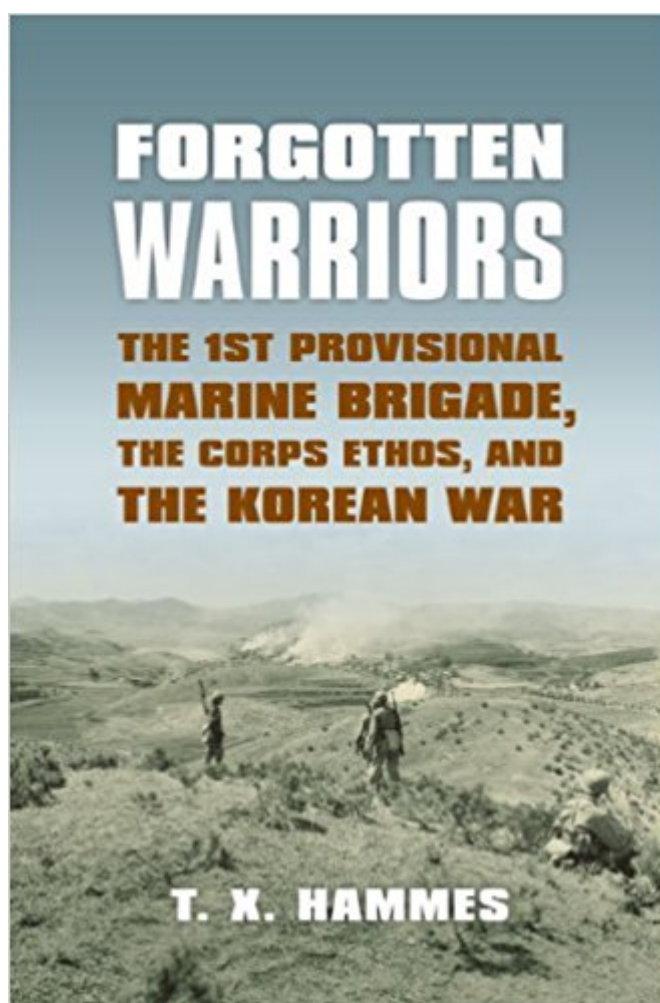


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Forgotten Warriors: The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, The Corps Ethos, And The Korean War (Modern War Studies)



Synopsis

When the Korean War broke out in 1950, the Marine Corps was ordered to deploy an air-ground brigade in less than ten days, even though no such brigade existed at the time. Assembled from the woefully understrength 1st Marine Division and 1st Marine Air Wing units, the Brigade shipped out only six days after activation, sailed directly to Korea, was in combat within ninety-six hours of landing and, despite these enormous handicaps and numerically superior enemy forces, won every one of its engagements and helped secure the Pusan Perimeter. Despite its remarkable achievements, the Brigade's history has largely been lost amid accounts of the sweeping operations that followed. Its real history has been replaced by myths that attribute its success to tough training, great conditioning, unit cohesion, and combat-experienced officers. None of which were true. T. X. Hammes now reveals the real story of the Brigade's success, prominently citing the Corps' crucial ability to maintain its ethos, culture, and combat effectiveness during the period between World War II and Korea, when its very existence was being challenged. By studying the Corps from 1945 to 1950, Hammes shows that it was indeed the culture of the Corps—•a culture based on remembering its storied history and learning to face modern challenges—that was responsible for the Brigade's success. The Corps remembered the human factors that made it so successful in past wars, notably the ethos of never leaving another marine behind. At the same time, the Corps demonstrated commendable flexibility in adapting its doctrine and operations to evolutions in modern warfare. In particular, the Corps overcame the air-ground schism that marked the end of World War II to excel at close air support. Despite massive budget and manpower cuts, the Corps continued to experiment and learn even as it clung to its historical lodestones. This approach was validated during the Brigade's trial by fire. More than a mere battle history, *Forgotten Warriors* gets to the heart of marine culture to show fighting forces have to both remember and learn. As today's armed forces face similar challenges, this book confirms that culture as much as technology prepares America's fighting men and women to answer their country's call.

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Customer Reviews

"An excellent book and a must-read for all students of Korean War history." • Marine Corps Gazette "An important case study of institutional adaptation." • Military Review "Hammes adds significantly to our understanding of the life-and-death struggle around Pusan to hold off the North Korean army until MacArthur could launch his amphibious invasion at Inchon. . . . Shows how the tenacity of this Marine brigade allowed them to emerge victorious against considerable odds." • Kenneth Hamburger, author of *Leadership in the Crucible: The Korean War Battles of Twin Tunnels and Chip'yong-ni* "Applying original research and rich personal experience in the Marine Corps, Colonel Hammes shows how Corps values and focused training counted more than combat experience and unit cohesion." • Allan R. Millett, author of *The Korean War, 1950-1951: They Came from the North*

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I have just finished this book. Based on the descriptions and some comments, I was ready to seriously criticize many of the statements. I need not do so. I would like to clear some points. No comment on the descriptions of the Brigade actions other than they are as they have been written before. Let me state that I served with H&S Co.1stBn.,5thMar.in the Brigade. The 'myth'that we

were led by experienced World War 2 veterans was very real to us. We 'Green' troops (I was a Sgt.but green), only knew that the Staff NCOs and most officers above 2ndLt. had served in the war. That was all we needed to know. Whether they had seen combat or not never entered our minds. I guess that's the Marine Ethos, Culture or whatever you want to call it. They were our leaders, they had served in the War. We knew that Col. Newton had been a POW. I did not know about the lack of combat experience until I read this book. Amazing, from the way they fought their commands, it's no wonder we believed they were experienced combat leaders. Mr Hammes makes a big point of the limited training during the 1949/1950 Winter. That is very true, as the 5thMar had just been organized in October. The only large operation I remember from that period was the airlift to San Nicholas Island. However there was a substantial trained 'cadre' on hand when the Brigade was formed. Many of us had been with the Division since 1947. I joined 1/6 in Sept. 1947. In October that became BLT-6, 2/6 became BLT-7 (BLT-6 became 1/5, 7 became 2/5 in 1949). From that point on through 1948 and 1949 we were constantly in the field or participating in amphibious operations, real or simulated, MajGen.Erskine made sure of that. Granted, there was turnover as men were discharged. I don't recall the turmoil of 'Summer transfers'. That was probably an officer thing, because we did have at least three battalion commanders that I can recall before Col.Newton. If I recall correctly one was LtCol.H.P.Crowe.All in all, a fine book though.EDIT- I'd like to add one more item. During the dark days of '48'49 when the fate of the Corps was being argued in upper echelons, there were many discussions in the barracks. Primary among these were what were to be the troops options. We (PFCs, Cpls and Sgts)generally felt there were only two. We would be released from service or absorbed into the Army. The second option was not acceptable. We were prepared to DESERT rather than serve in the Army. Some had made inquiries about the French Foreign Legion. We felt the situation very seriously, but we never mentioned any of our thoughts to our senior NCOs.

T.X. Hammes has accomplished several things with this excellent work: 1) he has clarified and improved upon the historical narrative of the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade; 2) he has provided an excellent history of the first real Marine Corps air-ground task force; and 3) he has added a response to the question, "what is Marine culture?" Hammes, a historian by training, does not spare the details as he builds the story of the deployment of the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade. In many ways his work is reminiscent of Brute Krulak's First to Fight in that it recounts the narrative of the inter-war period and efforts to eliminate the Marine Corps. However, the story is told in a way that helps the reader understand why the success of the Brigade was so astonishing. Not only was it

understrength, undertrained, and under equipped, it also reflected the bare remnants of a Marine Corps on the congressional chopping block. One gets the sense that had Korean War not erupted, and the Brigade not been successful, that the Marine Corps might not exist today. I was pleasantly surprised to discover a detailed narrative of Marine Corps aviation and close-air support, and the efforts to integrate the Marine air-ground team. It is clear how the Marine Corps evolved its current doctrine from this experience. Finally, Hammes addresses Marine Corps culture throughout the narrative and then in a brief conclusion. He touches upon some of Craig Cameron's themes, alluding to the myth that grew up around the Brigade in the post war years. Hammes clarifies the historical record, pointing out that the Brigade was not formed around a core of experienced WWII Marines, that the Marines in the Brigade were inadequately trained, and that they were poorly equipped. Revealing these truths, however, does little to undermine the record of the Brigade. Instead, it brings its accomplishments into sharper light. While Hammes does not take on Cameron nose-to-nose, he does provide a different angle to the idea of myth and legend in military organizations: these myths and legends have a distinct purpose. They encourage Marines to fight and not leave their buddies behind. This is a great read for Marines, for students of warfare, and particularly for students of the Korean War.

I felt the outstanding contribution of this book is Col. Hammes' in depth recounting of the pre-war status of the Marine Corps and the 5th Marine Regiment, and a more fully articulated review of the actual combat experience of the leaders that made up the Brigade. Previous histories, while acknowledging the ad hoc construction and deployment of the Brigade, have credited the unit's stellar performance at the Pusan Perimeter battles to the deep combat experience of the officers and senior NCOs that provided its leadership. Col. Hammes' describes in some detail how many of the key leaders at battalion and company level had seen little to no combat in WWII. This fuller understanding of the men who went to war at the Pusan Perimeter in August 1950 makes their incredible combat performance that much more remarkable, and bears testimony to the effectiveness of the doctrine, combat training and indoctrination (which is really what Marine Corps boot camp is) inculcated into the Marines who fought in southern Korea in August 1950.

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