

passing the town of Changdan on the north bank of the Imjin River and the bridges across that stream. The main battle position then crossed to the south bank of the Imjin, which it followed to the conflux of that river and the Han before shifting to the Han's south bank and continuing westward. The 5th Marines occupied the ground north of the Imjin, organizing strongpoints that in effect functioned as an outpost line for the rest of the division. The 7th Marines dug in south of the Imjin and the 1st Marines provided a reserve. The South Korean Marines formed the left of the line, south of the Imjin and along the Han.

From the end of the 72-hour period until the 45-day deadline of 13 September, the infantry companies north of the Imjin sent out each day work parties of from 25 to 100 men to finish the salvage effort begun immediately after the ceasefire took effect. By the time the task ended, the 5th Marines had retrieved some 12 tons of miscellaneous equipment, 2,000 miles of telephone line, 2,850 rolls of barbed wire and 340 of concertina wire, 19,000 pickets for use with the wire, 339,000 sand bags, and 150,000 linear feet of timber. Most of the salvaged items were incorporated on the positions being built by the regiment to defend the bulge north of the Imjin.

### Maintaining Order in the Demilitarized Zone

At the outset of its salvage operation, the 5th Marines marked the adjacent portion of the Demilitarized Zone and began controlling access to it. After constructing a so-called No-Pass Fence some 200 yards south of the near edge of the Demilitarized Zone, the regiment marked the fence with warning signs, engineer tape, and panels



Department of Defense Photo (USMC)

*Marine Sgt. Richard J. Thompson checks in on his radio at one of the checkpoints throughout the 1st Marine Division's front while patrolling the buffer zone south of the line of demarcation.*

visible from the air. Next, the 5th Marines established 21 crossing stations into the Demilitarized Zone, each one manned by at least two Marines who denied access to anyone carrying weapons or lacking authorization. As the work of salvaging material drew to a close, the regiment closed the crossing stations it no longer needed.

Each person entering the Demilitarized Zone through the area held by the 5th Marines had to show a pass issued by the regi-

ment. The salvage operation generated heavy traffic, especially in its earlier stages; indeed, vehicles passed through the crossing stations more than 3,500 times. After 13 September, when the salvage project ended, I Corps assumed responsibility for issuing passes.

Controlling access through its lines to the Demilitarized Zone and maintaining order there became continuing missions of the 1st Marine Division. The ceasefire  
*(Continued on page 596)*

## The Prisoners Return

Like the earlier exchange of sick and wounded prisoners, Operation Little Switch, the process of repatriation following the ceasefire took place within the sector held by the 1st Marine Division. Because the final exchange, appropriately named Big Switch, involved more than 10 times the number repatriated earlier, the medical facilities used in April could not meet the new challenge. A large Army warehouse at Munsan-ni, converted into a hospital by Marine engineers, replaced the old treatment center. A newly created administrative agency, the Munsan-ni Provisional Command, assumed overall responsibility for Big Switch, with the 1st Marine Division carrying out the actual processing.

When Operation Big Switch got underway on 5 August, a Marine receipt and control section, functioning as part of the provisional command, accepted the first group of prisoners at Panmunjom, checked them against the names on a roster the captors had submitted, and began sending them south along the Panmunjom Corridor. Returnees not in need of immediate medical care boarded ambulances for the drive to the Freedom Village complex at Munsan-ni. Those requiring prompt or extensive care were flown to Freedom Village in Marine helicopters; the most serious cases were then rushed either to hospital ships off Inchon or directly to hospitals in Japan.

*Ambulances carrying sick and wounded United Nations prisoners of war arrive at Freedom Village. The seriously*

Besides helping evacuate the sick or wounded, Marine helicopters played the principal role in an airlift designed to placate President Rhee, who believed that India's refusal to send troops to help defend his nation demonstrated support for North Korea and China. The United States sought to ensure his cooperation with Big Switch by promising that no Indian troops would set foot on South Korean soil. As a result, the Indian contingent involved in taking custody of the prisoners who refused repatriation flew by helicopter from ships anchored in Inchon harbor to a camp in the Demilitarized Zone.

### Processing the Freed Prisoners

At Freedom Village—South Korea operated a Liberty Village for its returnees—the newly freed prisoners underwent a medical evaluation, brought their records up to date, received new uniforms, mail, newspapers, and magazines, and ate a light meal. The steak that many of them craved would have shocked weakened digestive systems and had to wait until they had readjusted to American fare. Those former captives judged healthy enough could meet with reporters at Freedom Village and answer questions about their experiences. After a brief period of recuperation, the former prisoners embarked for the United States.

*injured were transferred directly to hospital ships at Inchon or air-evacuated to Japan.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A174375





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A174381

*For the benefit of the press and distinguished visitors, Marines maintained a map showing the progress of road convoys bringing former prisoners from Panmunjom to Freedom Village during Operation Big Switch.*

*Communist prisoners of war rip off their U.S. provided uniforms and toss them contemptuously to the ground. Shouting Communist slogans and hurling insults at United*

During the voyage, or shortly after disembarking, they described for intelligence specialists the treatment they had received at the hands of the enemy.

The fifth former prisoner to arrive at Freedom Village on 5 August turned out to be a Marine, Private First Class Alfred P. Graham, captured in July 1951. Forced labor and malnutrition left him too weak to meet with reporters at Munsan-ni, but later, at a hospital in Japan, he would describe how he had routinely been compelled to carry firewood 11 miles for the stoves at his prison camp. Two other Marines reached Munsan-ni on the first day: Sergeant Robert J. Coffee, wounded and captured in November 1950, and Private First Class Pedron E. Aviles, knocked unconscious by a Chinese rifle butt in December 1952 and taken prisoner.

The stream of returning Americans continued until 6 September, apparently with scant regard for time in captivity, physical condition, rank, or duties. For example, Private First Class Richard D. Johnson, a machine gunner in the 5th Marines captured on 25 July 1953, returned on 24 August, two days before the repatriation of Captain Jesse V. Booker, an aviator and the first Marine taken prisoner, who was captured on 7 August 1950. Some of the returnees had been given up for dead, among them: First Lieutenant Paul L. Martelli, a fighter pilot officially listed as killed in action; First Lieutenant Robert J. O'Shea, an infantry officer whose name did not appear on any list of prisoners; and Private First Class Leonard E. Steege, believed by his buddies to have been killed in the fighting at Boulder City.

Operation Big Switch continued until 6 September and resulted in the release of 88,596 prisoners, 75,823 of them

*Nations forces, they put on a propaganda show for the benefit of world newsreel cameras.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-626976



North Korean or Chinese. South Koreans, both soldiers and Marines, totaled 7,862, and those repatriated to other countries in the United Nations coalition numbered 4,911, 3,597 of them Americans, including 197 Marines.

Although the overwhelming majority of prisoners agreed to repatriation, more than 22,000 did not, entrusting themselves to the custody of the Indian troops overseeing the process on behalf of the five officially neutral nations. The Indians released 22,467 former prisoners; two-thirds of them Chinese, after a final attempt at persuasion allowed by the armistice agreement was made. Most of the Chinese were veterans of the Nationalist forces, who had been captured on the mainland and impressed into the service of the People's Republic. Once released, these veterans joined the Nationalists who had fled the mainland and established themselves on Taiwan and its satellite isles. The North Koreans disappeared into the populace of the South.

A total of 357 United Nations troops refused repatriation, 333 of them South Korean. Only 23 Americans—none of them a Marine—chose to stay behind, along with one British serviceman, a Royal Marine. Two of the American soldiers, swayed by the final efforts at persuasion, changed their minds at the last minute. Over the years, another 12 reconsidered their decision and returned to the United States.

*MajGen Vernon E. Megee, center, Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, introduces former prisoner of war, Capt Gerald Fink, to MajGen Randolph McC. Pate,*

## Behind Barbed Wire

As had happened in previous wars, Americans captured in Korea endured mistreatment from their captors, whether inflicted deliberately or the result of callousness. In this war, unlike the earlier ones, prisoners served as pawns in an ideological contest in which the Chinese and North Koreans tried to convert them to Communism or, failing that, to force them to make statements that would further the Communist cause in its world-wide struggle against capitalism. The methods of conversion or coercion varied from unceasing lectures extolling Communism to threats and torture, with the harshest treatment meted out for acts of resistance. By using these techniques, the prison staffs sought a variety of objectives that included maintaining order, persuading prisoners to embrace Communism, obtaining military information, or extorting confessions to alleged war crimes, statements designed to turn worldwide public opinion against the United States. By 1952, the enemy was focusing in particular on forcing captured fliers of all the Services to confess to participating in germ warfare.

The vigor of the persuasion or punishment varied according to the camp, the whim of the guards, or the policy of the moment. In July 1951, for example, the Chinese,

*Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, at Freedom Village.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A174480





Department of Defense Photo (USN) 627709

*Marine prisoner of war 1stLt Richard Bell is dusted with DDT prior to his departure for Inchon. Dusting with DDT was mandatory for all Marines leaving Korea for the United States.*

who had assumed custody of the prisoners, announced a policy of leniency that offered organized athletic competition among the prisoners and promised better treatment in return for cooperation. The new policy aimed at winning over world opinion while converting "reactionaries"—those prisoners who resisted indoctrination—into "progressives," who did not.

The new leniency did not apply to Lieutenant Colonel William G. Thrash, an arch-reactionary. Accused of "Criminal Acts and Hostile Attitude," he spent eight months in solitary confinement. In January 1952, he was beaten, dragged outside, and exposed overnight to the deadly cold, an ordeal that nearly killed him.

To facilitate the indoctrination of the prisoners, a process that came to be called brainwashing, the enemy tried to shatter the chain-of-command. He separated officers from enlisted men and tried to place progressives in places of leadership. The reactionaries fought back by creating a network of their own to frustrate the Chinese tactics by restoring military discipline.

Lieutenant Colonel Thrash of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Major John N. McLaughlin of the 1st Marine Division proved especially successful in creating solidarity among the prisoners. After recovering from the effects of his confinement, Thrash stirred up resistance to the indoctrination effort and to a related attempt to encourage the writing of letters that might serve as Chinese propaganda. He also warned that interrogators would try to pressure accused reactionaries into implicating fellow prisoners who shared reactionary views. McLaughlin created a chain-of-command using five veteran Marine Corps noncommissioned officers and, like Thrash, helped form the escape committees that took shape shortly before the armistice.

Resistance to the Chinese might be passive, essentially an internal rejection of Communist attempts at indoctrination, or active, with a range of actions that varied from symbolic to practical to defiant. Symbolic gestures included a celebration of the Marine Corps birthday on 10 November 1952, featuring a cake made from eggs, sugar, and flour stolen from the Chinese. A 22-inch crucifix, carved by Captain Gerald Fink with improvised tools and given the title "Christ in Barbed Wire," symbolized both hope and resistance. Captain Fink also fashioned practical implements, an artificial leg for an Air Force officer, Major Thomas D. Harrison, injured when his plane was shot down, and crude stethoscopes for the medical personnel among the prisoners.

Captain Fink's handiwork also played a part in an effort to keep track of as many of the prisoners as possible. The hollow portion of the artificial leg he had made contained a list of names, the dates of death for those known to have perished, and details of treatment while in captivity. The Chinese forced Harrison—a cousin of Lieutenant General William K. Harrison, Jr., the chief United Nations truce negotiator—to give them the leg when he was repatriated, but the information survived. The Air Force officer had a copy in the hollow handgrip of his crutch, and another prisoner carried a copy in a hollowed-out part of his cane.

Escape was the ultimate act of defiance, and also the most difficult. No underground existed in the Korean War, as there had been during World War II, to shepherd escaped prisoners or downed airmen through hostile territory to safety. Moreover, the average American could not blend as easily into the civilian populace of North Korea as he might have in Europe.

Despite the difficulty, captured Marines made several attempts to escape from various prison camps. Unfortunately, most attempts ended in failure. Sergeant Donald M. Griffith slipped away from a guard who had fallen asleep only to be recaptured when he asked a peasant family for food. Captain Byron H. Beswick, although badly burned when his aircraft was shot down, tried with four other prisoners to escape from a column on the march, but guards recaptured them all. While being held prior to transfer to a prison camp, Private First Class Graham, the first Marine repatriated in Operation Big Switch, joined another Marine in an escape attempt, but both were recaptured try-

ing to obtain food. After one unsuccessful try, punished as usual by a period of solitary confinement, First Lieutenant Robert J. Gillette, accompanied for a time by a South African pilot, succeeded in remaining at large for 10 days. Lieutenant Colonel Thrash and Major McLaughlin, together with First Lieutenant Richard Bell, got beyond the barbed wire, only to be cornered and forced to try to sneak back into the compound; Bell, however, was caught and punished with solitary confinement. Captain Martelli, who was reported killed but literally returned from the dead as a result of Big Switch, escaped and evaded recapture for 10 days. The final attempt, the product of one of the recently formed escape committees, took place on 1 July 1953, but the escapees remained at large for only a short time. With a ceasefire, and presumably an exchange of prisoners, drawing nearer, escape planning was suspended.

On rare occasions, special circumstances enabled captured Marines to escape and rejoin the United Nations forces. In August 1950, Private First Class Richard E. Barnett, driving a jeep, took a wrong turn and was captured by North Korean soldiers, who confined him in a cellar. When his captors took him along on a night attack, he managed to lag behind, threw a rock to distract the guard nearest him, and bolted into the darkness. He avoided recapture and rejoined his embattled unit before it had reported him missing.

Other successful escapes took place in May 1951. On the 15th, four days after their capture, Corporal Harold L. Kidd and Private First Class Richard R. Grindle, both from Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, made their way to United Nations lines. Later that month, a group of 18 Marines and an Army interpreter assigned to the 1st Marine Division were forced to join Chinese troops near the 38th Parallel. As the prisoners approached the frontlines, the Army interpreter, Corporal Saburo Shimamura, reported to the senior Marine, First Lieutenant Frank E. Cold that their captors planned to release them near Marine lines. The Chinese issued safe-conduct passes, lending credence to the report, but rather than wait to see if the Chinese would do as they said, the group took advantage of the distraction caused by United Nations artillery registering nearby and fled into the hills. They evaded the patrols looking for them; spread out improvised signal panels, and caught the attention of an aerial observer who reported their location. On 25 May, the day after their escape, two Army tanks clattered up to the men and escorted them to the nearest United Nations position.

In the spring of 1951, the enemy actually did release two prisoners, presumably as an overture to the policy of leniency announced shortly afterward. Whatever the reason, Corporal William S. Blair and Private First Class Bernard W. Insko were turned loose near the frontlines. Captured on 24 April, they regained their freedom on 12 May.

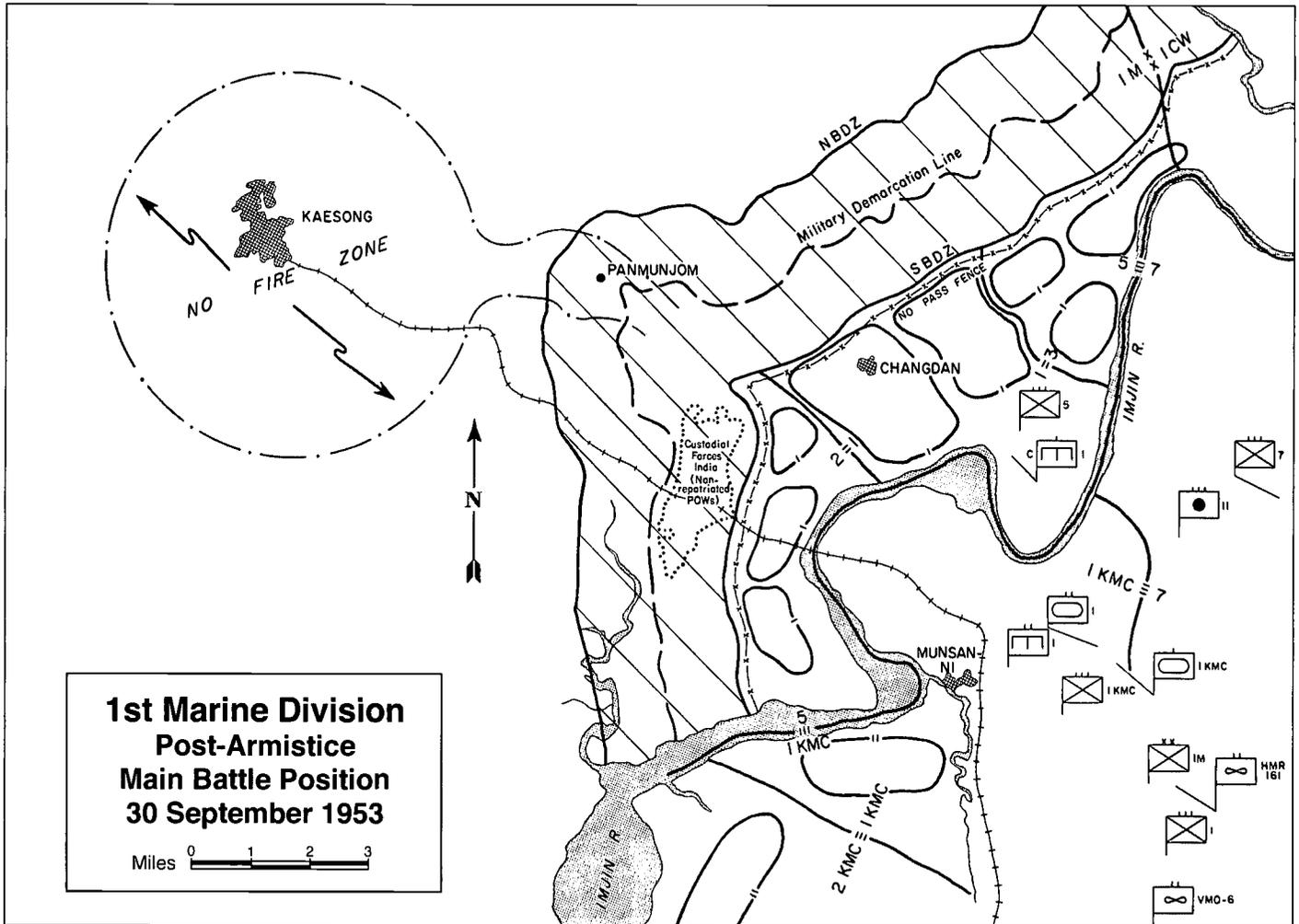
At times, captured Marines sought to invent fictitious statements that would ease the pressure on them by creating an illusion of cooperation. Master Sergeant John T. Cain,

an enlisted pilot, had the misfortune of being mistaken for a senior officer because of his age and military bearing, thus becoming a prized target for the interrogators. He tried to satisfy them with elaborate details about a non-existent logistics command in which he claimed to have served. The pressure continued, however, until he was taken to a hillside one day, blindfolded, and subjected to a mock execution. He spent 84 days in solitary confinement before the Chinese intelligence officers either gave up or realized their error.

Attempts to outsmart the enemy could end in tragic failure, as demonstrated by the fate of Colonel Frank H. Schwable, the chief of staff of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, who became a prisoner when his aircraft was shot down on a reconnaissance flight in July 1952. Deprived of sleep and medical care, subjected to relentless pressure to confess to war crimes, he tried to frustrate the enemy by making a statement so obviously false that it not only would fail to help the Chinese, but also demonstrate their use of coercion. This action, however, merely whetted the appetite of interrogators determined to exploit his rank and position. They rewrote the document to create an illusion of truth, and forced him to choose between endorsing the revised version or spending the rest of his life in prison. After he was freed as Operation Big Switch drew to an end, a Court of Inquiry—functioning like a civilian grand jury—recommended that he not face a court-martial for aiding the enemy because he had resisted to the best of his ability. The inquiry also found that his future in the Marine Corps was “seriously impaired” by his conduct as a prisoner, thus putting an end to a once-promising career. Only one Marine faced a trial, an enlisted man convicted of fraternizing with the enemy and dismissed from the Service.

The 221 Marines captured in Korea endured an unexpected ordeal. Prisoners in past wars had suffered malnutrition, forced labor, and other acts of cruelty, but never before had their captors tried systematically to coerce them into participating in a propaganda campaign. Despite the harsh treatment the Chinese meted out, 197 Marines survived captivity and returned in Operation Big Switch.

Five Marines received official recognition for their steadfast conduct and strong leadership while prisoners of war. Lieutenant Colonel Thrash received a gold star signifying his second Legion of Merit. Major McLaughlin also earned the Legion of Merit, as did Major Walter R. Harris, another reactionary, who set up a communications network in one camp by designating locations where messages could be hidden and picked up. Harris also took advantage of the policy of leniency by organizing Spanish-language classes as cover for providing information and encouragement to offset Chinese attempts at indoctrination. Captain John P. Flynn, who refused despite torture to confess to war crimes and encouraged others to resist, earned the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. Master Sergeant Cain, who did not yield to solitary confinement and threats of execution, received a Letter of Commendation with Ribbon.



**1st Marine Division  
Post-Armistice  
Main Battle Position  
30 September 1953**

Miles 0 1 2 3

(Continued from page 590)

agreement specified that each side, Communist and United Nations, maintain a force of 1,000 "civil police" to preserve the status of the demilitarized buffer. Since no civilian law enforcement agencies existed to provide this manpower, troops had to function as police. For maintaining the security of the Demilitarized Zone along its portion of the main battle position, the division on 4 September activated the 1st Provisional Demilitarized Zone Police Company, drawing men from its infantry regiments. Attached to the 5th Marines, the police company, which initially numbered 104 men under Captain Samuel G. Goich, took over the crossing stations, manned observation posts to monitor the demilitarized Zone, and escorted members of the Military Armistice

Commission, the Joint Observation Teams, and the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission along with other persons authorized to enter the zone. According to a Marine Corps journalist, the average enlisted man assigned to the police company had to know "map reading on an officer level, first aid, radio, and understand the fine print of the ceasefire agreement like a striped-trouser diplomat."

Besides providing armed escorts—usually one-half-dozen Marines carrying rifles and pistols—and staffing fixed observation posts, the police company operated roving patrols. Traveling in radio-equipped jeeps these groups reported any unusual activity in the Demilitarized Zone. In case of a genuine emergency, a platoon, standing by as a mobile

reserve, would respond.

Marine Demilitarized Zone police manning the observation posts monitored aerial activity as well as events on the ground. Besides keeping a record of all flights, they made sure that light reconnaissance planes had an appropriate clearance and that helicopters operating in front of the 5th Marines also had obtained permission for each flight. Helicopters responding to medical emergencies need not obtain specific approval from the ground commander.

The truce specified that prisoners of war who had refused repatriation to North Korea and China would enter the Demilitarized Zone, where their fellow countrymen, joined by Polish and Czech members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, could try

to persuade them to return. The Communist persuasion teams required escorts from the police company, which therefore had to be tripled in size.

### Main Battle Position

After the fighting ended, the 1st Marine Division formed the left of the line held by I Corps. The Commonwealth Division dug in on the right of the Marines then, in

*Machine gunners stand-by with loaded belts as riflemen take positions on the forward line. When the "Black Alert" siren sounded, Marines did not know whether it was "for real," but truce or not, they were always ready.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A349038



succession, the 1st Republic of Korea Division and the U.S. 7th Infantry Division. The Imjin River continued to challenge the ability of the Marines to move men and cargo, perhaps to a greater degree than before the armistice. A shallower and less defensible crescent of Marine-controlled ground lay north of the stream, which separated the supply center at Munsan-ni from the lines manned by the 5th Marines and forced the division to

rely on bridges and fords to transport material and reinforcements across the Imjin. Because the salient was more vulnerable than before, the division would have to react faster and in greater strength to repulse any new attack there.

The main battle position began at the No-Pass Fence, which served in effect as a trip wire to warn of an attack across the Demilitarized Zone, and consisted of successive lines of mutually supporting strongpoints, each stronger than the one to its front, that extended from the near edge of the Demilitarized Zone to the vicinity of the old Kansas and Wyoming Lines. Indeed, wherever possible, Marine engineers incorporated portions of these two lines in the new battle position. North of the Imjin, the 5th Marines manned the equivalent of an outpost line of resistance, in which firepower from large numbers of automatic weapons took the place of manpower. Within the northern salient, Colonel Tschirgi, the regimental commander, placed the 3d Battalion on the right, the 1st Battalion in the center, and the 2d Battalion on the left. South of the Imjin, the 7th Marines defended the right of the line, with the 1st Regiment of South Korean Marines in the center and the 1st Marines, the division reserve, manning a series of positions behind the South Koreans. The 11th Marines emplaced its howitzers behind the 7th Marines and prepared to fire in general support of the division.

In October, however, a major reshuffling took place south of the river. The ongoing exchange of prisoners—which brought to the Demilitarized Zone large numbers of North Koreans and Chinese who had refused repatriation, along with their former comrades who were trying to persuade the defectors to return—raised the



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A365246

*MajGen Randolph McC. Pate breaks ground for a new tuberculosis hospital donated and built by the 1st Marine Division. The completed hospital eventually bore a highly polished brass plaque, bearing a Marine Corps emblem and the words, "Built by the First Marine Division."*

specter of another South Korean attempt to disrupt the settlement. To guard against this eventuality, troops from the reserve regiment, the 1st Marines, took over the sector manned by South Korean Marines.

Clearly, the strongpoints manned by the 5th Marines formed the most vulnerable portion of the new battle position. The regiment held a frontage of 36,000 yards, about three times the usual width during the Korean War. Under Colonel Rathvon McC. Tompkins, who assumed command on 2

August, the 5th Marines fortified hills that included wartime Outposts Marilyn and Kate, along with Boulder City and the Hook. Behind this arc of mutually supporting strongpoints, the regiment established bridgehead positions to protect the vital river crossings.

Maintaining an adequate supply of ammunition to defend the salient posed a problem because of the reliance on automatic weapons and the range at which they would have to open fire. Not only did the large number of machine guns devour .30-caliber

ammunition faster than the usual mix of these weapons, rifles, and automatic rifles, the gunners would have to open fire sooner than normal if they were to close the gaps between outposts. As a result, the amount of ammunition at the outposts had to be increased and the reserve stocks moved forward from regimental to battalion dumps. These changes, however, could not solve the problem of dividing a finite supply of ammunition among the regiments and replenishing the 5th Marines by bridges or ferries vulnerable to



Courtesy of *Leatherneck Magazine*

*Men of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, poke holes in a frozen Korean stream and ignore the icy waters to scrub their clothing before stowing it in their seabags for the trip back to the States.*

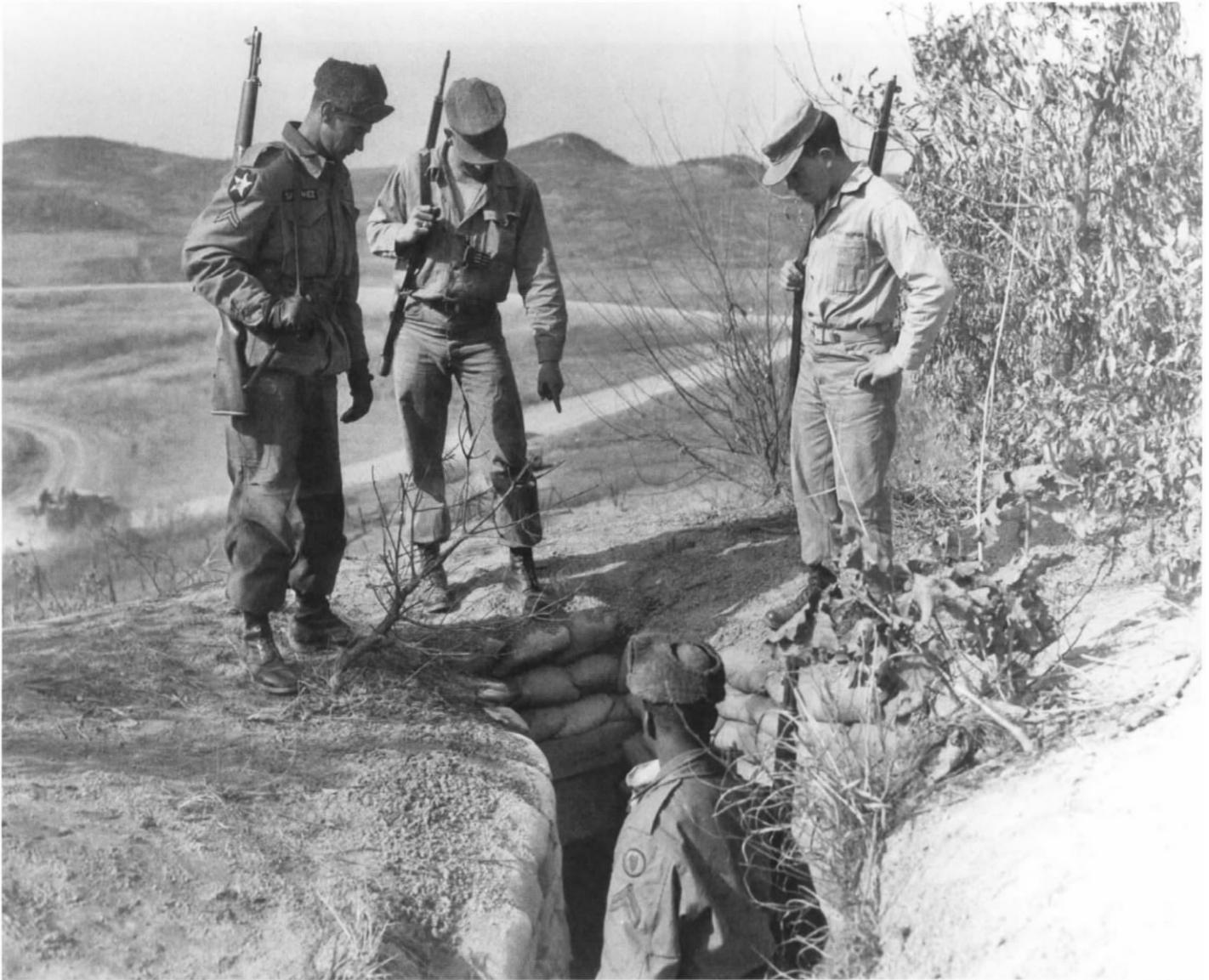
flood, ice, or—if the fighting resumed—hostile fire.

The ceasefire provided an opportunity for training to hone the cutting edge of the Marine forces. Within the division, individuals and small units practiced their skills, and all but two of the infantry battalions took part in landing exercises. Besides remain-

ing on alert in case the fighting resumed, Marine airmen also trained, sometimes in conjunction with Air Force squadrons. They practiced bombing and ground-controlled intercepts and supported an amphibious exercise at Tokchok-to Island involving the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines.

The division, as part of the

Armed Forces Assistance to Korea program, also undertook 51 building projects—42 to them schools. As each school was completed it received kits containing instructional supplies and athletic gear. These extras were made possible solely by the donations of 1st Division Marines and matching funds from CARE, the Cooperative



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A366243

*Two Marines from Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, show men of the U.S. Army's 24th Infantry Division their new positions near the Demilitarized Zone. The division's attitude about returning to Korea from Japan was summed up by two disillusioned privates: "Man, sixteen months in this forsaken place."*

for American Remittances to Europe.

The post-armistice activity included athletics that provided a break from training and routine housekeeping. Athletic competition took place among Marine units and between organizations and bases. Indeed, some Marines stationed at Pyongtaek played on an Air Force softball team representing that airfield.

Routine housekeeping continued, however. Each day, for example, latrines had to be burned out, primarily to prevent disease but

also to eliminate foul odors. A Marine poured a quart or so of gasoline into the privy, tossed in a lighted match, and stepped outside. Too much gasoline could produce spectacular results, as Corporal Lee Ballenger recalled. A buddy of his grew impatient when a succession of matches seemed to fizzle, poured gasoline directly from the can and was knocked down by a blast that splintered the wooden structure. Luckily, the flame did nothing worse than singe the Marine's hair and eyebrows.

The 1st Marine Division manned its portion of the main battle position for almost two years after the ceasefire. General Pate, in command at the time of the truce, was succeeded by Major General Robert H. Pepper (12 May 1954 to 22 July 1954), Major General Robert E. Hogaboom (23 July 1954 to 17 January 1955), and Major General Merrill B. Twining, who took over on 18 January 1955 and would bring the division home.

The first hint of the division's redeployment came from the

White House when a reporter “blandly asked the President if he could lend official credence to the ‘authoritative sources’ announcement that the First Division would be pulled out of Korea.” The reporter gained a “grinning admission” from President Dwight D. Eisenhower that the Marines would be moved in the near future.

When the news hit Korea, it was greeted with mixed enthusiasm and skepticism—every Marine knew that “in the near future” could mean months or years. But soon clippings sent by mothers, wives, and girl friends began to arrive, lending credibility to the move. Marines who had been wary now became convinced. However, there was little spontaneous rejoic-

ing; few celebrations or sayonara parties were planned.

Soon there was a gradual switch from hours spent on training to the packing and crating of gear. Most trucks, tanks, tents, clothing, and other “common” gear would stay in Korea, while all Marine Corps “peculiar” gear would accompany the division to Camp Pendleton, California. Despite contemporary newspaper reports to the contrary, there was no massive swapping of troops from the 1st to the 3d Marine Division in Japan. The only exceptions were a Rocket Battery and an Armored Amphibian Company.

In mid-March 1955, the division turned its sector of the demarcation line over to the U.S. Army’s

24th Infantry Division. Every Marine hoped that lugging water up steep, slimy hills, helmet baths, rations, sleeping bags, pot-belly stoves, long-handled skivves, parkas, DDT, and Mongolian “piss cutters” would become just memories.

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, now commanded by Brigadier General Samuel S. Jack, began withdrawing some of its components from South Korea in June 1956. The wing remained in the Far East, however. General Jack established his headquarters at Iwakuni Naval Air Station, Japan. Some of the wing’s elements moved to Japan, but others continued to operate from bases in South Korea.

*The 7th Marines rode trucks to the Munsan-ni railhead where they wait to board trains for Inchon. Divided into landing teams, the 7th Marines followed the 5th Marines, which was the first Marine unit to arrive in Korea.*

*Courtesy of Leatherneck Magazine*





*Packed on board small landing craft like sardines, Marines were carried out to waiting Navy transports where they easily climb the cargo net with a full pack and rifle. They were homeward bound.*

### The War in Perspective

Marine participation in the Korean War began with the desperate defense of the Pusan Perimeter, continued when the 1st Marine Division spearheaded a daring amphibious assault at Inchon, and, after the Chinese intervention forced the United Nations to withdraw from the Yalu River to the vicinity of the 38th Parallel, ended in static warfare fought along a battle line that extended across the width of the Korean peninsula. A highly mobile amphibious assault force thus became tied to fixed positions, a condition that lasted from the spring of 1952 until the armistice in July of the following year. Indeed,

by January 1953, defense overshadowed the offense, even though defensive operations required frequent and often bloody counterattacks to maintain the positions held by the United Nations. The Chinese succeeded in capturing and holding several outposts, but the 1st Marine Division clung tenaciously to its segment of the main line of resistance, helping force the enemy to agree to the ceasefire, with provisions for the exchange of prisoners of war, that had become the overriding American objective of the war.

Before North Korea invaded the South, American strategy focused on the defense of Western Europe against the Soviet Union and its satellites. The aggression in Asia

presented an unexpected challenge, which the Truman administration decided to meet, although not at the expense of weakening the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As a result, the United States fought a limited war in Korea, withholding nuclear weapons and relying with few exceptions on the weapons of World War II or improved versions of them.

In Korea, the Marines used to deadly effect the weapons they had, whether old or improved, massing artillery, supplementing the howitzers with rockets, and when necessary employing tanks as pillboxes on the battle line, but new weapons lay just over the horizon. The weight of the standard infantry weapons of World War II—for example, the M1 rifle weighing 9.5 pounds, and the Browning automatic rifle almost twice as heavy—aroused interest in lighter, fully automatic weapons like the sub-machine guns used by Chinese infantry. A lightweight automatic rifle, the M16, was therefore developed but did not become the standard weapon for Marine infantrymen until the Vietnam War. Although the steel helmet remained essentially unchanged since World War II, body armor had undergone improvement because of experience in Korea, as had the original antitank rocket launcher or Bazooka.

Infantry tactics changed to meet the evolving demands of the war on the ground. Fighting at night, especially patrol actions, received greater emphasis, for instance. Also, by the time of the battles for Berlin, East Berlin, and Boulder City in July 1953, the 1st Marine Division was committed to a defense in depth, made up of mutually supporting strongpoints, a principal followed in establishing the post-armistice main battle line.



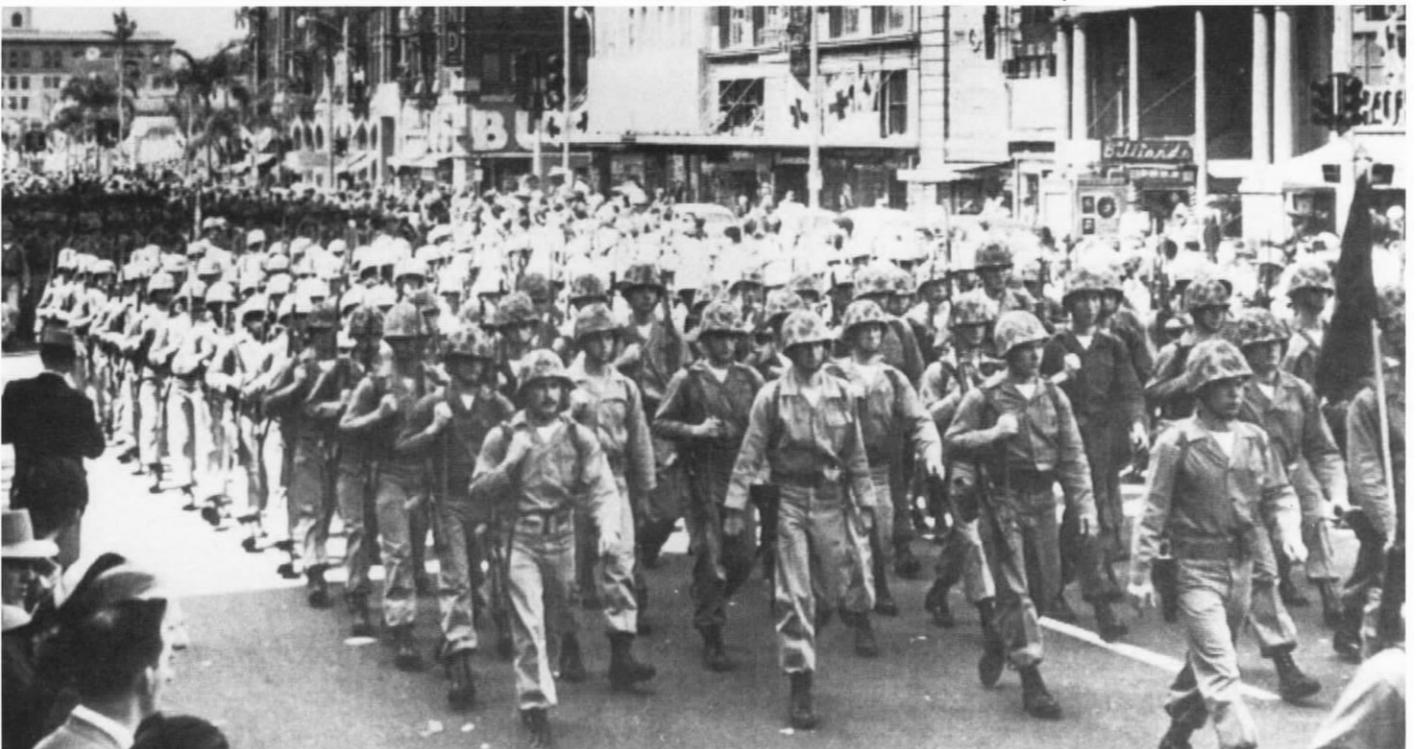
Courtesy of *Leatherneck Magazine*

*Col Raymond L. Murray, who commanded the 5th Marines during its first action in Korea almost five years before, greets the regiment's current commanding officer, Col Robert H. Ruud, upon his arrival at San Diego, California, in March 1955.*

*Marines of the 1st Division parade through downtown San Diego following their return from Korea. A hero's welcome*

*was furnished the combat-clad veterans as they marched up Broadway to Balboa Park.*

Marine Corps Historical Center Photo Collection



fully until the Vietnam conflict.

Because the Korean War had demonstrated the importance of integrated action between air and ground components, the Marine Corps in January 1953 established the 1st Provisional Air-Ground Task Force at Kaneohe in Hawaii. This unit, built around an infantry regiment and an aircraft group, stood ready for deployment throughout the Pacific.

In short, the Marine Corps had responded quickly and effectively to the peculiar demands of the Korean War without losing sight of its amphibious mission and its role as a force in readiness. To Marine eyes, the use of one of its amphibious divisions in an extended ground campaign seemed an aberration, a misapplication of

resources, no matter how well that division had fought. Because of this commitment to amphibious operations, the 1st Marine Division participated in landing exercises whenever possible during the course of the fighting, activity that may well have reminded the enemy of the abiding threat of another assault like the victory at Inchon.

After the truce went into effect, amphibious training continued in the Far East for the 1st Marine Division, until its return of the United States. In August 1953, as the Demilitarized Zone took shape, the 3d Marine Division, teamed with two aircraft groups, arrived in Japan. A program of amphibious training, which included regimental landings at Iwo Jima and Ok-

inawa, got underway while the 3d Marine Division was based in Japan and continued after its redeployment to Okinawa.

The continued existence of a force, normally one battalion, afloat with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean provided a further demonstration of the abiding orientation of the Marine Corps toward amphibious warfare. Since 1949, a succession of battalions drawn from the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, had embarked with the Sixth Fleet. Clearly, the Korean fighting in 1952 and 1953 had not converted the Marine Corps from amphibious operations to extended ground warfare, from assault to attrition, or affected its dedication to the air-ground team.

*A Douglas F3D is hauled on board ship after being ferried from Korea to Iwakuni, Japan, in June 1956. Postwar plans out by two amphibious trucks, as the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing transferred its headquarters and most of its aircraft called for the wing to occupy bases in both Korea and Japan.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A349563



## About the Author

Bernard C. Nalty, a member of the Marine Corps historical program from October 1956 to September 1961, collaborated with Henry I. Shaw, Jr., and Edwin T. Turnbladh on *Central Pacific Drive*, a volume of the *History of U. S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*. He also completed more than 14 short historical studies, some of which appeared in *Leatherneck* magazine or the *Marine Corps Gazette*. He joined the history office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1961, transferred in 1964 to the Air Force history program, and retired in 1994. Mr. Nalty has written

or edited a number of publications, including *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents*, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military*, *The Vietnam War*, *Tigers Over Asia*, *Air Power and the Fight for Khe Sanh*, and *Winged Shield, Winged Sword: A History of the U.S. Air Force*. In addition to contributing to this series on the Korean War by writing *Stalemate: U.S. Marines from Bunker Hill to the Hook*, he took part in the Marines in World War II commemorative series, completing two pamphlets, *Cape Gloucester: The Green Inferno* and *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II*.

## Sources

The best account of operations by Marines during 1953, their role in establishing the Demilitarized Zone, and their eventual withdrawal from South Korea appears in *Operations in West Korea*, volume five of *U. S. Marine Corps Operations in Korea, 1950-1953* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1972), by LtCol Pat Meid, USMCR, and Maj James M. Yingling, USMC.

The Marine Corps historical program also has dealt thoroughly with the treatment received by Marines held as prisoners of war, their reaction to deprivation and hostile pressure, and their repatriation. James Angus MacDonald has made extensive use of interviews with former prisoners in his *The Problems of U. S. Marine Corps Prisoners of War in Korea*, published by the History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, in 1988.

Walter G. Hermes discusses Marine Corps operations in his contribution to the official his-

tory of Army activity during the Korean War, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1966), a volume that deals with negotiation as well as fighting.

Martin Russ, a wartime Marine Corps infantryman, has written the best known and most revealing memoir covering the final months of the fighting, *The Last Parallel: A Marine's War Journal* (New York: Rinehart, 1957).

Personal accounts by other Marines appear in *Korean Vignettes: Faces of War* (Portland, OR: Artwork Publications, 1996), a compilation of narratives and photographs by 201 veterans of the Korean War, prepared by Arthur W. Wilson and Norman L. Stickbine.

Valuable insights and firsthand accounts are also available in *The Korean War: The Uncertain Victory; The Concluding Volume of an Oral History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), by Donald Knox with additional text by Alfred Coppel.

William H. Jantzen, a participant in one of the fiercer actions of 1953, has written a riveting account of that fight in "A Bad Night at Reno Block," in the March 1998 issue of *Leatherneck* magazine.

The *Marine Corps Gazette* has analyzed the tactics and lessons learned of the Korean War in three especially useful articles: Peter Braestrup's "Outpost Warfare" (November 1953) and "Back to the Trenches" (March 1955); and "Random Notes on Korea" (November 1955) by LtCol Roy A. Batterton. Also of use was the article by MSgt Paul Sarokin, "Going Home," in the May 1955 issue of *Leatherneck*.

The personal papers collection of the Marine Corps history program contains journals, photographs, letters, memoirs, and at least one academic paper, a master's thesis on outpost warfare by a Marine, Maj Norman W. Hicks. For events of the year 1953, the most valuable of these items were the submissions by Eldon D. Allen and Gen Vernon E. Megee.