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## The United States Marines. The First Two Hundred Years 1775-1975

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## 150 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

extensive use of the primary materials available in the already published volumes of the Navy Department's ongoing *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* series.

On balance, it is a book well worth reading. And, the Naval Institute Press is to be congratulated for producing a handsome volume which is an outstanding example of the bookmaking art.

WILLIAM JAMES MORGAN  
Naval Historical Center

Simmons, Edwin H. *The United States Marines. The First Two Hundred Years 1775-1975*. New York: Viking Press, 1976. 342pp.

Brig. Gen. Edwin H. Simmons, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired) has written an excellent account of the first 200 years of the Marine Corps.

The objectivity of a marine writing about marines might be questioned and when the reviewer is also a marine one may well have cause to reflect on just how partisan this version of the Corps' history really is.

Skeptics with justifiable reservations and marines who pride themselves on their knowledge of the Corps might be surprised to learn that marines have commanded ships at sea in time of war. In the War of 1812, Marine Lt. John Marshall Gamble, from Capt. David Porter's 32-gun frigate *Essex*, was given command of the captured British privateer *Greenwich*. Lieutenant Gamble, with a prize crew of sailors and marines, then captured the biggest prize taken on the cruise, the 22-gun British frigate *Seringapatam*. Equally surprising is that hot-tempered, Irish-born Lt. Col. Anthony Gale, 4th Commandant of the Marine Corps, was dismissed from the service while in office by an Army General Court-Martial. Simmons tells us that among Gale's charges was "... being intoxicated in common dram shops and other places of low repute in

the city of Washington." (Marines have always enjoyed a Washington liberty—one wonders what the other charges were.) Simmons further reports that "Gale pleaded not guilty by reason of temporary insanity, but the court found him guilty as charged. President Monroe approved the sentence which was dismissal from the service, and it was put into execution on 16 October 1820." Such frank commentary appears throughout Simmons' work. He reports accurately and lets the reader form his own opinions and impressions. Simmons comes forward with some very interesting and little-known historical facts. For example, at the Battle of New Orleans, 1814, Gen. Andrew Jackson's center was held by Maj. Daniel Cormick and 300 U.S. Marines. It was at Jackson's center that the British attacks were directed and repulsed with heavy British losses, including their commander General Packenham.

What Simmons has done is difficult at best. He has put together a very readable, accurate and unbiased history of the Marine Corps. He has reported facts and events on a subject normally given to exaggeration and perhaps a little fantasy. While there can be little argument that marines make good copy, the problem has always been where to draw the line or how much is enough? Simmons skillfully tells us just enough. He satisfies the casual reader and provokes the more serious.

The book is short, for the time span and events covered, but well organized and full of useful information. Simmons touches many bases in his narrative. For example, he identifies the literary contributions of such fine marines as Lawrence T. Stallings, *What Price Glory?*, and John W. Thomason, Jr., *Fix Bayonets!*, both classics of World War I. He tracks carefully but fairly the running battle of the Marine Corps' fight to survive as a service. It is all there. The early years are especially well done and the account is very informative. The

latter years of the Corps' history, while more familiar to us all, are less impressive. There is a passage on page 179 which discusses the landing on Saipan in the Marianas during World War II that incorrectly identifies the 2d Marine Division as landing on the right or south of the sugar-mill town of Charan Kanoa when, in fact, it was the 4th Marine Division. The 2d Division landed on the left or north of the town. In fairness, however, the familiarity we all have with the events of the recent past has colored somewhat our individual impressions.

Simmons' Acknowledgement and Short Bibliography sections, and the Battle Honors section are most interesting and provide useful information for the curious reader.

Even President Harry S. Truman whose "fondness" for marines is well documented on p. 238 would, I believe, concede that Simmons' history is a good one and a valuable addition to any professional library.

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Thompson, W. Scott and Frizzell, Donaldson D. *The Lessons of Vietnam*. New York: Crane, Russak, 1977, 288pp.

A sensible, informed, sober discussion of the American involvement in Vietnam is all too rare. Many written commentaries have been inspired by outrage, or have given vent to frustration. As a result far too much of the literature on this recent, important and traumatic experience contains only a few nuggets of truth or flashes of insight. Too much of it falls into the category of pure bilge and hogwash, authors of which generally have little competence to analyze and to evaluate their subject matter. Certainly they had no responsibility for implementing the U.S. involvement.

We should be grateful to Professor Thompson and to Air Force Colonel Frizzell for providing this relatively short, but serious discussion of what happened in Vietnam. Based on a conference held at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the spring of 1974, the papers presented and the comments from the delegates have been edited and arranged in a logical, coherent fashion which elucidates the issues to permit their serious examination. In this way one can see clearly both strengths and weaknesses.

It was indeed a remarkable conference. In addition to distinguished members of the academic community, the 31 participants included several senior former officials: Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, Gen. William Westmoreland, Maj. Gen. Edward Lansdale, Ambassadors Henry Cabot Lodge and Robert Komer, and the Honorable Paul Nitze. Although much of what these participants said is a restatement of previously held positions and at times seems to be a justification of them, it is still valuable as a starting point for further study and analysis.

The sensible organization, excellent editing and helpful comments by the editors directly raise important issues and show quite clearly where equally important issues were ignored. For example, Clausewitz told us that the "... first, grandest and most decisive act of judgment which the Statesman and the General exercises is rightly to understand" the kind of war they are engaging in. Stephen Young, who worked with AID and CORD, pointed out that the Vietnam War was an extension of Vietnamese politics. He noted that while this elemental fact was often expressed, it was seldom used to determine policy and to shape programs. This is a serious accusation which requires further study.

There was a general consensus that national objectives in Vietnam were both ill-defined (General Keegan) and