Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- Why Read No Bended Knee: The Battle of Guadalcanal? -

“The odds were nine battalions (eleven counting Kawaguchi’s force) to one against us when the fight began, but our firepower prevailed over the spiritual armor of their Bushido creed. In one captured diary the deceased had written, ‘The Imperial Staff must reconsider the matter of firepower.’

General Merrill B. Twining, No Bended Knee, 138

General Merrill B. Twining’s memoir puts into perspective the details of what took place during the 1942 battle for Guadalcanal. His role as the 1st Marine Division’s operations officer provides us with the strategic, operational, and tactical measures taken by Marines to fight the Japanese who are defending it. Marines pride themselves in their historic heritage and accomplishments. The historical events such as the ones described in this memoir offer insightful examples on what to expect when immersed in similar situations. Twining provides personal accounts of what took place on Guadalcanal and how Marines succeeded despite being outnumber and living in conditions that were not fit for human survival.

Senior enlisted Marines and officers take great measures in taking care of all of the Marines that they are responsible for. This memoir has several examples of many situations that provide senior enlisted and officers with demanding encounters of keeping their Marines in the proper fighting form. Twining describes problematic issues ranging from conducting amphibious operations to dealing with the difficulties of operating in a joint and combined theater. Proper planning and coordination between services are extremely important for the success of the troops on the ground. A combined theater requires mutual support from all of the units within it to triumph. Senior enlisted Marines and officers represent their troops therefore it is imperative that they understand how to properly manage these circumstances. No Bended Knee reveals the great difficulties in conquering Guadalcanal, which are prevalent in any combat environment.

Readers must keep in mind that the historical events described in this memoir are from the personal experiences of General Merrill B. Twining. He documents the entire battle from start to finish as he witnessed it and the readers must challenge themselves to see what is taking place in the battle of Guadalcanal from his perspective. Readers should compare their experiences with that of the Marines described in this memoir. Although Guadalcanal took place in 1942 there are many instances that correlate with the dynamic experience of combat today. There are challenges at every level that are encountered to succeed. There is nothing easy about winning a battle when the odds of winning are against you.