

# FORTITUDI

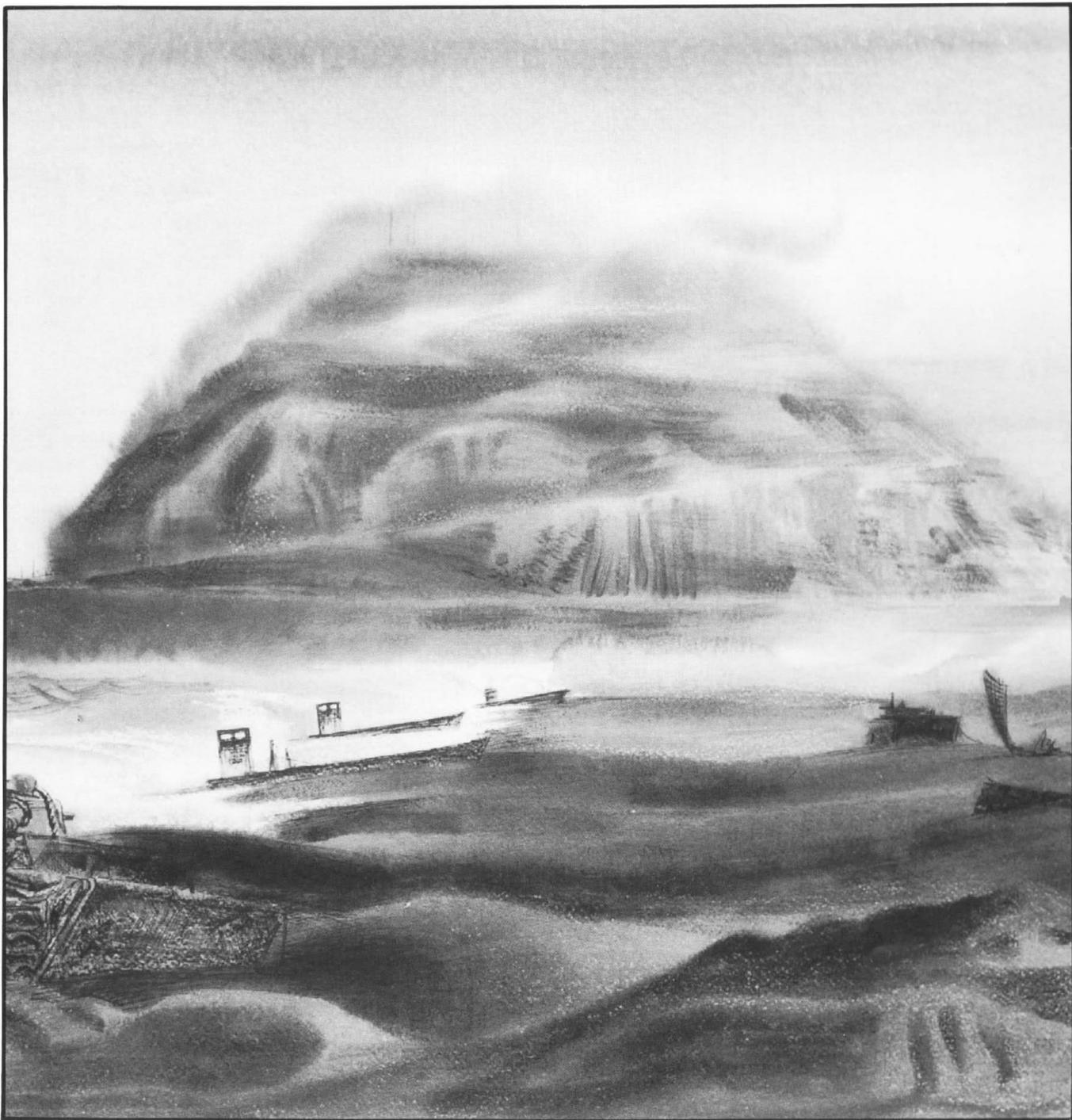
BULLETIN OF THE MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL PROGRAM

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HISTORICAL BULLETIN VOLUME XXIV

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NUMBER 4



50 YEARS LATER, AN EVENTFUL DAY ON IWO JIMA . . . COMMAND MUSEUM TAKES ACTIVE EDUCATIONAL ROLE FOR SAN DIEGO RECRUITS . . . VIETNAM BOOBYTRAP BIBLE ADDED TO COLLECTION . . . PENDLETON VOLUNTEERS OVERHAUL AND RESTORE 40-YEAR-OLD IVT . . . THE SATISFYING MARINE CAREER OF 'FOG' HAYES

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## HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION

Marine Corps Historical Center  
Building 58, Washington Navy Yard  
901 M Street, Southeast  
Washington, D.C. 20374-5040  
Telephone: (202) 433-3838, 433-3840, 433-3841

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# FORTITUDINE

*Motto of the United States Marine Corps in the 1812 era.*

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### THE COVER

"Iwo Jima: The Beach at Dusk," by Lt Mitchell Jamieson, USNR, is a product of a visit by the soon-to-be-famous artist in the months following the ferocious World War II battle for the island, to the scene of the Marine landing. ". . . the tragic section of beach below Suribachi becomes unearthly and ghostlike in the fading light . . . The beach is deserted except for the wrecks which litter its entire length . . ." Lt Jamieson annotated the watercolor which is now a part of the U.S. Navy Art Collection. Visiting Iwo Jima 50 years later, BGen Simmons joined U.S. and Japanese veterans at memorial services and walks, and heard Navy Secretary John Dalton announce the nomination by the President of the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Charles C. Krulak. Gen Simmons writes about his participation in his "Memorandum from the Director," beginning on page 3. In a decision which underscored the historic nature of the change of command, before taking office Gen Krulak located his transition office at the Marine Corps Historical Center in Washington, D.C., and subsequently released the space to Gen Carl E. Mundy, Jr., the 30th Commandant, also for use as a transition office. Gen Mundy is organizing his official papers and additionally leaving the Historical Center an oral history of his career experiences of more than 40 years.

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## Memorandum from the Director

# A Day Spent on Iwo Jima



BGen Simmons

IWO JIMA IS NOT impressive as you come in upon it from the air, just a low gray-green lump standing starkly in the sea. It has a somber, uninviting look and lacks the coral necklaces and flora exuberances of the Pacific atolls to its east and south. Even so, approaching it stirs up excitement, particularly if you are a Marine.

So it was on the morning of 14 March as the Commandant's C-9 transport circled the island and prepared to land. It was a bright, clear, sunny day with white puffy clouds against a brilliant blue sky. On board, in addition to the Commandant, Gen Carl E. Mundy, Jr., were LtGen Charles C. Krulak, Commander, Marine Forces, Pacific, and their respective sergeants major, Harold G. Overstreet and Lewis G. Lee.

Arriving on separate aircraft were former Vice President Walter Mondale, now the U.S. Ambassador to Japan; Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton; and Adm Richard

*Atop Suribachi, 30th Commandant Gen Carl E. Mundy, Jr., left, joined Director of Marine Corps History and Museums, BGen Edwin H. Simmons, center, and LtGen Charles C. Krulak, Commander, Marine Forces, Pacific, who moments before heard the*

C. Macke, USN, the tall, lean, and personable Commander-in-Chief Pacific. The airfield, now totally Japanese, stretched across the wide part of the island, near the northern tip called Kitano Point, which is where the World War II fight for Iwo Jima had ended. The runway more or less followed the trace of a wartime field, where after the capture of Iwo Jima, the damaged B-29s, returning from overflying Japan, could land. Probably not since the war's end in 1945 had the airfield bustled with such activity. It is now a small, handsome airfield, well-maintained, as you would expect, by current occupants, the Japanese Self-Defense Force.

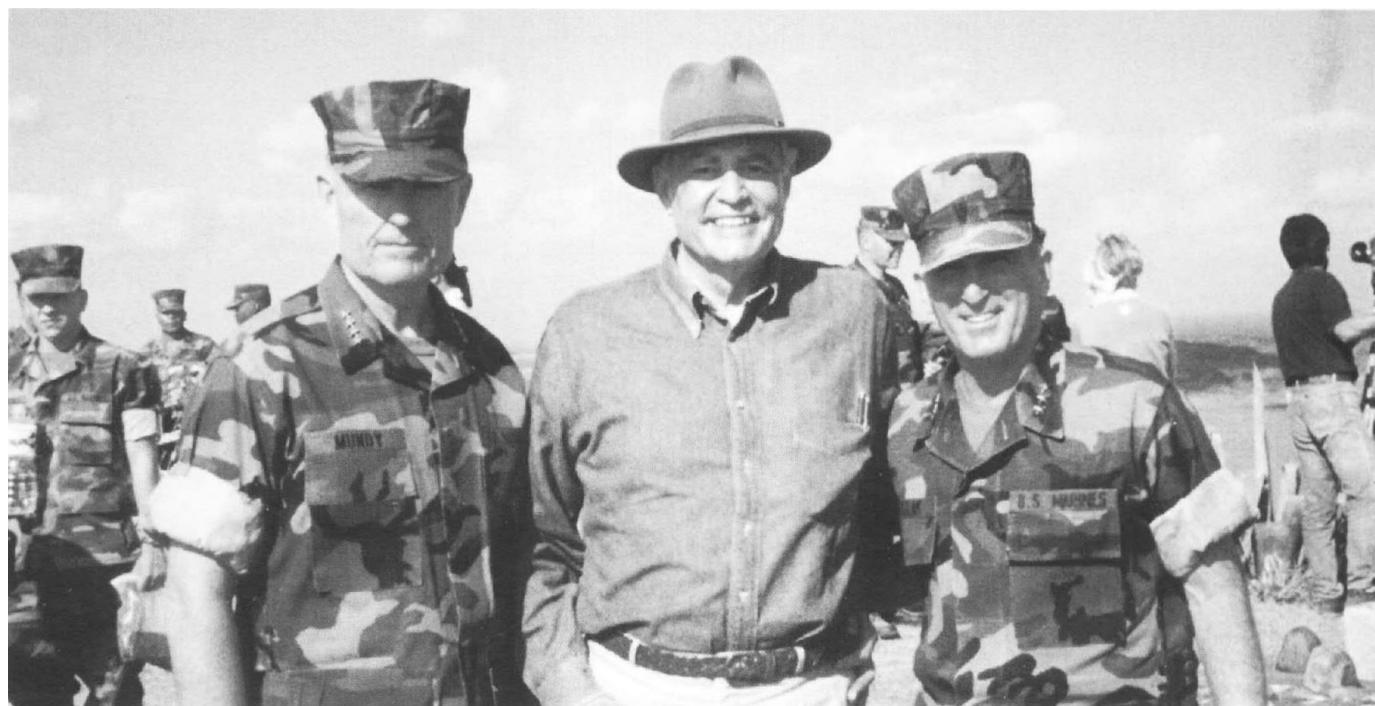
IWO HAD REVERTED to Japan in 1968. The Americans, military and civilian, were on the island with the forbearance of the Japanese and under conditions set by them. The veterans, most of them Ma-

rines, began arriving from Saipan and Guam in sleek Boeing 727 jets belonging to, or at least leased by, Continental Micronesia. The Japanese had backed off an earlier agreement to allow three DC-10s to land, saying they were too heavy for the runway, so Continental Micronesia had to scratch to find six of the smaller 727s which would be permitted.

Counting wives, children, and others, including just interested persons, there were about nine hundred of these American visitors. Iwo had no overnight accommodations for them so they had to arrive on the morning of the ceremonies and be off the island by nightfall.

The 727s taxied almost to the doors of the large Japanese-built hangar that was being used as a visitors center. The III Marine Expeditionary Force band serenaded the visitors' arrival. The band was unofficially augmented by a drummer and piper uniformed in Marine Corps utilities, both

*announcement of his nomination to become 31st Commandant. Gen Simmons, a China Marine, veteran of World War II and Korea, and a senior commander in Vietnam, joined other Marine veterans at the day-long commemoration of the island battle.*





The volcano Mt. Suribachi is the dominant feature in this 1945 photograph of the Marine landing on Iwo Jima. The island, five miles long and two and a half miles wide, was defended by nearly 23,000 Japanese troops manning, among other positions, 642 blockhouses, pillboxes, and gun emplacements. Suribachi itself was a fortress, with seven successive galleries of defenses.

somewhat older than the Marines in the band. They were, it was said, from Atlanta, Georgia.

**A**RAGED RECEPTION line formed with Gen Mundy as the focal point. He greeted virtually every arrival with a handshake, a few words of welcome, and a clap on the back.

Three sides of the interior of the hangar were lined with modular World War II exhibits from the Marine Corps Historical Center, and other displays. Tables in the middle were laden with folders that contained, among other things, copies of our World War II pamphlet, *Closing In: Marines in the Seizure of Iwo Jima*.

Leader of the veterans group was LtGen Larry F. Snowden, who retired as chief of staff of Headquarters, Marine Corps, in 1979. On 19 February 1945 he had landed at Iwo as a captain and company commander in the 23d Marines, 4th Marine Division. Wounded early and evacuated to Guam, he absented himself without leave from the hospital, found his way back to the island, and finished out the battle with his company.

Also prominent among the Marine veterans were retired LtGen Alpha L. Bowser, who commanded a 105mm howitzer battalion, the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines; and retired MajGen Fred E. Haynes, who as a captain had landed with the 28th

Marines, 5th Marine Division, the left flank regiment at Iwo.

**I**WO JIMA HAS BEEN compared, over and over again, to a bad-smelling pork chop, burned black and sizzling in a frying pan. The location of Iwo Jima is what made it strategically important. Five miles long and two and a half miles wide, about eight square miles in all, it lay at the midpoint of a straight line drawn from the B-29 bases in the Marianas to Tokyo.

The Japanese had completed two airfields on the island and were working on a third. Interceptors from these airfields threatened the B-29s. Even more importantly, the B-29s, on their way back from Japan, needed a recovery site if they were damaged or low on fuel. They were flying at extreme range and there was that business of the 200-mile-an-hour head winds over the Empire, as the B-29 pilots always called the Japanese home islands.

LtGen Tadamichi Kuribayashi commanded the Japanese at Iwo. He had published a set of "Courageous Battle Vows" and these were pasted to the inner walls of the concrete emplacements of which there were many. One of the vows was "Each man will make it his duty to kill ten of the enemy before dying." In all, there were between 21,000 and 23,000 Japanese defenders. Photo interpreters counted a total of 642 blockhouses, pillboxes, and

gun emplacements. The bony knob at the shank end of the pork chop was 556-feet-high Mt. Suribachi. Suribachi, with seven successive galleries of defenses, was a fortress in itself.

**L**TGEN HOLLAND M. SMITH was the Commanding General, Expeditionary Troops, for the assault against Iwo. Landing Force was the V Amphibious Corps under MajGen Harry Schmidt, with the veteran 3d and 4th Marine Divisions and the new 5th Marine Division. The 4th Division, commanded by Clifton B. Cates, would come forward from Hawaii, as would the 5th Marine Division under Keller E. Rockey, to be in the assault. The 3d Division, coming from Guam and under Graves B. Erskine, would be in floating reserve.

Intermittent Army Air Force and Navy air attacks pounded the island for 74 days before the landing. The immediate prelanding naval gunfire preparation was limited to three days, not as much time as the Marines would have liked.

Prevailing winds dictated a landing across the eastern beaches. As there was no barrier coral reef, landing craft and ships would be able to beach. Seven battalions were in the assault. The first wave of armored amphibian tractors touched down at 0902. The troop-carrying tractors



Photo by Cpl Paul S. Royston, USMC  
Marines of the 31st MEU provided support, including transportation for veterans in five-ton trucks to Suribachi ceremonies.

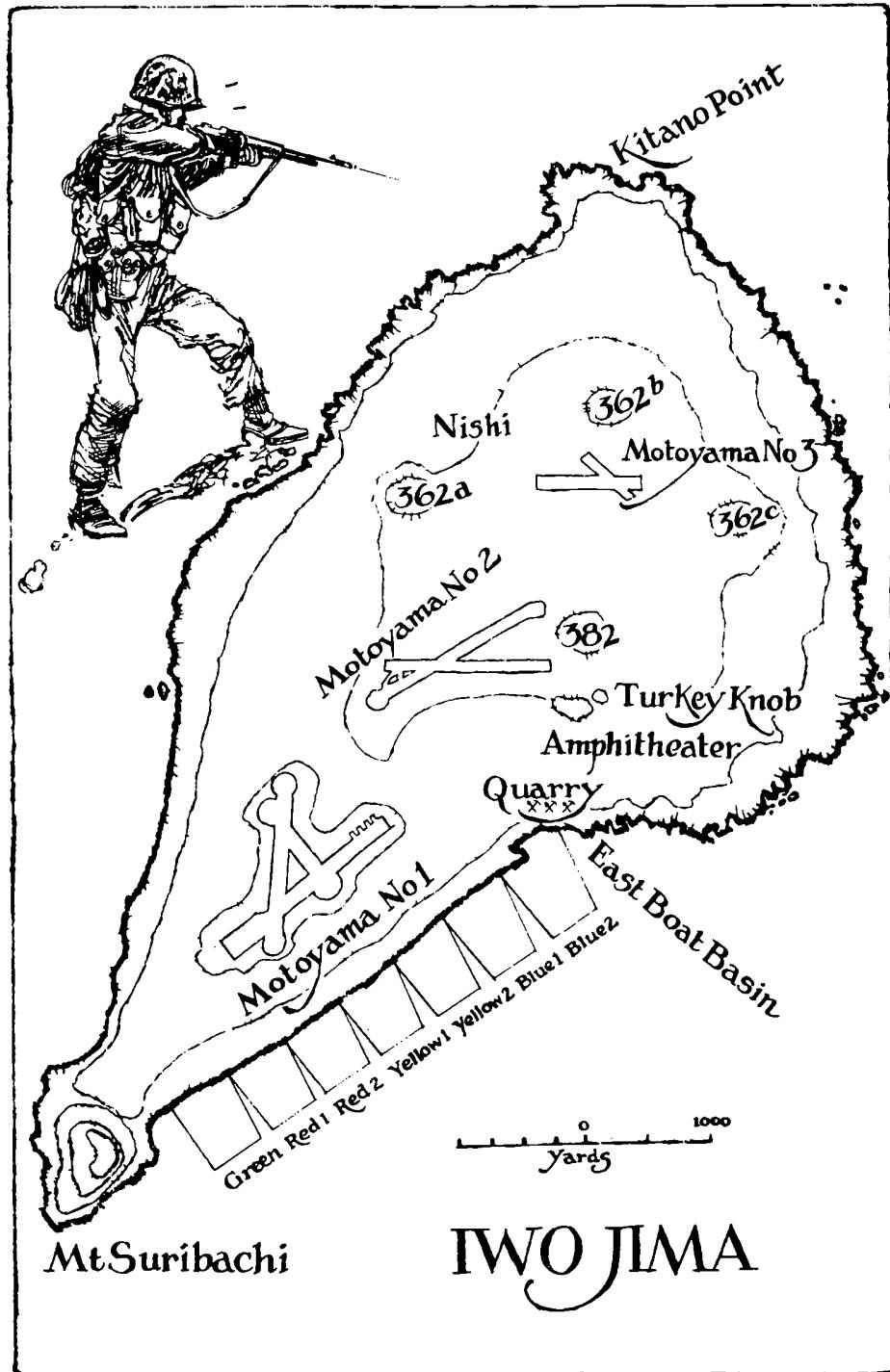
began disgorging their passengers three minutes later.

CATES' 4TH DIVISION landed on the right, its 23d and 25th Marines coming across Yellow and Blue beaches. Their immediate objective was Airfield No. 1. Rockey's 5th Division landed on the left, across Green and Red Beaches, the 27th Marines on the right and the 28th Marines on the left.

Suribachi was taken on 23 February and the flags had gone up, but the main attack northward came almost to a halt. The belt of fortifications between Airfields No. 1 and No. 2 had no flanks and it was worse than Suribachi. The 21st Marines from the 3d Division came ashore and put into the attack against Airfield No. 2. Soon thereafter Erskine landed with the remainder of the 3d Division, except for the 3d Marine Regiment which was held in floating reserve.

With three divisions abreast, Harry Schmidt drove toward the north coast of the island. On 16 March, Kuribayashi sent a last message to Imperial General Headquarters: "I . . . humbly apologize to His Majesty that I have failed to live up to expectations. . . . Bullets are gone and water exhausted. . . . Permit me to say farewell . . . ."

Marines think of Iwo Jima as solely a Marine Corps battle, but the Marines were not entirely alone. As always, there were Navy chaplains and Navy doctors and hospital corpsmen. Some Army and Army



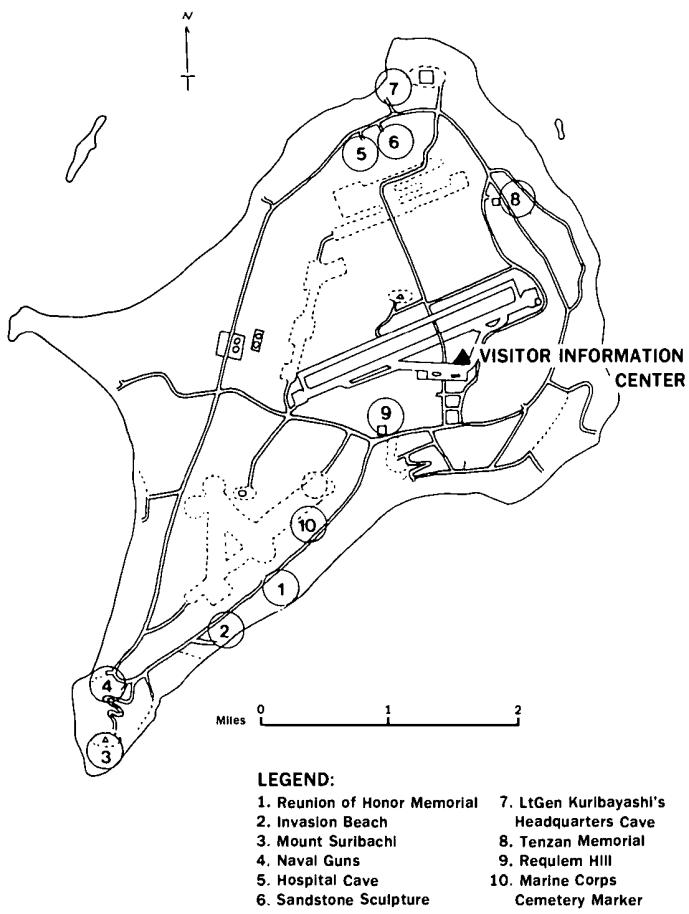
Map by Col Charles H. Waterhouse, USMCR

Air Force personnel also came ashore. Among the first of these to land were the Army's 471st and 472d Amphibian Truck Companies. Unlike the Marines' amphibian tractors, these Army amphibian trucks (better known as "DUKW's") had large rubber tires and were very useful in landing artillery and artillery ammunition. The truck drivers in these companies were African-Americans. The DUKW drivers were not the only black Americans on the beach at Iwo. The Shore Party included an ammunition company and three depot companies of black Marines.

ON 26 MARCH, Kitano Point, the northernmost point on the island, was taken and the island was declared secured. Adm Nimitz could well have been speaking for both attacker and defender when he said of this bitterly fought battle, "Uncommon valor was a common virtue."

Twenty-seven Medals of Honor were given for Iwo; 22 to Marines, of which 12 were posthumous, and five to Navy men, of which two were posthumous. In all of World War II, only 81 Marines received the Medal of Honor, and almost a third of

## IWO JIMA TODAY



these were for Iwo.

Exact casualty figures are always elusive, but the best count available indicates that of the 71,245 Marines who went ashore at Iwo, 5,931 were killed and 17,272 were wounded, a total of 23,203 Marine casualties. The Navy lost 881 dead and 1,917 wounded. The Army's losses were 9 killed and 28 wounded. This gives a total of 26,038 American casualties.

No one knows the exact number of Japanese killed, but of perhaps 23,000 defenders, only 216 were taken prisoner and most of these were Korean conscript laborers.

**W**AS IWO JIMA worth its terrible cost? Any B-29 crew member from the Twentieth Air Force will tell you that it was. On 4 March the first of many crippled B-29s made an emergency landing at Iwo. By the end of the war, 2,251 American heavy bombers, with crews totalling 24,761, had found reason to make emergency landings on the island.

Roughly speaking, for the 50th anniver-

sary reunion, veterans of the 4th Marine Division had staged through Saipan, where many of them had also fought and where hotel accommodations are now luxurious. Veterans of the 3d and 5th Divisions had come through Guam where the hotels are equally luxurious. The 3d Division had fought on Guam and before that on Bougainville. The 5th Division was a new division for Iwo, but many of its members had been parachute Marines or Raiders in the Solomons. Tourists on both Saipan and Guam are now most often Japanese and they tend to be young, without memories of the war.

There were others, besides Marines, in the veterans group: Navy men, both the sea-going and SeaBee kind (and both quick to make the distinction); a few Army men, mostly Army Air Forces, including some B-29 crew members who said they owed their lives to the Marines who took Iwo Jima; a Coast Guardsman or so; and at least one former Navy nurse who had flown on evacuation flights from Iwo to Guam.

Perhaps 500 active-duty Marines, in camouflage utilities, were on the island, having come from Okinawa, the largest number being from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit. A working party of Marine engineers and such had been on Iwo for a week or more cutting grass, doing

*U.S. and Japanese national flags fly over their respective monuments—five in all, one for the U.S. Marine Corps—on the crest of Mt. Suribachi. Bottled water against the ledge of a Japanese memorial was left to slake the thirst of the spirits of dead soldiers.*

Photo by Cpl Paul S. Royston, USMC





Photo by LCpl Vincent R. Oropesa, USMC

*First memorial service of the day—a joint one with Japanese veterans—was held at the 40th anniversary monument above the high-water mark on the invasion beach. Marines presented a wreath for each of the U.S. Armed Services taking part in the battle.*

some road scraping, setting up chairs, and in general getting things ready.

**I**N CONTRAST TO the Marines in utilities, the small Japanese naval garrison of the island was turned out in sparkling white uniforms.

There was no visible friction between the Japanese and American visitors. Nor was there much intermingling. The mood was one of exquisite politeness.

The veterans gathered for a memorial service at 1100 at the monument which was dedicated on the 40th anniversary of the landing. The monument is above the high-water mark on the invasion beach, about on the boundary between the 4th and 5th Divisions. The speaker's podium faced inland. The shallow crescent of chairs set up by the Marine working party

*Brothers and both Marine veterans are former SSgt Robert Barnett, left, and former Sgt Douglas Barnett, who served together during the battle for Iwo Jima. The two attended the memorial service on the invasion beach, with Suribachi in the background.*

Photo by LCpl Vincent R. Oropesa, USMC



*Fortitudine*, Spring 1995

feet ten or so, 170 or 180 pounds, and much more heavily muscled around the shoulders and arms. Today's Marines treated the veteran Marines with great deference, almost awe.

Some tears were shed but not so many as the media would lead one to believe. The American visitors were dressed for the most part in bright-colored sport clothes, as though on their way to the golf course, wearing the ubiquitous white walking shoes of relatively recent invention. As old legs tired, comments were heard of wishing they had their old "boondockers," the famous rough-side-out, high-top Marine shoe of World War II.

The long sequence of speeches, double-lengthened by the necessity of translating English into Japanese and Japanese into English, was largely repetitive. The American speakers, keynoted by Ambassador Mondale, carefully avoided sounding celebratory. Kuribayashi was repeatedly extolled as a brilliant and heroic general. American generals and admirals got only passing mention.

The Japanese speakers equally carefully avoided any reference to American victory or admission of Japanese war guilt. No Japanese of cabinet rank was present. Messages were read in Japanese by persons of lesser rank and translated into English. The burden of the Japanese messages was that they mourned for both the Japanese and American dead.

*Former Marine Cpl Charles Lindberg, last surviving member of the team that raised the first U.S. flag on Mt. Suribachi, holds flags he intends to give his grandchildren.*

Photo by LCpl Vincent R. Oropesa, USMC

