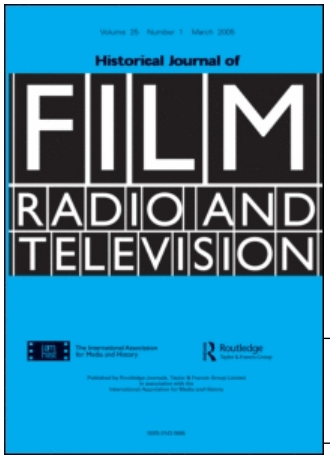

Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713423937

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Online Publication Date: 01 June 2008

To cite this Article: Orgeron, Marsha (2008) 'Filming The Marines In The Pacific: An Interview With World War Ii Cinematographer Norman Hatch', Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, 28:2, 153 — 173

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/01439680802077196
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01439680802077196

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Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television
Vol. 28, No. 2, June 2008, pp. 153–173

FILMING THE MARINES IN THE PACIFIC: AN INTERVIEW WITH WORLD WAR II CINEMATOGRAPHER NORMAN HATCH

Marsha Orgeron

I interviewed Norman (Norm) T. Hatch on November 15, 2007 at his home of 40-plus years in Alexandria, Virginia. When I first spoke to Major Hatch USMCR (Retired) on the phone, over a year prior to our meeting in person, my primary interest was to hear his take on amateur cinematography practices and prohibitions during wartime, and about the related subject of his 15-year role as the Senior Audio Visual Advisor at the Department of Defense. In our initial phone conversation, Hatch—who was on active duty as a cameraman for the United States Marine Corps from 1941 to 1946—explained that Marines would have had a very hard time shooting their own movies during World War II, likely more so than men in the Army or Air Force.[1] Because of the confined quarters kept by Marines onboard a ship, it was much more difficult for hobbyist activities such as filming to take place without catching the eye of a ship's Skipper, who was authorized to confiscate and, if necessary, destroy any unofficial photographic equipment he found on board. Marines were prohibited from keeping diaries due to similar concerns regarding the containment of strategic military information. Amateur filming overseas was, of course, forbidden for very logical reasons: the film a Marine might shoot could reveal secrets, positions, and so on if captured by the enemy. As Hatch reminded me, 'You're on duty 24-7; you're never a civilian part time, especially during a war.'

Hatch had, however, heard of several instances of Army men who had shot personal film footage during World War II, both 8-mm and 16-mm, despite the prohibitions. Hollywood director George Stevens, an Army Photographic Officer best

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ISSN 0143-9685 (print)/ISSN 1465-3451 (online)/08/020153–21 © 2008 IAMHIST & Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/01439680802077196

FIGURE 1 Norman Hatch in Hawaii prior to the Iwo Jima invasion with a Bell & Howell 35mm Eyemo Model Q camera equipped with a 400-foot magazine and motor. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Norm Hatch collection.

known in the wartime context for his filming of concentration camp liberations at the close of the European segment of the war, left a trunk full of such personal footage, which was found only after his death. Rules were strict but not always enforced concerning this kind of personal cinematographic business during World War II, one of the reasons, perhaps, that Stevens and many other soldiers who came home with such contraband tended to keep it to themselves.

As Hatch and I continued our phone conversation, which ended up moving from the subject of amateur cinematography during World War II, to Vietnam, to the Iraq war (Hatch argues that cell phones now present a serious problem in terms of the containment of imagery and strategic information, the likes of which nobody could have imagined during the Second World War), I realized that much remains to be learned about the nuts and bolts business of the *official* moving image recorders of World War II. How were these pioneering cinematographers trained? How and what did they shoot, and with what equipment? How did they deal with carrying film, reloading cameras, capturing a battle while also being part of it? [See Figure 1.]

While World War II cinematographers have by no means been ignored by historians, film scholars in particular have had relatively little to say about their methodologies or about the tremendous impact their images have had on our collective understanding of the war. Seen as an 'official' part of the war effort, the films themselves, especially the films not helmed by well-known Hollywood directors, are often acknowledged but seldom examined. The same might be said of the men who filmed these images. A handful of important studies have been published that aim to recover the history of the war's image makers, especially Peter Maslowski's indispensable *Armed With Cameras*: *the American military photographers of World War II* (New York, Free Press, 1993), which includes a very good but solitary chapter about

Marine Corps cameramen, including Hatch. But too much of this history remains undocumented.

Although coming to the business of filming later than other arms of the military, the Marines' cinematographic units made a significant impact not only on the public's perception of the war but on the public's understanding of the Marines and the tremendous role they played in the Pacific. Lawrence Suid, in a series of books—the most relevant here being *Guts & Glory: the making of the American military image in film*—has observed that the very survival of the Marines 'as an independent military branch during the post-war unification of the armed services provides a testament as to how well the Marines had learned to use motion pictures to explain their raison d'etre to the American people.'[2] Marine cinematographers, then, not only ensured their branch's survival but also provided Americans with a vivid sense of the sacrifices being made by their fighting men.

Hatch is one of the last living Marine cinematographers from World War II, possessing an incomparable record of cinematographic service: he was with *The March of Time* camera crew at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's declaration of war speech on December 8, 1941; he was the primary combat cinematographer at Tarawa in November 1943, which garnered the Marine Corps a Best Documentary Short Academy Award for *With the Marines at Tarawa* (1944); and he also filmed the battle at Iwo Jima in February 1945, which led to the Academy Award nominated documentary short, *To The Shores of Iwo Jima* (1945).[3] Hatch not only filmed but also worked as one of many editors on these Marine Corps films. He later acted as a consultant to the Hollywood studios making films about the Marines and World War II, starting with the iconic John Wayne film, *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (Dir. Allan Dwan, 1949).

Wartime cinematography, then, is the subject of the interview that follows, which I hope may provide a partial but detailed record of how these seminal images of the war were recorded by the men who were trained to tell the war's stories through moving images.

This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Marsha Orgeron: I wanted to start with how you ended up being a cinematographer during the war. Where did you learn how to film?

Norm Hatch: Well, I joined the Marine Corps in 1939. I was first stationed at 8th and I, at the Marine Barracks here in Washington, the ceremonial headquarters so to speak. There was something that was very important in those days and that was the bulletin board. You were told from day one in the Marine Corps, 'always read your bulletin board every single day.' The bulletin board told you what your unit was doing and what the Marine Corps was doing, their philosophy, the whole thing. Sometimes there was a lot on there for a Private or PFC (Private First Class) to swallow, you know to understand everything, but at least you were made aware of it.

While I was at 8th and I, I saw on the bulletin board that *The March of Time*, the pre-eminent newsreel of the day, had created a school of pictorial journalism and was teaching members of the armed forces how to tell stories with movie cameras. The reason for that was very simple: Louis de Rochemont, the founder and producer at *March of Time*, had been a Navy man in World War I, and had

stayed close to the Navy after that. He realized in looking at military footage that the men knew how to take care of f-stops, how to take care of focus, they knew how to aim the camera at somebody, but they didn't know how to tell a story with the camera.

During World War I, Louis de Rochemont was on a destroyer as a JG (Junior Grade) or Ensign. He had a bunkmate—they had two Officers to a little cabin—another Ensign or JG, who by 1941 was a Rear Admiral in charge of Naval personnel. So when Louis wanted to start the school he called up his old friend and asked him to send a Chief and a couple of first- or second-class Navy types who at least knew the equipment and could be taught how to use it. So, that's the way the school started.

So I see this bulletin board announcement for *The March of Time* school and it says, 'No experience required.' So I send in my request and it was returned because I had no experience! [laughs]

The classes were six months in length, so then I applied for the second class. Again I was turned down because I had no experience. In the meantime, when I had been transferred to 8th and I, I joined the English Department as an English instructor. An 18-year-old English instructor for the Marine Corps Institute—though important, that was probably the most monotonous job in the world for an 18-year-old—I did it for about six months. Then an opening came up for *Leatherneck Magazine*, which was downstairs from us. Because I had come from the English department, I was acceptable to the magazine editor, so I became an associate editor for the magazine.

My next assignment was with the Office of Public Relations at the Navy Department, who also handled all pubic relations for the Marine Corps. I applied again for a third time now for *The March of Time* school. One of the Lieutenants who came to take over the newsreel division of the Navy was a Reserve Officer named Alan Brown and he had been a director at *The March of Time*. One day I said, 'Can I go to lunch with you Lieutenant?' And he said, 'Sure.' So I told him my sad story, and I told him I had an application in for the third time. And he said, 'Well, let's see what happens.' Not long after that my Executive Officer, a man by the name of Lieutenant Gordon, came in the office and told me I had been turned down again—this was in September of 1941. So I went back to Alan Brown and said 'Well, I've been turned down again so I give up. I've tried three times and they refuse to take me.' He said, 'Well, I tell you what, Louis de Rochemont's coming to town (I didn't know the man by name at that point in time) and I've got to give him some Navy film for a project he's working on. I'll let you take it to him over at the hotel and I'll tell him your story before you get there.'

So I went over there and saw Louis and spent an hour with him. He was with two Norwegian Air Force cameramen who had come down from 'Little Norway,' as they called it, in Toronto, where the Canadians were teaching the Norwegians how to fly. Louis was doing a film up there involving this training, and these two guys who came down were cameramen. When I got back from the meeting, I went to see Lt. Brown and said how pleasant it was, but that I didn't know what would come of it.

Two days later Lieutenant Gordon came scurrying into the office and said, 'Norm what the hell have you been doing?' He had just gotten an order to

transfer me immediately to New York in time for the October 1st new class at *March of Time*. So I went back to Allen Brown to find out what happened, and then he told me the story about Louis being in the Navy and so on. Louis had apparently called up the Admiral and asked that he call the Marine Corps to see if they could dig up enough extra money to put someone on a six-month tour with them, and he requested me by name. I thought, 'How many times is your career affected by somebody from World War I'? The chain of events was amazing.

MO: So the school was in New York?

NH: New York City. 360 Lexington Avenue. *The March of Time* was pre-eminent in news stories because Louis would deal in a 20–30-minute show with a major problem around the world or here in the U.S. That program was the grandfather of *60 Minutes* and other like news programs with investigative reporting.

One time while I was up there, Louis was all smiles and we asked him what that was all about because he wasn't usually walking around with a smile on his face. He had just heard that Adolph Hitler had put *The March of Time* number 10 on his list of things to eradicate when he came to New York! Louis said, 'Well, I must be doing something right.'

Louis had the great propensity as a newsman, which I've never seen since, to be able to survey a large group of newspapers from around the world and predict where something might happen three months from now. He would send a crew to wherever it was to do that story, which hadn't really even surfaced yet. It was just a footnote in the news. He had 'in can' usually at least four months of work waiting for something to happen

MO: So at the time you began this training had you ever shot even a home movie on 8-mm?

NH: Oh no. We had a camera club in High School in Gloucester, Massachusetts and we were fooling around with pretty arcane cameras of the day. Kodak had come out with a bullet camera: it collapsed in on itself, and you could pop it out and shoot whatever you wanted. It wasn't very good. The best thing on the market was a Leica, but it cost more money in the 1930s than any of us kids could afford.

All of a sudden, one of the kids came and told us about a new camera on sale for $12.50. This was an Argus Model A. It sold out so fast all over the country! The improved model, Argus C3, was nicknamed 'the brick' during World War II.

MO: So you'd only done still photography, then, no film, prior to enlisting?

NH: That's right. Those days we had little processing kits using sunlight as your light power. You'd slip the print paper in and lay the negative over it and you'd get a contact print. They were very good, actually. I fiddled with that and liked it. And that's why I decided I wanted to try motion pictures.

MO: So what was training like for those six months?

NH: Well, I think I must have caught Louis de Rochemont's eye. The minute I hit New York he said, 'Don't unpack, you're coming to Toronto.' He was throwing a party for a feature film he made—they made about half a dozen feature films at *The March of Time*—on this business of the Norwegians and they had a great big party with all of the Norwegian airmen in one of the biggest hotels in town.

MO: So you hadn't even started training yet?

NH: No, that was my first experience with the company. When I came back to New York I stayed for a week or two at an apartment Louis kept for people coming in to do jobs until I found a place to live. And I did, right on Lexington Avenue not far from where *March of Time* was. And then I started training.

What they did was really teach you by osmosis. They put you out with the camera crews and supposedly there was an intercourse about what was going on and why and what for. However, the cameramen, as a general rule, were a little reticent about telling us anything because they were afraid that after the war was over we'd come back and take their jobs, we'd join the union, and there'd be a big influx of people and we'd water down the pool. But I managed to befriend George Stoetzel who was an assistant cameraman and I sort of made it a point that I tried to always get myself attached to his crew because I knew he'd talk to me. He had worked in Hollywood as an assistant cameraman.

MO: So you tried to work with Stoetzel whenever you could. Did you get to touch and use the equipment as part of your initial training, then?

NH: Oh sure, we carried it! [laughs] We carried the boxes and all kinds of stuff. They didn't have any trouble telling you to do this! Of course, you had to be very careful around the cameras because those cameras probably cost around $5000. But they taught me how to carry it—pick up the two arms of the tripod and lean it on your shoulder and lean forward a little bit.

MO: Were you shooting 35-mm? How heavy were those cameras?

NH: Yes, 35-mm. The cameras had thousand foot magazines on them and a thousand feet of film was pretty heavy. I don't know what the poundage was but there was the box, the lenses, the tripod legs. It took a big man to do a good job with one of those.

They would send us out in the city of New York to do stories. Film ran through the camera at 90 feet a minute.

MO: Do you remember anything that you shot?

NH: Well, the declaration of war. I had gone to Washington with the New York crew to photograph that.

MO: So you were there for the declaration of the war?

NH: Oh yeah. Louis called me up Sunday morning and said he wanted me to come into the office right away.

I had just heard what had happened.[4] In fact, I was the senior Marine in the group—I was a PFC, but by virtue of time and rank I was senior (there were two other Marines that were up there at *March of Time*)—and the word was coming over the radio that *all* active duty military personnel had to report to their commands. Mine for paperwork were the Marine Barracks at the Navy Yard. So I finally got the Sergeant Major down there, who I knew, and I said 'there's three of us up here, do you want us to come down'? And he said, 'Oh, Jesus Christ no. I'm covered with people and don't know what to do with them.' There were no orders about what to do with people once they physically reported in to their respective organizations. He told me to stay put since he knew where I was.

I went into the office and Louis said he was sending a camera crew down because the President was going to declare war on Monday morning. Since I knew the Washington area, he wanted me to drive the car. They loaded it up with all of the camera gear and the cameramen would come down in the morning and meet me at the hotel and go over to the Capital building and set up the gear.

MO: So you were still not considered a cameraman at this point?

NH: Yes and no. Well, they gave me a handheld camera. Louis was smart: he told me to wear my uniform because they'd have the place locked down and if you're in uniform he figured you'd be able to move. He was right. I went down to the floor of the House of Representatives with a handheld camera after we got established up on the balcony. I actually was down there when Roosevelt arrived in his car, but we didn't photograph anything because nobody showed the difficulty he had.

I shot a lot of handheld stuff around the capitol of that particular happening. Then when the actual speech started we were all immobilized while he was talking except that it was very easy for the cameramen to shoot 1000 feet of film in 10 minutes, and there were five newsreel companies up there and the cameramen were sitting in folding chairs right next to each other with no knee room. Their extra camera gear had to stay in the hallway, so I agreed that for all five newsreels that if they needed film I'd go get it for them. That saved them from trying to scramble around. That was my experience there.

MO: At what point in your training did the filming of FDR's speech happen?

NH: Well I got to *March of Time* on October 1st, so I had only been there a couple of months. I was practically a neophyte.

MO: How much longer after the declaration of war were you in training before you went overseas? What else did you do to get ready?

NH: The most important was learning how to do things, to make the crews more confident that you could do the things they asked you to do. We depended greatly on what the camera teams told us to do. Our graduation was a 100-foot test,

where we had to go out in the city, shoot a story with only 100 feet of film, edit it in the camera (instead of coming back and cutting it on the table), and screen it. They'd give us marks on how much we'd learned, how good we could tell the story. I apparently did alright because I graduated.

When my graduation was over I was sent down to Quantico where a newly formed photographic services unit was being put together. That was created because Captain Wallace M. Nelson on the West Coast, who wasn't connected with the motion picture industry in any way but everyone around him was, was asked what the Marines would do in terms of filming once we started to fight. He'd been to China and the Caribbean, and he'd only seen one or two photographers that whole time. So he sat down and wrote a letter to the Commandant of the Marine Corps and he outlined what he thought should be done, especially in shooting our own training films. We were using Army training films at the time. The Commandant loved the idea and ordered him to HQ to put this unit in operation. So here's this neophyte Marine captain who had never done anything photographically before and he had to put together this new unit. But he did.

At Quantico I was shooting training films with Louis Hayward, the actor, who had then come in as a Captain.[5]

MO: Do you remember anything about the training films you shot?

NH: They were all pretty much on amphibious-type things. What to do in the field. How to cook a meal. The kind of stuff that new recruits needed to know.

It's hard to imagine but at the time I joined the Corps the Marines were smaller in size than the New York City police force, 18,000 men. New York had 22,000 or something on the police force. In that period of time from 1941 until the end of the war the photographic unit for the Marines went from about 12 or 14 people to 600, and I'm one of the last two remaining members of the group. We had two big studios, one on the West Coast and one on the East Coast. They were just like any complete motion picture studio, from dollies to sound gear to lights to anything that you need. Plus, the cameramen overseas.

MO: What happened between Quantico and Tarawa?

NH: Quantico assigned another cinematographer, Johnny Ercole, also a *March of Time* trainee, and I to join the second Marine division, which was forming on the West Coast. They already had elements out in the Pacific, fighting in Guadalcanal plus Guam, Tahiti, places like that, forming small resistance groups in case the Japanese tried to make any kinds of landings out there since they were encroaching on that area for their own operations. The 8th Marines were out there, the 6th Marines came from Iceland and were sent overseas. So the division was not complete in San Diego, but we were putting it together. We went overseas in 1942 and went to New Zealand, and spent the most wonderful 11 months you could ever imagine. [See Figure 2.]

MO: What were you doing there?

FIGURE 2 Norman Hatch in New Zealand with the 2nd Marine Division Photo Section in 1943, holding a Bell & Howell Eyemo model M with a compact turret and a corresponding viewfinder lens. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Norm Hatch collection.

NH: Training.

MO: Combat training?

NH: Yes. They had wonderful beaches for amphibious training.

MO: I'm curious about that. You were considered a cameraman but you were being put through the same combat training as everyone else?

NH: No, we had a photographic section in the division and we were covering all of the things that the division was doing and sending it back to headquarters. Johnny and I were the only professionally trained cameramen in the division; there were no other motion picture cameramen assigned. Everyone else was a still photographer, and there were probably eight or nine of them. In San Diego we convinced the Quartermaster and the Photographic Officer that when we went up to Hollywood, which we were going to do to have some training at Twentieth Century Fox, that we should buy a group of 16-mm cameras and the magazine film that went in them so that we could train some members of the photographic section to use them. That way, if Johnny or I got shot or killed there would be somebody left to film the action.

So we spent a lot of time in New Zealand teaching these other kids how to handle 16-mm cameras, how to shoot. We didn't have to use the color film we had because we discovered that in New Zealand we could buy 16-mm

Kodak magazines in the photo stores, we could ship the exposed film over to a Kodak lab in Australia and get it processed and get it back so we could show the footage to the guys, what they did right and what they did wrong.

One of the funniest things in the early days: we were watching a film that this Sergeant had done and all of the sudden everyone had to turn their heads on their sides. Figuring like a still-man, he was getting a horizontal but wanted a vertical so he turned the camera on its side!

That was the start of the Marine Corps using 16-mm color and it was done out of necessity. You could not buy any more 35-mm Eyemo cameras. The Air Corps, the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps (where it could) and the Coast Guard had bought up everything. Bell & Howell wasn't making enough any more at this stage in the game to supply everybody with what they wanted.

When I was at *The March of Time*, Lt. Colonel Wallace Wachtler, who was the boss for photography at that time, asked me to go around to the hock shops and the camera stores to see if I could find any gear that we could use, and if I did to call him up and he'd give the guy the purchase order. That's how bad things were. I found out that I was a step behind the Army Air Corps, who were doing the same thing. I was able to buy a couple of cameras that were usable, though. Imagine, I was only a PFC and had been in the business less than six months. I did buy one camera that sold for $3500 dollars, but it was all intact with the lenses. It was the Wahl single-system sound camera.

MO: Tell me about your experience filming Tarawa. [See Figure 3.]

NH: At Tarawa, I was the senior NCO of the photo unit.[6] I was a staff Sergeant at that time. Louis Hayward was my boss out there, too. Because both I and Johnny Ercole, another staff Sergeant, had professional movie training—Louis and the two of us could talk together. Louis felt more comfortable with us because we could talk movies. When we went into Tarawa we had to figure out how to cover the battle.

FIGURE 3 Frame enlargement from the title sequence of *With the Marines at Tarawa* (1944).

Johnny's and my idea worked out well because though he rode around in a boat all night at Tarawa, and his 35-mm Eyemo got pretty well indoctrinated with saltwater and wouldn't run. He had taken one of the 16-mm cameras as a precaution. Johnny was in the same boat with our boss, Louis Hayward, and Captain Hayward had a couple of cameras. And spread around were other Marines with 16-mm cameras, as well. So they shot the bulk of the material in 16-mm color. Now most of those cameramen didn't get in until around 10:00 a.m. the second day. They were held out in boats overnight because of circumstances on the beach. I was on the beach for the first day-and-a-half shooting black and white 35-mm. [See Figure 4.]

When the film was shipped back to the West Coast, the assistant Photo Officer wasn't indoctrinated enough in motion picture work—he was a Warrant Officer—to know that you could meld the 16-mm with the 35-mm. He dropped my film off with a Public Relations Officer, Lt. Colonel Bender, in San Francisco and told him it was for newsreel use. So he carried the rest of it into Washington where it was processed and seen by the joint staff and then sent out to Hollywood to Warner Bros. to edit it into a film.

Well, Frank Capra told me later that he was asked to come down to Washington by the Joint Chiefs of Staff—he was in New York at the Signal Corps Production Center (SCPC, later called the Army Pictorial Center, which used to be where Paramount films was in the early movie days) in Long Island—to have a look at the film because Tarawa was such a terrific battle they were sure he could make a big film out of it. Well, he said he went home disappointed because he didn't see any combat footage and he couldn't understand why there wasn't any in such a tightly compacted battle.

So Capra went back to New York very unhappy. About two days later one of his Lieutenants ambled into his office and said he saw some wonderful footage

FIGURE 4 In the center, deep field, Norman Hatch filming at Tarawa in 1943. Photographer Cpl. Obie Newcomb. Courtesy Norm Hatch collection.

on Tarawa. Capra said, 'what do you mean? I saw it all. There wasn't any wonderful footage. Where'd you see it?' The Lieutenant told him it was in a newsreel and Capra told him to go get him a print. What had happened was that the five newsreels had taken and used all of my film from Tarawa. They all edited it differently, but they had all taken the total footage that I'd shot and put it out.

When the film was later used in Hollywood to make *With the Marines at Tarawa*, they brought in the 35-mm black and white to use with the color film. They then tinted my black and white a kind of rosy hue so it wouldn't be too sharp a contrast with the color footage.

Tawara lasted 76 hours, over 6000 people were killed—about 5000 of those were Japanese—and over 1000 wounded, all on an island about one third the size of Central Park in New York. There was a lot of lead flying around in those 76 hours.

After the battle I was brought back to Washington to be debriefed along with three of our combat correspondents, who had written some excellent stories, and a still man, Obadiah (Obie) Newcomb, who was with me at Tarawa. Obie got in on the Amtrac (amphibious tractor) and I got in on the first boat. I spent a lot of time in the supply section at HQ in Washington explaining that we didn't have enough Eyemos to go around so we should get away from that and buy all the 16-mm gear we can get. By that time there was a Lieutenant working in the supply section handling photographic equipment who had been a special assistant to the President at Kodak in his regular duty, Jerry Zarnow. I told him that Bell & Howell makes the best camera, because it has a turret on it with three lenses so you don't have to take a lens out and take a lens off and go through all that. The best that Kodak had at that time was the Kodak Cine, which had a door that dropped down on the side and you could throw the magazine in, but it only had one lens. The other camera that Kodak made at that time was the Kodak Cine Special, which had a 100-foot separate magazine that came off the camera and it was half the size of the camera. It was a bulky thing, and you had to load it, make sure the gates were closed, and all that kind of stuff.

So we got into using 16-mm and every battle after that we shot in 16-mm color.

MO: Do you remember how many reels or how many feet you shot at Tarawa?

NH: I probably shot around 3500 feet of film. We only brought around 4000 feet of film; that's all we could carry.

MO: This is what I'm trying to figure out. Logistically, how are you doing this on the beach with all of this stuff . . .

NH: First, in New Zealand they had wonderful leatherworkers. I went to one and had him make a kind of motorcycle belt with a holder so the Eyemo could be carried upside down with the handle sticking up and the lens pointing to the back. I could carry 400-foot rolls of film in pouches that were on that belt.

I had an assistant with me at Tarawa; it's probably the only time that any handheld cameraman had an assistant during the war, but Bill Kelliher was

learning the business and I figured that I could train him in combat. What he did for me was that he carried my second camera, which only had one lens, but it was an Eyemo. When I was running out of film and knew it, I'd say 'Kelly, give me the camera.' He would hand it to me all loaded, and he would take my camera back and he would record what I had shot on that roll and he would identify the roll number on the can and so on. In most cases we had slated each roll before getting into combat. This made life greatly easy for me in shooting because I wasn't worried about running out of or keeping track of film.

When I was out there shooting movies, every time I changed a scene I had to change the focus, which was another thing to think about. Additionally, if some sort of an ammunition dump exploded over here and after having nice, mid-Pacific sunlight at an F-16 stop, I now had a great big cloud of black smoke come over and had to drop it down to 2.3. Every time you changed a shot you had to do that.

Anyhow, Kelly and I came in on the same boat. Our boat broached on the shore and the ramp wouldn't go down, so we had to go over the side. We were in the water up to our shoulders—we were six footers—and for some of the shorter men the water was over their heads. I put Kelly over first, and we had four canisters that had 10 rolls of film each in it, one on each shoulder, and the 35-mm camera was strapped to your wrist. And that's the way we walked in. Of course, everyone who got out of the boat before us was dogpaddling and all you could see were the helmets going along; it reminded me of being at camp up in New Hampshire feeding the turtles at night, it looked like a herd of turtles going along.

Because we had so much weight on us our feet were on the bottom, but it is tiring walking in water, especially with all of the weight. I had my regular pack on, my pistol strapped to my waist. As soon as we got on the beach and fell into a big shell hole we started to film.

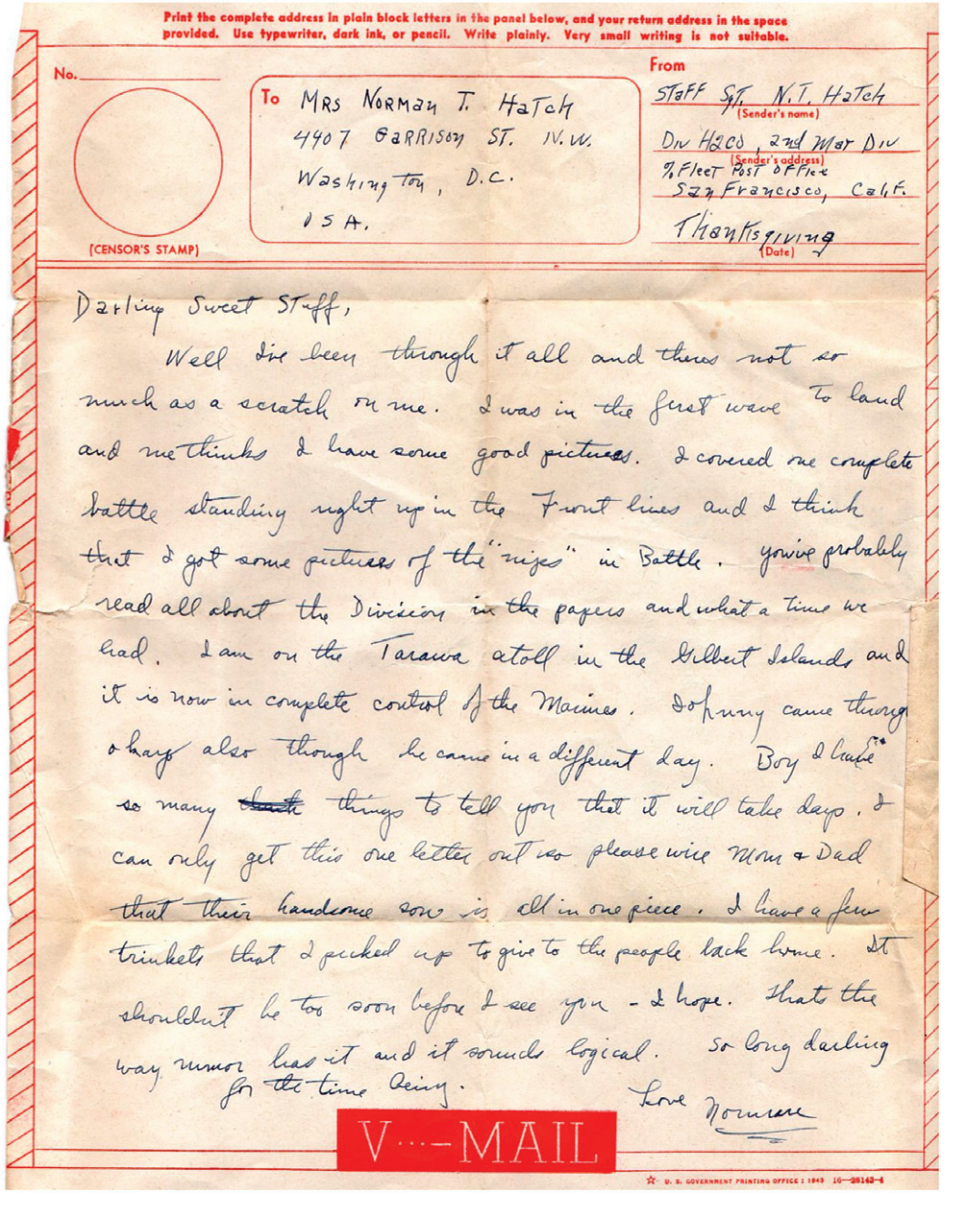
MO: And did you just shoot your camera during Tarawa or were you also fighting?

NH: Just the camera. That was my job. I would have to tell guys up on the front line who didn't think I had to be up there because I was a cameraman that I *had* to be up there because I *had to film*. I'd try to tell them why and let it go at that. [See Figure 5.]

MO: So after Tarawa, what did you do?

NH: I was on the Fourth War Loan Drive; I traversed the country for a couple of months doing that. Then they sent me to the Fifth Division, which was now forming at Camp Pendleton. There was no Camp Pendleton when the Second Division was forming, so in that space of time Camp Pendleton area had been purchased, the buildings built, and so on.

At the moment, I was a Technical Sergeant and I was sent out there to be the senior NCO in the unit, but I had an application in to be promoted to Warrant and while I was there it came through. I had two Photo Officers above me. One was a Major named Richard Day, who had been the senior art director at Twentieth Century Fox. Major Day was transferred to Twentieth Century Fox to


Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To MRS NORMAN T. HATCH
4407 GARRISON ST. N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C.
U S A.

From
STAFF SGT. N.T. HATCH
(Sender's name)
DIV H2CO, 2nd MAR DIV
(Sender's address)
% FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

THANKSGIVING
(Date)

Darling Sweet Stuff,

Well I've been through it all and there's not so much as a scratch on me. I was in the first wave to land and me thinks I have some good pictures. I covered me complete battle standing right up in the front lines and I think that I got some pictures of the "nips" in Battle. You've probably read all about the Division in the papers and what a time we had. I am on the Tarawa atoll in the Gilbert Islands and it is now in complete control of the Marines. Johnny came through okay also though he came in a different day. Boy I have so many ~~that~~ things to tell you that it will take days. I can only get this one letter out so please wire Mom & Dad that their handsome son is all in one piece. I have a few trinkets that I picked up to give to the people back home. It shouldn't be too soon before I see you - I hope. That's the way rumor has it and it sounds logical. So long darling for the time being.

Love Norman

V···-MAIL

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1943 16—28142-1

FIGURE 5 V-Mail sent by Norman Hatch to his wife, Lois, after Tarawa. It begins, "Darling Sweet Stuff, Well I've been through it all and there's not so much as a scratch on me. I was in the first wave to land and me thinks I have some good pictures." Courtesy Norm Hatch.

run the camouflage school, which trained anyone in the military who needed to learn how to camouflage their gear. The second one was named Captain Havens and he had been a second unit director for MGM. He had spent most of his life in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, all the upcountry of East Asia obtaining background footage for the studio. One day he came to me and said he was going to be leaving. Because we knew so little about those countries in those days they

ordered Captain Havens to Washington to pick his brain. So now I was made Warrant Officer and I was also the Photo Officer for the Fifth Marine Division. It was my job to get the kids ready for whatever we were going into.

From Pendleton we went to Hawaii, where I had been in the Second Division. It was then known as Camp Kamuela and it's now known as Camp Tarawa. From there we went to Iwo Jima.

MO: How was filming Iwo Jima different from filming Tarawa?

NH: Iwo Jima was a very scheduled shoot, in some ways, because we had three Marine divisions ashore fighting at Iwo Jima, the first time in our history and the first time during the war that we had three Marine divisions fighting one battle. We knew beforehand that there was going to be a lot of photography. Each division had approximately 30 photographers, still and motion, so there were going to be 90 photographers on the beach. And they all had the potential to duplicate themselves.

So we had a meeting at Pearl Harbor called by the Navy. CINCPAC (Commander in Chief Pacific) had realized that this problem was going to exist aboard their Navy ships as well, since they were going to have 600 ships out for this engagement. They called us all together and we planned out what each division would shoot and how many free roamers we'd have to just go ahead and shoot whatever they saw. If photographers were covering an artillery battalion, like we were, and something blew up in front of them, they'd shoot it. But basically they were supposed to shoot nothing but what the battalion did. For example, the Marine Corps made a great training film about a gun called *Glamour Gal* (1945).[7]

I think I had three or four specific stories to shoot, same with the Fourth Division and the Third Division. [See Figure 6.]

MO: When you assigned these 'stories,' what exactly did you request be filmed?

NH: The cinematographers put in charge of these units knew how to shoot film. You can't predict what's going to happen. You assign them several weeks before they leave the camp that they're in, so for example you shoot everything from the issuance of orders, which would be read to the troops; packaging up of the 75-mm Howitzers, how they were carried, loaded, getting them on deck; being on board ship with the guys, coming up on the island; the way everything comes out of the ship, down onto the little boats, carried ashore, run up the beach; how they overcame that great big hill we had to climb on Iwo, getting these wheeled guns up there. It's a whole story in itself, which Master Sergeant Lou Louft did very well with *Glamour Gal*.

The other thing we filmed was a medical battalion, which was a Navy organization. The Navy had never had camerawork done in a field hospital before. So we had one man assigned, Sergeant Francis (Frank) M. Cockrell, to do that and he had the hardest job of all because they let him into the operating room. He had a Cine Special—that big camera, awkward as hell to hold and carry—he held that in one hand and a light in the other hand. It was beautifully done; he had been a script editor in Hollywood so he knew how to tell a story.

FIGURE 6 Norman Hatch (right), now the Photo Officer for the 5th Marine Division, on Iwo Jima in 1945 with W.O. Obie Newcomb, who is holding a reflex 120 roll film camera, similar to a Rolliflex. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Norm Hatch collection.

And it was brutal stuff: shots of doctors cutting off arms, showing what a bloody mess it all was.

MO: What was done with that footage? That doesn't seem like *March of Time* material.

NH: That would have been used for training films for the Corpsmen who would be going with Marines.

MO: This whole time were you just shooting the film, right? Or were you involved in editing too?

NH: I shot very little film at Iwo, only on V-Day. The rest of the time was consumed by taking care of my photographers in the field. When the battle was over I would come back to the States and help edit the film.

MO: So you're going back and forth?

NH: Well, I did that two times—after Tarawa and Iwo Jima. I was brought back from Iwo because of the planning we did at Pearl. They figured they'd try to get the film edited at Warner Bros. reasonably soon after the battle. So the Photo Officer from the Fourth Division, Lieutenant Herbert Schlosberg carried in all of the motion picture film shot by the Marine Divisions from D-Day to D+8. I was

FIGURE 7 Frame enlargement depicting dead Marines—here floating in the water—from *With the Marines at Tarawa*.

to carry everything from D+8 to D+18. We both carried it into Washington so the Joint Staff could look at it and then it went back to Hollywood and we stayed there with the editor to keep things in context. After I carried my film in I took it to Hollywood and went to work on it.

I worked at a couple places for the editors of the Iwo film in Hollywood. I had to go to Disney because Disney had the only competent 16-mm coding machine, which puts numbers on the edge of the film so that you can easily locate the footage you want while you're editing. So I coded all of the 16-mm footage that was there. The main editing, though, was done at Warner Bros.

MO: When you say that the film went to the Joint Chiefs, were they editing out any material?

NH: No. They were looking at it for their own information to see what had happened. The battle was still going on.

There was little or no censorship in that sense. We did have certain rules that we were obligated to follow. Prior to Tarawa, no dead bodies were ever shown. *Life* magazine took some shots of dead bodies at Buna prior to Tarawa, and they ran with them much to everybody's consternation. In *With the Marines at Tarawa*, there are those scenes in there showing the bodies floating in the water up at the beach. [See Figure 7.]

Well, the President was friendly with Bob Sherrod, who was a senior *Time-Life* correspondent in the Pacific who had been at Tarawa and had also been a White House correspondent. Every time Bob would come back after a battle to be briefed by *Time-Life* about what had been going on in the battlefield, the President would ask him to come to Washington and talk to him. The President asked Bob if he'd seen *With the Marines at Tarawa* (it hadn't been released yet) and wanted his opinion about if it should be released or not. Bob told him that he thought it should be released because the American public hadn't the slightest concept about what was happening in combat. The President was worried about the dead

bodies, but Bob said that as long as faces weren't shown the footage should be included. The President said 'ok,' and it was released, and it got the Academy Award in 1944.

MO: Were there any other prohibitions besides not showing the faces of the dead?

NH: That would depend entirely upon the viewing hierarchy. There were no restrictions about what you shot. You forwarded it in and let the brass figure it out from there. Nobody saw it until they saw it. So I don't know what might have been edited out at any particular time. But for the first time the ban was lifted on showing dead bodies as long as the faces weren't shown.

When I came back from Iwo, I wound up at Warner Bros. and stayed there until the film was finished. The Third Division Photo Officer Captain Karl Soule came in last with the remainder of it and we got it out shortly after the battle was over. That was also nominated for an Academy Award.

We had an in-joke in the Second Division, prior to Tarawa, that we were going to equal John Ford's Academy Award record by having a combat film made of what we shot, never thinking we'd ever come near it. We were a bunch of 18-, 19-, 20-year-olds. Ford had the pick of all of the industry when they set him up as a Navy Photo Officer and gave him all those stripes to wear. He made a re-enactment of Pearl Harbor—*December* 7th—which was done in the studio with stock footage and which got an Academy Award, why I don't know. Ford got an Academy Award in 1943 for *Battle of Midway* (1942); he was out there for that and he got wounded.

MO: You were never wounded?

NH: No, I just walked right through those battles! [laughs]

I have a philosophy on that. The Japanese must have seen me because I'm upright, walking around. I rarely got down on my knees to shoot a picture. I jokingly say that they must have figured I was crazy and they didn't dare shoot me. Kelly didn't get hit either.

Among the photographers we actually had very few casualties. They list one photographic casualty for Tarawa, but he didn't belong to us. He was sent out by CINCPAC, or actually CINCMARPAC (Commander in Chief Marines Pacific). We had a big pool of photographers at Pearl Harbor and before going into battle you could call in and ask for movie or still men on temporary duty. That's the way, when I was building up for Iwo, I got Bill Genaust, who had already been on Saipan and got wounded there but refused to go home; he lived long enough to get to Iwo and got killed there.

On Iwo, we only had two killed to the best of my knowledge: Don Fox, who was a PFC, and Staff Sergeant Bill Genaust, who filmed the famous second flag raising on Iwo Jima.

MO: So after Iwo, did you get to go home?

NH: Yes, but briefly. So I say to myself, 'Now I've done it. I've been in the two worst battles in the Marine Corps. I survived. And I was the most senior motion

picture cameraman in the Marine Corps. I ought to be either at Quantico or Camp Lejeune. Send somebody else out in the field.' But no. As soon as I'm through editing, I'm told I have to go back to the Second Division. I said, 'Oh no.' The Second Division was still on Saipan, that's where they bivouacked after the battle was over. Some of the guys who were in the photo section were still there, but most of them had come home on points, they'd been overseas long enough. So it was pretty much a new unit.

We were getting ready for the landing in Japan and more fighting. So I'm back in Pearl Harbor again planning how we're going to do this, but now we're going to have all six Marine Divisions, five Air Wings, all the Army Divisions—China, Burma, everywhere there's Japanese forces—this has to be planned out very carefully. It was the third or fourth day of the planning and that evening I went to the open-air movie screening. We were sitting there watching a fairly good detective type thing, and at just about the most critical part in the movie the projector stops. Now, that's *not* an unusual happening. Projectors broke down all over the Pacific, film would break, and we'd curse the projectionist. Well, all of a sudden the projectionist came on the air and said, 'I've been informed to tell you that an atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima.' We all said, 'So what? Turn the machine back on.' We didn't know what the hell an atomic bomb was. The secrecy was so well kept on that program that even guys loading the bomb aboard didn't know what it was.

Three days later was Nagasaki, and then came the peace settlement and everything else, and I realized I wouldn't be fighting in Japan. I'd be going as occupation forces into Nagasaki. The bomb blast was in August, I went in September, and I was there until December. Then I got orders to come back immediately to Washington. I had no idea why, but I came back to discover that the war being over now for several months, there was a mad exodus of people who wanted to go home to get their jobs back. When I got back, Lieutenant Carlos (Carl) P. Steele was now my boss; he was the head of all photography in the Marine Corps. Carl had been in the Second Division with me at Tarawa. That's the reason Carl called me; he wanted me to be his right hand man and try to hold things together.

I was there double-hatted, wearing a hat for operations as well as public affairs, which allowed me to act on the John Wayne script for *Sands of Iwo Jima*, and that was the first commercial film that I got involved in.

MO: What exactly did you do for *Sands of Iwo Jima*?

NH: Well, as I said I was the Chief Operating Officer for the Marine Corps photographic services. My office was directly across the hall from the Office of Public Relations, as it was called in those days. I did things for the Director of Public Affairs that related to photography: I wrote letters, signed things, dealt with directives going out on how to handle photographers, and so on. On the other side I worked for the G-3: Carl Steele was the chief man in the G-3 office creating policy for photographic services for the Marine Corps and I helped carry out the policies. What happened was that the script for *Sands of Iwo Jima* came into the Office of Public Relations, which immediately sent it to the Marine

photographic side for comments. I was asked to review the script and concluded that we should cooperate with the studio on making this picture. I also recommended some changes to the script, probably involving military issues; I can't quite remember. It was a pretty accurate story so I don't remember having to make too many changes.

My main job was to read through the script to see if the Marine Corps could provide the things the filmmakers would ask for in order to properly do the film. They're going to need Amtracs, boats, men; they're going to have to simulate a landing on the beach. The studio has to come to ask for all the things that a motion picture production company needs in order to pull off a military picture. My job was to make sure that what they wanted to do was feasible and to figure out the kinds of things they would be likely to ask for to make sure that we wanted to be involved.

MO: Did the motion picture companies, then, basically hire the Marine Corps?

NH: No. With *Sands of Iwo Jima*, as with most other pictures at the time, if a motion picture studio needed to film a landing, the Marine Corps could consider it a training episode and so therefore they would allow the production company to come in and photograph the landing. If they needed something more specific, like a boat coming in or something like that, the Marines could still do that and call it training. If there was any great expenditure, though, they would usually have to pay the government for costs incurred.

MO: What do you think of *Sands of Iwo Jima* when it was released?

NH: Well, it was basically the story of my life in the Pacific! [laughs] I enjoyed it, even it was a little hokey in spots.

MO: As someone who was there, it must feel strange to watch a Hollywood version of the war. The director Sam Fuller, who shot some personal 16-mm footage while soldiering during World War II, used to say that to make a real war movie you'd have to fire bullets at the audience from behind the screen.

NH: Well, *Sands of Iwo Jima* was a theatrical presentation. It wasn't bound by historical, factual rules. Now, they did have to come into the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense for cooperation and approval. A lot of consultation was given by military Officers who had been there and at Tarawa and other battles in the Pacific up to Iwo. When they filmed stuff on the beach, at San Onofre or wherever, they had advisers right with them. They had Colonel Shoup right there, who had been in charge on Tarawa and who later became the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

There was a lot of trueness in *Sands of Iwo Jima*. They carried my life in the Pacific almost to the tee; that's why I enjoyed it.

After the war, Norman Hatch continued his audiovisual career holding major positions both as an officer and civilian at Marine Corps Headquarters. He spent 23 years in the

office of Public Affairs for the Defense Department where, for the last 15 of those years, he was the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense on audiovisual matters. For the past 28 years has operated his own photo-journalism business in Alexandria, VA.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for a Scholarly Project Award from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at North Carolina State University, which has funded my investigation of World War II cinematography and which made this research trip and interview possible.

Notes

1 Almost all of the unofficial, amateur film that I've encountered from the war was shot by men in the Army. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has begun to put its impressive moving image collection online and you can view some of this amateur (as well as official) film at http://resources.ushmm.org/film/search/index.php

2 Lawrence Suid, *Guts & Glory*: *the making of the American military image in film*, revised and expanded edition (Lexington, KY, University of Kentucky Press, 2002), 118.

3 *With the Marines at Tarawa* is viewable at http://www.archive.org/details/WiththeMarinesatTarawa and *To The Shores of Iwo Jima* at http://www.archive.org/details/iwojima

4 Hatch is, of course, referring to the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

5 Hayward had been a Hollywood actor since the 1930s, and served as Director for *With the Marines at Tarawa*.

6 Peter Maslowski notes that, 'Before Tarawa, the Marines' photography had been unimpressive. Wake Island had been missed entirely, and coverage of the six-month battle for Guadalcanal was sparse,' largely due to a severe lack of cameramen, equipment, and film. Peter Maslowski, *Armed with Cameras*: *the American military photographers of World War II* (New York, The Free Press, 1993), 223. Maslowski goes on to argue that Tarawa marked an important turning point in the Marines' photographic capabilities.

7 The film is viewable at the Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/details/glamour_gal

Marsha Orgeron is Assistant Professor and Director of the Film Studies Program at North Carolina State University. Her book, *Hollywood Ambitions*: *celebrity in the movie age* (Wesleyan University Press, 2008), explores individuals from different strata of American life who were drawn to Hollywood for its promise to alter, accelerate, or amplify their careers and reputations: Wyatt Earp, Jack London, Clara Bow, Gertrude Stein, and Ida Lupino. She is currently editing a collection of essays about educational films and writing a book about Sam Fuller. Her recent articles can be found in *Film Quarterly*, *Cinema Journal*, *The Moving Image*, and *The Velvet Light Trap*.