



**Oct
2023**

The Bursting Bomb

**ISSUE
3-23**

**MARINE GUNNER ASSOCIATION
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE**



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**ISSUE
3-23**

Editor: CWO-5/Marine Gunner Christian P. Wade USMC (Ret.)

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On the Cover: Marine Riflemen from Marine Barracks Washington DC execute "The Bursting Bomb" drill formation in front of The Home of the Commandants, armed with M1 Service Rifles. Photo: US Navy (PH2 Rob Rubio).

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SITREP...from the Editor:

Greetings, friends. We held publication for this issue because so much has happened in the recent weeks. The Annual Dinner was a huge success, hosting LtGen David Furness, USMC, our honored guest and speaker. The Marine Gunner Association (MGA) also exceeded the fund-raising goal for the Jesse Schertz Memorial Scholarship. Congratulations and gratitude to the leadership and membership of the MGA for a huge success.

The students of the Infantry Weapons Officer Course (IWOC) of The Basic School (TBS) enjoyed Matt Carpenter's company during the battle study of the Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. Naturally, Matt Carpenter currently serves as our President of the MGA. Within about a week after the Gettysburg battle study, the IWOC staff and students traveled to Montana where they conducted a battle study of the Battle of Little Bighorn, hosted by the author. We traveled from near Custer's leader's reconnaissance at the Crow's Nest, to the Lone Teepee, and through the rest of the battlefield, following in the footsteps of those 7th Cavalry soldiers and the Indians they fought.

From Montana, the IWOC class traveled to the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Center (MAGTF-TC) where they honed their supporting arms skills until returning to Quantico. They graduated from IWOC and have traveled to their first assignments as Marine Gunners. The MGA wishes them the greatest success in their service to our Marines and Sailors.

Before we continue, I would like to thank Gunner Brian Somers USMC (Ret.) for conducting an in-person interview with Gunner G. H. Bolton USMC (Ret.).

The Main Effort of the US Marine Corps is the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad.

Christian Wade
The Editor



(Above): The Executive staff of the MGA presents a gift to LtGen David Furness, USMC at the MGA Annual Dinner. Photo: MGA.



(Middle): Matt Carpenter poses with the IWOC class during the annual study of the Battle Of Gettysburg. Photo: Matt Carpenter.



(Bottom): The author poses with the IWOC class during the annual study of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Montana. Photo: Mark Erhardt.

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MGA Membership

Application for annual membership is currently open by way of the MGA website (<https://www.marinegunnerassociation.net>).

The link for membership is located on the top center portion of the MGA website homepage.

Membership requirements:

(Full membership)-

*0306 Marine Gunners Active and Retired (Honorable Discharge)

*Annual renewable memberships are \$50 per year

*Note: All editions of The Bursting Bomb will be placed, for public access and sharing, on the Marine Gunner Association website (hyperlink in blue on left of this page).

(Associate membership)-

*\$100 per year. Applications will be reviewed by the Executive Staff

* Note: All editions of The Bursting Bomb will be placed, for public access and sharing, on the Marine Gunner Association website (hyperlink in blue on left of this page).

Messages From the Executive Staff

MGA President

Dear Members and Friends of the Marine Gunner Association,

I hope this message finds you all well. It has been a truly remarkable quarter for our Association, and I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering support and commitment to our shared goals of supporting the Infantry Community. Your dedication is what makes our organization thrive.

Our third Annual MGA Dinner, held on the 17th of August at the Hylton Performing Arts on the George Mason University campus in Manassas, VA, was a resounding success. I would like to extend a special thank you to Ms. Michelle Bloxton of BluSage Catering, who has consistently provided us with exceptional experience for the third year in a row. It's her dedication to excellence that has contributed to the success of our event.

We were privileged to have LtGen Furness USMC (Ret.) as our honored guest, and his remarks were well-received by all attendees. The evening was not only marked by a spectacular dinner but also by a highly successful raffle, where many members walked away with fantastic prizes, including an all-expenses-paid hunt for two lucky members.

Another milestone we are excited to share is the upcoming announcement of our Scholarship Award winners. This initiative is a testament to our commitment to supporting the education and development of children from the Infantry community.

Looking ahead, we are in the early planning stages for a West Coast Weekend event in late winter/early spring 2024. Stay tuned for more details as we work to create another memorable experience for our members.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Their continued dedication to our Associ-

ation has allowed us to meet our goals and better serve the USMC Infantry community. To all our sponsors, thank you for your invaluable contributions.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Kevin Gonzalez, our MGA Treasurer, and Sean Flannery, our MGA Secretary. Their tireless efforts in securing sponsors, collecting donations, organizing raffle items, coordinating the hunt, and ensuring that our Association met its mission this year have been exceptional. Their dedication is a testament to the strength of our leadership team.

As we look to the future, I am pleased to announce that next year will mark the election for a new MGA Executive President. In January, we will be calling upon members to form an Election Committee. This committee will work closely with the Board of Directors to oversee the process of receiving candidate nominations in the summer and managing the election in November. If you are interested in serving on the Election Committee, please reach out to Sean Flannery, our MGA Secretary. It's an exciting opportunity to help shape the future of our Association.

It has been an incredible honor to serve as your President, and I eagerly anticipate the upcoming election to see who will lead us in the years to come. Once again, thank you all for your continued support and dedication.

A special thanks also goes to Chris Wade, our Editor-in-Chief, for his unwavering commitment to providing a professional periodical each quarter. Your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Thank you all for your dedication to our Association. Here's to a bright future ahead.

Semper Fidelis,
Matt Carpenter
MGA President



Messages From the Executive Staff MGA Vice President and Treasurer

Greetings to all and I hope this newsletter finds you well. It was great to see everyone that made it to this year's Annual Association Dinner. I want to send a special thanks to all that made this evening the huge success that it was. As we continue to grow the Association, we are always on the lookout for volunteers and sponsors. If you or anyone you know is interested, please reach out to any of the Board Members and or Executive Staff.

Bravo Zulu to the recent Infantry Weapons Officer Course Class graduates. I am personally excited to serve alongside each and everyone of you. Having observed this year's class these past couple of months, I know the future of the Gunner community continues to be in good hands.

Gunners serving throughout the ground combat element and supporting establishment continued to be as busy as ever. Since our last newsletter we have had multiple battalions return from deployment. I'd like to take a moment and say welcome home and job well done to all these Marines and Sailors—

Marine Rotational Forces-Europe, V26
Marine Rotational Deployment-Darwin V31
Unit Deployment Program, V36
Unit Deployment Program, V17
13th MEU, Battalion Landing Team, 2/4

Lastly as we gear up for the Fall, I hope everyone can take a moment to celebrate the birth of our beloved Corps. I'd like to join all of you on the 10th of Nov to raise a glass and toast all those that have come before us and those still standing the watch across the globe.

Happy Birthday Marines!
Semper Fidelis,
Matt Anderson (HQMC, PP&O Gunner)
Marine Gunner Association Vice President



Members of the MGA,

I would like to thank family, friends, sponsors, and MGA members for their continued support to the MGA and its mission. I'm proud to announce that we were able to achieve our 2023 financial goal. Also, with the support of Aimpoint, the MGA will be giving upwards of \$10k in scholarships for the 2024 school year. This would not have not been possible without generous donations made by Glock, SIG Sauer, Aimpoint, Trijicon, Leupold, GBRS Group, Liberty's Defense, Galvion, ESS, Stay Center LLC., Parabellum Group, Optics 1, Messer & Flint, Marathon Targets, Blue Force Gear, MVP Targets, Apex, Darley Defense, ADS, 3M Peltor, Rheinmetall, SAAB, and Black Canvas LLC.

Semper Fidelis,

Gunner Kevin Gonzalez (CWO-4 Ret.)
Marine Gunner Association Treasurer



(Above): A collection of anomalous specimens at the Annual Marine Gunner Association Dinner in Aug 2023. Photos: Sam Mortimer.

Messages From the Executive Staff

MGA Secretary



(Above): The very talented Team SAAB at the Annual Marine Gunner Association Dinner in Aug 2023. Photos: JC Knight.



(Above): The one-of-a-kind artist Invader girl donated a piece for the Jesse Schertz scholarship program. Photo: Sean Flannery.

Fellow members and friends of the MGA,

I am grateful to have the honor of serving in this association. The Executive staff continues to work hard to develop and implement programs that directly support you and your families; we need your help. The strength of the Marine Gunner is the network that each of us has and the competence that the Marine Gunner brings to the table. First, I ask that you be frank with us, reach out and help us understand the needs of the community. Second, be committed to the association, when you can, volunteer; when you can't, promote our positive actions. Third, reach out us with constructive criticism and innovative ideas that will help the association do the work that needs to be done. And always, never hesitate to reach out for assistance for yourself and others. Thank you for the honor of serving in our Association and for the sacrifices that you and your families make every day.

Semper Fi,

Gunner Sean Flannery (CWO4 Ret.)
Marine Gunner Association Secretary



(Above): The setting for the recent Annual Dinner was first class. Photo: MGA.

The MGA would like to thank the following sponsors for their continuing support



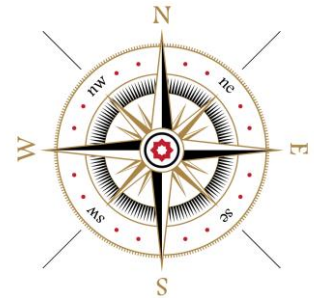
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GUARD UNIT



TBS and IWOC Updates

As of the date of publication, the 2023 class of student Marine Gunners have graduated from the Infantry Weapons Officer Course (IWOC) at The Basic School (TBS), Quantico, Virginia. The MGA offers our sincere congratulations and wishes for success in their first operational duty assignments as Marine Gunners.

So, let us summarize the essentials of what they have accomplished at the IWOC. During their demanding training schedule at IWOC, the newly graduated Marine Gunners:

- Served as observer/controller/evaluators for the USMC Annual Rifle Squad Competition in the National Capital Region (NCR).

- Conducted training with all aspects of range safety (Surface Danger Zone creation and considerations, Intermediate Range Safety Course, Range Manager's Tool Kit, etc.).

- 11 days of advanced marksmanship training aboard Weapons Training Battalion (WTBN), Quantico, Virginia.

- "Pistols to Missiles" training program—training Marine Gunners with the entire USMC infantry ground portfolio (and more).

- Field Exercises (FEX) on: assault weapons, anti-armor, mortars, and machine guns.

- Fire Direction Center packages 1-3.

- Marine Corps Systems Command 101 (MCSC).

- Methods of Entry Course (Gunner package).

- Demolitions training.

- Final Exercise (FINEX).

- Tactical Small Unit Leader (TSULC) package build training.

- Ballistic Research Facility at Redstone Alabama.

- National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) threat briefs.

- Aberdeen Proving Ground package:

- (NextGen Squad weapons system, threat briefs).

- Battle Study: Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

- Scout-Sniper training package.

- Battle Study: Little Bighorn, Crow Reservation, Montana.

- Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT): Range 400 and 410 series (live fire controls).

- Final Project: Creation of an 18 day progressive training package culminating in a company-level, supported night live fire attack.

Congratulations, Gunners. You have been very busy preparing to support the Rifleman in the Rifle Squad. We, the Marine Gunner Association, are very proud of you. We are grateful for your service. Good luck to your in your future service of our Corps and her Marines and Sailors.



(Above): The Editor discusses the Colt 1873 Single Action Army revolver with the IWOC class at the location of Maj Marcus Reno's attack during the Battle of Little Bighorn, Crow Reservation, Montana. Photo: Mark Erhardt (taken in September 2023).



(Above): The 2023 graduating class of US Marine Gunners. (L/F, Gunner Mark Erhardt) (C/L): Col Reggie McClam, Commanding Officer, TBS). Photo: Gunner Matt Anderson, PP&O Gunner.



“Such as Regiments Hand Down Forever...”

Remembering those who gave their tomorrows for my today

Interview with Gunner Gilbert H. Bolton, (CWO-4/Marine Gunner USMC Ret.)

By: Gunner Brian Somers, (CWO-4/Marine Gunner USMC Ret.)

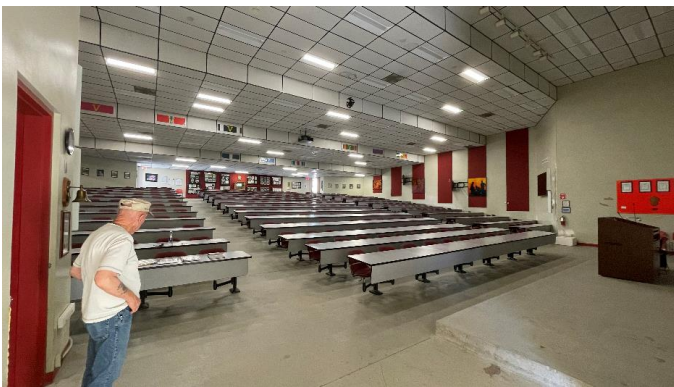
In the esteemed corridors of the Marine Corps' history, few names resonate with the distinction and valor of Retired U.S. Marine Gunner Gilbert H. Bolton. His career trajectory reflects a commitment to training and mentorship, from a raw recruit to a revered Infantry Weapons Officer and master of Marine Corps infantry weapon systems. He has been shaped as much by his experiences in training (as a student and as an instructor) as he has been by his experiences in combat. Bolton's attachment to the Marine Corps is best epitomized by his sentiment of being with them "Forever," a legacy that has led him back to the School of Infantry, where he's been at the forefront of Marine Corps training initiatives. He has contributed extensively to various training and mentorship activities as a volunteer since 2003. It is in this hallowed institution, in a classroom named in his honor by the [then] Infantry Training Battalion (SOI-West) Commanding Officer, Colonel Stephen Armes, that he continues to pay homage to Marines past and present and impart his vast knowledge to the current and future generations. On display are numerous framed photographs,



(Above): Gunner Bolton's classroom at AIT Bn-W. Photo: Author.

citations, articles, and other memorabilia describing his story as a Marine. Central to the décor which fills the massive instructional space are the painted medals of valor surrounding the seating area. A large bell hangs from the wall next to his make-shift office (formally a whiskey locker) which pays tribute to the ten Marines who lost their lives while serving with Bolton on South Vietnam's infamous Hill 25. Gunner Bolton's story is not just a testament to his personal dedication, but stands as a beacon of the resilience, adaptability, and values that the Marine Corps embodies. As I delved into his storied career, spanning the challenging terrains of Quảng Nam Province's ridges and hilltops in Vietnam, to the classrooms of the Advanced Infantry Training Battalion at Camp Pendleton's School of Infantry - West, I was privileged to witness the unwavering spirit of the Infantry Marine, exemplified in the life of Gunner Bolton.

Gunner Bolton is a living chronicle of both personal valor and the dynamic history of the Marine Gunner rank. His storied military journey began on 1 December 1959 when he chose the path of the Marines over joining his family plumbing business in Portsmouth, Ohio. When asked what



(Above): Gunner Bolton's classroom at Advanced Infantry Training Battalion-West (AIT Bn-W). Gunner Bolton stands to the left. Photo: Author.

“Such as Regiments Hand Down Forever...”

An Interview with Gunner Gilbert H. Bolton, (CWO-4/Marine Gunner USMC Ret.)

By: Brian Somers

inspired him to join the Marine Corps instead of pursuing a career in plumbing, Gunner Bolton responded honestly, “Believe it or not, I saw the John Wayne movie, *Sands of Iwo Jima...* and Sgt. Stryker, boy, I wanted to be like him.” In fact, Gunner Bolton was so influenced by Sgt. Stryker that he credits parts of his own leadership approach to the ideals portrayed in the movie.

Upon completing Recruit Training, Gunner Bolton was designated a Pioneer or Combat Engineer MOS. “I was to go to the Pioneer Battalion, which is now Combat Engineers, because I helped my dad in the summer plumbing so they thought that is where I would best serve,” Gunner Bolton reflects. However, during his assignment with Company D, 2d Infantry Regiment (2nd ITR), a pivotal moment occurred. While cleaning the company office, Bolton's attention was caught by a sign on the wall that read: “The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war.” For Bolton, this wasn't just a sign—it was a calling.



(Above): Gunner Bolton's office (formally a whiskey locker) located within his classroom at AITB - West. Gunner Bolton pictured. Photo: Author.

The story unfolds further. Gunner Bolton's Company Commander set forth a challenge: if every Private in the company could recite the sign's message when asked, he would gift Gunner Bolton the sign at graduation. The catch? If even one Private failed to remember the words, Bolton would have to

sprint to the summit of the hill behind the Delta Company office (now known as “Academy Hill”, situated behind the SNCO academy). As one might expect, the thoughtful Marines of Company D saw to it that Bolton made several trips up that hill. While he never did get that sign, this experience paved a new path for him. When given a chance to request something else, he told the company commander decisively, “I want to be in the infantry.” He got his wish. Gunner Bolton would go on to become an Infantry Marine who would eventually experience



(Above): Gunner Bolton's office (looking back the other direction). Photo: Author.

various roles from working as a guard in the base brig in Yokosuka, Japan to forming recruits into Marines as a drill instructor at MCRD, San Diego.

After leaving 2nd ITR, Private Bolton was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines in Las Pulgas, Camp Pendleton. As a sign of his command's trust in his potential, PFC Bolton was selected to attend “NCO School”, an experience he fondly remembers as instrumental to his growth as an emerging infantry leader. Throughout the early 60's, Gunner Bolton served as a Squad Leader with Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (later designated as the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines) and

“Such as Regiments Hand Down Forever...”

An Interview with Gunner Gilbert H. Bolton, (CWO-4/Marine Gunner USMC Ret.)

By: Brian Somers



(Above): The bell mounted to the bulkhead outside of Gunner Bolton's office serves as a reminder of the M 3/7 Marines who lost their lives during combat action on Hill 25. Photo: Author.

Company M, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines.

In 1963, Gunner Bolton received orders to Marine Barracks, Yokosuka, Japan where he had his first interaction with a Marine Gunner. While assigned to the brig, Bolton worked under the leadership of the Brig Officer, Gunner (CWO4) Noonkester, a Korean War Navy Cross recipient. At that time, Bolton was a newly promoted Sergeant and recalls Gunner Noonkester's leadership savvy as influential, and reflected upon this experience when the time came to make the decision to become a Marine Gunner, himself, years later.

In 1964, Gunner Bolton received orders to MCRD San Diego to attend Drill Instructor school as part of his reenlistment option. It was at MCRD San Diego where Bolton was promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant and served as Drill Instructor/Senior Drill Instructor until 1966. Gunner Bolton admits there were many challenges associated with this demanding duty but considers his time at MCRD San Diego well spent, noting “I learned a lot as a Drill Instructor. The “Drill Field” was a lot different in those days.”

However, it was the challenges of the Vietnam War that truly defined his career.

On a perilous night in 1967 while serving as a Platoon Sergeant with “Mike” Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines on Hill 25, Gunner Bolton showcased extraordinary leadership against the Viet Cong's elite 402nd Sapper Battalion, despite being outnumbered and under intense enemy fire. Thumbing through a binder of pictures taken from the battle and its aftermath, Gunner Bolton pointed to the baskets that sappers utilized for infiltration to carry their explosives used for demolitions. Reflecting on the resilience of the Viet Cong fighters, he remarked, “They were good fighters, I tell you.” His audacious decision to call artillery fire on his own position not only turned the tide of the battle but also earned him the Silver Star and later, Bolton was selected to become one of 59 total Marine Corps recipients of a battlefield commission. Yet, for Bolton, this commendation and recognition of his leadership were not an end, but a catalyst, driving a lifelong dedication to excellence in combat training for Marines.

Returning to MCRD San Diego in 1968, Bolton continued his service as a Drill Instructor for approximately one year before being Commissioned

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By: Brian Somers

as a Second Lieutenant (2ndLt). He then undertook multiple roles, from Series Commander at MCRD San Diego (the ONLY 2ndLt running around the Depot) to Combat Cargo Officer aboard the USS Paul Revere in 1970 as a 1st Lieutenant (1stLt). This is where Gunner Bolton's journey as a Marine presents a series of unique events, unparalleled in recent Marine Gunner history. When asked to describe his most interesting and most challenging experiences as a Marine Gunner, without hesitation, Bolton referred to making the decision to choose the rare "Marine Gunner" designation in 1971. As 1stLt Bolton was getting ready to execute orders to the USS Paul Revere as the Combat Cargo Officer, he was informed he would have to make a decision about his available career options since his current commission was not permanent. Bolton recalls the moment when he was explained his options, "...they said, 'We have two permanent programs you can apply for: do you want to be an LDO or do you want to be a Marine Gunner?' DING! Gunner Noonkester popped into my mind. I wanna be a Marine Gunner." During that period in Marine Corps history, Bolton explained, "You had communications, you had tracked vehicles, you had artillery, and of course, infantry. Those were the four MOSs [authorized the Chief Warrant Officer grade of Marine Gunner and to wear the bursting bomb]."

The subsequent years saw him contributing at Edson Range, Weapons Training Battalion, and Infantry Training School (School of Infantry - West) in Camp Pendleton, punctuated by a tenure in Okinawa's Jungle Warfare Training Center, MCB Camp Gonsalves (then Northern Training Area). When I asked Gunner Bolton what he considered to be the most rewarding experience during his 20 years as a Marine Gunner, he responded simply, "Well right here... I had been out here at the School 15 years... in '75 I came up here and the rest is history..."

I got to do the equivalent of MCT. I got to do weapons, which was the equivalent of ITB, and I got to do the Advanced Company which was the equivalent to AITB." Bolton's dedication to the Marine Corps is palpable, especially in his unwavering commitment to training. From raw recruits to seasoned Marines, his influence has spanned multiple assignments across the globe, most notably at the Advanced Infantry Training Battalion, School of Infantry - West. Bolton has been instrumental in revamping training infrastructure, pioneering innovative training methods, and championing the philosophy that every Marine, regardless of their primary role, is a rifleman first.

Gunner Bolton's professional arc closely mirrored the shifting paradigms and priorities of the Marine Corps, regularly navigating the administrative mazes of commissioned roles during wartime exigencies and difficult career choices. Bolton embodies the enduring ethos and legacy of this rank. In 1988, when the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Gray Jr., chose to resurrect the Marine Gunner grade, Bolton was among the few existing Marines still donning the bursting bomb insignia. Questioned about his potential influence on the revival of the Marine Gunner rank and the formulation of the inaugural Marine Gunner Class, Bolton concedes that his background and journey as a Marine Gunner undoubtedly shaped some of the ideal traits and subsequent criteria for selecting and promoting Marine Gunners. "General Gray saw me as the first Marine Gunner ...and then they started asking questions," he reflected.

His personal narrative, from being an enlisted man to his unique perspectives on the Marine Gunner tradition, offers invaluable insights into the intricate relationships within the Marine community. Bolton is a staunch advocate for the preservation of the Marine Gunner designation, emphasizing its

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By: Brian Somers

significance in direct combat roles and advocating for its continuity based on stringent criteria.

Even in retirement, Bolton's passion for the Marine Corps burns brightly. While he explored various career paths and dabbled in seven different jobs post-retirement, he realized none brought him the fulfillment he sought. It became evident to Gunner Bolton that his true calling lay in his unwavering dedication to the Marine Corps. Thus, he chose to remain in service as a volunteer, staying as close to the Corps as possible. As of this newsletter, he has spent 20 years actively volunteering at the Marine Corps' School of Infantry (West), Advanced Infantry Training Battalion in Camp Pendleton, CA, shaping the future of Marine training through various volunteer efforts and mentoring the Corp's future and current enlisted leaders.

Bolton's dedication culminated in his leadership role at the Advanced Infantry Training Company, overseeing key training courses until his retirement in 1991 after 32 dedicated years. A celebrated figure, Gunner Bolton is recognized in the Ohio Military Hall of Fame and has held the esteemed position of National Commander of the National Order of Battlefield Commissions. He is currently involved with several veterans' organizations in the Southern California area, either personally or in support of AITB/SOI-West awards and activities, to include the Desert Cities Chapter - First Marine Division Association (they sponsor the Platoon Sergeant Mitchell Page IULC Honor Graduate award), the American Legion Post 365 (Vista, CA), Southern California Chapter - First Marine Division Association, VFW Post 3173 (Anaheim, CA), VFW Post 7041 (Vista, CA), Los Angeles Chapter - Marines and FMF Corpsman Association. I would be remiss not to note Gunner Bolton sponsors the “Gung Ho” Awards, presented to AITB students on his own.

For those fortunate enough to cross paths with Gunner Bolton, his story serves as an inspiration, underscoring the resilience, adaptability, and enduring values of the Marine Corps. It's a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by many and the indomitable spirit of a few exceptional individuals like Gunner Bolton, dedicated to molding future Marines.



(Above): SSgt Bolton receiving the Silver Star for leadership and actions taken while repelling enemy Viet Cong forces attacking positions on Hill 25 on 2 November 1967. (Below): Gunner Bolton's portrait in the Ohio Military Hall of Fame. Photo: Ohio Military Hall of Fame.



The Infantry Rifle 1850-2023

An MGA Quarterly Magazine Historical Series

Part IV: Continued from the 2-22 Edition



*(Above): One of the most revered firearms ever fielded, the M1 Service Rifle—often called the “Garand”.
Photos: Open source.*

Before we begin with a sincere attempt at the history and context of the venerable M1 Service Rifle, a rifle for which I am admittedly very sentimental, we should begin at the *why*. I will endeavor to answer the following questions:

-Why, given the legendary performance of the Springfield M1903 bolt-action [series] rifles, was a requirement identified within the US Armed Forces, for a semi-automatic (a.k.a. “self-loading”) service rifle?

-Given, as a matter of fact, that the requirement was established, how did a semi-automatic service rifle attain “escape velocity” through the event horizon of the culture, or spirit of the times, of the traditionalists?

Author’s note: As readers progress through this historical study, some may begin to detect similarities to other US Marine Corps efforts, for example, the drama associated with the full integration of the Rifle Combat Optic (RCO) during both entry level and sustainment level rifle

training. Change comes difficult for the Corps. Perhaps, in some ways, this is a good thing. The US Marine Corps is many things, but being fickle is not generally among them. As readers will soon see, there was a struggle, among many, within the US Marine Corps and Army to resist the adoption of the semi-automatic rifle, for fear that marksmanship discipline would collapse...all because the rifle is designed to chamber another cartridge without attention and intervention by the operator.

“You’re ruining the Marine Corps...”
-Unknown, multiple sources (timeless).



USMC Dress Blue uniform rank insignia, six of which honor the iconic M1 Service Rifle, so enshrined in 1959.

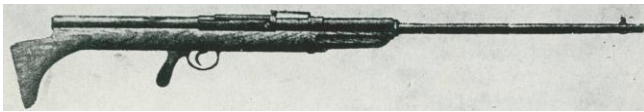
The Infantry Rifle 1850-2023

An MGA Quarterly Magazine Historical Series

Part IV: Continued from the 2-22 Edition

Semi-automatic rifle: In this context, a shoulder-fired, auto-loading rifle which fires a single cartridge with each pull of the trigger, using a portion of the fired cartridge's energy to eject the cartridge case and load another into the chamber. The mechanism then enters a "waiting" status until the operator presses the trigger again (firing the next cartridge). This cycle continues until the operator ceases and unloads the rifle, ammunition is exhausted, or a stoppage/malfunction is experienced.

1883-1885- Firearms designers began to create the first auto-loading rifles. In 1883, Hiram Maxim adapted a Winchester rifle to semi-automatic. In 1884, Horace Updegraff created another semi-automatic design. In 1885, Ferdinand Mannlicher unveils a semi-automatic rifle of his design. None of these rifles proceeded out of the prototype stage into production due to systemic flaws induced using black powder. When employed in firearms, black powder cartridges produce a great deal of residue and are generally not useful in semi-automatic systems.



Mannlicher 1885 self-loading rifle- a much underrated, useful, and largely forgotten design.

Photo: Forgotten Weapons, Ian McCollum.

1890s- The advent of much cleaner burning smokeless powder offered significant capability increases in auto-loading firearms designs, both for semi-automatic and fully-automatic systems. Designers began to adapt the Mannlicher concepts of operation, among others, for use in semi-automatic firearms and machine guns (i.e. the M1917 Browning Machine Gun and many more). Some of that era's most notable designers, many of

whose designs are still in wide use today, are John M. Browning, Ferdinand Mannlicher, James Lee, Paul Mauser, T.C. Johnson, John Pederson, John Garand, and many more. Readers should note that John M. Browning's creations, for one example, are often "hidden" behind another name (i.e. Winchester, Colt, FN, etc.) since corporations bought Browning's brilliant designs and placed their corporate names on the firearm. Just the other day, in fact, I carried a Springfield M1903A3, manufactured by Smith Corona, in a Memorial Day parade in my hometown. The original designer of that rifle, oddly enough, was a German named Paul Mauser (see previous edition).

When and why did the US Army, the principal firearms developmental agency in the 20th century, become interested in semi-automatic rifles?

Consider all the convergent infantry weapon lines of effort which manifested simultaneously during the early 20th century—proliferation and evolution of machine guns, fledgling auto loading rifles, smokeless powder, the height of bolt action rifle technology, and much more. Why, for example, was the US Army so aggressive in their development and adoption of the semi-automatic rifle when the German army was content with the bolt action Mauser Gewehr 98 for both World Wars 1 and 2? (Hint: the German machine gun and its doctrinally inverse relationship to the infantry rifle). And what of the British Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE)? When answering that question, one must remember that the interwar years for the European nations were quite different than for the United States (the European interwar duration is generally considered to be 20 years, 9 months, and 21 days). In fact, there are some who consider WW1 and WW2 the same war and yet others who

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consider the interwar years to be approximately 14 years, given some of the events which preceded Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. Regardless of the method of calculating the interwar years, the United States clearly enjoyed more time between these active combat engagements.

Back to the question...the US Army became interested in self-loading/semi-automatic weapons during WW1 (and for the future) simply because they came into existence as reliable, portable, and effective infantry small arms (do not forget that the revered M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) was deployed into combat service in 1918...and it performed very well. While early models of the BAR featured a standard select fire control with SEMI and AUTO modes, later models were produced with only automatic fire capability, with a selectable cyclic rate reducer mode, (550 and 350 RPM respectively). The US also produced the "Pederson Device", a bolt and magazine kit which installed into the receiver of the M1903 rifle, converting it to a semi-automatic .30 caliber pistol cartridge firing weapon with a 40-round magazine (more later).

Given that the BAR was so successful during the war, adoption of a semi-automatic service rifle was inevitable for the US Army (note: easy for me to say in hindsight, admittedly). Soon after WW1, American firearms designers were beginning to produce some very promising rifles.

The Germans and the British? The Germans were quite content with their Mauser bolt action rifles in support of their doctrinal anchor, the machine gun, and their semi-automatic rifle designs of WW2, although promising weapons, were never able to eclipse the Mauser 98. The British SMLE is an excellent bolt action rifle and given the short interwar period, financial constraints, and a traditionalist adherence to bolt action slow fire, the

British maintained the SMLE bolt action rifle until the 1950's when they adopted an FN FAL variant (as the L1A1 Self-Loading Rifle (SLR)).

The Pederson Device



(Above): Components of the Pederson Device- Bolt group, carrying case, pouches, magazines, spanner wrench. (Below): Springfield M1903 rifle with Pederson Device installed into receiver. Note boxes of .30-18 (7.65x20mm) ammunition. Photos: Open sources.



The Pederson Device was manufactured too late in WW1 to be issued to combat troops and most of the kits were destroyed after years of storage. The capability, however, was sound—easy conversion of a

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full power .30-06 Springfield bolt action rifle to a light weight, [relatively] close range, high capacity (40 rounds per magazine), semi-automatic, low recoiling rifle for use in assaulting enemy trenches. Soldiers and Marines, when required, could quickly switch back to the standard bolt (stowed in a metal carrying case attached to their cartridge belt) and .30-06 ammunition for standard operations. Great idea (and it worked), but the war ended before the device could be fielded. The United States' adoption of a dedicated semi-automatic service rifle after WW1 was simply inevitable given the ample time, desire, industrialization, and already whetted appetite for the perception of more "fire power".

John Garand and the M1 Service Rifle



(Above): Jean (a.k.a. "John") C. Garand. Most Americans, pronounce his surname as "Guh - RAND", some, however, pronounce his last name like the word "errand". "Luh-june - Luh-jern".

John Garand was born in Quebec, Canada in 1888. In 1899, his father moved the family to Connecticut, USA. Garand spoke French as a first language and learned English later while working in

a textile mill. Later, while working in a shooting gallery, Garand developed a love for shooting and for firearms. He was later trained as a machinist at the textile mill and in 1909, Garand was hired by a tool making company in Rhode Island. In 1916, he moved to New York and hired on with another tool making firm, resuming his shooting practice at New York's shooting galleries.

In 1917, Garand designed a light machine gun (LMG) for US Government-sponsored trials, and he was soon hired on as a weapons designer at the US Armory and Arsenal at Springfield, Massachusetts in 1919. He became a US citizen in 1920.

While employed by Springfield Armory (not to be confused by the modern firearms manufacturer of the same name), Garand was tasked with designing a semi-automatic service rifle. Not long after, in 1922, Garand was able to produce several working prototypes, refined from his initial M1919 creation, of the "M1922" rifle, a primer actuated blowback semi-automatic rifle. Garand entered this prototype into US Army trials in competition with prototypes offered by Thompson, Pederson, and others. Garand soon further developed this early prototype into the M1924. An excellent instructional video, produced by well known firearms historian Ian McCollum (Forgotten Weapons) of the M1924 Garand rifle is available at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WejY6KEotoU>

Note that Ian McCollum also explains another critical engineering development of the time, the introduction of the Improved Military Rifle (IMR) propellant which had major impacts on firearms capabilities of the day. Developments in propellant will come up again...when we discuss the M16.

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US Army Ordnance Board trials continued in the 1920's, providing the impetus for several firearms designers to continue refining their prototypes while searching for a lucrative US government contract (and the associated prestige of such an achievement). Note that during these trials, Garand's early designs employed a "primer actuated" system which used the rearward movement of the primer, having been unseated from the cartridge case during firing, to drive the bolt to the rear. This system, while promising, caused compatibility issues for cartridges intended for use in machine guns and other systems. These [other] systems required the primer to always remain seated (remember that US ammunition manufacturers were shortly thereafter required to "crimp" all primers into the primer pocket...rendering the primer actuated system unusable). After numerous trials, and an order from the Ordnance Board for a .30-06 rifle variant, Garand redesigned his rifle to employ a gas operated system.

Throughout the 1920's, the Ordnance Board (the specific committee named the "Semi-automatic Rifle Board" (SRB)) continued testing and redefining requirements (moving the goal posts), until John Garand finally produced a prototype that looked something like the M1 Service Rifle we recognize today—the .30-06 T3E2 Garand (shown at upper right). *Readers, in the industry, who endure the ever-changing requirements of US weapons programs can likely relate to the frustration Garand may have felt during that decade.*

We arrive in the early 1930's and John Garand has produced the T3E2, chambered in the .276 Pederson cartridge. Garand's T3E2 prototypes competed against the T1 Pederson in another round of Ordnance Board tests, the Garand outperforming the Pederson decisively. Note: a T1E2 Garand rifle



(Above): A sampling of John Garand prototypes as he responded to the requirements of the Ordnance Board in the 1920's. Photo: Open source.

in .30-06 was also tested during these trials, as if to foreshadow events to come.

In 1932, immediately after the trials, the Ordnance Board ordered the adoption of the .276 cartridge (note that in metric, .276 is approximately 7mm...*there is nothing new under the sun*) and ordered 125 further T3E2s. Garand also quickly refined the bolt of the .30-06 T1E2 variant (from the earlier trials), fixing design problems. General Douglas MacArthur, the US Army Chief of Staff at the time, ordered any/all further rifles be chambered in the standard US service cartridge, the .30-06, in part, due to the large stock of existing .30-06 ammunition. In February 1932, the US Army ordered that all efforts be directed at developing the Garand rifle in .30-06 and within a year and a half, the T1E2 became officially known as the "Semi-automatic rifle, caliber 30, M1". After teething issues during operational field testing, the M1 Service Rifle was adopted for service in late 1935 and standardized for production and fielding by the US Army on 9 January 1936. The US Marine Corps

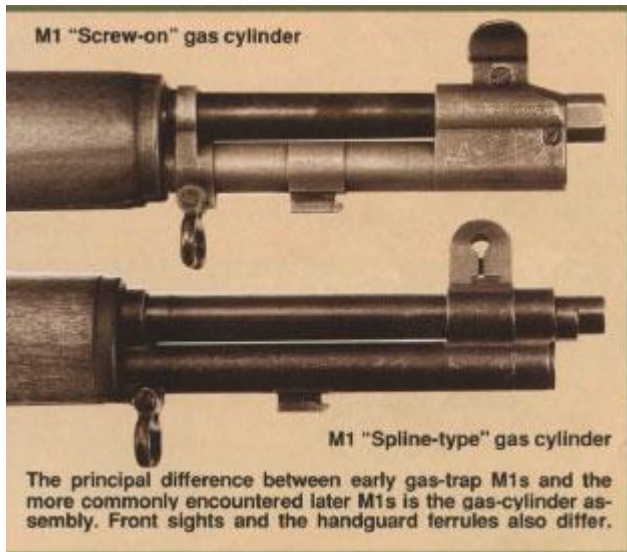
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continued to follow US Army developments and retained the Springfield M1903 as the standard Marine Corps service rifle.

After several years of production problems, redesign efforts of several of the key components (i.e. “gas traps” models recalled and refitted to gas cylinder models, front sights, etc.), the US Army was fully fielded with the M1 Service Rifle by the end of 1941.



(Above): The early gas trap model (top) and the later spline type gas cylinder model. Photo: NRA.

Author’s note: Marines and Soldiers were paying attention to all that transpired during the development of the semi-automatic rifle, and not everyone was “on board” with this change. There existed many within the Services who felt that the adoption of a fast-firing semi-automatic rifle would destroy the slow-firing precision marksmanship and fire discipline of the day, facilitated by the revered Springfield M1903. The following thesis was written by Major Paul W. Mapes, US Army, while he attended the US Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1930. The

entire thesis is available at the following web address and is approved for public release with unlimited distribution:

<https://cdm16040.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll14/id/64>

The US entered WWII in December 1941, and the US Army had been fully outfitted with semi-automatic M1 Service Rifles—the only army to have done so. The other armies of the war, both Allied and Axis, (while some did employ small numbers of semi-automatic rifles) overwhelmingly operated with bolt action rifles, as did the US Marine Corps at the start of the war.

The US Marine Corps and the M1 Service Rifle

Suffice it to say, the USMC was skeptical of the new semi-automatic M1 Rifle but watched the development of the M1 with a wary eye. Marines generally revered their proven M1903 bolt action rifles. Readers need only pick up a Springfield M1903 to appreciate its quality fit and finish, smooth bolt operation, handiness, and point-ability. In 1938, the Marine Corps received 400 M1 Service Rifles from an early production run in 1938. Most were sent for testing at an infantry battalion while others were sent to entry level infantry training sites. Marines found several defects in the design; most notable were problems with the “gas trap” design and issues with 7th round failures to feed (later, an engineer discovered that when installing barrels at the factory, the top portion of the right inner receiver feed mechanism rail was being removed). What was perplexing, early on, was that the 7th round “jam” only occurred when the ammunition clip of eight rounds was inserted with the top round to the right.

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Once the Corps had finished with the initial batch of M1 Service Rifles and had identified the problems to “higher”, they were quite content to return their attention to their beloved M1903s,



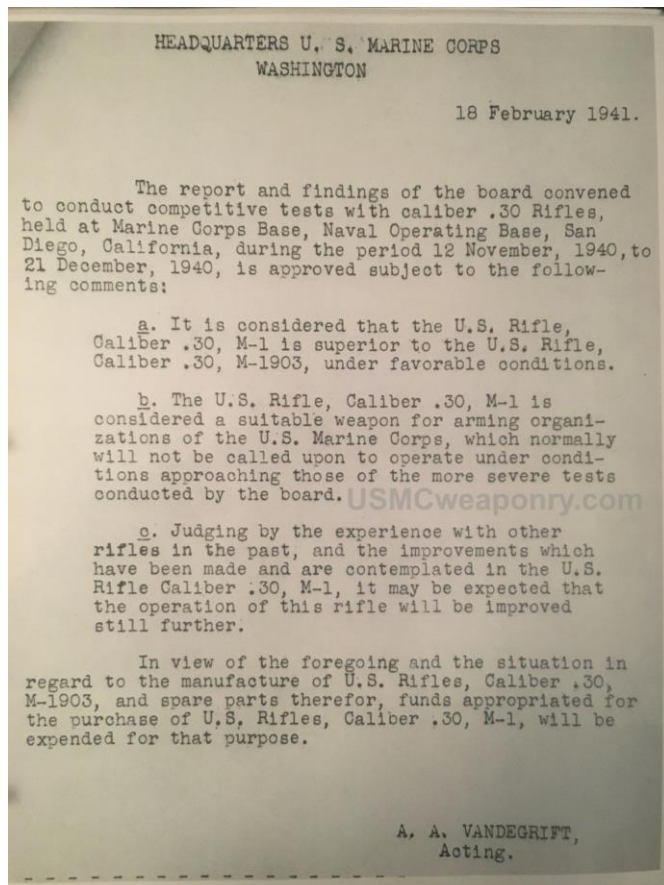
(Above): The arrow indicates the portion of the receiver which when removed (and not replaced by welding), causes a 7th round jam when the enbloc clip is filled with the top round on the right. Photo: Open source.

happy to leave their Army brethren to their semi-automatic rifles. In 1940, the Marine Corps conducted a test of four rifle designs; the incumbent USMC service rifle, the Springfield M1903, the M1 Rifle, the M1941 Johnson, and the Winchester G30 (the latter three rifles being semi-automatic designs). The test and its results became quite controversial and was keenly watched by all levels of military and government. The rifles were subjected to test scenarios which exposed them to elements commonly encountered on battlefields (sand, salt, mud, etc.). The letter (shown to right) shows the results from the test and the reason the Marine Corps, unlike the Army, was reluctant to fully replace the M1903 with the M1.

In a remarkable (by today’s standards) turn of events, the US Marine Corps formally adopted the M1 Service Rifle in February 1941—but only for rear echelon units. The leadership of the USMC did not trust the M1 Service Rifle sufficient to put it in close combat units for fear that sand, mud, and the elements of the battlefield would cause the M1 to fail. The Corps, by policy, retained her trusted and

proven M1903s in close combat units and when WW2 began, most Marines hit the beaches and jungles of Guadalcanal in August of 1942 with the Springfield M1903. Anecdotes suggest no M1 Rifles went ashore in the first waves, but photographic and documentary evidence shows that a few hundred M1s did. Most Marines, however, would have never encountered an M1 during their tour on the island, making their limited perception their limited reality.

Readers should note that on 26 June 1942, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Thomas Holcomb (a Distinguished Marksman), ordered that all units of the USMC adopt the M1 Service Rifle, rendering the M1903 obsolete.



(Above): Photo: NARA.

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Despite this, most forward deployed USMC combat units had not yet received them. Fully fielding a service rifle can take many years for an entire service.



(Above): 1942- Marines conduct an amphibious assault on Guadalcanal with Springfield M1903 Service Rifles, Thompson SMGs, and BARs. Note the enormous M1903 bayonet (center/left). Photo: AP.



(Above): Leathernecks armed with M1 Service Rifles raise the flag atop Mt. Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima. Photo: (Joe Rosenthal photo) artwork by Tom Lovell.

As more USMC combat units received their M1 Service Rifles and put them in the close combat fight, reports soon returned to Headquarters, Marine Corps regarding outstanding performance of the rifles, even through the salt and sand of the Pacific island assaults and jungle warfare.



(Above): The 17th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb USMC (Ret.). He was promoted to General after retirement, becoming the first Marine Officer to hold the rank of General. Photo: USMC.



(Above): Marines attack Japanese positions during the Battle of Okinawa. Note the M1 Carbine and M1 Service Rifle. Photo: USMC.

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The Marine Corps employed the M1 Service Rifle throughout the rest of WWII (along with the Browning Automatic Rifle and the M1 Carbine) within the Rifle Squad. Naturally, there were several other firearms employed on a mission and unit dependent basis, including the M1 Carbine, the M1911A1 .45 Service Pistol, the M1941 Johnson rifle, the Springfield 1903 Service Rifle, and the Thompson Sub-Machine Gun. The M1 Service Rifle continued in USMC service through the end of the war.

In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, causing the Korean War. The M1 Service Rifle went back into combat and again, served with distinction and was revered by both Marines and Soldiers. In this war, however, the M1 was subjected to bitter cold conditions, but as Marines and Soldiers figured out that the lubrication was causing sluggish operation in the cold, they began operating with the M1 in a dry, unlubricated condition. The rifle continued to perform well with no lubrication. The Korean War lasted until the armistice in 1953. The M1 continued well past this and began to be replaced by the short-lived M14 Service Rifle in 1957.

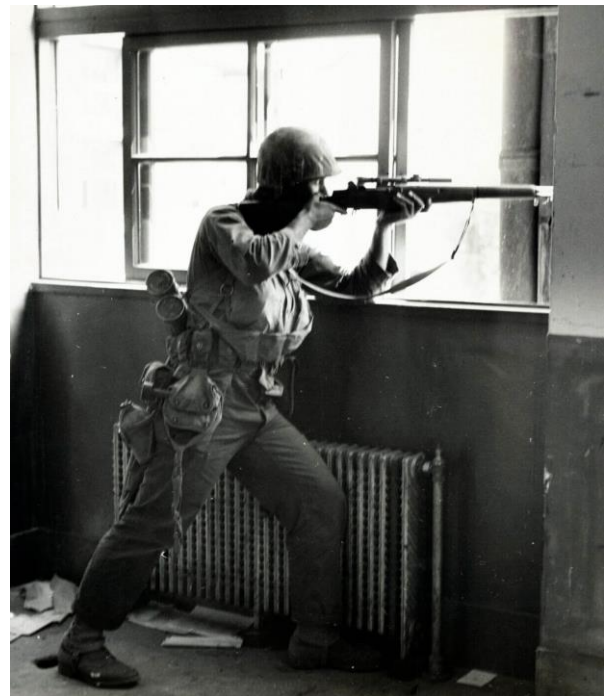
The USMC employed two other variants of the M1 Service Rifle, the M1C and the M1D sniper rifles. The USMC enthusiastically employed the M1C in the sniper role while the Army was not as interested, given the lack of “sniper culture” in the Army at the time.

Firearms researcher Bruce Canfield wrote regarding the USMC M1C variants that:

“The M1C was issued with the M81 and M82 scopes which had some deficiencies, especially the power. The Marine Corps tested several types of telescopes and settled on a 4x design to be supplied by Kollmorgen. A larger and somewhat different Griffin & Howe mount was also chosen by the



(Above): US Marines prepare to engage an enemy sniper during the Korean War in 1952. Note the Marine on the right was armed with an M1C sniper rifle. Photo: NARA.



(Above): A US Marine engages enemy forces with an M1C sniper rifle during the Korean War in 1950. Photo: NARA.

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Marines for their 'new' sniper rifles. The 'new' Marine Corps sniper rifle was given the designation 'USMC 1952' which was sometimes referred to as 'MC 52'. The designation 'MC-1' referred only to the scope and mount, and not the entire rifle. Thus, reference to a 'MC-1' rifle is incorrect.

Bruce Canfield

The M1D sniper rifle was produced shortly after the M1C was adopted to serve as a suitable substitute that was easier to manufacture than the M1C in the event M1C production was insufficient.

The M1C and M1D sniper rifles served the USMC into the 1960's when the USMC moved back in the direction of the precision bolt action rifle.



(Above): A US Marine, armed with an M1 Service Rifle, engages Japanese forces on Bougainville in 1943. Photo: USMC.



(Above): These two rifles are examples of fine specimens of USMC M1D sniper rifles which can often be found on reputable auction sites. Photos: Open source.

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(Above): M1 Service Rifle with grenade launcher and practice grenade available for auction. Photo: Open source.



(Above): A US Marine Corps M1C sniper rifle with Stith-Kollmorgan optic. Photo: Open source.



(Above): The author conducts the 1943 USMC annual rifle qualification course with an M1 Service Rifle in 2013 aboard MCB Quantico, Virginia. Photo: Author.

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(Above): "The Bursting Bomb" drill formation. The beloved M1 Service Rifle remains in service in the US Marine Corps with the Marines of Marine Barracks Washington, DC. Photos: USMC.



The United States Rifle, Caliber 7.62mm, M14...the M1's short-lived replacement.



In the Next Bursting Bomb...

MGA SITREP & Message Traffic from the Executives and Staff

Interview with a Marine Gunner

Update on the Marine Gunners at TBS and IWOC

USMC Fireteam Concepts

USMC Rifle Squad Concepts

United States Service Rifle and Marksmanship Historical Study

Contributions from our Members

Mental Health Concepts



Update to Mk2 historical article in edition 1-23: The Editor/author was able to obtain an unusual specimen, a Camillus Mk2 which has been skillfully modified into a spear point blade. Photo: Editor.

**If you, or someone you know needs help, support is available 24/7. Service members and their families can call Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, or chat at militaryonesource.mil. Service members, Veterans, and their loved ones can also call the Military and Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat at veteranscrisisline.net, or text to 838255. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available to anyone at 1-800-273-8255.

More excellent sources for Veteran's mental healthcare are:

The Headstrong Project: Contact <https://theheadstrongproject.org> and select "Connect to Care".

The Cohen Veterans Network: Contact at <https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/> . Help is available for Veteran mental health issues and for help in transitioning from military to civilian life and family related issues.



*"The 2000 Yard Stare"
Painting by Thomas Lea
Battle of Peleliu.*

