquito nets provided. Note the US Marine Corps towel right and above the standing man, a white towel with white letters on a red strip.



conditions even more cramped. The hot, stifling air below decks was stale, so troops spent their days on deck. Many slept on deck, as the steel ships absorbed heat all day and did not cool. Training continued with lectures in map reading, first aid, use of weapons, etc. A lot of time was spent practicing weapons crew drill, disassembly and assembly, loading ammunition belts and magazines, sharpening knives and bayonets, and occasional weapons firing at floating barrels. There were daily calisthenics and regular weapons cleaning to prevent the firearms rusting in the salt air. Much time was spent in chow lines. With three big meals a day and limited exercise, some men skipped certain meals and the endless lines. The food was simple, sometimes monotonous. There were lifeboat and fire drills. Some men stood watch scanning for periscopes, torpedo wakes, and aircraft on the horizon.

Soon briefings were being held among the officers and then presented to the troops. Among the many briefings the marines were told how to perform if captured.

If captured, you are required to give only three facts: name, grade, serial number. Don't talk, don't try to fake stories and use every effort to destroy all papers. When you are going into an area where capture is possible, carry only essential papers and plan to destroy them. Do not carry personal letters; they tell much about you, and the envelope has on it your unit. Be sensible, use your head.

They knew the reality though. No marine had been taken prisoner since the fall of the Philippines. The enemy took no prisoners, nor were the Marines inclined to.

Marines were taught the importance of live prisoners, but they were few and far between. Marine tactical intelligence collection efforts had been sloppy in the early days. Marines were now strongly encouraged to turn in captured maps, diaries, documents, and equipment.

Roi-Namur was defended by over 3,500 Imperial Navy guard troops, air service personnel, and laborers. Accurate and objective island maps were scarce. Those provided for operations were made from aerial

photographs. The division D-2 (intelligence) produced sketch maps of island objectives and these were given to each marine to study. These showed roads, trails, obstacles, key terrain features, and known fortifications and obstacles. They were not to be taken ashore.

Rubber-molded terrain models of the objective island were prepared by divisional engineers. These 3-D maps depicted natural and manmade features and key points were tagged with their actual or code names. The models were passed from unit to unit and the troops had ample time to memorize the terrain. They were also provided with recent aerial and submarine periscope photos of the coast. Platoons and companies discussed their movements on the terrain board. Leaders had to know the actions of the next higher element in case they had to take command, and even individual marines would be familiar with their higher and adjacent units' missions.

A representative unit was 1st Squad, 2d Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines. Company C – Charlie Company (lettered companies were commonly referred to by their phonetic alphabet name) – was usually shown as C/24 Marines. The battalion designation was not included as the initiated knew that A–D belonged to 1st Battalion, E–H to 2d Battalion, and I–M (no “J”) to 3d Battalion. Companies D, H, and M were weapons companies with .30-cal. M1917A1 water-cooled heavy machine guns and 81mm M1 mortars. Battalions were called, for example, “One/Twenty-Four Marines,” not “1st of the 24th” as was Army practice.

Since 1930 the term “regiment” has not been required to be included in the designation, nor was a functional designation used. The regiment was simply the 24th Marines. It was incorrect to call it the “24th Marine Infantry Regiment.” While seeming plural, regiments are



Machine gunners were trained on both the air-cooled M1919A4 light machine gun and the water-cooled M1917A1 heavy machine gun, pictured here. The brass water jacket end cap has been painted for camouflage and a blank adapter is fitted on the muzzle.



Behind the frontline, in rear areas, and on island bases most chow was served in the form of B-rations, i.e., bulk canned, dried, and dehydrated foods. Spam, powdered eggs, dehydrated potato flakes, and canned beans were staples. On Guadalcanal the marines lived on Spam, pancakes (canned mix), and canned peaches.





**C-rations were issued in rear areas and not normally to troops engaged in combat owing to the packets' weight and bulk. They were less than popular when cold, being extremely greasy. Mess kits were only used when hot water was available for cleaning. Inadequately cleaned mess gear led to diarrhea.**

habitually addressed in the singular pronoun context as "it" rather than "they." The regiment was the marine's tribe, which he identified even more closely with than his division.

The 1st Squad consisted of 12 men, a "buck" sergeant (the lowest rank of sergeant) squad leader, a corporal assistant squad leader, two automatic riflemen and their assistants, and six riflemen. All hands were armed with the M1 rifle, with the exception of the automatic riflemen with BARs. One man had an M7 grenade launcher. The platoon headquarters consisted of the platoon leader, a 2d lieutenant, platoon sergeant (both his duty

position and rank title), a sergeant platoon guide, demolition corporal, and three messengers. One messenger would be detailed to the company headquarters and a corpsman (pharmacist mate 2d or 3d class, grade 4 or 3) would be attached from the battalion medical section.

Marines carried three types of rations in combat. K-rations, the most widely issued, consisted of breakfast, dinner, and supper meals in individual pocket-size cartons. It was a lean meal, but provided over 3,000 calories in all three meals. A D-ration was a 4oz (113g) vitamin-enriched chocolate bar, a special "tropical chocolate" resistant to melting. C-rations were issued with three meals in a single carton; three cans of meat products and three cans with crackers, instant coffee, and cocoa. C-rations were heavy and bulky and were usually consumed by support troops. Marines would heat the K-ration meat unit, a small can, using heat tablets if the situation allowed, but more often they were eaten cold. They were monotonous, greasy, and not very filling. D-ration bars supplemented the Ks and provided a back-up if out of Ks. A problem encountered in combat was that stressed marines pumped up

**Roi-Namur, Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands. Roi with its airfield is to the left. The 4th MarDiv gold-on-red battle blaze had been approved before the division departed for Roi-Namur, but was not received until they returned to Hawaii. They requested that it be redesigned to look like the figure-four-shaped airfield, but the new insignia were already made. The 24th Marines landed east of the L-shaped pier on Namur to the right.**





with adrenaline in a hot, humid climate, and with limited opportunities to eat, often ate only one or two rations a day. This, coupled with dehydration and lack of sleep, weakened them and increased the chance of combat fatigue and heat exhaustion.

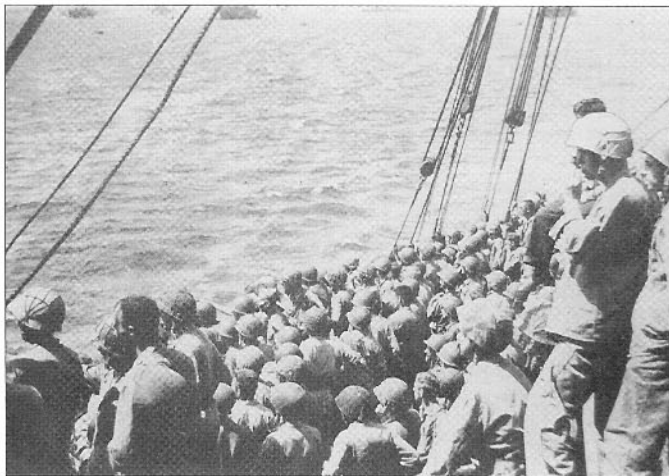
### **Attack on Roi-Namur**

D-1 (January 30, 1944) was a flurry of activity throughout Task Force 53 as it approached the north corner of Kwajalein Atoll and Roi-Namur. The Army's 7th Infantry Division would assault Kwajalein Island some 40 miles (64km) to the south. Carrier aircraft began pounding the still unseen islands. Army Air Force bombers had been blasting the islands for months. Equipment was being readied, amtracs and landing craft prepared. Officers and NCOs gave pep talks, chaplains made their rounds, and marines wrote letters home. They knew and were reminded that not all would reembark. The landing force was acutely aware of 2d MarDiv's ordeal on Tarawa two months before.

The attack force took up station outside the huge lagoon before dawn on D-Day. A number of tiny outlying islands first had to be secured before the main February 1 assault. Artillery landed on these small islands to provide fire support. Reveille was early and the troops had been up for hours before the 0712hrs sunrise. They received the traditional breakfast of steak and eggs. The guns of 29 battleships, cruisers, and destroyers commenced firing on the tiny islands before sunrise and carrier strikes rolled in. The endless gun flashes lit up the sea and the marines could see smoke and dust-obscured flashes on their target islands.

Rain squalls drifted through under overcast skies. The winds were 20mph (32km/h) and the sea was rougher than expected. Marines lined the railings to watch Regimental Combat Team 25 (RCT25) in its all-day fight to clear the outlying islets. While resistance was minimal, the operation quickly ran into difficulties. The rough seas forced amtracs back to half speed, sea spray drowned radios, and it became quickly apparent that the amtrac crews of the new battalion were poorly trained – the rehearsals in California had been inadequate. The six islets, however, were all secured by 1716hrs. RCT25 was reassigned as the Division Reserve for the next day's main assault. RCT23 would seize Roi and RCT24 Namur.

W-Hour<sup>11</sup> was set at 1000hrs on February 1, but problems were developing even before dawn. The amtrac battalion that would land RCT24 had been used for the outlying island assaults, and suffered from mechanical failures, damage, and inability to refuel from LSTs. Many amtracs were simply lost and sitting out the night on islets, and little over half the necessary amtracs were assembled for the operation. From their transports the marines were boated to LSTs inside the lagoon aboard



**Marines of the Roi-Namur landing force get a grandstand view of the action from their transport as the 25th Marines seize the small adjacent islets on D-Day.**

<sup>11</sup> H-Hour normally identified the time an assault would commence, but to prevent confusion other letters were used to designate the assault times for different islands in the same area.

LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel). They boarded their amtracs inside the LSTs rather than doing so on open water. Charlie Company was in the reserve battalion and would follow the 2d and 3d Battalions on to Namur. The nervous marines were quietly grateful to be in the reserve. There was excitement and tension in the air, though. The marines of 1st Squad remained aboard LCVPs, as they were the reserve of the reserve battalion.

The palm- and brush-covered island was shrouded in dust and smoke, with shell bursts erupting continuously. To the left barren Roi was likewise obscured. Destroyers were slamming rounds into the 800x890-yard (731x813m) island and Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI; Gunboat) vessels were rippling out loose barrages of rockets. From the left the regimental weapons company and three battalion weapons companies pre-positioned on tiny Abraham islet poured machine gun, antitank gun, and mortar fire on to Namur. Low in the water, the marines could see little of the amtracs ahead of them through the drifting smoke and mist. Word was passed that companies had been rearranged, and amtracs taken from the battalion reserve companies were given to the assault companies, which were short of the vehicles. W-Hour was delayed until 1200hrs, but finally the red Baker flag was lowered on the control craft and the amtracs began their run in, with 1st Battalion following. The LCIs were firing streams of tracers into the smoke cloud shrouding the island. Men peering over the sides were speculating if there would be any Japanese troops left. Non-coms were telling them not to worry, there would be plenty left to kill. The naval bombardment had only had mediocre success in the past. The men of Charlie Company could not see the actual landing, but before long amtracs were churning past them on their way back to the LSTs.

Expecting to find the narrow beaches littered with dead marines, Charlie Company rushed out when the ramps were dropped directly on to Beach Green 2, the men hardly experiencing wet feet. The din of firing and explosions was continuous, the acid smoke gagging. While there were no casualties evident, there was a great deal of confusion. Men from the assault battalions' reserve companies were scattered about the beach, officers were trying to get their bearings, and beach party personnel collected ammunition boxes and water cans that had been tossed over the sides of amtracs as reserve stocks as they came ashore.

The word was that companies had intermingled or were in the wrong places. Resistance had been light, but this did not sound like the case farther inland. Amphibious tanks were still on the beach, having been halted by the seawall, antitank ditches, and rubble covering the island from the many shattered buildings. The same was true for the amtracs, which were supposed to have disembarked their troops 100 yards (91m) inland. Baker Company had been attached to 3d Battalion and was already fighting its way inland.

**The 24th Marines found Namur totally devastated by naval and aerial bombardment, to the point that it was almost impossible in many areas to identify landmarks. The key buildings were simply shattered and roads covered with debris.**





As marines pushed inland, company and battalion mortars were set up to provide immediate fire support. Here an 81mm M1 mortar squad pumps out high-explosive and white phosphorus rounds.

The O-1 Line<sup>12</sup> had just been reached by most units. Then, as Charlie Company was forming up to move inland, an indescribable detonation rocked the island at 1300hrs. A Company F marine had unknowingly thrown a satchel charge into a torpedo storage bunker. The resulting explosion killed 20 marines and wounded 100 across the island, and left a 100ft (30m) diameter crater. Company F lost a third of its strength. A massive cloud of black smoke and coral dust rushed across the island and towered over 1,000ft (305m) above the island. Chunks of concrete, coral rocks, and palm trunks rained across the island and lagoon, hitting some men. Firing actually paused for a few minutes. The blast so disrupted 2/24 that it was unable to continue the attack. This rattled the troops, but the company moved out into the shroud of smoke, to be attached to 2/24 and placed in the line between Fox and Echo Companies. The island was unrecognizable. Even large buildings counted on as landmarks were gone and the 6ft (1.8m) high brush further limited visibility. The grid-like system of roads was so covered by debris that it was unidentifiable. Marine dead began to be encountered and wounded were trickling back on litters or walking on their own. The land was also littered with dead Japanese – obviously many had been killed in the bombardment.<sup>13</sup> The scenes were sickening, but the boys pressed on not wanting to show any uneasiness: they had to demonstrate their toughness among peers. Firing increased, appearing to come from all directions, and tension increased.

More tanks landed in the late afternoon and moved inland to support the assault. Progress was made inland on the left in the 3/24 zone, which was less affected by the blast. Most units managed to push beyond the O-1 Line, although reaching this line did not mean they would halt for the day. At 1930hrs the regiment was ordered to dig in for the night; sunset was at 1945hrs. This was a common mistake. The marines had pushed

<sup>12</sup> Objective 1 Line, the line the marines hoped to secure the first day.

<sup>13</sup> Because of lessons learned at Tarawa, the naval gunfire was so effective that an estimated 50–75 percent of the defenders were killed before the landing.

**Digging in.** The marines used two-man foxholes for their night positions, one man alert, the other trying to sleep. Time permitting, they dug the holes deep enough to fight standing, a technique they learned from the Japanese on Guadalcanal.



**Behind the lines** two-man sleeping holes were dug as protection from artillery, mortars, and the occasional air attack. It was not uncommon for marines to take children into "protective custody," probably thinking about their kid brothers at home.



ahead to clear as much ground as fast as possible, but it gave them little daylight to establish their night defense, reconnoiter the ground before them, redistribute ammunition, and receive supplies. The men on Namur did not know that Roi, mostly covered by an airfield, had been secured three hours earlier.

Marines and their buddies quickly scraped out foxholes behind a pile of rubble and made sure where the adjacent holes were. Once night fell a marine could not leave his hole under any circumstances for fear of being shot by his own men. In theory the marines would take turns

sleeping, but this being their first night in combat, sleep was impossible. It was a long night filled with fear and weariness. There were rifle cracks and bursts of machine-gun fire, with American red tracers going outward and Japanese pink and pale blue tracers incoming. US troops considered the Japanese tracers wimpy, but they would still kill. Destroyers fired star shells all through the night, casting the rubble and brush before them in an eerie yellow glow, criss-crossed with constantly drifting shadows. Every rubble pile and bush would look like a creeping enemy – some in fact were enemy soldiers trying to infiltrate, typically shouting "Hey, Joe!" or "Corpsman!" in an attempt to get the marines to reveal their positions by firing.

As the sun rose the marines hurriedly ate their K-rations. A weak counterattack hit the line on the island's west portion and was beaten back with the assistance of tanks. Ammunition, water, and more rations were distributed. The marines were constantly told not to drink any water found on the island, only to fill their canteens from the 5-gallon (19-liter) cans brought forward. They were briefed by their squad leader and at 0900hrs the



US attack commenced. Tank support did not arrive on time, however, being held up by the battered terrain, and the attack was delayed an hour. Three-quarters of the island had been taken the day before, so the remaining distance to the north shore was crossed by 1215hrs. Two hours later the island was declared secure.

It was a good first operation for the 4th MarDiv. One commander declared the clearing of the islands to be a "pip." The marines had the advantage of a great many lessons learned by other units on the earlier South Pacific operations to make their job easier. Fire discipline had been lax and control measures poor in some instances, mainly owing to the light resistance and relieved marines pushing ahead too fast and far. The operation had cost the division 287 dead and missing and 617 wounded. They killed at least 3,570 Japanese and took 90 prisoner. They had gotten off lightly. Most troops barely saw over 24 hours of action. It was a good way to become bloodied, though. The marines learned enough to fine tune their procedures and correct deficiencies without having to make such adjustments while embroiled in intense combat over a prolonged period.

There was still mopping up to do. Even with their hatred of the Japanese this was an unpleasant task. They were told to take prisoners, although the operation was over and they would provide little useful information. It was known that the officers would never surrender (there were rare exceptions). Intelligence always hoped that signalmen or other knowledge specialists might be captured. The few prisoners were mostly Korean laborers. The marines generally equated the mop-up with a rabbit hunt. Lines of troops would sweep the island in succession, searching destroyed pillboxes, rubble buildings, and holes. "Searching" usually entailed shouting for anyone in there to come out; if there was no answer or an answering shot a grenade or demo charge was chucked in.



**A battalion beach aid station on Namur. Aid stations landed right behind the assault waves. Casualties on the beach were collected and the flow of casualties from the front began immediately.**



**Mop-up went on for days and even weeks after an island was declared secure ("secure" meaning that organized resistance had ceased). These marines are searching for signs of Japanese infiltrators. In the background is a Japanese Daihatsu landing barge and a stranded Sherman M4 tank with fording vents.**



No one considered a live prisoner worth a single marine. The few prisoners were ordered to *Ha-daka-ni-nare* (Take off your clothes!), stripped down to loincloths, and marched to the rear. There was a valid fear of their hiding grenades on themselves.

In mid-February the 4th MarDiv set sail for Hawaii. The morning before, Japanese flying boats had bombed Roi, destroying fuel and ammunition dumps and inflicting 330 casualties, mostly Seabees. Most of the marines were on Namur or already aboard ship.

### **Rest and recovery**

The 4th MarDiv transports reached Maui (between Oahu and the island of Hawaii) a week and a half later and occupied a new camp at Kahului Harbor, which became their camp after each operation. The complete facilities of a division camp were erected to include the typical amenities. The area was beautiful and the locals hospitable. The main complaints were the incessant rain, mud, and high winds. All forms of entertainment were available, including movie theaters, playhouses, and a large organized sports program that fostered competition between unit teams, with baseball being the most popular sport. Training continued of course. There were 47 training areas and numerous ranges. Tactical exercises, CP exercises, range firing, compass courses, landing exercises, and forced marches were frequent. The crater of Haleamkala volcano, the world's largest extinct volcano, served as a superb obstacle course. Division schools provided a jungle training center and village, cave, infiltration, and fortified-area fighting courses. The latter had 22 pillboxes and emplacements concealed among trees, brush, and bamboo. All elements of the division were able to perfect their skills and conduct joint training. The lessons learned on Roi-Namur were worked into training and staff planning.

New men to replace casualties and the new billets resulting from the reorganization were assigned from replacement battalions from the United States. Because of fresh personnel and the need to conduct extensive unit training under the new organization, and sometimes train with new equipment, a problem was encountered with veterans. They had already conducted extensive training, been in combat, and felt they

**Marines check a dugout for by-passed enemy. This was a continual effort. Positions cleared of the enemy by assault troops had to be constantly rechecked - enemy stragglers and infiltrators sometimes re-occupied them. Likewise, discarded enemy and US weapons had to be rounded up to prevent their recovery by stragglers.**





Wounded marines were taken to battalion aid stations, then to the regimental aid station. Sometimes, especially in static situations, small company aid stations were established. Here slit trenches have been dug for protection from small-arms and mortar fire.

knew their duties. They resented having to undertake what they now considered as boring training for the benefit of new hands. Another problem on Maui was the sometimes monotonous diet: fried Spam, stewed tomatoes, and sliced pineapple for breakfast and baked Spam, breaded tomatoes, and diced pineapple for supper.

The division underwent further reorganization in February and March. The new Table of Organization affected all elements of the division. The engineer regiment was to have been deactivated with the return of the Seabee battalion to the Navy, and the engineer and pioneer battalions would become separate units. However, the 2d, 3d, and 4th MarDivs preparing for the Marianas campaign had already developed their tactical plans, so the regiments were temporarily retained. The infantry battalions lost their weapons companies, resulting in Companies D, H, and M being disbanded. The rifle companies, however, retained their original lettering. The weapons companies' machine guns were incorporated into the rifle companies and the 81mm mortar platoon assigned to the battalion headquarters company. The rifle company's weapons platoon was redesignated a machine gun platoon and armed with six M1919A4 light machine guns (a section of two machine guns was to be attached to each rifle platoon), plus it had six M1917A1 heavy machine guns as substitutes. The 60mm mortar section was reassigned to the company headquarters.

The rifle platoon headquarters did not change, but the rifle squads underwent a drastic change. There were now 13 men, a squad leader and three four-man fire teams (see Plate F). A great deal of time was spent practicing three-fire-team movement formations, and assault techniques, with teams alternating covering fire and maneuver.

On May 29, 1944, the 4th MarDiv departed Maui for Saipan. The 2d and 4th MarDiv landed on the lower west coast on June 15.<sup>14</sup>

### **Wounded in action**

In the face of a blistering Japanese defense, many marines of the 4th MarDiv ended their war as dead or wounded on the beaches of Saipan.

<sup>14</sup> See Rotman, Gordon, *Osprey Campaign 137, Saipan & Tinian 1944*, Osprey, Oxford (2004).



Casualties, once established at an aid station, were moved to a beach where other medical teams would check on them, and await movement by landing craft, amtrac, or "Duck" amphibious truck to a troop transport's hospital ward.

larger injuries. The medic would then drag the man to cover, assure him that he would be okay, and disappear in search of other wounded. A litter team would pick the wounded marine up and lug him to the battalion aid station. If necessary, he was given a morphine syrette and eight sulfa tablets with a canteen cup of water (the tablets were never to be taken without water), but if his wounds were minor he was pretty much ignored. Eventually a corpsman checked his casualty tag and loaded him into a "Duck" amphibious truck, which was driven across the beach and through the water to a transport. Correspondents often commented on how quiet and steady wounded US troops were as their litters were loaded into landing craft bound for an assault transport. Hoisted aboard, his litter was set on deck before he was carried into the sickbay. En route it was typical for sailors to ask the wounded marine if he had any Japanese souvenirs.

Transports were equipped with operating rooms, sickbay wards, and a complete medical staff. Once treated, the more seriously wounded were transferred to hospital ships for return to Hawaii or nearer island bases for further treatment or recovery in Navy hospitals. The chances of surviving serious wounds were twice as high in World War II as in World War I. Penicillin (from 1944), sulfa drugs, improved methods for dealing with shock, sufficient supplies of plasma and whole blood, and effective surgery were responsible for this. If the marine recovered enough, he would rejoin his regiment, but not necessarily his original platoon or company.<sup>15</sup>

## THE AFTERMATH OF BATTLE

The 4th MarDiv went on to take neighboring Tinian and returned to Maui in late August, having suffered heavy casualties. Yet casualties went beyond those downed by enemy fire. Combat fatigue took a high toll. The prolonged stress, sleep deprivation, poor and irregular food, the enervating heat and humidity, dehydration, and physical and mental

<sup>15</sup> The 4th MarDiv fought on Iwo Jima in February–March 1945. The division conducted four amphibious assaults in 13 months, suffering 17,722 casualties, the second highest casualty rate of the six Marine divisions.

exhaustion brought many out of the line. Some required extensive treatment as they had pushed themselves to the limit. Most needed a hot meal, water, and a few hours' sleep to put them back in the line. Most combat troops suffered from combat fatigue at one time or another. The 4th MarDiv was fortunate in that the islands it served on were devoid of malaria, but dysentery, dengue fever, and "undiagnosed fevers" were problems. Saipan and most island campaigns suffered under massive clouds of flies owing to the numerous unburied bodies and this resulted in many illnesses, especially diarrhea (known as GIs or "sh\*\*s"). Flies and mosquitoes were so bad that torpedo-bombers would fly over islands spraying DDT in the midst of combat. Accidental casualties were also frequent and not included in combat casualty figures. These included dead and injured from work and vehicle accidents, falls, drowning, fires, electrocution, etc.

Major efforts were made to account for casualties as soon as possible. This was difficult because of the cross-attachment of elements between units and the chaotic fighting. If a marine was killed, wounded, or missing, his next of kin were notified by telegram. Over the subsequent months letters of condolence might be received from the War Finance Committee (which would dedicate a combat aircraft in his name), from senators and congressmen, and an engraved Purple Heart was sent by Headquarters, Marine Corps. If the marine was killed, a killed in action (KIA) certificate was sent, along with any campaign and unit award decorations. After the war families were notified that they had the option of requesting that their marine's remains be returned home for burial in a Veteran's Administration Cemetery (at no cost) or a private plot. If they opted to let him remain in an overseas cemetery with his buddies, a sentiment held by many, they could not later change their minds. If a marine was reported missing he continued to accrue pay for one year, less allotments to relatives and savings accounts. If no further information became available he would be assumed dead and all pay was stopped.

For the living the Marines had intended to implement a rotation system, but because of the expansion of units and higher than expected losses it was two years or much longer before the marines rotated home. In 1945 a point system was instituted to rotate men home (initially 85 points were required, but the number was later lowered as the demobilization pace increased). The system was based on one point for each month of service up to September 1945, an additional point for each month overseas, five points for each battle star and combat decoration, and up to 12 points for dependents.



**Japanese prisoners were rare. Not only did most fight to the death or take their own lives, marines were only too happy to help them on their way. Most prisoners taken on islands were actually Korean or Okinawan laborers. Prisoners were stripped down to loincloths because of the danger of concealed grenades.**

**Another after-the-battle event – award ceremonies. Here marines are decorated with the Purple Heart.**



Souvenir swapping was a popular pastime. Some combat troops collected souvenirs with the intention of making a profit from rear service troops and sailors. Souvenir-starved sailors often picked up weapons and grenades from wounded marines aboard transports and these had to be collected.



On return to the United States the “nearly civilians” were given a \$250 discharge bonus, any back pay, and an Honorable Discharge Emblem (“Ruptured Duck”) for the uniform to wear home, which they could wear for up to 30 days. They would also receive a percentage of pay for wounds or service-connected disability.

The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the “GI Bill of Rights,” was instituted to assist veterans financially. This included veteran education and job-training support; home, farm, or business loans; unemployment pay, and job-finding assistance. It was responsible for hundreds of thousands of men obtaining college degrees. The Selective Service Act ensured that honorably discharged servicemen could apply for their former jobs, and former employers must restore them to their former position or one of like seniority, status, and pay.

## **COLLECTIONS, MUSEUMS, AND REENACTMENT**

Collectors find that World War II Marine uniforms, insignia, and equipment are extremely scarce and costly. They are urged to validate whether any Marine items are authentic. Numerous reenactment groups exist, both in the United States and other countries, so the entire range of replica World War II Marine uniforms and equipment items is available. The principal Marine Corps museums are:

Marine Corps Air-Ground Museum, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia <http://users.erols.com/hyattg/usmcguns/usmcvols.htm>

Marine Corps Historical Center, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia [http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/HD/Home\\_Page.htm](http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/HD/Home_Page.htm)

Amphibian Tractor Museum, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California <http://www.amtrac.org/at4lb/Gatorgalley.html>



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## COLOR PLATE COMMENTARY

### A: RECRUIT, SAN DIEGO

The marine recruit undertaking boot (1 and 2) wears "utilities" or "dungarees." First issued in late 1941 as a work uniform, they became the Corps' main combat uniform. He is armed with a .30-cal. M1903 Springfield rifle with an M1905 bayonet in an M1917 leather scabbard.

3. Fiber sun helmet worn by "Boots," adorned with the bronze globe and anchor.

4. Detail of the globe and anchor as stenciled on the dungarees' breast pocket.

5. *The Marine's Handbook*. The "Red Book's" 242 pages described the skills that were essential for a marine to master. The book became his "bible."

6. Identity or "dog tags." Tags were worn on a cloth- or plastic-covered wire. Alternatively, many men bought a thin chain available in the PX.

7. Marine Corps canvas leggings. Army leggings had eight lacing hooks.

8. Service shoes or "boondockers" were shod with nylon-cord-reinforced rubber soles.

9. Five-round .30-cal. stripper clip with M2 ball ammunition for loading the M1903 rifle. Two clips were carried in each cartridge belt pocket.

10. The M1905 bayonet was issued with one of three scabbards: M1910 canvas-covered leather (10a), M1917 leather (10b), or M3 fiberglass (10c). The first two were mainly issued to recruits.

### B: MARKSMANSHIP TRAINING, CAMP ELLIOTT

Rifle marksmanship was a cornerstone of Marine training. A

great deal of time and effort was committed to turning boys, many of whom had never fired a weapon, into effective riflemen. During their two weeks at the range, living in tent cities, they learned all aspects of musketry and the use of the infantryman's primary weapon. They were given cloth pads to sew on their dungaree elbows and the right pit of the shoulder. "Boots" would pair up and alternate firing and coaching. The coach (2) would talk the shooter (1) through the steps of firing: sight alignment, sight picture, breath control, gentle trigger squeeze, and follow through. Dry fire exercises – "snapping in" – were conducted before live firing commenced. Their rifle scorecards are pinned behind the globe and anchor on their sun helmets. A DI looks on wearing the khaki uniform (3). Recruits wore an identical uniform, except the campaign hat was no longer issued from late 1942. Instead they would wear a khaki garrison cap.

### C: THE INFANTRYMAN'S WEAPONS

The rifle squad was armed with two basic weapons, the .30-cal. M1 Garand rifle (1) fed by an eight-round clip (this one with armor-piercing ammunition, as commonly used in combat) with an oiler tube carried in the butt trap, and the .30-cal. M1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) (2), here with its bipod and flash suppressor removed and a takedown tool and ruptured cartridge extractor. The automatic rifleman carried a six-pocket belt with 12 20-round magazines and a leather spare parts and tool case (2a) while his assistant carried a slung belt with six magazines (2b). There were also supplementary weapons: M1 bayonet in an M7 fiberglass scabbard (3), KA-Bar fighting knife with its leather sheath (4),

and a variety of grenades. The grenade types included the Mk IIA1 fragmentation (5), here with a 1/2lb (0.23kg) TNT charge taped on for pillbox busting, Mk IIIA1 offensive (6), AN-M14 thermite incendiary (7), and M15 white phosphorus (8), AN-M8 white smoke (9), and Mk 1 illuminating (10). The M7 grenade launcher (11) enabled M9A1 antitank (12), M17 fragmentation (13), and M19 white phosphorus (14) grenades, to be fired from the M1 rifle.

#### D: BARRACKS INSPECTION

Barracks inspection included a full layout of equipment on the bunk ("junk on a bunk") inspection on Saturdays. The marine wears the khaki uniform with the summer garrison cap while the 1st lieutenant wears the summer service uniform with forest-green wool trousers and the summer service cap. Officers were just as likely as the DIs to rake the painstakingly displayed equipment and dump the contents of the locker box onto the deck. "Boots" were later issued service caps, but without the braid quatrefoil on their crowns.

#### E: NAMUR BLOCKHOUSE ASSAULT

Flamethrowers had seen limited use in the Solomons, but the old M1 "Zippo" suffered from problems. They came into somewhat wider use on Tarawa and the bazooka made its first appearance there. These weapons would see wider use at Roi-Namur, but it would not be until the summer of 1944 that they came into wide general use. Knocking-out pillboxes and large blockhouses was largely conducted by providing a base of suppressive fire to keep the defenders' heads down and to cover marines moving in close to blast the position with satchel charges and grenades. They were taught to immediately lay down fire when they saw other marines maneuvering towards a pillbox. Later in the war, gasoline was pumped into large fortifications and caves to burn out the defenders.

#### F: "DUTY BEYOND THE SEA"

In the days before a landing, part of the time aboard ship was spent undertaking individual preparations. Many men unclipped M1 rifle ammunition, cleaned each round, and re-clipped it. BAR men loaded their magazines, bayonets and knives were sharpened, rations and gear packed, every item checked. The three fire teams of the new 13-man squad operated as an entity. In effect the squad leader only had to direct three men, the team leaders. Team leaders led by example: whatever they did, as directed by the squad leader, their teams would do. When he got up and moved forward his team would follow. When he fired they would fire in the same direction. Each fire team had a corporal team leader, an automatic rifleman, an assistant automatic rifleman, and a rifleman. All but the BAR man had grenade launchers. The squad concept took into account that under heavy fire small groups of men managed to advance forward, so squads were organized into self-contained teams to accommodate this. Each division was assigned a geometric symbol in which a three- or four-digit number indicated the unit down to company level. The numbering system varied between divisions. Here Company I, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines is identified. Besides marking clothing, unit equipment and crates were also so marked. One marine wears a camouflage-painted helmet liner and another the 1941 utility cover.

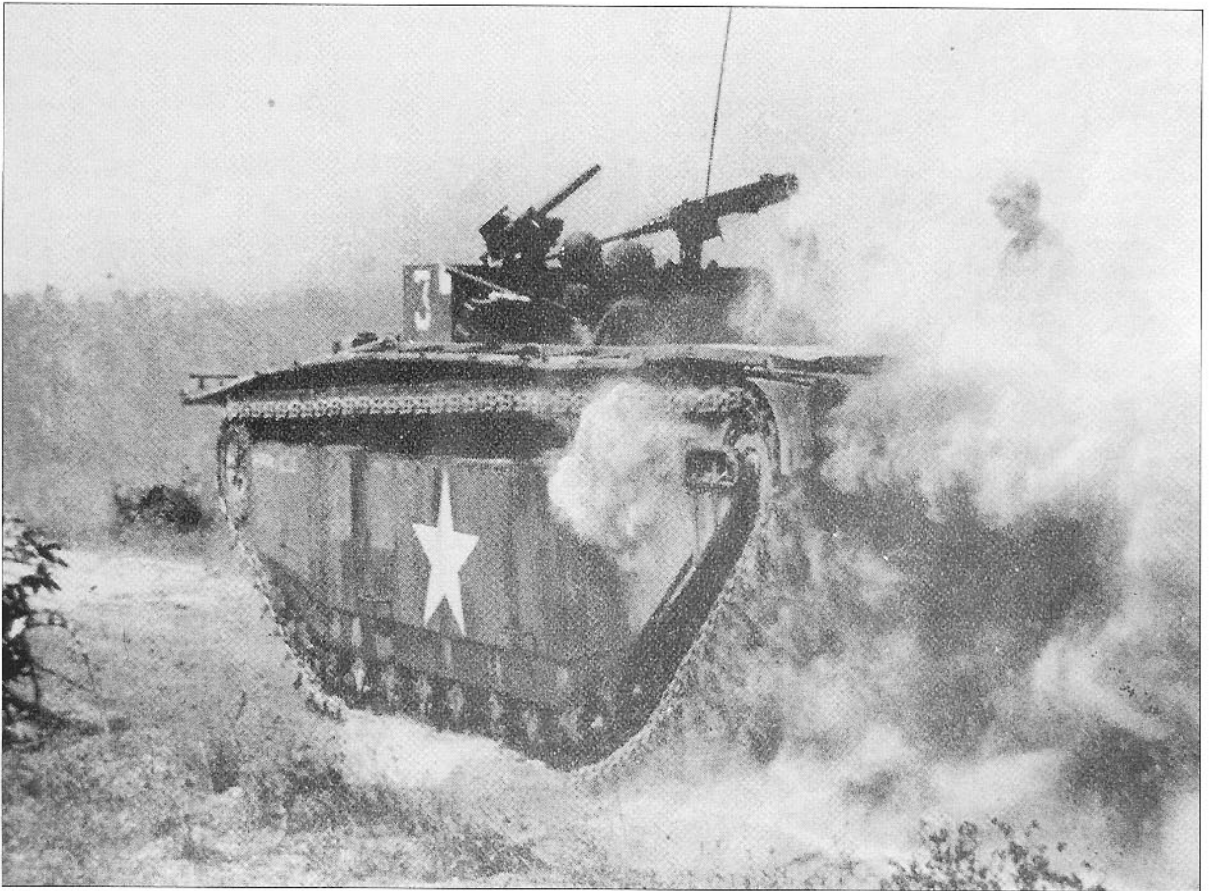
#### G: RIFLEMAN, SAIPAN

The marine (1 and 2) is prepared to board an amtrac for the run to shore. Leggings were often not worn or, if they were, it was with the trousers over them. The M1941 pack system is worn in the marching pack configuration with haversack, cartridge belt, and entrenching tool, the normal assault rig. He is armed with an M1 rifle and the short M1 bayonet.

3. 1-quart canteen, cup, carrier.
4. First aid pouch with field dressing (4x4in./10x10cm unfolded) and sulfa powder packet.
5. KA-Bar knife and scabbard.
6. K-ration meals. One K-ration included three meals. The breakfast had a canned meat (chopped ham and eggs for example), biscuits, cereal bar, soluble coffee, fruit bar, water-purification tablets, and toilet paper. The dinner contained a canned cheese product, biscuits, candy bar, a variety of beverage powders, salt tablets, and matches. The supper

Basic issue field equipment as would be displayed on their bunk ("junk on a bunk"): (left to right, top to bottom) M1941 knapsack, haversack, and straps; wool blanket; camouflage poncho; camouflage shelter-half with two-section pole, guy line and five tent pegs; canteen cup; first aid pouch and field dressing; 1-quart canteen; mess kit pan; spoon, fork and knife; mess kit lid; M1 steel helmet; canteen carrier; identity tags; and helmet liner.





**An amtrac LVT(1) – Landing Vehicle, Tracked Mk I – burns after being hit by an antitank gun. Often more amtracs were lost inland than on the beach and in the water. Amtracs carried 24 troops, half of a platoon.**

contained a canned meat product, biscuits, bouillon powder, and candy. All K-rations held gum, sugar, cigarettes, a P38 can opener, and a spoon.

7. D-ration bar. The enriched chocolate bar was purposely made less than tasty to prevent troops from consuming them as snacks. It was strictly an emergency ration. Cubes could be melted in boiling water for cocoa.

8. C-ration. The six cans constituting a C-ration provided three 12oz (340g) meat and three bread units for one day's meals in a single carton. The M-units were meat and beans, meat and vegetable hash, and meat and vegetable stew. The B-units contained crackers, cocoa, coffee, sugar, and candy. Troops complained that the C-ration was too rich and greasy, had too many beans, and lacked variety.

9. Mess kit and knife, fork, and spoon.

10. Toilet kit. There was no one standard toilet kit or "ditty bag." It could be a purpose-designed multi-pocket roll or simply a cloth bag, typically containing a toothbrush, toothpaste, safety razor, razor blades, shaving soap tube, shaving brush, steel mirror, bath soap in a plastic box, comb, foot powder, and maybe a sewing kit.

11. The jungle first aid kit originally contained a field dressing, six band-aids, insect repellent, Frazer's athlete's

foot solution, atabrine anti-malaria tablets, salt tablets, halazone water purification tablets, and sulfadiazine tablets. The later issue included field dressing, six band-aids, insect repellent, petrolatum, halazone water purification tablets, and a tourniquet.

12. The M1 satchel charge contained eight 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>lb (1.14kg) M2 tetrytol demolition charges, linked by detonating cord ("detcord" or "primacord"). The charge would be detonated by a short length of delay fuse ignited by a waterproof M2 fuse lighter.

#### **H: SAIPAN AID STATION**

Before the war two men were specified for litter carriers, but the realities of combat made it apparent that four were necessary to move a casualty to safety quickly under fire over rough terrain in order for him not succumb to exhaustion caused by the environment and combat. Litter bearers were provided by the division band and from service units, often volunteers. This corpsman, a pharmacist mate 2d class, carried the unit's three medical pouches containing large and small field dressing, gauze rolls and pads, adhesive tape, tourniquets, iodine swabs, petrolatum, sulfa powder and tablets, morphine syrettes, casualty tags, scissors, forceps, safety pins, and other items. The corpsman also carries a .30-cal. M1 carbine, and a machete-like hospital corps knife. Five-gallon (19-liter) water cans were identified from fuel cans by white-painted crosses or "WATER" stenciled on the upper sides.

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