

Devil Dogs of the Air and Land

WWII Marine Corps Service

Jennifer Holik looks at what to expect when researching Marine Corps personnel



Marines landing on Tarawa 20-21 November 1943. (USMC History Division, DEFENSE DEPT PHOTO (MARINE CORPS) 63498)

Preparing for Take-Off

If you have been following my other articles in previous issues of *Your Genealogy Today*, you will have read the basic tips to start your military research. Marine Corps research is not much different than other branches. You should always, start with what you know.

Download the *Military Service Questionnaire* and the *Research and Source Summary* Sheets off my website: <http://wwiirwc.com>. Fill in as much

RESEARCH TIP!

Document for each fact you record, where the information came from. List the website index or database, document, person, or book, from which the information was obtained. Military records do contain errors and conflicting information so it is good practice to record where you found the information in the first place. Visit my new World War II Research and Writing Center for more checklists to help you with your research: <http://wwiirwc.com>.

Marines are rough and tough. They fought in the Pacific during World War II and stormed many beaches during amphibious landings. Their pilots flew along with the Army and Navy to support the ground troops. Their history is one to be proud of.

In 2015, I wrote several articles for *Your Genealogy Today*, on starting World War II research for all branches. I refer you to previous issues of this

magazine, because I covered many pieces of the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) for other branches, which I will not repeat in this article.

Military records across all branches were created similarly, yet different. This article seeks to show you some different things within a Marine Corps OMPF that you might not see in other files. Please refer to 2015 issues of *Your Genealogy Today* for a more complete view of the OMPF.

information as you can regarding service. Just as in genealogy research, you do not have to know every piece of information to proceed with research. As you analyze more records and indexes, continue to add notes or fill in fields on this form.

Find the Marine Corps Service Number

The Service Number is the number which identified every Marine. This was not an individual's Social Security Number. If you do not have your Marine's service number, there are several avenues to search to obtain it.

- Check Marine Corps Muster Rolls on Ancestry.com or Fold3.com Often, but not always, a Marine's service number would be listed.
- If the Marine died in service, check the *U.S. Rosters of All World War II Dead, 1939-1945* and *U.S. Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963* on Ancestry.com or Fold3.com. The service number will always be listed on this application. You can also check the American Battle Monuments Commission (<http://abmc.gov>) website entry for the Marine.
- If the Marine survived the war, write a letter to the NPRC requesting a search of the VA Index.

A VIA Index search will cost you about \$5.00 per individual and NPRC will send you an index card with the information for your Marine. The VA Index Card will provide the name, first rank, branch of service, first unit in which the individual was placed (sometimes), service number, dates of birth, enlistment, discharge, and death, plus address.

Send your letter and check to:
NPRC, 1 Archives Drive,
St. Louis, MO 63138

Request the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF)

There are several ways to request the OMPF from St. Louis. You can request an appointment to view the file in St. Louis. Another option is to hire an independent researcher. National Archives provides a list of researchers who can assist you with record retrieval and copying. I have had greater success obtaining records and information more quickly by using an independent researcher named Norm Richards. His contact information is found on the Resources page of my website: <http://jenniferholik.com/resources.html>.

Another option is to visit the NPRC website at <http://archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/index.html> and submit a request online or download Form 180, complete it, and mail it to the NPRC.

Flying the Mission or Storming the Beaches

The next step in research is to analyze the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) when you receive it. Always sort it into date order if the file does not arrive that way. This makes it easier to navigate the information.

A major difference between Navy and Coast Guard files versus the Army, Air Corps and National Guard files are photographs. Most, but not all, Navy and Coast Guard files have the induction photo of the sailor in the file. Sometimes it is a large photo and other times it is a photo on an identification card.



Induction photo of Robert E. Bishop, USNR. (Photo courtesy of author's OMPF collection)

Application for Service and Induction Paperwork. The Application was a standard form across all branches. A Marine was required to provide vital information, education and training, job history, prior service history if applicable, and family information. Often even though a Marine may have been 21 years old, a form signed by the parents was required before a Marine could join the service. Additional documents, which may have accompanied the application, were Birth Certificates, Adoption records, High School and College Transcripts and Letters of Recommendation, particularly if the Marine was applying for an Officer rank.

Acceptance of Promotion. When Marines were promoted, the files contained several pieces of paperwork noting the change from one rank to another, based on a specific date. If testing of any kind was involved (written exam, flying exam, or other), those papers will also be in the file.

Genealogical Information

Every OMPF, regardless of branch, has similar documents, yet in some cases, you can learn a lot about the family of the Marine. This is the case with Pvt. William Cowart. Reading his OMPF, which you can view on my website (<http://wwiirwc.com>), there are copies of birth certificates for his siblings. There are many letters requesting aid for the family through the soldier's pay allowance system. There is a copy of a New Zealand marriage register, when Cowart married a woman while he was stationed in New Zealand.

Often, there are also letters from the family to the military asking about insurance benefits, death gratuities or soldiers allowance. In one such letter from William Cowart's father, he outlines the financial stresses his family is enduring and seeks additional compensation, if possible. His letter paints a grim picture of what life was like in Alabama at the time for some families. The war may have brought greater income and stability for some families, but not all, during the early 1940s.

Service Information

The Marine Corps is one service branch that makes discovering the combat history a little difficult. When you examine the Marine Corps Muster Rolls (the Marine Corps version of the Army Morning Report more or less), you will see it does not list a specific place the Marines were stationed, but rather says "IN THE FIELD". This makes the creation of a service history timeline a little more difficult.

It is important to understand this and then

EMBARKED ABOARD THE S. S. PRESIDENT MONROE AT SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA; 19 JANUARY, 1943; SAILED 20 JANUARY, 1943, CALIFORNIA.
ARRIVED AT Noumea, New Caledonia, on 5 Feb. 1943. DISEMBARKED 6 Feb. 1943.

A. I. SCHMULIAN
MAJOR, U.S.M.C.R.,
COMMANDER OF TROOPS.

Embarked aboard the S.S. President Monroe at Noumea, New Caledonia 10 February, 1943; Sailed 11 February, 1943. Arrived at Wellington N.Z. on 14 Feb. 1943. DISEMBARKED 15 Feb. 1943.

William H. Haudenschild Jr.
1st. Lt. U.S.M.C.R.
for Commander of Troops.

Embarkation information for Pvt. William Cowart, within his OMPF. Using this information, you can obtain the Naval Deck Logs to learn about the journey. (Photo courtesy of the author's OMPF collection)

N. M. C. 324-A&I.

411413

CONSENT OF PARENTS OR GUARDIAN TO ENLISTMENT OF A MINOR IN THE MARINE CORPS RESERVE

*We, Lester V. Cowart and Alice Cowart residing in Ethelville, county of Pickens and State of Alabama do freely consent to the enlistment of William Franklin Cowart in the United States Marine Corps Reserve as a PRIVATE, to serve FOUR YEARS, unless sooner discharged, with assignment to active duty ONLY upon his own written request, except in time of war or a national emergency, declared by the President to exist. We or I consent to his being subject while on active duty to all requirements and lawful commands of the officers who may from time to time be placed over him. We or I do hereby relinquish all claim to his service during all periods of active duty and to any wages or compensation for the same, and do hereby certify that he was born in Reform, Alabama on the 21st day of February, 1922.

And * we do solemnly swear (or affirm) that we are the parents we are the legal guardian of the said William Franklin Cowart and that he has no other legal guardian; So help me God.

NOTE: Parents must sign their names in ink and in the presence of a Notary Public or Postmaster, with his Seal or stamp on all copies. Sign and return all copies.

Lester V. Cowart
Alice Cowart

Address (with street and number) Route 2, Ethelville, Alabama.

Personally appeared before me Lester V. Cowart and Alice Cowart residents of Ethelville, in the county of Pickens, and State of Alabama, each of whom is well known to me as a credible person, and made oath that the foregoing statement is correct and true, and signed the same in my presence this 24th day of Sept, 1942.

R.H. Jones
(Signature of officer administering oath)

Consent of Parents for William F. Cowart to join the Marine Corps. (Photo courtesy of author's OMPF collection)

N.M.C. 763B-A&I (Revised 2-8-41)

ACCEPTANCE

Naval Air Training Center, Pensacola, Florida
(Place)

021059 30 March 1943
(Date)

From: Second Lieutenant Robert Edmond BISHOP, USMC (NAVC)
To: The Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington, D. C.
Subject: Appointment as Second Lieutenant, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve.

I hereby accept appointment as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve, dated March 16, 1943, with rank from March 16, 1943, transmitted by letter from the Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps, dated March 16, 1943.

Robert Edmond Bishop
(Signature)
Robert Edmond Bishop

OATH OF OFFICE

Having been appointed a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve of the United States, I, Robert Edmond Bishop do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.

Robert Edmond Bishop
(Signature)
Robert Edmond Bishop

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of March, 1943.

G. D. MURRAY, BEAR ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY

To Be Filled in By Appointee

Place of birth		State or territory of which a citizen	Date of Birth
City, Parish, County	State		
Lansing	Mich	Michigan	1 AUG 1919

Robert Bishop accepting commission of 2nd Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. (Photo courtesy of author's OMPF collection)

OFFICE OF G. S. HINTON
COUNTY SERVICE COMMISSIONER
OF PICKENS COUNTY
CARROLLTON, ALABAMA

To HELP SOLDIERS AND
DEPENDENTS WITH CLAIMS

State of Alabama, } Add ress: Care of Fleet Post Office,
County of Pickens. } San Francisco, Calif.

I, Lester Vonner Cowart want to make the following statement:-

My son William F. Cowart is in the U.S. Marines, and my financial condition is very bad.

I have tried in every way to get an allowance through, and it looks like it cannot be done.

I have tried for months to do so, and I now appeal for some kind of help to the U.S. Government.

I have borrowed money to take care of operations for my family and I owe around \$197.00 I borrowed for operations for my family.

My wife is confined and I have 7 children at home.

I would appreciate the Government contacting me and see if they can do something for my family.

I previously made application through War Department under No. X-2933785.2 birth certificates sent them.

The Navy writes me they have contacted my boy to try to get allowance through, but as he is an overseas soldier I doubt if contact can be made.

I therefore make the above appeal. My family in addition to above needs clothes. I will need doctor for her pregnancy.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this the 29th day of Oct, 1943.

Lester Vonner Cowart
G. S. Hinton
Notary Public

3-6/haw.

OFFICE OF THE GROUP QUARTERMASTER
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP FOURTEEN, FMAW.,
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

14 February, 1944.

INVENTORY SHEET

I CERTIFY THAT THE FOLLOWING IS AN INVENTORY OF THE PERSONAL EFFECTS OF R. E. BISHOP, 1st Lt., USMCR., MISSING IN ACTION.

3	TOWELS.	0210571	1	TOOTH BRUSH.
2	PACKETS, STATIONARY.	* 1	1	FLORIN, NEW ZEALAND.
1	WASH CLOTH.	* 1	1	PILOT WINGS, SET.
4	SHIRTS, COTTON.	* 3	1	BARS, 1st Lt., (SMALL).
1	TROUSERS, SS.		1	BROOM, WHICK.
7	SOCKS, PAIRS.	* 1	1	EMBLEM, NC. (SMALL).
8	DRAWERS, COTTON.	1	1	SANDALS, PAIRS.
1	UNDERSHIRTS, COTTON.	1	1	COAT, RAIN.
2	CAPS, GARRISON, SS.	* 2	1	BARS, 1st Lt., (LARGE).
1	TROUSERS, UTILITY.	1	1	BLANKET, NAVY.
2	COATS, UTILITY.	* 1	1	RAZOR, ELECTRIC.
1	TRUNKS, SWIMMING.	2	1	SEWING KITS.
1	CASE, LEATHER, TOILET.	1	1	BRUSH, CLOTH.
* 1	FINGER RING.	12	1	HANDKERCHIEFS.
* 2	SILVER EAR RINGS.	1	1	PICTURE FRAME.
1	SCHICK RAZOR, W/CASE.	2	1	PICTURES.
1	SOAP BOX, W/SOAP.	5	1	BARS SOAP.
1	HAND LOTION, BOTTLE.	1	1	ALUMINUM ARM BAND.
* 10	CAT'S EYES (SMALL).	* 3	1	ROLL FILMS.
* 7	CAT'S EYES (LARGE).	* 1	1	POCKET KNIFE & CHAIN.
1	KEY RING.	* 1	1	CAMERA, ACFA.
2	POWDER, SHAVING, CAN.	1	1	BOTTLE MEDICINE.
1	BRUSH, SHAVING.	1	1	DENTAL CREAM, TUBE.
3	SHAVING CREAM, TUBE.	1	1	KEY RING & CHAIN.
* 1	CUFF LINKS, SET.	1	1	COMB.
* 3	BARS, 2nd Lt., (SMALL).	3	1	ERASERS.
1	CAMPFON SETCK.	1	1	PACKET, LETTERS & CORRES.
4	SCHICK INSPECTORS.	* 1	1	FOUNTAIN PEN.
2	WATCH BANDS.			

THERE WAS FOUND IN THE AMOUNT OF FIFTEEN CENTS (\$.15) IN U. S. CURRENCY AMONG HIS PERSONAL EFFECTS.

R. R. Mathison
R. R. MATHISON,
1st Lt., USMCR.

J. R. Parker
J. R. PARKER,
2nd Lt., USMCR.

*NOTE: Items have been forwarded directly to the Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps, Washington, D. C., in accordance with Letter of Instruction No. 480 dated 6 July, 1943.

LEFT: Letter requesting financial assistance. (Photo courtesy of author's OMPF collection) RIGHT: Personal effect list for Robert E. Bishop following his Missing In Action status. (Photo courtesy of the author's OMPF collection)

comb through every detail in the OMPF because sometimes you will find snippets of information, such as which ship a unit was on to go overseas or from place to place, within the OMPF. These details all help your research.

Casualty Telegrams or Notices (MIA, POW, KIA)

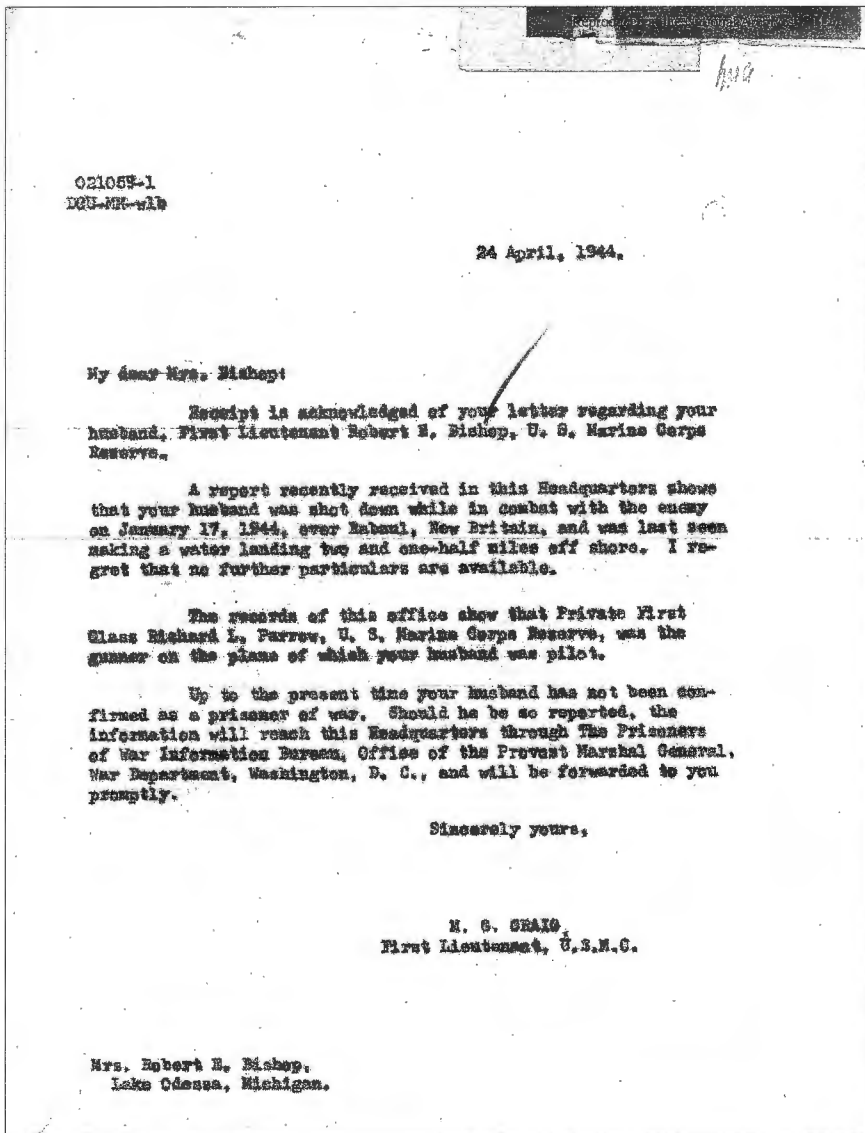
Each time a Marine had a change in status, which meant he went from being a healthy, active Marine to some sort of casualty — wounded, missing, prisoner, or killed, a telegram was sent to the next-of-kin and included in his file. These telegrams are usually, but not

always, included in the file. Sometimes these telegrams are found in the Individual Deceased Personnel Files (IDPFs) if the Marine was Missing In Action (MIA) and never recovered or Killed In Action (KIA).

Marine Corps files tend to have more information that might be found within the IDPF than other branches. Full inventory lists of personal effects have been seen in OMPFs. These lists show you what the Marine had in his possession upon being declared MIA or KIA. This might help you understand what some of the items your family possesses are and where they came from.

Letters to and from the family and military are found within the OMPF; again some of this is seen in the IDPF. Looking at Bishop's OMPF, we learn a lot about his MIA status, the mission he was on when he went missing, who was with him, and attempts at recovering his remains.

Finding of Death (FOD) is always included in both the OMPF and IDPF when a Marine has been missing for one year plus one day. While that was the general rule before issuing a Finding of Death, the Marines did things a little differently. If a Marine was declared MIA in a Japanese infiltrated area, it was



Letter to Mrs. Bishop regarding the last mission her husband, Robert E. Bishop flew with Richard Parrow. (Photo courtesy of the author's OMPF collection)

Discharge or Separation Information

The Separation and Discharge papers for the Marine Corps contain the name, rank, service number, all units in which a sailor served, place of entry & discharge are also listed. The Marine Corps, unlike the other branches, did not list specifically where the Marine served. We know from history, it was the Pacific. The Discharge and Separation Papers did not, however, list the specific islands or campaigns. To find this information, you must create a timeline of service based on all information in the OMPF. Add to that the Marine Corps Muster Roll information, where those details are noted, and then dive into the written histories.

RESEARCH TIP!

The sailor was given six copies of his discharge and separation papers upon leaving the service. Sailors were encouraged to file one copy with the County Recorder or County Clerk where they lived, for safekeeping. If you do not have copies of the discharge paperwork, check with the county. Laws vary as to access to these records.

always possible he was taken prisoner. Therefore, the Marine would have been moved from the Muster Roll for his unit to the Prisoner of War (POW) Muster Roll. Had he disappeared in 1943 or 1944, he might not be given a FOD one year plus one day later. It might have been after the war ended, early 1946, when the military issued the FOD.

Letters sent to the families indicated that since there was a possibility the Marine was a POW, they were left on the rolls.

After the war ended, the US military emptied all the Japanese POW camps and began searching for remains of missing Marines. If after this was concluded, the Marine in question was not located, a FOD was issued.

IMPORTANT!

Other branches of the service did not move unit members to a POW roll. The Marine Corps is the only branch of service where I have seen this done.

Coming in for a Landing

Marine Corps OMPFs are the starting point for Marines and Marine aviator service history. Create a service history timeline and then continue research in Marine Corps Muster Rolls, Mission Reports, War Diaries, Naval Deck Logs, Unit Histories, Individual Deceased Personnel Files, Casualty Cards, and additional unit records.

Many of these will be discussed in a future article. To begin your research today, examine the resources held by

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

History of the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II. This series of books has been digitized online at:

www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC

Fold3.com

<http://fold3.com>

Library of the Marine Corps

<http://guides.grc.usmcu.edu/lomc>

National Museum of the Marine Corps

www.usmcmuseum.org

USMC History Division

www.mcu.usmc.mil/historydivision/SitePages/Home.aspx

World War II Research and Writing Center

<http://wwiirwc.com>

your local and state archives, Ancestry.com census, military, and casualty lists, Fold3.com World War II Naval record holdings, and the histories available on Marine Corps websites.

As you navigate the vast ocean of record possibilities, continue

RESEARCH TIP!

The Marines worked with the Navy. Many records will be contained within Naval War Diaries and other reports. You will find Marines listed on Naval Deck logs as they embarked on crossings. Use all these resources together to put a fuller story of your Marine together.

to update your Military Service Questionnaire, service timeline and most importantly, start writing the story. To learn more about OMPFs and IDPFs, please visit my World War II Research and Writing Center to download files to peruse and read more articles on WWII research.



JENNIFER HOLIK is a Chicago-based genealogist and military historian specializing in World War II US records, research, and writing.

Research Resources



When Descendants Become Ancestors The Flip of Genealogy

by David A. Kendall, PhD

Every person is born a descendant who begins life as an outgrowth of past generations and will someday become an ancestor to future generations. Each life contains numerous short stories, vignettes, and anecdotes according to that individual's interpretation of many experiences. Rarely are those individual stories and interpretations passed on, except through obituaries and commentaries – usually written or altered by others who may mean well, but whose accounts and memories are usually tainted.

Genealogists and historical museums make valiant attempts to record major events and famous lives, but each of us is much more than a speck of nothing passing through the universe. We can prove our human existence through birth and death dates on gravestones, but it's the dash in between those dates that tells the real stories.

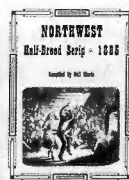
Most of us have regretted our failures to engage past generations and deceased family members about significant aspects of their lives, but we now have the technology to do for our descendants what our ancestors could not do for us.

Published by Balboa Press; 388 pages

ISBN: 978-1-4525-2022-3

Price: Hardcover \$42.95, Softcover \$23.99

Website & Blog: www.stories4descendants.com



Northwest: Half Breed Scrip – 1885

Compiled by Gail Morin

Land scrip refers to a certificate entitling the holder to obtain a certain portion of the public land either by entry or the payment of a portion of the price. This book covers awards made in the future provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and a portion of Manitoba to heads of household and minors who were born there before 1886. In all, nearly \$280,000 in money scrip was awarded to qualifying Métis. The purpose of the Scrip policy, which extended over several decades, was to eliminate whatever remaining claims Canadian Native Americans might make on the land.

Because of the detailed application process required for the award of scrip, Mrs. Morin's faithful extracts have preserved an enormous amount of genealogical information pertaining to the thousands of qualified applications. The book is arranged alphabetically by the surname of the applicant.

Published by Genealogical Publishing Company
306 pages

ISBN: 978-0-8063-5728-7

Price: \$39.95