

**The Development of Marine Corps Junior Officers during the Interwar
Period and its Relevance Today**

by

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AY 2010

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 13-05-2010		2. REPORT TYPE SAMS Monograph		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) July 2009 – May 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Development of Marine Corps Junior Officers during the Interwar Period and its Relevance Today			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Major James T. Martin (United States Marine Corps)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) 250 Gibbon Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2134			8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Foreign Military Studies Office & Command and General Staff College Director, FMSO 731 McClellan Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) FMSO / CGSC		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Generals Lewis Walt, Raymond Davis, and Lieutenant General Victor Krulak had highly successful Marine Corps careers beginning with their commissioning in the 1930s. The purpose of this monograph is to examine their development as young officers from pre-commissioning until they assumed battalion command and to identify common trends potentially applicable to the Marine Corps officer procurement and development system today. The methodology for this study included a review of the officers' Official Marine Corps personal records, interviews, and a document search at the United States Marine Corps' Archives, History Division and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation. The research examines the pre-commissioning education, activities and experiences of each officer prior to joining the Marine Corps, their wide and varied experiences as young officers in the operational forces, and the impact of mentorship on the officers' early careers. The officers commissioned in the 1930s benefited from several characteristics that are different from today's newly commissioned officers. First, they had a wide range of experiences prior to commissioning, including military experience in the Reserve Officer Training Corps or the National Guard. Second, their first tours in the operating forces provided them with a multitude of opportunities to lead Marines both in the United States and abroad. Finally, due to the small size of the officer corps, and the nature of the service, a very active, yet informal mentoring network not only guided the young officers, but also provided them opportunities. This monograph contains three specific recommendations for the Marine Corps in the development of junior officers. First, the Marine Corps needs to improve the formal aspects of developing junior officers through a refocus and re-emphasis of the Supplemental MOS program and an implementation of a pathway for young officers to observe units in action prior to them assuming their first operational billet. Second, formalize and incorporate a program to expose young officers to the responsibilities and duties from marines who are veterans of the current environment. Third, increase the senior officers' and staff non-commissioned officers' education and awareness of the importance of mentoring to the development of junior officers and encourage the development of meaningful mentoring relationships between the junior and senior officers.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS United States Marine Corps, officer development, officer education, pre-commissioning education, Lewis Walt, Raymond Davis, Victor Krulak, mentoring, supplemental MOS program					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: (U)		17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT (U)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 42	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Stefan J. Banach COL, U.S. Army	
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)			c. THIS PAGE (U)	19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code) 913-758-3302

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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Title of Monograph: The Development of Marine Corps Junior Officers during the Interwar Period and its Relevance Today

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Abstract

The Development of Marine Corps Junior Officers in the Interwar Period and its Relevance Today
by Major James T. Martin, USMC, 43 pages.

Generals Lewis Walt, Raymond Davis, and Lieutenant General Victor Krulak had highly successful Marine Corps careers beginning with their commissioning in the 1930s. The purpose of this monograph is to examine their development as young officers from pre-commissioning until they assumed battalion command and to identify common trends potentially applicable to the Marine Corps officer procurement and development system today.

The methodology for this study included a review of the officers' Official Marine Corps personal records, interviews, and a document search at the United States Marine Corps' Archives, History Division and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

The research examines the pre-commissioning education, activities and experiences of each officer prior to joining the Marine Corps, their wide and varied experiences as young officers in the operational forces, and the impact of mentorship on the officers' early careers.

The officers commissioned in the 1930s benefited from several characteristics that are different from today's newly commissioned officers. First, they had a wide range of experiences prior to commissioning, including military experience in the Reserve Officer Training Corps or the National Guard. Second, their first tours in the operating forces provided them with a multitude of opportunities to lead Marines both in the United States and abroad. Finally, due to the small size of the officer corps, and the nature of the service, a very active, yet informal mentoring network not only guided the young officers, but also provided them opportunities.

This monograph contains three specific recommendations for the Marine Corps in the development of junior officers. First, the Marine Corps needs to improve the formal aspects of developing junior officers through a refocus and re-emphasis of the Supplemental MOS program and an implementation of a pathway for young officers to observe units in action prior to them assuming their first operational billet. Second, formalize and incorporate a program to expose young officers to the responsibilities and duties from marines who are veterans of the current environment. Third, increase the senior officers' and staff non-commissioned officers' education and awareness of the importance of mentoring to the development of junior officers and encourage the development of meaningful mentoring relationships between the junior and senior officers.

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Introduction

Of the many men commissioned by the United States Marine Corps in the 1930s, three men stand out as leaders through three wars and were integral to the development of the Marine Corps into the force it is today. Generals Lewis Walt, Raymond Davis, and Lieutenant General Victor Krulak represent that generation and are well known in the Marine Corps for their professionalism and achievements. As America moves into a period of persistent conflict, it serves the Marine Corps well to examine how these leaders developed, and perhaps, re-discover those qualities and how the Marine Corps can foster and capitalize on them.

In 1938, Major Victor Krulak offered to take the Commander of the Atlantic Fleet on a ride in a new experimental landing craft. Admiral Ernest King agreed to the trip, but Krulak broke the amphibious tractor on a reef forcing the Admiral to abandon the craft and walk to shore. Five years later, the same marine officer led a battalion of Para-Marines on a diversionary raid onto the island of Choiseul, in support of Operation Cherry Blossom, the invasion of Bougainville. For six days, he and his marines deceived the Japanese into believing this raid was a division-sized amphibious assault. Although wounded, and with overwhelming Japanese force closing in on his battalion, he successfully executed his planned withdrawal from Bougainville. This ended one of the most successful battalion sized raids conducted during World War II. For his leadership and gallantry, the Marine Corps awarded Lieutenant Colonel Krulak the Navy Cross, the second highest award for valor in combat. Additionally, during his time in the Pacific theater, he watched with satisfaction as every amphibious assault in World War II used the same craft that he experimented with and developed five years earlier.¹

Captain Lewis Walt landed on the island of Tulagi as a company commander with the 1st Raider Battalion as part of the initial Guadalcanal Campaign in August 1942. As a company commander, he led

¹ United States Marine Corps, "Official Biography of Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak," <https://slsp.manpower.usmc.mil/gosa/biographies> (accessed September 13, 2009).

repeated attacks against fortified Japanese positions. During these attacks, he exposed himself to enemy fire on multiple occasions to determine the location of the enemy. For his gallantry, the Marine Corps awarded him the Silver Star, the third highest United States military award for valor in combat. With operations on Tulagi complete and the island secure, the 1st Raider Battalion joined the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal. Shortly after arriving on Guadalcanal, the Marine Corps promoted Walt to major, and the new commander of the 5th Marine Regiment, Colonel Edson, selected him to become the regimental operations officer. In October of 1942, Colonel Edson ordered Major Walt to command 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment when the former commander executed orders back the United States. Walt commanded the battalion for the duration of the Guadalcanal campaign. After departing Guadalcanal, Walt, then a junior major, became the regimental executive officer when a more senior officer joined the regiment and took command of the battalion. Early in the invasion of Cape Gloucester, the regimental commander again ordered him to command a decimated battalion that lost its commander and executive officer in the middle of a decisive attack. He immediately took command, and through his direct and fearless leadership, the battalion seized its objective, a ridge overlooking the beachhead. In honor of his bravery, the division commander named the critical ridge "Walt's Ridge." Furthermore, the division commander recommended him for the Navy Cross. In less than a year, he progressed from company command to commanding two different infantry battalions in combat.² He secured a reputation across the Marine Corps as a fearless officer who was calm and decisive under the most arduous conditions.

Captain Ray Davis arrived on Guadalcanal commanding an anti-aircraft battery of .50 caliber, 20 mm and 40 mm machine guns.³ Not content to watch the fighting from the rear, he sought an opportunity to join the infantry and, sixteen months later, led the 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment in the assault on Peleliu. Determined and effective Japanese defense coupled with formable terrain caused his battalion

² United States Marine Corps, "Official Biography of General Lewis W. Walt," http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/HD/Whos_Who.htm#VWX (accessed 13 September 2009).

³ Raymond G Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, first ed. (North Carolina: Research Triangle Publishing, 1995), 45-46.

suffered 71 percent casualties. The Marine Corps awarded Davis a Purple Heart for wounds received in combat and a Navy Cross for his exceptional combat leadership.⁴ Six years later, Davis again commanded an infantry battalion, this time in Korea, and received the Medal of Honor for his personal bravery and leadership during the Chosin Reservoir campaign.⁵ Within the Marine Corps, his name remains synonymous with combat leadership and ruthless determination.

The story of the United States Marine Corps in combat during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam is a story of officers and non-commissioned officers leading and motivating young marines to achieve amazing results. Krulak, Walt, and Davis are typical of a generation of leaders who forged a fighting force the world considered elite for the remainder of the twentieth century. They entered the service during the inter war period of the 1930s, a time defined by small wars, incursions, reduced budgets, and a paucity of equipment. Yet, when called to lead marines in the Pacific, Korea, and Vietnam, they were ready. What were the essential components of their development as military leaders and in their early careers that contributed to their long-term professional achievements?

This question is still relevant today. The modern Marine Corps is in a period of constant conflict and will need to continue developing leaders of this quality and caliber. By examining the early career progression and development of officers in the inter-war period, the Marine Corps can re-discovered the practices to develop versatile, dynamic and brave leaders in the vein of Krulak, Walt and Davis. These men had natural talent, and good timing, but were also products of their environment. The era in which they grew up, the small Marine Corps that they joined and matured in, and the fast arriving world war influenced them and ultimately made them successful, adaptive leaders.

By examining the careers of these officers and identifying common characteristics, one can discover lessons and techniques relevant to the current Marine Corps officer development process. Their early career progression disclose a variety of pre-commissioning experiences, a broad array of

⁴ United States Marine Corps "Official Biography of General Raymond G. Davis," <https://slsp.manpower.usmc.mil/gosa/biographies> (accessed September 13,2009).

⁵ Ibid.

development opportunities as junior officers, and an active mentorship program that enabled them to achieve much success, led marines to great victories, and guide the Marine Corps through three wars.

Formative Years

The men in this study were born between 1913 and 1915; the beginning of a generation referred to as the “G.I. Generation” or more recently, the “Greatest Generation.”⁶ They grew up witnessing the rise of the United States in the “Roaring Twenties” and matured into men as the nation suffered through the Great Depression. The experiences of growing up in the rich and booming 1920s, and the hard, lean times of the 1930s, shaped their entire outlook, conduct, and drive to succeed.⁷ These times and life experiences laid the foundation of all they would become as men and marine officers.

All three willingly joined the Marine Corps, to not only serve, but also to have a guaranteed, steady paycheck in the middle of the Great Depression. Prior to joining the Marine Corps, none truly understood the mission, duties and responsibilities of the Marine Corps. Each came from a different background and upbringing, but all shared common characteristics that shaped and benefited them as they started their careers. All enjoyed academic success, participated in extracurricular activities, and pre-commissioning military service prior to entering the Marine Corps. The officers in this study shared little in their geographic, economic, and educational backgrounds, but had overarching commonalities in the formative years. One grew up on a farm, one in a small southern town, and one from a city.

Krulak was born in Denver, Colorado in 1913 and he spent most of his early life there, except for a short, but formative, time in San Diego, California.⁸ He did not come from a military family, nor was he encouraged to pursue a military career. During his time in San Diego, he watched the naval operations in the harbor, and that made him pursue an appointment to the United States Naval Academy. Walt was born

⁶ William Strauss and Neil Howe. *Millennials: Raising the Next Generation* (New York: Random House, 2000), 264-268.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Richard Harold Hoy, "Victor H. Krulak: A Marine's Biography," *Masters Thesis* (San Diego: San Diego State, 1974), 5.

in 1913 and raised in Kansas. His upbringing was hardscrabble; he worked on his family ranch, and grew up in an austere environment. He joined the Marine Corps because he wanted to serve his country and the Marine Corps offered him a regular commission, while the Army did not.⁹ Davis was born and raised just outside Atlanta, Georgia in 1915 and grew up comfortably in a small town, walking to school and hunting and fishing. He did not have a familial military tradition, and sought out the Marine Corps for the Army did not offer him a regular commission when he graduated college.¹⁰ While diverse in their upbringing, these men were all high achievers in academics, athletics and extracurricular activities during their formative years. Additionally, they witnessed the rise of America in the 1920s, and lived as young men in the trying times of the 1930s.

Academic and Extracurricular Achievement

None of these men suffered from indolence during their developing years. All achieved much success and as young men growing up, they share much in common. First, all had significant academic achievement in high school and college. Second, all were involved in organized activities and assumed leadership roles in those organizations. Finally, they each had military experience prior to joining the Marine Corps in the National Guard, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or as a Midshipman at the United States Naval Academy. Their career successes resulted from these many aspects of their development as young men and are useful in the evaluation of future officers. An examination of each man's formative years reflects that, while different in experiences, they shared the same traits of ambition, determination, and leadership.

Krulak's introduction to the military and to the naval service began at the naval academy. The years he spent there were the most influential years of his life as he matured physically, mentally and academically. He entered the naval academy when he was sixteen years old and graduated in 1934 with a

⁹ Lawrence C. Walt, email correspondence concerning recollections of L.W. Walt, to author, March 5, 2010.

¹⁰ Davis, 23-29.

degree in engineering.¹¹ In addition to the normal rigors of the school, he became very involved in the varsity crew rowing team. He eventually rose to a leadership position, becoming the coxswain for the varsity team, and in his final year served as the team captain. Throughout his last two years at the naval academy, the naval officers on the staff strongly encouraged him to pursue a commission in the United States Marine Corps. These officers felt he did not have the appropriate potential, discipline and intellect to be a naval line officer.¹² At the same time, the marine officers on the staff actively recruited and encouraged him to pursue a Marine Corps commission. While it is discernible in his writings and interviews that he struggled with some aspects of academy life, it is plain that the attributes of his experiences at the naval academy outweighed the deficiencies. He viewed his experiences at the naval academy as extremely valuable and formative for his development as a Marine Corps officer.¹³ While Krulak and Walt were the same age and their formative years were much different, they shared similar attributes on the road to commissioning

Walt performed exceptionally in high school and college; he was highly successful in academics, athletics, and extracurricular activities all while having a job outside of his education. During high school, he served as the captain of the football and wrestling teams, achieved academic honors, and served as the president of the student government. In 1932, He graduated from high school in Fort Collins, Colorado, and graduated with honors from Colorado State University in 1936.¹⁴ While attending Colorado State, he played football, joined the ROTC detachment, served as the president of chemistry club, and the captain of Scabbard and Blade, a joint military service honor society.¹⁵ He did not spend much idle time in high school and college, and continually challenged himself in extracurricular athletic and academic pursuits.

¹¹ Hoy, 6.

¹² Frank M Benis, "Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript," United States Marine Corps History Division (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1973), 1.

¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴ "Official Biography of General Lewis W. Walt."

¹⁵ Ibid.

His academic and athletic accomplishment in concert with his involvement in ROTC provided him a substantial foundation with which to develop as a man and officer.

Davis shared many of the same experiences as Walt, and well represented the generation of men eager to find consistent work during the height of the Great Depression. He was an excellent student in high school and college, and worked many hours outside of school to supplement his income. In 1933, he graduated from Atlanta Technical High School where he wrestled on the varsity team, served as a member of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and a member of the National Honor Society.¹⁶ Upon graduation from high school, he spent a year working to save money for college. He attended Georgia Technical University and received a degree in chemical engineering in 1938. While he had an interest in military service, he joined the ROTC detachment to pay for his education. To that end, he opened a bakery that unfortunately failed within three months. This forced his return to his previous job to supplement his income in addition to his ROTC stipend.¹⁷ Despite financial difficulties, he remained active throughout his high school and college years in both academics and extra-curricular activities.

The subject officer's activities in their adolescence and teen years tell much of their development as future leaders in the Corps. As part of the G.I. generation, they were accustomed to hard work, working as a team, and had a civic mindset. They were active, eager participants in a multitude of activities ranging from college football to the chemistry club, and the three men had some formal exposure to the military during their formative years. This common exposure to military service and experience gave each man a common foundation to develop as officers.

¹⁶ Davis, 23-24.

¹⁷ Raymond G Davis, "Official Military Personnel File of Raymond G. Davis: Statement of Prior Service Education and Employment in U.S. Marine Corps Officer Qualification Record," 1938, United States Marine Corps Archive, St Louis.

Pre-commissioning Military Experience

All three officers had some type of military service prior to accepting a commission in the Marine Corps. These experiences formed their early understanding of military service and shaped their personalities for the rest of their lives. They gave each officer a context of military service and leadership prior to beginning their Marine Corps career.

Krulak spent four years immersed in the military life at the naval academy that prepared him greatly for life as a marine officer. By the very nature of that experience, he had to acclimate very quickly to prevent his dismissal from the naval academy. Additionally, his introduction and exposure to many officers on the staff assisted him in developing his personal leadership philosophy, and presented him with many examples of good and bad leadership. While he attended the naval academy, he did not initially desire to join the Marine Corps, but decided to do so after his exposure to and interaction with several marine officers at the naval academy. The two most influential officers were Captain Frank Geogtte and Colonel Holland Smith who he observed and worked with during his years at school.¹⁸ The naval academy produced some of the best marine officers of the generation, but many officers, like Walt, came from a different source, specifically the National Guard and ROTC.

Walt's forty-year military career began at age seventeen when he enlisted in a Colorado National Guard artillery unit. He thoroughly enjoyed that experience and became very comfortable with the military lifestyle, rising in rank from Private to First Sergeant in six years.¹⁹ He developed a strong desire to serve in the military and felt it was a citizen's requirement to serve his country. For the rest of his career, he accredited his army service with giving him a great understanding and expertise of machine guns and artillery.²⁰ Presumably, his rapid rise in the ranks also gave him experience and insight into leadership. Upon starting at Colorado State University, he enrolled in the ROTC program to augment his

¹⁸ Benis, 4,45.

¹⁹ Lawrence C. Walt, email correspondence concerning recollections of L.W. Walt , to author, February 9, 2010.

²⁰ Ibid.

income to pay for college. During his senior year, he became the cadet colonel of the detachment. Upon graduation, he received a commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Army Field Artillery Reserve. He also received numerous job offers including a football contract with the Chicago Bears, and a chemical engineer contract with a major energy company. Unsure of what he wanted to do and keenly interested in serving his country, he sought advice from Dr. Charles A. Lory, the Colorado State University President.²¹ Dr. Lory saw a world war on the horizon and recommended he choose the military option. As a ROTC Distinguished Graduate, the Marine Corps offered him a regular commission but the United States Army only offered him the reserve commission.²² These six years of military experience helped Walt develop a solid understanding of military life and prepared him well for commissioning.

Similar to Walt, Davis had extensive military experience prior to receiving his commission. During high school, he participated in the JROTC for three years and served in ROTC at Georgia Tech for four years.²³ In his senior year of college, he realized he would not get a regular United States Army commission and would not secure reliable employment after graduation. With guidance from the ROTC detachment, he interviewed with the Navy ROTC detachment on campus and subsequently the NROTC element named him the Marine Candidate for the class of 1938.²⁴ He had multiple years of experience in a military organization prior to accepting his commission. These years of instruction on basic military information gave him the insight and confidence as he began his career. When he arrived in Philadelphia at The Basic School, the Marine Corps officer entry level training, he understood basic discipline and operation of a military organization even if he did not fully understand the Marine Corps mission.

These officers accomplished much in their years prior to commissioning. The educational and extracurricular activities in conjunction with their military service in ROTC or at the naval academy gave them great experience and insight as they started their careers. The previous generation had won World

²¹ "Colorado State Chronology," http://www.president.colostate.edu/pdf/CSUchronology_web.pdf, (accessed April 21, 2010).

²² Walt, email correspondence concerning recollections of L.W. Walt, to author, March 5, 2010.

²³ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

War One and was responsible for the booming American economy of the 1920s, so the young men knew of the greatness of America and all of the stories of valor in battle. They were serious young men ready to leave their mark, serve their country, and believed in the greatness of the United States. These officers define the earliest part of the G.I. Generation, a generation that experienced both success and failure, and were driven to succeed. The impact of these experiences served as the foundation for their development as junior officers that not only reflected in their performance during operations in the Pacific Theater during World War II, but later in Korean and Vietnam as they continued to serve. There are distinct parallels between that generation of officer and generation of officer that will shortly join the Marine Corps. The attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the economic recession in the 1990s and 2000s will all influence future officers as they develop potentially in a similar vein. The Marine Corps needs to consider these components as they recruit future officers.

Early Officer Experiences

By 1944, Krulak, Walt, and Davis were successful battalion commanders, leading marines in combat, and confirming their potential for future service. Their rise to success is marked with several common themes including the education at The Basic School, the wide and varying experiences during their first tour, the latitude to make decisions and mistakes, and their professional curiosity. The most dominant early career experience all three officers shared was experiencing combat as observers. Walt and Krulak observed the Japanese fighting the Chinese as part of the American security detachment at the international settlement in Shanghai. Davis observed the infantry fighting on Guadalcanal as an anti-aircraft officer during the initial 1st Marine Division invasion. These experiences introduced them to the violence and complexity of infantry combat from a detached point of view. Krulak and Walt considered

their opportunities to observe combat very important in their development as marine officers, and Davis's time observing on Guadalcanal led him to transfer to the infantry.²⁵

Regardless of occupational specialty, all marine officers share common training experiences at The Basic School. This course provides the fundamental indoctrination into the Marine Corps and provides all officers with leadership skills essential for their first few assignments. In the 1930s, the Marine Corps was a small force. Few lieutenants joined the force each year, ranging from a low of thirty (Krulak) to ninety-two (Walt). The increase of officers attending The Basic School were the result of three things, an overhaul of the course curriculum, a combination of classes and the expansion of the armed forces to meet the growing global threat. Despite these changes, the education remained unchanged; the officers continued to benefit from the same specific formal and informal instruction used to develop junior officers. As the earliest exposure to the Marine Corps, The Basic School was the immediate and defining experience for many officers. The most apparent educational trend during that period was that the formal instruction included much more informal mentoring and practical instruction by the instructors to the lieutenants. For example, Krulak, Walt and Davis each regarded this informal instruction and mentoring at The Basic School as the most instructive and important part of the curriculum.²⁶

Krulak's naval academy education prepared him well for military life and leadership, so his initial exposure to the Marine Corps was not entirely new. He described The Basic School as practical and retrospective in comparison to the naval academy education.²⁷ He identified this as the most valuable instruction to be the war-fighting and leadership lessons taught informally and based on the instructors' experiences in South America and France.²⁸ In 1934, he graduated eighth out of thirty lieutenants in his

²⁵ Benis, 36; Gordon, "Oral Interview of Lieutenant General L.W. Walt, United States Marine Corps (Ret), " *Columbia University Oral History Project*, New York: 1973. 4; Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 61-62.

²⁶ Benis, 7; Gordon. 45-46; Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 107.

²⁷ Benis, 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

class.²⁹ Following his graduation, the format and size of the classes changed. Walt began The Basic School with a much larger class of lieutenants and an expanded format and duration.

In 1935, the curriculum at The Basic School expanded to incorporate more field time and more emphasis on the duties of officers on Sea Duty.³⁰ Walt was a student in the second company to experience this new curriculum, which encompassed over 1000 hours of instruction.³¹ While his academic record reflects an average performance, he believed the informal teaching and influence of Captain Lewis B. Puller was essential to his development as an officer.³² He graduated in March 1937 finishing forty-fifth out of ninety-two Lieutenants.³³ He experienced the first expanded class at the Basic School and probably witnessed the difficulties of a school expanding their class size and curriculum.

Davis, the youngest officer in this study, attended The Basic School in 1939, experienced the matured curriculum, and benefited from the revision and improvements made over the previous years. His most significant recollections of The Basic School were the detailed instruction on leading and caring for troops. He was greatly impressed by the high quality of the instructors and his peers as officers and gentlemen. Many of these men would become lifelong friends and mentors as he started his career.³⁴ He ranked eighteenth out of a class of seventy-three lieutenants, graduated in May 1939 and reported to his first billet aboard ship, as an officer in a Marine Detachment.³⁵

The Basic School serves as the first evaluation of all marine lieutenants regardless of specialty. In the case of the officers in this study, their future success was not based on the quantitative scores, or school ranking. All three officers refer the importance of the informal instruction, the great value of

²⁹ USMC, "Official Military Personnel File of Victor H. Krulak: The Basic School Student Record of 2nd Lieutenant Victor H. Krulak," 1935, United States Marine Corps Archive, St Louis, 25.

³⁰ J.D. Hittle, "The Basic School Completes Another Year," *Marine Corps Gazette* 22, no. 2 (1938), 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

³² Walt, email correspondence concerning recollections of L.W. Walt, to author, February 9, 2010.

³³ USMC, "Official Military Personnel File of Lewis L. Walt: The Basic School Student Record of Walt, Lewis William," 1942, United States Marine Corps Archives, St. Louis.

³⁴ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 32-33.

³⁵ USMC, "Official Military Personnel File of Raymond G. Davis: Recapitulation of R.G Davis Basic School Transcript," 1939, United States Marine Corps Archive, St Louis.

forming an identity as a marine officer, and the establishment of relationships with their instructors and peers as the critical elements to their education at The Basic School.

Wide and Varied Experiences in their First Operational Tour

The time period from the officers' completion of The Basic School to their assumption of battalion command varied; Krulak had eight years of service while Walt and Davis each had six years of active service before assuming command. During that period, each of these officers had experiences in the operational force that shaped and developed them for their future service as commanders. In these early years, the officers served in various billets across the Marine Corps, formed their leadership style, and matured as officers. One of the most important aspects of their careers as junior officers was that their experiences were not limited to service in the infantry. The early careers of these officers are defined by overseas service and billets across varying occupational fields. The author believes that these experiences widened their collective understanding of the Marine Corps, and gave them a solid professional foundation as they continued their career.

Krulak, the most senior officer of the three, had the greatest time between commissioning and battalion command and his career progression, as a junior officer is the most diverse. Upon completion of The Basic School, he reported to his first duty station, where he served as the second in charge of a shipboard detachment aboard the USS Arizona.³⁶ This served as his first introduction to Marine Corps leadership and responsibility. Experienced marine captains or majors traditionally led the shipboard detachments and specifically selected staff non-commissioned officers were in charge of the multiple sections aboard the ships. The ship's detachments provided multiple services while underway including landing parties, operating anti-aircrafts guns, and serving as orderlies to the commanding officers. Without question, this exposure to competent and professional officers, staff non-commissioned officers and marines had a tremendous impact on Krulak. In late 1936, he received temporary orders back to the

³⁶ Hoy, 4.

United States Naval Academy as the crew coach. Ironically, some of those same naval officers who felt he did not have the constitution to become a naval officer requested from Headquarters Marine Corps that he return to the naval academy two years after he started his Marine Corps career. When the naval academy crew team's performance faltered, the athletic department remembered his expertise and knowledge on crew and requested the Marine Corps send the young lieutenant back to the naval academy on temporary duty to instruct and coach the team.³⁷ His orders were unusual for the time, but he had already established "name recognition" and the naval academy needed to improve the crew team.³⁸ He worked for seven months as the coach and then received orders to the 6th Marine Regiment as the engineer officer.³⁹ In 1937, he received orders to China as part of the security force at the international settlement.

Krulak viewed his tour in China as one of the most significant tours for his development as an officer. Upon arrival in China, he became the assistant regimental intelligence officer. During this period, he spent much of his time observing the Japanese and the Chinese fighting in and around the International Settlement. He also observed the Japanese conduct amphibious landing that greatly influenced his thinking in regards to infantry combat and amphibious operations. His performance in China during this period also greatly enhanced his reputation as an officer. In a rare addendum of his officer evaluation in 1938 written by the 4th Marine Regimental Commander, the colonel specifically recommended him for special duty due to his special interest, talent and ability concerning military intelligence work.⁴⁰ His tour in China developed his thoughts on amphibious operations and advanced his career through his strong professional performance.

³⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁸ Benis, 16.

³⁹ "Official Biography of Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak."

⁴⁰ F.B Col Price, "Official Military Personnel File of Victor H. Krulak: Note to Be Attached to V.H Krulak Fitness Report," 1937, United States Marine Corps Archive, St Louis.

In 1940, he received orders to Quantico and attended the Junior Course,⁴¹ re-introducing him to amphibious operations and his previous instructors from The Basic School.⁴² The lecture series on the landings at Gallipoli by Captain Gerald Thomas and the landing exercises he observed in Guam reinforced many of his personal ideas regarding amphibious operations that motivated him to follow-up on his observations of the Japanese amphibious operations, specifically their landing craft design.⁴³ Through his own initiative, he recovered the report he sent to Headquarters Marine Corps regarding the Japanese amphibious operations in China and personally took it General Holland Smith who followed up with the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Krulak's efforts led to a new design of landing craft that eventually became the basis of the craft used throughout World War II. Because of his previous relationship with General Smith from the naval academy, he soon found himself serving as Smith's aide when the General assumed command of the 2nd Marine Brigade. In addition to the aide posting, he served as the assistant brigade logistics officer.⁴⁴ The General deliberately placed Krulak in this billet, for it dealt specifically with the fielding and development of amphibious landing equipment and operations. As a young captain, he became one of the lead Marine Corps experts for landing craft design and amphibious operations. Beginning in January 1942, he participated in multiple amphibious landing exercises and continued to refine the newly formed amphibious doctrine. Because of his diligence and efforts as a staff officer, he was unable to receive orders for combat duty and had multiple requests for duty overseas denied.⁴⁵ Eventually, his personal appeal to General Smith brought him orders to the operating forces and eventually, battalion command. While Krulak served several years in a variety of billets across the Marine Corps, Walt spent his early years serving in the infantry, developing his leadership skills.

⁴¹ The Junior Course refers to the Marine Corps Career Captains Course, currently called The Expeditionary Warfare School.

⁴² Benis, 40.

⁴³ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁴ Hoy, 48.

⁴⁵ Hoy, 50.

From his initial tour as a second lieutenant to his assumption of battalion command, three themes describe Walt's first years in the Marine Corps: troop command, infantry service, and a wide spectrum of additional duties. On April 29, 1937, he joined the 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment at Marine Base San Diego and assumed command of the 2nd Machine Gun Platoon in Company D.⁴⁶ In August of that year, he deployed to Shanghai, China, as part of the security force for the International Settlement. Like Krulak, he observed the Japanese fighting the Chinese.⁴⁷ His perspectives of the fighting proved invaluable to his understanding of combat, and gave him a significantly high opinion of the individual Japanese soldier.⁴⁸ His unit departed China in February 1938 and he transferred to Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment for duty as a Platoon Commander.⁴⁹ He remained a platoon commander in Company B until June 1939 when he reported to the Marine Barracks, Guam as a guard company officer.⁵⁰ He spent over two years serving as a platoon commander in an infantry battalion before receiving orders to another troop command billet at the Marine Barracks. His first tour experiences of deploying to China, observing infantry combat between the Chinese and Japanese, conducting multiple shipboard and amphibious exercises, and learning to lead marines developed him into a proficient junior officer and tactical leader.

From June 1939 until June 1941, Walt served as a platoon commander at the Marine Barracks, Naval Station Guam. In addition to his duties as a platoon commander, he assumed multiple duties including the recreation officer, rifle range officer, and the deputy commissioner of immigration and customs collection.⁵¹ These duties forced Walt to learn the Marine Corps and United States Government's processes and procedures for administrative paperwork.

⁴⁶ USMC, "Official Military Personnel File of Lewis L. Walt: The Basic School Student Record of Walt, Lewis William."

⁴⁷ Gordon, 4.

⁴⁸ Walt, email correspondence concerning recollections of L.W. Walt, February 9, 2010.

⁴⁹ USMC, "Official Military Personnel File of Lewis L. Walt: The Basic School Student Record of Walt, Lewis William," 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁵¹ Ibid., 2.

In June 1941, he proceeded to Quantico, Virginia for duty as a company commander at the Marine Corps Officer Candidate School. Multiple units were arriving and establishing in Quantico during the summer of 1941, and many opportunities existed for officers to assume troop command. Within a year, he assumed command of a company in the 1st Raider Battalion and was preparing his company for offensive operations against the Japanese. Troop leadership billets and service in the infantry dominated the first five years of his career. Moreover, he had a series of additional duties that not only enhanced his technical knowledge, but also gave him significant administrative experience. The combination of these experiences greatly prepared him for his future.

As the junior officer in this study, Davis had the shortest and most unique career path of the three officers for World War II and the exigencies of service quickly raised him to battalion command. Nonetheless, his outstanding reputation as a proficient officer and personal connections attributed to his rise to battalion command. Upon completion of TBS in 1939, he reported for sea duty aboard the USS Portland, as the second in command of the Marine Detachment.⁵² Along with the primary duties of operating the ships anti-aircraft batteries, he also assumed additional duties as the marksmanship instructor, ships laundry officer, and shore patrol leader.⁵³ In May 1940, he applied for the Base Defense Weapons Course at Quantico. This course trained officers to serve in the marine defense battalions. Davis, with his experience from sea duty and his interest in gunnery, thought a follow tour in the Defense Battalions would be interesting. Midway through the course, he realized he was not interested in joining a Defense Battalion and volunteered for assignment to the 1st Marine Division.⁵⁴ In June 1941, he received orders to the 1st Marine Division and he became an anti-aircraft officer within the Special Weapons Battalion.⁵⁵ In this role, he participated in the landing at Guadalcanal and operated his guns around Henderson Airfield. Although under shelling by Japanese naval gunfire and bombings by Japanese

⁵² Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁵⁴ Joe Guttman, "Interview: Three-War Marine Hero," *Military History* 15, no. 4 (1997): 43.

⁵⁵ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 41.

aircraft, he did not participate in any of the direct infantry fights on Guadalcanal. Yet, due to the small size of the Guadalcanal perimeter, he observed most of the infantry fighting that occurred on the island. With the relief of the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal and the refitting of the division in Australia, Davis remained with the 1st Special Weapons Battalion and became the executive officer. During the preparation for the next invasion of New Gloucester, the 1st Marine Division ordered his units detached to the infantry regiments, leaving him in a battalion headquarters with no troops to command. He approached Colonel Puller, the commander of the 1st Marine Regiment and his former instructor from The Basic School, looking to find a “meaningful” billet of the upcoming invasion. Colonel Puller, who always looked for talented people, brought him along as a staff officer serving within the regimental headquarters.⁵⁶ On 8 April 1944, Davis assumed command of 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment during operations on Cape Gloucester, which he retained through the invasion of Peliliu.⁵⁷

The rise to battalion command for the three officers was very different in time, billets and locations. Yet, the similarities of troop command, overseas service and different billets outside of the infantry provided them with a strong foundation as they commanded battalion in combat and beyond. These formative years operating across the Marine Corps were essential as they developed a foundation of leadership and an understanding of the Marine Corps.

Early Career Mistakes and Uncertainties

As with many young officers, they sometimes commit errors or mistakes in good faith because of their inexperience. While most modern histories of general officers omit the mention of these transgressions, these incidents are important for they represent the human side of the officer and provide life lessons from which they developed. Additionally, the fact that these officers and their mistakes did not adversely affect their careers, reflect that the Marine Corps during this period was more understanding

⁵⁶ Jon T Hoffman, *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller* (New York: Random House, 2001), 229.

⁵⁷ Frank O. Lt. Col Hough, USMCR and Crown, John A. Maj, USMCR "The Campaign on New Britain," Historical Branch (Washington DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1952), 211.

and lenient about errors committed by junior officers. Officers were given much responsibility, and sometimes, through inexperience or poor judgment, made errors. Krulak, Walt and Davis all had missteps as junior officers, yet, these incidents did not end their careers and resulted in developing officers who were more understanding when their subordinates made errors.

Krulak had several significant incidents in his early career that profoundly affected him personally, but did not harm him professionally. During his tour aboard the USS Arizona, he qualified for duties aboard ship and stood deck watch as the Officer of the Deck. As the Officer of the Deck one evening, the ship began to slide on its anchor, Krulak consulted with the Sailors standing watch with him and he ordered an additional anchor dropped to stop the ship from sliding. He ordered the anchor dropped and an unattached anchor fell into San Francisco Bay.⁵⁸ Not impressed, the captain of the ship and had a stern conversation with the young lieutenant. Yet, despite this mistake, he suffered no long-term consequences. He recalled the incident throughout his career. Later, as the assistant regimental intelligence officer in China, one of his closest friends during his deployment eventually was identified as a known Japanese Intelligence Agent.⁵⁹ The most embarrassing incident occurred during his tour as the 2nd Brigade assistant logistics officer, when he persuaded Admiral King, the Commander of the Atlantic Fleet, to ride along on an amphibious vehicle familiarization tour, and then became stuck on a reef, making the Admiral walk to shore off Collabra.⁶⁰ General Smith had choice words for him, and Admiral King never forgot the ride on the amphibious tractor, but he continued to work on the amphibious craft nonetheless.

Davis' first tour, as a 2nd Lieutenant, was aboard the USS Portland with the Marine Detachment. During this tour, he incited the wrath of the ship's senior naval officers for perceived transgressions. At a ship's dance, many officers believed his date was a prostitute. At a second dance, a senior officer's wife

⁵⁸ Benis, 10.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 22-23.

⁶⁰ Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Admiral Ernest J. King* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 135.

attempted to take advantage of the young lieutenant. When he received his next fitness report, his reporting senior rated him slightly lower on the subsequent officer evaluation.⁶¹ This report did not affect his future school selection or his promotion. During the Base Defense Weapons Course at Quantico, after a long night out, his command listed him in an unauthorized absence status and out of uniform for an inspection. His commanding officer subsequently informally restricted him from liberty as punishment.⁶² None of these events affected his subsequent rise to command and his future achievements.

Krulak and Davis readily admitted in their writings and histories that they made errors in judgments and mistakes as junior officers. In contrast, Walt does not provide similar insights and the information regarding his early career does not provide information to illustrate his decision-making abilities. The author assumes that he had some minor transgressions in his early career, most young officers do, but no official documentation or record exists and Walt did not articulate any mistakes in his writings or interviews. It is clear that any mistakes or errors in judgment did not affect his career progression.

While the three officers made mistakes, and had errors in judgment, none of them suffered long-term consequences. The common sense judgment of their superiors, and the fact that they were single offenses and not repeated, reflect that they were held accountable, corrected and instructed to continue their jobs. In this period of the Marine Corps, there was not a “zero defect” mentality; senior officers tolerated the minor transgressions and mistakes of junior officers as long as they learned, did not repeat them and had strong professional performance. For the three officers it fostered initiative to make decisions, and tolerance to allow subordinates to make mistakes.

As is common with many young men pursuing a new occupation, Krulak, Walt, and Davis experienced periods as junior officers where they were unsure of what they actually wanted to do. None of them questioned whether they wanted to stay in the Marine Corps; they were uncertain what they

⁶¹ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 36-37.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 44.

specifically wanted to do as officers in the Marine Corps. Both Krulak and Walt submitted requests to attend Navy Flight School and become aviators. The Marine Corps did not approve either request. Marine Corps Headquarters denied Krulak's request for medical reasons and denied Walt's request because of a lack of vacancies at flight training.⁶³ Davis, because of his interest in gunnery, chose to become a base defense and anti-aircraft officer. Neither Krulak nor Walt pursued another career field after applying to flight school, and the advent of World War II overcame Davis' career choices. The interests in pursuing other occupations within the Marine Corps reflect that these officers were indeed curious and uncertain of what they actually wanted to do professionally. Yet, the advent of World War II made the decision for them.

Observing Infantry Combat

The most compelling aspect of all three officers' early career experiences is that they observed infantry combat prior to actually actively fighting. As part of the International Settlement Security Force, Krulak and Walt observed the Chinese and Japanese fight throughout Shanghai. Davis witnessed the infantry fights on Guadalcanal as a combat support platoon commander. Each officer's observations further developed his understanding of the dynamics and complexity of small unit combat. For the officers, these experiences gave them insight and provided context that informed all of the training they conducted. It also reinforced the seriousness and significant consequences of ground combat.

Krulak's exposure to ground combat and Japanese landing craft in China defined his career prior to his participation in World War II. His experience observing the Japanese fighting the Chinese gave him two critical observations; an introduction to close combat and a better understanding of modern expeditionary and amphibious warfare as executed by the Japanese military during offensive operations

⁶³ J.R Poppen, "Official Military Personnel File of Victor H. Krulak: Physical Qualifications of V.H. Krulak for Duty Involving Control of Aircraft," 1935, United States Marine Corps Archive, St Louis; USMC, "Official Military Personnel File of Lewis L. Walt: The Basic School Student Record of Walt, Lewis William."

against the Chinese.⁶⁴ His photographs and report on the Japanese landing craft served as the basis for the Marine Corps development of the modern landing craft.

Walt's deployment to China as a platoon commander also provided him the opportunity to watch the Japanese and Chinese fight. He learned three things from observing the fighting. First, the Japanese soldier was a good soldier, well led, and well equipped. Second, the Japanese integrated airpower in their advances into Shanghai. Third, infantry combat in urban areas was very difficult and bloody. The Chinese were not well led, poorly prepared and had no significant airpower to support them. He believed that the quality of the Japanese soldiers and the integration of airpower with ground operations were critical to the eventual Japanese victory and he remembered for the rest of his career the importance of good training and leadership and the vital importance of airpower in support of the infantry.⁶⁵

Davis, due to his assignment as an anti-aircraft officer, witnessed his first combat action as he provided anti-aircraft coverage for Henderson Airfield on Guadalcanal. The time on Guadalcanal gave him direct exposure to aerial attacks and naval bombardment, but no direct experience with infantry actions. Instead, due to the small size of the perimeter, he witnessed the actions of all the infantry units fighting around him.⁶⁶ His observations of troop leadership and the actions of the officers around him gave him a strong understanding of the requirements and mettle necessary to be an infantry officer. Shortly after the 1st Marine Division retrograded from Guadalcanal, he determined that he would rather be a troop leader in the infantry than in an air defense officer.⁶⁷

Walt, Krulak and Davis had experiences in their early career that prepared them well for combat and later career successes. The common education at The Basic School, the wide and varying experiences and exposure during their first tour, the latitude to make decisions and mistakes, and their professional curiosity and versatility all contributed to their development as junior officers. The opportunity to observe

⁶⁴ Benis, 36.

⁶⁵ Gordon, 3-5.

⁶⁶ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 53-55.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

infantry combat as junior officers remained critical during their formative years. The totality of these wide experiences, the opportunity to make decisions; right and wrong, and the opportunity to observe infantry combat became the foundation for their success as combat commanders and their continued advancement in the Marine Corps.

Mentorship

Krulak, Walt, and Davis benefited from mentoring by senior marine officers starting at the earliest point in their careers and continuing until they retired. These relationships not only assisted them as junior officers, but also remained important throughout their careers, and influenced many career-shaping decisions. Nowhere was this more evident than during the years each spent as junior officers.

In a 1994 monograph, written by Major Mark Ritter, a student at the United States Army Command and General Staff College, highlights a study examining the American military and its different perspective and application of mentoring as a development tool. This study detailed specific definitions and terminology concerning military mentoring. This monograph will use Ritter's methodology to describe the mentoring that the subject officers received as young officers. Ritter defines a mentor as "someone who develops a personal relationship with an individual that is intended to enhance the protégé's professional and/or social development."⁶⁸ A good mentor understands the strengths, weaknesses, and goals of the mentee, and actively seeks to assist his development and advancement. There are multiple elements and types of mentorship. These include teaching, coaching, counseling, advising, and sponsoring.⁶⁹

The personality of the mentor, his position in the Marine Corps and the nature of the relation with the junior officer delineate the type of mentorship. Multiple mentors influenced Krulak, Walt and Davis, but each relationship was unique and had different components. The most important types of mentorship

⁶⁸ Mark L Ritter, "Senior Leader Mentoring: Its Role in Leader Development Doctrine," (Ft Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1994), 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

for these three officers during their early careers were teaching, coaching, counseling, advising and sponsorship.

The types of mentoring used varied in each of their respective careers; however, a common trend appears as they developed as junior officers. Teaching and advising were critical in the early years of their careers for they were inexperienced young officers. As they continued their careers as junior officers and established their professional reputations, the relationships with their mentors matured. With that maturation, advising and sponsorship became the most prevalent types of mentorship the officers received. The small Marine Corps officer corps and the common technique of identifying officers of potential and attempting to acquire them to work in specific organizations explains the primacy of the sponsorship style of mentoring during this period. While there was no formal mentoring program in the Marine Corps at the time, each of the officers greatly benefited from the guidance, advice and sponsorship of these senior officers. They benefited from different types of mentoring depending on the position, time of their relationships in their career progression, and the position that the mentor held.

Teaching and Coaching

In the education and development of any individual who is new to the military profession, the logical first step of development is teaching or instructing in the basics of the profession. Regardless of commissioning source, military background or military occupational specialty, the education and development of new Marine Corps second lieutenants in the 1930's was the instruction at The Basic School. The instructors and staff were the first significant influence and example for the new officers. The senior officers not only served as formal instructors, but also spent time informally teaching the young officers about the Marine Corps and leadership. In the late 1930's, The Basic School, had small classes of lieutenants with a large staff that encouraged interaction between senior officers and lieutenants beyond the classroom.

Krulak reported to The Basic School in June 1934. One of his earliest instructors was Captain Gerald Thomas. At the conclusion of his career forty years later, he specifically identified Thomas as one

of his earliest and most influential mentors. The two officers established and maintained a strong relationship throughout his career.⁷⁰ When he was a captain, Thomas again served as one of his instructors at the Junior Career Course.⁷¹ Through his instruction and personal interactions with him, Thomas re-ignited and affirmed his interest amphibious operations and his drive in developing a suitable amphibious vehicle. Major Julian Smith, the Director of the Basic School, was also as a significant influence in Krulak's early career. As the director of The Basic School, Major Smith sought to ensure the accomplishment of formal instruction, but also spent significant time informally teaching the young officers.⁷² These close relationships with the instructors and staff of the Basic School are attributed to the fact that his class was only 30 Second Lieutenants.⁷³ While he finished in the top 25% of the class, Thomas and Smith noticed his potential and became his mentors for the durations of his career.

Walt readily refers to two officers as the most significant mentors in his career. Walt met his first mentor as a student at the Basic School. Captain Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller served as an instructor at The Basic School and became one of his earliest and most influential mentors.⁷⁴ He credits Puller for his success as a leader, and being a very important mentor in his career. The most important mentor he identified is Lieutenant Colonel Mike Edson. In early 1942, Edson served as his battalion commander in the 1st Raider Battalion, and influenced him by teaching him advanced techniques in light infantry tactics, combat leadership, and irregular operations.⁷⁵ Edson would continue to be active mentor him throughout the early years of World War II.

⁷⁰ Benis, 6.

⁷¹ Ibid., 7.

⁷² Benis, 7.

⁷³ USMC, "Official Military Personnel File of Victor H. Krulak: The Basic School Student Record of 2nd Lieutenant Victor H. Krulak," 21.

⁷⁴ Hoffman, 117.

⁷⁵ John T. Hoffman, *Once a Legend: "Red Mike" Edson of the Marine Raiders*, (Presidio: Novato, 1994), 159.

Throughout his career, Davis repeatedly referred to the instruction he received from Captain Puller at The Basic School.⁷⁶ Puller, an officer of extensive experience in South America, taught him the intricacies of combat leadership and small wars tactics. He recalled these classes with Puller at the Basic School as animated, thoughtful and the most interesting courses he received at The Basic School.⁷⁷ Puller's influence would direct him throughout his career. In 1968, as a division commander in Vietnam, he specifically referred to lessons from Puller during the small wars courses at The Basic School as he developed his successful campaign plan for the 3rd Marine Division.⁷⁸

The second component of mentoring is coaching. Ritter defined coaching as a "process of on-going, on-the-job training carried out regularly by a person with the intent of developing another person's skills. The act of coaching includes the use of performance feedback and constructive modeling by the coach."⁷⁹ Early in his career, many field grade and senior officers identified Krulak as an officer of potential and promise. On his first tour in China in 1938, his Regimental Commander, Colonel F.B. Price, observed his efforts and interest in intelligence work and coached him to pursue those interests.⁸⁰ This is especially noteworthy, since, at the time, not many lieutenants attracted the attention of their regimental commanders. His efforts in China soon resulted in him becoming a driving force for the development of landing craft.⁸¹ He served as the officer in charge of multiple experiments with prototype landing craft for the Marine Corps identified him the officer with the most intimate knowledge of the Japanese landing craft observed in China.⁸² General Holland Smith, who knew him from the naval academy, suggested he request attendance at the Junior Captains Course and influenced him to seek assignment to the 2nd Marine

⁷⁶ Frank M Benis, "General Raymond G. Davis, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript," United States Marine Corps History Division (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1978), 108-109.

⁷⁷ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 31.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁷⁹ Ritter, 7.

⁸⁰ Price.

⁸¹ Benis, "Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript," 17.

⁸² Benis, "Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript," 18.

Brigade.⁸³ It soon developed into a mutually beneficial relationship as he turned to Smith for assistance when he needed help with the landing craft, and Smith became the most senior and prominent Marine Corps proponent for new landing craft development.⁸⁴

Davis identified multiple mentors who coached him as a young officer. When he reported to the 1st Marine Division, his first commander was Captain Krulak. He credits Krulak with serving as a great example and he implemented many of his leadership techniques.⁸⁵ He also refers to Jim Masters, an officer ten years his senior, who served as a teacher and coach to him throughout his early years.⁸⁶ This relationship began as a friendship among staff officers at the 1st Marine Division Headquarter in 1942, and remained active throughout his career. General Davis actively sought officers he trusted for mentorship and advice throughout his career to help his career progression and leadership approach.

Counseling

The third element of mentorship is counseling. Ritter define counseling “as talking with a person in a way that helps that person solve a problem, correct performance, or improve performance from a position of authority.”⁸⁷ At the time, officers only received formal counseling as part of the fitness reports process. Fitness reports during the period were limited to objective data, and there is limited record of the narrative that accompanied these early reports. There is little doubt that these officers received counseling as part of their performance review, however there is little information to establish the impact and importance of which this had on their career development and progression. Coaching and counseling are very closely related types of mentoring. It is important to distinguish between the two; coaching is outside of the chain of command, and counseling is formal evaluation from one’s immediate superior. In effect,

⁸³ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁴ Norman V Cooper, *A Fighting General* (Quantico: Marine Corps Association, 1987), 54-55.

⁸⁵ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 43.

⁸⁶ Benis, "General Raymond G. Davis, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript," 119.

⁸⁷ Ritter, 7.

coaching is benevolent guidance from a concerned mentor who is observing the junior officers performance.

Advising and Sponsoring

Ritter defines advising as “showing the protégé a way to improve performance or make a good career choice.”⁸⁸ When Krulak was a midshipman at the naval academy, the staff strongly encouraged him to pursue a commission in the United States Marine Corps for the naval academy staff felt he did not have the appropriate potential, discipline and intellect to be a naval line officer. A marine officer on the staff, Captain Geottge, saw his potential and advised him to pursue a Marine Corps commission.⁸⁹ Captain Geottge, a highly regarded officer, became one of his earliest mentors and steered him to the Marine Corps.

As a young officer, Davis sought Puller for advice on multiple occasions. Puller’s most important advice for him was to pursue assignment to the 1st Marine Division while he was a student at the Base Defense Weapons Course in 1941. This was the most significant act of mentoring he received in his early career for it set the stage for his rise as a combat leader in the following three years. Additionally, his assignment to the 1st Marine Division removed him from an assignment to Guam or Wake Island with the defense battalions. That assignment would have drastically changed his career considering the garrisons at Guam and Wake surrendered to the Japanese’s in early 1942.⁹⁰

Ritter defines sponsoring as the “process whereby higher-level officers with special interest in more junior officers (not necessarily under their command) provide advice and see that the [junior] officer is considered for appropriate assignments.”⁹¹ Sponsoring appears very prevalent in the early careers of these officers. The small size of the Marine Corps and the exigencies of World War Two are two potential

⁸⁸ Ritter, 73.

⁸⁹ Benis, "Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript,"

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⁹⁰ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 40-41.

⁹¹ Ritter, 8.

reasons. Later in the war and in the post-war years, sponsoring occurred because each officer proved to senior Marine Corps leaders their professionalism and merit during combat. In effect, success begets success. In the small Marine Corps of the time, senior officers remembered their successes and sought them for future assignments.

Through his work on the landing craft project, Krulak was a familiar name as the Marine Corps was still developing the amphibious capability. At the commencement of the Second World War, he found himself still serving as an aide to General Holland Smith, and as the assistant brigade logistics officer.⁹² He was in this billet for two reasons: he was one the most knowledgeable Marine Corps officers in regards to landing craft, and the Marine Corps assumed the 2nd Marine Brigade would be the first unit to go into action. Unfortunately, Headquarters Marine Corps ordered the brigade to reinforce Iceland, and he watched the 1st Marine Division form and head to the Pacific. He wanted duty overseas, and a combat command, but was unable to get detached for combat duty; his multiple requests for duty overseas were all denied.⁹³ In the fall of 1942, he used his position as the general's aide to pester the general for combat duty. General Smith finally relented and assisted his protégé. In January 1943, he participated in parachute training and had a follow on assignment overseas.⁹⁴ In February 1943, he deployed overseas in command of a battalion of "Para-Marines".⁹⁵ In 1944, he found himself watching the war from afar, this time in Washington DC. Again, he was working for General Smith on his staff at Headquarters Marine Corps. As the planning for the invasion of Okinawa commenced, Marine Corps division commanders in the Pacific theater actively requested him to serve as either a division operations officer or chief of staff. General Smith made the final decision and Krulak went to work for Major General Sheppard as the 6th Marine Division Operations Officer. In that billet, he conducted the amphibious invasion, the subsequent

⁹² Hoy, 48.

⁹³ Ibid., 50.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 53.

campaign on Okinawa and the occupation of Northern China.⁹⁶ In the immediate post war period, Generals' Vandergrift and Thomas specifically selected Krulak to return from China and work as part of a research committee to defend the Marine Corps in the unification fight.⁹⁷ In this capacity, he worked directed for the generals conducting research, lobbying, and writing point papers and speeches to support the Marine Corps position against the unification of the armed forces.⁹⁸ In December 1951, General Sheppard became the Commandant of the Marine Corps and ordered him to Headquarters Marine Corps to become the Secretary of the General Staff.⁹⁹ His professional reputation, not only as a combat commander, but also as a diligent and tenacious administrator, made him very attractive to senior leaders who actively sought him for important billets.

Walt's most significant mentor who continually sponsored him in the early war years was Lieutenant Colonel Mike Edson. When Edson was forming the 1st Raider Battalion in Quantico, he specifically requested that he serve as one of his company commanders. Later, when Edson took command of the 5th Marine Regiment on Guadalcanal, he requested (then) Major Walt as his operations officer. In short order, Edson made him a battalion commander.¹⁰⁰ In fact, under his sponsorship Walt went from a captain commanding a company to a major commanding a battalion in four months. Edson's personal reputation as a warrior and leader, and his advocacy on his behalf is apparent in its effect on his career. Without question, his performance reinforced his professional reputation, and he became well known among the senior leadership of the Marine Corps as a consummate and brave combat leader. Because of his battlefield actions, he consistently had combat leaders as if Edson and Puller actively sponsor him.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁹⁷ Benis, "Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript," 104.

⁹⁸ Victor H Krulak, *First to Fight* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984), 35-39.

⁹⁹ Hoy, 104.

¹⁰⁰ Hoffman, *Once a Legend: "Red Mike" Edson of the Marine Raiders*, 228.

Three mentors actively sponsored Davis in his early career and directly contributed to the most important events of his career. First, Puller requested him by name to become a battalion commander in the 1st Marine Regiment during operations on Cape Gloucester and for the invasion of Peleliu.¹⁰¹ What was unique about this was that he was not filling an infantry billet, and to this point in his career, had very little infantry experience. The second mentor was Colonel Homer Litzenberg, the commander of the 7th Marine Regiment in 1950. Colonel Litzenburg requested him to led one of the infantry battalions deploying to Korea.¹⁰² This is remarkable for at that time, Davis was on Inspector-Instructor duty in Chicago while the Marine Corps was mobilizing for the Korean War. Presumably, there were plenty of good, proven lieutenant colonels seeking battalion command already in the 1st Marine Division. Of course, (then) Lieutenant Colonel Davis became a battalion commander and received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his gallantry and leadership in combat during the Chosin Reservoir Campaign. His third mentor was Brigadier General Jim Masters, who was working on the Marine Corps General Staff at Headquarters Marine Corps, sought (then) Colonel Davis, by name for he needed a credible, well-known officer to work as the assistant G-2 at Marine Corps Headquarters. Masters specifically sought him to revitalize the G-2 and improve the prestige of the Marine Corps Intelligence Activities. Masters remembered him from his time at the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal and was well aware of his successes, so he sought him for assignment to Headquarters Marine Corps. He also proved influential in forwarding Davis' career by prompting the Marine Corps to send him to the National War College.¹⁰³ His outstanding performance as a junior officer resulted in many senior officers identifying him as an officer who produced results and they consistently sought him for increasing challenging and important billets.

Active mentoring served as a large part of developing these officers into the successful leaders. While there was no established mentoring program in the Marine Corps at the time, it is apparent that the senior marine officers at the time spent time and energy to develop and mentor young officers of promise.

¹⁰¹ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 62.

¹⁰² Benis, "General Raymond G. Davis, United States Marine Corps (Ret) Oral History Transcript," 149.

¹⁰³ Davis, *The Story of Ray Davis*, 153-165.

These relationships, for the most part, were enduring throughout their careers. Yet, due to the small size of the officer corps, and the immediacy of the combat in the Second World War, senior officers were very quick to sponsor subordinates who were “known commodities.” This may be called nepotism, but the harsh reality of the Marine Corps is that officers who have proven their capability and merit will be sought after. Senior officers sponsored these officers because they were competent and capable, and had proven themselves in combat, command, and in the supporting establishment. They were not sponsored because of a lineage, or because of any illogical purposes, but because they produced results.

Recommendations

Krulak’s, Walt’s and Davis’s successes were not magic or sheer luck. They had natural talent molded and developed through their early years to provide them with the capability and potential to accomplish much in their Marine Corps career. As the Marine Corps enters an era of persistent conflict and the changing dynamic of its future leaders, the Marine Corps needs to examine how it forms and develops capable officers such as Victor Krulak, Lewis Walt, and Raymond Davis. By examining the education and development of junior officers in a previous era, the Marine Corps can recall much on how officers must begin their career. Through careful development, providing wide experiences, and deliberate mentoring, the Marine Corps will better prepare young leaders for the challenges of this generation. Additionally, there potentially are shared characteristics in ethos and mindset between the “G.I. Generation” and “Millennium Generation” that can be used to develop the best pathway for training, educating and developing the next generation of officers.¹⁰⁴ Each officer in the study had unique experiences that better prepared him for the challenges they faced and the successes they achieved. The Marine Corps can incorporate the common denominators; pre-active duty military service, team athletics and activities, wide experiences during the first tour of duty, observation of combat operations, and a robust mentoring program. By recalling these attributes and incorporating them in to modern officer

¹⁰⁴ Strauss, 69.

development programs, the Marine Corps can improve not only the caliber of officer joining the Marine Corps, but also develop that young officer into a more capable and confident one.

The Marine Corps currently addresses many of the components that made Krulak, Walt, and Davis successful in their early careers in the current recruiting, education and development of young officers. Whether this focus is accidental or by design, this study reinforces the importance of those characteristics and provides the Marine Corps with objective data from which to further modify or improve the officer corps.

Pre –Commissioning Considerations

All three officers within this study had previous military service. Krulak at the naval academy, Walt served in the National Guard and ROTC, and Davis participated in JROTC and ROTC. All three credit these experiences as acclimating them to military life. The Marine Corps Officer Selection Officers, who are responsible for recruiting potential officer candidates, can put greater resources to search the JROTC detachments, the National Guard units in their respective recruiting areas, and the local ROTC units. While previous military service is not the critical element for success, it does instill the basics of military living that a potential would otherwise not receive until his induction at Officer Candidate School.

An additional element that recruiting officers should examine and place additional importance is the candidate's participation in extra-curricular activities. The subject officers were involved in team efforts such as athletics, academics and other broadening endeavors, to include employment outside of school. Success in a military unit is about understanding teamwork and overall unit success, and candidates who already participate in these type of activities understand that the accomplishment of the team is as important, if not more so, than individual achievement. The recruiting officers also have the opportunity to encourage candidates to become more involved in team activities between their attendance to Officer Candidate School and college graduation. Understanding the importance of team activities and the individual candidates' personality, the recruiting officer can focus the candidate to appropriate

activities that are not limited to academics or athletics. An example of this is to encourage the officer candidates to join a volunteer fire department or emergency medical service. This type of activity is team-oriented, operates under stress, and provides both meaningful training and a sense of accomplishment.

Early Operational Tour Diversity

The three officers in this study had wide and varied experiences during the first tour of duty in the Marine Corps operating forces. It was this exposure to many different aspects of the Marine Corps that greatly increased their understanding and appreciation of the scope and scale of Marine Corps operations. The current size of the Marine Corps and the increased need for specialization within specific Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) is problematic to provide the same opportunities for current officers that Krulak, Walt and Davis benefitted from their tours outside of the infantry. Yet, there are several initiatives that can be implemented to replicate the same type of overarching experiences for young officers that our subjects shared. The Supplemental MOS Program, an observer/controller program for new officers at the training commands, and an improved and robust professional military education program are ways to provide the young officer this experience.

First, re-invigorate the existing Supplemental MOS program. In 1999, Marine Corps Headquarters initiated this program with the primary purpose of manning MOS's that were short officers.¹⁰⁵ This program takes volunteer officers after their first tour of duty from their primary MOS to another MOS for a period of two to three years. While this does not identically reflect the same type of experiences Krulak, Walt and Davis had in their first tour of duty; it is a suitable alternative for an officer in the current generation that will still benefit from a different exposure to the Marine Corps. In recent years, the program faltered for several reasons. First, officers were not aware of the program and did not volunteer. Second, the officers who were aware of the program were concerned a tour in another MOS

¹⁰⁵ Cathleen M; Potter McHugh, Holly A; Stimpson, Dan; Moskowitz, Micheal J; Quester, Aline O., *Analyses of the Marine Corps Officer Manpower System: Final Report* (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, 2006), 112.

would make them non-competitive for promotion within their own MOS. Finally, the officers who did apply for the program were from MOS's that were already short, negating the initial intent of the program.¹⁰⁶ By re-invigorating this program, and re-orienting the intent to become a program that broadens the experiences of young officers, the Marine Corps can develop junior officers with a greater basis and understanding of Marine Corps operations. Senior Marine Corps leadership must lead the re-implementation of the Supplemental MOS program. By increasing the awareness of the program and dispelling the myths about perceived adverse consequences, the Marine Corps would garner many more applicants who would rather stay in the operational forces and do a different occupational specialty than go on a traditional supporting establishment billet. While not an exact copy of the rich experiences of Krulak, Walt and Davis, it would do much to widen the perspectives of the Lieutenants and Captains who choose to participate.

Second, provide opportunities for young officers to observe marine units in action outside of the school setting. A most telling observation from the research was all three officers had the opportunity to observe small unit infantry combat during the early years of their careers. In each case, Krulak and Walt in China, and Davis on Guadalcanal, the officers were able to be up front and close to the fighting without being active participants. This unique opportunity, impartial and relatively stress-free observation, gave each of them an opportunity to reflect on their training and decision making without having to be in the thick of the fight. Krulak and Walt put great emphasis on these experiences and referred to them as very formative in their development as an officer. Davis observing the fighting on Guadalcanal started his personal progression to move from the anti-aircraft field to the infantry. While the current operating environment does not present those same opportunities, and the manning of the operating forces does not allow young officers to observe combat for a long period, the Marine Corps can accomplish something very similar. Having young officers conduct an evolution as an assistant observer-controller during a

¹⁰⁶ Michael S. Holt, "Evolution of the Marine Corps Officer Promotion System: A Re-Evaluation of the Current Marine Corps Officer Promotion System" (Marine Corps University, 2005), 20.

Mohave Viper or Mountain Viper training exercise would be as close as possible to observing real combat. The young officer could execute temporary duty orders to 29 Palms, work as an assistant to the cadre staff and observe a unit conduct the training. For example, an infantry lieutenant, recently graduated from the Infantry Officers Course executes temporary orders to the exercise staff at Marine Corps Base 29 Palms. Since he graduated the Infantry Officers Course, he is technically and tactically proficient, and his observations, in conjunction with the seasoned captain observer/controller, would provide additional depth and analysis into the performance of the operational force units. Additionally, he would be able to observe an infantry platoon in action from an observer's perspective, and he would receive the direct mentoring from the captain observer/controller. While the receiving battalion would have to sacrifice without a platoon commander for several weeks, the lieutenant that the battalion receives would have had a greater experience and exposure not only to leadership of an actual platoon, but a greater understanding and appreciation of how to train and lead his platoon.

The third initiative is a program that will assist in providing young officers with additional exposure and experience to current operations is the formalization of a professional military education series of bringing officers and marines with current operational experiences together with the new officers. While many units attempt to execute this within different battalions, regiments and divisions at their home station, a formal organization, in coordination with the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, would screen recently returned veterans and develop a comprehensive program to provide new officers with a better understanding for their upcoming experiences in the operating forces. By including officers, staff non-commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers into this team, it would provide the young officers the perspectives from several different levels of command, and give them a further exposure and basis of understanding of their duties and responsibilities upon arriving at their first post in the operating forces.

Modern Marine Corps Mentorship

Krulak, Walt, and Davis had mentors that influenced them from the very beginnings of their career. The three officers refer often to the important counsel and guidance that they received from their mentors. At that time, there was not a formal program for officer mentoring within the Marine Corps, these officers sought out and cultivated relationships with mentors throughout their careers. In addition, the senior officers understood the value and importance of making and maintaining relationship with junior officers. While there are recent efforts to formalize a mentoring program, the Marine Corps needs to not only focus on a doctrinal approach to mentoring, but to raise the awareness of the obligation to mentor and the significant influence senior officers have when they establish long term mentoring relationships with junior officers.

In 2006, the Commandant of the Marine Corps formalized the mentoring program in Marine Corps Order 1500.58. The intent of this program is “to allow each marine to develop to his or her potential as an individual marine and as part of a unit or team.”¹⁰⁷ The focus of this program is on enlisted marines and the impetus of the order is to reduce liberty and personal misconduct because of the stresses of the current conflicts.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, it identifies that the next senior marine in his chain of command is the most likely and primary mentor for the marine. This order and the establishment of the Marine Corps Mentoring Program follow the efforts initiated in 1998 by General Krulak, who, as Commandant of the Marine Corps, started the unit cohesion program. This program also was an effort to acclimatize and maintain the morale and well-being of marines from their initial date of enlistment through their first enlistment.¹⁰⁹ This program is successful in its original intent, but falls short in regards to officer mentoring.

¹⁰⁷ Michael W. Hagee, "Marine Corps Order 1500.58 Marine Corps Mentoring Program ", United States Marine Corps Headquarters (Washington, DC: 2006), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁰⁹ Charles C. Krulak, "Marine Corps Order 3500.28: Marine Corps Unit Cohesion Program Standing Operating Procedures," United States Marine Corps (Washington DC: 1999), 2.

The Marine Corps needs to include these ideas, teachings and direction in the performance, development, and well-being of junior officers. Not only is there a lack in education on the concept and importance of mentoring, but also a lack of opportunities for senior officers to establish relationships with lieutenants and captains. At every level of his education, a marine officer receives some instruction on mentoring. Beginning at The Basic School, the lieutenants receive instruction on the Marine Corps order and the importance of mentoring his enlisted marines. In the current education of officers, captains attending Expeditionary Warfare School receive one hour of instruction on mentoring during the leadership section of the curriculum.¹¹⁰ This level of focus does not reflect the importance and effort needed to instill the understanding and obligation for senior officers to mentor young officers.

As seen in the early careers of Krulak, Walt and Davis, the mentors they had were senior captains and field grade officers who interacted with them on both the professional and individual level. Increasing the awareness of mentoring as a leadership skill to field grade officers is critical, but more importantly is the need for establishing opportunities for them to make and develop relationships with young officers. Within the Marine Corps formal schools systems, the staffs can establish events for young officers and senior officers to meet and interact. A specific recommendation is to establish an event for all of the officers in the schools have received their orders and know their upcoming billet and unit assignments. This is an opportunity where all officers from lieutenant to lieutenant colonel have an opportunity to meet prior to the joining the unit. Sponsoring MOS specific events where officers from the same specialty can meet creates opportunities for marine officers to meet and establish relationships. In the operating forces, encouraging regimental / air group functions among the officers and by MOS would further expand the range of influence for the mentors, and create a greater audience for the protégé to seek information or advice.

¹¹⁰ "Expeditionary Warfare School Course Card, E(L)6228," Expeditionary Warfare School Leadership Department, (Quantico, VA: USMC, 2008).

Conclusion

The early career progression and development of officers in the inter-war period produced versatile, dynamic and brave leaders in the vein of Victor Krulak, Lewis Walt and Raymond Davis. Just as in 1941, the Marine Corps will need the same type of officer for the next generation of warfare. By recalling the developmental trends through the experiences of these officer's careers, common characteristics provide relevant lessons and techniques that the Marine Corps can instill into the current officer development process. The early careers of these officers disclose a variety of pre-commissioning experiences, a broad array of development opportunities as junior officers, and an active mentorship program that enables them to achieve much success, led marines to great victories, and led the Marine Corps into the future.

Many experienced officers will intuitively identify the components in this study as integral to the success of young officers. There is little question that the Marine Corps Recruiting Command understands and focuses its efforts on potential officers who are high achievers in academics, athletics and extra-curricular activities. Officers and staff commissioned officers mentor young officers from the moment they arrive at Officer Candidate School. Moreover, in the current years of conflict, most officers deploy to combat in their first tour.

Yet, beyond the obvious and current efforts, this biographical snapshot of early officer career development provides several aspects for consideration and implementation. First, the Marine Corps needs to improve the formal aspects of developing junior officers through a refocus and re-emphasis of the Supplemental MOS program, and an implementation of a pathway for young officers to observe units in action prior to them assuming their first operational billet. Second, formalize and incorporate a program to expose young officers to the responsibilities and duties from marines who are veterans of the current environment. Third, increase the senior officers and staff non-commissioned officers' education and awareness of the importance of mentoring to the development of junior officers and encourage the development of meaningful mentoring relationships between junior and senior officers. While both

Commandants' Krulak and Hagee introduced and formalized a mentoring program primarily focused on enlisted marines, an equally important issue is to make senior officers more aware of their obligation to serve as mentors to young officers and the profound influence they can have on their development.

This generation's Krulak, Walt, and Davis are currently still in college and considering the Marine Corps as a career. To capitalize on the innate talent of these future officers, the Marine Corps must readily and proactively prepare them for the future challenges that face the nation. Today's officers must be aware of their important role in this effort and continue to understand the motivations of new generations of officers and shape the development to maximize the potential of this generation.

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