



Department of Defense Photo (USA) SC349015

For much of the advance up the axis of the Inchon-Seoul highway, and even sometimes traveling cross-country, Marines used amphibian tractors as personnel carriers pro-

tected along the way by M-26 tanks. The North Koreans, in turn, tried to choke off these advances with ambushes and antitank mines.

Battalion advanced uneventfully and now held high ground overlooking the FBHL. His patrols reached the edge of Ascom City—

once the village of Taejong-ni and now the remnants of a huge service command that had been used by the U.S. Army during the occu-

pation—to his front. The sea was to his left.

A Korean civilian eager to assist the advancing forces, shows one of the division's reconnaissance Marines a large cache of dynamite and ammunition hidden in a storage cave. It was one of several caches uncovered by Capt Kenneth Houghton's Marines on the division's right flank.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A2821



South of the 5th Marines, Puller's 1st Marines, having spent most of the day pulling together its scattered parts, did not jump off in the new attack until about 1600. Sutter's 2d Battalion went forward on the right of the road past Kansong-ni for a thousand yards and then tied in with Roise's battalion for the night. Hawkins' 1st Battalion filled in between Sutter and Ridge. Ridge's 3d Battalion had done more hiking than fighting and at the end of the day was relieved by the Division Reconnaissance Company, under pugnacious Captain Kenneth J. Houghton, attached to the 1st Marines as the division's right flank element. Ridge's Marines went into regimental reserve. Houghton's reconnaissance Marines engaged no enemy but found huge caches of arms and ammunition.

O. P. Smith Opens His Command Post

General Craig had just gotten back from his search for a site for the division command post, when he learned that O. P. Smith, accompanied by Admiral Struble and General Shepherd, had landed. Smith was satisfied with Craig's recommended site. Craig then took him for a quick tour of the troop dispositions and at 1800 Smith officially assumed command ashore. During the day, General Almond visited Red Beach and the 5th Marines.

Smith was joined later that evening by Major General Frank E. Lowe, an Army Reserve officer and President Truman's personal observer, who had arrived unannounced. Lowe moved into the division command post. He and Smith got along famously. "His frank and disarming manner made him welcome throughout the division," remembered Smith.

More Enemy T-34 Tanks

The night of 16-17 September was quiet, so quiet, the official history remarks, that a truck coming down the highway from Seoul drove unimpeded through the Marine front lines, until finally stopped by a line of M-26 tanks several hundred yards to the rear. The tankers, the 1st Platoon, Company A, under First Lieutenant William D. Pomeroy, took a surprised NKPA officer and four enlisted men prisoner.

Lieutenant "Hog Jaw" Smith, commander of Company D, 5th Marines, from his observation post overlooking the highway was sufficiently apprehensive, however, about a sharp bend in the road to the left front of his position to outpost it. He dispatched his 2d Platoon with machine guns and



Photo by Frank Noel, Associated Press

Front-line Marines found that stripping a prisoner bare took all the fight out of him and also eliminated the possibility of hidden weapons. Rear-echelon authorities found the practice distasteful and ordered the Marines to desist.

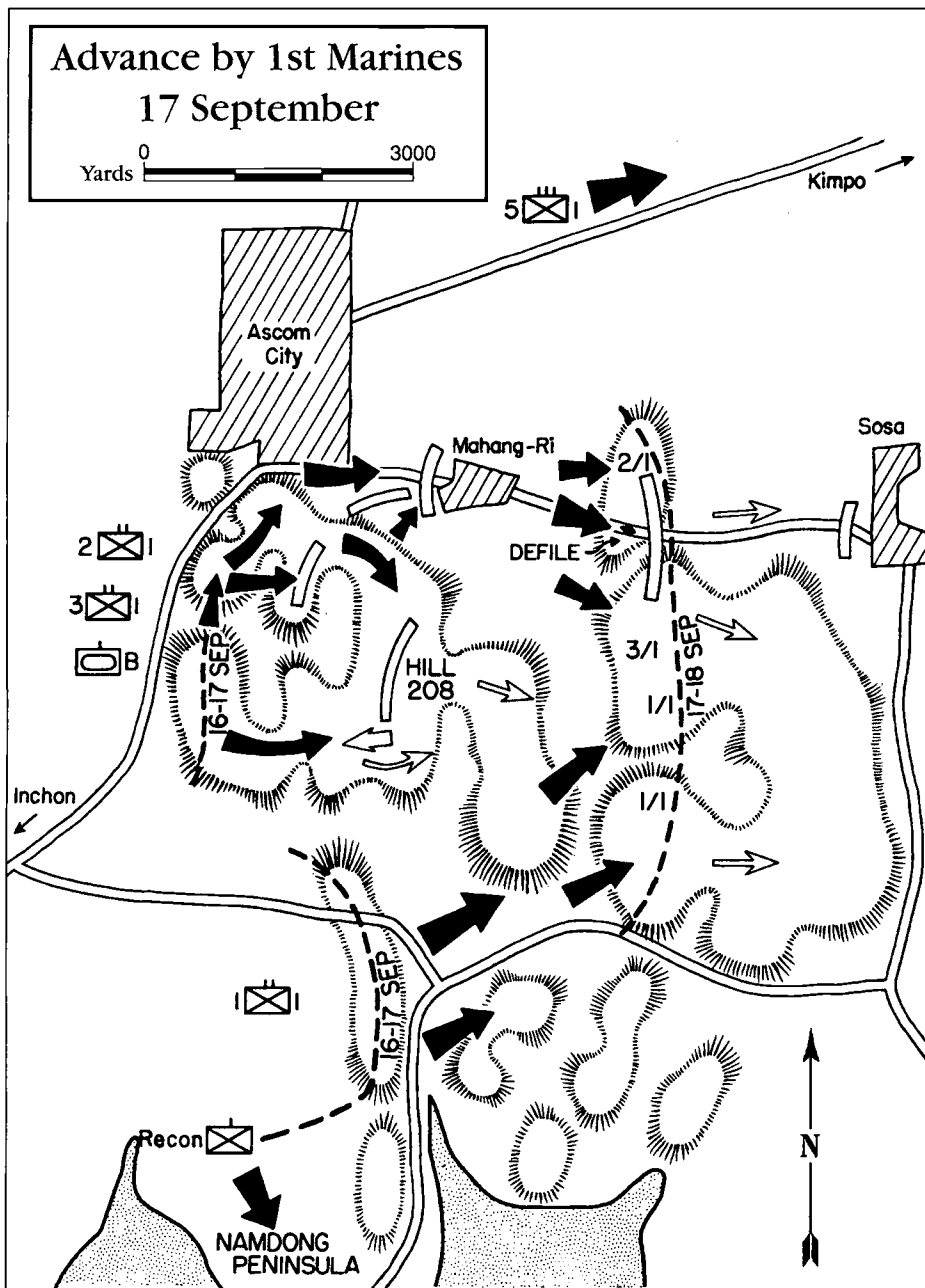
rocket launchers attached, all under Second Lieutenant Lee R. Howard, for that purpose.

During the night the North Koreans formed up a tank-infantry column—six T-34s from the 42d NKPA Mechanized Regiment and about 200 infantry from the 18th NKPA Division in Seoul—some miles east of Ascom City. Howard saw the lead tank at about dawn, reported its approach to "Hog Jaw" Smith, who reported it to Roise, who could not quite believe it. Obviously the North Koreans did not know the Marines were waiting for them. Howard let the column come abreast of his knoll-top position and then opened up. Official historians Montross and Canzona say: "The Red infantry went down under the hail of lead like wheat under the sickle." Corporal Oley J. Douglas, still armed with the 2.36-inch rocket launcher and not the new 3.5-inch, slid down the hill to get a better shot at the tanks. At a range of 75

yards he killed the first T-34 and damaged the second. The remaining four tanks continued to plow forward to be met by a cacophony of 90mm fire from Pomeroy's M-26 tanks at 600 yards range, 75mm recoilless rifle fire at 500 yards, and more rockets, some coming from Sutter's battalion on the other side of the road. Private First Class Walter C. Monegan, Jr., from Company F, 1st Marines, fired his 3.5-inch rocket launcher at point-blank range. Just which weapons killed which tanks would be argued, but the essentials were that all six T-34s were knocked out and their crews killed.

MacArthur Comes Ashore

MacArthur, instantly recognizable in his braided cap, sunglasses, well-worn khakis, and leather flight jacket, came grandly ashore that same morning, 17 September. His large accompanying party included Struble, Almond,



just as the Marines knocked out five tanks." Shepherd replied, "Well, Ned, we're just doing our job, that's all."

MacArthur climbed back into his jeep and the star-studded party drove on. Seven dazed North Korean soldiers crawled out from the culvert over which MacArthur's jeep had parked and meekly surrendered.

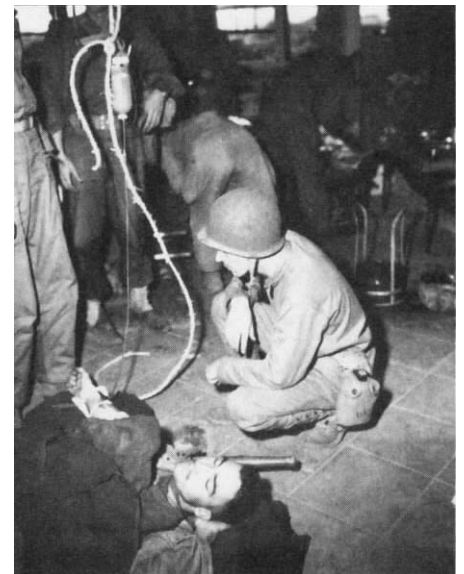
Next stop for MacArthur was the 5th Marines command post. MacArthur went to award Silver Stars to General Craig and Colonel Murray only to learn that his supply of medals was exhausted. "Make a note," he told his aide. The medals were delivered later.

MacArthur finished his tour with a visit to Green Beach at Wolmi-do, where unloading from the LSTs was progressing, and to see the occupants of the prisoner of war stockade—671 of them under guard of the 1st Marine Division's military police.

Ashore at Wolmi-do, MacArthur found evidence, to his great satis-

At a temporary aid station at Pier No. 2, designated Yellow Beach, a wounded Marine is given whole blood by a Navy corpsman. From this station, the wounded were evacuated to hospital ships off shore.

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC349024



Shepherd, Whitney, Wright, and Fox; a bodyguard bristling with weapons; and a large number of the press corps. A train of jeeps was hastily assembled and the party proceeded to the 1st Marine Division headquarters in a dirt-floored Quonset hut where Smith joined the party. MacArthur presented him a Silver Star medal.

MacArthur and his entourage then visited Puller at the 1st Marines' observation post. MacArthur climbed the hill. Puller put down his binoculars and the

two great actors shook hands. MacArthur gave Puller a Silver Star.

MacArthur's cavalcade next drove to the site of the still-smoking hulls of the dreaded North Korean T-34 tanks that had counterattacked at dawn. Shepherd, looking at the still-burning T-34s, commented to Almond that they proved that "bazookas" could destroy tanks.

"You damned Marines!" snorted Almond. "You always seem to be in the right spot at the right time . . . MacArthur would arrive



Department of Defense Photo (USA) SC348526

On the morning of 17 September, Gen MacArthur, surrounded by subordinates, bodyguards, and photographers, made a grand and much publicized tour of the Inchon beachhead. MacArthur is unmistakable in his crushed cap, sunglasses, and leather jacket. LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd,

Jr., on the left, is in his usual khakis and carrying his trademark cocomacaque, or Haitian walking stick. MajGen O. P. Smith, in khaki fore-n-aft cap and canvas leggings, trudges along behind Shepherd.

Almost obscured by the jeep's windshield, a photographer peers through his lens at the command echelons of the Inchon landing during the 17 September visit. Gen MacArthur in hawk-like profile stares straight ahead.

MajGen O. P. Smith sits smiling in the middle of the rear seat, flanked on his right by MajGen Edward M. Almond and on his left by VAdm Arthur D. Struble. The unidentified Marine driver awaits instructions.

Department of Defense Photo (USA) SC348522





Department of Defense Photo (USA) SC348516
FMFPac commander LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, VMI 1917, on the right, points out something significant to the X Corps commander, MajGen Edward M. Almond, VMI 1915, as they move by motor launch from the Mount McKinley to the beach. Shepherd, although relegated to the position of observer instead of corps commander, held no grudge against Almond.

faction, that the enemy had begun an intensive fortification of the island. Later he pontificated: "Had I listened to those who wanted to delay the landing until the next high tides, nearly a month later, Wolmi-do would have been an impregnable fortress."

Almond, just before leaving with his boss to return to the *Mount McKinley*, informed Smith that Barr's 7th Infantry Division would begin landing the next day, coming in on the 1st Marine Division's right flank. Smith, returning to his command post, learned that Major General James M. Gavin, USA, of World War II airborne fame, had arrived to study the Marine Corps' use of close air support.

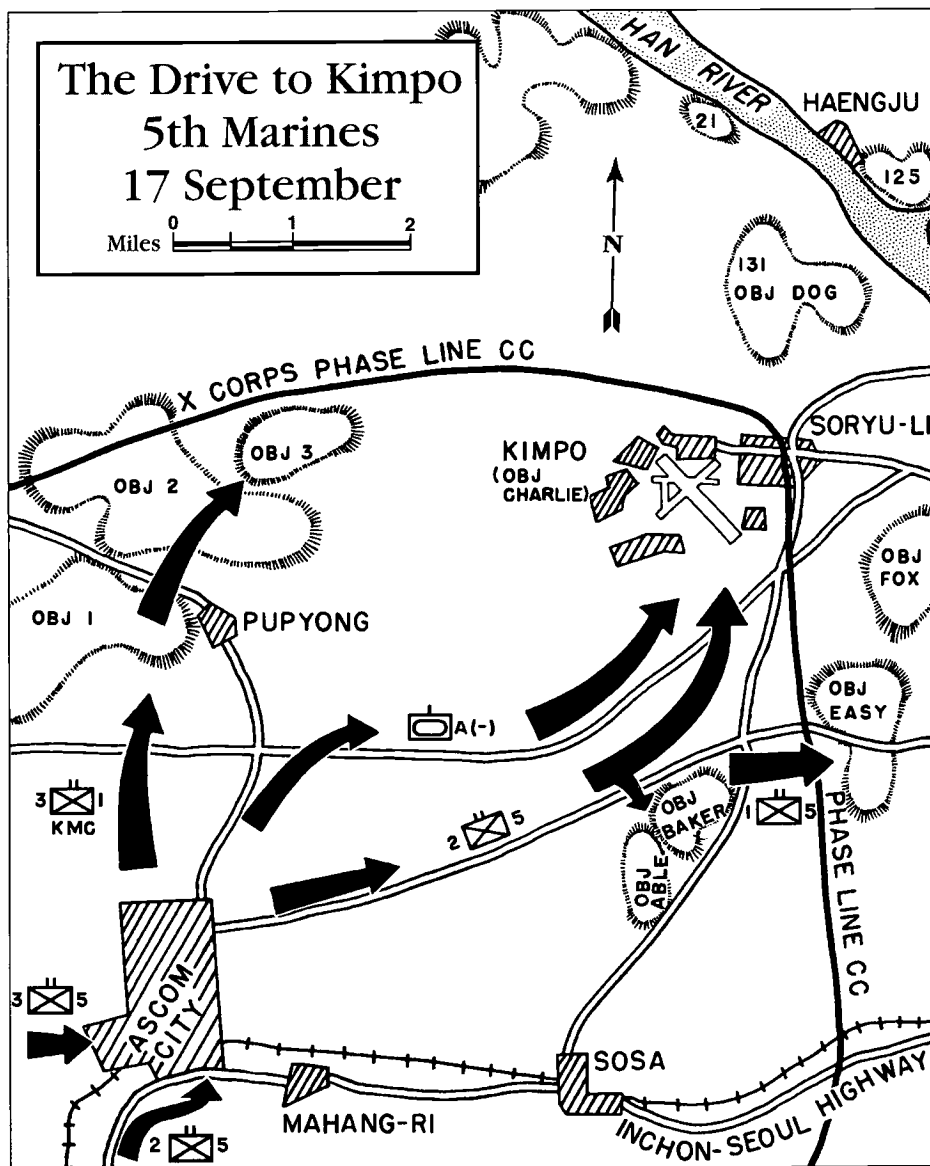
An airstrip was set up next to the division command post that same day, 17 September. After that, Gottschalk's VMO-6 flew a full schedule of observation, evacuation, liaison, and reconnaissance flights.

Marine helicopters, fragile and few in number, were found useful in evacuating severely wounded Marines to hospital facilities to the rear or at sea. As the war progressed, more

suitable helicopters arrived and the practice became standard.

Photo by Frank Noel, Associated Press





Infantry Advances

The battle with the T-34s delayed for an hour the jump-off for the day's attacks. The next phase line was 19 miles long and Murray's 5th Marines had two-thirds of it. At 0700, the Korean Marines' 3d Battalion had passed through Roise's 2d Battalion to clean up the outskirts of Ascom City. Roise himself jumped off two hours later, Captain Jaskilka's Company E in the lead. The advance was to be in column and then a left turn into Ascom City.

Company E, joined by 2d Platoon, Company F, spent the morning in a methodical clearing

of the densely built-up area of little pockets of resistance. Roise found that the road on the map that was supposed to lead to his next objective, four miles distant, was nonexistent on the ground. The renewed advance did not get off until mid-afternoon.

The inexperienced 3d Battalion of the Korean Marines ran into trouble on the other side of Ascom City. Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, in regimental reserve, moved in to help and efficiently knocked out the moderate resistance. Pomeroy came up with his platoon of M-26 tanks. Looking for Roise's 2d Battalion and, not finding the mythical road, he instead

found Taplett's 3d Battalion. Eventually, Pomeroy reached the 2d Battalion and a road that would lead to Kimpo Airfield now about five miles away. He was joined by his company commander, Captain Gearl M. English, and another platoon of tanks.

Meanwhile, Roise advanced to two high hills some 4,000 yards south of Kimpo. He launched his attack against the airfield with Companies D and E in the assault. They moved rapidly against nothing but light small arms fire. Captain English brought up his tanks to help, assigning a tank platoon to support each of the assault companies. By 1800, Roise's Marines were at the southern end of the main runway. Each of his three rifle companies curled into separate perimeters for the night. Lieutenant Deptula's 1st Platoon, Company E, was positioned well out to the front in the hamlet of Soryu-li as an outpost.

During the afternoon, Newton and the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, had moved up on Roise's right against no resistance. Taplett's 3d Battalion, having eased the situation for the Korean Marines, was two miles to the rear, again in regimental reserve.

With 1st Marines

Throughout the day, 17 September, Puller's 1st Marines had continued its advance. On the left flank Sutter, with the 2d Battalion, straddled the highway and moved forward behind an intermittent curtain of howitzer fire delivered by the 11th Marines. Essentially, Sutter was attacking due east from Mahang-ri to Sosa, two fair-sized villages. He deployed Company E on the left of the road, Company F on the right, and kept Company D in reserve. As the 5th Marines moved to the northeast toward



Department of Defense Photo (USMC)

When not moving from hill to hill, the Marines frequently found themselves attacking across flat rice paddies. Ironically, Kimpo, in addition to having the best airfield in Korea, was also known for growing the best rice.

Kimpo, a considerable gap widened between the two regiments.

North Korean resistance thickened as Sutter neared Sosa. Puller ordered Ridge to move the 3d Battalion up on Sutter's right flank. Ridge decided again to use amphibian tractors as personnel carriers. Westover's Company G clanked up the road behind the 2d Platoon, Company B tanks, under Second Lieutenant Brian J. Cummings. In a defile, some brave North Koreans tried to stop Cummings' M-26s with grenades. The advance on the road stalled. Company G got up on the high side of the defile to the right of the road. With Sutter's battalion on the left, the Marines had a converging "turkey shoot" and broke up the North Korean attack. Sutter and Ridge dug in for the night, each battalion on its own side of the defile. To their south, Hawkins' 1st Battalion and Houghton's Reconnaissance Company had cleared up Namdong Peninsula. The night would pass quietly for the 1st Marines.

To the rear, Inchon was in a

shambles. Most of the city officials had fled before the North Korean capture of the city. Fortunately, Admiral Sohn Won Yil, the chief of naval operations of the ROK Navy,

Shore party operations followed close behind the assault waves and within a few days, stocks of ammunition, rations, and other supplies had reached the level needed for the drive to Seoul and its capture.

Photo by Frank Noel, Associated Press



had come ashore to observe the operations of the Korean Marine Regiment. (He also received a MacArthur Silver Star.) Sohn picked a temporary mayor who was installed on the morning of 18 September by authority of a 1st Marine Division proclamation.

5th Marines Takes Kimpo

The night of 17-18 September was tense for the 5th Marines. Murray was certain that the North Koreans would not give up Kimpo, the best airfield in Korea, without a fight, and he was right. The airfield was under the apparent command of a Chinese-trained brigadier general, Wan Yong. The garrison, nominally the NKPA 1st Air Force Division, was in truth a patchwork of bits and pieces of several regiments, with not more than a few hundred effectives.

The North Koreans went against Roise's well dug-in battalion in



Department of Defense Photo (USN) 420271

Fumigation and bath platoons would arrive later, but during the assault phase of the Inchon operation Marines seized the opportunity to clean up when and where they could. Helmets made convenient washbasins.

three badly coordinated attacks. The first hit Deptula's outpost at about 0300 in the morning, the Communists using rifles and machine pistols, backed by a T-34 tank. Deptula skillfully fought off four half-hearted assaults and by 0500 had withdrawn successfully to Company E's main line of resistance.

The second attack came from both the west and east against Jaskilka's Company E. The third attack hit Harrell's Company F further to the south. Both attacks were easily contained. The routed enemy fled toward the Han River.

At daylight Roise jumped off in pursuit. His Marines swept across the airfield, securing it and its surrounding villages by 1000. Companies E and F mopped up and Company D went on to take Hill 131 overlooking the Han. In 24 hours of fighting, Roise had lost four Marines killed and 19 wounded. His Marines had taken 10 pris-

oners and had counted about 100 enemy dead.

1st Marines Advances

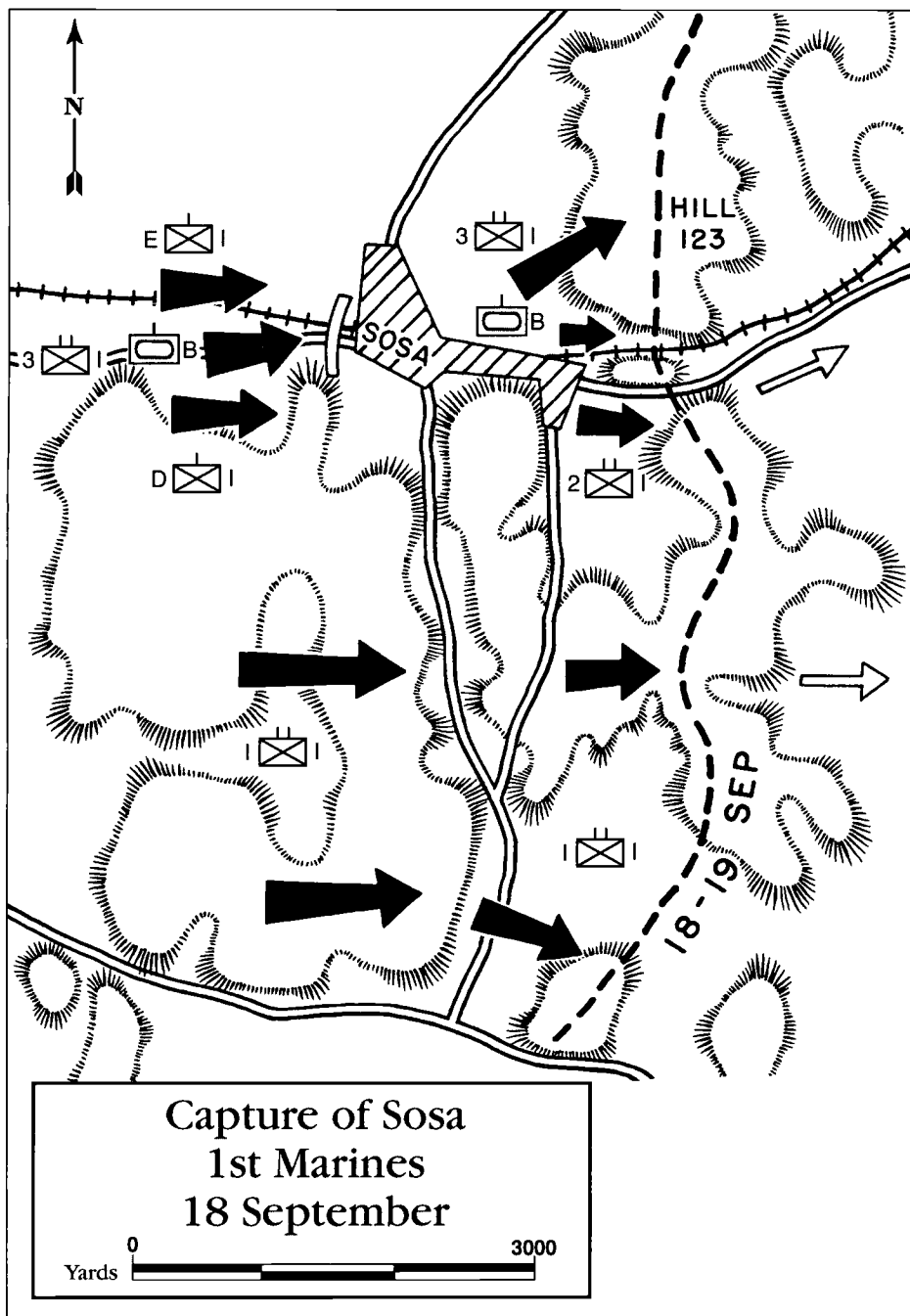
In the 1st Marines' zone of action, Ridge, with the 3d Battalion outside of Sosa, decided that the center of North Korean resistance must be on Hill 123. During the night he called for naval gunfire. HMS *Kenya*, Captain P. W. Brock commanding, delivered some 300 rounds of 6-inch shells somewhere between Sosa and Hill 123. Ridge's naval gunfire spotter was not sure where they impacted, but Ridge, in the interest of inter-allied cordiality, sent Captain Brock a "well done."

At dawn Sutter charged ahead astride the Seoul highway, Company E on the left of the road and Company D on the right. Premature airbursts on the part of his artillery preparatory fires cost him

Correspondents and photographers examine a Russian-built Yak fighter in a destroyed banger at Kimpo Airfield. Captured by the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, Marine engineers quickly made the airfield operative and ready to receive elements of MAG-33.

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC349036





**Capture of Sosa
1st Marines
18 September**

two killed and three wounded.

Behind the 2d Battalion, Ridge mounted up the 3d Battalion in a motorized column made up of a mixture of jeeps, amphibian tractors (LVTs), and amphibious trucks (DUKWs). Corsairs from VMF-214 worked over Sosa, sighted six T-34s beyond the town, and knocked out two of them. Ridge thundered ahead in a cloud of dust behind the tanks of Company B, 1st Tank Battalion. Together they brushed aside some light resis-

tance, including an antitank roadblock. By noon Ridge had cleared the town. His battalion then swung to the left off the road and moved up Hill 123 while his naval gunfire spotter continued to look for some evidence as to where the *Kenya's* shells might have hit. The 3d Battalion was barely on the hill and not yet dug in when a barrage of North Korean 120mm mortar shells drenched their position causing 30 casualties. The romp over the green hills, marred as they

were with the red-orange scars of shell holes and trench lines, was over. The war was getting serious.

Sutter's 2d Battalion, meanwhile, went straight ahead, left flank on the railroad tracks, into a defensive position about a mile beyond Sosa. A barrage of mortar shells cost him 14 casualties. Hawkins' 1st Battalion continued advancing on the right and for the third straight day encountered nothing but a few rifle shots.

Kimpo Airfield Becomes Operational

Murray displaced his command post forward from Ascom City to Kimpo. His regiment spent a quiet day sending patrols around the airfield. The field was in relatively good shape. A North Korean Soviet-built Yakovlev Yak-3 fighter and two Ilyushin "Shturmovik" attack aircraft were found in near-flyable condition.

The first aircraft to land at Kimpo was a Marine H03S-1 helicopter. It arrived at 1000 that morning, 18 September, piloted by Captain Victor A. Armstrong of VMO-6 and with General Shepherd and Colonel Krulak as passengers. General Craig who had just arrived by jeep met them.

Captain George W. King's Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion, made the field operational with temporary repairs. Generals Harris and Cushman came in by helicopter that afternoon. On their advice, General Almond authorized the establishment of Marine Aircraft Group 33 (MAG-33) on the field.

Corsairs began to arrive the next day. Harris set up the headquarters of his Tactical Air Command. Two Corsair squadrons, VMF-312 and VMF-212, came in. Night fighter squadron VMF(N)-542, under Lieutenant Colonel Max J.



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A3727

1stLt John V. Hanes flew in first Marine Corsair to land at Kimpo Airfield. Having taken hits while on a bombing mission, Hanes was grateful that there was a friendly airfield on which to land. BGen Thomas J. Cushman, Assistant Wing Commander of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, greets him.

Volcansek, Jr., arrived from Japan. There was a paper shuffle of squadrons between Marine Aircraft Groups 12 and 33. Marine Aircraft Group 33 under Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman was now in business ashore. MAG-12 picked up the squadrons afloat. VMFs 214 and 323 continued to operate from the *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait*, and the night-fighters of VMF(N)-513 from their base at Itazuke in Japan.

Reinforcements Arrive

On Murray's left the 2d KMC Battalion joined the 1st KMC Battalion. The ROK Army's 17th Regiment landed at Inchon and, temporarily under 1st Marine Division control was given an initial mission of completing the clean-up of the unswept area between Ascom City and the sea.

Almond, pressing forward, conferred with Smith on the morning of 18 September concerning the readiness of the 1st Marine Division to cross the Han. Smith pointed out that the 7th Division

must take over its zone of action and free his right flank so he could concentrate his forces to cross the river. Smith already had it in his mind that the 5th Marines would go over first to be followed by the 1st Marines. His 7th Marines was still at sea. He went forward to Kimpo to discuss the matter with Murray.

The first unit of the 7th Division, the 32d Infantry, landed, as promised on the 18th, was attached temporarily to the 1st Marine Division. Smith relayed Almond's orders to the 32d to relieve the 1st Marines on the right flank and then to operate in the zone of action assigned to the 7th Division.

7th Division Becomes Operational

On the morning of 19 September, General Barr established his 7th Division's command post ashore. Almond called Barr and Smith together at the 1st Marine Division command post to discuss the 7th Division's immedi-

ate assumption of what had been the 1st Marines' zone of action south of the Inchon-Seoul highway.

The 31st Infantry had begun landing. The 32d Infantry would be detached from the 1st Marine Division at 1800. With these two regiments Barr was to begin operations. Smith would then be able to side-slip Puller's regiment fully to the left of the Seoul highway.

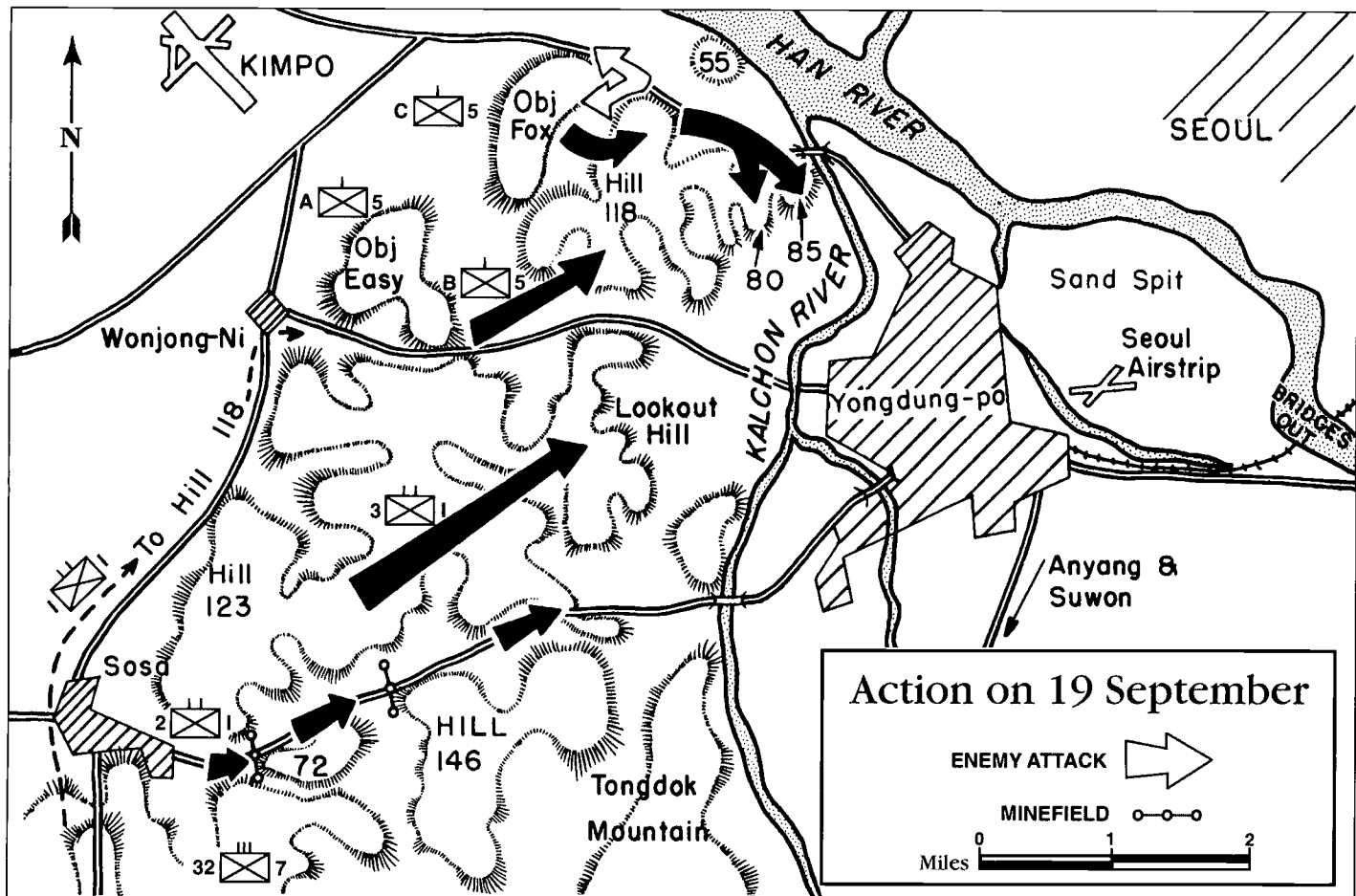
Almond's aide, Lieutenant Haig, who was a fly on the tent wall at these meetings, observed that "the Marines' respect for the 7th Division at this stage of the war was ostentatiously low."

Advancing to the Han

After that meeting, the peripatetic Almond went on to visit the command posts of both the 32d Infantry and the 1st Marines. He then proceeded to the 5th Marines command post on Kimpo Airfield to discuss with Murray the crossing of the Han that was scheduled for the following day. Murray told him that he planned to cross in column of battalions using amphibian tractors, amphibious trucks, and pontoon floats at a ferry crossing site northeast of Kimpo.

A significant range of hills separated the 5th Marines on Kimpo from Yongdung-po and the Han. During the night of 18-19 September, Murray had ordered Newton forward with the 1st Battalion to seize Hill 118 and then Hills 80 and 85, overlooking the Kalchon River near where it joined the Han.

At dawn, before Newton could move out, a company-sized North Korean force attacked Company C behind a shower of mortar shells. While Company C slaughtered the North Koreans, "Ike" Fenton's Company B moved against Hill 118. There was the usual air and



artillery preparation before the jump-off, and Company B took the peak of Hill 118 without suffering a single casualty. The trapped attacking North Koreans lost perhaps 300 dead (there is always optimism in the count of enemy dead) and 100 prisoners. Company C lost two killed and six wounded.

To the 5th Marines' right, Ridge's 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, with Companies H and I in the assault, moved off Hill 123 toward Lookout Hill, so-called because it gave a good view of the Kalchon and the town of Yongdung-po beyond. Official historians Montross and Canzona called the attack, which cost two killed and 15 wounded, "too successful," because it put Ridge's battalion well out in front of the 5th Marines on his left and Sutter's 2d Battalion on his right.

Sutter's battalion was advancing along the Seoul highway behind

Captain Richard M. Taylor's Company C tanks and had gone little more than a quarter-mile when the lead M-26 hit a box mine that blew off a track and two road wheels. The antitank barrier of mines was formidable. The whole column came to a stop. Small-arms fire smashed in from neighboring Hill 72. The 11th Marines, the division's artillery regiment, took Hill 72 under howitzer fire. Corsairs from ever-ready VMF-214 came to help. A platoon of engineers under First Lieutenant George A. Babe blew up the box mines with "snowball" charges of C-3 plastic explosive. Sutter used all three of his rifle companies to uncover the minefield and force his way through. His infantry went forward a mile into heavy fighting around Hill 146 while the tanks waited on the side of the road. A second minefield was encountered, and

more work by the engineers was needed. At 1900, Sutter ordered his battalion to dig in. His Marines had advanced nearly three miles at a cost of four killed and 18 wounded. Yongdung-po was still more than two miles in front of him.

Smith moved his command post forward the afternoon of 19 September to a site Craig selected about a mile and a half southeast of Kimpo; it had been used for U.S. dependents housing during the occupation. From here Smith was within easy jeep or helicopter distance of his front-line units. The abandoned Quonset huts were near ideal except for occasional harassment apparently by a single NKPA gun. The backbone for the perimeter defense around the command post was provided by a section of the Division Band trained as a machine gun platoon.

The 32d Infantry, now detached

from the division, was somewhere to Sutter's right rear. The Army battalion that relieved Hawkins' battalion had spent the day mopping up rather than continuing the attack.

Hawkins' 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, was on its way to relieve Newton's 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, an 11-mile motor march from the division's right flank.

Captain Robert H. Barrow's Company A, 1st Marines, was the first to reach Hill 118 and relieve Fenton's Company B, 5th Marines.

Company C, 1st Marines, was to replace Company C, 5th Marines, on Hills 80 and 85. Newton was anxious to pull back his 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, to Kimpo to get ready for the river crossing the next day, and it was almost dark

when Hawkins reached him. Company C, 1st Marines, under Captain Robert P. Wray, had not yet arrived.

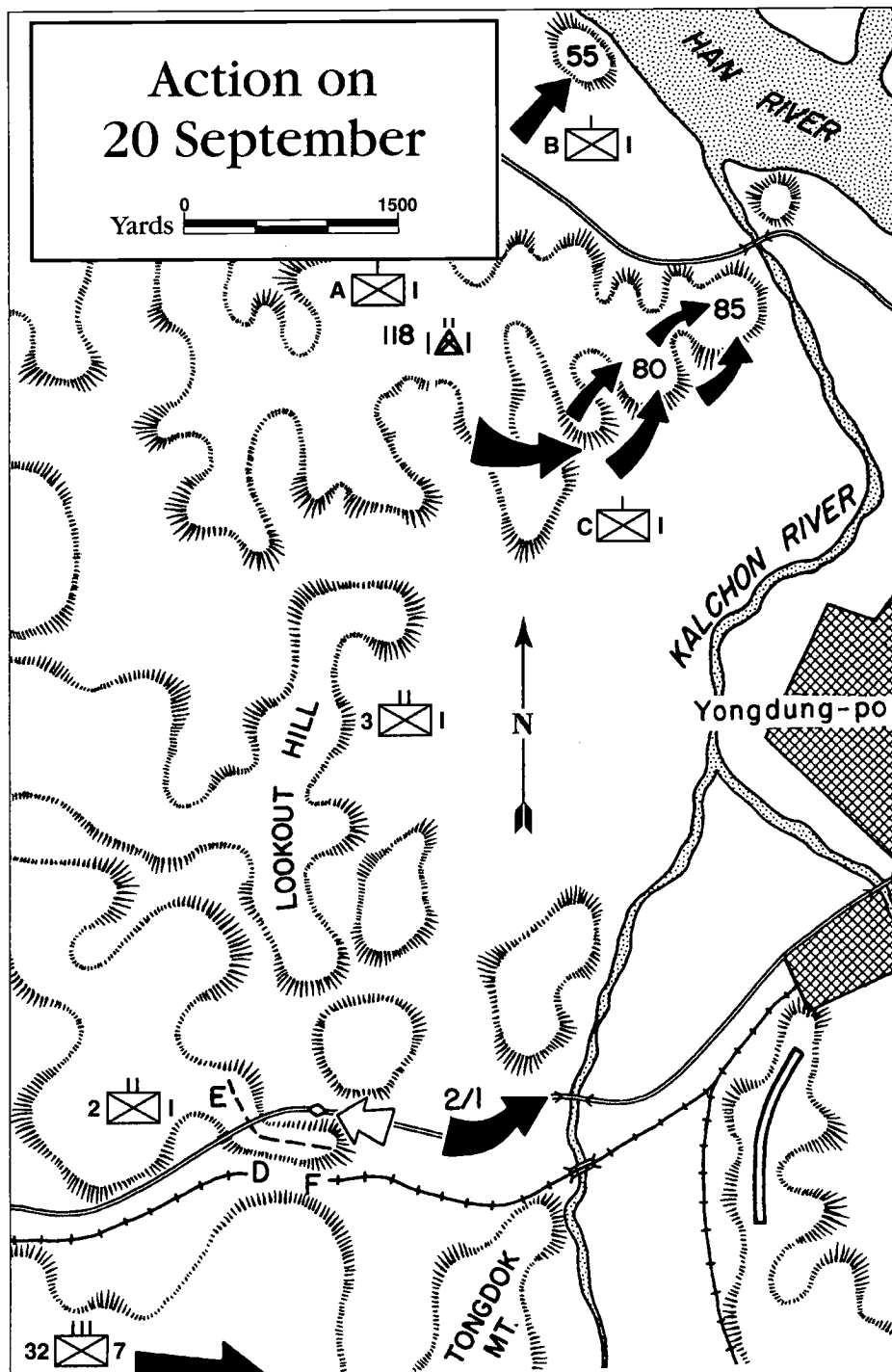
Barrow, a tall Louisianian and a future Marine Commandant, realized the tactical importance of Hills 80 and 85 and radioed for permission to move Company A forward to the two hills. Permission was denied. Newton made it known that he would pull Company C off the hills no later than 2100. Wray's Company C did not reach Hill 118 until 2200; Hills 80 and 85 were left empty.

Confused Day

Before dawn the next day, 20 September, Hawkins' Marines on Hill 118 heard the North Koreans assault the empty hills. Then they came on in company-sized strength in a futile attack against the entrenched Marines on Hill 118.

Meanwhile, shortly before dawn a battalion-sized North Korean force, led by five T-34 tanks followed by an ammunition truck, came down the Seoul highway against Sutter's 2d Battalion, 1st Marines. Companies D and E held positions on each side of the road. The column roared through the gap between them and hit head-on against Company F's support position. The North Koreans were caught in a sleeve. Companies D and E poured fire into their flanks. Howitzer fire by the 2d and 4th Battalions, 11th Marines, sealed in the entrapped North Korean column. "A fortunate grenade was dropped in the enemy ammunition truck and offered some illumination," noted the 2d Battalion's Special Action Report, "enabling two tanks to be destroyed by 3.5" rocket fire."

The rocket gunner was Private First Class Monegan, the tank-killer



Private First Class Walter C. Monegan, Jr.

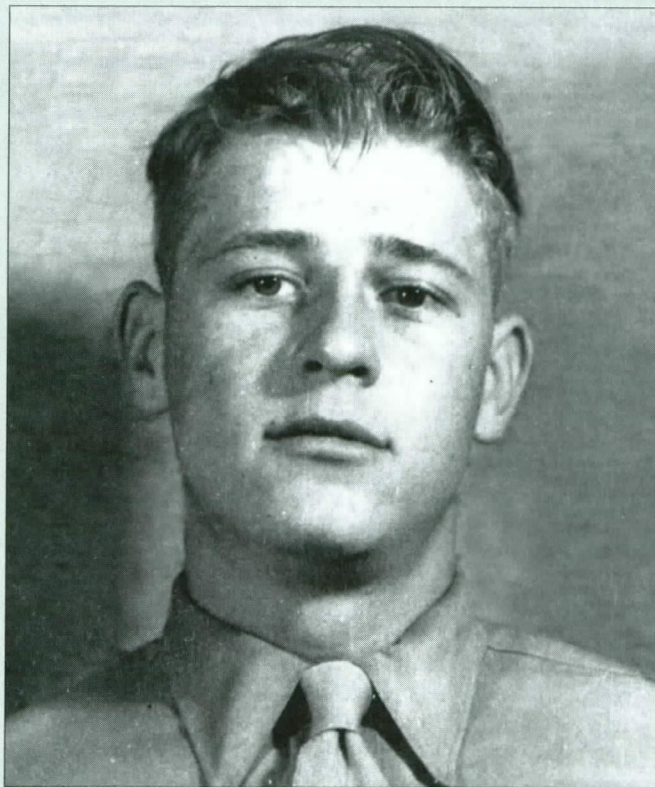
Nineteen-year-old Walter Monegan in five days of action fought two battles against North Korean T-34 tanks, won them both, and lost his own life.

Born on Christmas Day 1930, he could not wait until his 17th birthday, enlisting in the Army in November 1947. The Army discovered he was underage and promptly sent him home. He tried again on 22 March 1948, enlisting in the Marine Corps. After recruit training at Parris Island in June he was sent to China to join the 3d Marines at Tsingtao. After a year in China he came home, was stationed at Camp Pendleton for a year, and then was sent to Marine Barracks, Naval Air Station, Seattle. He had barely re-enlisted in July 1950 when he was ordered to return to Camp Pendleton to join the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, then being formed.

His remains, buried temporarily at Inchon, were returned home and re-interred in Arlington National Cemetery on 19 July 1951. His wife, Elizabeth C. Monegan, holding their infant child, Walter III, received his posthumous Medal of Honor from Secretary of the Navy Dan Kimball, on 8 February 1952.

Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Rocket Gunner attached to Company F, Second Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division (Reinforced), in action against enemy aggressor forces near Sosa-ri, Korea, on 17 and 20 September 1950. Dug in a hill overlooking the main Seoul highway when six enemy tanks threatened to break through the Battalion position during a pre-dawn attack on 17 September, Private First Class Monegan promptly moved forward with his bazooka under heavy hostile automatic weapons fire and engaged the lead tank at a range of less than 50 yards. After scoring a direct hit and killing the sole surviving tankman with his carbine as he came through the escape hatch, he boldly fired two more rounds of ammunition at the oncoming tanks, disorganizing the attack and enabling our tank crews to continue blasting with their 90-mm guns. With his own and an adjacent company's position threatened by annihilation when an overwhelming enemy tank-infantry force by-passed the area and proceeded toward the bat-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A45432

talion Command Post during the early morning of September 20, he seized his rocket launcher and, in total darkness, charged down the slope of the hill where the tanks had broken through. Quick to act when an illuminating shell hit the area, he scored a direct hit on one of the tanks as hostile rifle and automatic weapons fire raked the area at close range. Again exposing himself he fired another round to destroy a second tank and, as the rear tank turned to retreat, stood upright to fire and was fatally struck down by hostile machine-gun fire when another illuminating shell silhouetted him against the sky. Private First Class Monegan's daring initiative, gallant fighting spirit and courageous devotion to duty were contributing factors in the success of his company in repelling the enemy and his self-sacrificing efforts throughout sustain and enhance the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

of Soryu-li. He slid down the slope from Company F with his 3.5-inch rocket launcher and knocked out the first and second tanks. Machine gun fire killed him as he took aim on the third T-34. His family would receive a posthumous Medal of

Honor. A third T-34 was captured intact. Sutter's battalion claimed 300 enemy dead. Half an hour after breaking up the North Korean attack, the 2d Battalion moved forward in its own attack.

Yongdung-po was drenched

that day with shell-fire. Puller moved to align his regiment for the assault of the town. Hawkins was to take Hills 80 and 85. Sutter was to advance to the first of two highway bridges crossing the Kalchon. Ridge was to stay in

reserve on Lookout Hill.

Hawkins sent out Captain Wray with Company C to capture Hills

80 and 85, that had been free for the taking, the day before. Wray, covered by the 81mm mortars and

Browning water-cooled machine guns of Major William L. Bates, Jr.'s Weapons Company, made a text-

Second Lieutenant Henry A. Commiskey

Lieutenant Commiskey was no stranger to war. As an enlisted Marine he had been wounded at Iwo Jima and received a letter of commendation for "exhibiting high qualities of leadership and courage in the face of a stubborn and fanatical enemy."

Born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, in 1927, he had joined the Marine Corps two days after his 17th birthday. He served more than five years as an enlisted man and was a staff sergeant drill instructor at Parris Island when he was selected for officer training in 1949. He completed this training in June 1950. Two months later he was with the 1st Marines and on his way to Korea.

He came from a family of fighters. His father had been a machine gun instructor in World War I. One brother had been with the Marine Raiders in World War II. Another brother was badly wounded while with the 187th Airborne Infantry in Korea.

In the action on 20 September, that gained Henry Commiskey the nation's highest award for valor, he escaped unscathed, but a week later he was slightly wounded in the fight for Seoul and on 8 December seriously wounded in the knee at the Chosin Reservoir. Sent home for hospitalization, he recovered and went to Pensacola in September 1951 for flight training, receiving his wings in June 1953 and then qualifying as a jet pilot.

He returned to Korea in April 1954 as a pilot with VMA-212. Coming home in September, he returned to line duty at his own request and was assigned once more to the 1st Marine Division. Next assignment was in 1956 to Jackson, Mississippi, close to his birthplace, for three years duty as a recruiter. In 1959, now a major, he went to the Amphibious Warfare School, Junior Course, at Quantico, and stayed on as an instructor at the Basic School. He retired from active duty in 1966 to Meridian, Mississippi, and died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound on 15 August 1971.

Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Platoon Leader in Company C, First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division (Reinforced), in action against enemy aggressor forces near Yongdungp'o, Korea, on 20 September 1950. Directed to attack hostile forces well dug in on Hill 85, First Lieutenant Commiskey, then Second Lieutenant, spearheaded the assault, charging up the steep slopes on the run. Coolly disregarding the heavy enemy machine-gun and small-arms fire, he plunged on well forward of the rest of



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A43766

his platoon and was the first man to reach the crest of the objective. Armed only with a pistol, he jumped into a hostile machine-gun emplacement occupied by five enemy troops and quickly disposed of four of the soldiers with his automatic pistol. Grappling with the fifth, First Lieutenant Commiskey knocked him to the ground and held him until he could obtain a weapon from another member of his platoon and kill the last of the enemy gun crew. Continuing his bold assault, he moved to the next emplacement, killed two or more of the enemy and then led his platoon toward the rear nose of the hill to rout the remainder of the hostile troops and destroy them as they fled from their positions. His valiant leadership and courageous fighting spirit served to inspire the men of his company to heroic endeavor in seizing the objective and reflect the highest credit upon First Lieutenant Commiskey and the United States Naval Service.



On 20 September, as the loading continues, an LST, beached until the next high tide comes in, has discharged its cargo.

The small landing craft to the right are a 36-foot LCVP and two 50-foot LCMs.

Department of Defense Photo (USN) 80-G-426159

book double envelopment of Hill 80 against stubborn resistance. The 1st Platoon, under Second Lieutenant William A. Craven, came in on the left. Second

Lieutenant Henry A. Commiskey came in on the right with the 3d Platoon. Together they took Hill 80. The day was almost done but Wray went on against Hill 85,

repeating his double envelopment. Craven set up a base of fire with his platoon on the northern slope of Hill 80. Second Lieutenant John N. Guild went forward on the left

Amphibious trucks, "ducks" to Marines, are readied at Inchon to be moved up for use in crossing the Han River. The division was well supported by the versatile trucks of the

1st Amphibian Truck Company, an element of the 1st Motor Transport Battalion.

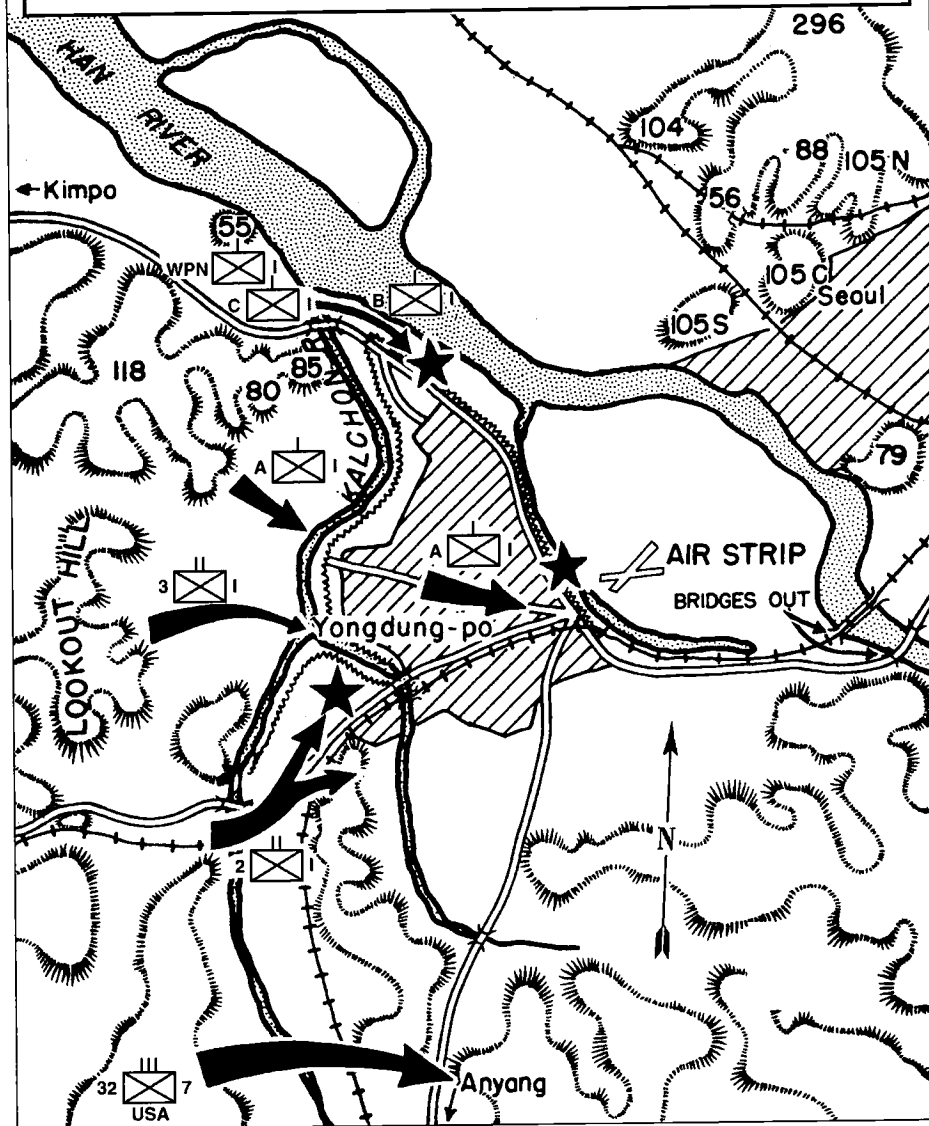
National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC348700



Assault of Yongdung-po 1st Marines 21 September

★ Main Marine Positions at Day's End ~~~~~ Dike

0 2000 4000
Yards



engineers got away; one, Private First Class Clayton O. Edwards, was captured. (He would later escape from a train taking prisoners into North Korea.)

Meanwhile, Sutter's 2d Battalion, having begun the day by breaking up the T-34 tank-led North Korean attack, had moved forward uneventfully, except for harassing fire from their open right flank. They reached their day's objective, the highway bridge over the Kalchon, shortly after noon. The bridge was a long concrete span. The engineers inspected it and certified it strong enough to bear M-26 Pershing tanks for next day's attack into Yongdung-po itself. The second bridge, crossing a tributary of the Kalchon, lay 2,000 yards ahead. A high ridge, seemingly teeming with North Korean defenders, to the right of the road dominated the bridge. Sutter's neighbor on his right was Lieutenant Colonel Charles M. Mount, USA, with the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry. The ridge commanding the second bridge was technically in Mount's zone of action. At 1300, Sutter asked Mount for permission to fire against the ridge. Mount readily agreed, but it took seven hours to get the fire mission cleared through the layers of regimental and division staffs and approved by X Corps. It was dark before Colonel Brower's 11th Marines was allowed to fire.

with his 2d Platoon and got almost to the top of the hill before being mortally wounded. Commiskey went out in front of his 3d Platoon in a one-man assault that earned him a Medal of Honor.

While Wray worked at capturing Hills 80 and 85, Hawkins' command group and Barrow's Marines watched as spectators from Hill 118. They saw to their left front, to their horror, a tracked "Weasel" with a wire party from the 1st

Signal Battalion hit a mine on the approach to a bridge across the Kalchon near where it joined the Han. In full sight of Hill 118, two Marine wiremen were taken prisoner. A truck from Company A, 1st Engineers, with a driver and three passengers, unaware of the fate of the communicators, now came along the road. Barrow tried to catch their attention with rifle fire over their heads, but the truck continued into the ambush. Three

During the day, General Almond visited Colonel Puller at the 1st Marines' command post. Almond admired Puller's aggressive tactics and there was also a Virginia Military Institute connection. Puller, saying he could not reach Smith either by wire or radio, asked permission to burn Yongdung-po before committing his troops to its capture. Almond authorized its burning.

Almond's habit of visiting the

Marine regiments and issuing orders directly to subordinate commanders had become a serious aggravation to Smith. A division order went out that any direct order received from Almond would be immediately relayed to division headquarters for ratification.

Ready to Cross the Han

The shelling of Yongdung-po, now blazing with fires, continued throughout the night. Puller's plan of attack for the 1st Marines on 21 September was to have the 2d Battalion continue its advance astride the Inchon-Seoul highway.

The 1st Battalion on the left would attack across country and the 3d Battalion, occupying Lookout Hill, would initially stay in reserve.

During the previous day, Captain Richard L. Bland had occupied Hill 55 overlooking the Han with Company B, 1st Marines. Now, shortly after dawn, he took his company across the bridge that had been the site of the ambush of the Marine communicators and engineers. In late afternoon, Hawkins sent Company C and Weapons Company across the bridge to join with Company B to form a perimeter for the night.

During the day, Ridge's 3d Battalion, in reserve on Lookout

Hill, had grown impatient and had come forward prematurely, getting out in front of both the 1st and 2d Battalions. Its prospective assault companies, Companies G and I, reached and huddled behind the dike on the western bank of the Kalchon close to a water gate where a tributary entered into the main stream. This put them in good position to watch the approach march of Barrow's Company A to the Kalchon.

With Bland's Company B stalled on the opposite bank of the Kalchon, Hawkins had committed Company A to an attack from its positions on Hill 80 across a mile of rice paddies to the river. Barrow

Following a burst of sniper fire, Marines quickly take cover along a dike near the Han River. So far, the Marines had suffered only light casualties, while the North Koreans had lost heavily.

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC349026





National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A3610

Marines of Capt Robert H. Barrow's Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, move into Yongdung-po. Although the town seemed empty and dead, they carefully searched each building and side street but failed to uncover a flicker of enemy resistance.

deployed his platoons in a classic two-up one-back formation. As they came forward through the waist-high rice straw, a 3d Battalion officer, watching from his position behind the dike, was reminded of the stories he had been told of the Marines advancing through the wheat into Belleau Wood. Without a shot being fired, Company A waded the stream and marched into Yongdung-po. Barrow radioed Hawkins for instructions. Hawkins told him to keep on going.

The crossing of the Kalchon by Ridge's 3d Battalion was less easy. Going over the dike was eerily like going "over the top" of the trenches in the First World War. Second Lieutenant Spencer H. Jarnagin of Company G formed his platoon in

line on the near side of the dike close to the water gate. At his whistle signal they started across. As they came out of the defilade provided by the dike, Maxim heavy machine guns on the opposite dike, perhaps 50 yards distant, opened up. Jarnagin fell back dead. His platoon recoiled, some of them wounded. Denied artillery support and with his 81mm mortars lacking ammunition, the battalion's Weapons Company commander called up his platoon of six water-cooled Browning machine guns.

During the rapid cross-country movement toward Seoul the heavy machine guns were initially attached by section to the rifle companies. They could not keep up with the light machine guns nor

did the rifle company commanders fully understand their capabilities. Consequently they were pulled back to company control and employed in battery for overhead fire in the attack. Now, in this situation so much like the Western Front, they would come into their own.

With their barrels just clearing the top of the dike, the Brownings engaged the Maxims, just as they had done in 1918, and it was the Brownings that won. The 3d Battalion then crossed the Kalchon at the water gate, Westover's Company G to the left of the tributary, First Lieutenant Joseph Fisher's Company I to the right.

Early that morning Sutter's battalion crossed the second bridge without incident except for fire

that continued to come in from across the boundary separating the 1st Marine Division from the 7th Infantry Division. Frustrated by the lack of artillery support, Sutter seized the bit in his teeth and shelled the offending ridge with his attached 4.2-inch mortars before sending up Companies E and F to take the high ground. While they were so engaged, Captain Welby W. Cronk took Company D along the highway and ran into another section of heavily fortified dike. Heavy fighting, supported by the ever-willing Corsairs of VMF-214, continued in Sutter's zone until late in the evening, when Sutter recalled Companies E and F to tuck them into a battalion perimeter for the night.

In Yongdung-po, Barrow could hear the furious firefight being waged by Sutter's battalion somewhere to his right. Crossing the town against scattered opposition Barrow reached yet another dike. Beyond it was a sandy flat reaching about a mile to the Han. To his left rear was Bland's Company B. Barrow dug in on the dike in a sausage-shaped perimeter. At nightfall, the Marines of Company A heard the characteristic chugging clatter of advancing tanks. Five T-34s, without infantry escort, came up the Inchon-Seoul highway and pumped steel into the western face of Company A's position. Barrow's 3.5-inch rocket gunners knocked out one and damaged two others.

Almond had been returning each evening to the *Mount McKinley*, but on the morning of 21 September he moved the headquarters of X Corps ashore and opened his command post in Inchon.

MacArthur came ashore again that afternoon enroute to Japan. A pride of generals—Almond,

Shepherd, Smith, Barr, Harris, and Lowe—had gathered at Kimpo Airfield to see him off. Mutual congratulations were exchanged, and MacArthur flew to Tokyo. "He was, in my opinion, the greatest military leader of our century," mused General Shepherd, the Virginia gentleman, in 1967.

Later that day, in a ceremony at X Corps headquarters in Inchon and in accordance with established amphibious doctrine, overall command of the operation passed

from Admiral Struble to General Almond.

By midnight, five infantry assaults against Barrow's position had followed the attack by the T-34s. All were beaten back, the heaviest fighting being in front of Second Lieutenant John J. Swords' 3d Platoon.

Pause in the Fighting

When the morning of 22 September came, Barrow's Marines

Gen Douglas MacArthur and MajGen Edward M. Almond examine a map at Kimpo Airfield shortly before the general's departure for Japan. MacArthur would tell the Joint Chiefs of Staff that "his forces were pounding at the gates of Seoul."

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC349084





National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC349054

Navy Hospital Corpsmen Richard E. Rosegoom and Frank J. Yasso, assigned to the 1st Marine Division, give first aid to a wounded North Korean while another prisoner is marched to the rear. While always there for Marines, corpsmen also were available to treat prisoners of war and Korean civilians; the latter were second in number only to the Marines themselves.

were able to count 275 enemy dead. The four remaining T-34s, two damaged, two intact, were found abandoned nearby. The 1st and 3d Battalions renewed their attack and converged on Barrow's position against negligible resistance.

Sutter was not the only commander to complain about the fire control problems along the boundary between the two divisions. The 7th Division reported Marine Corps fire falling in its zone. Almond met with Barr and Smith and then told his aide, Lieutenant Haig, to telephone Corps headquarters and straighten out the situation.

Almond, continuing his critique of the Marines' performance, expressed his concern over Smith's "open" left flank. Smith explained to Almond his use of the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment, also that he had formed a Kimpo Airfield defense force, using combat support and service units. Almond appeared somewhat mollified.

The Korean Marines, leaving one battalion behind in Inchon, had followed the 5th Marines to Kimpo Airfield, and made its first attack northwest of the airfield on 19 September against light resistance. That same day the battalion

from Inchon rejoined its parent regiment. Now, with one battalion to be left behind to cover the northwest flank, the KMC regiment prepared to follow the 5th Marines across the Han.

Smith's third organic infantry regiment, the 7th Marines, including the battalion that had come from the Mediterranean by way of the Suez Canal, had arrived in the harbor. Colonel Homer Litzenberg asked General Smith what element he wanted landed first. "An infantry battalion," said Smith. "And what next?" "Another infantry battalion."

Litzenberg opened his command

post two miles south of Kimpo. His 3d Battalion, under Major Maurice E. Roach, moved into an assembly area nearby. The 1st Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Thornton M. Hinkle, reached Hill 131 a mile north of the airfield sometime after midnight. The 1st Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis, stayed in the harbor to unload the ships that had brought in the regiment.

Smith made a note in his journal that Almond's concerns over open flanks had increased now that X Corps' command post was ashore. With the arrival of the 7th Marines, Smith himself could rest more easily concerning the security of his northwest flank.

Coordination between the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Division continued to be poor. An extensive minefield delayed the 32d Infantry as it attacked along the Seoul-Suwon highway on 20 September, but on that same day the 32d did take T'ongdok mountain and a part of Copper Mine Hill. The rest of Copper Mine Hill was taken the next day and, as night fell, the Army regiment held a line two miles south of Anyangni. The big event of 22 September for the 32d Infantry was the capture of Suwon Airfield and opening it to friendly traffic.

Sutter's 2d Battalion reverted to regimental reserve the afternoon of 22 September after seven days

in the assault. His grimy Marines gathered together in a bivouac area where they could wash and rest. The 22 September entry in Almond's war diary, dutifully kept by Haig, noted that Sutter's battalion had taken 116 casualties as "the result of aggressive forward movement without the required artillery preparation." That evening, Almond, after a busy day, entertained Admiral Doyle and selected staff officers at dinner at his newly established mess in Inchon.

Almond and Smith Disagree

By 23 September, the 32d Infantry had secured its objectives

Loaded in amphibious tractors and trucks, Korean Marines prepare to follow the 5th Marines across the Han River. A major portion of the 1st Korean Marine Corps Regiment had

followed the 5th Marines to Kimpo Airfield, made its first attack northwest of the field, and were now poised to liberate the Korean capital.

National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC348702



1st Marine Division Casualties

15-23 September 1950

Date	KIA ¹	DOW ²	MIA ³	WIA ⁴	Total
15 Sept	20	1	1	174	196
16 Sept	2	1	1	22	26
17 Sept	6	0	0	70	76
18 Sept	7	3	0	92	102
19 Sept	10	1	0	61	72
20 Sept	24	1	3	119	147
21 Sept	30	3	0	198	231
22 Sept	27	3	0	135	165
23 Sept	19	7	0	117	143
Total	145	20	5	988	1,158

¹ KIA Killed in Action

² DOW Died in Action

³ MIA Missing in Action

⁴ WIA Wounded in Action

overlooking the Han, south and southeast of Yongdung-po. The 3d Battalion of the Army's highly regarded 187th Airborne Regiment, with Almond's "GHQ Raider Group" attached, arrived at Kimpo and temporarily came under 1st Marine Division control. Smith gave it the mission of covering his northwest flank, freeing the 7th Marines for a crossing of the Han.

Almond ordered his command post displaced forward from Inchon to Ascom City. During the day he visited Barr's command post and passed out a liberal number of Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, and Purple Hearts. Smith found Almond's practice of presenting on-the-spot awards disruptive and a cause for hurt feelings and misunderstandings. He thought Almond was inspired by Napoleon, but MacArthur was a more immediate practitioner. Smith had, it will be remembered, him-

self received a Silver Star from MacArthur as had Barr and Admiral Doyle. MacArthur was even more generous to Admiral Struble, giving him the Army's Distinguished Service Cross.

The 5th Marines was now firmly across the Han but was having difficulty in expanding its bridgehead. Mid-morning on the 23d, Almond met with Smith and urged him to put the 1st Marines across the river. He again complained that the Marines were not pressing the attack vigorously enough. Almond suggested that Smith cross the Han southeast of Seoul with the 1st Marines and then attack frontally into the city. Smith countered with a less-rash plan to have the 1st Marines cross at the 5th Marines' bridgehead. Almond reluctantly concurred.

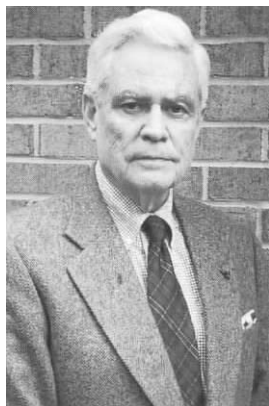
From 15 through 23 September, the 1st Marine Division had suffered 165 men killed in action or

died of wounds, 5 Marines still missing in action, and 988 men wounded. In turn the division had taken, by fairly accurate count, 1,873 prisoners, and claimed 6,500 enemy casualties.

During the day, 23 September, Smith visited the observation post of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, which had just taken Hill 108 overlooking the rail and highway bridges, their spans broken, into Seoul. A Marine major, who knew of O. P. Smith's study of the Civil War, presumed to remark that the position was similar to that of Burnside at Falmouth on the north bank of the Rappahannock across from Fredericksburg in December 1862. General Smith looked with amusement at the major and patiently explained that he would not make the same mistake as Burnside. There would be no frontal assault across the river into Seoul.

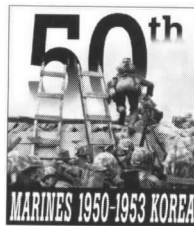
About the Author

Edwin Howard Simmons, a retired Marine brigadier general, was, as a major, the commanding officer of Weapons Company, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, in the landing across Blue Beach Two at Inchon. His active service spanned 30 years—1942 to 1972—and included combat in World War II and Vietnam as well as Korea. A writer and historian all his adult life, he was the Director of Marine Corps History and Museums from 1972 until 1996 and is now the Director Emeritus.



He was born in Billingsport, New Jersey, the site of a battle along the Delaware River in the American Revolution, and received his commission in the Marine Corps through the Army ROTC at Lehigh University. He also has a master's degree from Ohio State University and is a graduate of the National War College. A one-time managing editor of the *Marine Corps Gazette*, he has been published widely, including more than 300 articles and essays. His most recent books are *The United States Marines: A History* (1998), *The Marines* (1998), and *Dog Company Six* (2000).

He is married, has four grown children, and lives with his wife, Frances, at their residence, "Dunmarchin," two miles up the Potomac from Mount Vernon.



THIS PAMPHLET HISTORY, one in a series devoted to U.S. Marines in the Korean War era, is published for the education and training of Marines by the History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., as part of the U.S. Department of Defense observance of the 50th anniversary of that war. Editorial costs have been defrayed in part by contributions from members of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

KOREAN WAR COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

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2000

PCN 190 00315 100

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Valuable insights were provided by an Inchon war game developed at the Marine Corps Historical Center (MCHC) in 1987,

which examined the operation from the viewpoint of its principal commanders, using their reports, writings, and memoirs. Among the primary sources used, the most important were the unit files and records held by MCHC of the 1st Marine Division and its subordinate regiments and battalions. Also important were the biographic files held by Reference Section.

Other primary sources of great use were the oral histories, diaries, and memoirs of many of the participants. The most important of these were those of Generals Stratemeyer, Almond, Cates, Shepherd, O. P. Smith, Craig, V. H. Krulak, and Bowser, and Admirals Burke and Doyle. A fully annotated draft of the text is on file at the Marine Corps Historical Center. As is their tradition, the members of the staff at the Center were fully supportive in the production of this anniversary pamphlet. Photographs by Frank Noel are used with the permission of Associated Press/World Wide Photos.

