

## FIRST PRIZE ESSAY

# A FIGHTING FIT

BY CAPTAIN ROBERT E. CUSHMAN, JR., U.S.M.C.

**R**-R-RIP! With that swan song, my neatly tailored and quite expensive suit of winter service paid the penalty of attempting a role somewhat out of character; that of a field uniform when it was not designed for such rough treatment. Watching barbed wire make a seventy-five dollar suit of clothes depreciate to seventy-five cents in one fell swoop led my thoughts in the direction of improvement of our uniforms. Why should they be improved—how might they be improved; these were the questions with which I concerned myself, and I shall here relate the conclusions I reached.

As a fundamental from which to proceed, it is evident that the body must be clothed to withstand the elements and the rigors of war; and, being a military body, must be clothed uniformly. However, and this applies particularly to the Marine Corps, there must be two main types of such uniform clothing; one for the parade ground and normal garrison wear, and one for service in the field. The former must be well fitting, snappy appearing, and distinctive, immediately designating the man who wears it as a Marine. The latter uniform, on the other hand, must give perfect freedom of movement under all conceivable conditions, long wear under hard usage, blend with most terrain as much as possible, and be suitable for wear by all branches and arms of the Corps. Each of these two main types must be further subdivided to provide for both summer and winter climates.

Under the present regulations, I believe the intent to be this: blues constitute the parade uniform, with the overcoat added for winter. For the field, greens are the winter uniform, with the overcoat added for extremes of cold, and khaki is the summer uniform. This is complicated by the fact that, for at least a portion of the year, blues are too hot to be worn as the dress uniform in most of the places where Marines now serve, hence khaki in these posts does duty in the field and on the parade ground both, although intended as a field uniform for hot weather. In addition to these, we have as a worksuit various marks, and modifications thereof, of the genus dungaree. These, then, are the uses for which our present uniforms are intended. Let us see what actually is the status quo.

First; because of the emergency, only certain posts are allowed to have blues, which are the best looking, most distinctive uniform we have. There is no mistaking a man dressed in blues for anything but a Marine! At the World's Fair in New York, Marines outfitted in blues stood head and shoulders above all other contingents present for distinctiveness of dress and snappy appearance.

Second; greens have become a parade ground uniform in half-hearted competition with blues, yet are called upon to double for a good field uniform upon occasion. Marines appear at troop inspection in greens in the morning and

woe betide the unlucky who have not their pants pressed, their coat well fitting and tailored just so. That afternoon, the same men in the same uniforms may be taking cover in the brambles on the combat range.

Third; in warm weather, the khaki uniform is called upon to serve in similar fashion.

Fourth; in an effort to correct this state of affairs, many places have called upon that old standby of maintenance, the dungaree. As a consequence, Marines fall out clad variously in grey herringbone, blue coveralls, two piece overalls, and an occasional sweat shirt or leather jacket to liven up the formation on a cold day. Upon reaching the drill field the men discover that they look sloppy, feel sloppy, and, consequently deliver in kind—with sloppy work. Upon reaching the combat range for maneuvers, the men discover that these uniforms were designed to protect clothing from grease and dirt in the shop, not as a uniform in which to fight. Legs and arms of these outfits are too long and loose, the waists are too large, a little rain and men are soaked to the skin, a little sun and dungarees become ovens. These coveralls save the men's good clothing during peace time drill and thus have a limited usefulness, but they definitely are not suited to the intense physical activity under adverse conditions required by war.

For further incentives to change, let us examine two accessories to the uniform proper; headgear and shoes.

We have now in use the following types of headgear: Garrison caps, barracks caps, steel helmets, fiber helmets, campaign hats, and shop caps; we employ blue, green, white, and khaki cap covers in conjunction with the cap frame to produce the barracks cap. This profusion of caps is not only expensive, but very difficult to pack in the limited baggage allowance of a Marine, even making allowance for the fact that steel helmets are not carried, but issued at each post.

In the footwear line, we have an excellent garrison shoe which looks snappy and takes a high polish. Use in the field ruins this shoe in short order, however, as the glossy finish scratches and cannot be shined again; the shoes are not waterproof and water stiffens the leather as well as wetting the feet; and the soles go to pieces quickly as they will not stand up under hard usage and wear right through. Neither is the shoe high enough to afford protection to that part of the leg which needs it, thus necessitating leggings.

The above are the answers to my first question: why should our uniforms be revised and improved. Now let us have some constructive criticism and see how they might be improved.

Parade uniform, winter: For liberty, honors and ceremonies, parades, and other formal occasions, the blue uniform would be prescribed with the white cap cover to be worn at all times. In very cold weather, add the present

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## CONGRATULATIONS

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### COLONEL LARSEN

ice in his capacity as Brigade Inspector he was awarded the Navy Cross Star (equivalent to a second award of the Cross itself) and was specially commended by the Secretary of the Navy. Also awarded the Nicaraguan Medal of Merit by the President of Nicaragua.

In addition to serving at various posts and stations in the United States, he served at Headquarters of the Marine Corps as Assistant Adjutant and Inspector; at Marine Barracks, Quantico, Va., as Instructor, Marine Corps Schools; as Chief of Staff of F-3 Section and as Executive Officer, 5th Marines 1st Brigade, F.M.F. Served as Director of Division of Plans and Policies at Headquarters of the Marine Corps, April, 1939, to June, 1940. Assumed command of 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, F.M.F., July 22, 1940, which duty he is now performing.

Graduate of School of Application, Norfolk, Va.; Advance Course, Ft. Benning, Ga.; Ecole de Guerre, Paris, France.

In addition to decorations previously mentioned he holds:

Victory Medal  
Mexican Service Medal  
Dominican Campaign Medal  
Expeditionary Medal  
Second Nicaraguan Campaign Medal  
French Legion of Honor and Diploma

### COLONEL RUPERTUS

4th Regiment of Marines, Shanghai, China. Commanded the Marine Barracks, Washington, D. C., from 1938 to 1940, and the Marine Barracks, Naval Operating Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, from 1940 to 1941. He is at present in command of the Fourth Defense Battalion.

In addition to the Haitian Distinguished Service Medal, holds the following:

Victory Medal, with Grand Fleet Clasp  
Haitian Campaign Medal  
Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal, with Bronze Star  
China Service Medal.

### COLONEL PICKETT

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lina; of the Field Officers Course, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, and of the Army Coast Artillery School, Fort Monroe, Virginia.

He holds the Mexican Service Medal, the Victory Medal, and the Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal.

### A FIGHTING FIT

(Continued from page 16)

green overcoat. A blue one would be much smarter, but the change would entail too many difficulties. For drills, guard duty, lectures, etc., blue trousers with a khaki shirt would be worn. The green uniform would be done away with entirely.

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Parade uniform, summer: The present khaki uniform would perform the same duties as the blues when the weather became hot or in tropical posts. The same cap frame would be used with a khaki cap cover. With both parade uniforms, the present footwear would be worn.

Working uniform: For field days, painting, garage work, and like tasks, the present dungarees provide excellent protection from dirt and would be used.

Field uniform: For use in the field we need a uniform, which we do not now have, with the following specifications:

1. A coverall with bi-swing back, full under the arms and across the shoulders.
2. Waist and hips should be adjustable to a snug position by means of spaced snaps along the waist.
3. Knees and elbows very full, with the wrists and ankles snug and fitted with snaps to make them so.
4. Gas resistant, if cloth processed in this manner can be worn for long periods of time.
5. Front of the coverall to be closed with zipper, snaps, or buttons, depending upon corrosive action of gas upon metal fasteners, extra work involved making button holes, cost, or other difficulties making one type stand out as desirable. I rather imagine snaps of the "gripper" type, widely advertised, might be the solution.
6. Of two types, both grayish green in color, one with the combination of maximum possible strength and lightness, for summer; the other of heavier weight, for cold weather. For fighting in the snow, a light, white, full length parka could be slipped on over the grey green coverall. It will be noticed that a full length coverall is prescribed even for the tropics. I discovered that this was necessary by questioning some British Royal Marines who had come from the Mediterranean theater of this war. The blast of a bomb burned to death those who wore the British tropical uniform of shorts and polo shirts, while those fully clothed were spared from the terrific heat of the blasts, they reported. When they go into battle now, they have the entire body, except the face, covered with cloth.

Such would be the basic uniform and it could be used by infantry, tank troops, artillery, parachute troops, engineers, aviators, and all other branches of the Corps as their combat and field uniform. For very cold weather, sweat suits similar to, but thinner than, those now used by athletes could be worn inside the basic coverall. I have often wondered how our Marines could fight in the winter encumbered with our present green overcoat—I don't believe they could at anything even approaching top efficiency. The Chinese and Japanese both use the principle of donning successive padded inner jackets underneath their outer uniform until they have enough to keep them warm. I have done this myself in winter when skating or indulging in other outdoor sports, and know that freedom of action as well as warmth can be maintained in this way, and, conversely, that it cannot be with an overcoat.

The underwear and socks that we now have are very satisfactory, although the socks could be even thicker with resultant benefit on the march. That leaves but the ques-

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tions of footwear and headgear to consider. My solution to the former would be a half boot of unfinished leather, water proofed, and without studs or caulks of any kind on its heavy composition sole. These boots would come up over the ankles of the basic coverall. Studs cut down wear of the sole, but they make walking practically impossible on pavement, rocky soil, hard wet ground, or wet earth, as men who wore them in the last World War have told me, and as I, myself, have discovered from a very limited experience with them. The composition sole is my answer, as it has more traction than leather and wears about as well. As a boy, I wore many a pair of low boots such as I have just described, and they were very satisfactory as I found them to be comfortable, long wearing, and inexpensive even at retail prices.

For headgear, I would by all means urge adoption of the new Army helmet. It is described and illustrated very clearly in the July issue of *The Infantry Journal*. Briefly, it consists of a liner and the helmet proper. The liner not only makes the helmet comfortable to wear (which ours at present certainly are not) but also becomes an excellent, light, sun resisting hat when the helmet is removed. The use of this combination would do away with garrison caps, campaign hats, and fiber helmets, making our total headgear requirements as follows: Helmet and liner for the field, barracks cap frame and two types of cap covers for parade.

Officers should have exactly the same uniforms as the men, except for insignia, plus sword and belt, plus evening and mess dress, if the latter are to be worn. The sword, Marine Corps emblem, blue uniform, and evening dress uniform are the few remaining tangible threads running through the years which remain practically unchanged from the Marine Corps of other generations and help keep alive those other traditions of deeds and esprit de corps which we know so well. As such, they are colorful, distinctive, have a proud heritage, and should be kept and used always. However, if the custom of recent years of prescribing tuxedo as the uniform for post social functions is continued, I would advocate discarding the evening and mess dress uniforms. At present these cost at least \$150, and the average officer wears them perhaps on five occasions in as many years, and has, in addition, to maintain a tuxedo and accessories to wear the remainder of the time.

Whites and greens, serving no useful or traditional purpose, would be dropped from the list of required uniforms.

Throughout this discussion I have tried to keep the existing regulations as much as possible and make changes where they seemed desirable. Simplicity and practicability were the keynotes of these changes. I believe several advantages would accrue from their adoption. The money saved on greens could be used to develop the sorely needed combat uniform. The space and money saved by discarding caps and other impediments would be considerable. And most important of all, I think that morale would be improved. The men would know that for every occasion they had the best and most practical uniform. Marines could turn out in the snappiest parade formations of which this country's armed services could boast, or they could take the field in a uniform fit for the fight. We are the first to fight—let us be dressed for it!



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