

## **A Little Marine Corps History**

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The Marine Corps was created on November 10, 1775, in Tun Tavern, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, by a resolution of the Continental Congress. In 1834 the Marines became part of the Department of the Navy.

Captain Samuel Nicholas - is considered the first Marine Corps Commandant. He was the first commissioned officer of the Marine Corps.

General Archibald Henderson - The Grand Old Man of the Marine Corps - fifth Commandant and first to be a General. He served as Commandant for 38 years.

The current Marine Corps emblem (the Eagle, Globe and Anchor) was adopted in 1868. The globe and anchor signify worldwide service and sea traditions. The spread eagle represents the nation itself. The motto is clenched in the beak of the bird.

Devil Dogs - During World War I the Marines fought the Germans at Belleau Wood. The Germans thought that their position could not be taken. However, they had not planned on the fierce fighting ability of the Marines. The persistent attacks, delivered with unbelievable courage soon had the Germans calling the Marines "Teufelhunden" (Devil Dogs).

Lieutenant General Louis B. "Chesty" Puller - General Puller is the most decorated Marine in Marine Corps history. He won 52 ribbons in all, including five Navy Crosses, the second highest award a Marine can win, and a Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Cross is the US Army equivalent of the Navy Cross and therefore is ALSO the second highest decoration awarded by the United States

Lt. Presley O'Bannon - Marine Lt. Presley N. O'Bannon led a force of Marines and Mercenaries across 600 miles of Libyan desert, to attack the fortress at Derne, Tripoli, while Naval forces provided bombardment. This was the first time an American flag flew over a captured fortification in the "Old World". In appreciation for O'Bannon's services, Hamet Bey (the rightful ruler of Tripoli) presented O'Bannon with his own sword, a curved blade with ivory hilt topped by a golden eagle's head. The Mameluk sword. This sword served as the pattern for swords carried to this day by Marine Officers.

Scarlet Trousers Stripe (Blood Stripe) - The red stripe was first seen on Marine uniforms in 1796. It was used off and on until uniform regulations made it standard on all NCO and Officer uniforms in 1859. It is rumored that the stripe represents the blood shed by Marines at the Battle of Chapultepec in the war with Mexico in 1846.

Quatrefoil - the quatrefoil in the cross-shaped design seen on officers' barracks cover and was taken directly from Napoleon III's army.

Marine Corps Motto - "Semper Fidelis" was adopted in 1883 as the official Marine Corps Motto. It is Latin for Always Faithful.

Official Marine Corps Colors - Scarlet and Gold.

Marine Corporal John Mackie - During the Civil War Corporal Mackie's acts of heroism made him the first Marine to win the Medal of Honor. Mackie was on board the Galena when a direct hit caused an explosion, Mackie rallied the survivors, carried off the dead and wounded and got three of the ship's guns back in action.

Smedley Butler - Only Marine Officer to win the Medal of Honor twice.

Gunnery Sergeant Dan Daily - Only enlisted Marine to win the Medal of Honor twice.

Major General John A. Lejeune - First Marine Officer to command an Army division in combat, as well as the 13th Commandant of the Corps.

General Roy A. Geiger - At Okinawa in 1945, after the battle death of Army Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., then Lieutenant General Roy A. Geiger succeeded to the command of the 10th United States Army consisting of the 24th Corps (4 Army divisions; 7th, 27th, 77th, 96th infantry divisions) and the 3rd Amphibious Corps (3 Marine divisions; 1st, 2nd, 6th). The first and only time that a Marine Corps officer attained such standing. Geiger was posthumously promoted to full general by the 80th Congress.

Oorah is a spirited cry common to United States Marines since the mid-20th century. It is comparable to the "Huaa" (heard, understood, and accepted - pronounced Hooah) cry used in the Army, but is probably more commonly used among Marines than "Huaa" would be in the Army. It is most commonly used to respond in the affirmative to a question, to acknowledge an order, or as an expression of enthusiasm.

The 1st Amphibious Reconnaissance Company, FMFPAC can be credited with the introduction of "Oorah!" into the Corps in 1953, shortly after the Korean War. Recon Marines served aboard the submarine USS Perch, ASSP-313, which was a WWII diesel submarine retrofitted to carry Navy UDT and Recon Marines. As is commonly depicted in war movies, whenever the boat was to dive, the PA system would announce "DIVE! DIVE!", followed by the sound of a horn: "AARUGHA!".

In 1953 or 1954, while on a conditioning run, one of the 1st Amphibious Recon Marines imitated the "Dive" horn sound "AARUGHA!" as part of the cadence, and it naturally became a part of the Recon cadence while on runs, and thereafter infiltrated Recon Marine lexicon. Over time, "AARUGHA!" morphed into the shorter, simpler "Oorah!" Today, the official Marine Corps Training Reference Manual on the history of Marine Recon is titled "AARUGHA!"

Former Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps John Massaro, while serving as the company Gunnery Sergeant of 1st Force Amphibious Recon in the late 1950s, acquired "Oorah!" and took it with him when he went to serve as an instructor at the Drill Instructor school at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. He there passed it on to the Drill Instructor students and they, in turn, passed it on to their recruits.

Owing to its relatively recent origins, it is less common for Marines who served in Vietnam or earlier to be familiar with "Oorah!", but most post-Vietnam Marines will have learned it throughout their careers.

Several apocryphal origins of "Oorah!" exist. One has it that the term is Turkish for "Kill". How a Turkish word entered the Marine Corps is not typically explained. In fact, the Turkish word for "kill" is "öldürmek". However, the Russian battlecry of "Urrah!" can supposedly be traced to the Turkish word for "Kill."

A shortened version of "Oorah!" can come out as a short, sharp, monosyllabic guttural "Er!"

Retired Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant, Drill Instructor and Hollywood actor [R. Lee Ermey](#) is known for using "Oorah!" frequently on the History Channel program Mail Call, which he hosts.

"Oorah" and "Hooah" may also be variations of the earlier "Hurrah", which was a common shout used by English-speaking soldiers in the past.

## **History of the Women Marines**

Since 1918, women have answered the call to serve proudly in the United States Marines and the role of women in the Marines has evolved and expanded. All Women Marines can look forward to the future proudly, while never forgetting the women who made this future possible.

In 1918, the Secretary of Navy allowed women to enroll for clerical duty in the Marine Corps. Officially, Opha Mae Johnson is credited as the first woman Marine. Johnson enrolled for service on August 13, 1918; during that year some 300 women first entered the Marine Corps to take over stateside clerical duties from battle-ready Marines who were needed overseas. The Marine Corps Women's Reserve was established in February 1943. June 12th, 1948, Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act and made women a permanent part of the regular Marine Corps.

In 1950, the Women Reserves were mobilized for the Korean War and 2,787 women served proudly. By the height of the Vietnam War, there were about 2,700 women Marines served both stateside and overseas. By 1975, the Corps approved the assignment of women to all occupational fields except infantry, artillery, armor and pilot/air crew. Over 1,000 women Marines were deployed in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990-1991.

Private Minnie Spotted-Wolf of Heart Butte, Montana, enlisted in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in July 1943. She was the first female American Indian to enroll in the Corps. Minnie had worked on her father's ranch doing such chores as cutting fence posts, driving a two-ton truck, and breaking horses. Her comment on Marine boot camp "Hard but not too hard."

#### Women Marine Milestones

- 1918 --Pvt. Opha Mae Johnson becomes the first woman to enlist in the Marine Corps Reserve
  - 1943 --Colonel Ruth Cheney Streeter first Director of Women Marine Reservists
  - 1943 --Captain Anne Lentz, first commissioned officer
  - 1943 --Private Lucille McClarren first enlisted woman
  - 1945 --first detachment of women marines arrives in Hawaii for duty
  - 1948 --Colonel. Katherine A. Towle first Director of Women Marines
  - 1961 --The first woman Marine is promoted to Sergeant Major (E-9).
  - 1965 --The Marine Corps assigns the first woman to attach duty. Later, she is the first woman Marine to serve under hostile fire.
  - 1978 --Colonel Margaret A. Brewer was the first woman Marine general officer
  - 1979 --The Marine Corps assigns women as embassy guards.
  - 1985 --Colonel Gail M. Reals, the first woman selected by a board of general officers to be advanced to brigadier general
  - 1992 --Brigadier General Carol A. Mutter assumed command of the 3d Force Service Support Group, Okinawa, the first woman to command a Fleet Marine Force unit at the flag level
  - 1993 --2d Lieutenant Sarah Deal became the first woman Marine selected for Naval aviation training
  - 1993 --The Marine Corps opens pilot positions to women.
  - 1994 --Brigadier General Mutter became the first woman major general in the Marine Corps and the senior woman on active duty in the armed services
  - 1995 --The first female Marine pilot pins on Naval flight wings.
  - 1996 --Lieutenant General Mutter became the first woman Marine and the second woman in the history of the armed services to wear three stars
  - Today --Women serve in 93 percent of all occupational fields and 62 percent of all billets. Women constitute 6.2 percent of the Corps end strength and are an integral part of the Marine Corps.
- This is but a brief history of Women Marines to learn more please visit the following links. To add to a oral history of the Women Marines, become a member of the Women Marines Association and add your story and memories to our member's forums.