

PHASING THE M2 CARBINE INTO THE USMC – A Military Instruction Manual

By David Albert

Copyright 2014

The author recently acquired a previously unknown USMC manual that should be of interest to Carbine Club members. This appears to be the only known manual solely dedicated to coverage of the M2 Carbine, and is shared here in the club spirit of continued sharing and historical education.

The manual is a course of instruction, focusing on a 4-hour period of lecture, demonstration, and application of the weapon. It was printed in a batch of 20,000 at USMC Quantico, Virginia on 12/19/51, for release in 1952. It covers the description, nomenclature, disassembly and assembly, functioning and stoppages of the weapon without the use of any diagrams or photos, and was used for instruction with live weapons in small groups. An instructor could read from the manual directly to instruct the group. Quoting directly from the manual, it indicates “This class is intended to familiarize you with the mechanics of a weapon that is gradually replacing the M1 Carbine throughout the Marine Corps.”

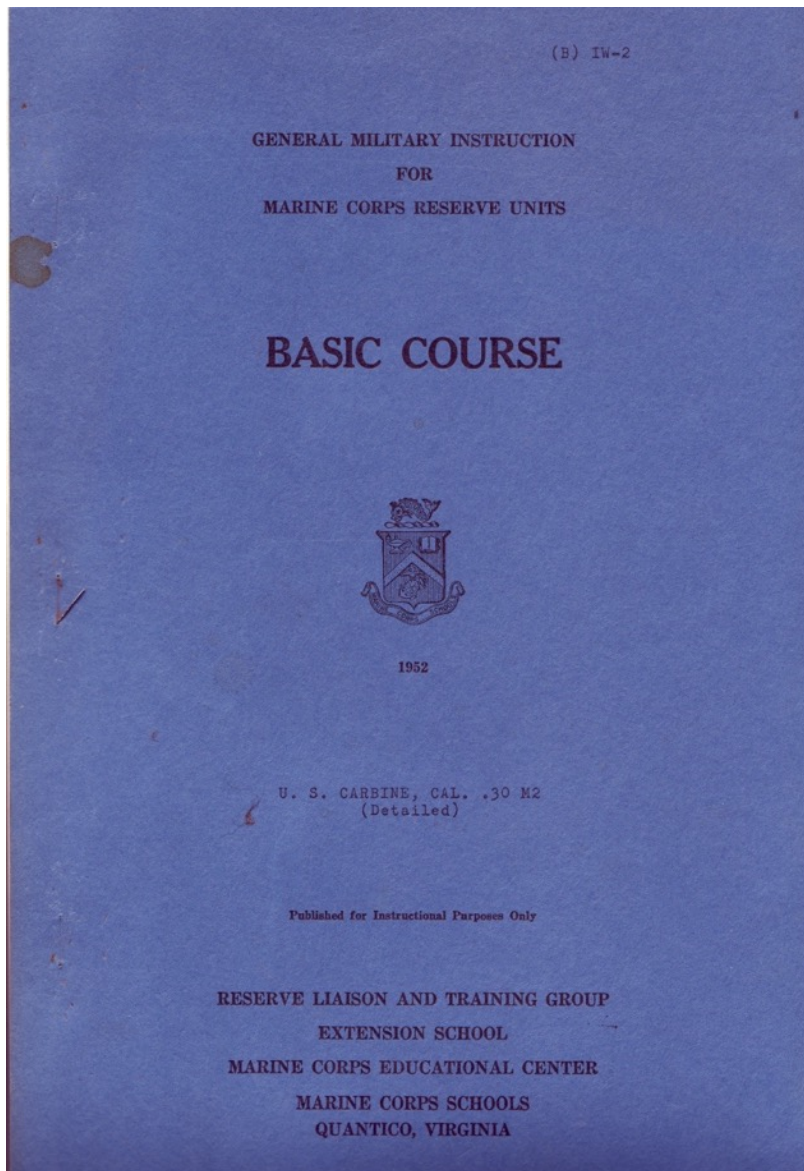
The following additional resources are referenced, and the film was intended to be a 15-minute portion of the overall instruction.

- Guidebook for Marines, Chapter 14
- FM 23-7, April 1944
- FM 23-30 Chapter 5, Section V
- Film MA 6238 (M2 Carbine)
- Chart GTA 9-61

Instruction included the use of one or more weapons for demonstration, depending upon number of students, and the class was broken into four 1-hour sections, as follows:

- First hour: Nomenclature, disassembly, assembly of carbine
- Second hour: Nomenclature, disassembly, assembly of trigger group
- Third Hour: Detailed explanation of the functioning of the weapon
- Fourth Hour: Devoted to operation and stoppages with brief focus on spare parts and accessories, as well as Q&A

The most interesting quote found in the manual was “The U.S. Carbine, Caliber .30 M2 is nothing more than a miniature M1 Rifle, so designed as to be able to fire full-automatic, as well as semiautomatic fire.” Some current Carbine collectors may not like that statement.*



The only known manual dedicated solely to the M2 Carbine. This 1952 USMC manual of instruction was used to familiarize troops with the weapon as it was phased into service. - David Albert Collection

* Editor's note: Referring to Newsletter 149-5, the phrase "the carbine is nothing more than a miniature M1 rifle" was initially found in a 1944-dated manual entitled OFFICER CANDIDATES' SCHOOL COURSE OF INSTRUCTION IN U.S. CARBINE, CAL. .30, M1, published by MARINE CORPS SCHOOLS, MARINE BARRACKS, QUANTICO, VIRGINIA.

The introductory paragraph continues with great enthusiasm for the carbine, stating "The carbine is a very accurate, hard hitting weapon at short ranges. When fired from a fixed rifle rest with no wind blowing, the bullets stay within an 8 inch circle at 300 yards. The .45 cal. pistol will only dent the new type helmet at 100 yards, while the carbine bullet will go completely through both sides of the helmet. At a short range, the carbine penetrates deeper than an M1 rifle will."

The glowing and somewhat misleading statements contained in both Marine manuals are even more interesting, when compared to the negative words used by the Marine Corps after the carbine's disappointing performance during the Korean Conflict. In a press release dated December 28, 1954, the Marine Corps officially "eliminated" the carbine as a weapon, deeming it "substandard" and "unsuitable".¹

Although the M2 Carbine's delicate mechanisms were perhaps unsuited for the abuses of combat in extremely harsh winter weather, and the excessive rate of fire was not conducive to sustained firepower during a lengthy engagement, it can be argued that the USMC's (and the U.S. Army's) disfavor with the weapon was partially their own fault.

First of all, the carbine should never have been regarded as a frontline, lightweight version of the M1 Rifle. It was never designed nor suited for that purpose. Nor was carbine ammunition designed or suited to replace .30-06 M2 ball. Second, infantry replacements were not given adequate training in the effective use of the M2 Carbine, nor in the night-fighting tactics used by the Chinese Communist forces. These errors, understandably, resulted in an evaluation of the M2 Carbine as a weapon that "lacks power, is not sufficiently accurate for aimed fire at moderate distances, and wastes ammunition."²

In my opinion, faulty doctrine by both the Marine Corps and the Army gave the carbine a bum rap. It has been well documented that when the M1 and M2 Carbine were well-maintained, fired by trained individuals, and used for its intended purpose, the carbine served with distinction in both WWII and Korea.

Marty Black

Ref:

1. D.O.D. Office of Public Information letter 1244-54, dated December 28, 1954.
 2. Battlefield Analysis of Infantry Weapons (Korean War), by S.L.A. Marshall, reprinted and copyrighted 1984 by Desert Publications, Cornville, AZ 86325
-