



2018-2020 STEWARDSHIP REPORT CLASS OF 1957 POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW *Dr. Mark R. Folse*

Below is a summation of my two years as your post-doc. I want to preface it by stating that this position was the most enjoyable and rewarding experience of my professional career. Shortly after my arrival in the summer of 2018, I went right to work researching, teaching, and looking for jobs. I am happy to report that I succeeded or made significant progress on all fronts.

RESEARCH

My two years at the Naval Academy have been the most productive of my career so far. While here, I have been active in publishing and presenting scholarly research on military and naval history. My article, "The Cleanest and Strongest of Our Young Manhood: Marines, Belleau Wood, and the Test of American Manliness," appeared in *Marine Corps History* shortly after my arrival in the fall of 2018. My most recent work, "Iwo Jima: The Enduring Legacy after Seventy-Five Years," in the February issue of *Naval History*, explores the lasting significance of one of the most



important battles in Marine Corps and American history. I have a forthcoming piece on John A. Lejeune coming out with the same publication this summer. I published two articles about the Marine Corps in *War on the Rocks*. The first, "Marine Corps Identity from the Historical Perspective" (May 2019), contributed to a robust and ongoing debate about the Marine Corps'

identity and future in the post Global War on Terrorism world. The second, “Tell THIS to the Marines: Gender and the Marine Corps” (March 2020), promoted gender as a useful and often vital analytical tool regarding the study of military organizational culture.

I published an annotated bibliography on Marine Corps history with Oxford’s online bibliography series in February 2020. I also wrote book reviews in the Naval Institute’s *Proceedings*, *The Journal of Military History*, *Marine Corps History*, *H-War*, and have one forthcoming with the *North Carolina Historical Review*. Additionally, I have presented my research on military and naval history at numerous venues and conferences, including the Society for Military History, the McMullen Naval History Symposium, Marine Corps University, and the Naval War College. Two of my spring conferences this year were cancelled due to Covid-19. The first was the annual Society of Military History conference that was to be held in Arlington, Virginia.

The second was the North American society for Oceanic History conference that was scheduled to meet in Pensacola, Florida. I was going to present a paper on the integration of women into the Marine Corps during the Great War at the former and participate in a roundtable discussion on teaching naval history at the latter. In total, I earned acceptance to present papers at six major conferences while at USNA. The Class of 1957’s

generous financial support of these endeavors made this possible.

I am proud of the work I have been able to accomplish on my manuscript. After some initial research and revisions, I sent it off to University Press of Kansas in February 2019. The readers’ reports that came back in late May were mixed: one negative, one positive, and one lukewarm. All reports agreed, however, that the manuscript was not quite ready for publication. Since then, I have made tremendous progress based on the suggestions of the reader reports. This postdoc has been indispensable to the revision process.

Being near the major archives necessary to my research allowed me the time and ability to conduct frequent deep dives into the primary source material for the Marine Corps, Army, and Navy. I found my most useful and fascinating materials at the National Archives in both Washington D.C. and College Park, Maryland, as well as the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at the War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, all of which are conveniently located near Annapolis. These materials made it possible to expand my manuscript and bolster many of its claims.

Being a part of a superb community of scholars in the USNA history department allowed me to make major strides towards completion. The faculty here were incredibly supportive



of my research endeavors. Both Class of '57 Distinguished Chairs (Kathy Williams and Dave Winkler), the visiting Shifrin Chairs (John McMannus and Kenneth Swope), and faculty members Rick Ruth, BJ Armstrong, Fred Harrod, Ernie Tucker, Mary DeCredico, Marcus Jones, Brian Vandemark, Molly Lester, and Matthew Dziennik stand out in my mind as being particularly supportive. I also must include all of the Marine instructors and Navy JPMPs in the department for listening to my ideas and making me feel at home. The faculty allowed me to workshop two chapters of my manuscript at their Works in Progress meetings, where they provided valuable feedback. I was invited also to contribute to HH 104 Charm School meetings, where I gave talks on how to incorporate Marine Corps history effectively in the Plebe history course.

All the research, publishing, presenting, and talks given at the charm schools made the manuscript much better than it was, because they gave me a more solid foundation in Navy and Marine Corps history. The manuscript is still currently under revision so that it can be sent back to University Press of Kansas for another round of review before the end of this year.

TEACHING

I taught two classes across four semesters at USNA. My first class was the plebe HH104 American Naval History, which is a general survey of United States naval history from its beginnings in 1775 to roughly the early 2000s. One of my main purposes was to familiarize students with a basic narrative concerning the growth of American naval power. Today, the United States Navy is arguably the preeminent military force on the planet in terms of its size relative to other great powers, its technological sophistication, its weapon systems, its versatility, and its global reach. Therefore, an important objective of this class was recounting how exactly this hegemony came to be.

The class was not solely an institutional history

of the U.S. Navy, however. It being a “naval history” of the United States meant that we often discussed historical forces outside and beyond the purview of the Navy that had consequences for the country’s maritime interests. We addressed how the United States’ geographical location and economic concerns had a significant effect on the country’s historical trajectory into the realm of sea power. American armed forces do not, and never have, operated in a protective bubble free from the influences and demands of the society they serve. The more traditional subjects of other survey courses on American history (i.e. national and sectional politics, economics, society, and culture) played important roles in the class because these forces helped shape American naval thought, strategy, and technological development throughout its history in critical ways.

I encouraged students to understand that an effective naval power needs not only ships, but also a capable land and (eventually) air forces to be effectively applied as leverage in both war and diplomacy. A naval history of the United States would not be complete, therefore, without also paying due diligence to the U.S. Marine Corps which has had its own important contributions not just to naval, but also greater American history.

Which brings me to my second course, one that is near and dear to my heart as a Marine Corps historian: my HH385 History of the U.S. Marine Corps. This course was a history of the USMC from its origins in 1775 until roughly the present. Its purpose was to familiarize students with a basic narrative concerning the growth and development of the Marine Corps over time. Like the Army and Navy, the growth of the Marine Corps has coincided with the growth of American economic power. The Marine Corps is a military and naval institution, and we discussed frequently how that peculiar amalgam of traditions and jurisdictions has affected Marine mission, identity, culture, and history.

The Marine Corps is a warfighting institution.

Therefore, we devoted time to its history of combat operations across the breadth of the United States' military and naval history. Its development from ships' guards and naval landing parties to the modern-day Fleet Marine Force is a complicated and complex evolutionary process. Much of that evolution was informed by the conflicts that the Marines fought at home and abroad. We discussed also how the Corps contributed to American military and naval thought throughout this process. We discussed how the Marine Corps is also an American institution comprised of men and women from all walks of life. That was not always the case. How the Marine Corps came to better reflect the makeup of the general population along social, racial, and gender lines is an important question that we discussed as well.

The Marine Corps' own institutional culture was a frequent point of discussion as well. We explored the Corps' world view, ethos, image construction, myths, and legends (often a mix of truth and fictions). My students learned that the Marine Corps, like the Navy, Army, and Airforce, is a military means to a political end subject to the perceived needs of Congress and the American people. It is not an end in and of itself. Therefore, we frequently discussed how the Corps has been dependent upon the goodwill of the society that it serves, as well as how Marine

culture both helped and hurt the Corps' public image.

I envisioned these classes as having practical value for students beyond learning for learning's sake. While in these classes, they exercised mental and intellectual effort under criticism, the purpose of which was to get their minds accustomed to thinking critically and historically. Regarding critical thinking, I wanted students better able to ask and answer questions of the past. Through historical study, students become better prepared for how messy, chaotic, and complex life will be both at USNA and as naval officers in the fleet.

My students were expected to communicate their thoughts and ideas clearly and persuasively. Making sound and persuasive arguments backed by thorough research and credible evidence is a skill that is valued in nearly every profession, both military and civilian. They exercised those skills in my classes via book essays, short answer and essay-based exams, as well as a research paper.

The Covid-19 pandemic precipitated the Naval Academy's switch to remote learning on 20 March. This happened in the middle of the Brigade's Spring Break, so many students were without their laptops and books for their courses. Like many professors on the Yard, I



switched to an asynchronous schedule. I recorded all my remaining lectures using Panopto for my students to listen to at their own pace. I scanned ALL of Victor Krulak's *First to Fight*, and the Nimitz Library provided online access to a digital copy of Anthony Swofford's *Jarhead* so the students could keep up with the readings. I held one discussion session online where students answered a discussion prompt and responded to two other responses from their classmates, and one synchronous discussion session using google meet. Although I preferred the latter option, some students performed better on the discussion board, while others did better during the video conference. I was careful NOT to create more work for the students, because I knew other professors on the Yard were going to do just that. For example, I did not require lecture quizzes, and I did not assign extra writing assignments (other than the one online discussion post). I gave the students an extension on their final research paper and I deleted the short answer section of their final exam. The most consistent complaint from my students was the overwhelming extra workload from their other classes brought on by the switch to online learning.

Based on my conversations with students and from the yard-wide surveys conducted by USNA, the students liked online learning about as much as we liked online teaching: i.e. we all preferred face to face interactions in the classroom. Switching to online was hard on all of us, and not solely because of the struggle to adapt to a new learning format. We lost our face-to-face interactions with each other, and it was quite sad. But the students took it on the chin and made do with what life had given them, and they should be commended for that.

I must say that teaching midshipmen has been the best part of this post-doc. While here, the faculty treated me as an in-house expert on Marine Corps history, and many of them sent their students working on USMC history papers in their own classes to me for guidance. The joy that brought me was immeasurable. In general,

midshipmen are more interested, more receptive, more engaged, and more serious about their studies than any single body of students I have encountered, which makes them a joy to teach. I have never received such positive feedback from students anywhere like have from the midshipmen at the Naval Academy. The student opinion forms for my HH 104 and HH 385 class were overwhelmingly positive of myself and my classes -- aside from the consistent complaint that I assigned too much reading. I will sincerely miss teaching midshipmen the Navy and Marine Corps history. It has been one the greatest honors of my career.

JOB

I have succeeded on the job market beyond my expectations because of this post-doc. In the Spring of 2020, I received three job offers: one tenure track offer from the Citadel, one from the Navy History and Heritage Command (NHHHC) at the Navy Yard, and one from the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) at Fort McNair. My position here at the Naval Academy made me competitive for all of these jobs. Tenure track jobs are extremely hard to receive because of their relative scarcity compared to the amount of available and interested applicants and the competitiveness of the field. It was a wonderful opportunity, and in many ways a dream come true.

I accepted the CMH job over NHHHC; not because I wanted to leave the Navy, and not because I no longer wanted to be a naval historian. Ultimately it came down to what each organization wanted me to do. NHHHC wanted me in their special projects branch, which entailed quick and short research projects that came down from the CNO and SECNAV's office. I felt much more suited to what CMH wanted me for, which was the researching and writing of long monographs. They have brought me on to help them write the "Tan-Book" series on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Being a former Marine with combat experience in both countries piqued their



interest in me. But so too did my experience in researching, writing, and teaching military and naval history here at the Naval Academy. Their Chief Historian who recruited me is Jon T. Hoffman, a retired Marine officer and author of *Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC*. Hoffman also served as a Marine instructor here at the Naval Academy in the late 1980s, so the connection between us was immediate.

In order to continue teaching, I have picked up an adjunct position at Marine Corps University's College of Distance Education and Training (CDET). This will allow me to remain a teacher/scholar and to continue to help the Navy and Marine Corps' educate its force.

THANK YOU

All that is left to say is thank you. Thank you, Class of 1957 and the USNA History Department for the past two years, for your faith in me and in my potential, and for your support of my family and my research. I have met many of you, but

the single individual who has been the face of the Class of '57 for me has been Bill Peerenboom. He has been there for me from the very beginning to make me and my family feel welcome. He saw me present papers in Quantico and at the McMullen Symposium, he took me to a Navy football game, and we enjoyed meals and conversations together at Naval Academy Club. He has simply been an indispensable part of my time as your post-doc.

Although it saddens me to leave, I'm happy that I will remain in the orbit of the Naval Academy and the Class of 1957 indefinitely. My family and I have moved to Alexandria, Virginia, so that we can be closer to our jobs in Washington D.C. I look forward to keeping in touch and seeing you all soon at occasional meetings, workshops, dining outs, and the McMullen Naval History Symposiums.

Until then, fair winds and following seas.

Semper Fi

Mark Folse, PhD.