

# MARINE CORPS TRAINING CENTER, EAST COAST, FLEET MARINE FORCE

The New River Graduate School of Invasion  
New River Pioneer, 15 October 1942

"Alright, next group in the fox holes!"

As you let yourself down into a fox hole, you wonder what it is like to be mashed by twelve tons of metal and what your obituary will look like in the hometown paper. The tank, a cute little monster of about 12 tons, was waiting up at the edge of the field. Suddenly with a terrific roar and a screech of its siren, it took off lumbering rapidly toward our shallow foxhole. Its size seemed to increase tenfold as it bore down on us, its treads kicking up clouds of dirt. Instinctively you crouch into the foxhole. . . . It is wide enough to permit you to duck safely below the surface of the ground. But it's narrow enough to prevent caving in when the tank tread passes over—at least you hope so.

With a mighty roar and shower of dirt your foxhole is plunged into darkness. A bucket full of dirt seems to be thrown over you. Then sunlight burst in and the tank was roaring in the distance. . . .

You retire to the shade to catch a fast drag. A troop column is assembled and marches toward the field. A sharp blast from a whistle sends the men running in all directions and they hit the deck and take up air defense positions.

"North!" shouts the lieutenant. All men swing the muzzles of their rifles to the north, just as three fighter planes, throttles wide open, come skimming at them 200 miles an hour over the tree tops. Zooming over the troops the planes shoot from different directions with a thunderous roar. Three or four times more the planes come over, each time attacking from a different point. The pilots look down, grinning. The last time they go away and split their formation. Just as troops are being assembled, all of the planes come roaring in, each from different directions and are on the men within two seconds of the time they're first spotted. The troops now know that when planes come tearing at them with their guns blazing, it is folly to try to outrun them. The Marine stay and fire everything they have. . . .

. . . [Y]ou fall in with a group that is gathered around a table that is cluttered with beer bottles, whiskey bottles and other containers of the drinks which cheer. "Ah, refreshments," you say to your self, crowding in a little closer. But it is not liquid joy that is being dispensed. It is liquid terror for enemy tanks and their crews — Molotov Cocktails, two jiggers of gasoline, a jigger of oil and a dash of creosote. With the poise of a veteran bartender, the instructor pours some of the mixture into a bottle, settles into a foxhole, lights the wick, and tosses it at a truck which obviously has seen better days. Instantly the vehicle is a blazing inferno even though it is metal.

Some distance further away a group is gathered around an officer who is explaining the finer points of erecting shelter halves. In another area are troops in full combat uniforms practicing debarking from a troop transport on a "mockup" which is built to represent the side of a transport.



Further into the boondocks is another group of Leathernecks in full combat gear running the obstacle course. Taking off at a trot, men run the gauntlet of man-made obstacles which make nature's obstacles seem like child's play. You scale walls, vault high fences, crawl through culverts, swing across a brook Tarzan fashion, crawl under double apron barbed wire and leap across gullies. . . .

From the obstacle course the path leads to another group surrounding an instructor who is giving his men timely advice on the gentle art of killing an opponent with bare hands, knife and bayonet. The "students" learn by doing, and they get a rough going over while they learn.

Laying and setting off land mines is explained to a group farther on. Mines are touched off, and in a terrific blast send huge showers of dirt into the air. . . . Further into the boondocks a platoon of Pioneers is practicing road building. In open fields men are slithering through the grass learning scouting and patrolling. In another sector, signalmen are wig-wagging to each other.

High over head, in the direction of the airport, a transport plane drones. Suddenly several specks are seen to fall from the door in the side of the plane. As if by magic the air overhead is filled with Paramarines descending in full force on their objective.

This "round robin" of training goes on daily, morning and afternoon, with brief time out for lunch. These are some of the courses leading to an M.A. degree — Master of Assault — at the New River Graduate School of Invasion.

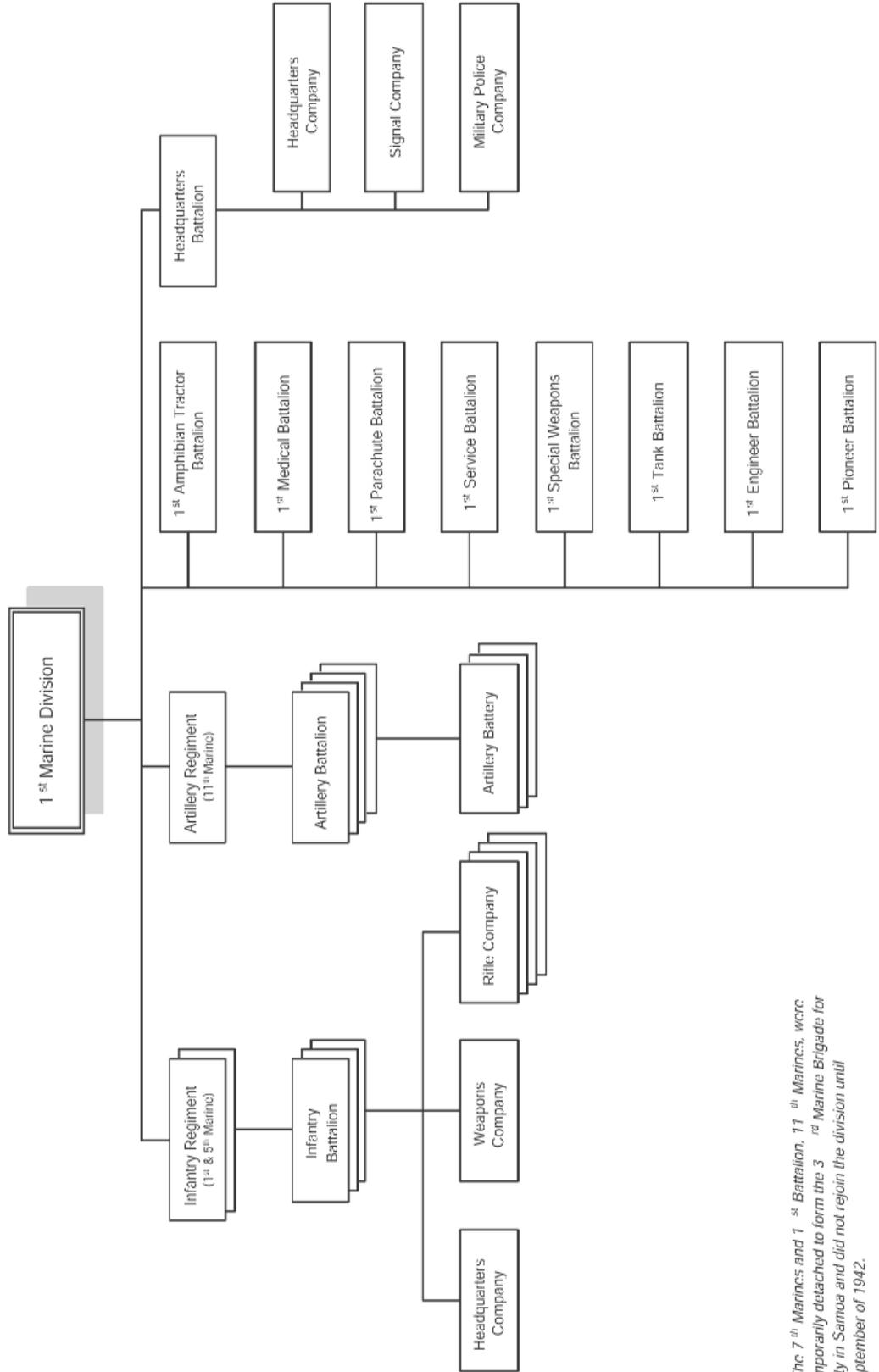
## Training Center Organization

Beginning in April 1942 the 1st MarDiv departed for the West Coast and assignment to the South Pacific, leaving the New River base available for another division. But no new division was raised at New River. A joint Army-Navy board had decided that the Army would perform amphibious landings in Europe to begin the ground war there, while the Marine Corps would head to the Pacific, where operations would be largely (although not entirely) naval. As a result of this decision, the plan to use the New River site as a division training area for anticipated European operations was scrapped; however, the Corps still needed a major ground training center on the East Coast (to balance the training load there and in the Corps generally), and it also wanted a base from which to launch combat-ready units in the event that the Axis powers expanded their activities across the Atlantic. Thus the New River base's Table of Organization (T/O) was revised accordingly: the Marine Division as a separate command was dissolved and replaced with a new command, the full title of which was "Training Center, Fleet Marine Force, Marine Barracks New River, North Carolina," or "New River Training Center," or simply TTC, for short.

Under the new T/O, the TTC fulfilled the training functions begun with the 1st MarDiv. Although the base had been built as a division training center, for the most part the base's World War II mission became the training of individual replacements, specialists, and unusual or unique Marine units. Among the troops that were organized and trained at New River during that time were the East Coast echelon of the 4th MarDiv; the 3rd Marine Brigade (Reinforced); six Marine regiments (four reinforced); three defense battalions (two of which, the 51st and 52nd, were composed of African-American Marines); two airdrome battalions; one aviation engineer battalion; 21 infantry battalions; seven Marine



(1) 1st Marine Division organization upon its departure from Camp Lejeune during the Spring of 1942.  
D-Series T/O (minus)\*



\* The 7<sup>th</sup> Marines and 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, were temporarily detached to form the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Brigade for duty in Samoa and did not rejoin the division until September of 1942.

war dog platoons; 1st Brigade, Royal Netherlands Marines; 49 depot companies; 12 ammunition companies; two ammunition renovation platoons; one mine clearing detachment; one war dog mine detecting team; three corps evacuation hospitals; three stewards branch replacement battalions; 13 replacement detachments; 30 replacement drafts; five replacement drafts of African-American Marines; and two war dog replacement drafts. Numbered among these units was the 29th Marines, the last infantry regiment formed in the Marine Corps, subsequently assigned to the 6th MarDiv.

For the first few months of World War II units trained together, more or less as they had during peacetime, but in May 1942 the Corps initiated individual replacement training. The base at New River and Camp Elliott in California became the replacement training centers for the Corps. The twofold mission of these centers was to conduct formal schools for the training of those technical specialists who could not be efficiently trained in units, and to operate infantry replacement training activities providing individual instruction in the basic combat subjects.

The purpose of the TTC was to train combat replacements and the many occupational specialists that would accompany or support the combat troops. Several of the specialist schools, transferred here from Quantico or other Marine installations, occupied the former regimental areas, which became the core of the new FMF Training Center. At various times the parachute troops and Seabees (Navy construction battalions) moved into Area 1, and were later joined by the Women's Reserves and Royal Netherlands Marines; Women's Reserves also billeted in Area 2, as did officer candidates; members of the Signal School occupied Area 3; Area 4 housed the School Battalion, consisting of the Quartermaster School, Engineer School, Cooks and Bakers School, Motor Transport School, and Field Medical Service School; and the Artillery Battalion occupied Area 5, where there was more room for parking artillery pieces. Building 2, formerly the Division Headquarters, was occupied by the TTC in late December 1942 to serve as its headquarters.

At the same time, the Marine Corps changed the name of the base to Marine Barracks Camp Lejeune in honor of General John Lejeune, who had been instrumental in the initial development of what would become the FMF and Marine Corps amphibious doctrine. By that time the total population of the base had reached between 34,000 and 36,000.

## Camp Lejeune's Ranges

The Rifle Range was part of Camp Lejeune's permanent training facilities. Nearly every Marine who passed through Camp Lejeune during World War II spent time at the Rifle Range, regardless of rank, specialization, or race, to achieve and maintain the proficiency in the use of personal arms required by the Corps.

Originally, the Rifle Range was to be located on the eastern side of the New River in Area G, the combat area. Camp Lejeune's planners contemplated alternative sites in the fall of 1941 when it was discovered that the original location would be a serious obstruction to exercises in that area. In spite of its greater distance from the main area at Hadnot Point, the present site on the western side of the New River was selected in December 1941.



When it opened in September 1942, the Rifle Range at Camp Lejeune was considered the most modern in the history of the Marine Corps. The Range area, laid out near the western shore of Stones Bay and southeast of Stones Creek, was accessed via Range Road, which connected with the Dixon-Sneads Ferry Road (State Route 210). Three 50-target rifle ranges, with 200-, 300-, 400-, and 500-yard firing points, were the center of the complex. A long distance (1,000-yard) machine gun range with 24 targets was sandwiched between the three ranges (to the west) and the bay (to the east). According to standard guidelines of the time, Range 2 faced due north; Ranges 1 and 2 were a few degrees east and west of north, respectively.



Number boards in front of earth berm at Range Charlie.

A Pistol Range, of which only one was built during World War II, was located just west of the Rifle Range. The Pistol Range had 30 targets, all electrically operated. Each of the rifle ranges and the Pistol Range had its own range house, target houses, and magazines for storing ammunition.

The permanent housing, subsistence, and administration area for the Rifle Range lay southwest of the Pistol Range. This complex, nearly a base in itself, consisted of four barracks, a mess hall, administration building, post exchange, bachelor officers' quarters (BOQ), theater/gymnasium, storehouses, and central heating plant. Except for the two-story administration building and heating plant, all buildings were identical to their counterparts at Hadnot Point and Courthouse Bay. For married officers there were five quarters identical to those constructed at Paradise Point.



1940s aerial of the Rifle Range area.

Each class of African-American recruits from Montford Point also spent a week at the Rifle Range. In early 1943 a separate cantonment for African-American Marines was constructed due south of the rifle ranges. This compound had 17 platoon barracks, six washroom buildings, a mess hall, and heating plant identical to those of Montford Point Camp No. 2. The main street of the rectangular camp was named Dr. G.W. Carver Street, and the Marines traveled to and from the ranges via Booker T. Washington Road, both named in honor of distinguished African Americans.

## Artillery Training

In 1941 artillery instruction in the Marine Corps consisted of the Base Defense Weapons Class, a 12-week course taught by the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico. It was a course for officers only, in which student officers learned a combination of field, antiaircraft, and seacoast artillery methods and tactics. Artillery training for enlisted men was accomplished in established FMF units.

Before the U.S. entered World War II, however, the pressures of mobilization forced the Marine Corps to split the course into Field Artillery and Base Defense sections in order to reduce class size and speed up the training process. In general, field artillery reinforced the infantry in land actions, while base defense artillery defended an advanced base from attack by air or sea.

Seacoast and antiaircraft artillery were critical to the Marines' new base defense battalions, the training of which was a principal task of the TTC at Camp Lejeune during World War II. The base defense battalion was a heavily armed and relatively immobile unit intended to defend newly taken advanced bases, thus freeing the infantry units of the FMF from any defensive tasks. The defense battalion was originally intended to move into a base after the assault units had landed and secured it, helping to eliminate the last of the enemy occupants, if necessary, and then to assume the entire defense of the base. This would allow the infantry to continue advancing as quickly as possible.

Although field artillery continued to be taught at Quantico, the Base Defense Section of the Corps moved to Camp Lejeune in January 1943. Once in residence, it began to modify the predominantly seacoast and antiaircraft program to include some field artillery instruction.

The second change during 1943 was the introduction of artillery courses for the enlisted ranks, the first time in Marine Corps history that enlisted men were trained in artillery before being assigned to their units in the field. Enlisted men reported to the Artillery Battalion at Camp Lejeune straight out of boot camp. There they were assigned to batteries for four-week training courses in all subjects relating to the operation and simple maintenance of artillery.

Artillery training was further reorganized in early 1944 with the creation of a special 16-week course for officers, to be divided equally between Quantico and Camp Lejeune. Antiaircraft instruction was also reorganized in early 1944, being divided into two courses, according to the different kinds of guns (heavy and light) used in this kind of defense. These two courses were also taught at Camp Lejeune. Thus, Marine Corps artillery training expanded from two courses, field and base defense, to four courses: field, seacoast (which included instruction in field artillery), and two antiaircraft artillery courses.

This highly specialized arrangement did not last long, however, as events in the Pacific war swung the pendulum ever more toward field artillery. Seacoast artillery training at Camp Lejeune continued on a reduced scale through the fall of 1944 and was discontinued in December 1944. Antiaircraft artillery training at Camp Lejeune was discontinued altogether in late 1944.

The Artillery Battalion moved into Regimental Area 5 at Hadnot Point in early 1943, as soon as the quarters were available. In addition to the classroom buildings in Area 5, students received instruction in two simulators at Hadnot Point, the Waller Gunnery Trainer and the Mark I Gunnery Trainer, located across the Main Service Road from Regimental Area 4 in Buildings 28 and 39, respectively.

### *Artillery Ranges*

The vast acreage of the New River base provided ample space for artillery ranges, which, like nearly everything at Camp Lejeune, were laid out with considerable thought. A carefully selected board consisting of four senior officers divided the so-called Artillery Area into six sectors (Traps Bay, Duck

Creek, French Creek, River, Railroad, and Town Point) in such a way that any portion could be used without closing the entire area. The Artillery Area was also equipped with artillery-proof emplacements for forward observers and 80-foot towers for longer range observation. Towers were provided for seacoast artillery practice, although shore bombardment was avoided out of concern for the Inland Waterway and danger to personnel "by ricochets and erratic shots."

## Special Units

The Marine Corps, ever conscious of its legendary motto, "First to Fight," had closely monitored the employment of special units by the Japanese in China in the 1930s and by the European powers after the beginning of World War II in 1939. The Corps was then, and continues to be, the most aggressive service in experimenting with new theories and methods to enhance its capabilities to meet worldwide contingencies for amphibious operations and in a minimum amount of time. Hence, during World War II the Marines developed five new types of special units: base defense battalions, raiders, barrage balloon squadron, glider forces, and parachutists.

Base defense battalions were the first organized. Like the other special units, they did not survive the war, as they were overtaken by events or could not fulfill their intended missions. The 1st Defense Battalion was activated at San Diego in 1939 and was followed by 19 more; three (the 18th, 51st, and 52nd) were organized and trained at Camp Lejeune from 1942 to 1943. Most were subsequently reorganized and redesignated as anti-aircraft battalions.

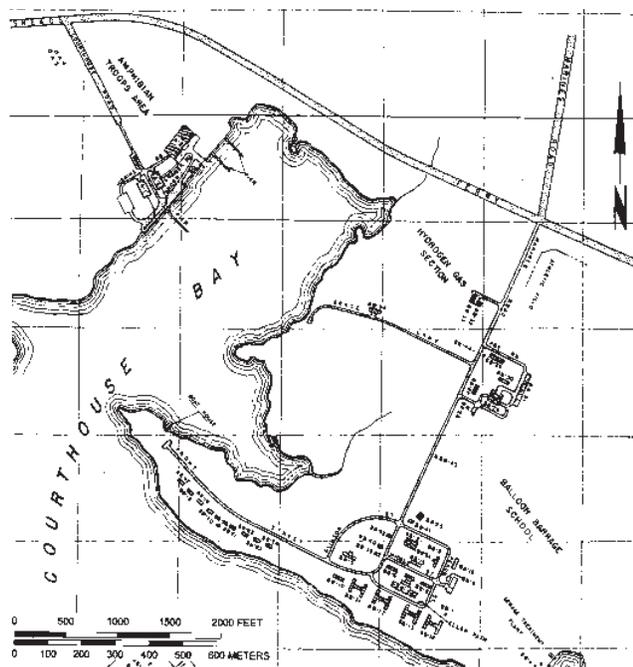
Raider battalions were not a new concept to the Marine Corps, but as a result of the successful raids undertaken by British commandos, and the influence exerted at the presidential level to emulate this capability, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, was designated the 1st Raider Battalion on 16 February 1942. Three more Raider Battalions followed, but none had any significant affiliation with Camp Lejeune. These four battalions were eventually formed into two raider regiments, which were disbanded in February 1946 to form the newly reconstituted 4th Marines. Marine Raiders preceded the Army's Rangers by four months and were the first to be employed in combat.

Marines had also had experience with balloons, dating back to World War I. The development of modern amphibious doctrine between the wars and the British experience with balloons over London, particularly during the Battle of Britain, however, suggested a key role for barrage balloons in the defense of advance naval bases. The concept was approved during March 1941 and a Barrage Balloon Training School (BBTS) was subsequently established at Quantico, then moved to Parris Island. The first barrage balloon squadron (ZMQ) was activated on 1 October 1941. ZMQ 1 through 5 were organized at Parris Island, and ZMQ-6 was organized at Camp Lejeune. In September 1942 the school was relocated to a complex of buildings constructed for the BBTS at New River's Courthouse Bay, the current location of the Marine Corps Engineering



JOINT ARMY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING MANEUVERS AT MARINE BARRACKS NEW RIVER, 1941.

Joint Army and Marine Corps training maneuvers at Marine Barracks New River, 1941.



1942 map of Balloon Barrage School, located east of Courthouse Bay. The Marines discontinued barrage balloon training at Camp Lejeune around May 1943. This area was subsequently used by the Engineers School.

School. By the end of 1943 all the squadrons had been disbanded and the personnel transferred to defense battalions.

The Marines' early interest in gliders and parachutists stemmed from a desire to create an airborne component to amphibious operations. Germany's successful invasion of Crete in May 1941 using gliders and parachutists provided a strong impetus to both programs. By October 1941 HQMC had fully developed its concept of glider deployment. Training would be conducted initially at Parris Island and then be extended to three other facilities. Although a significant amount of construction for the Glider Training Base had been completed at New River's Peterfield Point, the program was terminated on 24 June 1943. Gliders never trained at New River and the only operational glider squadron (VMC-711) was disbanded in Texas in June 1943.

## Paramarines

With the initiation of its program for parachute battalions in May 1940, the Marine Corps organized its first parachute detachment at Naval Air Station Lakehurst, New Jersey, in October 1940, to train parachutists. By the summer of 1941 1st Parachute Battalion had been formed at Quantico and the 2nd Parachute Battalion at Camp Elliott, California. The 1st Battalion later moved to Camp Lejeune for further training and, in June 1942, left North Carolina for the Pacific. At the same time, the Corps expanded the program, establishing parachute training schools at Camp Gillespie near San Diego, and at Camp Lejeune.

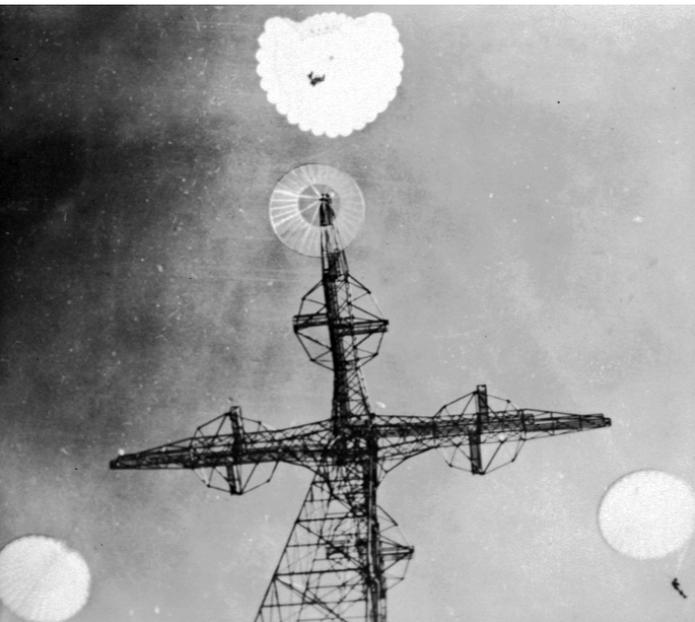
As a Division Training Center, Camp Lejeune was intended from the beginning to provide facilities for Marine parachute troops. The Parachute Training Area, located just off Holcomb Boulevard on Parachute Tower Road,

was selected because it was a large area already relatively clear of trees, well away from potential aircraft interference, and close to the main barracks area. Three 250-foot-tall steel training towers and several buildings related specifically to parachute training were built, such as a large building for storing and packing parachutes, a training building containing airplane fuselage mock-ups, and jumping platforms.

In December 1942 the Paramarines were housed in Regimental Areas 3 and 4 in the Division Training Area. By April 1943 the battalion had moved to Regimental Area 1, which they shared with the Navy Seabees and other units in training.

Training of Marine parachutists entailed a six-week program of physical training, tower jumps, and actual air jumps. Following three weeks of physical training, including tumbling exercises and jumping from platform plane mock-ups, and weapons instruction, the Marine student began practice jumping from the Controlled Tower (PT-6), which was equipped with eight cables to guide students back to the

ground. The training at this tower permitted the trainees to experience a parachute descent and to practice landing techniques. After mastering the controlled drop, students advanced to the Captive Tower (PT-4), which allowed them to



Paramarines perform practice jumps from the Controlled Tower, 1943.



experience the shock of having their downward movement suddenly halted when a parachute first opens. The next step in the training was a jump from the Free or Fly-away Tower (PT-5), which was identical to the Controlled Tower, but without the guided cables. After eight jumps from the Free Tower, they progressed to jumps from aircraft in flight. Following six successful air jumps, usually over Peterfield Point with the last jump performed at night, the students graduated and received their wings, becoming "Paramarines."

Camp Lejeune's Parachute School operated through July 1943, when it was consolidated into the West Coast school at Camp Gillespie, California. Most Paramarines who trained at Camp Lejeune were replacements for the battalions that had already gone to the Pacific. The program as a whole was short-lived, however, for the Marine Corps decided to disband the parachute units in December 1943 and most of the parachutists were transferred to the 28th Marines (5th MarDiv). The discontinuation of this program, as well as the glider program, reflected the fact that the Marines did not have the air transport capacity necessary to carry parachute troops to their targets (because of a lack of planes and the prohibitive distance of targets from shore-based staging areas in the Pacific). Also, it turned out that FMF objectives in the Pacific theater involved "small, densely defended areas . . . unsuitable for mass parachute [or glider] landings." In all, one battalion of parachute troops (the 4th) was organized and two (the 1st and 4th) were trained at Camp Lejeune. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Parachute Battalions formed the 1st Parachute Regiment on 1 April 1943. Although they never made a combat jump during World War II in the Pacific theater, the high level of physical fitness and skill in small-unit tactics demanded by their training program made them exceptional ground troops.

## War Dogs

The War Dog Training Company, headquartered at Camp Knox in November 1942, was redesignated in January 1943 as the War Dog Training School. All seven platoons of war dogs, or devil dogs, were trained at Camp Lejeune. The majority of the dogs trained were Doberman pinschers, although German shepherds, Labrador retrievers, and other breeds also served. The dogs underwent an initial six-week basic training period, after which they were divided into groups for specialized training with assigned handlers. Dogs were trained as scouts or messengers, for sentry duty, or search and rescue duty. A Dog Service Record Book, which recorded training and qualification information, was maintained on each of the War Dogs. The dogs trained at Camp Lejeune served in the Pacific, most notably in the liberation of Guam in 1944, during which 25 dogs were lost.



The War Dogs in Training: Sgt. training with a message carrying dog; war dogs practice an amphibious landing from a Higgins Boat; Devil Dogs exhibiting discipline in close order drill.



In August 1945 the War Dog Training School was dissolved; however, a dog detachment continued to occupy Camp Knox through October 1946 for the demobilization of canine veterans returning from overseas. Although some dogs were destroyed, many of the dogs underwent a program of detraining and rehabilitation in order to return to civilian life.

## Royal Netherlands Marines

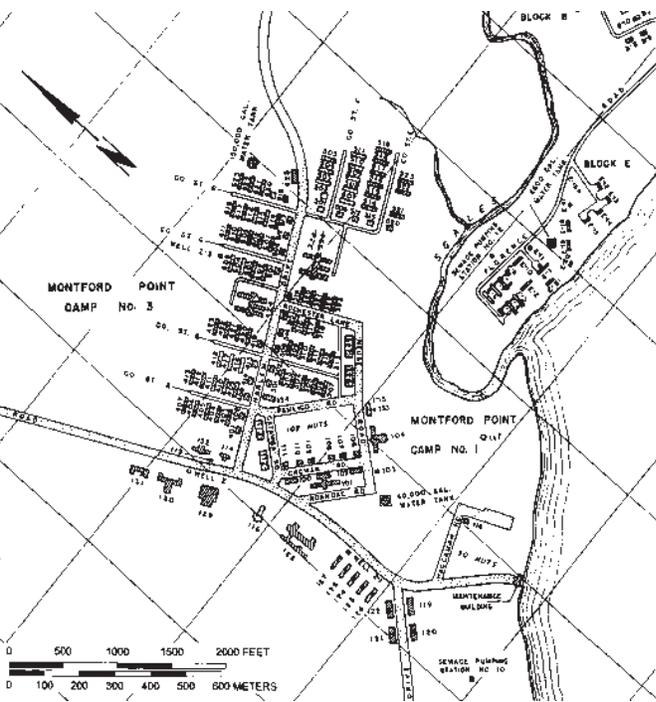
Under the terms of the Lend-Lease Act of March 1941, the United States agreed to provide training facilities for the armed forces of its allies. The first foreign marine unit to be trained in the U.S. was the First Brigade of the Royal Netherlands Marines, a unit composed of various members of the Dutch military and reconstituted at Camp Lejeune in December 1944. Here they occupied "special areas at Hadnot Point and Montford Point" while undergoing a training regimen similar to that of American Marines. After about nine months they transferred to Camp Davis, the former Army post at Holly Ridge. The Dutch Marines were the last Marines to occupy that post during the war period. One unit shipped out for duty in Malaysia in November 1945, and another left in December 1945. This special branch of the Training Command, Camp Lejeune, was dissolved by the end of the year.

## The African-American Marine Training Experience, Montford Point

Since the founding of the Marine Corps in 1775, no African Americans had served in the Corps other than a few during the American Revolution. Of the other major branches of the military, African Americans could serve in the Army only in all-black units, which were separated from white units "[in] tactical organization, in physical location, [and] in human contacts . . . as completely as possible." African Americans had a long history of service in the Navy, but between 1922 and 1942 the Navy restricted their enlistment except as stewards or messmen.

The radical about-face in the Navy Department's policy in early 1942 resulted not only from an urgent need for additional military personnel, but also from domestic politics. In the Depression-weary early 1940s, African Americans' frustration with the discrimination practiced by private industry and the armed services had reached a fever pitch. In 1940-1941 they suffered from more unemployment and poverty "than most whites had known during the worst year of the depression." Jobs in the expanding defense industries remained closed to them, and opportunities in the military remained as restricted as ever, although all the services were taking on record numbers of white recruits.

By early 1942 it had become apparent that "the existing system [of essentially excluding African Americans from the military] involved an unacceptable waste of manpower." In April 1942, after continued pressure from



1943 map showing layout of Montford Point Camps No. 1 and No. 3.



President Roosevelt, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox advised the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard that they would soon be required to accept African Americans for service in capacities other than messmen. In May, based on a plan drafted by the Corps, the Navy made public the Marines' intention to enlist 1,000 African Americans per month beginning 1 June, and to form "a racially segregated 900-man defense battalion" to be trained at Marine Barracks New River, which was then under construction.

The Marine Corps for the most part followed the example of the Army in its policies toward African-American personnel. Its aim was to maintain the strictest segregation possible from boot camp through active duty, to prevent black noncommissioned officers (NCOs) from outranking or commanding whites, and to ensure that "few, if any" black NCOs shared the same rank as white NCOs in any unit. Qualified or promising recruits were to be advanced as quickly as possible to become NCOs, at which time they would replace white NCOs.

In April 1942 the Montford Point area of the camp was designated as the first Marine Corps training camp for African-American recruits. Unlike white Marines, who went to boot camp at either Parris Island or San Diego and were then sent elsewhere for advanced training, except for a few specialist schools at neighboring Camp Davis, the entire training regimen for African Americans was to be based at Montford Point. The Marine Corps policy, following the example used by the U.S. Army, which also segregated black troops, stipulated that black and white Marines would experience exactly the same training, discipline, and have separate but identical recreational facilities on Marine Corps posts.

When the Commandant of the Marine Corps issued the order in April 1942 to begin constructing the African-American training center, Montford Point was already the site of a Marine encampment. The Post Troops of Marine Barracks New River had recently moved there from the Tent Camp Area and would stay until their permanent facilities at Hadnot Point were completed (August 1942). This was a tent camp, but it included several buildings acquired with the land. In any case, it was clearly inadequate for the approximately 1,360 enlisted men and 44 officers of the base defense battalion that was scheduled to begin arriving in August 1942. In July 1942 temporary troop housing was increased at Montford Point by the erection of 150 additional portable (Homosote) huts.

One hundred twenty of the huts were erected in a new cantonment, Montford Point Camp No. 1, which was completed in August 1942. The first African-American Marine recruits arrived on 26 August, and the 51st Composite Defense Battalion was activated before the month was out. Training began that September. Howard P. Perry of Charlotte, North Carolina, was the first African-American recruit to set foot in Montford Point. During eight weeks of boot camp each recruit received the same weapons and field training, physical conditioning, and instruction in garrison-type subjects as their white counterparts. Two weeks of preliminary marksmanship training was conducted at Montford Point,



Sgt. Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson looking over new recruits at Montford Point, 1943.

culminated by a week of live firing at the Rifle Range. Until the cantonment for them at the range was completed, the African-American recruits were trucked to the range each day before dawn and returned to camp before nightfall.

The problems of slow recruitment began to ease with the activation of the selective service system, and, beginning in January 1943, 1,000 African-American Marines were to be drafted per month. Until that time the duty assignments available to these new Marines were limited to the 51st Composite Defense Battalion, the messmen's branch, and duties as messmen in general messes, chauffeurs, messengers, post exchange clerks, janitors, maintenance, and policing. But the great influx of African Americans in early 1943 was clearly more than the 51st Defense Battalion could accommodate, so the Secretary of the Navy authorized the creation of the 52nd Defense Battalion, the Marine Corps Messman Branch (later changed to Steward's Branch), and the first of 63 combat support companies (depot and ammunition companies).

Following the activation of the draft and the corresponding influx of new recruits, Montford Point was substantially enlarged during the first half of 1943, both organizationally and physically. New post buildings, constructed of structural tile and stucco because of the shortage and expense of other materials, were arranged in a string along the western side of the main road (Montford Point Landing Road) leading in and out of the camp. Facilities included an administration building, a hostess house, a new infirmary, a new brig, the post theater/gymnasium, and a set of four classroom buildings.

By March 1943 a new 1,000-man encampment, Montford Point Camp No. 2, was placed below the original cantonment, near the end of the point. After finishing basic training in the main camp area, troops assigned to the Messman Branch or a depot or ammunition company were billeted in Camp No. 2 for final training before they shipped out for active duty. Camp No. 2A, close to but still separate from Camp No. 2, housed all of Montford Point's white officers and special enlisted personnel.

Montford Point Camp No. 3 was built around the northwestern and northeastern sides of Camp No. 1, and although it was identified as a separate phase of construction, Camp No. 3 was essentially an extension of the original encampment. By mid-1943 the Recruit Depot Battalion, the Motor Transport School, and the African-American cadre (post personnel) had moved into Camp No. 3. Part of the 51st Defense Battalion was also billeted in Camp No. 3, with a few companies and batteries (such as communications and searchlight units) scattered elsewhere in Camp No. 3 wherever space was available. In September 1943 the entire 51st Defense Battalion moved into several of the former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) barracks at Camp Knox, sharing the camp with the War Dog Training School.

The 1st Marine Ammunition Company was organized at Montford Point in September 1943, and from October 1943 to September 1944 two depot companies and one ammunition company were activated at Montford Point each month. Ultimately, 51 depot companies and 12 ammunition companies would be formed at Montford Point. Ironically, the men in these units, most of which were posted forward to support combat units in the Pacific, experienced more fighting than the 51st and 52nd Defense Battalions, which had been trained for combat.



African-American Marines fighting during World War II received their training at segregated facilities located at Montford Point.

Most African-American Marines were discharged at Montford Point in 1945-1946. Unlike their white counterparts, African-Americans returned from overseas duty with their units rather than individually in order to maintain racial segregation. The Recruit Depot was disbanded, and the Homosote huts of Camp No. 1 were removed immediately after the war. Even after demobilization had been achieved, the Marine Corps kept Montford Point active; the Corps was still segregated and all African-American Marines were still trained there. Following the desegregation of the Corps in 1949, Montford Point Camp became the home of several service support schools.

## Marine Corps Women's Reserves

Women first served in the Marine Corps during World War I, taking over clerical jobs to "free a Marine to fight," and this phenomenon was repeated in World War II for the same purpose. In November 1942 a much-needed increase in manpower resulted in the establishment of the Marine Corps Women's Reserves (MCWR or WR), whose official birthday was 13 February 1943. When enrollment opened in February 1943, women (all of whom were white, as the WR did not accept black enrollments during the war) joined in sizeable numbers, and the Women's Reserves easily met its quotas ahead of schedule. Rates of enlistment and the Marines' general acceptance of the Women's Reserves made the new program a success, but the WR was never considered anything but a "wartime expedient" and there was never any question that women Marines would be assigned only to non-combat support jobs.

Initially, the women, both officers and enlisted, received training with the Navy's Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and Hunter College in New York City, but by summer 1943 the New River base had been designated as the principal training center for the women Marines. At the beginning of 1943 the WR were quartered in Regimental Area 1, the location of the barracks, classrooms, and administrative offices of the MCWR schools. In March 1943 Camp Lejeune's own WR Battalion (women post troops) was quartered in a separate Women's Reserve Area, which was placed adjacent to the Post Troops Area since it would involve the least amount of new site development. Brick buildings similar to



On 10 November 1945, Frederick C. Branch of Hamlet, North Carolina, became the first African-American commissioned officer in the Marine Corps. Here, his wife Peggy pins the insignia of 2dLt on his uniform. Three other African-Americans were commissioned the following year.



Newly arrived "boots" begin learning basic maneuvers upon arrival at New River, 1943.



A new recruit is shown the Women's Reserve area at New River.



In 1944, Maine Congresswoman Margaret Chase Smith, then the only woman member of the House Naval Affairs Committee, visited the Women Reserves at New River.

those in Regimental Areas 1 through 5 were erected there along streets named Virginia Dare Drive, Molly Pitcher Drive, and Lucy Brewer Avenue, to commemorate famous women in American history. While the architectural style and layout of the permanent structures resembled those already erected at the base, special features, such as laundry rooms, ironing boards, extra outlets "for electric irons," and comfortably equipped lounge rooms, were also provided for the women. Today the street names are the only remaining clues as to the area's original function.

The advance echelon of 10 female officers arrived at Camp Lejeune in April 1943, followed by 145 enlisted personnel on 1 May. Little more than a month later, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Schools were organized. Boot camp, Officers' Candidate School, a few specialized schools, and thereafter all WR training were centralized at Camp Lejeune. In July 1943 more women began arriving for basic and advanced training at Camp Lejeune. Seventy-five officer candidates and 525 recruits arrived on 16 July, and new classes arrived bi-weekly until approximately 3,000 women were training at Camp Lejeune. The first women officer candidates were commissioned at Camp Lejeune in August 1943. In November Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox arrived at the base to personally address the seventh Women's Reserves officers' class, which included Eugenia Lejeune, daughter of the famous general for whom the base was named.

Women's Reservists were expected to meet Marine Corps standards for appearance and discipline, and they learned to drill like their male counterparts. And WR were the only military women to receive combat training. After boot camp they trained in the MCWR Schools, the Quartermaster School, the Cooks and Bakers School, and the Motor Transport School, but later they were permitted to enter other training courses at the base and various other schools throughout the country. During World War II the women continued to fill clerical positions but also worked as parachute riggers, mechanics, radio operators, mapmakers, welders, and in motor transport support. Approximately 23,000 women joined the Corps during World War II, virtually all of whom were trained at Camp Lejeune. In 1948 the U.S. Congress passed the "Women's Armed Service Integration Act," making women a permanent part of the Marine Corps and allowing them regular status. Henceforth they were no longer Women's Reserves (WR), they were Women Marines (WM).

## Aviation Facilities at New River

Aviation training has been part of Camp Lejeune's mission since its beginning. Although the Marine Corps subsequently developed the air station at Havelock (MCAS Cherry Point), the New River base needed an airfield of its own for emergency purposes and for various training functions, which included the training of Paramarines. Peterfield Point, located southeast of the Tent Camp, was chosen as the site of this facility in late 1941. Throughout the war years it was variously referred to as the Emergency Landing Field, the Glider Base, the Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Facility (MCAAF) at Camp Lejeune, or simply the airfield at Peterfield Point. By October 1942 a "Glider Training Base" consisting of three 5,000-foot runways, taxiways and warm-up pad, a seaplane ramp down to the New River, and "glider repair shops" had been built at Peterfield Point.



The first squadron to train at New River, Marine Bombing Squadron (VMB)-612, arrived in 1943. The squadron's PBJ bombers, Army B-25 Mitchells modified for Marine use, pioneered the application of aircraft-mounted radar. By 1943 further additions at Peterfield Point included six buildings, which were mostly Quonset huts, some tents, and three airplane hangars. Of these only the Operations Building (LF-1 [AS-820]) and a transformer shed (LF-3 [AS-819]) are still standing. The airfield was, and continues to be, under command of Marine Corps Air Bases East at MCAS Cherry Point. At the end of World War II Peterfield Point, designated as a MCAAF, was closed and placed into caretaker status, but was still used sporadically for weapons training or as an outlying field to Cherry Point.



Aerial view of Peterfield Point, Camp Lejeune, 1941.

## The War Ends

On the deck of the battleship USS Missouri, 2 September 1945, V-J Day, World War II ended with the formal surrender of Japan, six years and one day after the war had begun. The United States Marine Corps, which had been long admired for its distinguished military history but had been little more than a footnote to American orders of battle in previous conflicts, had risen to the status of an essential contributor to Allied victory by bearing much of the burden of the Pacific campaign and, even more importantly, by bringing to the worldwide struggle what is considered by most historians as one of the most far-reaching tactical innovations of the war: the Marine Corps doctrine of amphibious warfare. Every successful Allied amphibious landing in World War II was based mostly or entirely on the doctrine and techniques developed and taught by the United States Marine Corps.

V-J Day saw the Marine Corps at its peak strength of 485,833. The war had taken 91,718 combat casualties from its ranks. Eighty Marines were awarded the Medal of Honor (48 posthumously), and 957 received Navy Crosses. Every one of these had been the product of a Supporting Establishment that during the war had produced approximately 450,000 new Marines at the Parris Island and San Diego recruit depots and further trained tens of thousands of replacements and specialists annually to keep units at wartime strength and combat effective.

