



We Few: The Marine Corps 400 in the War against Japan

James R. Dickenson

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Desperate for junior officers to meet the wartime demands of its rapid expansion and to replace the mounting casualties in its Pacific battles, the U.S. Marine Corps convened a Special Officer Candidate School (SOCS) at Camp Lejeune in 1944. This special class was to augment the regular Officer Candidates School (OCS) at Quantico, which was operating at full capacity. The young candidates had been enlisted in the V-12 officers procurement program and called to active duty from colleges and universities across the country. Destined to fight in some of the bloodiest battles of the war then answer the call to arms again in Korea, the Marines of this special class, who called themselves the "SOCS 400," served in the Minuteman tradition established at Lexington and Concord nearly two centuries earlier. Their compelling story is told for the first time by a former Marine and reporter for some of the nation's best news organizations. He chronicles their experiences from induction through training and combat to the lives they later led.

Eliminating some of the traditional training of young Marine officers, this special OCS curriculum concentrated on infantry tactics and weapons, and ninety percent of the class wound up as platoon leaders on Iwo and Okinawa. Forty-eight of them were killed, 168 wounded, for a casualty rate of some 58 per cent. For their heroic actions they earned a host of decorations, including five Navy Crosses. Eight more were wounded in Korea and one more earned a Navy Cross. Many believe they had the highest casualty and decoration rates of any Marine OCS class in World War II. This book focuses on ten men representing all six Marine divisions and nearly every section of the country and all types of colleges and universities. The story's appeal bridges professional and general interests.

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