# UCF Veterans Legacy Program

***UCF VLP Presents: US Marine Corps History***
**Episode Two: Marines Remember Their World Wars**
Written by Jim Stoddard
Edited by Sebastian Garcia

**LIAM AMBROSE:** June 6, 1918. Sergeant Luther Wade Pilcher urged his squad forward from their covered position. 500 yards of waist-high wheat stood between them and their objective. Their mission, along with the other Marines from the 4th Brigade, centered on dislodging the German troops from their well dug-in position inside a thick patch of woods some 50 miles from Paris. As they pressed through the wheat, the Germans opened fire with their machine guns and mortars. Amid the wizzes and snaps of bullets, the explosions and shrapnel, Pilcher's squad pushed forward. They crouched at first, to stay hidden from enemy sights. Occasionally, they dove to the ground to avoid nearby explosions. When possible, they leveled their rifles to return fire. As they inched closer and closer to the tree line, more and more Marines fell. In the last few yards, they rose up, rushed the enemy, and fought to gain a foothold in the woods…[1]

**AMBROSE:** February 19, 1945. Corporal George Joseph Byers crouched in the belly of an amphibious landing craft. Rocked by the waves, soaked by the geysers caused by enemy artillery splashing into the ocean, he and his comrades from the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions motored towards a black sand island in the Pacific. Praying that one of those rounds doesn't find his landing craft, he peered over the side. He saw a lone mountain looming in the distance. He knew that the mountain, along with the rest of the island, concealed a well prepared Japanese defense. When the ramp dropped on his landing craft, he rushed out onto the sand to gain a foothold on the beach…

**AMBROSE:** From Belleau Wood in June of 1918 to Iwo Jima in February of 1945, Marines marched to the sound of the guns in World Wars I and II. In doing so, they etched their names into the history of those global conflagrations.

**AMBROSE:** I am Liam Ambrose and this is ***UCF VLP Presents: US Marine Corps History,*** **Episode Two: Marines Remember Their World Wars**.[2] Before World War I, the Marines combatted in small-scale conflicts and enforced American

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[1] Sound comes from a short film at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Virginia, that recreates the Marine Corps attack at Belleau Wood. "WW1 - USMC Attack at Belleau Wood - June 6, 1918 - Marine Corps Museum," posted June 7, 2018, by LionHeart FilmWorks, YouTube, https://youtu.be/09yjvF1jxQ0?si=ZaMtgzbyBOjFTRnd; Score and sound effects that follow sourced from Pixabay artists.

[2] Theme music sourced from the United States Marine Band's "The Marine Hymn (three verses)," https://www.marineband.marines.mil/Portals/175/Docs/Audio/Ceremonial/the_marines_hymn_three_verses.mp3.

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interventions abroad. The large-scale land warfare of World War I transformed the Marines into a formidable fighting force that proved essential to the US military's larger operations. Their combat at the Battle of Belleau Wood elevated the Marines to an almost mythical status, giving rise to the lore that remains central to how Marines continue to remember and honor their past. Their fighting in World War II only advanced this mythology further. But how? What did the Marines do during both World Wars that cemented their legacy? How did their actions in both World Wars differ from their earlier history? To begin answering these questions, we briefly head to Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, on the eve of American Independence, as this marked the origins of the Marine Corps; we then follow the Marines' path throughout the nineteenth century, as their interventions across the Western Hemisphere defined them as America's police force; we lastly spend most of our time with Marines who served in the two deadliest conflicts in human history, visiting sites that remain enshrined in Marine and American memory.

**AMBROSE:** As Jim Stoddard details, the Marine Corps originated during the American Revolution.

**JIM STODDARD:** The Marine Corps began with an act of the Second Continental Congress. The Continental Marines they would've been called at the time. My name's Jim Stoddard. I am a Marine Corps Veteran and doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida in its Text and Technologies program. My dissertation deals with Marine Corps history and culture. So like the Navy, like the Army, our birthdates predate the birthday of the nation itself. With recruit training, you get Tun Tavern, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and 10 November 1775, and that's the first recruiting station of the Marine Corps in a bar. As the phrase would go, we're born in a bar. They recruit merchant marines and seamen that have the skillsets of also being infantry and militiamen that also have a naval background. So you're already getting that hybrid of soldiers of the sea even before that phrase really exists. Through the Revolution, the Marine Corps does an amphibious landing at New Providence, Bahamas. It's the first amphibious landing in the Marine Corps' existence. In addition, the Continental Marines are attached to George Washington. They're a part of the crossing of the Delaware and the battles of Trenton and Princeton. So there is some Revolutionary War legacy, but after that war is over, like the other continental services, the Marine Corps goes away.

**AMBROSE:** President John Adams re-established the Marine Corps on July 11th, 1798, when he signed into law "An Act for Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps." This act made the force permanent and placed it under the new Department of the Navy.[3]

[3] U.S. Congress, "An Act for Establishing and Organizing a Marine Corps," Congressional Act, Philadelphia, July 11, 1798, Documents, Orders, and Speeches, Marine Corps History Division,

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**STODDARD:** You get the birth of the actual United States Marine Corps under his presidency when the Navy gets rebuilt and we become the Marines of the frigate Navy.

**AMBROSE:** Throughout the nineteenth century, the Marine Corps fought on American soil and abroad.

**STODDARD:** After that, you get the Barbary Wars, the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War. There's Marine Corps presence in the Seminole Wars. Archibald Henderson, the longest serving commandant in Marine Corps history, he very famously puts a note on his door in headquarters Marine Corps that says he's "Off to fight the Indians, be back when the war is over," and goes down to Florida and takes part in the Seminole Wars. There's very small presence of the Marine Corps in the Civil War. We're on gunboats and steamboats, paddleboats on the Mississippi River, guarding naval posts and installations and things like that. The nineteenth century Marine Corps history is interesting and important, but it doesn't take up as much oxygen as the twentieth century Marine Corps history does, when it truly expands and gets involved in these great wars of history. And you get the modern Marine Corps.

**AMBROSE:** That shift to the modern Marine Corps occurred at a time when United States foreign policy went through its own shift. Beginning in 1898, the US increasingly intervened in affairs abroad. In that year, the US waged a war with Spain over the liberation of Cuba. In the war's aftermath, the US seized control of Spain's other colonies, such as Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

**STODDARD:** The change takes place after the Spanish-American War because, with that war, the US gains an empire. It doesn't gain Cuba in the direct sense because of the Platt Amendment and the Teller Amendment. We're involved in their government, but we don't own them as a colony. Whereas Puerto Rico, the Philippines, they're gained, and they're added to US territory. From that, very quickly, with the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary, Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson as progressive presidents, are very involved in interventionalist foreign policy, whether that be speak softly and carry a big stick, dollar diplomacy, or Wilsonian moral intervention. We see that with the Panama Canal, Haiti, Nicaragua. There is direct political involvement.

**AMBROSE:** With this interventionist shift, the United States, particularly its State Department, needed a force to police American interests abroad.

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https://www.usmcu.edu/Research/Marine-Corps-History-Division/Frequently-Requested-Topics/Historical-Documents-Orders-and-Speeches/An-Act-for-Establishing-and-Organizing-a-Marine-Corps/.

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**STODDARD:** It's the Marine Corps that becomes the police force for the State Department, going into Panama, going into Haiti, going into Nicaragua, all these places. The Army's involved in some of these, but for the most part, it's the Marine Corps that responds first because the Navy gets there first, and the Marines are the ones that can be sent to shore.

**AMBROSE:** While the Marine Corps developed its expeditionary capabilities and anti-guerilla tactics during the so-called Banana Wars of the early twentieth century, conflicts in Europe erupted into a global conflagration. Though World War I began in 1914, the US attempted to remain neutral until President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany in April of 1917.

**STODDARD:** If you look at it from the context of what the Marine Corps was doing at the time, World War I's the anomaly. Everything that's going on at the time is the Marine Corps showing up into small countries, doing these small wars, counterinsurgencies, dealing with political situations, setting up national police, like the Gendarmerie and things like that. And then you have this large-scale land warfare that's taking place in Europe.

**AMBROSE:**[4] Once the US declared war, it needed to build up its Armed Forces, particularly the US Army. Including the National Guard, the Army only numbered about 200,000 soldiers in April of 1917. For comparison, the French suffered nearly 600,000 casualties in 1916 alone, mostly from the Battles of Verdun and the Somme.[5] If the US military wanted to contribute to the Allied war effort, it had to grow and grow fast. At least a portion of that growth came from the Marine Corps.

**STODDARD:** The commandant very astutely recognizes the Marine Corps needs to be involved in this in one capacity or another. This is the biggest thing the country is involved in. No one's paying attention to these interventional situations that the Marine Corps has been doing for decades now because this Great War is happening. And we have this moniker already at the time of First to Fight. How can the Marine Corps maintain that idea if it's left out of the Great War? So lobbying begins to convince President Wilson and General Pershing that there needs to be a Marine Corps element added to the American Expeditionary Force. Eventually, that does come to pass through 1917, and the 5th and 6th Marine regiments are

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[4] Music in between Stoddard and Ambrose comes from George M. Cohan's 1917 song "Over There," one of the most popular songs at the time of the US's declaration of war against Germany. Peerless Quartet and George M Cohan, *Over There*, June 13, 1917, Audio, https://www.loc.gov/item/jukebox-656848/.

[5] Paddelaters Research Desk, "French Casualties WW1: Raw Numbers, Battles & Historical Impact," Paddelaters, January 22, 2026, https://paddelaters.com/blogs/the-origins-of-the-french-ww1-uniform-from-blue-to-horizon-blue.

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brigaded together to become the 4th Marine Brigade. They're half of the 2nd Division of the US Army under an Army general, being sent over to France to fight on the Western Front.

**AMBROSE:** General John J. Pershing remains one of the few soldiers mentioned by name in the Marine Corps' historical narrative. As commander of the American Expeditionary Force, the AEF, Pershing wielded the discretion to place the 4th Marine Brigade within an Army infantry division. At first, Pershing resisted using Marines within his Army. But over time, his feelings on the Marines changed.

**AMBROSE:** Once the AEF arrived in France, they trained in quiet sectors of the line under French tutelage. However, everything changed on the deadlocked Western Front in the spring of 1918. The German Army, reinforced by troops no longer needed on the Eastern Front due to the surrender of Russia, began a series of offensives into Allied territory. The offensives threatened major strategic Allied positions across the Western Front, and consequently, the AEF's 2nd Division, which included the 4th Marine Brigade, rushed to a sector northeast of Paris.

**AMBROSE:** Luther Wade Pilcher and Leroy Ian Brandon fought in the 4th Marine Brigade during this counteroffensive. Pilcher served in the Corps' Cuban and Haitian interventions. Brandon joined the Marines shortly before the US entered World War I. Pilcher, Brandon, and their fellow Marines filled in the line along the Marne River, near Château-Thierry, to block the German advance toward the French capital. It was here that the 4th Marine Brigade authored the first great chapter in modern Marine Corps history at the Battle of Belleau Wood.

**STODDARD:** The Marines get Belleau Wood, which has zero significance at the time, but it's chock-full of Germans. It's like fifty miles from Paris as the crow flies. The orders are to remove the Germans from these woods. And the 4th Marine Brigade is there to do it.

**AMBROSE:** On June 6th, 1918, the Marines assaulted across wheat fields and into the teeth of the German defense. Though Belleau Wood stretched only a mile and a half long and a half-mile wide, it sheltered nearly 2,000 soldiers from Germany's 237th and 28th Divisions, armed with dozens of heavy machine guns and mortars. The Germans entrenched themselves into the Wood's rocky and uneven terrain. Despite outnumbering the Germans five to one, the Marines that assaulted into Belleau Wood on June 6th, 1918, had to fight for every square inch and paid dearly for each step. The Marines took 1,087 casualties that day alone. Among the dead were Pilcher and Brandon.

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**STODDARD:** It's close quarters, hand-to-hand fighting, grenades and bayonets, gas attacks. Very brutal combat.

**AMBROSE:** But the battle for the Wood did not end on June 6th. It took twenty more days of hard fighting. On June 26th, Major Maurice E. Shearer sent his report of victory to his headquarters stating, "Woods now U.S. Marine Corps entirely."[6]

**AMBROSE:** The Battle of Belleau Wood left deep scars throughout the landscape. Over one hundred years later, the woods still hold the remains of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

**STODDARD:** If you go to Belleau Wood today, it's still a wood. It's a forest in a sense, but it's a lot sparser on its trees than it was back then. There's only a dozen oak trees that still exist that predate the battle. The rest of them are trees that grew up since the battle. It still has trenches and barbed wire and things like that. There still remains in there. It's still very much a former battlefield.

**AMBROSE:** Just outside of Belleau Wood is the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery. Interred in its hallowed grounds are the remains of 2,289 American servicemembers. Luther Wade Pilcher rests among them. Inscribed on the walls inside of the cemetery's chapel are the names of 1,060 Americans whose remains could not be recovered from the battle. Listed among them is Leroy Ian Brandon.

**STODDARD:** It's a monument. It's a site of memory, site of mourning.

**AMBROSE:** The Marine Corps gained fame and notoriety in real time during the Battle of Belleau Wood. Reporters often accompanied American units in World War I. Floyd Gibbons of the *Chicago Tribune* covered the 4th Marine Brigade at Belleau Wood. Gibbons' firsthand accounts of battle, aided by the fact that he himself sustained injuries from the enemy, put the Marines in the headlines of newspapers across America. A quirk of censorship regulations further enhanced the Marines' coverage.

**STODDARD:** The Marine Corps is getting a lot of public fame and notoriety because of a loophole in the press reporting at the time. Basically there are censorship regulations. Embedded reporters could not give the names or the unit numbers in the reports. What they were allowed to say was, an Army unit, an Army division, a Marine unit, a Marine division, is fighting the Germans. Well, even though you can't say the 4th Marine Brigade or the 2nd Army Division, if you're saying the Marines are

[6] "Battle of Belleau Wood: June 26, 1918," Naval History and Heritage Command, U.S. Navy, 2026, http://public2.nhhcaws.local/content/history/museums/nmusn/explore/photography/wwi/wwi-aef/battles/battle-of-belleau-wood.html.

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doing this, the Marines are doing that, it stands out. You don't have to give the unit numbers. The whole Marine Corps is fighting the Germans in Belleau Wood. And the Army all of a sudden looks like it's playing second fiddle. The Army's there too at the Battle of Belleau Wood, but when you're hearing the Marines, the Marines, the Marines, it gains a lot of attention. So it becomes almost a legend in its own time. That becomes the epicenter of the Marine Corps experience in World War I.

**AMBROSE:** After winning the Battle of Belleau Wood, the 4th Marine Brigade and their soldier brethren in the 2nd Infantry Division went on to fight the Germans in other battles, such as Soissons, Saint-Mihiel, Blanc Mont Ridge, and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. In that final campaign, Marines and soldiers fought up to the final minute of the war. On the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month of 1918, World War I came to an end. It took time for everyone to come home, but the US Marine Corps was forever changed by its World War I experience. As a new decade approached, Marines returned their attention to interventions in the Western Hemisphere and prepared for a potential future war in the Far East.

**KGU NEWSMAN:** Two, three, four. Hello, NBC. Hello, NBC. This is KGU from Honolulu, Hawaii. I am speaking from the roof of the Advertiser Publishing Company building. We have witnessed this morning the distant view of a brief full battle of Pearl Harbor and the severe bombing of Pearl Harbor by enemy planes, undoubtedly Japanese. The city of Honolulu has also been attacked and considerable damage done. This battle has been going on for nearly three hours. One of the bombs dropped within fifty feet of KGU tower. It is no joke. It is a real war.[7]

**PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT:** Yesterday, December 7th, 1941, a day which will live in infamy, the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.[8]

**STODDARD:** When Pearl Harbor happens and the Japanese attack there, that's a third of the attack actually on December 7th through 8th. It's Pearl Harbor, but it's also the southwest Pacific. It's also the Philippines. It's also Wake Island. It's also all these other places that are involved with US presence, British, Dutch, Australian. The Western world is very much in the Pacific Theater at this time, and Japan's kicked over all of them. In about 24 hours, they begun all these attacks.

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[7] "News Flash Describing the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor," December 7, 1941, NBC: National Broadcasting Company, Inc., Collection, Sound Recordings of Broadcasts Series, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/2192572.
[8] "President Franklin Roosevelt's 'Day of Infamy' Speech," December 8, 1941, BRDLY: John G. Bradley Papers, Experimental Sound Recordings, National Archives at College Park, College, Park, MD, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1436350.

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**AMBROSE:** The early morning Japanese attack took the lives of over 2,400 Americans and wounded another 1,100. In addition to the loss of human life, Japan destroyed 180 aircraft and twenty-one ships, including eight battleships. Fortunately for the US Navy, its three aircraft carriers were out to sea during the attack. It took the US several months to rebuild and replace what they lost on December 7th.

**AMBROSE:** Though the buildup of US forces began during peacetime, after the US declaration of war against Japan, the military grew exponentially through volunteers ready to defend their country. The desire to serve one's country even extended to those too young to join the military. Lou Boria was one such young man. He joined the Marine Corps at sixteen years old and did so through the draft. When someone under eighteen volunteered for service, they required parental permission. But draft registration required no such permission, one only had to be eighteen years old or, at least, pass for eighteen years old.

**LOU BORIA:** At Parris Island, we get off the bus and get into our spots. And this calls a roll call. And he calls my name, "Boria." He says, "You're a draftee?" If their serial number started with a 9-0, was a draftee. "So you couldn't volunteer? You come into my Marine Corps, draftee?" I'm looking at this guy, like I said, "I don't want to tell him I'm sixteen. They'd, they'd throw me out!"

**AMBROSE:** Mr. Boria managed to keep his age a secret and graduated from boot camp. He went on to serve in the Pacific Theater of World War II, specifically in the campaign to liberate the Philippines from Japanese occupation. He later served in the Korean War.

**AMBROSE:** The US military crossed nearly 5,000 miles of enemy-held sea and land to reach Japan. This required taking and holding the islands in-between. For the Marines, their island hopping campaign across the Pacific began at Guadalcanal, in the Solomons, on August 7th, 1942.

**STODDARD:** When we start this Pacific campaign, the Navy's the way this is gonna happen, because none of our planes fly long enough distances yet, we have to take over islands in order to land land-based aircraft. The Marines are the assault force to do this. The Army gets involved in it to a large extent, but very often it's the Marine Corps assaulting these islands, and then the Army comes in as the larger force to secure it in total after the assault has taken place. We see this in Guadalcanal, in Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian, basically what becomes known as island hopping.

**AMBROSE:** The island hopping campaign reinforced the Marine Corps' amphibious warfare identity. Marines like George Joseph Byers Jr of the 4th Marine Division hit the beaches of islands such as Kwajalein, Saipan, and Tinian. Such assaults from

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the sea to take each island and the high casualty rates that came with those efforts also cemented the idea that the Marine Corps and the Navy fought the Pacific War nearly on their own in the American memory of World War II.

**STODDARD:** Even though the Marine Corps is six divisions through the Pacific War and the Army has, like, twenty-five of them in the Pacific War, kinda like World War I and Belleau Wood, the Marine Corps gets the attention for the Pacific War. The Army gets Europe. There's no Marine contention over that. But the Marine Corps, even though it's the smaller of the forces, it gets the attention of the Pacific War. It's the Marine Corps' war. For right, wrong, or indifferent, that's the memory of it.

**AMBROSE:** Arguably, one of the key reasons the Marine Corps remains synonymous with the Pacific War comes from the Battle of Iwo Jima and the raising of the American flag atop Mount Suribachi.

**STODDARD:** Iwo Jima comes up in early 1945 and it's still when the United States military believes that it’s island hopping its way up to the eventual invasion of mainland Japan. The argument for Iwo is its distance from Japan itself. It's about 800 miles, and it sits politically within the Tokyo prefecture, even though it's at a great distance away. But because of its location, B-29s that take off from Tinian, to bomb mainland Japan, if they're too damaged to make it back home, they have Iwo partway back where they can land safely. So that's kind of the military strategic reason for going after it. The hope is that the lives spent to take that island will be less than the lives saved by saving those bomber pilots and fighter pilots coming back to land there.

**AMBROSE:** The 4th and 5th Marine Divisions assaulted Iwo Jima on February 19th, 1945. The divisions suffered over 2,400 casualties, including 550 killed in action, to gain a foothold on the volcanic island. Byers was one such Marine who made the ultimate sacrifice that day. His remains are interred in the Saint Augustine National Cemetery in Saint Augustine, Florida. Including the 3rd Marine Division, which landed on the island later in the battle, nearly 6,000 Marines perished to secure the island.

**AMBROSE:** However, the B-29 crewmembers saved by US possession of Iwo Jima is not the reason the battle holds a prominent place in the American memory of World War II.

**STODDARD:** But really the reason Iwo is important in the grand scheme of the war and in how it is today, we don't remember it as a stop-off for B-29s. We remember it as the place that the American flag was raised over Japanese soil for the first time in

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the war, most splendidly done on the top of Mount Suribachi, a few days into the battle.

**AMBROSE:** The 28th Marine Regiment, 5th Marine Division had the task of taking Mount Suribachi, the 545-foot high dormant volcano that dominated the island. First Lieutenant Harold G. Schrier's detachment of forty Marines ascended Suribachi on February 23rd.

**STODDARD:** Marines went up there to take the high ground. It was the most dominant position on the island, and there were Japanese all up and down it, and it had to be taken. So there's a military tactical reason to do it. When they get up there, they do what Marines do, and they put a flag on top.

**AMBROSE:** At 10:30 in the morning Schrier's Marines raised an American flag of about four-and-a-half-feet by two-and-a-half-feet.

**STODDARD:** And it was just the one they had with them, pretty small, and it could be seen, at a distance, and supposedly when this happened, everybody's excited, ship horns honk, and guys are shouting and everything like that. And depending on the oral histories you listen to from Veterans who were there, some of them hear this, some of them don't, and it has all to do with what they're currently engaged in at that time and their distance to Suribachi.

**AMBROSE:** The Americans raised two flags on Mount Suribachi that day. The iconic photograph of Marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima, seared in the American consciousness, actually captured the second, larger flag, rather than the first, smaller, flag.

**STODDARD:** There's conjecture on why, but they decided to put a second flag up. Some of the conjecture is the Secretary of the Navy, who was present, wanted the first flag for his own, so they'll put up a second one. Other conjecture says, "No, we just need a bigger flag up there." They send a patrol of Marines up to the top with this second flag, and along the way, they come across photographer Joe Rosenthal, who finds out what they're doing, and he and another tag along. They get up to the top, and the lieutenant on top decides that, well, if we're gonna swap these flags out, we can't lower a flag and then raise a flag because that could give the wrong message to those down at the base of the mountain and wouldn't be a good look. So we will lower the first as the second is coming up. As that is occurring, Rosenthal realizes that, "Oh, I have to take this picture now." Cameras of the '40s being what they were, he snaps a photo, doesn't know what he's got. Then they do a few more photos, a group pose they call the Gung Ho picture, and that's kinda it.

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**AMBROSE:** While the Marines carried on the fight for Iwo Jima, Rosenthal sent his film to Guam for development. Within days, Rosenthal's photo appeared on the front page of newspapers across the United States. When his editor asked about the circumstances of the photo, without seeing the newspapers, Rosenthal thought about the staged "Gung Ho" picture. To his surprise, it was the nearly missed image of six faceless Marines raising the American flag that galvanized the attention of a war weary nation. The photo led to a whirlwind tour for the men identified as the surviving flag raisers as part of the 7th War Loan drive that helped pay for the duration of World War II.

**STODDARD:** Iwo Jima in particular of all the Marine Corps imagery and events, that flag raising, it is the picture of World War II to most Americans, even though in the American mind, the European theater is paramount. Defeating the Nazis, defeating Hitler, is the main thing we think about with World War II. It's the primary topic of World War II films in the US. But somewhat ironically, the theater that's often forgotten about or plays second fiddle in the Pacific, it is the image of those Marines raising a flag atop of a volcano in some random island in the Pacific Ocean that no one had ever heard of prior to that battle, that is the image that comes to mind. It is the photo of World War II.

**AMBROSE:** On April 1st, 1945, the US launched Operation Iceberg, a complex plan to invade and occupy Okinawa and the surrounding Ryukyu islands. Controlling these islands held strategic importance to the eventual invasion of mainland Japan. US forces considered Okinawa the last piece of the puzzle to complete their long island hopping campaign across the Pacific. The 1st, 2nd, and 6th Marine Divisions, along with four divisions from the US Army and US Navy's 5th Fleet, fought for eighty-two days to secure the island of Okinawa. The island contained all the various terrain elements the Marines fought through in their brutal island hopping campaign: dense jungles, sharp ridges, steep hillsides, dark caves, and populated urban centers. Marines, like Thomas C. Oesterreicher of the 1st Marine Division, fought through a series of well-fortified Japanese defensive lines to take the island. One of the most heavily defended was the Shuri Line, which stretched across the central ridges of southern Okinawa. The Marines and soldiers who fought to breach the line suffered over 26,000 casualties in the process. With the Shuri Line breached after the fall of Shuri Castle on May 29th, the Japanese fell back to their final defensive positions, which included Kunishi Ridge. Oesterreicher and his fellow Marines in the 1st Regiment fought for several days in mid-June to take the ridge. The regiment succeeded on June 17th, though Oesterreicher was mortally wounded two days prior. He rests in Saint Augustine National Cemetery in Saint Augustine, Florida.

**AMBROSE:** With the island secured, the battle for Okinawa concluded on June 22nd. The surviving servicemembers likely felt a sigh of relief, but their joy quickly

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dissipated with what they believed to be their next mission: the invasion of mainland Japan.

**STODDARD:** Very few people know about the Manhattan Project at all, and it's only in July of '45 that the Trinity tests are successful, and Truman finds out about it. He gives his Potsdam Declaration. And instead of an invasion of Japan, two nuclear bombs bring that war to a close.

**AMBROSE:** The introduction and use of the atomic bomb to end World War II raised questions about the future of warfare. As the smallest and most conventionally armed force, several within the military establishment and in the halls of Congress questioned the Corps' mission and necessity.[9] In our next episode, we will hear how senior Marine officers and their civilian allies spent these years arguing for the Corps' place in America's military in the nuclear age. They testified on the history of the Corps and pointed to the need for their service in the future. When the Cold War turned hot on the Korean Peninsula, the Marines proved the veracity of such testimony.

**STODDARD:** Going from the Department of War to the Defense Department and the Marine Corps having to justify its existence in the late '40s, and then there's a whole argument that Korea saved the Marine Corps.

**RAY FULLARD:** We had just got out of World War II, so we were downsizing, and all of a sudden Korea pops off and now we need somebody to go over there right away. Who was that? That was that first provisional regiment out of Camp Pendleton, over there right away and held the line. That solidified a need for a Marine Corps as America's 911 force.

**AMBROSE:** Thank you for listening to ***UCF VLP Presents: US Marine Corps History***, an educational podcast produced by the University of Central Florida's Veterans Legacy Program. I'm your host, Liam Ambrose.

**AMBROSE:** ***UCF VLP Presents: US Marine Corps History*** is made possible by the University of Central Florida's Veterans Legacy Program. The UCF VLP is a US Department of Veterans Affairs-funded partnership with the National Cemetery Administration through which UCF students, faculty, staff, and K-12 educators across Florida collaborate to extend the memorialization of Veterans buried in National Cemeteries across the state by using cutting-edge technology and innovative pedagogy.

[9] Music comes from the United States Marine Band's "Marines' Hymn (slow version)," https://www.marineband.marines.mil/Portals/175/Docs/Audio/Ceremonial/the_marines_hymn_slow_version.mp3.

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**AMBROSE:** This episode of ***UCF VLP Presents: US Marine Corps History*** is researched, written, and produced by Jim Stoddard. This episode is edited and mixed by Sebastian Garcia. Music and sound effects are sourced from the US National Archives and Records Administration, the Library of Congress, the United States Marine Corps, and Pixabay artists. Executive producers are Dr. Amelia Lyons and Sebastian Garcia.

**AMBROSE:** We also thank Marine Corps Veteran Lou Boria for sharing his story. Special thanks to Dan Fandino and Harper Norris for helping us record at the UCF Digital Exploration Center. We also thank Heather Gibson and the UCF College of Arts and Humanities for the recording studio at the Nicholson School of Communication.

**AMBROSE:** To learn more about the Veterans featured in this episode, visit our website which also contains the other deliverables we produce as part of our VLP work, such as grade-level Veteran biographies, cemetery mini-tours, K-12 lesson plans, and more, visit our website. The link is in the episode's description.

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