

Flags *for* OUR FATHERS

BY DON FARRELL

As an adult, I have come to increasingly appreciate the unique privilege of being the son of a World War II veteran—one who survived Japanese artillery barrages as he drove a landing craft filled with US Marines onto the invasion beaches at Iwo Jima in February 1945. What's more, that appreciation has been heightened immensely because providence has determined that my residence for most of my adult life should be the island of Tinian, which not unlike Iwo Jima, is a geographically isolated Pacific island that looms large in the annals of World War II history. Drawing upon these two factors—my dad's Iwo Jima connection and my Tinian connection—fate bestowed upon me this past March the honor of accompanying my dad (along with a dozen other WWII vets, their families, WWII history buffs, and a gang of Navy and Marine Corps brass) to Iwo Jima—a trip that had heretofore been only a wild dream.

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My benefactor was John Powell, a director for Military Historical Tours and a participant in last year's MHT sponsored tour of Tinian—for which I served as guide. When I told John that my dad had driven a landing craft filled with United States Marines onto the invasion beaches at Iwo Jima, he invited Dad and me to join this year's Iwo Jima tour. When I called my 81-year-old dad to ask him what he thought about the two of us participating in the tour, it took him less than a heart beat to enthusiastically respond in the affirmative.

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In 1994 Lieutenant General Larry Snowden, USMC (Ret), a member of the 4th Marine Division Association, along with Colonel Warren Wiedhahn, USMC (Ret), President of Military Historical Tours, traveled to Tokyo to seek approval for American Iwo Jima veterans and/or their families to return to the island for the 50th anniversary of that infamous battle. The Japanese countered that a joint reunion would be more appropriate. As a result, it was the very next year, 1995, that Military Historical Tours chartered six Continental Micronesia jets and brought a diverse group of over a thousand US veterans and their families back to this historic battle ground—"their battleground"—for the first time. For many of the veterans who survived the battle for Iwo Jima, this pilgrimage offered an exceptional opportunity for closure to a nightmarish episode in their lives, an opportunity to help dispel the gory images

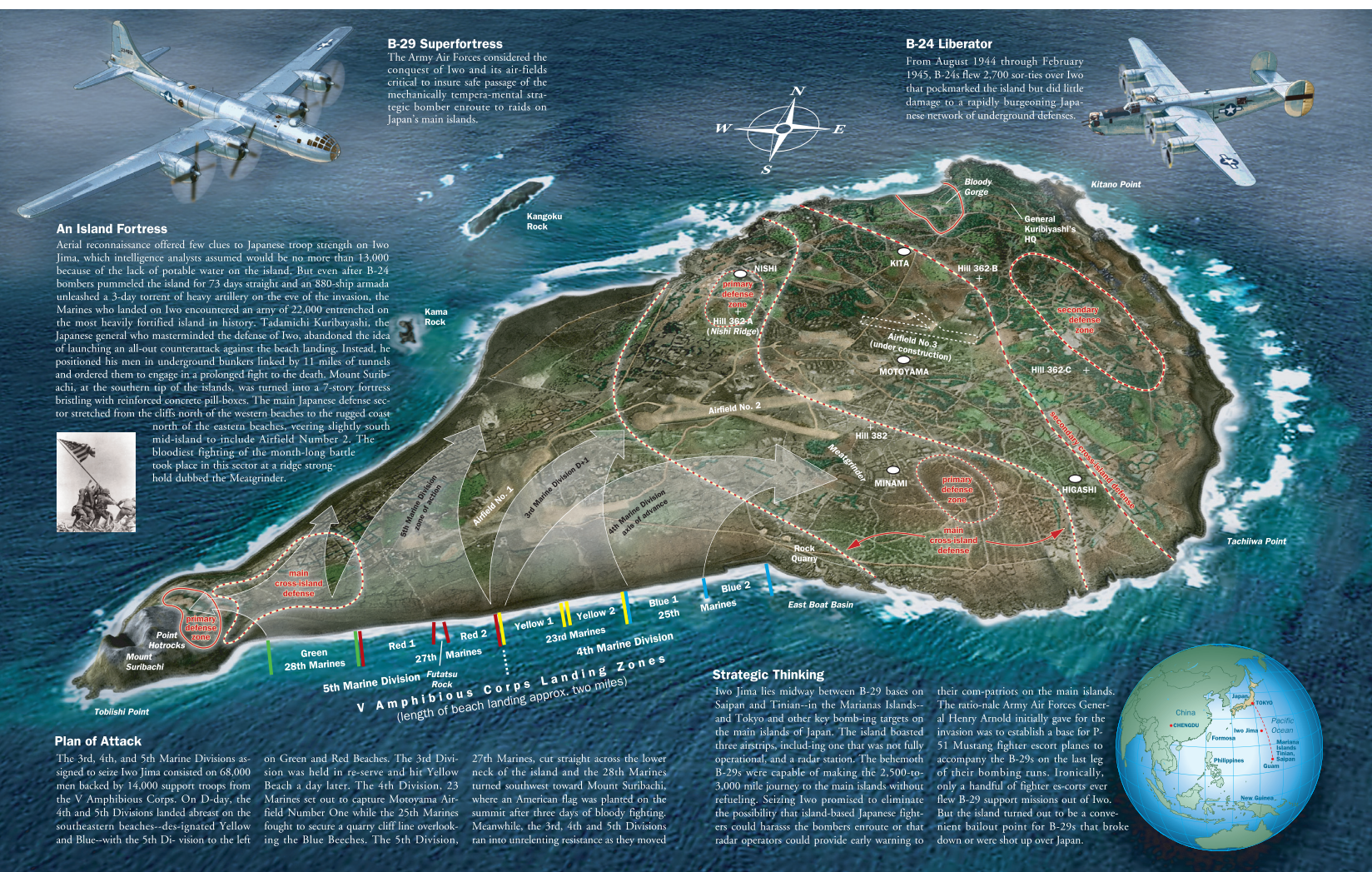
that had negated restful sleep for five decades.

Due to the success of that mission and the desire to afford others such an opportunity, Colonel Wiedhahn has continued to charter Continental Micronesia aircraft for this now-annual visit of veterans and/or their families to Iwo Jima. Since Iwo Jima was returned to Japan in 1968, it is virtually the only day of the year when Americans can visit the island. Through what Colonel Wiedhahn calls the "Combat Veterans of Iwo Jima Reunion of Honor," veterans from both of these once hostile nations now come together in peace on this isolated and desolate island to remember and pay tribute to those from both sides who lost their lives in that historic battle.

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So this year, after again serving as guide for the MHT Tinian tour, I headed off to Guam to meet up with Dad at the Guam Outrigger Hotel, where all the MHT participants were booked. Next morning, on Sunday, March 9, we began a daily routine of breakfast at 6:00 a.m. in the Outrigger's Santa Fe Room. The buffet was hot and the trays full when Dad and I arrived and took chairs at one of the 50 or so tables set for eight. We were shortly joined at our table by other tour participants, who began questioning Dad and the other vets about the war—or rather, how they felt about returning to the scene of that horrific battle.

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Map by Steve Walkowiak. Originally appeared in "Iwo Jima: The Battle We Can't Forget" ©2006. Reprinted with permission of Weider History Group.



Aerial view of Iwo Jima, 1945. (USMC Visual Media Repository)

Iwo Jima. The mere mention of the name evokes the image of a half-dozen battle-worn Marines hoisting the American flag on Mt. Suribachi. To those men who served on “that damned island” on either side—on the sea, on land, or in the air—it still makes the hair stand up on the back of their neck. Even as octogenarians visiting the battlefield 63 years after the fact, the stench of death and visions of carnage are etched in their minds. Capturing Iwo Jima was a dirty ugly job, but it had to be done. The island occupies strategic space halfway between the Marianas and Japan, and lies slightly west of due north of the Marianas.

Despite the cost America would have to pay in blood and materiel to capture Iwo Jima, the need to do so was obvious from the day Admiral King proposed to the American Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Marianas were “the key to the Pacific.” His plan to conduct the final campaign for the defeat of Japan from the Marianas had not been initially supported by his colleagues on the JCS. But once General Henry “Hap” Arnold, commanding officer of the US Army Air Forces, recognized that the Marianas would be the perfect base of operations for his new B-29 Superfortresses, he convinced the remainder to give their consent to the capture of the Marianas.

As soon as the 165th Infantry captured As Lito Airfield on Saipan on July 17, 1944, the Army Air Engineers began turning it into a B-29 base and named it Isley Field. On October 12, the first B-29 of the 73rd Bombardment Wing (Very Heavy) touched down there. Immediately thereafter, Japanese bombers based at Iwo began attacking the B-29s on Saipan.

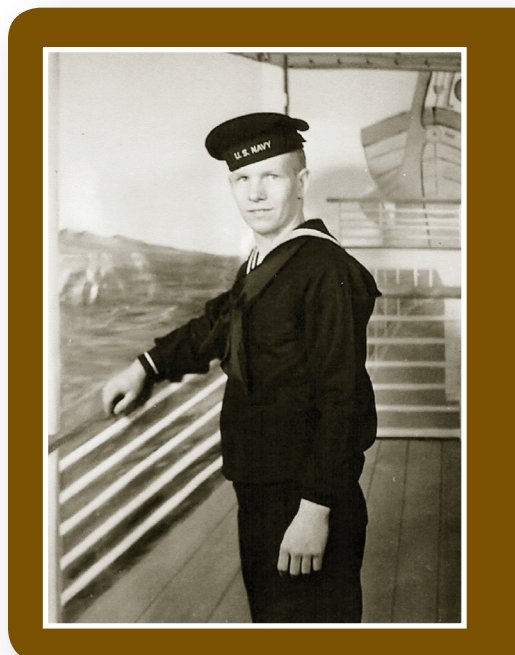
Arnold felt the war could be won purely through strategic air bombardment. However, three high-ranking US military strategists—namely Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz (Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas), General George Marshall (Chief of Staff, United States Army), and General Douglas MacArthur (Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area)—were convinced that the “doughboys” would inevitably have to force Japanese surrender in Tokyo, just as the Russians had forced the Germans to surrender when they beat down the doors of the Reichstag. Consequently, Okinawa, that large island just southwest of Kyushu, was chosen

as the staging area for Phase I of Operation Downfall, the plan for the invasion of Japan and its ultimate total defeat. Iwo Jima, however, was in the way. Thus in October 1944, just as the first B-29 was touching down on Saipan, the JCS directed Nimitz to capture and develop Iwo Jima within the ensuing three months.

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For my dad, 17-year-old red-headed Irish-American **Joseph Patrick Farrell**, like so many others, the war began shortly after he and his buddy turned seventeen. The two ruffians from the streets of Philadelphia marched into the US Navy recruiting office on February 4, 1944 and signed on the dotted line. The Navy subsequently sent his buddy one way and Dad the other, the twain never to meet again. As ordered, Dad reported to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center outside of windy Chicago, Illinois on cold Lake Michigan for a winter boot camp. Shortly he and a bunch of other novice sailors found themselves boarding a troop transport train bound overland to the US Navy Destroyer Base Training Center at sunny San Diego, California. There he and his classmates learned Japanese aircraft recognition along with other tidbits that every sailor aboard ship ought to know—according to the Navy. At the end of these training courses, Dad was assigned to the US Naval Amphibious Training Center on Coronado Island, a seven and one-half square mile island within San Diego Bay. There he learned salt-water diesel mechanics.

By August 26, 1944 Dad and his mates had completed their initial training and had been organized into a working unit whose job would be to land a battalion of Marines when and where



Navy Motor Machinist Mate Third Class Joe Farrell.

required. They were destined to become part of the Boat Group crew that would ride to war on the USS *Lubbock*, a US troop transport still under construction at that time.

When word arrived at the Coronado training center that the *Lubbock* would be commissioned in mid-October, Dad and his group took another train ride, this time to Astoria, Oregon, where they boarded the new 455-foot vessel on October 23, 1944. Following six weeks of training, they sortied with transport Division 48 on December 2 to join Vice Admiral Spruance’s 5th Fleet gathering at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawai’i. There they would practice landing maneuvers before sailing for the Marianas.

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Dad’s trip to the Marianas in March 2008 was much more pleasant, flying Continental Micronesia from Los Angeles to Hono-

lulu to Guam. And the rooms at the Guam Outrigger were a luxury he could only have dreamed of from his bunk in the *Lubbock*. Following breakfast that Sunday morning, Colonel Warren Wiedhahn, who was decorated in both the Korean and Vietnam wars, introduced his professional staff to the hundred some members of the tour and then briefed us on the week's schedule of events, which was pretty much full from breakfast to the daily after-dinner presentations. The first stop for the World War II veterans and their families that very morning was a courtesy call on the Commander of Naval Forces Marianas, Rear Admiral William French, at his official residence, Nimitz House, which is located on Flag Circle, Nimitz Hill. The site overlooks the Asan Beachhead, one of the bloodiest battles of the war and fought by the 3rd Marine Division, which would later taste Iwo Jima sand as the Landing Force Reserve.

At Nimitz House we were greeted by Captain Janice Wynn, Chief of Staff to the admiral, who was off island, but would join us for the flight to Iwo Jima. It was there at Nimitz House that

my dad and the other veterans stood awkwardly facing each other for the first time, fumbling for words. Then a tall, big boned, eighty-some-year-old Marine named **Ivan Hammond** walked up to Dad, poked a finger at his MHT name tag and said, "The APA 197. That was my boat!" I could see my dad's eyes light up. A smile broke across his somber face. They hugged, a little longer than men ordinarily do, then broke into a running dialogue. Although Hammond did not ride ashore

on Dad's landing craft, the two did ride on the same transport vessel from Hawai'i to Iwo and that was close enough to kindle a bond. It was a comfort for me to see my dad spew out years of dormant emotions to his fellow survivor, someone who could see what he had seen.

As it turned out, Hammond had previously participated in the Iwo Jima veterans' Reunion of Honor. He had already gained his "closure," and was prepared to help Dad deal with his. This time Hammond was being escorted by his son Bruce and daughters Cindy and Mary Lynn. Like me, they were traveling to the scene of their father's battlefield and to Suribachi to raise a flag with their hero. When I asked Bruce about his coming along this time, he replied, "I've always wanted to take this trip with my dad. Last time I couldn't afford it. Cindy and Lynn always try to make various family reunions and such, whereas I've always been busy working drilling rigs." Bruce handed me his business card and I noticed that Ivan's son had graduated from working on rigs to being the

senior training engineer for a leading oil field service company, making it a bit easier for him to take time off. This time, with his sisters nudging him along, Bruce would stand proudly by his father on Suribachi.

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Like my dad, every WWII dad, I guess, has his own enlistment tale. In Hammond's case, he actually had to fight to get *into* the Marines. It began when, as a result of his childhood interest in the intricacies of radios, he managed to connive his way into the War Industrial Training School in San Antonio, Texas, sponsored by the US Army Signal Corps. It was one of the several wartime programs developed to find and train promising young men before they entered the service. Unfortunately, when Hammond finished the nine-month program, he was not yet a member of the Signal Corps and therefore not eligible to continue the program. Knowing that he would get drafted if he didn't do something, he chose to enlist in the Marine Corps; he wanted to wear the Globe and Anchor. At the Houston Marine Corps recruiting station Hammond ran into a Navy chief warrant officer with 30 years of gold stripes cluttering his sleeve, who insisted that with all the communications training he had received, Hammond *must* join the Navy.

When Hammond said, "No, I want to join the Marines," the chief asked him, "Son, just what is it that you do not like about the Navy?"

Hammond insolently replied, "Well, there are at least two things. I don't like your little old piss-cutter hat, and I don't like that 13-button uniform."

At that point the very red-faced Navy warrant officer produced the correct form for the Marine Corps and said, "Sign here!" It was October 26, 1943. As 18-year-old Hammond left the recruiting station, he could not hear the veteran Navy hand mumble, "You'll be sorry!"

After thirteen weeks of boot camp at Camp Pendleton in San Diego and two weeks of rifle training at Camp Matthews, Hammond was sent to radio code school at Texas A & M University. By a series of other circumstances peculiar to the Corps and the war, Hammond got "shanghaied" into the Joint Assault Signal Company (JASCO) with the 5th Marine Division, which was activated on November 11, 1943, Armistice Day. He eventually became a member of Air Liaison Party #13, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 28th Regiment. Although the 5th was a new division, its men were not all green. Thousands of them had seen combat before, giving the new men like Hammond excellent teachers and leaders. The next thing he knew, Hammond and his teammates were packing off to "Camp Tarawa" at Hilo, Hawai'i for amphibious warfare training. In December 1944, transports began arriving at Hilo. Among them was APA 197, the USS *Lubbock*, with my dad aboard.

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After two days of battlefield tours on Guam, Military Historical Tours was joined on Tuesday night by Ambrose Tours for a gala buffet dinner in the Outrigger Hotel. The next morning we would fly to Iwo Jima. Tom Goresch, the Guam MHT tour director, had arranged for all WWII vets to have little green stickers placed on their ID patches, allowing the veterans from the two groups to identify one another. So as the veterans began to arrive and pick a table, they looked around for other green patches. Thus Dad and I met



Marine JASCO Operator Sergeant Ivan Hammond.

Jim Reed, a rifleman with the E company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Regiment, 4th Marine Division and his son Rob, who I discovered had initiated their participation in this year's Reunion of Honor. When Rob had approached his dad about going back to Iwo Jima, his dad had replied, "No thank you. I can't go back there alone." Rob replied, "You won't be. I am going with you. It's a family affair and I am the guest."

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James Reed, Jr., unlike Dad and Ivan Hammond, had joined the war effort earlier and had already faced his baptism under fire before landing at Iwo. Born in Walker, Minnesota, Reed had graduated from Pine River High School and enlisted in the Marine Corps in June 1942. Being shipped to Camp Pendleton made him one of the "Hollywood Marines," in contrast to those who were sent to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. A relatively small Marine, Reed chose to pack an "equalizer," the essential but heavy .30 caliber Browning Automatic Rifle. Jim and the 4th Division first saw combat at Kwajalein and Majuro atolls. After a brief respite back on Maui, the 4th was moved to Pearl Harbor where they boarded one of the 29 LSTs that were loading up for the invasion of Saipan and Tinian. On the top deck of each were about 80-100 barrels of fuel for the landing craft and 6,000 cubic feet of ammunition. A little after 3:00 p.m. on May 21 while Reed was sleeping under a canopy on the deck of his LST, a nearby vessel blew up, sending a shower of hot metal onto the adjoining ships. The explosion awoke Reed, who quickly noticed that his canopy was on fire. Springing from his cot, he twisted his ankle as he hit the deck and then leapt overboard. Twelve minutes later another ship blew up. Altogether, six LSTs sank that day, 163 men died and 396 were wounded. Jim survived his unexpected swim, but left Hawai'i for Saipan on crutches.

Marine Infantryman Corporal James Reed.

In the last days of the battle for Saipan, Reed was among the Marines who attempted to talk the Japanese stalwarts out of leaping to their deaths from Suicide Cliff on the northern end of the island. While trying to play humanitarian on August 9, 1944, the day the island was declared secure, a Japanese sniper shot him in the back of the head. Fortunately it didn't kill him, but it did make him the butt of many jokes. With a Purple Heart pinned on his robe, Jim Reed was evacuated on the USS *Solace* to a hospital in Guadalcanal, and then later transferred to Pearl Harbor. At Pearl, Corporal Reed recovered from his wound, got a new BAR, and prepared for his fourth landing in 13 months.

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The *Lubbock* left Hilo Bay on January 8, 1945. On the way to Kwajalein, Motor Machinist Mate Third Class Joe Farrell tended to the engine on his landing craft and watched the Marines as they watched the ocean, searching the horizon for their destiny. They did not yet know their final destination would be the beautiful black beaches at the base of Suribachi. Dad knew that many of them would never see home again. Perhaps he wouldn't either.

The other troop ships, including Reed's LST, set sail from Hawai'i bound for Eniwetok on January 27. There the various portions of the fleet rendezvoused. It must have been a breathtaking site, particularly for Reed, who had been there for the capture of the atoll. A vast armada, larger by more than a hundred ships than that which had captured the Marianas—Saipan, Tinian and Guam—lay at anchor with hundreds of little boats running between them and shore. Leaving Eniwetok on February 7, the fleet convoyed to the Marianas, passing close by Tinian and dropping anchor off Saipan on the 11th. The *Lubbock* participated in night maneuvers on the 12th, completed a full dress rehearsal at Tinian with heavy seas running, and then returned to anchor off Saipan. While waiting for their departure to Iwo, they watched B-29s taking off and landing—and crashing—and watched battleships hammering away at Japanese stragglers still holding up in caves around Mt. Tapotchao. These bombardments left no doubt in anyone's mind that they had arrived at that mysterious place called "the front."

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Vicariously now, Bruce, Rob and I joined our fathers—Ivan (19), Jim (20) and Joe (18)—as the fleet left Saipan between February 13 and 16, 1945, D minus 3, bound for Iwo Jima. The next day, according to a Seabee who also sailed on the *Lubbock* and would be landing with the Marines, "We were issued K rations, ammunition, grenades, a bottle of brandy and a last minute briefing on the 17th. Sunday evening, the 18th, we were served a dinner of turkey, pie, ice cream, candy and nuts. On invasion morning, February 19, we were up at 0200. Battle breakfast at 0330. First shellfire visible. Too dark to see the island. It is getting lighter. We can now see the other 799 ships with us. We move in closer to disembark our troops. Hell is really popping all over Iwo. [At 0645, Admiral Turner gave the order, "Land the landing force!"] At 0700 the boys go over the side; everyone's quiet; no shouting. Everyone has a job to do and goes about it. It's been a tiresome trip, but we are all refreshed with the spirit of the job at hand."

In his command post on Motoyama Plateau, General Kuribayashi remarked to his staff, "I pray for a heroic fight."

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On D+4, Friday, February 23, one of the most memorable events of the entire war took place. The rain had let up and a unit of Hammond's 28th Regiment struggled up a narrow trail that led to the top of Suribachi. Surprised to find few living Japanese, at 10:20 a.m. the platoon raised a 58" by 24" American flag. Reed and Hammond both saw the flag go up. Men contagiously began shouting and firing their weapons in the air as if they were cheering at a football game. Sailors like my dad on the ships at sea also



Marine packing a heavy flame thrower runs toward the front, his boots sinking into the soft black sand of Iwo Jima. (USMC Visual Media Repository)

saw the flag. They blasted and blew horns. Bells, sirens and whistles played a spontaneous cacophony of the victor's aria. About two hours later an even larger flag was raised and the cheers went up again. Suribachi, the commanding high ground, was in American hands.

Eight days after landing its troops, the USS *Lubbock* had fulfilled its mission and was relieved to prepare for its next engagement. With my dad back aboard, the *Lubbock* upped anchor and sailed back to the Marianas, where the Iwo Jima casualties were unloaded onto Tinian and Guam. From there, the *Lubbock* sailed to Espiritu Santos, largest of the islands in the Anglo-French condominium of the New Hebrides. There she was re-fueled and re-provisioned.

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Capturing Motoyama Airfield No. 1 had cost Reed many of his companions and the job wasn't done yet. As the 4th Division moved forward into what would become known as the "meat grinder," they now faced difficult geographical features, including Hill 382 (the second highest ground on Iwo Jima), the Amphi-



US Marines landing on the beaches of Iwo Jima. (USMC Visual Media Repository)



Steam heat from sulfur pits cloud the scene. (USMC Visual Media Repository)

US Marines head for invasion of Iwo Jima. Mt Suribachi rises in background. (USMC Visual Media Repository)



theater (a broad, uphill clearing with high ground on both sides), and Turkey Knob (an outcropping that anchored the Japanese 2nd Mixed Brigade). After Hill 382 was taken, the 4th continued to take heavy casualties as they fought their way through the Amphitheater and Turkey Knob to Airfield No. 2. However, their effort proved to be the turning point in the battle for Iwo Jima, as it forced General Kuribashi to retreat to his final command post in a cave at the northern end of the island.

Although Seabees were already at work on the half of Airfield No. 2 controlled by the 4th Division, the Japanese contested ownership of the other half. Both sides were amazed when a large airplane appeared from the south, approached the island, and took a very close look at Mount Suribachi and the airfield below it. It was Lt. Raymond Malo in the B-29 Superfortress *Dinah Might*. The plane had been badly damaged on a mission over Tokyo with the 9th Bomb Group, which was based on North Field, Tinian. Malo did not know the condition of the field or the status of the battle, but he did know that he had to risk landing on a “hot LZ” or end up ditching at sea and swimming with sharks. So he maneuvered *Dinah Might* into a self-designed landing pattern and put the crippled Superfortress down as quickly as the Seabees could move their equipment to one side. The Marines stopped fighting for a moment, just as they had done at the sight of the flag-raising, to give a cheer for the busted bomber and its crew. Marines, Seabees and sailors dashed out onto the field to get their first glimpse of the aeronautic marvel that had just dropped its load on Tokyo. For the Marines, the landing drove home their understanding that the main justification for capturing Iwo Jima was to support the strategic air campaign against Japan by giving bombers from the Marianas a safe haven on their way to and from the Empire. *Dinah Might* was quickly repaired and took off before a Japanese mortar team could get a bead on it.

On March 6, the 4th Division continued to tighten their noose around the well-entrenched men under the command of Major General Sadasue Senda, a veteran of both the Manchurian and China campaigns. By the 8th, after 25 days of attrition warfare, Senda had become completely frustrated. He and his men kept killing Americans, but the Marines just kept coming. Senda asked Kuribayashi for permission to conduct a banzai attack. Kuribayashi refused. Senda disobeyed. That night he led about a thousand of his Imperial soldiers in a determined counter-attack, attempting to breach the lines between the 23rd and 24th Regiments. Reed's Easy Company was the first to detect Senda's advance and open the fight. Hand grenades flew in both directions. Sabers slashed at bayoneted M-1s. Reed's BAR barked continuously, spitting out a pile of empty shells. Parachute flares and Star Shells burst overhead, lighting up macabre scenes of men locked in hand-to-hand combat. The grunts and groans, yells and screams of men fighting for their lives with knives, bayonets and rifle butts could be heard above the gunfire. Although the 4th held its lines, 99 more Marines died. Reed's luck also finally ran out for he was one of the 257 wounded that night. At daybreak he and what was left of his company were again relieved.

With two Purple Hearts, Reed's war was over. However, Sergeant Ivan Hammond fought on with the 5th Division till the end.

Just as General Schmidt was about to declare the island secure on March 25, 300 well-disciplined Japanese Imperial soldiers infiltrated the Marine lines and took positions around the rear base area near Motomoya Runway 1 and the tents that held the men of the 7th Fighter Command. That night, totally undetected, the 300 Japanese attacked the tents in as vicious a battle as had occurred on Iwo Jima. The pilots, nearby Seabees and members of the re-deployed 28th Regiment joined in the fight. At sunrise, the 300 lay dead along with 100 US pilots, Seabees and members of the 5th Pioneer Battalion. Another 200 Americans were wounded. The dedicated and determined Japanese defenders of Iwo Jima had dealt one last dose of death and destruction to the Americans. The island was declared secure that day, March 26. To his own amazement, Ivan Hammond had managed to survive the entire 36 days without a wound. Japanese Prime Minister Kuniaki Koiso described the loss of Iwo Jima as “the most unfortunate thing in the whole war situation.”

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Jim Reed and Ivan Hammond walked off “that damned island” still wearing the same clothes they had on the day they landed. Neither had had a bath before leaving his last ship, and neither would get one until he boarded another. Before leaving Iwo, Corporal Reed and his remaining buddies went through a stack of discarded “ruck sacks” on the beach and found a toothbrush, which everyone shared. It was their first brushing since they had landed. Although they would continue to stink until they could get on board a ship, at least they were able to begin washing the taste of Iwo Jima out of their mouths.

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Five days later, Motor Machinist Mate Third Class Joe Farrell, still aboard the *Lubbock*, would help land 183,000 troops on Okinawa to begin 82 days of combat that would cost an additional 12,500 American lives. Reed went back to the States, where he nearly missed riding on the *Queen Mary* to England. That would have made him one of the few Marines to wear combat ribbons from both the Pacific and European theaters. Hammond eventually landed in Japan with the 5th Division, not to fight, but as part of the occupation forces. Obviously, Dad survived the Okinawa invasion. The *Lubbock* then sailed to the Philippines to undergo repairs and prepare for the invasion of Kyushu. He is quite sure, as are many other servicemen, that the atom bomb saved his life.

Nimitz said of the battle for Iwo Jima, “Among the men who fought on Iwo Jima, uncommon valor was a common virtue.”

America had paid a dear price for a rock that wasn't even fit for human habitation. Although numbers vary according to the source, there were approximately 28,000 Marine casualties, with 6,825 killed in action. As they had pledged Kuribayashi, the Japanese soldiers fought fiercely and to the death, only 1,000 being taken prisoner, most of them wounded. Approximately 20,000 Japanese had died in the island's defense. It could be justifiably argued that the final road to the defeat of Japan was paved with the blood shed at Iwo Jima.

In short order the Navy's fighting Seabees reversed the operational status of Iwo Jima, turning what had been a Japanese defensive airbase into a fortified and well-defended American of-

fensive airbase. The B-24 Liberators of the 7th Air Force Bomber Command moved forward to Iwo Jima. Being half-way closer to the target, the heavy bombers only needed half the fuel and could carry twice the bomb load. With double the firepower, the Liberators from Iwo began pounding Okinawa and Japan. In the months between Iwo Jima's capture and the ceasefire on August 15, approximately 2,200 B-29s launched from the Marianas landed on Iwo Jima, thus fulfilling the island's planned role as an American base and saving an estimated 20,000 lives. Rather than being lost at sea, the Superfortresses and their crews who found safe haven on Iwo Jima lived to fly and fight another day.

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And so it was that **Paul Linden**, another Military Historical Tours guest, became an Iwo Jima veteran. When the war broke out, the young man from Aurora, Illinois decided to see the Pacific from an eagle's perspective rather than from that of a "ground pounder." So on October 26, 1942, he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps. After completing radar operator's school at Boca Raton, Florida, Linden was ordered to join the 73rd Wing and became radar operator on the B-29 Superfortress later named *Misbehavin'*.

In October 1944, *Misbehavin'* arrived about a week after the first B-29s landed in the Marianas, with Staff Sergeant Paul Linden in the radar operator's seat. Due to weather delays, the 73rd's combat initiation was delayed until Thanksgiving Day. On that day the first bombing mission against Japan was conducted from the formerly Japanese-held Marianas—a tribute to the men of every service that participated in the capture of Saipan, just four months earlier.

Misbehavin' and the

rest of the 73rd then settled into what became routine "Empire Runs," which consisted of a regular stream of B-29 squadrons delivering bombs and aerial mines from Saipan to Japan, returning home to rearm and refuel, then heading back to the Empire with another load. (Because they were short on aircraft in the beginning, crews alternated until there were enough planes for each flight crew.) Unfortunately, about half way along each run they had to pass by Iwo Jima—and wish it was not Japanese controlled. Japanese interceptors would come out to harass them while Japanese radio operators on the ground advised Tokyo to prepare a warm welcome for another flight of Superfortresses that would arrive there in about two hours. After dropping their load on Japan and turning south for home, the B-29 crews knew they had to pass within range of Iwo again. The Japanese fighters on Iwo were the

dread of any "tail end Charlies," wounded birds that couldn't keep up with the flock. With an engine out or severe body damage, they had to drop out of formation and lose the protection provided by a tight nest of Superfortresses bristling with guns and flying high and hot. When headquarters discovered what was happening, they diverted the route away from Iwo Jima, saving many planes. Yet, the Japanese on Iwo had to go. As the February 19 invasion of Iwo Jima loomed, General LeMay opposed the use of his "strategic" bombers for tactical missions. Higher authorities convinced him otherwise and the 73rd subsequently flew missions in support of the invasion of Iwo Jima. *Misbehavin'* flew five of those missions, with Linden in charge of radar.

After the capture of Iwo Jima, the loss rate among B-29s leaving the Marianas greatly decreased, while their efficiency in delivering tonnage to Japan greatly increased. Linden clearly remembers his squadron's June 7 mission to Osaka, when they were first escorted to Japan by friendly P-51 Mustangs instead of by enemy Japanese fighters. This would not be the last time Sergeant Linden would say a prayer for the Marines who had captured that horrid rock called Iwo Jima.

Just like the other men in the 73rd, Linden kept track of the number of missions he had flown, dreaming of the day he would complete that magical 25th mission—the one that would earn him his ticket for the "magic carpet" ride home. As with the Army Air Forces in Europe, as soon as a flier reached 25 missions, he was eligible to be sent home—or at least back to the States. Unfortunately for Linden, as soon as his plane hit 25 missions, the minimum number of flights was increased to 30. Then when *Misbehavin'* hit 30, the minimum was raised to 35. Even after that 35th mission, their aircraft commander, Captain John Crowder, continued to volunteer them for missions.

Misbehavin''s luck ran out on its 39th mission: July 12, 1945. Crowder had volunteered them for a "milk run" to Ichinomiya, one of those targets where "little flak and little fighter interference" could be expected. The flight went smoothly until they lost an engine about 350 miles from the coast of Japan. Crowder now asked the crew what they wanted to do: abort the mission and drop their bombs in the ocean or continue the mission on three engines. As the chance of losing another engine was slim, and as it was a low altitude night run with no interference expected, the crew decided to complete the mission. They did successfully bomb their target. Then as they left Japan behind and a beautiful Pacific dawn appeared on the horizon, they lost a second engine. Disaster was avoided however because it was on the opposite side and allowed Crowder to maintain control of the aircraft. Although it might have been possible to fly *Misbehavin'* back to Saipan on only two engines, the prudent decision was to use the new emergency landing field on Iwo Jima, which they did. Thus Paul Linden spent two days basking on the black sand Iwo Jima beaches, now peaceful except for the roaring of hundreds of airplane engines. As soon as another disabled B-29 was repaired, Linden and crew flew it back to Saipan. After being repaired, *Misbehavin'* was flown back to Tinian. It went on to fly forty-three successful missions over Japan before being flown to Davis Monahan Air Base to be scrapped.



B-29 Radar Operator Staff Sergeant Paul Linden.

Shortly after arriving back on Saipan, the Army Air Forces relieved Linden of his parachute and his .45 caliber pistol and gave him his ticket for the “magic carpet,” a long ride on a crowded LST from Saipan to Pearl Harbor and from there on a troop ship to Ft. Lewis, Washington. The next time Linden landed on Iwo, it would be aboard Continental Micronesia, with lovely stewardesses and ever-cheery MHT nurse Ellie Bertrand tending to his every need!

* * *

All these stories were on my mind as we sat down for a sumptuous buffet dinner at the Guam Outrigger Hotel on the night before the flight to Iwo: red table cloths, white linen napkins and all the right forks and spoons at hand; Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force flag officers in full dress uniform. After a delicious meal, Colonel Wiedhahn took the podium as master of ceremonies to begin the tributes to the veterans. Governor Felix Camacho welcomed everyone with typical Guam Chamorro hospitality. Admiral French, Commander Naval Forces Marianas, welcomed us to his turf. Because of bad weather in Japan, which bode ill for our trip to Iwo Jima the next morning, General Richard Zilmer, Commanding General 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, Okinawa, could not attend the banquet. In his stead, Lieutenant General Lawrence F. Snowden filled in as keynote speaker, which was no problem for the handsome and articulate leader of the Marines. He said of the Iwo Jima veterans:

“Your battlefield performance and conduct 63 years ago polished the image of the Marine Corps and set the standards against which present day and future generations of Marines will be measured. Courage, integrity, dedication and sacrifice. Those four words describe those who died and those who survived the

battle for Iwo Jima. We all recognize our double good fortune: that we survived and that we are here 63 years later to talk about it and to renew the bonds of brotherhood. Your nation will forever be indebted to you for your service.”

* * *

Very early the following morning, March 13, 2008, 63 years after their first anxiety-ridden ride into the hell of battle, three Iwo Jima veterans—Navy Motor Machinist Mate Third Class Joe Farrell, Marine JASCO operator Sergeant Ivan Hammond, and Marine infantryman Corporal James Reed—each accompanied by one or more adult children, began their mission to the shores of Iwo Jima, this time aboard a Military Historical Tours chartered air-con-



Rear Admiral William French, Commander Naval Forces Marianas, engages Paul Linden at Reunion of Honor Banquet at Guam Outrigger.



Reunion of Honor Banquet at Guam Outrigger Hotel the night before the return to Iwo Jima: (l to r) Colonel Warren Wiedhahn, USMC (Ret), President of Military Historical Tours; Lieutenant General Larry Snowden, USMC (Ret), 4th Marine Division Association; and Guam Governor Felix P. Camacho.

ditioned Continental 737. To no one's surprise, the in-flight movie was about the battle for Iwo Jima.

The sky was grey and overcast as the 737 approached Iwo Jima, much as it was on the day the US flag was raised on Mt. Suribachi for the first time 63 years before. Our pilot made two looping passes around the island, giving everyone a good look at Suribachi before touching down on the airfield now shared by Japan and the United States Navy. The Japanese would land later, their flight delayed by the rain. Because only two blue vans had been brought to Iwo Jima by the Japanese for island transportation, there was only room for the WWII veterans and their families for the ride to Suribachi. The rest would be humping it. With the sky threatening rain showers, many of the guests donned the light ponchos that had been provided by MHT. As soon as the busses were full, uniformed Japanese personnel drove us from the hangar and onto the somewhat maintained, single lane, paved road that lead from the airfield across the northern plateau, past the "meat grinder," along Motoyama Air Field, and then to the base of Suribachi. As we drove, my mind's eye saw the horrifying combat photographs of the battle of Iwo Jima that I had just copied at the USMC photo archives at Quantico, Virginia. Then I watched the faces of the Marine veterans looking at the same scene, knowing that their mind's eyes were seeing the *real* thing.

At the base of Suribachi we began to climb the winding road that had been cut by Seabees while the battle raged to the north of them. At the top there was only a small plateau, where the two busses could park along with the one canopied Humvee that carried the Young Marines, a group of students of national merit

who had earned the privilege of joining this pilgrimage of veteran Marines. We were told that the Japanese had limited us to 45 minutes to raise our flags and get our pictures. And to our chagrin, they had carefully stowed the flag pole. Atop Suribachi, organization emerged from chaos. Each veteran and his family or friends pulled out one or more American and US Marine Corps flags they had carried all the way from home, held them up in front of the monument, and had their moment on Suribachi frozen in time.

Although my 45 minutes on Suribachi were hectic with photo-taking, I took the last minute to stand alone near the cliffline at the back of the monument and take in the view. Directly below me was Green Beach, where my dad's landing craft had touched shore and where Ivan Hammond had first tasted the sands of Iwo Jima. Stretching north was 3,000 yards of black beach about 30 yards wide, neatly set off between deep blue Pacific water and the green foliage that cloaked the center of the island. Gone was the carnage I had seen in so many movies and pictures. There was no sound other than the wind whistling in my ear. Iwo Jima was silent. It was not cold, yet for that moment I was chilled to the bone. How fortunate I was to have a father who had survived. He had described his nightmare to fellow veterans—of climbing into disabled amphibious tractors in the sea-lanes to collect nametags, remove mangled bodies, and sink the amtrac. He had achieved closure. At least Iwo Jima was at peace now, as was my dad.

The rain gradually increased as we rode down Suribachi and back to the airport for the official reunion ceremony. Ordinarily it is conducted at a monument near invasion beach. Due to the constant drizzle however, it was moved to the Joint Forces gym-



World War II B-29 radar operator, Paul Linden, sits in the radar station aboard a modern B-52 Superfortress stationed at Andersen Air Force Base on Guam.

nasium. As we walked in we saw rows of chairs arranged along both walls and facing center court. Locating those marked for the American veterans, we took seats and began to nibble on snacks. The Combined 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force/Joint Group Self-Defense Force Central Band began playing in an attempt to lull the drama as the American vets awaited the Japanese veterans or bereaved families. Shortly, in a most military fashion, they arrived. First came the dignitaries, followed by those we assumed to be the veterans and bereaved families, all dressed in black suits as if attending a funeral—in stark contrast to us in our “field garb.”

In a carefully orchestrated production, alternating American and Japanese civilian and military leaders spoke of the fallen heroes of Iwo Jima. American and Japanese military and civilian leaders alike spoke of today’s friendship and political alliance between Japan and the United States. Colonel Wiedhahn was diligent about ensuring the American veterans were introduced. The Japanese never acknowledged whether there were any Iwo Jima veterans among their group. Perhaps there were none. Considering how few American veterans of Iwo Jima are still alive and kicking, it would probably be difficult to find even one of the one thousand Japanese who survived the battle and who was physically fit today. After the speech giving and the final salute to both flags, there was much handshaking between the Japanese and American dignitaries and military officers. Sadly, the American veterans never got the opportunity to shake hands with one of their former adversaries and say, “I’m OK. Are you OK?”

We walked back to the Navy hanger through a light rain, still awed at being on Iwo Jima but somewhat chagrined at the lack of sincerity from our Japanese hosts. There, enlisted men brought chairs from their offices, allowing some of us “old farts” to sit down to wait for those intrepid souls who were still humping around Iwo Jima gathering volcanic ash from the beach and peeking into caves. Several squadrons of US Navy F-18s were on the ground at the time and began leaving, giving us all a glimpse of them taking off between rain squalls. As it turns out, the US Navy, which can use the airport any time it wants, makes good use of Iwo Jima. The island is so dark at night that, with all lights turned off except on the runway, it is used by novice naval aviators to practice simulated landing on the deck of an aircraft carrier. When the last of our roaming band of adventurers returned to the hanger, the rain let up, we cleared customs and immigration, and walked back to our plane.

Shortly after takeoff, Susan Hendrix, the ever effervescent Senior Flight Attendant and nine-year veteran of the Iwo Jima tour, served up a hot meal for the troops and opened the bar. Then the veterans and the families leaned back to enjoy another full-length documentary on the battle for Iwo Jima. As I glanced around at the passengers, I noticed that most were imbibing beer or wine and discussing the day’s events. The Iwo Jima vets, on the other hand, were “glued to the tube.” None of them had trudged to the top of Suribachi 63 years earlier. Now, having looked down upon their beachhead from the Japanese vantage point, they viewed scenes of the battle from a wholly different perspective—and were even more amazed by the miracle of their survival.



Author Don Farrell at Mt. Suribachi with his father Joe Farrell.



Ivan Hammond is joined by his children (l to r) Bruce, Lynn, and Cindy as he displays the US flag atop Mt. Suribachi.



Jim Reed and son Rob display the USMC flag at the memorial monument on Mt. Suribachi.



Paul Linden, at right, with Ron Altman on Mt. Suribachi.



John Gerber, US Marine Corps veteran, welcomes World War II veterans and their families to a taste of Guam hospitality at his ranch in Ordot, Guam.



Jim Reed listens to Guam songster Jesse Dydasco during the "Welcome Back to Guam" night at John Gerber's ranch.

The next evening, our last together, it was fitting and appropriate that the entire group was brought to John Gerber's "Ranch" in Ordot, Guam, home of the 3rd Marine Division Association and Gerber's "69th Infantry Battalion," a collection of World War II vehicles. Not only did the 3rd spearhead the invasion and liberation of Guam, but John had served a tour in Vietnam with the 3rd. The two veterans had yet another memorable evening as they met Guam's vets and inspected the olive green trucks and landing craft John and his friends had dug from the jungles of Guam and restored. Then the chow line opened and the band began to play. Following a final photo-op, the vets re-boarded their busses for the final ride to the hotel. One of John's good buddies jumped on board before the driver could close the door and stuck up a lively rendition of Don Ho's famous "Tiny Bubbles" on his ukulele. The two Jima veterans and their families quickly joined in, singing along, laughing and crying together, having rekindled their brotherhood just as General Snowden had suggested they would.

Back at the hotel, most guests headed for their rooms to get some sleep before their 1:00 a.m. wake up call for their flight back to "the world." Yet I found many of the vets still in the lobby, sharing last minute stories with the many new friends they had made. Dad went to bed early, a happy man. I sat in the lobby watching the last vets get dragged upstairs by a worried wife, son or daughter. It had been a busy, action-packed week, far too much to remember at one sitting, far too rewarding to allow the *feeling* to escape, at least for a few more minutes.

The next morning, while most of the MHT guests headed home, others who had opted for the "full pull" went on to Peleliu or Pearl Harbor for another MHT guided tour. Dad followed me home to Tinian. For a week we sat on my balcony, watching the sun come up over the Pacific Ocean every morning and set over the Philippine Sea each night, recalling our trip to Iwo Jima. It was undoubtedly the best time of our lives.



A group photo of the World War II veterans the night before departure from Guam.