

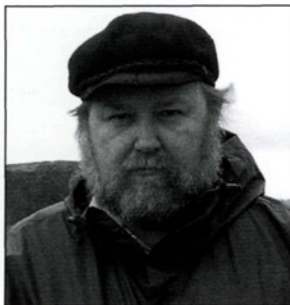
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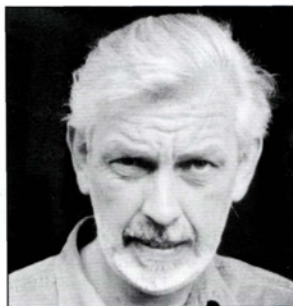
# US Marine Corps Raider 1942–43



Ed Gilbert • Illustrated by Howard Gerrard



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Though not specifically footnoted in the text, the primary references used in preparing this account are Joseph H. Alexander's excellent *Edson's Raiders* (Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 2001), George W. Smith's *Carlson's Raid* (Novato, CA, Presidio Press, 2001), and Jon Hoffman's *Once A Legend – Red Mike Edson of the Raiders* (Novato, CA, Presidio Press, 1994).

The experiences of fictional characters are of necessity loosely based on those of real persons, but resemblance to any real Raider in name or detail is coincidental.

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## Author's dedication

For Cecil and Sarah.

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## Artist's note

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# US MARINE CORPS RAIDER 1942-43

## INTRODUCTION

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*Heroism, the Caucasian mountaineers say, is endurance for one moment more.*

George Kennan, 1921

**T**he Raider battalions were units that the Marine Corps never wanted. The Raider concept was born in the early days of World War II when America was perilously weak and needed forces that could harass and delay a stronger foe while maintaining national morale. President Franklin Roosevelt eagerly seized upon the Commando model for guerrilla fighters and maritime raiders to pit against the Japanese empire.

The Marine Corps' leadership wanted no part of the guerrilla role, and countered that amphibious raiding was one of the Corps' traditional roles. The commander-in-chief, of course, prevailed. The Marines organized Raider battalions, but they lasted less than two years. In the final analysis they fought primarily as elite infantry rather than in their intended roles.

No one ever questioned the courage, tenacity, or professionalism of the Raiders. Six decades later several units lay unofficial claim to the legacy of the Raiders, the martial arts training center of the Corps' traditional home base at Quantico, Virginia, is named Raider Hall, and the symbols and ethos of the Raiders live on in Marine Detachment One, Special Operations Command (SOC).

The account of the Raider experience in this book will primarily focus upon two fictional, composite characters, Erik Andersen and Jake Rosen. The details of their lives, from their recruitment through to battle, are wholly accurate and based on true accounts. The text will be supported by first-hand accounts from real-life Raiders Ervin Kaplan, Brian Quirk, and Ken McCullough. All other named persons (apart from Drill Instructors Caulfield and Tompkins) are real.

**The mud pits were one of the features of Raider training. Note how clean the muzzle, breech, and magazine of the M1918 BAR remain. The heavy but reliable BAR was a favored Raider weapon. (Raider Museum)**



## CHRONOLOGY

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**Summer, 1941** US Marine Corps captains Sam Griffith and Wally Greene observe British Commandos.

**January 13, 1942** Captain James Roosevelt (United States Marine Corps Reserve) recommends formation of US Marine Commandos. The Marine command structure is resistant.

**February 16, 1942** 1st Special Battalion is redesignated 1st Raider Battalion.

**February 19, 1942** 2d Raider Battalion is formed near San Diego.

**August 7, 1942** 1st Marine Division lands on Guadalcanal. The 1st Raider Battalion seizes Tulagi.

**August 17–18, 1942** 2d Raider Battalion assaults Japanese base on Makin Atoll, Gilbert Islands.

**September 8, 1942** 1st Raider Battalion attacks major Japanese supply point at Tasimboko, Guadalcanal.

**September 12–14, 1942** 1st Raider Battalion repels the Kawaguchi Brigade's attack on the Marine perimeter on Guadalcanal.

**November 4–December 4, 1942** On the "Long Patrol," 2d Raider Battalion marches over 150 miles (242km) across Guadalcanal to disrupt the Japanese retreat.

**March 1943** 1st Raider Regiment formed.

**July 5, 1943** 1st Raider Regiment lands on New Georgia and marches overland.

**July 19, 1943** 1st Raider Battalion captures Enogai.

**July 20, 1943** Attempt by 1st and 4th Raider Battalions to capture Bairoko is bloodily repulsed.

**September 12, 1943** 2d Marine Raider Regiment (Provisional) organized on New Caledonia.

**November 1, 1943** 2d Raider Regiment lands on Bougainville as right flank of 3d Marine Division.

**November 8–9, 1943** 2d Raider Battalion fights battle of Piva Trail.

**November 21–25, 1943** 2d Raider Battalion committed to battle of Piva Forks.

**February 1, 1944** The Raiders are disbanded. Veterans form the core of the 4th Marine Regiment.

## RECRUITING MARINES

---

The initial manpower of the Raiders was drawn from the pool of pre-war enlistees. The Great Depression of the 1920s–30s made military service, with its small but steady income, a desirable alternative to poverty. As Raider Ken McCullough recalled, "Down in southeastern Oklahoma there wasn't any jobs." One day several high school boys were talking to the proprietor of the local diner. "He said 'If you can't take it, don't get in the Marines,' so that kind of perked my interest..." The Corps could afford to be selective: out of 25 potential recruits who applied with McCullough, only four were accepted. There were many reasons for joining the Marines and recruits came from a variety of backgrounds. For instance, another Raider, Ervin Kaplan, completed pre-medical studies but lacked the money to attend medical school, so he joined the Marines and became a radio operator.

Our first composite character, Erik Andersen, a young man of Norwegian descent from the state of Washington, illustrates the different paths that led men at the time into the Marines. He left home during the Great Depression to reduce the financial drain on his large family, like many young men of that era. He traveled about the country by hopping aboard slow-moving trains (where he risked beatings by the "bulls," railway security guards), working for, begging, and sometimes stealing food. Eventually a weary and disillusioned Erik enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and ended up building a park in Texas. The CCC, a program designed to pump money into the Depression economy, provided tent housing, balanced meals, and a dollar a day (an income equivalent to that of a private in the US Army). Erik received one-quarter of the money, the rest was sent to his family. In return, Erik quarried stone and constructed bridges and buildings under the supervision of former Army sergeants. Under the blazing sun and temperatures that ranged from 112 degrees F (45 degrees C) to below freezing, Erik fleshed out into a lean but powerfully built young man. A program intended to



A "portrait" photo of the P1941 utility uniform, showing 782 gear and common ways of wearing the boots and leggings. The men are carrying the later M1 rifle, with the longer M1903 bayonet preferred by most Marines. The ammunition belt – laden with ammunition, canteen of water, and other gear – typically hung much lower than shown on the man at left. (USMC Museums)

Raider training, like this practice off the coast of San Clemente Island, California, did not prepare Carlson's men for the high, breaking surf they would encounter off Makin Island. (Raider Museum)

keep him from starvation had converted him into the perfect potential soldier.

Our second composite character, Jake Rosen, on the other hand, was a small man who grew up in lower-middle-class affluence in Philadelphia. His father's haberdashery ensured that though neither new clothes nor food were abundant, they were always adequate. His experiences with the outdoors were manicured parks, and the rare holiday at the New Jersey shore.

Jake's journey to the Marine Corps was one motivated by social conscience. As a student he followed news of the savage Spanish Civil War, and the rise of the Nazis. Though resolutely secular, he also studied the news of the expulsion and persecution of Jews. Like most Americans, he saw the Nazis as a greater threat than Japan. He was not convinced that America could avoid being dragged into the European war that erupted the summer after his graduation from high school. German U-boats extended their reign of terror closer to American shores, even sinking the American destroyer *Ruben James* in October 1941, and Jake grew frustrated with his tasks of selling and shaping men's hats in his father's shop. He often passed the local recruiting station, with its prominent poster depicting a Marine, and the question "If you're

going to join up, why not join the very best?" One day after lunch he walked down the street to the recruiters' office. Unaware that his native city was the spiritual home of the Corps, where it was organized at Tun Tavern in November 1775, he just wanted to be among the "First to Fight" against the Nazis. The recruiter eyed Jake skeptically, but thought, "What the hell. Dan Daly was a feather merchant [see glossary], and he's got two Medals of Honor."





## BOOT CAMP

The massive expansion of the Marine Corps during World War I caused major revisions in the way the Corps trained recruits. In 1917 the Marines established Recruit Training Depots at the San Diego Naval Base in California and at an old naval dockyard and prison facility on Parris Island, South Carolina. Marines recruited east of the Mississippi River attended boot camp at Parris Island, those west of the river at San Diego.

Experienced Marine NCOs trained the new recruits over a ten-week period, emphasizing tough discipline, close-order drill, and rifle marksmanship. Discipline, unit pride, and individual motivation to excel had been the deciding factor in many of the Marine actions on the Western Front. The Corps' leadership felt that the emphasis on rifle marksmanship was justified by the results of Great War actions in which Marine riflemen drove German attacks to ground by aimed fire at ranges the Germans thought impractical.

Erik attended boot camp at San Diego, where recruits were housed in squad tents pitched along a sandy stretch of flat land near the naval base. For Erik, boot camp was something of a vacation. Food was good and abundant, the housing superior to that provided by the CCC, and the mild southern California climate was a year-round paradise. Erik's Drill Instructor (DI) was a weather-beaten but even-tempered sergeant of the "Old Corps" who had served aboard ship and in the Banana Wars. Sergeant Caulfield had already seen every stupid mistake or rebellious

**The new Raider Training Battalion established in 1943 emphasized consistent, but still intense, training. These trainees are equipped with an odd mix of M1 rifles, BARs, and a Thompson gun. (USMC Museums)**



gesture his young recruits were likely to invent. Training consisted of a daily routine of close-order drill, physical conditioning, and learning to care for the rifle and field equipment. The only break in this routine was a short period at the new base north of the city, where the recruits underwent rifle marksmanship training.

Caulfield proved to be a patient and thorough educator, who never used his booming “parade ground” voice to discipline his recruits. He would often handle his recruits rather firmly when required to teach them some drill maneuver or to contort their bodies into the joint-cracking postures that made the human body more stable when shooting the rifle at ranges up to 500 yards (460m) with “iron sights,” but never to discipline. That was done entirely with his weary and disappointed-sounding Virginia drawl. Ken McCullough recalled that “I had a couple of privileges taken away. But we didn’t have many privileges to start with.”

Erik learned a new language in addition to English and Norwegian. The Marines had their own peculiar naval dialect, and Erik had to learn that he answered calls of nature at the “head.” Caulfield grabbed his recruits by their “stacking swivels,” or necks, to move them about. Despite his protestations, Erik acquired the nickname “Swede.”

The soft, city-bred Jake had a very different experience. His DI was the figure of legend, a sarcastic corporal named Tompkins. Nothing Jake and his fellow boots did measured up to the standards demanded by Tompkins, which the corporal assured them were the bare minimum. The corporal seemed to live in a constant state of screaming exasperation at their ineptitude, which he sought to remedy by an exhausting regimen of close-order drill, “field days” (cleaning the living quarters), and “junk on the bunk” (equipment inspections). The heat, sand, and humidity of Parris Island ensured that nothing could ever meet Tompkins’ exacting standards. For Jake, the problems were exacerbated by Tompkins’ East Tennessee accent, as he sought to teach his boots to do things the “raht” way, and to learn military “normanclature.” The corporal was not a sadist, as Jake and his fellow boots imagined, but a proficient and knowledgeable NCO who had himself been trained in this harsh tradition.

New Marines were granted a short leave, then either assigned to regiments or, like Ervin Kaplan, sent to a specialist school such as communications. Jake was particularly pleased to be assigned to the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. The 5th Marines had distinguished itself in fighting against the Germans in the Great War.

## **RAIDER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING**

Individual Marines took different paths into the Raiders, and the process was dependent upon the beliefs of the commanders of the original Raider battalions. Though it has a reputation for being somewhat backward in attitude, the Corps actually encourages initiative, professional education, and creativity, and produces a disproportionate number of “characters” like the commanders of the first two Raider battalions, Merritt Austin Edson and Evans Carlson.

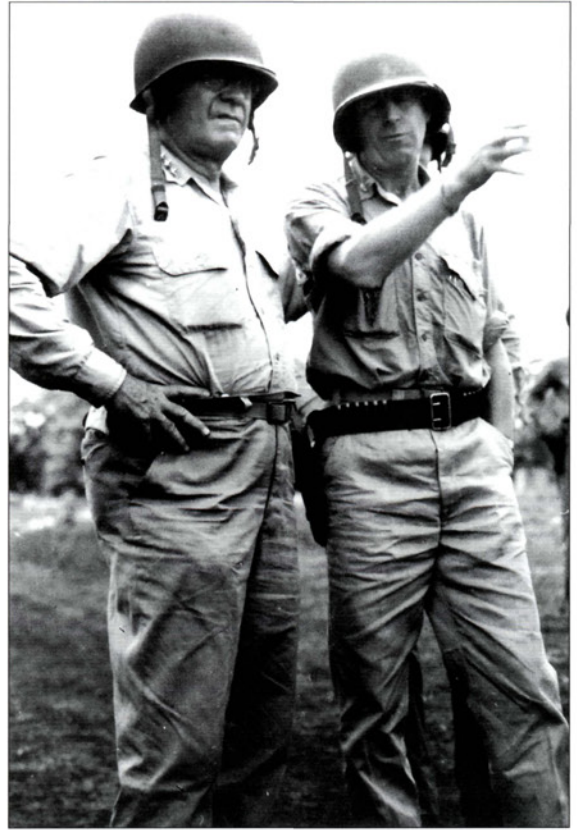
Lieutenant Colonel Merritt Austin Edson held the orthodox view that all Marine units should be capable of conducting maritime raids, the role

of the “specialist” British Commandos. Nicknamed “Red Mike” for the flaming red beard that he had grown during long-range jungle patrols pursuing Nicaraguan guerrillas in the Banana Wars, Edson was a fighting intellectual. A small, ungainly man whose clothing and equipment always seemed too big, he led the national champion Marine Corps rifle and pistol teams, and authored the *Small Wars Manual*, a seminal document in counterinsurgency warfare. His cold, blue eyes never smiled. War correspondent Richard Tregaskis called him “... the bravest, the most effective killing machine I have met in fifteen years ...” Captain Henry Adams, who as an FBI Special Agent had hunted the most violent criminals, said he had “... never seen a guy as cool as that fellow. I don’t think he was ever scared.” Edson genuinely cared for his men, but was reserved and distant.

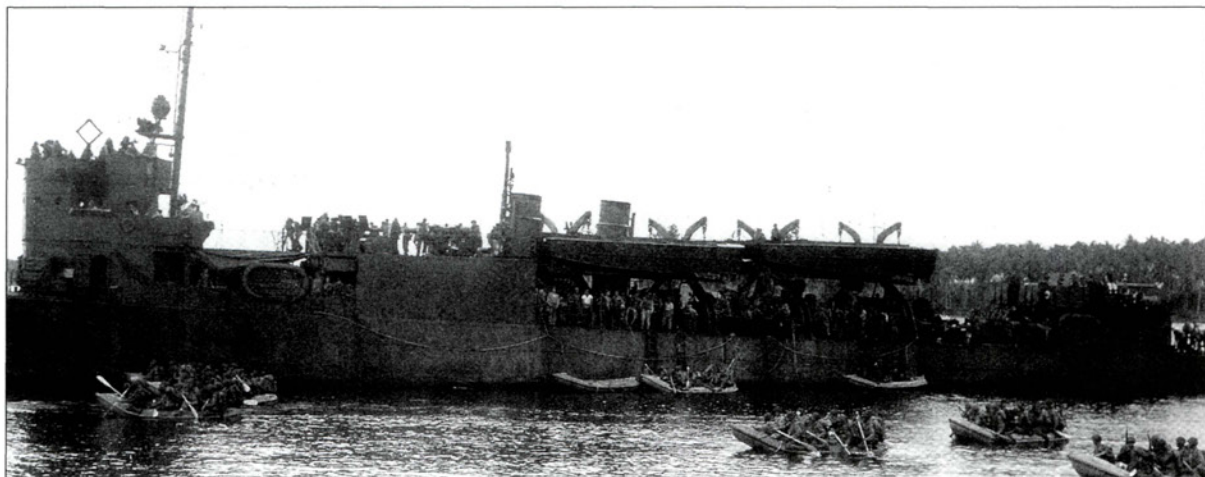
Jake arrived as a replacement in the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines about the same time as Red Mike, in June 1941. At that time the 1st Battalion was being trained as an experimental rubber-boat unit, intended to land by night and seize critical terrain features in advance of an amphibious assault. Transport was provided by high-speed destroyer transports, or Auxiliary, Personnel (transport), Destroyers (APDs) in Navy parlance.

These small ships were Great War vintage “four-stacker” destroyers stripped of most armament, and fitted with davits to handle four of the new Higgins landing boats. With one set of boilers removed to make room for troop berthing spaces, they were “high-speed” in name only. The APDs had inadequate water distillation equipment, limited messing (feeding) capacity, and grossly inadequate heads. They rolled wickedly in the slightest of seas, turning into floating cesspools when the passengers became seasick. Nevertheless the Able-Peter-Dogs and their crews served the Raiders heroically, and 11 of the vessels would be lost in action. The limited troop capacity of the APDs – 135 officers and men – necessitated a reorganization of the rubber-boat battalion. After a particularly chaotic landing exercise, Red Mike questioned his senior NCOs and promptly fired off a detailed report to Major General Holland M. “Hoke” Smith, the father of the amphibious force. (Smith had not yet acquired his more famous nickname “Howling Mad” as the result of his confrontations with Navy admirals.) The problem they faced was how a Marine battalion could be transported aboard ships that each accommodated only part of an infantry company – under the 1941 Table of Organization (T/O), 183 officers and men – and none of its heavy equipment, and then assemble on the beach amid the chaos of battle.

Edson’s efforts resulted in a redesigned rifle company with a captain, four lieutenants, and 130 enlisted men; two Navy medical corpsmen were quartered with the ship’s crew. The company kept its heavy firepower at the cost of reduced support functions and lost some internal support altogether. A battalion headquarters company and a



**“Red Mike” Edson (right), shown here with Commandant Holcomb on Guadalcanal, supported the orthodox Raider doctrine of “spearhead” assaults, and determined Raider unit organization. Both men are wearing summer dress clothing. Note the different designs of the shirt. Edson is wearing a non-standard pistol belt usually issued to Defense Battalions. As usual, his helmet seems too big. (USMCRC)**



**APDs like the USS *Humphreys* (APD-12), shown here in the unopposed Russell Islands landings, were the designated transports for the Raiders. Many of these slow and poorly armed old ships were lost in action supporting the Raiders. (Raider Museum)**

weapons company (E Company, with eight light machine guns and four 81mm mortars) supported the rifle companies. All this change was invisible to Jake. He was aware only of the intense regimen of field training that Edson established. When the 1st Marine Division moved to a new base in North Carolina, the 1st Battalion remained at Quantico under the watchful eye of Hoke Smith.

The battalion embarked on the APDs for days or weeks to conduct landing exercises. Boarding the rubber boats from the APD was a hair-raising experience. The sailors draped cargo-loading nets over the ship's side, and the Marines slowly clambered down, burdened with equipment and ammunition. The ship was relatively stable, but waves would lift and drop the rafts as much as 8ft (2.5m). The idea was to let go of the net and drop into the raft. If a man timed his drop well he would step right into the raft; if not, he plummeted into a pile of men and loose gear. There was always the chance that the unlucky individual might miss the raft entirely, and step into the sea with up to 100lb (45kg) of gear strapped tightly to his body.

Ashore, Red Mike seemed to possess a masochistic love of hiking. Marches with full field gear started at a few miles, and quickly grew in distance and severity. On one marathon the battalion marched from

**The APDs carried only four of the original unarmed Higgins boats, the Landing Craft, Personnel (LCP), to tow rafts toward shore or to use as platforms to make boarding the rafts easier in a high sea. They could not carry the heavier and more familiar Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel (LCVP). (National Archives)**





The original Raiders were conceived as “rubber-boat battalions” to land stealthily and conduct a variety of special missions. In this photo the men are wearing inflatable life vests, not a typical practice, and the unreliable outboard motor is barely visible. (USMC Museums)

Quantico to the old Manassas battlefield 30 miles (48km) away, and returned the next day. Like a good Marine, Jake cursed Edson and the Corps with his new vocabulary. Still, he noted that at every brief rest stop the middle-aged Edson walked back the length of the battalion column, examining the condition of his men. When the battalion moved out he would trot the length of the column back up to the front, past the grumbling Marines, to set the pace. When they arrived back at base, they double-timed the final mile to the barracks. Other training focused on increasing proficiency with weapons, and on improving cross-country navigation and map analysis. Much of the training was conducted at night, and Edson’s emphasis on night combat would save many lives.

The sole compensation for Jake’s tribulations under Edson was weekend liberty. The tiny town of Quantico was surrounded by the Marine base, was oddly reminiscent of an old Western town, and offered few attractions. A short and inexpensive train ride away was Washington, DC, a city swelling with the ranks of the bureaucrats who would oversee the war everyone knew was coming. The ratio of newcomers was about one middle-aged officer to four young, unmarried female secretaries or clerical workers. For a young man in a flashy uniform, it was paradise. Jake’s skilful demonstrations on how to skirt regulations and subtly tailor the dress uniform to make it even more form fitting earned him his nickname “Duds.”

Jake and others were in the city on December 7, when the world changed. All transport back to the base was crammed, and Jake rode back standing on the platform between two railway cars. Edson increased the training to a numbing tempo.

Holland Smith requested that the rubber-raft battalion be redesignated 1st Special Battalion, under direct command of the Amphibious Force Commander, and assigned to special missions. In January 1942 Edson’s battalion was designated the 1st Separate Battalion, and the 2d Separate Battalion was established under Major Evans Carlson in California.

Unseen by Jake, the Corps was grappling with yet another problem. Evans Carlson’s campaign to create a “guerrilla” force was gaining momentum with a request by Admiral Chester Nimitz, the newly appointed commander in the Pacific, for raiding forces to strike back at Japan. There was a very real threat that the President might insert Colonel

William "Wild Bill" Donovan (a Great War Army hero and future leader of the Office of Strategic Services, predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency) into the Corps to divert manpower and scarce resources to form guerrilla units, at the expense of the amphibious assault mission. Commandant Holcomb reluctantly dispatched two officers to observe British Commando training, and resigned himself to the idea of special "trick" units.

On February 16, Edson's battalion became the 1st Raider Battalion. The ensuing changes almost wrecked his carefully crafted unit. Rather than taking the time-honored opportunity to dump his malcontents, Edson transferred his entire A Company, a machine-gun platoon, and a mortar section to form the core of Carlson's 2d Raider Battalion. The effect upon Jake was that he was jumped up to corporal, and made a squad leader in D Company.

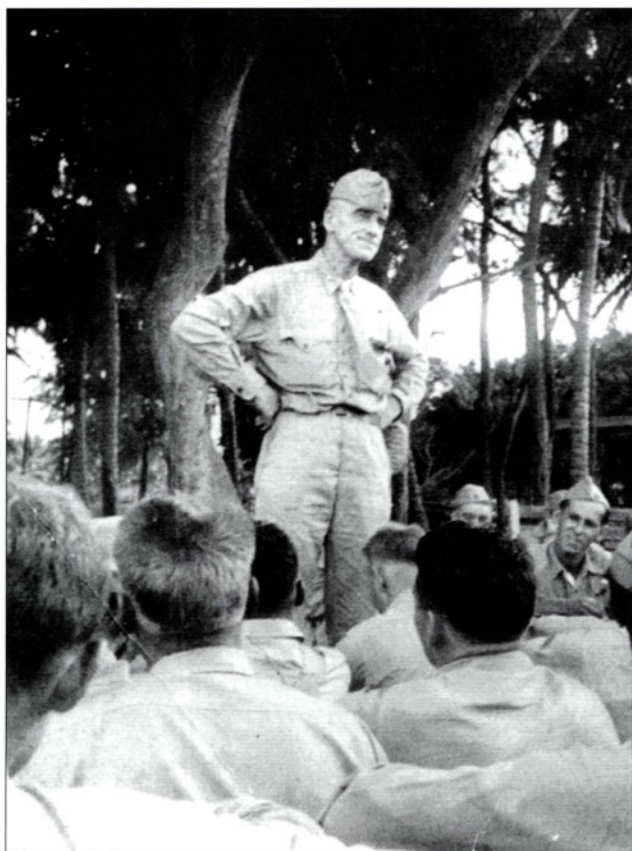
The rest of 2d Raider Battalion was a hand-picked unit shaped by Evans Carlson's unusual concept of a new kind of social order in the American military. The son of a Congregationalist minister, Evans Fordyce Carlson ran away from home at 14, lied about his age to join the Army at 16, and was a first sergeant at 19. After a brief stint as a civilian, he reenlisted in 1917, was promoted to lieutenant, chased Pancho Villa in Mexico, and served as a captain on General Pershing's staff after the Great War. After another half-hearted and unsuccessful try at civilian life, he enlisted as a private in the Marines in 1922. Commissioned as an officer and assigned as a military aide at President Roosevelt's vacation

home in Warm Springs, Georgia, he became a familiar of the President and his son James, a Reserve officer.

When assigned to his third tour as an intelligence officer and military observer of the communist forces in China, Carlson maintained private communications directly with the President, which did little to endear him to his superiors. In China he observed with admiration the apparent unity and political motivation of the Chinese communist forces fighting against the Japanese invaders. He marched over 2,500 miles (4,000km) through the mountains and deserts of northern China with the famous Eighth Route Army. Like many idealists, Carlson somehow missed noticing the brutality that underpinned Mao's system; the Chinese fighters marched so hard and fought so tenaciously not only out of political motivation, but also out of mortal fear of their own leaders.

Though Carlson was not a communist (a devout Christianity-based socialism would probably be a better description of his beliefs), his public admiration for the communists aroused suspicion. He resigned from the Corps in April 1939 to write and speak publicly about Japanese atrocities in China. In

**Evans F. Carlson, shown here addressing his men at a "Gung Ho session" before the Makin Raid, was a maverick even by the Corps' eccentric standards. His admiration for the Chinese communist guerrillas and concepts of an egalitarian military structure brought him into conflict with his superiors. (USMCRC)**



May 1941 Carlson used his White House connections to re-enter the Corps as a Reserve captain, then was promoted to major.

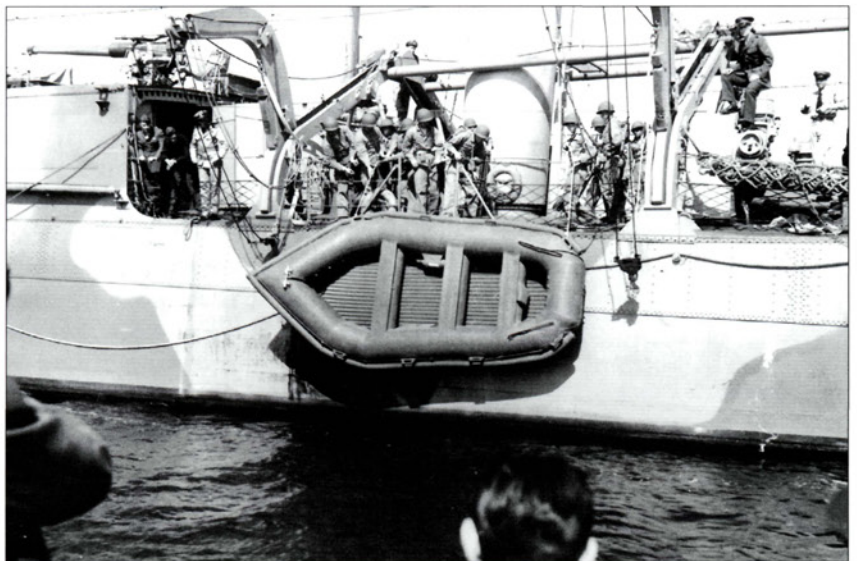
Unlike the aloof Edson, Carlson was, according to Private Brian Quirk,

the nicest man you'd ever want to meet, and he was fearless. He was smart ... flawlessly in control of himself. Never got excited, never raised his voice, and that's pretty hard to do when things are going bad.

Carlson's Raiders were hand picked, as Ken McCullough explains: "Colonel Carlson ... interviewed the NCOs ... and the other officers interviewed the privates." Carlson stirred up a hornet's nest when he summarily rejected half the officers and three-quarters of the enlisted men from the 1st Battalion. He allegedly made caustic comments about the quality of the troops, and sent them to a replacement pool for the new 9th Marines. Edson never forgave Carlson.

Brian Quirk wanted to get into aviation, but was assigned to the infantry. When Carlson gave a speech that promised nothing but hardship and a chance to get at the enemy, he signed up. Carlson or Roosevelt conducted individual interviews in an effort to weed out those lacking personal motivation. Roosevelt quizzed Erik on his vision of what America stood for, whether he would be willing to sacrifice himself for his comrades, what he wanted the social system of the country to be like after the war. He asked Erik if he would be willing to kill a man with a knife. This question was more fundamental than it sounds. The ease with which a soldier kills is a function of physical distance. Most will kill at rifle ranges, but many will balk – sometimes at the expense of their own lives – at forcing a short steel blade into another man. By whatever arcane criteria he used, Roosevelt found Erik acceptable, and assigned him to Lieutenant Wilfred "Frenchie" LeFrancois' platoon in A Company.

Like many units in the expanding Corps, the battalion was assigned to build its own camp at Jacques Farm, an abandoned homestead north



This photo of Raiders deploying boats over the side of an APD shows the size and configuration of the standard Raider boat. This operation was seldom done in such calm waters. Note also the Marine and Navy officers in dress uniform. (USMC Museums)

**Jimmy Roosevelt (center), shown here with Carlson (left) and Brigadier General H.K. Pickett, suffered from poor eyesight, bad feet, and gastric ulcers. Always convinced he did not merit the rank he had attained, he pulled strings and called his father directly to go with his men on the Makin Raid. Carlson has wire cutters, compass, and pistol ammunition on his belt; he wore the pistol on his left side. (National Archives)**



of San Diego. The men lived in two-man tents, and a chicken coop was swamped out to serve as a mess hall. The barn was converted into a stage from which Carlson addressed his men.

Carlson used his unique speeches to explain his philosophy. He introduced the term “Gung Ho” as a motto, speaking with a missionary’s fervor of the need for postwar social equality and justice, and mutual self-sacrifice. Weekly Gung Ho sessions served as “town-hall” meetings to air complaints, conduct group singing, view movies, and listen to guest speakers on political and social issues. Higher-ranking officers found one of Carlson’s practices – his egalitarian disregard for rank structure – profoundly disturbing. Officers fraternized openly with enlisted men, no rank badges were worn, and the Gung Ho sessions featured open criticism of officers without fear of retribution.

Carlson also placed great emphasis on physical fitness. Ervin Kaplan:

We’d get up and run in a circle for twenty minutes ... two or three miles. We’d go down in the Mission River valley, and somebody would carry us for a hundred feet, and we had to carry them back. I always seemed to pair up with some guy that ran about two-fifty [pounds].

Route marching started slowly and worked up to two-day, 70-mile (112km) hikes. Others could not tolerate their colonel’s vision of how dedicated warriors should live, with few comforts and no recreation. In addition to the usual weapons training and marches, Carlson placed more than usual emphasis on knives. His Raiders were issued two distinctive knives, the massive “Gung Ho” Bowie and a Raider stiletto patterned after those used by the Commandos. The young Marines took to the knife training with a vengeance.

Carlson’s battalion received less training in the use of rubber boats – three weeks practicing with the APDs off the California coast. After a transfer to the Hawaii Territory the battalion received additional training at Camp Catlin, Oahu.



On May 22, C and D Companies were dispatched in great secrecy to reinforce Midway in anticipation of a Japanese invasion that never materialized. On June 28, A, B, E, and F Companies set sail north to the Aleutians as part of a plan to recapture Attu and Kiska from the Japanese. "About two days out," said McCullough, "we turned and went to Midway."

## BELIEF AND BELONGING

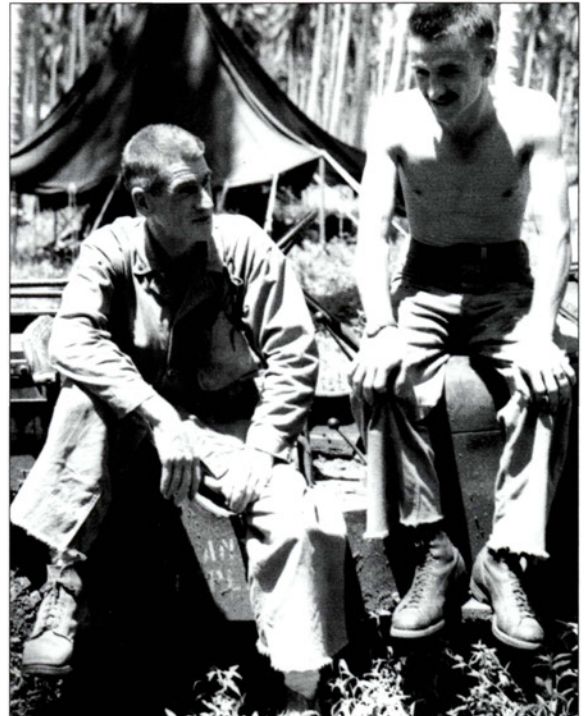
The Corps already possessed a long tradition of service, but for most Americans their image of the Marines as a heroic fighting force reached no farther back than the Great War. Bellicose quotes from some of the Corps' typically colorful characters were ready made for the press. When the German offensive of early June 1918 ruptured the Allied front near Chateau-Thierry, the inexperienced 2d Division was thrown into the breach with no greater expectation than to temporarily slow the rout.

Moving forward near the Bois de Belleau, the Marine Brigade (part of the Army's 2d Division) breasted a flood of broken units streaming rearward. A French staff officer advised Captain Lloyd Williams to turn around and retreat, to which Williams snorted, "Retreat hell! We just got here!" When the German offensive halted, the Brigade went on the offensive to help roll back the front. When his men faltered in the face of raking machine-gun fire, one veteran sergeant stood up, waved his rifle over his head, and shouted, "Come on you sons-of-bitches! Do you want to live forever?" Veteran reporter Floyd Gibbons filed a colorful story on the Marines fighting in the first phase of the counteroffensive. When he was reported killed the censor passed his "last" story unedited. The story mentioned the Marine Brigade by name, a violation of American Expeditionary Force policy. By this simple error the Corps achieved a stunning public relations coup.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the Corps kept itself in the public eye through its activities in the Banana Wars (though these were nearly as controversial as Vietnam or Iraq would one day be), and guarding the US Mail against a rash of armed robberies (Marines with Thompson submachine guns and shotguns quelled that criminal trend without a shot fired).

By the time of the major American military build-up on the eve of World War II, the Corps had firmly established its Great War reputation as "The First To Fight." The entry of the United States into the war was quick, brutal, and for the Corps another shot of publicity. At a time when every day's news brought a litany of disaster, the gallant stand of the 1st Defense Battalion on Wake Island was a beacon of sorely needed pride. For three weeks the tiny garrison and a small air unit withstood the onslaught of vastly superior air, naval, and ground forces until they were overwhelmed. The Corps was swamped with potential recruits, and had to turn

**This photo of the Carlsons, father and son, shows the boondocker boots, the most common pattern of Raider logging boots, and the hacked-off trouser legs. The younger Carlson won a Silver Star on the Long Patrol, became an aviator, and served in Korea. (USMCRC)**



men away. It was hard to even get the chance to be a Marine. By accepting only volunteers the Corps started with a pool of the highly motivated. Fierce and sometimes brutal recruit training weeded out the physically and emotionally weak. By the standards of later eras, the physical rigors of Marine training were not particularly severe, but most young men were products of the Great Depression, physically smaller and often underweight. To counterbalance this, they were often inured to privation, and expected little from the world but hardship.

Unlike his Army counterpart, the recruit was isolated from all civilian influence during his lengthy “boot camp,” making him a member of a very closed – and to the recruit, exclusive – society. From the time of the Spartans, isolating the soldier from his society, making him believe that he suffers more and is rewarded less, and that more is expected of him than of other men, is a powerful bonding experience. The harsh training and the constant reminder that “You volunteered for this” also instilled intense personal pride, a perverse desire to endure the worst and to achieve the impossible just to prove that it could be done.

While a Marine may have enlisted out of patriotism, loyalty soon took on an entirely different meaning. Primary loyalty was to the men in the immediate unit, and this loyalty was expressed in odd forms. One was the widespread use of nicknames that reflected some physical or behavioral trait, or an unusual (and often embarrassing) incident, much like the naming practices of primitive tribes. These “tribal” names proved useful, as they were an unbreakable code on the battlefield to identify leaders, convey messages, or verify identity (as in the “Squeegie” Long message from Makin – recounted later in the Makin Raid section).

The concept that allegiance is a function of distance was very real to these men. The ordinary Marine fought for his buddies, his unit, his Corps, and his country, in that order. This is perhaps best illustrated by an anecdote later recounted by Lewis “Silent Lew” Walt, the CO of A Company, 1st Raider Battalion.

**When the Raiders grew to resemble regular infantry battalions, they acquired all the features of larger formations. These 1st Battalion Raiders are attending religious services conducted by revered 1st Battalion chaplain Father Paul Redmond (US Navy) before the New Georgia operation. (Raider Museum)**



Walking his company lines after the Japanese counterattack on Tulagi, Major Walt came upon the fighting hole of feather merchant Private First Class Edward Ahrens, a Kentuckian. Inside Ahrens' blood-drenched fighting hole were a dead Japanese officer and a sergeant; around the hole were 11 more dead Japanese. Walt tried to lift Ahrens, shot and stabbed multiple times. Ahrens whispered to Walt "The bastards tried to come over me last night – I guess they didn't know I was a Marine," and died in Walt's arms.

The men of the 1st Raider Battalion, and the battalions raised later in the war, were products of this Marine view of the world. Their bond was the knowledge that they were an elite inside an elite, and that they had suffered and endured more than should be expected of fighting men.

Evans Carlson attempted to introduce a concept of informed egalitarianism into the American military, which is by nature a rigidly hierarchical social structure at odds with the greater society that it protects. While superficially patterned after an idealized vision of Chinese communism, Carlson's vision was rooted in his Yankee Congregationalist upbringing. His was a vision of a society in which sacrifice and service for the greater good were rewards in and of themselves.

Though Ervin Kaplan thought Carlson did a good job of unifying his unit, his idealism was sometimes at odds with his men. Much later Jimmy Roosevelt wrote that Carlson appeared baffled when in one of the Gung Ho sessions at Jacques Farm, the men voted down his idea that after the war annual income levels should be capped at \$25,000. Their rationale was that after all they had suffered, they wanted their shot at becoming filthy rich.

The philosophies of two men with very different visions but similar goals thus shaped and inspired the Raiders.

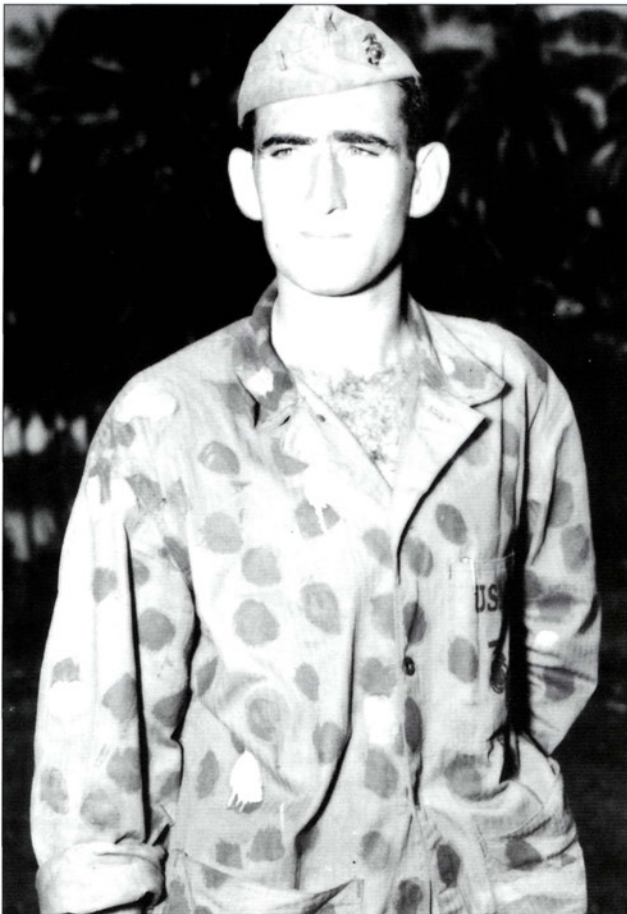
## **APPEARANCE, DRESS, AND SPECIAL WEAPONS**

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In late 1941 and early 1942 the Marines were in the process of making the transition from their older uniform system to the more familiar World War II system. The Corps had just introduced the two-piece cotton twill utility uniform that would become the standard combat dress in the Pacific. Prior to this innovation, the Marines had used a similar system in which the field service uniform was the dress uniform, with weapon, World War I-style "dishpan" helmet, and web gear added. Not all units had been issued the new uniforms, and the 1st Defense Battalion on Wake Island, the detachment on Guam, and the 4th Marines on Bataan and Corregidor fought their last battles in the old-style uniforms.

As new and greatly expanded units were clothed and equipped, the Corps was forced to recycle old gear dating back to the Great War, accept some items because they were all that was available, and sometimes simply had to improvise. Special units like the Parachute and Raider battalions were granted wider than usual latitude to adopt special items. Some of these gained a cachet that led to them being envied and more widely adopted.

**This lieutenant has camouflaged his early-pattern P1941 utilities with daubs of brown and even white paint. The dress overseas cap (called a "pisscutter" by Marines) with USMC symbol and officer rank badge was often worn in camp. Enlisted men did not wear the rank badge on the cap. Note that according to regulations, he has shaved down to the undershirt line, though no undershirt is worn. (USMC Museums)**



Despite a persistent myth that the Marines recycle the Army's castoffs, the majority of the Marines' gear was manufactured to specification and procured through the Corps' own depot system. The Utility Uniform, HBT, Sage Green, P1941 was adopted in late 1941 as work and training garb. Herringbone twill (HBT) was rip resistant and imparted a subtly striped appearance as the light reflected off the texture of the fabric. The jacket, with bronze or steel buttons, had three pockets and was worn loose over the trouser tops. There were two models of trousers, but the jacket skirt concealed the main difference, a small watch pocket. There were two large patch pockets on the trouser seat, and internal pockets on the front. The trousers came in only one leg length, "too long," so most men simply hacked off the extra length with a knife. Trailing the utility uniform, knotted into a line, overnight behind a ship at sea not only made the uniform look worn, slightly faded, and therefore "salty," but it softened the coarse fabric. Navy officers of course did everything in their power to discourage this practice.

Though far more durable than the older uniforms, the utilities – like most clothing – were poorly suited to the climate of the Solomon Islands. The heavy cotton twill soaked up moisture, and during weeks of combat dirt, sweat, and body oils accumulated in the unwashed fabric. PFC Ervin Kaplan, who later became a noted physician, recalled that "The high

temperature, frequent rain and daily crossing of rivers and streams never allowed one to be completely dry. These were obvious conditions for the almost universal incidence of fungus infections." The rough, wet fabric chafed at tight spots, so that "The most frequent site of the expanding ring like lesions were the crotch and arm pits." The typical practice of dispensing with underwear helped only minimally. In the final analysis, though, the clothing was the least of the problems faced by Marines in the Solomon Islands.

The matching short-visor cloth cap with a stand-up front was eventually modified with a longer visor. The short-billed version came to be referred to as the "Raider cap" and was much sought after. The Corps' eagle-globe-and-anchor symbol was stenciled onto the breast pocket of the jacket and the front of the cap. Rank symbols were usually not worn in combat, and of course Carlson tended to dispense with them altogether. A common practice by all ranks was to wear the tan or forest-green dress fore-and-aft overseas cap with the field uniform while in camp. It was not unusual to see senior officers wearing components of the tan dress uniform in the field. "Harry the Horse" Liversedge wore a floppy-brimmed rubberized rain hat with a black metal USMC symbol on the front. After he assumed command of the 3d

Raider Battalion, Jimmy Roosevelt continued to wear the old Army web gear from the 1st Raider Battalion.

Most Raiders wore the brown rough suede “boondocker” low-top boots. Distinctive laced leggings were worn over the boots, with the trouser legs tucked inside. Many Marines wore the trouser legs outside the leggings, or discarded the leggings since they tended to keep the boots from drying when wet. Another common practice was to tuck the trousers into white socks above the boot tops. The 2d Raider Battalion procured specially made logging boots. There appear to have been several types, all with high mid-calf tops and made of dark-brown smooth leather. One type had a high, rounded toe with a steel cap, and a thick, wide platform-like sole that extended well beyond the edge of the boot. The most common type had a flatter toe, with a tongue and laces that extended well down toward the toe of the boot. Jimmy Roosevelt wore sneakers or even dress shoes in the field because of his chronic foot problems.

Rucksacks, web belts, ammunition pouches, and other 782 gear (see glossary) followed Army patterns, but were manufactured in a light tan color. Many of these items were old designs, like the ammunition pouches for the M1903 rifle, and the grenade vest that held 11 grenades. Distinctive items included the belt pouch for the aluminum or blue-enameled steel canteen with a screw cap, which had closure flaps that crossed to form an X. This item was later simplified, and was similar to the Army pattern.

The distinctive Marine cloth helmet cover appeared after the southern Solomons campaigns, but most Marines wore the M1 steel helmet and liner without a cover. Individuals in the 2d Raider Battalion improvised shaggy camouflage covers from strips of HBT material and burlap. A 1st Battalion practice was to cover the helmet with a loose, baggy cover of burlap to disguise the shape and shininess of the helmet. The only issue helmet cover was a cord “fishnet” designed to hold twigs and bits of local vegetation as camouflage. Actually adding the vegetation was rare and dangerous, as the practice was more common among the Japanese.

There is some confusion about the improvised uniforms worn by Raiders. Although it has been widely stated that the Makin Raiders wore black dress clothing, survivors say that black utilities were worn. The confusion seems to stem from period photos. The sole, and unauthorized, camera was lost while leaving the island, so no photos taken on the island exist. Many of the men lost their clothing in the evacuation, and arrived back at Pearl Harbor wearing the “spare” black dress uniforms and borrowed sailors’ clothing.

**This Raider's utilities are not camouflaged, only filthy after days or weeks in the jungle. Note the captured Japanese equipment and the Marine identity discs. (USMC Museums)**



These men “raiding a Japanese base camp” are wearing the P1942 jungle utilities and improved 782 gear. The scene was probably staged for the photographer, since the ration boxes are American. (USMC Museums)



These photos probably inspired the dress uniform story. Some Raiders produced improvised camouflage clothing by daubing various colors of paint in spots over the P1941 utilities. This was probably not very effective.

The campaigns for Bougainville and New Georgia witnessed the introduction of specialized jungle uniforms and equipment. The two-piece Uniform, Utility, HBT, Camouflage, P1942 was reversible with green- and brown-dominated sides. The reversible design necessitated unpopular compromises in the pockets. The jacket had only two pockets, on the left breast and right skirt; when the uniform was reversed, the corresponding pockets were inside. Similarly the trousers were reduced to two usable pockets, a slash pocket on the right front, and a hip pocket on the left. A common practice was to cut slits through the uniform to be able to reach the otherwise useless inside pockets. The new uniform was made from the same heavy cotton, with the same shortcomings in the tropical climate as the older utilities.

The reversible cloth helmet cover was introduced with this uniform. Six flaps that folded into the space between the helmet and liner held the cover in place. Marines often left the rear flaps loose and hanging to provide protection from the sun and bugs, and to help break up the outline of the head and neck.

New footgear included jungle shoes with flat bottoms, clearly patterned after gym shoes of the period, and made of green canvas with a black rubber sole. The rubber extended up and over the front to provide some protection for the toes. The companion jungle boots were calf-high, with a raised heel and additional arch supports.

The Army-designed Pack, Jungle was a capacious rucksack in plain or camouflage material, much simpler in design and more practical than the older packs. These packs were issued only to Raider and Parachute battalions. Other specialized items included lightweight jungle hammocks with integral mosquito netting, camouflage poncho and shelter half, and an improved “jungle” first aid kit.

The most characteristic equipment items of the Raiders were their knives. Carlson procured the distinctive “Gung Ho Knife.” Officially

The small M2 60mm mortar, like this one in a deeply entrenched firing position on Bougainville, was the fire-support weapon at company level. It could fire HE, smoke, and illumination rounds. (USMCRC)



the Collins No.18 9-in. Machete, it was a classic Bowie fighting knife. With its massive 9-in. (22cm) blade, brass crossguard, and grips of green horn or black Bakelite plastic held on by rivets, it was an impressive piece of cutlery. It was carried in a dark brown or russet (reddish brown) leather belt sheath. Jimmy Roosevelt carried a black-handled Camillus “Shark Knife” with a 4½-in. (11cm) blade. The stiletto knife was the definitive Raider weapon. Marines had a long-standing connection with British captains W.E. Fairbairn and E.F. Sykes, formerly of the Shanghai Municipal Police, who designed the British Commando knife. Both men had taught “China Marines” the deadly art of knife fighting, and Captain Samuel S. Yeaton of the 4th Marines helped design the prototype.

Marines sent to train with the Commandos endorsed the Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife, and a version unique to the Marines was manufactured. The slim knife had a “bottle” handle with checkered grip, and a scroll with USMC and laurel leaves etched into the blade. This subtle marking was quickly worn off by routine cleaning and sharpening. The tip of the slim, pointed blade was easily broken if thrown, and it was strictly a close-quarters stabbing weapon.

Most Raiders carried two blades, the stiletto and a heavier utility knife like the Bowie, Ka-Bar (after late 1942), or the old Mark I Trench Knife. This brutal-looking weapon had a heavy blade and the hilt incorporated a set of brass knuckles that could break bones or smash skulls. Most came from old stores, as the 1lb (450g) of brass in the hilt was a strategic material. The Navy Hospital Bolo issued to medical corpsmen for cutting battlefield splints from available materials was equally useful for hacking at heavy vegetation or the enemy.

The bolt-action M1903 rifle with its long bayonet was the standard Raider weapon, and older Marines swore by the old Springfield for its reliability and long-range accuracy. The Table of Equipment (T/E) for a Raider company included nine telescopic sniper sights for the M1903, special-issue items in infantry battalions.

The four 81mm mortars of the battalion weapons company (E Company) were the heaviest "artillery" the Raiders could depend upon. This weapon is in action along the Matanikau River on Guadalcanal. (National Archives)



The standard squad automatic weapon was the M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), which came in four models differing in the placement of (or absence of) a bipod. The most common model in Marine service was the M1918 without bipod, followed by the M1918A2 with a bipod mounted far forward near the muzzle. This powerful weapon was popular with its users.

The Raider company T/E did not include the Thompson submachine gun, but many found their way into Raider hands. Though hard to fire, the Thompson was popular for its reliability and stopping power. The Reising submachine gun was one of the weapons adopted only because it was available. The simple-looking Reising came in the Model 50 with a wooden stock and muzzle compensator, and the Model 55 with folding wire stock and without muzzle compensator. It jammed easily, and the spring that closed the bolt after the spent round was ejected was weak and sometimes failed.

### Weapons Table Comparison

	Rifle Company	Raider Company
.30-cal. carbine	21	17
.30-cal. rifle	143	90
Automatic rifle	18	18
Reising SMG	0	0
Thompson SMG	4	0
.30-cal. LMG	2	2
60mm mortar	2	2
AT rifle	3	2
Shotgun	0	0

The limited troop capacity of the APDs required Edson to reconfigure the rubber-boat companies. Many weapons commonly used by the Raiders – shotguns, Thompson guns, Reising guns, and Johnson guns – were never part of the official Table of Equipment. (USMC Tables D-1, and D-175, 1942)



The Raiders also acquired Johnson M1941 light machine guns and a few M1941 automatic rifles. This weapons system was officially issued only to Marine Parachute battalions.

The heaviest weapons routinely used by the Raiders were various models of light machine guns and mortars. The official T/O specified the tripod-mounted M1919A4 .30-cal. air-cooled Browning light machine, but a variety of models were used. Each company included a section of two machine guns, with eight more in E Company that could be parceled out to reinforce the line companies. Two M2 60mm mortars, each with a five-man crew, were the company's indirect firepower, with three additional 60mm mortars and four 81mm mortars in E Company.

## DAILY LIFE

For Marines in the early days of World War II the difference between life at a base area and life on campaign was largely a matter of the quality of diet and the level of tedium.

New Marines typically had to live in tents or had to construct their own training and living facilities, with the manual labor as part of their training. One exception was Edson's 1st Raider Battalion during its tenure at Quantico. Quantico is the Corps' oldest permanent field training base, and the battalion was housed in brick barracks with indoor plumbing. When the 1st Marine Division was formed and moved to the new base at New River, North Carolina, the rubber-boat battalion stayed at Quantico.

Entertainment was, of course, dependent on how close you were to the fighting. For Edson's men at Quantico, the primary venue was Washington, DC. Centralized mess halls provided plentiful and palatable food, even if fine dining was rare. Evans Carlson's warrior ethos centered on Spartan living, and during training at Jacques Farm his battalion, both officers and men, lived in small tents constructed by buttoning together two of the shelter halves carried by each man. In the United States the men ate well



In addition to the premature withdrawal of the supply transports, the chaos of the hasty unloading on Guadalcanal caused many of the later food shortages. Note the bags of baking flour stacked on the beach, broken crates, and the boxes in the foreground bearing labels such as "Rice Krispies™," "powdered eggs," "chili con carne," and, ironically, "store in a dry place." (USMCRC)

by the standards of the time, better than during the Great Depression. Californian agriculture provided food in plenty, and each company was assigned a three-man mess staff (mess sergeant, field cook, and assistant cook) augmented by men assigned to mess duty. Food was purchased in bulk and distributed to units, to be prepared according to set menus.

Carlson's monastic beliefs seldom allowed his men such indulgences as liberty, though the Navy town of San Diego with its assortment of bars, hotels, and unsavory establishments was a short taxi ride away. Some slipped away after Taps to meet a waiting taxi, though after a night out drinking the following 14-hour training day must have been brutal. Eventually Carlson's 0300hrs roll calls stopped the practice.

During its brief stay at Camp Catlin, Hawaii, the 2d Raider Battalion lived in barracks that were luxurious by the slap-'em-up-fast standards of the time. Framed with rough-cut wood and covered with a tarpaper roof, the barracks were unfinished on the interior and furnished with iron-framed cots. The main complaint in Hawaii was the food. With its limited agricultural base, many items had to be shipped from the mainland, or done without. Dried beans and powdered potatoes were dietary staples, and milk and fresh vegetables rare. Carlson again allowed his men few official liberties in Honolulu, although Hotel Street offered all the bars, strip clubs, brothels, and gambling dens that even the most dissolute could hope for. The troops complained, but far worse was to come.

At overseas base camps the Raiders typically lived in two-man tents or, if fortunate, in ten-man squad tents. Life consisted of a monotonous cycle of dried and canned foods, harsh training, and boredom. The sole amenity was the camp slop chute.

On campaign assault troops were issued a large chocolate bar (high in fat and sugar) and a quart (roughly 1 liter) canteen of water to supply them for the first day ashore. This was the ration issued to the Makin Raiders, and when the plan went awry the Raiders were left ashore another day and night with little to sustain their energy for the ordeal in the rain and surf. On more prolonged operations it was assumed that bulk provisions would be brought ashore and field messes established.



**Much of a Marine's life centered on food. At this Raider mess line on Guadalcanal men assigned to mess duty are ladling various combinations of rice dishes into the mess tins, and the man at left dispenses coffee brewed in a garbage can. The men are carrying Springfield rifles and Reising submachine guns. (NARA)**

On Guadalcanal both battalions lived under starkly primitive conditions. Shelter halves were a luxury for when the unit was actually in bivouac. Within the main part of the perimeter the tents were usually pitched in flat areas under trees to avoid observation by enemy planes, but often on ground that might be ankle deep in water and gluey, black mud. Conditions on high ground like Bloody Ridge were at least dry, but there was a price to be paid. Any high, barren ground was dry and dusty, and the climate inland from the beach was baking hot, with none of the cooling sea breezes that made life in the coconut groves slightly more bearable.

On patrol the men slogged through wet vegetation and swamps, or constantly forded streams, sometimes crossing the same stream seven or eight times a day. When night came, there was little inclination to pitch tents, even if the tactical situation allowed. The men simply lay on the ground in their filthy, wet clothes, or wrapped themselves in a shelter half or poncho. This was the genesis of the many fungal infections and parasites that afflicted almost everyone.

More than any other factor save disease, the shortage of food became the major issue of the Guadalcanal campaign. The Corps had not yet developed an adequate system of amphibious and combat logistics. Tons of foods such as baking flour in 50lb (23kg) cloth bags, bags of sugar, and dry cereal in cardboard cartons were ruined by rain, humidity, and vermin. At Guadalcanal Navy transports sailed away before the landing force supplies were fully unloaded. Despite Carlson's assertions that the Marines could – and on Guadalcanal did – take food from the enemy, the result was very unsatisfactory. The 1st Marine Division captured stocks of Japanese food, but it was a diet ill suited to Western bodies. Other than a few tinned delicacies like fish, crabmeat, and fruit, there was rice – lots and lots of rice. For months the Marines lived on a diet of rice augmented by raisins, tea, salt, and occasionally a bit of bacon or some sugar. The usual ration was two meals a day of rice gruel, and perhaps an afternoon snack of rice in times of plenty.

The unbalanced and inadequate diet made the men even more susceptible to the ravages of insect-borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever. There was no real treatment for the dysentery that deprived a man of what nutritive value the food possessed, and led to rapid dehydration. In addition to swarms of disease-carrying mosquitoes and carrion flies, the men were set upon by blood-sucking flies, spiders, huge biting centipedes, and even crocodiles.

As the Americans slowly gained the upper hand, conditions improved. After late 1942 the standard combat diet was the K-Ration, a bundle of three cartons that provided a day's meals – breakfast, dinner, and supper. Each tightly packed, brown-camouflaged carton protected by a heavy wax coating, held a tinned meat and jam or canned cheese. Crackers, a fruit or chocolate bar, cigarettes and matches, powdered



**Log bridges like this one on Guadalcanal were a luxury. Often the Raiders forded the same stream several times each day as they picked a path through the jungle. (Raider Museum)**

Living in the dank jungle was primitive at best, as shown by accommodations at the Enogai base camp on New Georgia. On patrol men typically just lay down on the ground to sleep. The Raiders are entertaining sailors from the base's small naval detachment. (USMC Museums)



coffee and sugar, and chewing gum filled out the box. The food could be eaten cold, or heated a bit by burning the waxed carton or by using special chemical heating tablets. The least popular item was the powdered orange or lemonade drink, so acid that it burned the mouth and throat. A very popular item was a small packet of toilet paper, sorely missed by the men in the early campaigns.

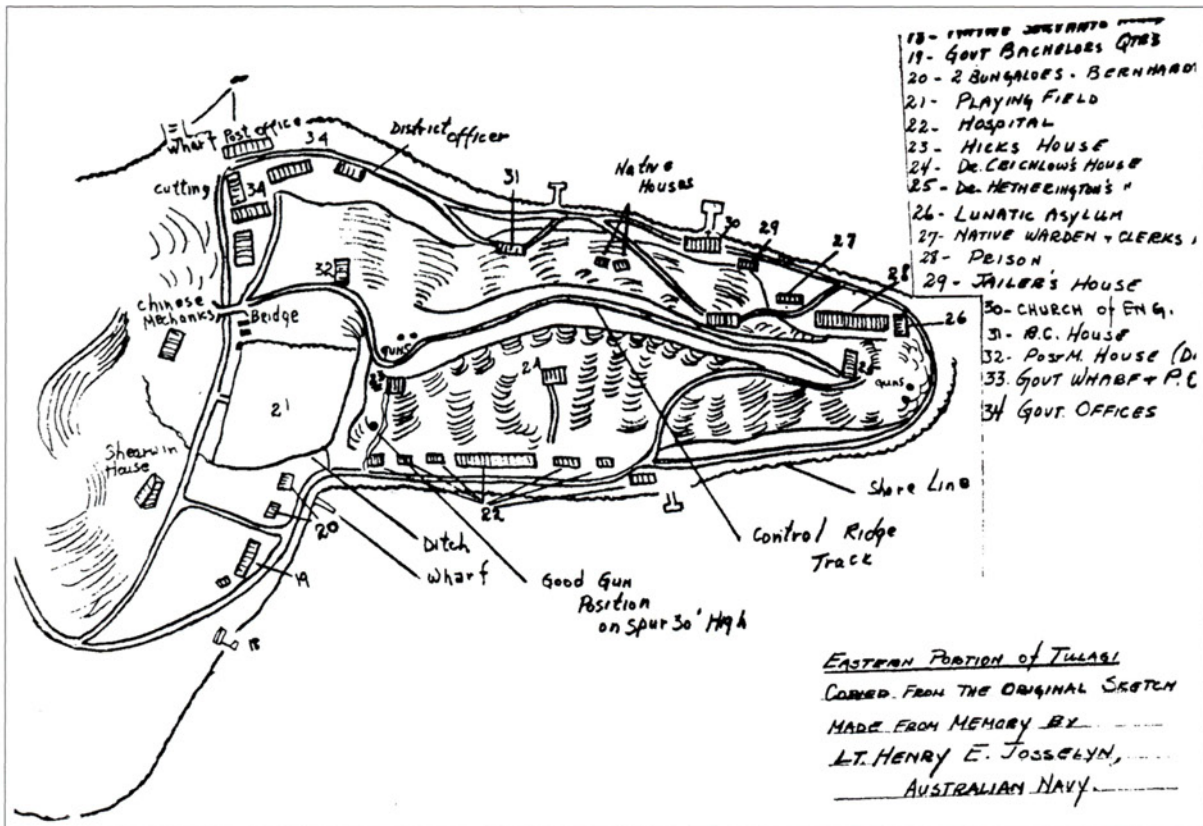
Raiders who survived the Guadalcanal campaign in some semblance of normal health were sent for recuperation in rear area bases with a healthier climate such as New Caledonia (1st Raider Battalion) or Espiritu Santo (2d Raider Battalion). A typical practice was to transport the entire battalion to Auckland or Wellington in New Zealand for about 30 days, where they were granted frequent liberty. The relationships with the locals were bizarre. Civilians befriended the Raiders, took some of them into their homes, and forged personal bonds – some marital. But part of the mental decompression took the form of drunkenness and street brawling, particularly with Kiwi soldiers returned from their own fighting fronts. (The most notorious brawl was the so-called “Battle of Wellington.”) Afterwards the Raiders returned to their remote camps to fatten up, regain their physical condition, and train for the next brutal campaign.

For some the combination of disease, malnutrition, untreated wounds, and mental trauma rendered them unfit for immediate reassignment. These men were sent to Hawaii or the continental United States for medical treatment and duty in training units or depots until they were deemed fit to return to combat.

## **BATTLE EXPERIENCE**

### **First Blood: Tulagi**

Jake and the others had little time to enjoy the tropical paradise of Samoa, involved as they were with the training regimen. The men also



cursed Red Mike's discovery of yet another pleasure – mountain climbing. To win Edson's wager with the island's defense commander, the Raiders ascended the highest peak on the island undetected, and in a pre-dawn attack "captured" the top secret radar station sited there. Edson also taught his men about the enemy's predilection for edged weapons like the Samurai sword and their long bayonet with the odd hook designed to twist the opponent's rifle out of his hands.

Edson's first mission would be to spearhead an amphibious assault. The prize for Operation *Watchtower*, the invasion of the southern Solomons, was the airfield on Guadalcanal, but the toughest nut to crack was likely to be nearby Tulagi. The small island had been the seat of the British colonial administration. Now it was occupied by 350 battle-hardened *rikusentai*, or Japanese marines. The naval force commander refused a night assault, so Edson's battalion would go in at daylight in Landing Craft, Personnel (LCP). Intelligence was minimal. Crude maps, hand-drawn by a former resident, would guide the attackers.

Major Justice Chambers' D Company was in the first assault wave on August 7, 1942, but that was no real disadvantage to Jake since the landing was unopposed. The real problem was that when the boat grounded on the coral, Jake leapt over the side and into water up to his nose. He propelled himself toward the beach, hopping along the bottom. Once ashore he struggled to keep pace as the company moved inland toward the rugged 350ft (107m) high central ridge that ran the length of the island. This ancient coral was riddled with caves that formed natural pillboxes.

The paucity of intelligence for the Guadalcanal operation is illustrated by this map of the eastern end of Tulagi, hand drawn by an Australian who had lived on the island. The west end of the island was unmapped. The heaviest fighting took place around a road passing under the bridge marked at left center. (Raider Museum)

Light machine guns like this .30-cal. M1919A4 were the "heavy weapons" of the Raider companies. They were instrumental in breaking suicidal *banzai* charges, first encountered on Tulagi. (USMC Museums)



The Raiders moved southeast along the ridgeline, and it was soon clear that the *rikusentai* had gone to ground in caves and buildings, covered by snipers. True to their concept of *gyosukai*, there was no surrender. They had to be killed by grenades, or by Raiders who rushed forward to fire point blank into the openings. Casualties mounted steadily.

Like many Americans, Jake thought of the Japanese as bow-legged, buck-toothed caricatures with thick glasses. The deadly accurate fire from 5.56mm Arisaka rifles taught him otherwise. Jake and his best friend were watching an assault when the friend raised his head for a better look. Jake watched in amazed horror as his buddy's helmet hopped off his head, and a pink spray erupted from the back of his head. A Japanese marksman had put a round through the middle of his forehead.

Jake spent the remainder of his time on Tulagi in an angry daze. That night D Company took defensive positions overlooking a road cut near the built-up southern end of the island. A Japanese counterattack fell upon A Company in the night. For Jake the night air was filled with the weird sounds of a typical Japanese "noise campaign" – animal and bird cries, insulting and sometimes comic taunts in Japanese and crude English, moans and screams, and any other sound imaginable. The Raiders flung grenades at the sounds to avoid revealing their positions.

At dawn two companies of the 5th Marines passed through the D Company line, and that afternoon the Raiders and infantry moved onto the road to finish off the last of the defenders. Red Mike reported the island secure, though several more days were required to kill the last enemy survivors.

Just after the original landings the enemy had defeated a force of American and Australian cruisers in the nighttime battle of Savo Island, and at night controlled the sea. In the pre-dawn hours each morning a Japanese destroyer the Marines nicknamed "Reveille Charlie" blindly shelled the island, then departed back north before dawn.

For three weeks the Raiders lived among the dead and the carnage they had created. Flies gorged on the concealed dead and human waste, crawled all over the men's food, and even into their mouths while they slept. Like many others Jake fell victim to dysentery. His soiled

underwear was soon discarded in the tropical heat, but the worst torment for the normally fastidious Jake was the rawness and blistering caused by his inability to wash himself after each bout of diarrhea.

### **The Makin Raid**

Admiral Nimitz was casting about for a diversionary operation in support of the landing on Guadalcanal, and his staff eventually settled on Butaritari Island, Makin Atoll. The small Japanese weather station and seaplane base made it a feasible target, close enough to the Solomons to be an effective diversion. The 2d Raider Battalion was chosen for the mission. Reconnaissance was sketchy, consisting of a few photos taken on an aerial raid, and through a submarine's periscope. The battalion intelligence officer, Lieutenant Gerard Holtom, interviewed a fisherman from the island. All information seemed to suggest that there were few beach defenses.

The layout of the island was staked out near Barber's Point on Oahu for rehearsals, and the Raiders did a walk-through of each man's role. Each man had a specific mission on the island. Brian Quirk was one of six men hastily trained in demolitions, though "I didn't know Primacord, from a telephone [cord], from a piece of string." He was in B Company, but attached to the small headquarters unit. "My job was gonna be to go to that radio station [and destroy it], and assuming I had the landmarks to get there, I didn't care where you were going... We had rehearsed this thing lock, stock, and barrel."

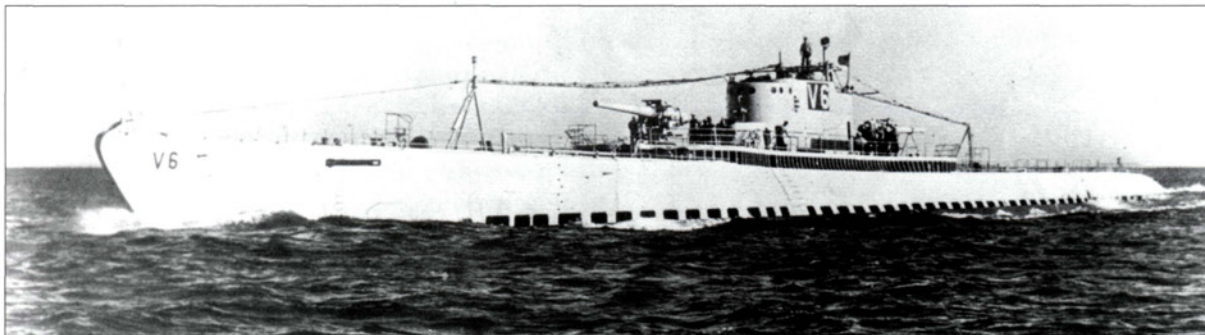
Nimitz could make available only two of the Navy's three large submarines, *Nautilus* (APS-2) and *Argonaut* (APS-1), which limited the size of the raiding force. *Nautilus* could cram in 85 passengers, while the bigger *Argonaut* could take 134. Carlson pared his force by leaving behind 25 men from A Company and 30 from B, the two companies selected for the raid.

Carlson argued that only one senior officer was needed on the raid, and outlined the risks of having the President's eldest son fall captive. Roosevelt argued that his place was with his men. Eventually a phone call from Jimmy to his father secured his place on the raid.

Rubber-boat practice in some of Oahu's roughest surf revealed problems with the small outboard engines: improvised metal shields proved inadequate to protect the ignition systems against salt water. Concerns about conditions aboard the submarines also led to the installation of crude air-conditioning systems.

At the end of one hectic day Erik's platoon sergeant told them to select one pair of utilities and one set of dress uniform clothing and put

**The old mine-laying submarine *Nautilus* transported Carlson, his command group, and part of the raiding force. Shown here in 1930 peacetime colors, the ship was painted dark gray and had the deck guns removed by the time of the Makin Raid. (Raider Museum)**



them in a laundry bag. A few days later the clothing was returned, dyed a splotchy black. The men were also issued green gym shoes.

On August 6, 1942 (August 7 in the Solomons), Pearl Harbor was abuzz with the news of the Guadalcanal landings. The next morning the Raiders boarded the submarines. To save space each man carried only his weapon and a cloth bag with field gear, including helmet and a change of clothing. Erik passed his bag down through the forward hatch of *Nautilus* and wriggled down the steep ladderway. The tightly packed rafts, outboards, and the fuel had already been loaded in great secrecy. At 0900hrs the submarines slipped out of the harbor.

Erik found the claustrophobic submarine disconcerting. The air was heavy, damp, and never seemed to contain enough oxygen. Despite efforts not to think about it, Erik became obsessed with breathing. There was nothing to do but lie in the bunk and think unwelcome thoughts. Crude bunks, stacked four high, were sheets of canvas stretched tightly over a wooden frame, and each bunk held four men. The temperature never dropped below 96 degrees F (36 degrees C), and just lying in his bunk caused Erik to sweat. The closely packed bodies overwhelmed the air circulation, and pools of sweat accumulated in the bunks and on the decks. The air reeked of unwashed men, diesel fumes, and the smoke of cigarettes that were the only concession to morale. The grunting, snoring, and farting of men, and the rhythmic thumping of the diesel engines marked every minute of every day. The only punctuations were twice-daily meals, and the rare opportunity to go on deck and breathe clean air.

At 0300hrs on Sunday, 16 August, the faster *Nautilus* made landfall at Makin, and conducted a last-minute periscope reconnaissance. In the face of rain and an onshore wind the operational commander, Commodore John Haines, elected to proceed with the mission. After midnight on August 17 Erik ate a final meal of ham and powdered potatoes, and was issued a chocolate bar. At 0330hrs someone opened the forward hatch, drenching the men with seawater blown in by the storm.

When Erik managed to maneuver up the ladderway and onto the rolling, slippery deck, Raiders from Lieutenant Peatross' platoon were already at work inflating their rafts. The heavy grease that had protected the stored rafts made the footing even more treacherous. Within moments Erik was soaked to the skin by spray and rain. The 15ft (4.5m) waves broke over the deck, knocking men off their feet. Men struggled to mount outboard motors and fill fuel tanks. Loose gear was carried off by the wind and waves. Water filled the rafts as soon as they were lowered over the side, and men bailed frantically with helmets. Men fell into the water, saved from sinking only by the superhuman efforts of comrades. Two rafts filled with medical supplies and ammunition broke free and disappeared into the darkness.

Erik scrambled into a raft, and as the raft cast off, the outboard failed. The men paddled madly toward the rendezvous point,

**The original plan for the Makin Raid was to float the rubber boats off the decks of the submarines as they submerged, as shown here in training. Waves and wind made this impossible at Makin. This view is looking forward along the submarine's deck. (Raider Museum)**







**The Raiders never used the huge Boys Anti-Tank Rifle against Japanese tanks, but used two to help shoot down a big Kawanishi flying boat during the Makin Raid. This wreck was photographed at Butaritari in late 1943. (National Archives)**

only to be swept landward by the relentless wind. The rafts, and their landing sites, were hopelessly scrambled.

On the edge of the reef the raft plunged down the faces of the breakers, taking on water. Unable to steer, the man in charge of the motor cursed and unscrewed the wing nuts, letting it sink. When the raft grounded on the sand the exhausted Raiders leapt out and dragged it into the underbrush, then crouched in the darkness. Erik worked the bolt of his rifle, while all around him the whispered voices of NCOs searched for their men. The two companies had landed in a huge snarl along 200 yards (183m) of beach. Lieutenant Oscar Peatross and his small party were nowhere to be found.

The Raiders decided to sit quietly until daylight, but just before dawn a private loading a BAR let the bolt slam home, releasing a long burst of fire into the silence. Officers and NCOs immediately scurried about organizing the units. Ken McCullough recalls that it was about 20 minutes before the Japanese garrison responded.

A short while later one squad from Frenchie's platoon sent to the far shore of the narrow island reported back that the units had landed exactly in position. The platoon spread out and started to move slowly through the scrub and tall palm trees, guiding on a narrow road. Suddenly the scout, Corporal Howard Young, dropped to the ground and warned the others. A truck slewed to a stop in the road. Japanese soldiers tumbled out and deployed in a skirmish line in the brush. Sergeant Clyde Thomason ran back and forth along the line, positioning men in an ambush with one flank pushed forward to form a cross fire.

Erik and the other inexperienced Marines opened fire with no thought for fire discipline or preserving ammunition. Thomason ignored shouts to get down, until a Japanese rifleman fatally wounded him.

The firing slackened after five full minutes in which the Japanese unit was wiped out, but as the 2d Platoon arrived as reinforcement, more Japanese troops arrived and launched a screaming *banzai* attack. The two platoons drove the enemy back, but suffered heavy losses trying to move forward. Nothing in their training had taught them to expect snipers hidden in the treetops, and enemy marksmen concentrated on leaders like Captain Holtom (promoted while on the raid) – who were identified by their hand signals – and the radiomen. Sergeant Ken McCullough was in charge of communications. "We had these little SCR walky-talkies, and the damn things had chrome antennas. One or two of the guys were shot in the head." Five machine-gun rounds struck

The Mission School on Butaritari served the Japanese as a barracks. One squad of Raiders was assigned to attack this building. (National Archives)



Frenchie. An enlisted man bandaged the ghastly wounds, tied his arm to his body with a belt, and he continued to stagger around the battlefield.

By 0700hrs most of the fighting was over. Major Roosevelt used one of the remaining radios to call in gunfire from *Nautilus*, which destroyed two Japanese vessels in the lagoon. The Japanese, alerted by a radio message from the doomed garrison, dispatched planes to see what was happening on Makin. One arrived at 0900hrs, two more at 1040hrs. Carlson pulled his skirmish line back to try and lure the enemy forward, and when a dozen enemy planes arrived at 1255hrs they bombed and strafed their own troops.

Erik was following Frenchie around a pier when two seaplanes loaded with Japanese reinforcements touched down. The Raiders directed fire from machine guns, rifles, and two Boys Anti-Tank Rifles at the planes. One burst into flame and sank. The larger four-engine aircraft made a desperate attempt to take off again, but was riddled by fire as it rose from the water, staggered, and crashed.

Peatross' small group never linked up with the main body because other Raiders opened fire on them in the confusion. They looted and burned the enemy headquarters, then withdrew to their isolated raft. By 2000hrs they were back aboard *Nautilus*, the only group to withdraw as planned.

Carlson planned to leave the beach at 1930hrs, but had not counted on the pitch-black night, the strength of the surf, or his burden of wounded, which included both his surgeons. Seven of the 18 boats, including Brian Quirk's, made it through the surf.

For five hours Erik and his companions made repeated attempts to breach the surf. The raft filled with water, was spun about by the waves, and repeatedly pushed back. Erik's powerful arms were burning and cramping with fatigue, and he cried in frustration. Twice the raft capsized and they were all flung back onto the beach before they gave up the struggle. Most of the men lost shoes, clothing, and weapons. Brian Quirk later concluded that they must have had about 25 rounds among them.

When an enemy patrol probed the beach perimeter around 2300hrs, Erik was unarmed, his rifle at the bottom of the sea. He drew his knife,

Raider weapons and uniforms, mid-1942



2d Raider Battalion training at Jacques Farm, California, early 1942



Second night on Bloody Ridge, September 13-14, 1942



The Makin Raid Landing, August 17, 1942



The Long Patrol, Guadalcanal, November 4 to December 4, 1942



1st Raider Regiment base camp, Dragon's Peninsula, New Georgia, July-August 1943





Tank and infantry action on the Piva Trail, Bougainville, November 7, 1943



Raider uniforms and gear, 1943



but after a brief exchange of fire the Japanese withdrew. The survivors spent another miserable night in the rain.

Carlson fretted all night. The son of the President was trapped on the island, enemy planes would certainly return at daylight, and perhaps a powerful Japanese landing force. After all, their purpose was to draw a landing force.

By some accounts a despondent Carlson penned a surrender note and dispatched it to the Japanese. Others, like McCullough, who was near him through the night, dispute the claim. McCullough wrote that for Carlson "... it could have been grocery shopping, or a day in training. He was about the most calm guy on the island." Carlson's major concern was relieved when around 0800hrs four more boats breached the surf line and met the submarines. One carried Major Roosevelt, though Carlson did not yet know that.

Ken McCullough wrote: "Peatross or somebody sent five men back in. One of them jumped out of the boat and swam in... He said that the ship's Captain said he would be there until we all got off. He swam back out, and he hadn't much more than got in the boat, 'til we seen the subs dive." Enemy planes machine-gunned the boat, and dropped bombs on the submerged submarines. Fortunately they had no depth charges.

Most of the men on the beach were despondent, but Carlson reorganized the men to sweep across the island killing any remaining Japanese and destroying facilities, the mission they had neglected in the confusion of the day before.

Erik helped drag the surviving rubber boats over to the lagoon side of the island, where Lieutenant Charlie Lamb supervised lashing them together with native canoes to make a huge, unwieldy raft.

All the radios had been lost in the surf, and four of Carlson's communicators were killed by snipers. The sole survivor who knew Morse code was Ken McCullough. McCullough climbed a leaning coconut tree with the single surviving flashlight and signaled for the submarines. "I could feel them [Japanese] looking at me all over the place. I'd start and get two or three letters out, and they'd break me. Blink real fast - that means 'stop'." The sailors kept signaling "Who?" Finally Haines blinked out a query about

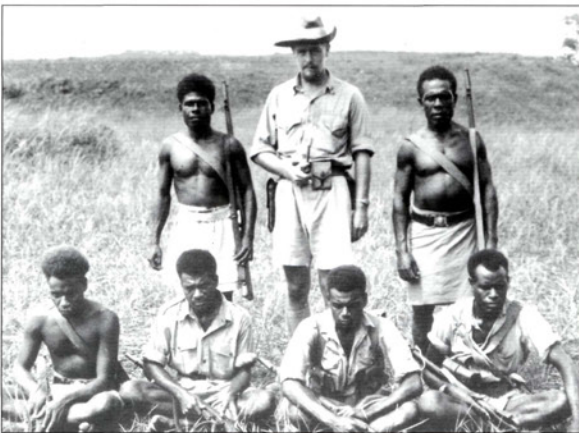


**Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of all US forces in the Central Pacific, welcomes the crew and passengers of *Nautilus* on their return from Makin. Note the battered submarine, and the unshaven and oddly dressed Raiders. (USMC Museums)**

Raiders mingle with sailors and Marines after debarking from *Nautilus*. The Raiders are wearing the black-dyed cotton summer dress uniforms and the green gym shoes. Photos like this contributed to the misconception that the Raiders wore black-dyed dress uniforms on the actual raid. (National Archives)



Knowledgeable and dedicated native scouts, like these shown with Coastwatcher Captain Martin Clemens, provided invaluable aid to the Raiders and other Marine units on Guadalcanal and New Georgia. One Raider said that without the natives "none of us would have gotten off New Georgia alive." Natives on Bougainville – a former German and then Japanese possession – were less cooperative. (USMCRC)



the odd nickname of a friend of Haines' father. Carlson recognized the name – "Squeegie" Long. After verifying his identity, McCullough blinked out instructions for the subs to rendezvous at 2130hrs downwind of the island, where the huge raft would not have to fight the surf.

The trip turned into a two-hour ordeal. The last outboards died, and the paddlers struggled with the unwieldy raft. One group of men badgered Carlson until he gave them permission to break away and go ahead. The rubber boat and its occupants were never seen again. At the rendezvous McCullough signaled with his dying flashlight, and by 2308hrs the last of Carlson's men were on board. There was no time to account for the dead and missing, so the ships divided up the survivors and steered a course for home. The wounded doctors provided "meatball surgery" in the fetid air of the crowded subs.

The Raiders returned to a tumultuous welcome. They may not have been the first Americans to strike back at Japan, but they were ones the press and the brass could get their hands on. The raid provided a much-needed boost to national morale, rivaling the equally famous and equally token Doolittle Raid. The Raider exploits were shamelessly exaggerated, and they were the guests of honor at a no-holds-barred party at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.

### Tasimboko

On August 30 Japanese planes caught and sank APD-2, the *Colhoun*, off Guadalcanal. The night after the 1st Raider Battalion was ferried across the channel to Guadalcanal, three Japanese destroyers were prowling the strait when a flare dropped by a Navy patrol bomber accidentally illuminated the *Gregory* (APD-3) and the *Little* (APD-4). The Japanese destroyers closed in for the kill, pumping shells into the transports, then ran through the knots of survivors in the water, chopping up men with their propellers and machine-gunning others. More than any other in

a string of atrocities, this incident steeled the Raiders' resolve to offer no quarter.

On September 7 Edson returned from a conference at Division HQ with the cold, lopsided grin that the Raiders now realized meant death was in the air. The next day the Raiders boarded APDs *McKean* and *Manley* and small craft *YP-298* and *YP-346* for an 18-mile (29km) trip to raid the Japanese logistical base at Tasimboko on the northern coast of Guadalcanal. They would be reinforced by the remnants of the 1st Parachute Battalion, reduced to 208 men by their own ferocious battle on Gavutu on August 7-8.

D Company, reduced to 46 men by Edson's practice of replacing losses by transfer, was to provide security for the landing area. When A and B Companies landed in the darkness - at the wrong place - they stumbled upon hundreds of Japanese packs stacked under the trees. Intelligence officers discovered that they belonged to the 2d Field Artillery Brigade. The bulk of General Kawaguchi's Sendai Division was well into the jungle in a march toward the main Marine perimeter at Lunga Point, but the rearguard was enough to crush Edson's landing force.

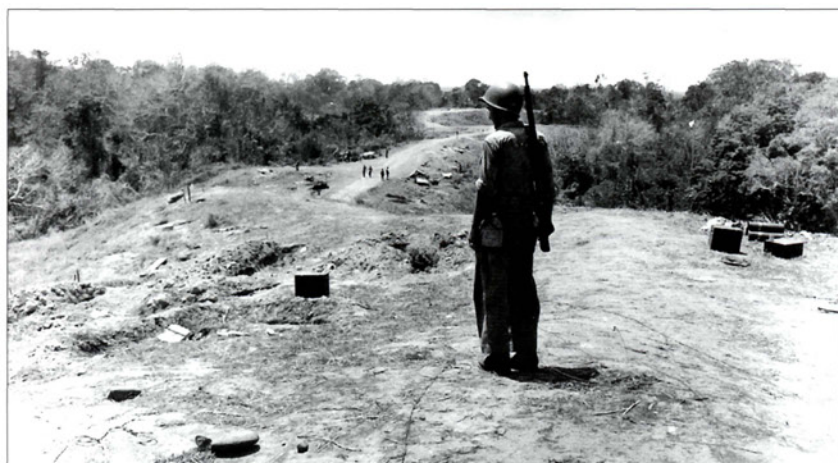
Offshore the terrified men of D and E Companies, packed aboard the defenseless tuna boats, sighted a fleet of big ships in the darkness. Fortunately they were not the usual Tokyo Express, but two American cargo ships escorted by a cruiser and several destroyers. The Japanese assumed the ships were an American invasion and withdrew, saving Edson's force from disaster. At dawn American planes and vengeful shelling by the 3-in. guns of the APDs harried the enemy.

Raider columns stumbled about in a seven-hour pursuit while Edson ignored orders to withdraw. After looting the logistics center, the Raiders withdrew carrying a secret long-range Japanese radio and documents, including Kawaguchi's battle plan. Like many of the men, Jake carried away all the cigarettes and alcohol he could cram into his utilities.

Destruction of the base crippled Kawaguchi's offensive before it began.

### **Bloody Ridge**

Four days after the Tasimboko operation, the commander of the 1st Marine Division rewarded the 1st Raider Battalion by giving it another



This view of Bloody Ridge is looking south from the crest of the southern knoll. The proximity of the jungle made the position hard to defend, and Edson held this position with only a thin screen on the first night. (USMCRC)

impossible task. The captured documents indicated that Kawaguchi would march into the jungle and attack the American perimeter from the south. In the trackless jungle the most logical route of attack was along a low, grassy ridge that formed a natural thoroughfare straight toward the 1st Marine Division command post (CP) and airfield. To defend it, Edson was given a composite battalion made up of the survivors of his own Raiders and the Parachute Battalion. He deployed three of his companies in a thin line to slow the anticipated onslaught with the weaker units, including D Company, behind at Hill Number 2, the highest knoll on the ridge.

Jake knew only that the ridge was baking hot, dusty, and that the rocks and tangled roots of the kunai grass made digging defenses nearly impossible. Edson also had his troops string whatever barbed wire they could salvage, and artillerymen plotted impact zones. Another indication that something was about to happen was the serving of a rare hot meal of Vienna sausages, string beans, and coffee.

Jake was a walking skeleton, dressed in torn and filthy utilities, and shaking with feverish malarial chills and dysentery. Since he did not regularly fall down in convulsions, he was deemed fit for duty rather than “rest” at the hospital, where he would be subject only to nightly bombardments and air raids. At any rate D Company was set up 600 yards (550m) behind the forward lines. For a few days the only unwelcome threat was air raids by Betty bombers from Rabaul.

Kawaguchi, harried by his superiors, struggled to move six battalions through the trackless jungle. His hasty attack on the night of September 12–13 was in his own words “beyond control.” Two battalions of the 124th Infantry Regiment overran the positions of the C Company Raiders (reinforced by a machine-gun platoon from E Company), moving head-



**The tough kunai grass roots and stony soil at Bloody Ridge made digging defensive positions almost impossible for the exhausted Raiders. Most “fighting holes” were just shallow pits of odd shapes as the Raiders dug around buried obstructions. (National Archives)**

on into the Marine fire and wading down the Lunga River to outflank them. The company was isolated between the river and an abandoned river channel bridged by a fallen log. As the Raiders withdrew, the single slimy log became a bottleneck as Raiders and Japanese shot, stabbed, and hacked at each other in the jungle. Flares cast a flickering light over the confusion, and huge shells from a Japanese cruiser rumbled in to strike friend and foe. Wounded Raiders crawled into the bushes to hide or die. B Company refused its right flank, and the attack died out as the enemy paused to repeatedly shoot or bayonet even dead bodies.

On the slope of the ridge, Jake and his buddies gathered in survivors of the broken company. An attack never came, but for the remainder of the night they heard the agonized screams of captured Raiders being tortured. At daylight a patrol went down to hunt for survivors. The first men across the log were driven back by heavy fire, and snipers shot medical corpsmen as they sought for wounded Raiders. The patrol retired with 14 survivors.

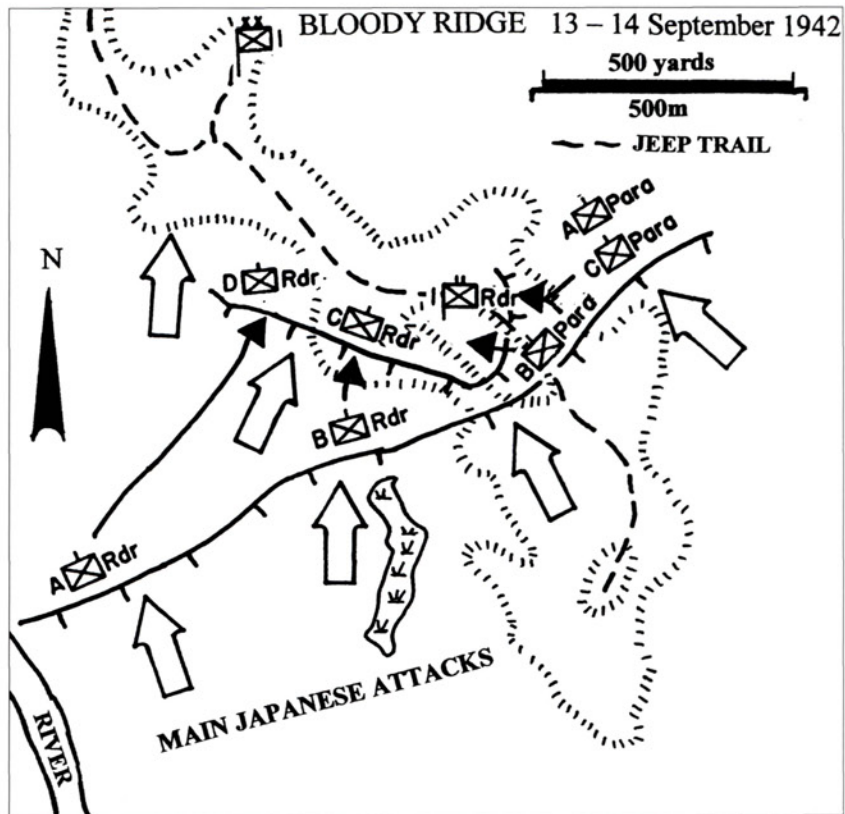
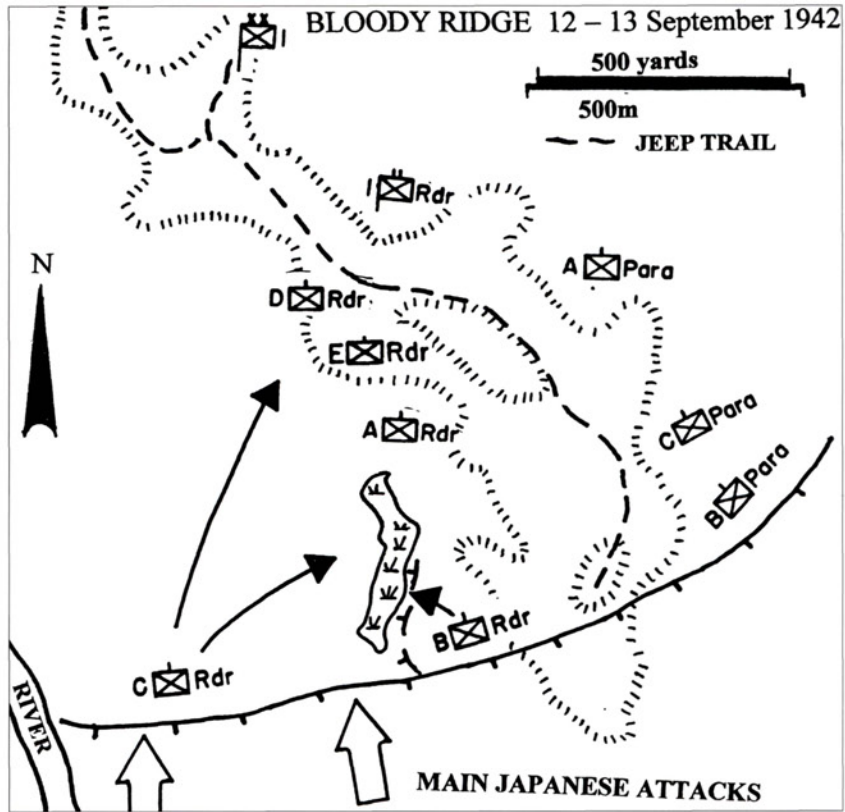
Edson pulled his front line back. The thin positions could not really hope to stop a major attack, only slow it. His only links to the rear were a phone wire, two artillery radios belonging to 11th Marines forward observers, and his runner, Corporal Walter Burak.

The enemy struck all along the line shortly after nightfall. Experienced Japanese infantry infiltrated the thin B Company position before rushing the Raiders in a volley of grenades. Artillery fire from the 11th Marines' howitzers plunged into the company positions. Jake watched Edson – easily recognizable because his helmet always seemed too big – stand silhouetted against the night sky, talking into the field phone, calling the torrent of artillery fire ever closer. Jake saw bullets repeatedly pluck at his baggy clothing without leaving a scratch.

**The aftermath of the second night of the Bloody Ridge battle, near the hill where Edson made his final defense. Different boots and web gear helped differentiate Raider, Parachutist, and Japanese bodies. (USMCRC)**



Edson could not hope to defend 1,500 yards (1,371m) of front with an understrength battalion, and stubbornly traded ground and lives to obstruct and delay superior Japanese forces. Dense jungle came approximately up to the outside set of hachures. (Modified from Hough et al., 1989)





Burak rushed down the front slope where he shouted repeatedly over the din of battle, "Red Mike says it's okay to fall back!" Raiders and parachutists fell back into the positions occupied by the remnants of C and D Companies. The entire command was packed into a tight horseshoe, firing and flinging grenades. A fleeting thought passed through Jake's mind that it looked too much like a painting he had seen of Custer's Last Stand. Jake concentrated on his work, squeezing off shots at Japanese he saw running across the company front, headed for the division CP. He watched several tumble, never really knowing whether he, someone else, or some random bit of shrapnel struck them down.

A mass of Japanese recoiled from the main crest and came over the spur to Jake's left. He could see them coming, but it was too late. One rushed past several Marines, and onto the muzzle of Jake's rifle. A shot put him down at Jake's feet. One Raider went down, hit in the body. As he rolled he grabbed at the feet of a Japanese officer swinging his sword double-handed. The BAR man from Jake's squad sent a blast of automatic fire into the officer at point-blank range, blasting him backward in a spray of gore. Another enemy bayoneted the Raider on the ground. Another crashed into a Raider, and the two men grappled. All this happened in seconds, but Jake's brain had gone into what Marines call "battle time," and it all unfolded at a glacial pace.

A white-hot pain tore through Jake's left arm and he briefly lost consciousness. When he could think again, his left arm was numb below the elbow, his fist clenched into a useless claw. He raised the rifle, fired at another enemy, fumbled with the bolt one-handed, and shot down another. A crazed Japanese ran at him, rifle butt upraised as a club. Jake planted the butt of his empty rifle in his armpit, impaling the onrushing man on his bayonet, and again lost consciousness as both went down in a bloody tangle.

At daybreak a corpsman dug Jake out from under the enemy body. Another corpsman checked his wound, strapped Jake's arm to his side with a dead man's belt, and pointed him down the jeep trail toward the rear. Jake was walking along when a light field ambulance crawled past, loaded down with wounded. A Nambu machine gun opened fire from the tree line, raking the truckload of helpless wounded. A torrent of fire from the Marines of 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, who were moving up to relieve the defenders, silenced the gun, but not before three more were dead.

For Jake and nearly a third of the men who had defended the ridge, the war was over. The 1st Raider Battalion, now down to half strength, patrolled south along the Lunga, seeking Kawaguchi's survivors. Edson, promoted to colonel, was transferred to take command of the 5th Marines on September 21. The battalion would fight two more bitter battles along the Matanikau River, once on the offensive, then on the defensive, blocking an attack by Japanese infantry and tanks in "the battle of the sand spit."

Of around 400 survivors who boarded ship for return to New Caledonia, 267 had active cases of malaria. Others suffered from dormant fevers, parasites, skin diseases, jaundice, and dysentery.

### **The Long Patrol**

The brass, the press, and the public lionized the Makin Raiders, but the drunken idyll lasted only a week. Training resumed, and on September



**The Japanese Type 89 "knee mortar" grenade launcher was a deadly weapon well suited to jungle fighting, and superior to the Raiders' rifle grenades. (National Archives)**

6 the 2d Battalion embarked for the voyage to Espiritu Santo, staging base for Guadalcanal.

Carlson's son, Evans Junior, tried to transfer to the Raiders, but was rebuffed by his father. Finally the father relented, making it clear to his son that he would be judged by an even harsher standard than normal. Carlson agonized that his battalion was missing out on the Guadalcanal campaign. Finally, part of the battalion was assigned to provide security for Navy Seabees at a landing site in Aola Bay. Just before boarding ship for return to Espiritu Santo, Carlson received a message assigning the battalion a mission. After heavy fighting with the fresh 7th Marines, the Japanese were reeling back in disarray. The 2d Raider Battalion would move overland, blocking the escape of any enemy units fleeing south or east away from the main American perimeter.

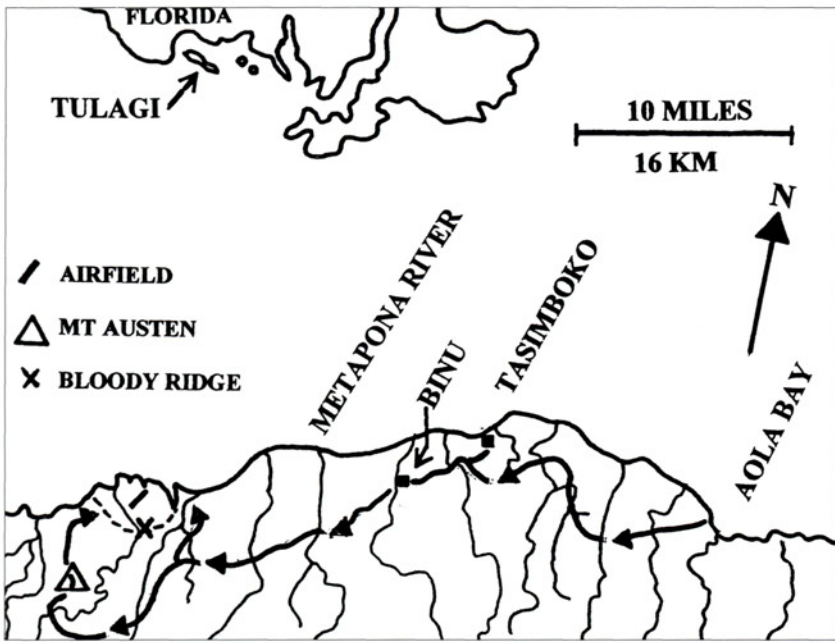
At dawn on November 6, C and E Companies, the small battalion command group, and native scouts and carriers set off on a march for Binu Village. Three more companies, B, D, and F, arrived at Aola Bay. On November 10 they moved by landing craft to the old Japanese position at Tasimboko and plunged into the jungle looking for Carlson's column. Despite useless maps, the column under Captain Peatross found Carlson that afternoon. A deep patrol learned that over 3,000 Japanese who managed to break out of encirclement along the Metapona River were fleeing toward Carlson.

Carlson planned to fan out company patrols to maximize the chance of contact. The companies would coordinate by radio every two hours; any company could call for assistance from the other companies or the operational reserve. Communicators were to accomplish this feat of coordination with heavy radios powered by equally weighty batteries or a hand-cranked generator. Native bearers carried most of this burden, but setting up and operating the bulky radios was a Raider task.

By 1000hrs on November 11, C Company was heavily engaged. D and E Companies, as well as the reaction platoon from B Company, rushed to help. D Company stumbled into a Japanese ambush, and the lead squad was pinned down. That afternoon Captain McAuliffe and seven men staggered into the CP to report his unit "wiped out." No sooner had he spoken than the rest of his men arrived. Enraged, Carlson relieved him on the spot. Lieutenant Carlson, in a mirror-image engagement, surprised a large Japanese patrol crossing a river and nearly destroyed it.

The next day the Raiders shifted base to Asamana Village on the Metapona River. Digging in for the night they discovered the Japanese had used the village as a mass grave. The Raiders had to dig in and spend the night in the stench of decaying corpses.

The next day was marked by another wild jungle melee. Marine artillery fire decimated an ambushed Japanese column, but fell perilously close to C Company. McCullough sent a radio message, but was told "No friendly troops in that area." When Captain Hal Throneson erupted in anger at the errant shelling, Carlson relieved him. Captain Peatross fumed that perhaps Carlson expected more than was humanly possible. This campaign was one where small groups of exhausted, sickly, bedraggled men of both sides randomly clashed in the rugged, jungle-covered ridges. It was a chaotic fight impossible for leaders to control, where individual initiative and dogged courage determined the outcome.



Though the straight-line distance from Aola Bay to Henderson Field was only 27 miles (43km), the 2d Raider Battalion covered a vastly greater distance in countermarches, traversing rivers, dense jungle, and mountainous terrain. (Modified from Hough et al., 1989)

On November 15 the battalion fell back on Binu, where the men had a chance to wash with soap, and treat the diseases that afflicted almost everyone. Ervin Kaplan took desperate measures to cure his own jungle rot, scrubbing it with sand and then painting the raw flesh with Merthiolate™. Then they plunged back into the jungle, pushing forward to reach the Tenaru River on November 24.

Erik arrived on November 25, when the battalion shifted its base to the banks of the Tenaru River, and soon the battalion continued to advance south of the perimeter around Lunga Point. The Raiders were on their last legs, but the Japanese were in worse shape. Enemy soldiers were skeletal and disease ridden. On November 28 a six-man patrol stumbled upon a Japanese encampment, and as the weak and apathetic enemy tried to scatter, the patrol slaughtered over a hundred.

Erik was still in good condition, and acted as the point man on many of the patrols. Within days, however, he was suffering from jungle rot that made his crotch itch until he scratched himself raw and bleeding.

Carlson was instructed to terminate the patrol by December 3, but he was determined to push on. He sent his most depleted units down the Tenaru to the sea, to enter the Lunga Point perimeter from the east. The balance – A, B, and F Companies, under Carlson himself – moved up and over the dominating regional terrain feature, Mount Austen.

Climbing jungle slopes covered with greasy mud and rotten vegetation, scaling high rock cliffs, the three companies struggled slowly upward. As the Raiders crested the mountain on December 3, they encountered Japanese entrenched along the ridges that made up the hill mass. Most of the enemy had little ammunition, some none at all, but unable to flee, they fought with the desperation of the doomed.

Erik moved along the ridgeline firing at running enemy, ruthlessly shooting wounded Japanese. He investigated each stick and leaf hovel constructed by the enemy. As Erik stepped over the body of an enemy officer the man rolled over and grasped at his legs. Erik came down



**Raiders (and Japanese) were most vulnerable crossing streams, the sites of numerous bloody ambushes. Note the jungle-covered cliffs in the background. (Raider Museum)**

heavily on top of the man, who grabbed him by the ears, and snapped at Erik's throat with bared teeth. Erik could smell the man's hot breath, a combination of rotted yellow teeth and the acid smell of a man whose body is consuming its own muscle tissue and organs. As Erik pushed back, the man clawed with the long, broken nails of his bloody fingers, ripping gashes down one of Erik's eyebrows and a stubbly, unshaven cheek.

Half-blinded by blood, Erik fumbled for the Gung Ho Bowie. He drove it into the man's chest, the blade twisting as it grated between two ribs. Frothy blood splattered into Erik's face as the officer's punctured lung emptied itself through his mouth. Erik bore down with all his weight until the bubbling breath stopped. Pulling himself upright, Erik wrenched the knife loose, and then bent back over as his empty stomach tried to push itself out his throat in a series of dry heaves. He staggered out from between the huts, covered with blood, a knife in one hand and dragging his rifle by the muzzle, shaking with fury and fright.

The Raiders withdrew down the mountain, only to have B Company move into one last Japanese ambush. Three men were killed before a BAR man killed the crew of the enemy machine gun. On the final march, two wounded Raiders died and were buried in the jungle. The battered Raiders staggered into the 1st Division perimeter, and had an 8-mile (13km) walk to their bivouac.

On the Long Patrol the battalion had marched and countermarched over 150 miles (241km) through some of the most terrible terrain imaginable. They had killed 488 Japanese, losing 16 killed in action, 19 wounded, and 225 to disease. At the December 5 muster, no company was over 20 percent of its authorized strength.

## **A New Generation**

In September 1942 Lieutenant Colonel Harry B. "Harry the Horse" Liversedge stood up the 3d Raider Battalion. In October Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Roosevelt raised the 4th Raider Battalion, and a Raider Training Battalion was established in California. (A victim of various diseases, Roosevelt relinquished command of the 4th Raider Battalion before the unit went overseas.) Liversedge was a by-the-book officer who represented the future of the Raiders as he rose to command the new 1st Raider Regiment (composed of the 1st and 4th Battalions) in March 1943.

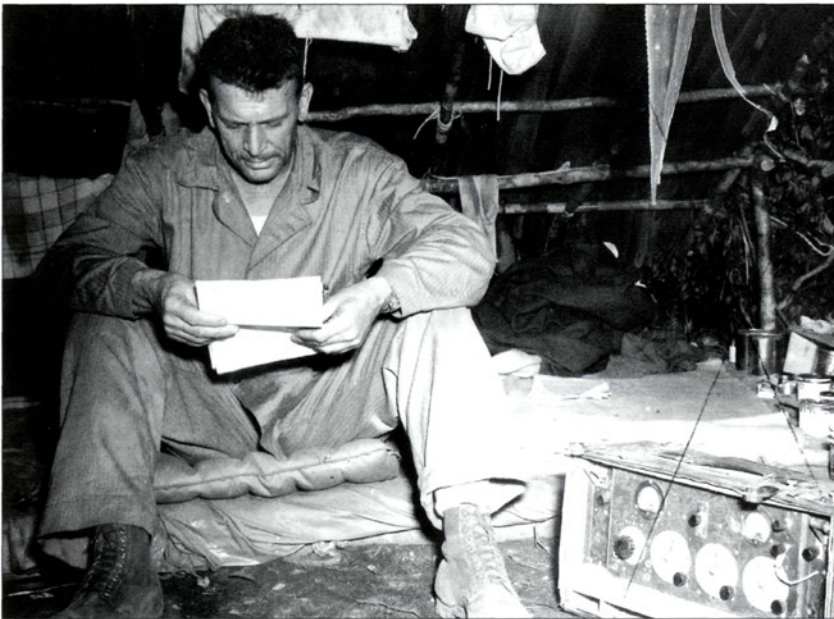
Sam Griffith, the new CO of the 1st Battalion, was another fighting intellectual. The ten-man rifle squad was unwieldy in the jungle. Griffith reorganized the squad with a leader and three three-man fire teams. Each had a BAR, with a leader and assistant BAR man, both with the new M1 semi-automatic rifle.

Lieutenant Colonel Alan Shapley, the CO of the new 2d Raider Regiment (raised on September 12, 1943 and composed of the 2d and 3d Raider Battalions) made it clear that he did not ascribe to the Raider mystique. "We had a lot of stuff like Raider boots. Everybody had to turn those in and they were burned up in a big fire," recalled Kaplan.

Erik was transferred to the new 4th Raider Battalion when it arrived overseas, one of many experienced men who formed cadres for new units. He found an unlikely friend in his senior team leader, a skinny college boy from Alabama named Little, a product of the new Raider training. Inevitably nicknamed "Chicken," he was nevertheless deadly with a rifle.

## **The Dragon's Peninsula**

The assault on New Georgia was one of the most badly bungled campaigns of the war. In the "indirect approach" strategy so beloved of Army staff colleges, the plan was to land and march overland to attack the



"Harry the Horse" Liversedge commanded the 1st Raider Regiment on New Georgia. He is shown here in his living accommodations, wearing the old P1941 utilities. (USMC Museums)

big Japanese base at Munda. It would pit inexperienced Army infantry battalions against a veteran enemy and tens of miles of terrible jungle.

Small Raider patrols, led by Australian Coastwatchers and local guides, used native war canoes to reconnoiter and map the unknown coastline. Their efforts led to major changes in the plan, which remained badly flawed. While the major Army units marched on Munda from the south, Liversedge's 1st and 4th Raider Battalions, and the Army's green 3d Battalion, 145th Infantry and 3d Battalion, 148th Infantry, would land on the north coast to sever the enemy supply line. The 4th Raiders would not be part of the initial force, but a small advance party including Erik's squad accompanied the 1st Raiders.

On the pitch black and rainy night of July 4–5, 1943, the Raiders and soldiers landed at a swampy river delta called Rice Anchorage, east of the Japanese supply bases. The Japanese discovered the landing force. While LCPs towed the rubber boats into the river mouth, Erik and Chicken flinched as enemy 140mm shells rumbled overhead. Flares and tracers stitched the darkness as the ships battled Japanese shore batteries and destroyers. Despite the downpour they could see flames as the destroyer *Strong* went down, torpedoed by an enemy submarine. The naval force broke off action and retired, taking with them rations, ammunition, and the only long-range radio. The Raiders and soldiers were isolated.

When the bow of the rubber boat grated against an obstacle, Erik and Chicken jumped out into stinking neck-deep water. They spent the next hour picking their way over and through a three-dimensional tangle of slimy mangrove roots in absolute darkness. Finally a native guide showed them how to find a luminous fungus that grew on the

**The advance on Enogai was a protracted slog through flooded jungle and across rain-swollen rivers. Note the size of the Raider carrying the huge Boys Anti-Tank Rifle. (USMCRC)**



roots. They smeared it on each other's backs, and followed along in single file, stumbling and falling over roots, logs, and rotten stumps.

The 8-mile (13km) overland march toward the enemy took three days and crossed two flooded rivers. The 9ft (2.7m) deep Tamakau was a raging torrent, bridged by a single slick log. The Raiders rigged their toggle ropes as a safety line. That night the squad ate their single K-Ration meal of the day cold, and slept in shin-deep water. Erik claimed a prime spot, sitting wedged between two roots. Unlike the new men, he slept soundly amid the weird noises and dripping rain.

With the two Army battalions securing the trails and communications routes, the task of assailing the enemy base at Enogai fell to the 1st Raiders. The five-day fight annihilated the *rikusentai*, but cost 45 dead, four missing, and a hundred wounded. Liversedge moved his base to Enogai, where small supply ships could slip past the enemy, and "Black Cat" PBY patrol bombers could land to evacuate his wounded.

With the 1st Battalion mauled, the 4th Battalion would have to carry the brunt of the fight for the main enemy position at Bairoko. Liversedge was worried. A flurry of high-level command changes caused a delay in moving the already depleted 4th Raiders up from the south coast, and gave the enemy time to bring in reinforcements and construct strong defenses.

Reunited with its parent battalion, on the night of July 17–18 Erik's squad stumbled along the coastal track. By noon the 1st Battalion had managed only to break through the enemy outpost line. The 4th Battalion shifted left along the edge of a dense swamp, trying to find the flank of the positions. Chicken, who had an insufferable tendency to lecture, kept telling Erik how much this resembled the Battle of the Wilderness in the Civil War.

Everything was going wrong. Requested air strikes failed to materialize. The Army's 3d/148th – sent to try and outflank the enemy on the south margin of the swamp – was stalled by enemy machine guns.



**Dead Raiders were buried where they fell, and in the jungle were soon reduced to skeletal remains. These men were recovered after the fighting for Bairoko. (National Archives)**



**By late 1943 the Raider battalions functioned as regular infantry, and had the same heavy equipment, like this radio jeep at Cape Torokina, Bougainville. Note the logging boots on the man at right, and bullet holes in the jeep. Lying on the jeep is a walkie-talkie, an improved version of the one that caused the deaths of radiomen on Makin. (Raider Museum)**



**The dense jungle made combat a series of deadly, short-range clashes where the opponents could literally smell each other. Marine Gunner (Warrant Officer) Anthony Yekanich stands over the bodies of dead Japanese on the Piva Trail. (National Archives)**

The 3d/145th was slow to move when called upon for support. The Japanese pounded the Raiders with heavy mortars.

Rounds from a Japanese heavy machine gun clipped limbs off the trees, showering Erik and Chicken with debris. Chicken worked his way around until he found good concealment, and he discovered that he could see the gunner's head silhouetted against the rear opening of the bunker. Taking careful aim, he fired a round through the man's head. A second, blood-spattered *rikusentai* took his place, and Chicken shot him.

Fire from the bunker ceased after the fourth enemy died at Chicken's hands, and the squad rushed the bunker. The BAR man poured a torrent of fire into the firing slit, but a second machine gun got off a five-round burst. Three rounds caught Erik in the chest, puncturing both lungs and severing his spine. "Killed instantly" may comfort the survivors, but it's seldom true. Erik tumbled over backward with a look of pained surprise on his face.

The fourth round was a miss, but the fifth took Chicken in the left cheek, smashing his upper teeth, and ripping off most of his ear. Another BAR man wiped out the second gun crew, giving the squad time to drag the two men back behind a huge log.

The corpsman shot Chicken up with morphine, packed the wound, and rolled him onto his side so he would not drown on his own blood and bone fragments. Chicken lingered between pain and a drug-induced haze as native carriers moved him back along the track with nearly 200 other badly wounded. His last memory of New Georgia was the pounding of the wave tops as the PBV took off from Enogai.

The Raiders were pulling back. Erik's buddies had just time enough to take one of his identity tags and scratch out a shallow grave. The 1st Battalion chaplain, Father Redmond, had inadvertently crossed the battalion boundary. The padre said a brief prayer, though Erik was a non-believer. A nearby tree was skinned of bark as a marker, the site recorded on the platoon sergeant's map. On August 21 the air strikes that could have made the difference the previous day covered the withdrawal as the Raiders staggered back the way they had come. Army troops entered Bairoko unopposed three days later. The Japanese had accepted the inevitable and skillfully slipped across the straits to Kolombangara.

The Raiders' final mission on New Georgia was to recover the skeletal remains of men like Erik Andersen.

### **The Final Campaign: Bougainville**

Chicken's big brother, Lieutenant Little, was a former football player at Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), and a product of the same Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program that had





**The jungle and climate were as great an enemy as the Japanese. These 2d Battalion Raiders are dug in along the Piva Trail. Note the combination of P1942 camouflage utilities and the pre-war two-man entrenching system where one man carried a two-piece mattock, the other a shovel. (National Archives)**

produced Hoke Smith. A large man by any standard, he quickly acquired the nickname "Babe," and was assigned to F Company in the 2d Raider Battalion, 2d Raider Regiment.

On November 1, 1943, the regiment served as infantry for the landings at Cape Torokina, Bougainville. Corporal Brian Quirk had been sent to L Company, 3d Raiders and landed on tiny Puruata Island to eliminate positions that could have fired upon the landing force from behind. The 3d Battalion then moved over to mainland Bougainville, and both battalions pushed rapidly inland. The mission was to deny the enemy the use of the Piva and Numa-Numa Trails. Though they were just footpaths, any overland counterattack would have to come from the south over these trail connections. Brian Quirk recalled it as "Unpleasant. Rained all the time. Slogging in water. Sleeping in water." Ervin Kaplan: "About every twenty minutes you had to bail out the foxhole with your helmet."

On November 7 E Company, holding defenses just south of Piva Village, was struck by a Japanese attack. E and F Companies, supported by cannon-armed halftracks and light tanks, tried to outflank the Japanese trail block. Machine guns and mortars raked both companies, inflicting heavy casualties. The vehicles became bogged down, and had to withdraw, piled high with wounded Raiders.

Babe's platoon was assigned to cover the withdrawal as the Raiders sought to break contact. When one of his men went down with a mortar fragment in the side, Babe slung the wounded man over one shoulder and slogged through the deep muck.

All night insects tormented the officer, attracted by the reek of blood on his clothing. That morning the company was to advance on the right flank, skirting the Piva River. Tanks and halftracks with cannon were unable to advance in support of L Company, 3d Raiders, and in the confusion only part of F Company attacked. All along the front the Raiders reeled in the face of heavy fire.

American artillery blasted the jungle, and Babe's platoon fought for possession of a slightly drier spot of swamp. Attempts to outflank the enemy were driven back, and when the Japanese counterattacked they

were slaughtered in return. Babe shot two onrushing Japanese, but a grenade put a splinter through the side of his neck.

Slowly the enemy gave ground, and at 1230hrs the fire suddenly slackened. The Japanese had withdrawn, and by 1500hrs the Raiders had advanced several hundred yards. Among the Marines wounded in the trail battles was Brian Quirk, who won the Navy Cross and a commission.

Over the coming weeks the Raiders would fight again at places like the Coconut Grove (November 13–14) and Piva Forks (November 19–20), but always as regular infantry.

## THE END OF THE RAIDERS

By late 1943 it was clear that there was no role for the Raiders in the “new” Corps. There was no need for harassments or diversions, and ironically the Raiders were now becoming a morale problem. The “ordinary” officers and enlisted Marines who increasingly bore the brunt of the fighting resented the publicity lavished upon the Raiders, and “Gung Ho” became a derisive term. What was there to do with all these highly trained men?

In a stroke of organizational inspiration, the Raider units disbanded in February 1944 formed the core of the new 4th Marines. The Corps was determined that the only regiment ever to be surrendered would be

**Lieutenant Colonel Alan Shapley, CO of the 2d Raider Regiment, dictates a message at his command post on Bougainville. The hard-charging Shapley went on to command the resurrected 4th Marines. Note the aid station in the background. (Raider Museum)**



reborn as a “special” unit. The 4th Marines went on to fight at Emirau, the recapture of Guam (the only major US territory to fall to the Japanese), and Okinawa. It was deliberately chosen to land in Japan to liberate the POW camps. For the emaciated and disease-ridden survivors of Bataan and Corregidor, the Marines’ code of honor was satisfied. Their regiment had at last come to take them home.

### **Final historical notes**

In his book *Bless 'em All*, Colonel Oscar Peatross made public the issue of Carlson’s supposed surrender note on Makin. The story was that Carlson had an officer scrawl such a note. Two Raiders somehow delivered it to a Japanese soldier, who was then inadvertently killed. Ken McCullough questions the circumstances: “As they left the tent ... they saw a Jap running. One of them grabbed a Jap pistol and it would not fire so he grabbed a rifle and shot the Jap. (Our two were supposed to be without weapons, there just happened to be these weapons laying around.) How far had the Jap run while all this gun grabbing was going on? It was at least twelve o’clock at night and there were no lights on.” It was also cloudy, with no moonlight. The Japanese found the note on the body, and used it as evidence of American “treachery.” (Imperial Army field manuals advocated the use of the white surrender flag as a ruse to lure the enemy into a trap.) Many Raiders dispute the story, but in 1942 Nimitz apparently accepted it as true. It is important to remember that for commanders like Carlson, honorable surrender to save the lives of their men still seemed a viable option. Not even old China hands like Carlson suspected the depravities inflicted on prisoners of Imperial Japan. It was later revealed that during the darkest days on Guadalcanal the regional commander authorized General Vandegrift to negotiate surrender. Even if true, Carlson’s consideration of surrender was not cowardice, nor does it reflect badly upon him or his men. The fact that Carlson was able to shake off the demons of his depression and lead his men to safety demonstrates a higher form of courage than the blind and unthinking madness depicted as “heroism” in films and television.

A more severe blow was the 1946 discovery that in the confusion nine of the Makin Raiders had been captured. Transported to Kwajelein, they were beheaded by the Japanese as part of their Yasukuni Shrine Festival. Bodies of the men killed on Makin were located and recovered in 1999, but the bodies of the murdered prisoners have never been located.

Carlson was never again placed in command of troops. He served as an observer in some of the most vicious battles in the Pacific, and was severely wounded on Saipan. He died of a heart attack in May 1947, virtually penniless. The government declined to pay for transportation of his body to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. A furious Jimmy Roosevelt and friends paid the expense.

At the same time, Edson became embroiled in resistance to efforts to limit the Marine Corps to its ancient role of naval police, or eliminate it altogether. Edson sacrificed his career to principle. He resigned his commission in June 1947 in order to publicly testify before Congress and to speak publicly before the American people. Unlike the wounded and ill Carlson, Edson enjoyed years of public and private service until, despondent over personal matters, he committed suicide in August 1955.

They were two very different, yet in the end similar, men of honor.

# MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS, AND DEPICTIONS

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Virtually all weapons and equipment used by Raider units in the Pacific War were used until surveyed, or destroyed, at war's end. The single most common service item to return to the United States was the stiletto knife. Most of these were lost, though many found their way into museums or organized collections as the owners died. Surplus stocks of these knives were sold, and replica or commemorative versions have been issued. On the rare occasion that a documented stiletto becomes available for sale, the sale price is often thousands of dollars. The potential collector should be extremely wary of any "authentic" Raider items offered for sale.

One collection of authentic knives, clothing, and gear belongs to a single private collector. The Raider Museum has now closed and its collections are housed in Raider Hall at MCB Quantico. The USMC Museums Branch had by far the largest collection of firearms, and some original uniform items from the Makin Raid. The Museums Branch collections will belong to the new Heritage Center near the main gate of MCB Quantico; this facility will open in November 2006.

Raider unit records and documents are available at the National Archives at College Park Maryland, and the Marine Corps Research Center at Quantico. The latter is primarily a research center for active-duty Marines. The most accessible source of information, including firsthand accounts, is the Raider Association website, [www.usmarineraiders.org](http://www.usmarineraiders.org).

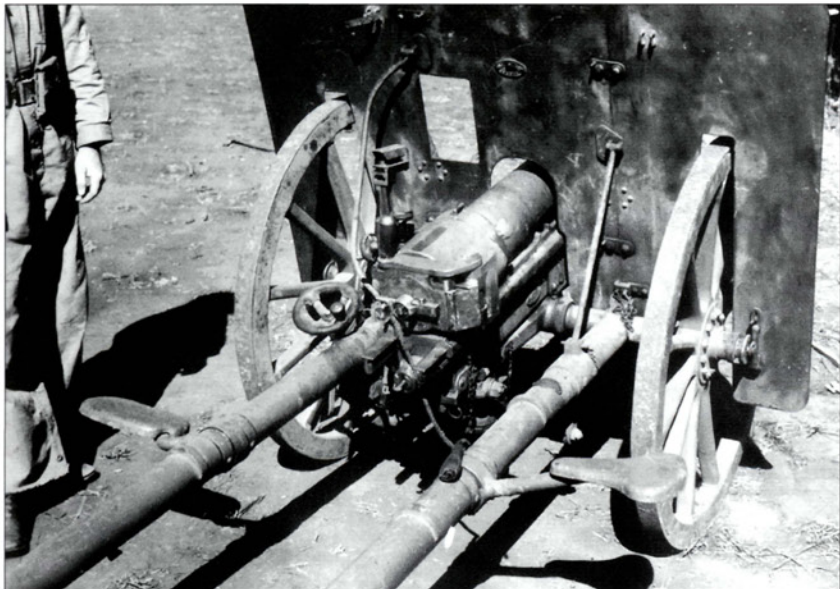
Two films depicting the Raiders were produced during World War II. Though Carlson and others served as advisors for *Gung Ho*, most Raiders considered it a joke. In the film the incident of the Japanese accidentally bombing their own troops is portrayed as resulting from the Raiders painting an American flag on the Japanese headquarters. Raider Ben Carson scoffed, "Like we carried buckets of red, white, and blue paint with us on the Raid!" Heavy on oratory, it is an unfortunate example of the ham-handed propaganda movies of the era. *Marine Raiders* is an equally forgettable Hollywood love-triangle film involving two brothers who happen to be Raiders. A modern film, *Wind Talkers*, has an opening scene that depicts Raiders in the 1943 campaigns. Though many of the battle scenes are "over the top" on special effects, it more accurately depicts the brutal carnage that was the Marine experience in the Pacific. The depiction of Marine uniforms and personal equipment is on the whole accurate.

## GLOSSARY

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<b>782 gear</b>	the Marine term for web and field gear including packs, helmet, pistol belts, canteens, etc.		fighting for the interests of the United Fruit Company.
<b>APD</b>	Auxiliary, Personnel (transport), Destroyer.	<b>Betty</b>	Allied codename for the Mitsubishi G4M1 twin-engine Type 1 medium bomber of the Japanese Navy.
<b>Banana Wars</b>	a collective term for early 20th-century military interventions in the Caribbean and Central America. The term is derived from the erroneous assertion that the Corps was	<b>boondockers</b>	generic term for field boots, from the island of Bondoc in the Philippines, where Marines fought in the Philippines Insurrection.

<b>Coastwatcher</b>	British and Australian officers who stayed behind in occupied territory. They provided intelligence on ship movements, hence the name.	<b>Seabees</b>	the nickname for the Naval Construction Battalions. In early World War II a battalion was part of the Marine division structure.
<b>corpsman</b>	a Navy medical service enlisted man who served with the Marines on the battlefield. A Raider battalion rated two surgeon officers and 20 enlisted corpsmen.	<b>slop chute</b>	an establishment that sells beer. An enlisted men's or NCO club aboard a base.
<b>CP</b>	command post.	<b>survey</b>	to declare unfit for further service. The term was applied equally to damaged equipment and crippled men.
<b>feather merchant</b>	a man small in either physical stature or weight. Marine historian Colonel Joe Alexander (author of <i>Edson's Raiders</i> ) was not the first to note that many of the Corps' heroes come from the ranks of the feather merchants.	<b>swamp out</b>	to clean thoroughly, the practice of washing a ship's decks or compartments with large volumes of water.
<b>Great War</b>	the name usually applied to World War I, prior to World War II.	<b>T/E</b>	Table of Equipment.
<b>Gung Ho</b>	Chinese, "Work in Harmony." Today the term is used to denote something flashy, or an overly enthusiastic person or action.	<b>T/O</b>	Table of Organization.
<b>HBT</b>	Herringbone twill	<b>Taps</b>	lights out, at which time troops were supposed to go to sleep. The bugle call commonly called Taps is actually Butterfield's Lullaby.
<b>jungle rot</b>	a generic term for a variety of fungal diseases that attacked the feet, groin, armpits, and other areas.	<b>Tokyo Express</b>	the nocturnal supply runs the Japanese Navy dispatched to Guadalcanal from their big base at Rabaul, on New Britain.
<b>LCP</b>	Landing Craft, Personnel, an early version of the Higgins Boat, without a bow ramp.	<b>trench foot</b>	the old name for what is now called immersion foot. Constantly wet, infantrymen's feet would lose circulation, turn white, and eventually ulcerate. It could result in amputation of toes or parts of the feet.
<b>LCVP</b>	Land Craft, Vehicle, Personnel.	<b>utilities</b>	the heavy cotton dungaree shirt (called a jacket by the Marines) and trousers worn by Marines. The name was derived from the uniform's origins as work clothing.
<b>liberty</b>	a short holiday, usually 72 hours or less in duration.	<b>Vienna sausages</b>	short links of paste-like ground sausages made from waste pork (lips, ears, et cetera) canned in a salty gelatin base.
<b>Merthiolate™</b>	a solution of the mercury-based preservative Thimerisal in alcohol.	<b>YP</b>	Yard Patrol, a class of light vessels intended only for utility work. Called "Yippees" by the Marines and sailors, the ones used at Guadalcanal were former California tuna fishery boats.
<b>Reserve</b>	personnel not long-term members of the Regular establishment. Most of the Marines who fought in World War II were hostilities-only Reservists.		
<b>rikusentai</b>	Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces.		
<b>salty</b>	old and experienced, as in encrusted with salt from long service at sea.		



**A Japanese 75mm Type 41 Mountain Gun like this one was found near the nose of Bloody Ridge after the battle. The gun had repeatedly failed to fire after being laboriously dragged through the jungle. Had it worked, the defense of the ridge might have failed. (National Archives)**

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## COLOR PLATE COMMENTARY

### A: RAIDER WEAPONS AND UNIFORMS, MID-1942

Much of the equipment and many of the weapons used by the Raiders were adopted not because they were particularly suited to the unit's requirements, but simply because they were the only items available. (1) This 2d Raider Battalion enlisted man is wearing the black P1941 utilities and gym shoes unique to the Makin operation, and is armed with a Thompson gun. The helmet cover is manufactured from strips of burlap and old bits of HBT uniform cloth, painted in dark colors. Many Raiders continued to use these even after the adoption of the P1942 reversible camouflage helmet cover. (2) This Raider lieutenant's P1941 utilities have been camouflaged with irregular splotches of brown, dark green, and even white paint. He is wearing the khaki overseas cover with his rank badge attached, and holding a Raider stiletto knife. He wears the most common pattern of Raider logging boot, and Marine-pattern identity discs on a cord around his neck. Note that as per regulations, he has shaved down to the normal neckline of the undershirt, though he is not wearing an undershirt. (3) The M1911 .45-cal. pistol in a brown leather belt holster was the sidearm for officers. Carlson always wore his on the left hip. (4) The M1903A1 Springfield rifle, renowned for its accuracy, was the standard weapon for Marines through late 1942. This model M1903A3 has the aperture rear sight, visible in front of the open bolt. (5) The M1941 Johnson light



**Raider forward aid station, Bougainville. Note the mix of old and new uniform elements, the short-billed P1941 Raider caps, and the Navy corpsman's late-style identity tag. (National Archives)**

machine gun was issued only to Marine Parachute battalions, but many found their way into Raider hands. Components of the different weapons in the Johnson system were interchangeable to facilitate field repair. (6) The M1941 Johnson Automatic Rifle was another weapon commonly



**A Raider patrol, led and supported by Solomon Scouts, moves out to search for the retreating Japanese. (USMCRC)**

acquired by the Raiders. (7) The Reising submachine gun was adopted simply because it was available. Manufactured in a standard model and also an "airborne" model with modified muzzle compensator and folding wire stock, it was prone to failure of several components. (8) The .55-cal. Canadian-pattern Boys Anti-Tank Rifle appeared on the Table of Equipment of the Marine infantry company, but in fact was seldom used except by the Raiders. (9) The World War I grenade vest was suspended by a broad strap around the neck, and secured with tie-ribbons around the waist. (10) Marine Corps 782 (web) gear was manufactured by the Corps' own suppliers, and was slightly different from Army patterns and lighter in color. The most distinctive item was the early-pattern canteen cover with crossed flaps. (11) Toggle ropes could be linked together by slipping the wooden handle through the loop. By combining them in various ways Raiders could scale cliffs, make safety lines for fording streams, or construct simple footbridges. (12) The stiletto knife was the distinctive weapon of a Raider. Strictly a stabbing weapon, it was easily broken if thrown. Decorative scroll work lightly etched onto the blade was typically worn off during cleaning or normal use. (13) Some Raiders preferred other edged weapons, like this Shark Knife carried by Jimmy Roosevelt. (14) The heavy "Gung Ho" Bowie was developed for Carlson's battalion. There were a variety of sheaths, and the handles might be either black or dark-green horn.

**B: 2D RAIDER BATTALION TRAINING AT JACQUES FARM, CALIFORNIA, EARLY 1942**

The original Raider battalions were trained differently, reflecting the disparate philosophies of their founders, but both emphasized night combat and fast, long-distance marches. Both battalions were extensively trained in knife-fighting and the Japanese martial art *jiu-jitsu* (judo). Here 2d Battalion Raiders in P1941 utilities and field gear practice hand-to-hand combat under the approving eye of Lieutenant

Colonel Evans Carlson. Though he wears the officer's summer dress uniform, Carlson has dispensed with rank badges. Informality between officers and enlisted men in Carlson's battalion led to a deep distrust and suspicion among his superior officers that he was a communist.

**C: SECOND NIGHT ON BLOODY RIDGE, SEPTEMBER 13-14, 1942**

Aware that he could not defend his entire extended front with his depleted 1st Raider Battalion (Reinforced), Edson chose to hold the critical crest of the ridge and the jeep trail, a topographic axis that would guide an attacking force toward the 1st Marine Division Headquarters and Henderson Field. The battered and disease-ridden Marines were heavily outnumbered by relatively fresh Japanese. "Red Mike" stood upright on the crest of Hill 120, the highest prominence, exposed to a hail of bullets and shrapnel, directing his troops and supporting artillery with two field telephones, and by loud shouts when the phone lines were severed. Though his clothing was full of bullet holes and one shoe sole was shot away, Edson was un wounded. Part of the enemy's 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, sheered away from the crest and moved along the southwest slope, across the secondary ridges and gullies that ran down from the crest (the Japanese called the ridge "The Centipede" because of the winding crest and numerous side ridges). This brought them against the flank and front of the Raiders' E Company, reduced to platoon strength. In the rough terrain the Japanese were on top of the defenders before they were seen, and much of the fight was with grenades, bayonets, and knives. The Raiders blocked the main assault, but small detachments of the enemy penetrated as far as the 1st Marine Division Headquarters.

#### **D: THE MAKIN RAID LANDING, AUGUST 17, 1942**

Attacking the isolated Japanese base on Butaritari Island, Makin Atoll, in the Gilbert Islands was precisely the type of mission envisioned by Evans Carlson for his 2d Raider Battalion. The exposed seaward shore of the island was chosen for the landing site, as reconnaissance indicated that it was virtually undefended. Despite intensive training, nothing prepared the Raiders for the unexpected storm and surf conditions they encountered at Butaritari. Men and equipment were soaked by breaking waves and cold rain, and entire boats filled with key equipment were swept away by the wind. In the background Raiders struggle to launch the last of the rubber boats from the transport submarine *Nautilus*, as the leading boats contend with wind and waves. Salt spray caused the exposed electrical ignition coils of the outboard motors to fail, and a strong onshore wind swept the rafts quickly onto the reef, defying the efforts of the Raiders to control them with the small boat paddles. Weapons, radios, explosive packs, and other gear piled into the centers of the rafts were thoroughly soaked by seawater. Breaking waves closer to the shore washed over the small boats, but miraculously not one Raider drowned in the chaos. Dawn found the raiding force scattered along hundreds of yards of beach, with two companies and the small headquarters detachment hopelessly intermingled. Discipline and intensive rehearsals, which had taught each man his specific objective on the island, allowed the raid to proceed largely as planned despite the confusion. The Raiders are wearing black utilities and sneakers, and minimal field gear. Each carries one canteen of water and a large chocolate bar; true to his philosophy, Carlson had assured them that if necessary they could capture food from the enemy.

#### **E: THE LONG PATROL, GUADALCANAL, NOVEMBER 4 TO DECEMBER 4, 1942**

Carlson's 2d Raider Battalion was assigned the mission of blocking the escape of vastly superior, though badly battered, Japanese forces reeling back from a defeat by other Marine

**A column of native bearers moves out to re-supply Raiders operating in the backcountry. (USMCRC)**

units. The struggle against the implacable jungle, with its heat, humidity, and astonishing variety of poisonous animals, diseases, and parasites, produced more casualties than combat. In the epic jungle march the Raiders subsisted largely on salt pork, raisins, and worm-riddled rice captured from the starving enemy. Afflicted by malaria, dengue fever, dysentery, and fungus diseases, only those men too depleted for further duty were evacuated. Of the 266 Raiders from C and F Companies who began the march at Aola Bay, only 57 entered the perimeter around Henderson Field on their own feet, and casualties in the other companies were comparable. The wounded and those too sick to continue walked or were carried in improvised litters to the shore through miles of jungle populated by Japanese stragglers, where they were evacuated by landing boats. Locally recruited bearers carried heavy equipment, and supply columns supported units on long jungle patrols. Solomon Islands Scouts, led by Australian officers and NCOs of the native constabulary, scouted for the Marines. The locals were a coastal people who hated and feared the interior jungle perhaps more than the Marines, but nonetheless provided heroic service. Here a wounded Raider is being carried to the sea, protected by a wary Raider and a Solomons Scout. The Raider is wearing typical light field equipment, without any sort of bedding or shelter; he will simply sleep in his wet, dirty clothing wherever he stops that night. The field equipment of a typical Scout was an old British or Australian cartridge belt, worn with the local wraparound skirt and perhaps a castoff Marine shirt, and a surplus Enfield rifle. An evacuation boat would have been summoned to a rendezvous by a message transmitted over heavy and bulky battery-powered radios carried by native bearers.

#### **F: 1ST RAIDER REGIMENT BASE CAMP, DRAGON'S PENINSULA, NEW GEORGIA, JULY-AUGUST 1943**

The accommodations at this rear-area base camp illustrate the hardships of the New Georgia campaign. The isolation of the Northern Landing Force in the coastal swamps on the northern coast required Colonel Harry Liversedge's Raiders to live and fight under exceedingly primitive conditions. Equipped with only light weapons, and assigned to attack an







**On New Georgia headquarters was wherever you laid the map down. Here Marine officers, native scouts, and a Royal Australian Air Force flying officer plan an air support mission. At Bairoko air support failed at a critical juncture because of inadequate communications. (USMCRC)**

entrenched and numerically superior enemy supported by heavy mortars and artillery, the Raiders' main attack on the Japanese base at Bairoko was bloodily repulsed. One man is cooking up a stew of mixed rations in a steel helmet, while another examines captured equipment. The men are wearing a typical mix of P1941 and P1942 utilities, and both "boondocker" and logging boots. The shelter and its floor are made from camouflage shelter tent halves.

**G: TANK AND INFANTRY ACTION ON THE PIVA TRAIL, BOUGAINVILLE, NOVEMBER 7, 1943**

The Bougainville campaign followed the pre-war concept of the Marines' strategic role: to establish beachheads by amphibious assault, and then withdraw as Army troops took over the land campaigns. Rather than assault the Japanese base areas at either end of the huge island, the Marines landed at Empress Augusta Bay, forcing the Japanese into a



**The Raiders were one of the first units to use war dogs as scouts to detect ambushes in the dense jungle, and as message carriers. Caesar, a German Shepherd scout dog, was wounded in action on Bougainville. (Raider Museum)**

long overland approach through the horrific jungle terrain. The 2d Raider Regiment under Colonel Alan Shapley was instrumental in rolling back a major Japanese counteroffensive directed along the Piva and Numa-Numa Trail complexes. These Raiders, clad in the later pattern of camouflage jungle utilities, are supported by light tanks of the 3d Tank Battalion. The new American clothing and weapons proved far better adapted to the jungle than those of their enemy, and the campaign conclusively debunked the early-war myth of Japanese superiority in jungle fighting.

**H: RAIDER UNIFORMS AND GEAR, 1943**

The experiences of the early campaigns led to marked improvements in clothing, weapons, but most of all in logistics such as food and water supply. (1) This Raider sniper on Bougainville wears the P1942 reversible camouflage utility uniform, with the green "jungle" side out, and low-top "boondockers." He is armed with the M1903A1 rifle, distinguished by the "ladder" folding rear sight near his left hand. (2) The Browning Automatic Rifle was popular with the Marines because of its reliability and powerful round. The most common model in Marine service was the M1918, without a bipod. (3) The heavy M1938 Thompson submachine gun fired the same round as the .45-cal. pistol, and was popular with the Marines because of its enormous stopping power at close range. Both drum and rectangular magazines were used; spare magazines were carried in either belt pouches, or in a round bag with a shoulder sling for the drums. (4) The M1A1 "airborne" Carbine, with a folding wire shoulder stock, was common in Raider service. (5) The rubberized rain hat was a dress uniform item popular in the wet climate. This type of hat, with a black metal Marine Corps emblem attached to the front, was commonly worn by Colonel Harry Liversedge. (6) The P1941 utility cap was replaced by a model with a longer visor, but remained popular and became generically known as a "Raider cap." They were often worn under the helmet. (7) "Boondocker" boots of rough-side-out brown leather remained the standard Marine footwear throughout the war. The sole was in theory replaceable (in the original Table of Organization, each Marine infantry company had a cobbler), but usually the boots were so badly battered that the whole boot was replaced. (8) Rubber and fabric jungle boots were an effort to provide footwear that reduced casualties from fungal infections and trench (immersion) foot. A similar jungle shoe had a lower top and less arch support. (9) The expandable jungle rucksack, in plain or camouflage material, was an Army item that saw limited service in the later Solomons campaigns. (10) World War I trench knives, with heavy blades and handles that incorporated solid brass knuckles, were vicious close-quarter weapons. (11) The Medical Bolo, designed for Navy medical corpsman to cut battlefield splints from trees or lumber, was adopted by the Raiders as a combination machete and combat weapon. (12) The K-Ration, which appeared in late 1942, was one of the great American innovations of the war, freeing the troops from cumbersome field kitchens. Three daily meals of various foods and convenience items packed in heavily waxed cardboard boxes provided a lightweight, high-calorie diet that could survive the wet, heat, vermin, and poor sanitation of the battlefield. A hot meal could even be prepared by burning the carton.

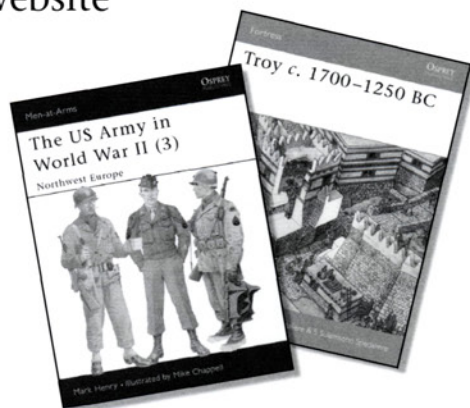


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