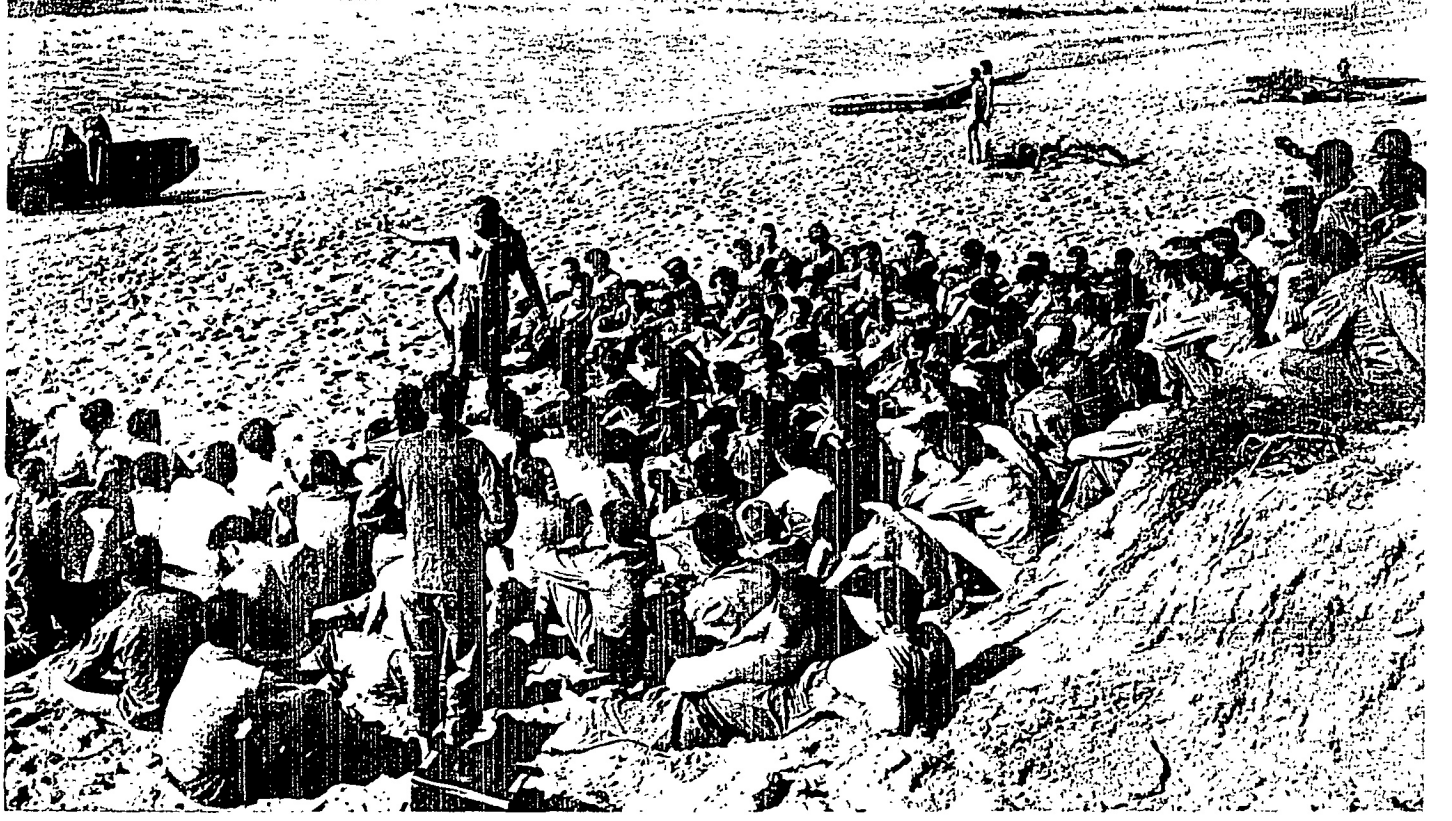
From Siesta to Bayonet

The Story of Camp Joseph H. Pendleton



Beaches of Camp Joseph H. Pendleton provide for excellent landing and combat swimming operations. Here Marine Gunner Melvin K. Archer (standing and pointing) is lecturing Raiders on how to swim through a rough surf.

CAMP JOSEPH H. PENDLETON, in southern California, celebrates its first anniversary this month. It is one of the newest Marine Corps bases in the country, as well as the largest; yet it has an old and distinguished history enshrined in the well-preserved adobes that make up its present-day reception center. Camp Pendleton started its career only a year ago, but with a precious heritage and the highest official blessing—the blessing of the President of the United States. The inspiring background is giving countless thousands of young Americans, who choose to serve their country in the ranks of the Marine Corps, a wealth of memories that will long endure.

Way back in 1769 on a delightful July day, a party of Spaniards, bound from San Diego to Monterey in California, paused to refresh themselves and their animals. The undulating scenery, the lazy flow of the nearby river, the merry singing of meadow larks cheered them. One of the Spaniards, in a burst of enthusiasm, exclaimed: "This is the day of Santa Margarita!" Sure enough, it was July 20th. "Let's christen this place after our holy virgin and martyr!" All agreed. Such is the manner in which the celebrated and historic Portola Expedition left a famous name.

A half century later, two spectacular brothers, Pio and Andres Pico, became enamored of the country over which these Spaniards had blazed a legendary trail. The brothers engaged furiously, somewhat ruthlessly, in the business of collecting Mexican land grants. They secured Santa Margarita, San Onofre, and Las Flores. Once in possession of these vast acres, the brothers considered an appropriate name. "Andres," Pio remarked one day, speaking in soft, musical Spanish, "this great land of ours shall be known everywhere as Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores!" And his prophecy came to pass. This Ranch of Saint Margaret and the Flowers became far-famed.

Two groups of well-weathered adobe structures, twelve miles apart, mark the site of the famous *rancho*. In these adobes early owners of the *rancho* lived according to the buoyant traditions of their day, the era of dons. Pio and Andres Pico were the first owners of this Mexican land grant. Pio was the last Mexican governor of California, and his brother signed the treaty with the Americans at Cahuenga, now a part of Hollywood, by which California became part of the United States.

When master of Santa Margarita, Pio played the host in eloquent fashion. Often to guests he would hand a $50 gold coin. "For luck," he smiled. Or, when guests gambled too

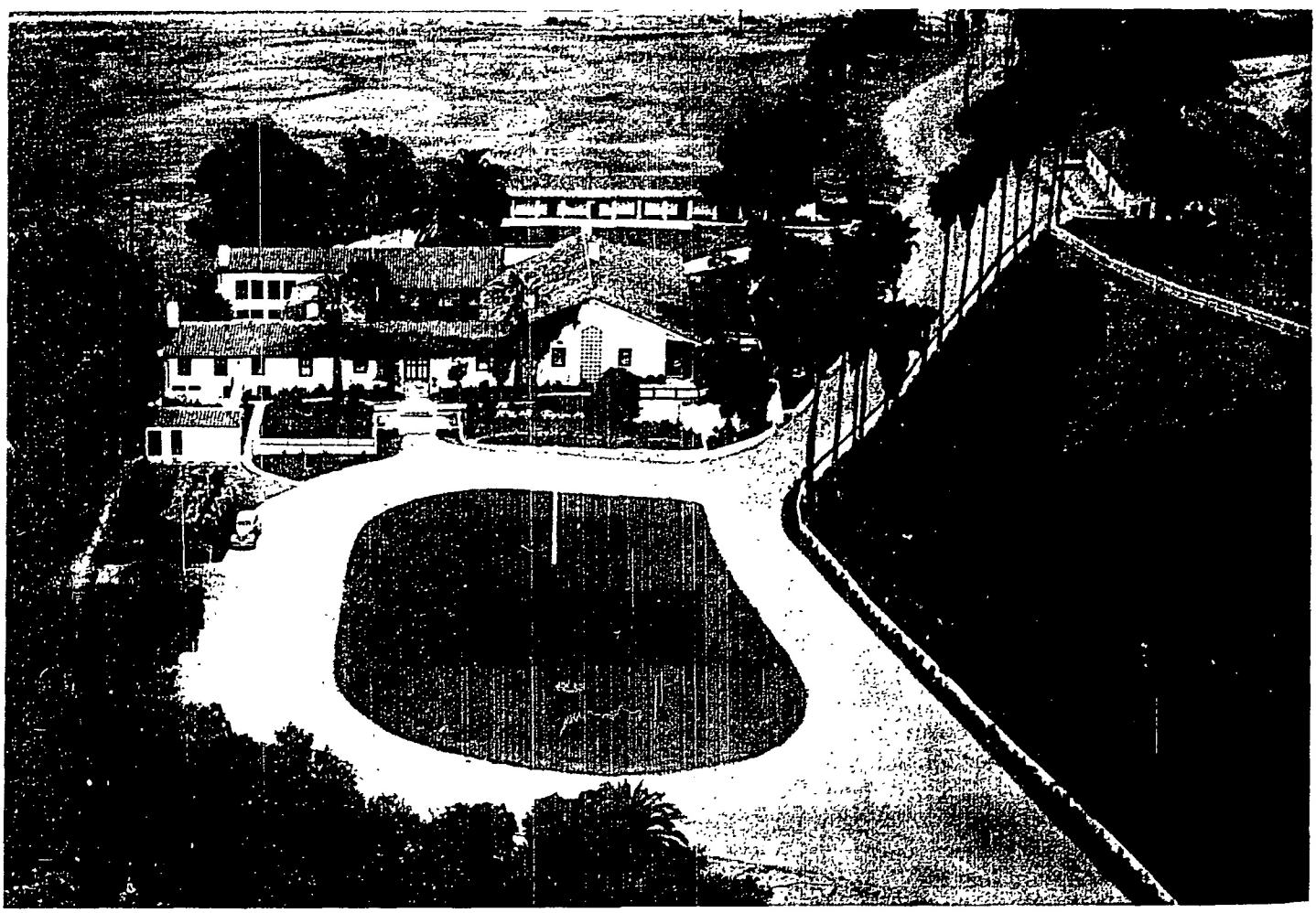
brashly, Pio slipped quietly into their rooms and left a plate containing from $100 to $200 so they could help themselves and not be humiliated by having to ask for funds!

During Mexican rule in California, insurrections against the government were frequent. One revolt was organized by the Carrillos, ancestors of Leo Carrillo, famous stage and screen star, against the government of Juan Batista Alvarado. Don Carlos Carrillo had been named governor, but Alvarado refused to relinquish his office. Their armed forces met at Mission Las Flores in a one-shot bloodless, talkative battle, with Carrillo being out-talked. The only casualty of the battle was a donkey!

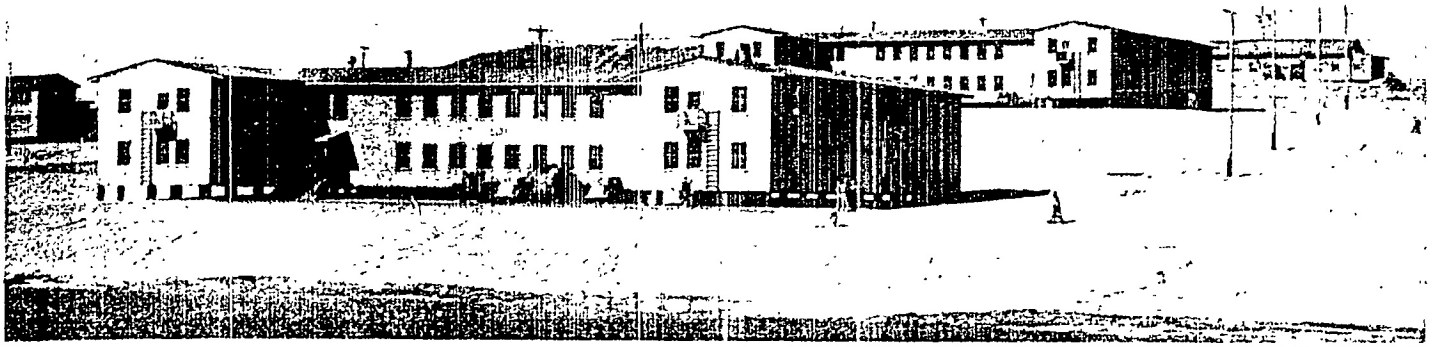
Soldiers and marines, too, figured in the history of this area. The Battle of San Pasqual, the bloodiest ever fought in California, occurred near the *rancho* between forces led by Captain Andres Pico, who lived at Santa Margarita, and American forces commanded by General S. W. Kearney. Prior to the battle, which occurred on December 6, 1846, Californians were preparing to march upon San Diego and retake it from the Americans, but halted for a moment upon receiving this information: "Captain Gillespie (a Marine) and about 40 men have left San Diego secretly for the mountains." Hearing this, Leonardo Cota and José Alipaz, then in command of the advance forces of Californians, put their heads together to plan to intercept Gillespie. They sat beneath a large sycamore tree for their conference, planning for the battle to occur at San Pasqual. This tree, now appropriately marked, is within easy walking distance of the Santa Margarita *residencia.* Again, on January 3, 1847, the U. S. Marines, marching north from San Diego to engage in the last battle needed to win California from the Mexicans, encamped near Las Flores.

After the Mexican War, Andres Pico became a loyal American citizen. He served as a presidential elector in 1852, and as a state senator in 1861. But the lavish era of prosperity did not survive for the Picos. On May 10, 1862, Pio bought Andres' half interest in the *rancho;* two years later Pio had to sell. The entire property went to his brother-in-law, Don Juan Forster, for $14,000. Forster also got 1,500 cattle, 140 horses, and all of Pico's debts in the deal. Forster continued the spirit of the dons' hospitality. When travelers failed to reach San Diego from the north at the appointed time, their delay was generally due to difficulty encountered in breaking away from Forster's hospitality.

Though Forster prospered, various schemes drained his purse. Forster died early in 1882 with large debts against the place. Later in the year, Richard O'Neill, proprietor of a prosperous San Francisco butcher shop and large land owner, paid $250,000 for the old land grant. Almost immediately, O'Neill conveyed the property to his friend, James C. Flood, the bonanza king and, in later years, got a half interest in the ranch. The heirs of O'Neill and Flood sold the *rancho,* consisting of three mountain ranges, five



This airview shows the historic Santa Margarita adobes—the ranch house, built in 1828, in the foreground; the winery, built in 1810, on the right; and the bunk house just beyond the ranch house—at Camp Joseph H. Pendleton, Oceanside, California.



Norman T. Van Pelt photo.

Typical barracks structures are shown here at Camp Joseph H. Pendleton, huge Marine Corps base at Oceanside, Calif.

lakes, three rivers, 425 miles of fence, 260 miles of roads, granite and flagstone quarries galore, and 35 windmills, to the government.

ON March 10, 1942, the Navy Department announced that the largest Marine Corps base in the country was to be established on the approximately 132,000 acres of the historic *rancho*. Construction plans were rushed. Hunt, Chambers and Ellingwood, and Claud Beetman were named the architects. Actual construction, under the guidance of the U. S. Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks, was started on March 23rd, with the general contract awarded to Haddock Engineers, Limited. The original contract provided for the construction of training facilities at an estimated cost of $14,460,000, and included barracks, messhalls, store-houses, utilities, and facilities for amphibious forces. Subsequent changes increased the estimated cost of the contract to approximately $34,000,000.

The camp site, rich in history as a *rancho,* required a traditional name which Major General C. F. B. Price, USMC, provided. "The new base," he declared, "should honor a gallant Marine—Major General Joseph H. Pendleton!" Everyone agreed, for the General was the pioneer of the Marine Corps in Southern California. The Secretary of the Navy concurred and, on March 23, 1942, announced the camp would be named in honor of General Pendleton, affectionately known among officers and enlisted personnel as "Uncle Joe."

On August 14th, Major General Joseph C. Fegan, former aide to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was named Camp Commander. At that time he was temporarily commanding the Second Marine Division, and immediately moved to Camp Pendleton.

By September, Camp Pendleton was ready to receive some troops. The Ninth Marines left Camp Elliott under full marching order for Pendleton, its arrival marking the formal occupation of the new base. The regiment, commanded by Colonel Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., heard General Fegan express this sentiment:

"Set the example for others who will follow—that is your challenge!"

Shortly afterward, Camp Pendleton was dedicated by President Roosevelt. General Pendleton's widow—"Aunt Mary" to everyone—attended the ceremonies on September 25, 1942. She stood beside the President and raised the national colors for the first time over the camp. When she expressed her happiness over the honor done her late husband, the President took her hands in his and said:

"It is a tribute to Uncle Joe—and well deserved!"

Inspired to secure for posterity the historic aspects of this early California scene, the Marines have preserved its historic adobe structures—the Santa Margarita *residencia,* the adjacent winery, and the bunkhouse, making them into a museum and reception center for visitors.

The twenty-four room Santa Margarita adobe is a hospice for distinguished official guests. Standing on a rocky knoll, it possesses a commanding view of the great and picturesque valley of Santa Margarita. In the peaceful interior courtyard or *patio* is a large iron kettle, brought around the Horn

Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox chats with Major General J. C. Fegan on a recent inspection visit to Camp Pendleton.

by a sailing ship for use in tallow production. Hanging in the west gate of the *residencia* entrance is the bell from the old Mission Las Flores, now a pile of ruins in the tank-training region. This bell, cast in 1828, was returned to the camp by the Santa Fe Railway, its possessor since 1887. The cedar beams in the *residencia* ceilings were brough by Indians from Mount Palomar. The *lodrillas,* or roof tiles, have become moss-green with age, covering the dwelling with rainbow-like hues. The exact age of the *residencia* is unknown. It was first mentioned in a report by Father Antonio Peyri in 1827, so it may be presumed that ground for the adobes was broken much earlier. At any rate, the original portion was completed in 1828.

The winery, the oldest structure in the reception center, was reported by padres to have been in existence in 1810, when it was referred to as "the great vineyard of Santa Margarita Valley." This high-ceilinged structure is being converted into a non-sectarian all-purpose chapel as the result of coöperation by 20th Century-Fox Studio, which shot most of the film *Guadalcanal Diary* at Pendleton. As a chapel, the structure will be an additional echo of the religious and historical past of the California adobe period.

The old bunkhouse, once home for many *vaqueros,* is a tile-roofed structure housing the reception center office and a recreation room.

Twelve miles over the sweeping hills to the westward is the Las Flores adobe, built in 1867. It stands about 500 yards from the Las Flores mission ruins. One of the rooms of this substantial two-story ranch house was the telegraph office for the first railroad built along the coast.

Upon these historic lands there have now been constructed 365 buildings—barracks, company mess-halls, post exchanges, theaters, an airfield, a protected boat basin, and a 1200-bed hospital. Also there have been established camp sites for field training, ranges for all types and sizes of weapons, and a tank-training area. Upon the 132,000 luxuriant acres of Pendleton are being trained thousands of Marines.

Thus the traditions of the Rancho Santa Margarita, though changed beyond the wildest dreams of its founders, will continue to play a vital part in the history of the nation. On land that was trod by Spanish *caballeros* and mission priests; by Kit Carson, the famous Indian Scout, and James C. Fremont, the trail-blazer; by General S. W. Kearney and the nineteenth century Army and Marine heroes; and by the prospectors and bonanza kings of bygone years—on this historic land thousands of Marines are being trained today, to go forth to many foreign lands and carry on the traditions of the Corps against America's enemies. on land, at sea, and in the air.

How Long?

(Editorial Note)

THE fall of Mussolini and the rumors of disorder in Germany have caused many to jump to the conclusion that the war is nearly over. They compare the signs of disintegration in August, 1943, with those of August, 1918, and project their wishful thinking into the inference that November, 1943 (or at worst a few months later) will see a collapse of our enemies like that of November, 1918. Such a line of reasoning overlooks many factors; and the danger of it is that it tends to cause a let-down in the battle of war production and in the morale of the public, thus actually threatening to prolong the war.

On the other hand, Admiral Horne has recently declared, publicly, that the Navy is planning for a war that may continue into 1949, and Secretary Knox has warned that it is unwise to count on too short a war.

While it is true that political factors sometimes change the picture rapidly and unpredictably, it is the military situation that must be primarily considered so far as planning is concerned. Hanson W. Baldwin, able military critic of the *New York Times,* wrote on August 11: "There is nothing in the military situation today to justify the assumption that the war in Europe will come to an early end." The fall of Mussolini has not terminated Italian resistance, and, indeed, the breathing spell that the Allies allowed for Badoglio to make up his mind may well have given the Germans an opportunity to strengthen greatly their defenses in north Italy. The bombing attacks on Germany have undoubtedly done a great deal to "soften up" the German public, but there is, as yet, no indication that they have so completely disrupted German industry and transportation as to cause anything approaching economic collapse. The Russian advance, though highly significant, has still not brought the Russian troops very close to the German border—and it is a long way to Berlin whether from Moscow, from London, or from Sicily.

When we turn our eyes to the Pacific, we see an even more difficult situation. Although American and Australian forces have assumed the offensive in several areas, we are still only attacking the fringes of the greater Japanese empire. The capture of Munda was an important victory, but it brings us only a fractional step closer to Japan, and it is probably only by an overwhelming attack on Japan proper, not only by air but by ground occupation, that the Pacific war will ultimately be brought to a successful conclusion. This desired end is certainly a long way in the future and much hard fighting will be required before it is achieved.

Actually, American troops, both in Europe and in the Pacific, have just begun to fight. We are, so to speak, in the first period of the game, and the fact that we have made one touchdown (in Sicily) and a couple of first-downs (in the Pacific) should not lead us to overconfidence. We would be far wiser to plan for a long war and perhaps be agreeably surprised by an early termination of it than to plan for a short one and find, to our dismay, that it continues long after the date that some of our strategists set for its conclusion.