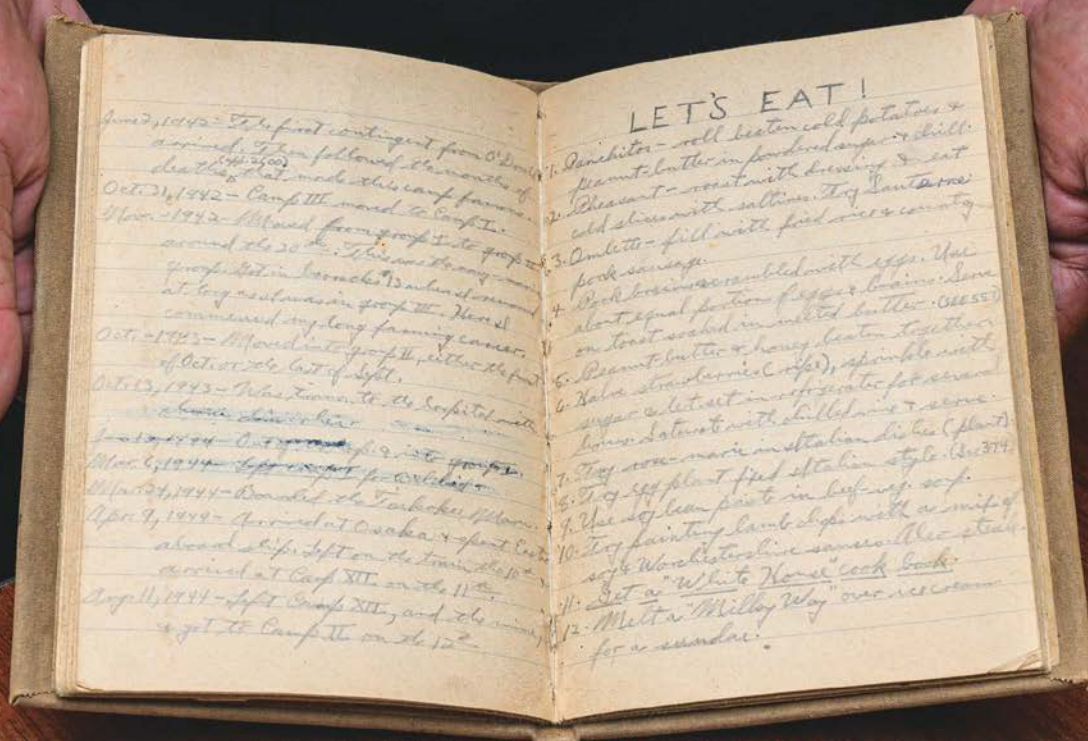


# “Every Marine Has a Story to Tell”



## For 100 Years, the USMC's History Division Has Been Documenting the Corps' History For Future Generations of Marines

By Sara W. Bock

Corn fritters with Karo; fried apple sandwiches with mayonnaise; lamb chops covered with a mix of soy and Worcestershire sauces.

These unique combinations are just a few of the recipes in the personal papers collection of Corporal Martin E. Eichman, which he penciled within the pages of a diary he aptly titled “Let’s Eat.” Out of context, it’s a seemingly insignificant list of ideas for main dishes, desserts and drinks written by a young Marine.

But for Eichman, who was captured

during the fall of Corregidor in 1942 while serving with Company H, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines and held by the Japanese as a prisoner of war for 40 months, a diary of recipes—written in his malnourished state in captivity—was a mental exercise that sustained his hope that he’d one day return home and eat to his heart’s content.

The Eichman collection is just one of 5,700 personal papers collections in the possession of the Marine Corps History Division, which has amassed more than 9 million items ranging from original photographs and film to oral histories and significant documents and since 2015

has been located in the Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center on the campus of Marine Corps University in Quantico, Va. The diary is a personal favorite of archivist John Lyles, who has spent nearly a decade working for the division and has seen more historical papers than he can count.

“On the surface you say, ‘it’s a cookbook—what does that really have to do with the Marine Corps or with this particular Marine?’ But I think it’s a fascinating look at a Marine doing what he needed to do to survive the ordeal of being a POW,” said Lyles, who compares each

Archivist John Lyles displays “Let’s Eat,” the WW II diary of POW Cpl Martin E. Eichman, one of the “treasures” among the personal papers collections at the Marine Corps History Division in the Simmons Center at Marine Corps University, Quantico, Va., Aug. 21. (Photo by Stephen Collins)



day in the division's Archives Branch—where family members often come to donate photographs and letters that belonged to a Marine in their family—to Christmas morning. “You never know what’s going to be on the other end of that door!”

Lyles and six other full-time archivists work to collect and preserve the primary source materials that tell the story of the Corps and to make those documents accessible to both military and civilian researchers. Each individual item, such as Eichman’s “Let’s Eat” diary, has its own distinct story and is properly archived, cataloged into a database, and may even be referenced by staff historians as they continue the division’s 100-year effort to write and publish the official history of the Marine Corps.

“Every item that we get is sort of like a grain of sand on a beach. As an individual grain, it’s not much, but when you start piling all of the grains together, then the entire picture comes together,” said Lyles. “That’s sort of the way I view our collection.”

As home to the Marine Corps’ repository for historically significant papers, photographs and audiovisual materials, the History Division celebrates its centennial this year. It’s a multifaceted organization that has evolved greatly over the last century and became a component of Marine Corps University in 2002. Its mission includes preserving, researching, writing and publishing the “long and illustrious history” that is ingrained into the collective Marine identity and its organizational culture as a whole. Marines have long immortalized legends of the Corps like Chesty Puller, Dan Daly and John Basilone and passed along the stories of Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima and Khe Sanh for posterity, and it’s up to the division to ensure that these narratives—and those of today’s Marines serving in every clime and place—are accurately preserved and documented.

With director Dr. Edward Nevglowski, a retired Marine lieutenant colonel, at the helm, the individuals who comprise the History Division’s staff are energized and excited to help usher in the division’s second century with an increased focus on digitization of its records and a commitment to harnessing the power of technology to make Marine Corps history more accessible to the masses than ever before.

“There’s really no point in preserving it if you’re not going to provide access to it,” said Lyles, who also is responsible for managing the Marine Corps’ command chronologies program. Utilized by the



STEPHEN COLLINS

**Of the more than 9 million items in the possession of the History Division, Eichman’s “Let’s Eat” diary stands out to Lyles as a unique piece of Marine Corps history. Lyles views the individual items in the Archives as “grains of sand” that together tell the story of the Corps.**



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

**Maj Edwin McClellan, the first officer in charge of the History Division, wrote the Corps’ first historical publication, “The United States Marine Corps in the World War,” in 1919.**

**Its mission includes preserving, researching, writing and publishing the “long and illustrious history” that is ingrained into the collective Marine identity.**

History Division as the foundation for official histories, battle studies and other publications, command chronologies—required submissions from every Marine Corps unit—serve as the primary source materials, detailing the unit’s operational history during a specified period of time.

The tradition of documenting and disseminating the history of the Corps officially began in September 1919 with the establishment of the Historical Section, as it was then called, at Headquarters Marine Corps. By directive of Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, Commandant



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

**LtCol Clyde H. Metcalf wrote “A History of the United States Marine Corps,” published in 1939.**

Major General George Barnett ordered the creation of an archive of records and tasked Major Edwin N. McClellan with writing the history of the Marines in World War I. His report, “The United States Marine Corps in the World War,” emphasized the lessons learned by Marines and was intended to be a useful resource in future wars. McClellan also began writing a seven-volume official history of the Marine Corps, a task that he never finished but later was completed by Lieutenant Colonel Clyde H. Metcalf and published as “A History of the United States Marine Corps” in 1939.

The evolution of the History Division is best understood within the greater context of what was happening in the Marine Corps at the time, said Dr. Seth Givens, one of the division’s historians, who has studied at length the correlation between the two.

While the Marines were heavily engaged in the Pacific theater during World War II, the division faced challenges publishing histories and battle studies due to restructuring and frequent personnel changes. The first unit histories published by the division were based primarily on war diaries and after-action report and highlighted a need for a more clearly organized “wartime historical program” in the future, with trained historians gathering information in the field.

The 1947 publication of “The Defense

of Wake” by then-director of the History Division, LtCol Robert D. Heintz Jr., was the first of a series of 15 monographs—book-length studies of campaigns and operations—covering the role of Marines during WW II. A decorated combat veteran and one of the Corps’ most renowned historians to date, Heintz and his counterparts laid the framework for future monographs, which the division continues to publish today.

The authors of the WW II monographs were “critical where warranted,” wrote Givens in a *Marine Corps History* article entitled “The History Division and Change in the Marine Corps: A Historiography” in commemoration of the division’s 100th anniversary.

“The criticism was constructive as much as it was academic, providing planners lessons from the last war that might be applied to the next,” Givens wrote.

According to Givens, in the late 1940s when the Marine Corps was threatened with dissolution by Congress and the Pentagon, its leaders used the History Division’s WW II monographs to justify their position that the Marines should remain their own independent branch of the Armed Forces.

Another of Heintz’s initiatives as director gained traction during the Korean War with the deployment of History Division field historians to the front in an effort to accurately record events for future publications, a practice that had begun during the tail end of WW II and has continued through subsequent wars and conflicts. The division also began to hire civilian historians, which resulted in accounts of Korean War battles being published as early as 1951 while Marines were still engaged in the fighting.

The Marines’ involvement in the Vietnam War led to a number of works, the first of which, “Small Unit Action in Vietnam, Summer 1966” was published in 1967 with the intention of keeping the Marines involved in the war informed about lessons learned the previous year. It was written by Captain Francis J. “Bing” West Jr., who later became the assistant secretary of defense under the Reagan administration and who has in recent years become a prolific author of books about the role of Marines in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Following the war, the division published a nine-volume series, “U.S. Marines in Vietnam.” The first volume was



published in 1977 under the direction of BGen Edwin H. Simmons, for whom the History Division’s current building is named. BGen Simmons served as director from 1971 to 1996 and under his leadership, said Givens, the division “expanded and thrived.”

In the 1990s, the History Division began publishing commemorative histories, beginning with “Opening Moves: Marines Gear Up For War,” written by former chief historian Henry I. Shaw Jr., in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the U.S. entry into WW II.

During the Gulf War and later during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, the division sent field historians to document events, gather materials and conduct interviews, resulting in numerous publications. The effort to complete the official operational histories of Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan remains underway to this day.

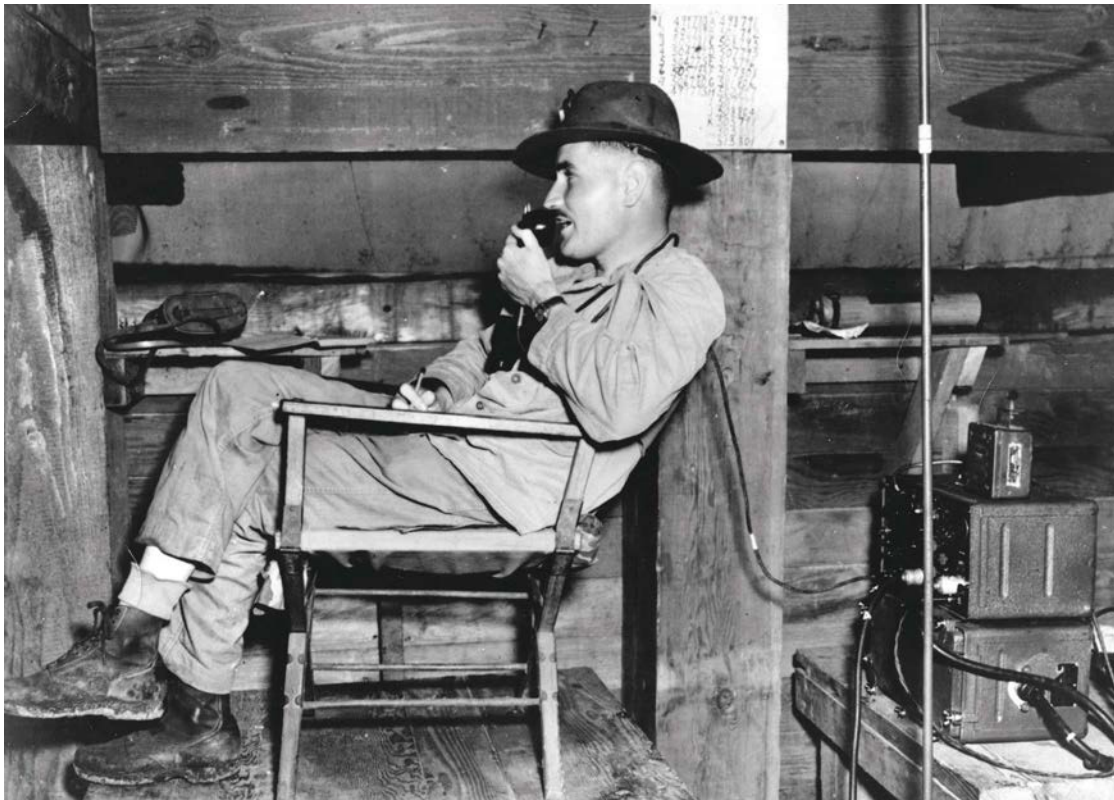
**During the Gulf War and later during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, the division sent field historians to document events, gather materials and conduct interviews, resulting in numerous publications.**



This 1978 photo shows the exterior of Building 58 at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., which housed the History Division—then the Marine Corps Historical Center and Museum—until it was relocated to Quantico in 2005.



SGT W.S. EISELE, USMC



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

**LtCol Robert D. Heintz Jr.,** pictured here in a reinforced bunker in the Hawaiian Islands, served as director of the History Division following WW II and wrote the first monograph about the war, which set the standard for future publications.





COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

**Gen Wallace M. Greene Jr., 23rd Commandant of the Marine Corps, left, receives the first copy of the third volume of the history of Marine Corps operations in WW II from Henry I. Shaw, one of the authors and the chief historian with the History Division, June 21, 1967, in Washington, D.C.**

Existing under a variety of names, including Historical Section, Historical Division, Historical Branch and History and Museums Division, what is now known as the History Division was located in Washington, D.C., until 1941, when it was moved to Arlington, Va. The division returned to Washington at the Navy Yard in 1977 and later was relocated to Quantico in 2005.

Having been aligned previously with

the Marine Corps' Museums Division, which became its own separate element in 2005 prior to the 2006 opening of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, the present-day History Division is focused on papers, idea and concepts while the museum specializes in objects. There is a great deal of interaction between the two, particularly when it comes to fielding questions from the general public and accepting donations of personal collections

that may include a combination of papers, photographs, uniforms and other items.

Throughout a century of evolution and change, the History Division's staff members emphasize that one thing has remained the same: a realization that a Marine Corps that knows and understands its history can use that knowledge to improve its future.

"The division's importance is not in chronicling what has already been, though that history is an important component of Marine culture," Givens wrote in his historiography of the division. "More crucial is its role in producing works that inform those responsible for making decisions that will shape the future of the service. As a result, the division's publications are historical documents in and of themselves, illustrative of what the leadership has deemed important enough to study at a given moment. To analyze them is to understand how the Marine Corps has evolved institutionally, doctrinally and philosophically."

Givens, who earned his doctorate from Ohio University in 2018 and has been with the Marine Corps History Division for a year, is one of the historians in the Histories Branch, which is responsible for writing the Corps' official history, both operational and institutional.

"We're strictly interested in the narrative of what went on. We're the first draft of history," said Givens. "Scholars can then use our narrative and they can analyze any type of question they have, but we're just trying to get the record down."

Using primary source materials held by the Archives Branch, Givens and his counterparts are tasked not only with writing history, but also with anticipating what the Marine Corps might need or want in the future.

Givens' current area of focus is on writing the history of the Marine Corps in Operation Iraqi Freedom, which previously had only been completed through 2004. It's a project that he says has proven more difficult than one might think. Documents like command chronologies and unit records that in previous eras would have been paper-based were computer-based during OIF and OEF, and many external hard drives and files containing unit records were lost or destroyed.

"It's indicative of our digital age, isn't it? At once it makes our lives really

**Since joining the staff of the History Division's Histories Branch in 2018, Dr. Seth Givens has become a subject matter expert on Marines in OIF and OEF and is working to complete the service's official histories of those conflicts.**



STEPHEN COLLINS





COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

Daniel Crawford, a reference historian with the division in the 1970s, uses a microfilm machine to conduct research.

**The History Division's staff members emphasize that one thing has remained the same: a realization that a Marine Corps that knows and understands its history can use that knowledge to improve its future.**



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

A History Division employee works among stacks of papers in this 1970s photo. Today, the division is working toward digitization of its collections as it enters its second century.



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

"The stacks," pictured here in the 1970s, continue to be a valuable resource for reference historians as they work to answer questions about Marine Corps history.





Located in the BGen Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center at Marine Corps University, today's History Division is at the epicenter of the Marine Corps' academic community, giving its historians the opportunity to participate in discussions that affect the future of the Corps. (Photo by Jason Monroe)

easy but it also complicates them," said Givens, who also is working on various commemoratives for the 50th anniversaries of battles and operations during the Vietnam War.

While the digital age presents some challenges for the division, Givens also sees technology as a force multiplier—an opportunity to get Marine Corps history into the hands of more people. With such a large volume of items in the archives, complete digitization of all the division's materials on a research-friendly website is

a tall order but ultimately is the end goal, said director Nevglowski.

Utilizing social media sites Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter and photo sharing forums like Flickr to share Marine Corps history with the world, the division is slowly but surely growing its online presence and ensuring its viability for future generations. But the division's mainstay continues to be its publications: monographs, battle studies, commemoratives, definitive histories, and anthologies under two distinct imprints: History Division

and MCU Press; as well as two biannual professional journals: *Marine Corps History*, which replaced the division's magazine, *Fortitudine*, in 2015; and *MCU Journal*.

"I think the goal for each of these published products is to analyze the Marine Corps' past as a way to enable those 'thought leaders' and military leaders who would like to draw from its past as an example of lessons learned—to help inform their decisions for the future," said Stephani Miller, managing editor of *Marine Corps History*.

Miller and the five other individuals who make up the division's Editing and Design Branch are committed to accuracy and spend their days fact-checking and editing materials written by in-house historians like Givens, outside historians who have been asked to contribute, and instructors and students at MCU. In addition to the two journals, the division generally publishes between eight and 10 books each year. Publications are available digitally and are free to the public, with print copies sent out primarily to libraries and to units in the fleet.

As part of Marine Corps University, the History Division is strategically positioned to interact with the students at

## How To Access the History Division:



**Flickr:** Marine Corps Archives



**Facebook:** Marine Corps History Division



**Twitter:** @CorpsHistory



**Instagram:** @MarineCorpsHistory

**Reference Branch:** [history.division@usmcu.edu](mailto:history.division@usmcu.edu)

**Publications:** <https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Publishing/History-Division-Publications>

**But the division is far more than a just resource for the Marine Corps' academic community—its Reference Branch regularly fields inquiries from Headquarters Marine Corps, federal agencies and the general public.**

the university's various schools, which include Expeditionary Warfare School and Command and Staff College, helping them better understand the history of their service and to use that knowledge to improve situational awareness, said Nevglowski. The division provides lectures and presentations on the operational history of the Marine Corps and its institutional development, giving its historians a prime opportunity to be involved in the academic discussions and debates within the Marine Corps at large, Givens added.

But the division is far more than a just resource for the Marine Corps' academic community—its Reference Branch regularly fields inquiries from Headquarters Marine Corps, federal agencies and the general public. And for historian Mike Westermeier, these interactions, which include everyone from the Commandant to junior enlisted Marines and middle school students working on history projects, may just be the most rewarding of all.

Piled in the Reference Branch's seemingly endless "stacks" are files on a wide range of subjects related to the Marine Corps—"everything from colonial Marines to movies about Marines and biography files on everybody from Samuel Nicholas to Lee Harvey Oswald to Adam Driver; Commandants and Medal of Honor recipients," said Westermeier, an Army veteran who received his master's in military history from Norwich University and joined the division in 2017. All of the files were compiled over decades as the reference historians fielded requests for information on a wide variety of Marine Corps-related topics.

"The great thing about working here is every day I'm going to get something new," said Westermeier, who emphasized that he takes even the most minor requests as seriously as the more substantial ones. "Sometimes it's verifying a Montford Point Marine. Sometimes it's just an email. I like to take pride in the fact that



STEPHEN COLLINS

**Reference historian Mike Westermeier fields inquiries from both inside and outside the Marine Corps and enjoys the opportunity to interact with Marines and help them identify with and learn from the history of the Corps.**

that small email is going to mean the world to somebody whose father was a Montford Point Marine, and they're going to receive that recognition they've been waiting for."

In addition to answering inquiries and requests, Westermeier is the division's unit historian and is responsible for ensuring accurate lineage and honors, allowing Marines to know and understand their unit's history and heritage.

Last year, Westermeier had an opportunity that he considers the highlight of his career: he traveled to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and shared his knowledge with the Marines of I Marine Expeditionary Force. He told them the

stories of the Marines who fought for their lives on the streets of Hue City and of the daring exploits of the Marine Corps' first aviators who braved the skies above Europe during World War I.

He also shared a simple yet profound message with the next generation of history-making Marines:

"This is what you are part of now. This is a part of you. You own it. You're responsible for it. You've got to perpetuate it—but look at what you're a part of, and what these Marines did. Maybe someday you'll have to do the same, but you'll be able to do it because you know that other Marines have done it." 🐼



A man in a military uniform is hugging a man from behind. The man being hugged is wearing a white cap with the word 'VETERAN' on it and is smiling. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting.

# YOU SERVED OUR NATION, let us serve you

USAA proudly offers free membership to anyone who has honorably served our country. We welcome all branches, all ranks and all generations. Join the millions of servicemembers and veterans like you already taking advantage of our financial products and award-winning customer service. For all the reasons you served, we serve you.

No Department of Defense or government agency endorsement. USAA means United Services Automobile Association and its insurance, banking, investment, and other companies. Use of the term "member" or "membership" refers to membership in USAA Membership Services and does not convey any legal or ownership rights in USAA. Restrictions apply and are subject to change. To join USAA, separated military personnel must have received a discharge type of "Honorable." Eligible former dependents of USAA members may join USAA.





**MARINE CORPS**  
ASSOCIATION & FOUNDATION  
EST 1913



USAA is proud to be the  
**Semper Fidelis Sponsor**  
of the Marine Corps Association & Foundation

**NOW'S THE TIME TO JOIN USAA**  
**CALL 877-651-6272 OR VISIT [USAA.COM/MCA](https://usaa.com/mca)**

Restrictions apply and are subject to change. To join USAA, separated military personnel must have received a discharge type of "Honorable." Eligible former dependents of USAA members may join USAA. Marine Corps Association & Foundation receives financial support from USAA for this sponsorship.  
© 2019 USAA. 259604-0419