

1941 - 1948

“...Since 1775 the United States Marines have upheld a fine tradition of service to their country. They are doing so today. I am confident they will continue to do so.” - President Franklin D. Roosevelt



CHAPTER | FOUR

TRAINING FOR VICTORY



World War II caused the largest expansion of recruit training in the history of Parris Island. Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 the recruit age was lowered from 18 to 17 and enlistment periods were extended from three years to the duration of the war.

On 16 December, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had increased the authorized strength of the Marine Corps from 75,000 to 104,000. In order to house the horde of incoming personnel, some 430 pre-fabricated buildings were assembled. Of these, 58 Personnel Barracks (PB) and 240 Quonset huts were located at the recruit depot; while 42 PB and 90 Quonset huts sprung up at the rifle range. Each PB had a capacity of 64 men; each Quonset could house 16 men. With the expansion of the depot facilities, the number of recruit battalions was increased from 4 to 12.

Initially training was reduced from eight to four weeks before expanding to seven weeks. By war's end recruits received 16 weeks of training. Within two months of Pearl Harbor the numbers of recruits grew from 2,869 in four battalions to greater than 15,000 in 13 battalions. By February 1944, the commandant approved a 16-week training schedule, with eight weeks of basic training and eight weeks of field training.

Parris Island established an elementary school for men lacking formal education, but possession of a certain level of mental ability. During its operation, the Parris Island school processed about 1,000 men to the equivalent of a sixth grade education. Parris Island was also home to schools for gunnery and rocketry, field kitchen, cooks and bakers, drill instructors, barrage balloons, NCOs, dental technicians, recruiters, field music and band.

Parris Island graduates departing Yemassee train station pictured right, circa 1944.





Besides recruit training, the area was home to a number of other commands, including Page Field, Barrage Balloon and Glider Units, Women Reserves, and Defense Battalions on Parris Island. (pictured here)

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PARRIS ISLAND WWII

1941

The war results in tremendous expansion, and on 1 December, Page Field is upgraded to a Marine Corps Air Station.

1941

Rifleman's Creed is introduced.
"This is my rifle..."

1942

Recruits begin using the M1-Garand





President Roosevelt visits Parris Island, 14 April 1943.

1943

The first printing of the newspaper "The Parris Island Boot."



1945

14 August, brings an end to World War II. A total of 204,509 recruits passed through Parris Island.

1946

First Drill Instructor Course is established.

1946

1 December, the post is designated Marine Corps Recruit Depot.



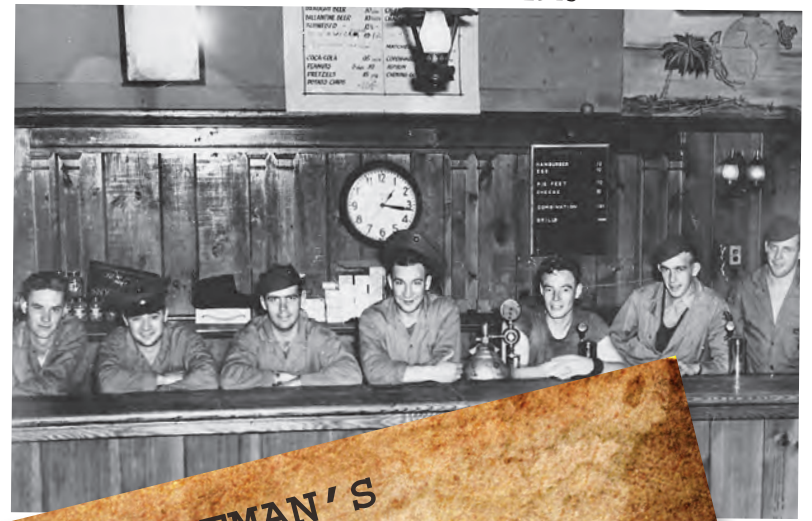
Barrage balloon Page Field circa 1941



'The Boot' cartoon 1945



Enlisted club circa 1945



Woman Reserves circa 1945



RIFLEMAN'S CREED

(1941)

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life.

My rifle, without me, is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill me. I will... before he shoots me. I will... My rifle and I know that what counts in this war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, nor the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit...

My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready. I will keep my rifle clean and ready, even as I am clean and ready. We will become part of each other. We will...

Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life. It, until victory is America's enemy.

Actor and recruit Sterling Hayden circa 1942



Bayonet instruction circa 1945





In 1943 the 39-target range was expanded and three 50-target ranges and a mechanical, .45 automatic pistol range added. In early 1943 the M1 Rifle came into use at the base, ending the 28-year tenure of the '03 Springfield Rifle.

Headquarters Building, 1942.





Page Field

Parris Island aviation began well before the more recognizable title, 'Page Field' was adopted. From 1919 to 1921, a Marine aviation detachment was stationed on Parris Island. The Marines used an abandoned rifle range training area as their airstrip and nearby Ballast Creek as a seaplane ramp and entry point. It existed near what today is known as the 'DI Bridge.' There were several small landplane and seaplane hangars for storing the various DH-4 bombers, standard biplanes, pontoon and sea floatplanes that were in training at that time. In the 1920s, a mooring station was added to the airstrip in order to accommodate the 'lighter-than-air ships' currently commissioned by the U.S. Navy.

At the end of World War I, congress authorized 1,020 men for Marine aviation and thus established permanent air stations at Quantico, Parris Island and San Diego. The U.S. began to take shape as a global power with its Marines serving as the preferred force for military intervention. With increasing flying technologies, Marine aviation became a desired commodity.

In 1933, civilian laborers, hired as part of the various public works programs in the 1930s, prepared the ground for the construction of what would become known as 'Page Field.' Most of the work was done without heavy machinery, using instead mule teams

and hand tools. By early 1934, Page Field was complete, named after Captain Arthur H. Page Jr. Page was a Marine pilot who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for successfully completing the longest recorded blind flight as pilot in an 2U-1 airplane from Omaha, Nebraska, to Anacostia, D.C., a distance of approximately one thousand miles, through rain storms and clouds and negotiating the entire flight in one day. Captain Page's pioneering, scientific study and successful accomplishments have contributed much toward the advancement of military aeronautics.

Page Field was a fully functional Marine air station. It was primarily built to provide tactical squadrons with a site for operational training such as night landings, ground firing and gunnery training. By 1943, Page Field had a full air crew with maintenance and crash fire rescue teams. In addition, 200 Women Marine reservists were activated to support the war effort and could be seen going about their daily chores, delivering mail and working on the aircraft.



Aerial view of Page Field, circa 1941

Within a few more years, new concrete taxis, mess hall, a personnel exchange and new control towers were built. At its height of operation, Page Field had four asphalt runways, with its longest at 6,000 feet long. Squadrons from various Marine fighter groups came regularly to keep up their training cycles for the war effort. (Troop formation on Page Field runway pictured right, circa 1950.)

By the mid-1950s, both WWII and the Korean War were over and the need for an additional airstrip was no longer needed at Parris Island. Page Field was closed and left to the use of the Recruit Training Command aboard the island.

Since its closing, Page Field has been used several times to conduct temporary helicopter exercise landings and various unit-training evolutions. It is now primarily used to support recruit training. It houses 'The Crucible' stations and events, which offer recruits additional secluded field training opportunities aboard the depot.



Glider at Page Field

An Airfield Is Born... Then Dies

Page Field Runway Serves As Reminder

By Pfc DAVE HULL
Staff Writer

In early 1941 and the southern part of Parris Island suddenly became the scene of much intense activity as an airfield is being built.

First crews of laborers roll with pick and shovel to

the work for many days. They bring in equipment

and do the ground work which the building of

the airfield will take many days.

Some of the boys who are working on the

airfield are: [names]

[names]

[names]

[names]

[names]

[names]

[names]

[names]

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