

**First Reunion on Iwo Jima
of Japanese & American Veterans
19 February 1970**



25th Anniversary of the Landing

Reunion in Peace

Sponsored by The Fifth Marine Division Association

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CONTRIBUTORS

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MEDIA - PRINT AND TELEVISION

STARS AND STRIPES, PACIFIC EDITION & JAPAN NEWS

CNN SPECIAL DOCUMENTARY

FMDA NEWSLETTER SPEARHEAD NEWS

SARASOTA HERALD TRIBUNE

SARASOTA JOURNAL

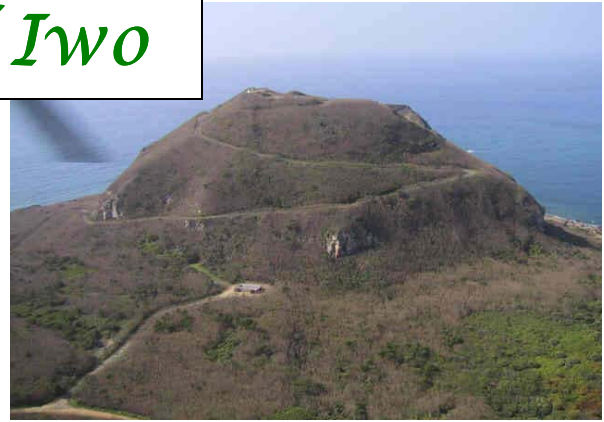
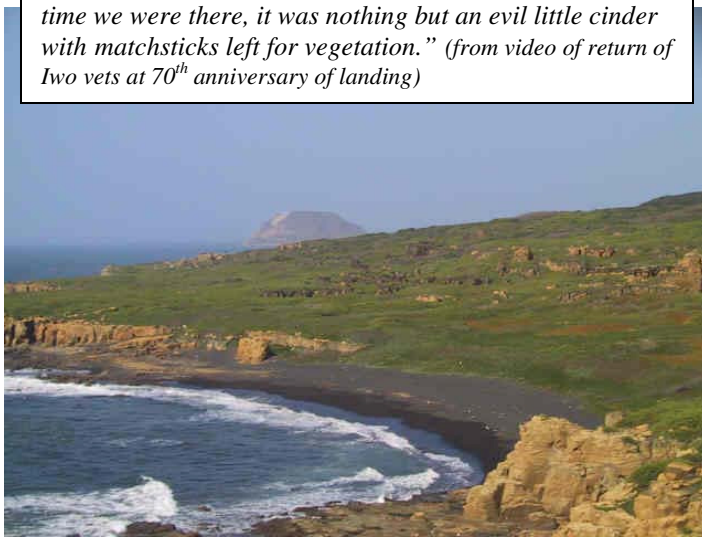
HUNTLEY BRINKLEY SHOW

LEATHERNECK MAGAZINE

The Re-greening of Iwo



"It looked entirely different this time. It was green. In the time we were there, it was nothing but an evil little cinder with matchsticks left for vegetation." (from video of return of Iwo vets at 70th anniversary of landing)



Iwo Jima isn't, and never was, a jungle island. It is very dry with no natural water source, and covered with scrub vegetation. The sky is remarkable clear with beautiful cloudy vistas over a cerulean ocean. Waves beat her black sand beaches into high terraces.

But on D-Day when the Marines landed, the massive bombing had rendered the island bare of vegetation, torn and jagged with her volcanic rocks pitted and blasted apart. Iwo resembled Mars more than a Pacific Island. Today, Iwo has sprouted once again with her natural vegetation, but the island still has a cathartic effect for returning veterans. The haunting soul of the island was described by a Loran Station Coast Guardsman in the 70's as he worked on the crest of the dormant volcano Suribachi at the Seabees' tribute to the Marines who conquered the mountain.

"Towards the end of my stay I was assigned a paint detail for the Marine monument on Mt. Suribachi. Its height and view allowed a 'tactical' understanding of the island on a gorgeous day. The broad gray beaches on either side merged into the cliffs and Iwo's center massif. One could well imagine now the ease of targeting the Marines. It made clear the desperation of the battle; the Marines like fish in a barrel, the Japanese overwhelmed by the huge fleet about them.

"As I scrapped and painted the monument, a sense of the very real sacrifices made finally dawned on me. I felt humbled before what the Marines had done on Iwo Jima, so I painted the monument with all the care and concern I could muster, not as a job, but as an act of contrition. So as I repainted the Marine Memorial on Mount Suribachi, I treated it with a tenderness and care as if it itself were a fallen comrade, not because of any ostentatious patriotism, but because of what you could actually feel there.

"The island seemed pitifully mournful, and although there are no grave sites, you couldn't help but feel a tragic sense of grief and loss, not based on what you knew from the battle, but innate to the island itself, as if the pain and suffering of all the combatants had left a psychic echo resonant in the land itself."

(U.S. Coast Guardsman Matthew Crawford)

RETURN TO IWO JIMA 1970



**25TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE LANDING**

Published by



F M D A

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Preface:

ALMOST LOST IN HISTORY



At the 2014 reunion of the 5th Marine Division Association in Tampa, FL, a remarkable and yet largely now unknown Reunion that occurred on Iwo Jima in 1970 was recounted by Iwo survivor Marty Connor (5th Division HQ 1-26,) who was a participant in this event.

An article based on Connor's information of this 1970 Reunion commemorating the 25th anniversary of the landing was published in the Fall /Winter 2015 issue of *Spearhead News*.

In researching further, the FMDA journal editor to whom Connor had first told the exceptional account, discovered further details from Dr. Mary Swain, who as an 11 year old, accompanied her father, Charles Early, to Iwo Jima. This additional information about the first Iwo Jima Reunion was recounted in the Association's 2017 Reunion Journal.

Charles Early, a severely wounded 5th Division Iwo survivor and a prominent lawyer in Sarasota, Florida, had organized the reunion. After obtaining authorization for the event from Headquarters Marine Corps, he contacted individuals both in Japan and in the U.S. to put in place all the components of the "Reunion in Peace" for the first ever official meeting of American and Japanese veterans of the battle.

The 3rd Marine Division, based in Okinawa, flew in vehicles to transport the attendees around the island. Their commander, BGen William Jones, attended the event as the Commandant's representative. In 1970, the Japanese and American Reunion on Iwo was widely covered in the press and on airwaves. NBC's head Asian correspondent, John Rich, himself an Iwo Veteran of the 4th Marine Division, played an instrumental part both on Iwo Jima and in Japan. The reunion was also the subject of a Huntley Brinkley report.

The day on Iwo Jima included the raising of both nations' flags, playing of their national anthems, laying wreaths at monuments, speeches by representatives of both nations, and former enemies shaking hands atop Mt Suribachi. Official translators included John Rich and Japanese Army Major Horie. Imperial Navy Captain Tsuenzo Wachi, who had been the commander on Iwo until late 1944 when Army Gen Tadamichi Kuribayashi took over, also spoke fluent English. He spoke to the American Marines about the deep significance that the return of the souvenirs they had taken would have to the bereaved families of the Japanese dead.

A significant and lasting outcome to the historic 1970 reunion was the resulting return of artifacts to Japan over the next 40 years.

Official meetings continued in Tokyo with the widows of high ranking Japanese war dead hosting a dinner for the Americans. The widows of both Gen Kuribayashi and Baron Nishi were among those who made lasting friendships with the family of Charles Early and others who had come to Japan to forge reconciliation, forgiveness, and understanding.

The 5th Marine Division Association is proud to present the following account and supporting documents of this largely lost historic reunion which fostered the legacy of peace and honor between The U.S. and Japan veterans 15 years before the first named 1985 Reunion of Honor and 25 years before the annual Reunions of Honor began in 1995.

*May peace & honor between our two nations always be recognized
with meetings of veterans and their families on Iwo Jima.*



(photo: Part of joint 2015 reunion ceremonies at location of D-Day Landings Monument donated by the John Wayne family. Inscription by Arnold Shapero in English on the side facing inland. Japanese inscription faces the sea. The earlier 1970 Reunion in Peace ceremonies had been held on top of Mt Suribachi at the site of the Seabee Memorial.)

Part # 1

Overview of the 1970 Reunion



For Americans and Japanese alike ---

First Iwo Jima reunion was a transformative experience

(By Ray Elliott reprinted from the fall/winter 2015 Spearhead News.- Information for this article was provided by Martin Connor, HQ-1-26, who was a part of the 1970 reunion trip.)



Not long after the 20th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima, the Fifth Marine Division Association started planning to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the battle on the island.

In a July 29, 1969, letter to Association members, Reunion Chairman Charles E. Early (31st Replacement Battalion) informed members about the plans.

A news background sheet at the time noted: "Rarely have two groups of men been more dedicated to the destruction of the other than the Marines assaulting Iwo Jima and the Japanese defending it."

Considering that the commander of the Japanese forces on Iwo Jima, Gen Tadamichi Kuribayashi, ordered each of his men to kill 10 Marines before they died, and that tenacious and gritty U.S. Marines landed on the island determined to take it, such a statement is undeniable.

But in 1965, one of those Marines, a private in a rifle company who was seriously wounded, "thought what a forcible statement for peace and friendship between nations could be made if survivors of these two groups could meet in friendship on the actual scene of their former conflict."

And the plans began to take shape.

“Although the Association has been working on this for three years,” Early wrote in his 1969 letter, “because of the turnover of the island to the Japanese, final details have not yet been worked out.”

It wasn't just the turnover of the island to the Japanese that had to be dealt with, however. To cut the costs down, the group had to either travel with a group or on a charter. Federal regulations apparently required that everybody on the charter be a member of the organization at least six months prior to the trip.

With the trip being planned for the 25th anniversary on Feb. 19, 1970, and going in and out of Japanese customs, leaving a week before seemed likely. That meant that anybody interested in making the trip would have to have been a member of the FMDA as of Aug. 10, 1969, if they weren't already paid-in-full life members. Membership at the time was five dollars.

Over the next few months, plans were made and the trip became a reality for about 33 Iwo Jima veteran survivors and 17 of their wives. Some 24 Japanese survivors, three officials and four of the Japanese committee also made it to Iwo Jima for the joint commemoration. But it wasn't easy.

“It seems likely Iwo Jima is the most difficult place to go in the world,” Early wrote. “We expected our first trip there to be difficult, but we certainly never expected the second one to be so much trouble.”

Early wrote that he had a 10-inch-high stack of files from trying to work out the details. He had corresponded with “everyone from the premier of Japan to the commanding officer of the Coast Guard detachment on Iwo and former privates of the Japanese Army.”

Technical and logistical problems included runway conditions, navigational aids, facilities for food on the island, unexploded ordinance and more. Elected representatives and even the State Department gave little help beyond contacting the Japanese to be able to travel to the island.

Not to be deterred, Early and members of the Association who wanted to go relied on the Marine Corps way that has always been its modus operandi: to improvise, adapt and overcome.

While there were initially plans to meet on the island with the Japanese soldiers and sailors who had fought there, it looked doubtful. There was “considerable pressure,” Early said, on the Japanese government “to force us to meet with a group comprised mostly of widows and orphans of the men killed.” While the group did have some soldiers and sailors, he said he had tried to make it clear that it would be awkward.

So plans were made to spend four or five days in Japan, then early on the morning of Feb. 19 to take a smaller plane to Iwo Jima for the day, fly back to Japan and then go to Hong Kong for another four or five days. The entire round trip from San Francisco was expected to cost between \$700-\$750.

Despite the obstacles, the Marine and Japanese survivors of the battle met on Iwo Jima for the 25th anniversary of the deadly battle. Both groups traveled over the battlefield—sometimes together—and held a joint ceremony on Mount Suribachi. Both flags were raised simultaneously. A Christian chaplain and a Buddhist monk offered prayers.

Leaders from both groups made short speeches. A wreath was laid by the Japanese on the Marine monument, and the Marines laid a wreath on the Japanese monument. Both nations' national anthems were sung, and taps was played.

Major U.S. television networks and a large Japanese television network covered the event. American and Japanese news services carried photographs and stories.

No attempts by the Marines were made to celebrate a victory, but to pay respects to the dead of both nations. For those who attended, “it was universally agreed that it was one of the most meaningfully experiences of their lives.”

Back in Japan the next day, and despite the initial reluctance, the Marines hosted a luncheon for the families of the Japanese who had been killed on Iwo Jima. Instead of the awkwardness they had feared,”the Marines thought it was a beautiful and moving experience.”

The Marines had brought back swords, flags and other personal items, and attempts were made to locate the families to whom the items belonged. This was publicized throughout Japan and was well received. It was reported that one family had traveled all night by train to meet a Marine to make certain it was their soldier who had been killed so they could have a final service for him. The family had a “gift delivered to the Marine at the airport when they left Tokyo.”

At the luncheon, the widow of Gen Kuribayashi welcomed the Marines to Japan on behalf of the other families and thanked them for their expressions of friendship. When she finished, the Marines, all but one of whom had been wounded, gave her a standing ovation. One Marine took Mrs. Kuribayashi's hand and kissed it.

The Marines hosted a banquet that night for the Japanese survivors. With the language difference and only four of those present able to carry on a conversation in the others' language, it was expected to be a formal evening without any rapport. That was not the case.

Immediate rapport was established, with both sides pointing at maps, using sign language and interpreters to learn what others did in the battle, and even kidding back and forth. Names and addresses were exchanged by the end of the evening.

The next night, the Japanese hosted a cocktail party for the Marines. Survivors, bereaved families and officials of the Japanese government attended. On the final night, "Auld Lang Syne" was playing on the public address system: "Should auld acquaintance be forgot. ..." It was noted "25 years ago on that very day, they had been using every nerve, every muscle and all of their spiritual strength to kill each other."

When the Fifth Marine Division Association met Major Yoshitaka Horie, "who was credited with convincing Gen Kuribayashi of the strategic concept for defending the island which was so devastatingly successful, he was invited to speak and was elected an honorary member of the Association."

After the 1970 visit to the island commemorating the 25th anniversary, the Marines and the Japanese continued to keep in touch. When the Japanese come to the United States, it was reported that they often visited some of the Marines they met then, and one brought his entire family to the United States and stayed with one of his former enemies for a week."

Both sides and the media seemed to recognize that "nothing symbolizes quite so well the ending of hostilities between our two sides and the friendship which now exists, as the relationship of those who contended against each other in this bloody battle."

Charles Early, 1970 Reunion Chairman

And later, in 1972, the FMDA President and Host of the 23rd Annual FMDA Reunion

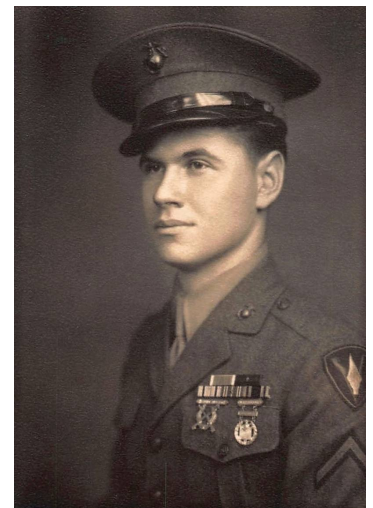
The 1970 Reunion on Iwo Jima first set the tone of reconciliation and peace for the former enemies, and lasting friendships between Japanese and Marines were formed.

The driving force behind the 25th Anniversary meeting of Americans and Japanese on Iwo Jima was Charles E. Early, who had been a young private in the 31st Replacement Battalion and assigned to a rifle company on Iwo Jima.

He was seriously wounded in the battle and ended up back in the states for medical treatment. While at Bethesda Naval Hospital, he met his future wife, Bonnie, who was serving at the hospital as a volunteer. Early went on to attend law school at the University of Florida and he and Bonnie married and moved to Sarasota, Florida, in 1950. There he worked as an attorney his entire career.

Early was active in the Fifth Marine Division Association and, along with a few other former privates, began planning three years before the 25th Anniversary meeting. Because there was no official government or Marine Corps involvement in instigating or organizing the joint meeting, there was next to no official help.

And years later, few people remember the event except for those who took part in the historic day. The FMDA hopes to correct this. In 2015, the *Spearhead News* had printed the above article, based on extensive information, copies of letters, and photos from one of our Iwo Survivor members, Marty Connor, given to the journal editor following the Tampa FMDA Reunion. The 2017 68th Reunion Journal further documented this seminal meeting. And this current booklet has now been published to give Internet access to the event.



*Letter from Chairman of Iwo Jima Reunion
To Fifth Marine Division Association members*

Abridged

FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION

Charles E. Early
Iwo Jima Reunion Chairman
515 Palmer Bank Building
Sarasota, Florida 33577

July 29, 1969

Dear Marine & Wife:

As you have undoubtedly heard, the Fifth Marine Division Association is planning to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima on the island of Iwo Jima itself. Although the Association has been working on this for three years, because of the turnover of the island to the Japanese, final details have not yet been worked out.

In order to get the cost down, we will be traveling either on a charter or some type of a group plan. Federal regulations require that all persons on the charter or in the group be a member of the organization at least six months prior to the trip. Because of some logistics about going in and out of customs in Japan, it is quite possible that we will leave a week before February 19, 1970. That means that if you are not already a member of the Fifth Marine Division Association, you must join the Association and be registered on its books BY AUGUST 10th. THIS IS MOST IMPORTANT.

...

It seems like Iwo Jima is the most difficult place to go to in the world. We expected our first trip there to be difficult, but we certainly never expected the second one to be so much trouble. I have a series of files approximately 10 inches high trying to work out the details of the trip. Correspondence has been had with everyone from the Premier of Japan to the commanding officer of the Coast Guard detachment on Iwo and former privates in the Japanese Army. There are many technical and logistic difficulties, such as condition of the runway, navigational aids, facilities for feeding us, unexploded ordnance, etc. On this point, it might be of some help if you could write to your U. S. Senators and see if the State Department could give us some financial assistance in overcoming some of these technical difficulties. We have been working with the State Department, but outside of contacting the Japanese for us they have given us no concrete help so far.

...

As of now, our plans are to go to Japan for 4 or 5 days. Early on the morning of the 19th we would get on smaller planes and fly to Iwo. The most recent information is that the runway surface will not support large planes such as jets. We would spend the day on Iwo and leave that night for either Tokyo or some intermediate spot. We would then go to Hong Kong (perhaps stopping off in Taiwan overnight) and spend about 4 or 5 days there.

Depending on how much we have to spend on the Iwo Jima leg of the trip, we hope to get the price per person down to between \$700 and \$750, round trip from San Francisco. This will include air fare, sightseeing, surface transportation, baggage handling, hotels and some meals. At this price, it is certainly an opportunity of a lifetime. As a result, most men are planning on taking their wives and many their children.

In planning a trip like this certain primary objectives must be kept in mind. Of course, our primary objective is the trip to Iwo and our very deep feelings in connection with it. Our next objective is to have a trip at a low enough price and with a wide enough appeal to get the largest possible participation. Undoubtedly some of you will think the trip is too short and others too long. Some would want to spend all the time in Japan and others less. Since we can't please each of you in every detail, we have tried to plan the trip that will produce the widest participation. All in all, we don't know of anywhere you could get a more exciting or meaningful trip for the money.

Don't regret it for the rest of your life that you didn't take this opportunity. There will be no more chances to visit Iwo! Don't wait until tomorrow, send in your membership dues today, if you have not already joined the Association.

Very truly yours,

Charles E. Early

Charles E. Early

Iwo Jima Reunion Chairman

CEE/vhc

P. S. Since we have addresses for only 1/20th of the men in the division, please notify all of your friends who were in the 5th of this right away.

paul
bressoud

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FIFTH MARINE DIVISION IWO JIMA TOUR

Tues., Feb. 17 1:30 p.m. Depart Seattle for Tokyo on Northwest Orient Airlines flight No. 7. Cross the International Date Line and lose a day.

Wed., Feb. 18 4:50 p.m. Arrive Tokyo.

You will be met and transferred from the airport to the Prince Hotel. Baggage handling and gratuities are included, of course. We suggest that you will be quite tired from the trans-Pacific flight and urge you to retire early this evening as tomorrow will be a very big day, and you will have missed a night's sleep.

Thurs., Feb. 19 5:00 a.m. Transfer to the Tachikawa Airport for the U. S. Air Force flight to Iwo Jima. Food packets will be provided. Information regarding the ceremonial activities on Iwo Jima will be provided at a later date.

Late return to Tachikawa Airport and transfer will be provided back to the Prince Hotel. (The expenses, if any, for the U. S. Air Force flight to Iwo Jima will be paid by you in Tokyo and is not covered in the tour price. We have not been given any cost figures yet, but would assume them to be very reasonable.)

Fri., Feb. 20 No activities are planned for this day in order that it will be available for meeting with the Japanese survivors of Iwo Jima. Others may wish to casually walk around the city of Tokyo or sightsee on their own. Your tour escort will arrange conducted sightseeing for you if you wish.

Sat., Feb. 21 Today will also be at leisure for you to choose what you wish to do. To give you an idea, you may take a morning tour of Tokyo which includes Tokyo Tower, the Tea Ceremony at Happon Garden, Meiji Shrine Outer Garden and the Imperial Palace Plaza.

Or, an afternoon tour including Capitol Asakusa Kannon Temple, the Main Store of Mikimoto (the Pearl King) and a Bridal Costume show and a private home visit.

We would strongly suggest the all-day trip to Nikko, which includes a train ride to Nikko and the automobile excursion visiting Toshugu Shrine, the most colorful of Japanese shrines, Futarasan Shrine, Lake Chizenji and Kegon Waterfalls including lunch. Train back to Tokyo.

Again, your tour escort will assist you in every way possible.

COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL PLANNING

Sun., Feb. 22 9:00 a.m. Transfer will be provided to the rail station for the 125 mile per hour "Bullet" Train to Kyoto. You will enjoy viewing the countryside, the carefully manicured Japanese farms and gardens around their homes. You will notice how all land is utilized during this two-hour train ride.

Upon arrival in Kyoto you will be transferred to the Kyoto International Hotel.

In the afternoon, we have arranged a tour of Kyoto including Heian Shrine, Sanjusangendo Hall and Kiyomizu Temple.

Mon., Feb. 23 9:00 a.m. This morning we have included the famous Kyoto Arts and Crafts Tour where you will observe Kimono Dyeing, Wood-block printing, the Nishijin Silk Museum and the lacquer ware factory as well as other points of interest.

This afternoon will be at leisure. Overnight Kyoto International

Tues., Feb. 24 Today at leisure. Perhaps you would like an excursion to Osaka and a visit through the grounds of Expo or perhaps you would enjoy the essence of Japanese gardening which your tour escort will arrange or any other activity that may interest you. Overnight Kyoto International Hotel.

Wed., Feb. 25 9:00 a.m. Depart this morning from your hotel to Osaka by way of Nara. In Nara you will see the Todaiji Temple, Kasuga Shrine, Deer Park, Fushimi Shrine and Momoyama Castle.

From Osaka you will leave on Japan Airlines flight No. 703 at 5:55 p.m. Arrive Hong Kong at 9:55 p.m. where you will be met and transferred to the Hotel-Park. *MIRAMAR*

Thurs., Feb. 26 Morning at leisure for you to start your shopping. We urge you to bring with you pictures or patterns of clothes that you would like made in Hong Kong so that you will not spend a long time in selecting styles. The Chinese tailors will duplicate the styles from pictures in magazines or other advertisements. We also suggest that you place your orders as soon as possible so that you will have ample time for three or four fittings.

This afternoon, we have included a sightseeing tour of Hong Kong Island including rides on the Ferry and the Funicular Tram; visits to Tiger Balm Garden, Repulse Bay and Aberdeen. We have included the meal at a floating restaurant. Overnight *MIRAMAR* Hotel.

Fri., Feb. 27 Morning at leisure (more shopping); this afternoon we have included a sightseeing tour of Kowloon and the New Territories including Refugees' Resettlement Area; Tsun Wan-an industrial district; Un Long-a farming village; Kam Tin-an ancient walled town; Lok Ma Chau-for a glimpse of Communist China; Tai Po- and Shatin Fishing Village. Overnight *MIRAMAR* Hotel.

Itinerary for the Feb 17 - March 2, 1970, 5th Marine Division Iwo Jima tour organized by Charles Early



In addition to the American attendees listed on the facing page, active duty Marines who had fought on Iwo Jima and were in 1970 stationed on Guam and Okinawa were flown over to the 25th Anniversary ceremonies on Iwo by invitation of the 3rd Division Commander, Gen William Jones.

One of those in attendance was FMDA member George Boutwell who had returned from Vietnam to Camp Schwab, Okinawa, in Dec 1969. He was at that time 1st Sgt of Alpha Co, 3rd Recon BN. The plane taking the Marines to Iwo had problems and left Okinawa late, resulting in the men missing part of the ceremonies. George said of Gen Jones' invitation, "I thought it was very interesting to get an opportunity to return. It was the first time I had been back. Later I returned again in 2015 for the 70th anniversary reunion. By then the island looked completely different than when we left in 1945. Vegetation had grown back all over the island"

Sat., Feb. 28 Today at leisure. More shopping and sightseeing. Overnight ~~Park~~ Hotel. *MIRAMAR*

Sun., Mar. 1 At leisure. Last minute shopping and sightseeing. Overnight *MIRAMAR* ~~Park~~ Hotel.

Mon., Mar. 2 1:00 p.m. You will be transferred to the airport for your Northwest Orient flight No. 10 at 2:10 p.m.

Arrive Okinawa at 5:10 p.m.
Leave Okinawa at 5:50 p.m.
Arrive Tokyo 7:55 p.m.
Leave Tokyo 9:32 p.m. - Cross International Date Line - gain a day
Arrive Honolulu 9:50 a.m. (still March 2)

For those of you who wish to remain in Hawaii, you may do so at no additional air fare cost, as long as you leave Honolulu before March 17.

Northwest Orient Airlines flight No. 10 continues from Honolulu at 10:30 a.m.

Arrive San Francisco 5:15 p.m.

Marines and their families and friends who attended the 1970 Reunion in Peace on Iwo Jima

Mr and Mrs Charles E Early	Mr Andrew L Szuhay
Mr and Mrs AW Armond	Mr and Mrs Keith Thomas
Mr Cal Shoop	Mr John Trezza
Mr and Mr John Downer	Dr Harry Gorfien
Mr Harry Sandosky	Mr Arthur F Higgins
Mr and Mrs James Robeson	Mr J Toby Raspilair, Jr
Mr and Mrs George Pauslon	Mr and Mrs C Rodgers
Mr and Mrs Charles Beidleman	Mr JJ Rebstock, Jr
Mr and Mrs Eldon Thude	Mr and Mrs James Shanahan
Mr and Mrs John Edmonson	Mr Anthony Izzi
Mr John McLean	Mr and Mrs Lloyd T Ferrin
Mr and Mrs Charles Sockett	Mr August L Smith
Mr and Mrs Martin Conner	Mr John Mentzell, Jr
Dr and Mrs AW Thomson, Jr	Mrs Mary Anne Montgomery
Mr and Mrs Robert Barnett	Chuck Early
Mr and Mrs Michael J Murphy	Mary Beth Early
Mr Mike Carchetta	Burl Barnett
Mr Joseph Manco	Mr John Rich from NBC news
Mr Robert Mentzell	

Former 5th Division men still in the service and stationed on Guam or Okinawa who were on Iwo for the 25th Anniversary.

Cmdr. J.F. Laboon – 12th Marines Chaplain – Former submariner whose boat was off Iwo
 1st Sgt G. N. Boutwell – 3rd Recon - Former 5th Medical Battalion
 Capt H.N. Glasser – 3rd Dental Corps - Former Infantryman 26th Marines
 Capt. L.S. Eisman – USN – Former 5th Medical Bn. Past President of FMDA
 Col. H.H. Stirling – Former 28th Marines.

Japanese Attendees at Reunion in Peace

Survivors Group: Dr Kazuyoshi Morimoto, Takeo Abe, Toshihiko Oono, Bunzi Anzai,
 Hisayoshi Ubukata, Shizuo Ooneta, Tadayoshi Koizumi, Toshihide Seki, Shigeharu Takahashi,
 Yoshio Takeuchi, Masami Nishida, Ryuuichi Hasegawa, Ichizo Hirai, Toshinosuke Miyakata,
 Akira Yamazaki, Shinya Ryuumae, Gorzo Wakatsuki

Officials Group: Kazuaki Arichi, Akira Kurosake, Kazuhiko Miyata, Tsuenzo Wachi,
 Yoshitaka Horie, Minoru Tada, Moichi Kanda

Part # 2



Mary (Early) Swain

From “Uncommon Valor” to “Love Thy Enemy”

By Mary Beth (Early) Swain, M.D.



(Eleven-year old Mary Early with Baroness Nishi and other Japanese widows)

“He Blamed it on Calculus”

In June, 1944 my dad, Charles E Early, was a 17 year old “Rat” finishing his first year at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) where he had matriculated in the hopes of one day becoming a career military officer. He later claimed that it was because he detested calculus that he resigned from VMI and joined the US Marine Corps. I rather suspect that he, like many young men of his time, was afraid that the war was going to end before he could participate in the great adventure. In any event, he somehow convinced his mother to sign his enlistment papers and on April 13, 1944 he enlisted in the Marine Corps. Events happened fairly quickly after that- Paris Island, Camp Lejeune, and he soon found himself on a troop train crossing the United States to Camp Pendleton in California. The long voyage to Iwo Jima began at Hilo on Dec 31, 1944 on the USS Highlands, finally arriving at Iwo Jima on Feb 19, 1945. His parents never knew that he had been sent into combat until they were notified that he had been wounded on Iwo Jima.

Dad had been assigned to the 31 Replacement Battalion and went ashore on the island on Feb 20, 1945, the day after the first Marines landed on the black sand beaches. He eventually was assigned to Mortar Section C Company, 28th Marines. On March 10, 1945, his company was involved in a heavy firefight with the Japanese who were hidden in the caves they had dug in preparation for the battle. Dad, and several other Marines, were sent back to obtain more stretchers for the many wounded. Unfortunately, they had to cross an open area covered by a Japanese sniper. As Dad always told my brother and me, “I zigged when I should have zagged”. The sniper hit him in the right hip and abdomen with a captured American rifle! Fortunately, another brave Marine ran out into the

fire lane, pulled Dad to safety, got him onto one of those precious stretchers, and via a relay team transported him to a makeshift field hospital, where he was initially operated on.

Dad spent the next 16 months in Naval Hospitals in Guam, Hilo, Oakland, and Bethesda, 10 months in a body cast, and 2 months in traction to try to relocate his hip. He spent years in physical therapy, traveling by train from Sarasota and Gainesville Florida to be treated by an orthopedic surgeon, Dr Anapol, at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, but his hip ankylosed (fused), and he walked with a severe limp the rest of his life, unable to put on his right sock or tie his shoe.

His dreams of becoming a general dashed and honorably discharged from the Marine Corp on June 9, 1946, Dad eventually finished college and law school at the University of Florida on the GI Bill where he graduated first in his class in 1950. After graduation he married my mother, whom he had met while recuperating in Bethesda, and they settled in Sarasota, his hometown, where he practiced law.

My brother and I grew up in a home where the specter of Iwo Jima was ever present as our Dad was severely disabled by his war wounds. However, Dad never blamed the Japanese. As children, we were not allowed to use the term “Jap”, as that was considered disrespectful. Dad always said that “They were doing their job and I was doing mine.” He said that his understanding and empathy, for the Japanese began with his acting commander, Lt Kurt Tanner’s, admonition that they should not participate in the mistreatment of the few Japanese prisoners of war. Tanner said that “ The war was over for these men and they should be treated like human beings....They had been our allies before the war and could be our friends again someday.” Dad took these words to heart and when in 1966 the 5th Marine Division officially authorized the investigation of the possibility of an Association meeting with the surviving Japanese defenders, Dad became the leader of the effort to organize such a reunion. This was to become both his and my mother’s obsession for the next 3 years.

I honestly don’t know how Dad arranged this reunion. Remember that this is before the Internet and cell phones! I know he traveled to Japan in 1967 to try to start making contacts with the Japanese survivors, many of whom had never returned home, preferring that their families thought that they had died in the battle. Some started new lives and changed their names. Somehow he met Yoshitaka Horie, a former major in the Imperial Japanese Army who became our translator and later, our friend. Major Horie was mostly stationed on Chi Chi Jima where he learned English from captured American pilots.



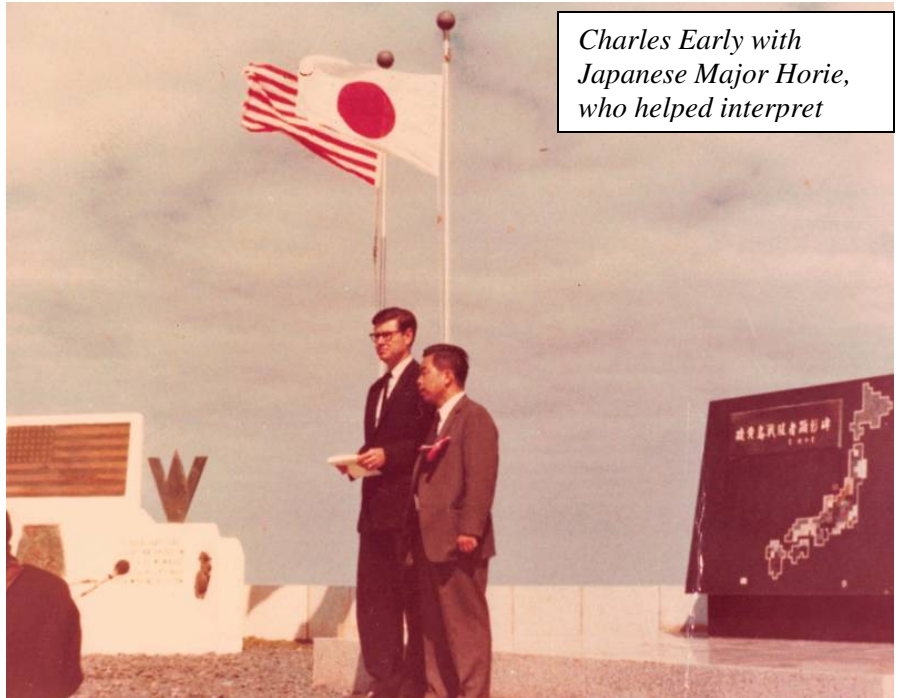
Mary Beth and her brother Chuck with her father Charles Early and mother Bonnie at the Iwo Jima Airport in 1970

The two major stumbling blocks were that the Japanese said that they didn’t have a plane that could fly from Tokyo to Iwo Jima and that the widows of the Japanese soldiers who died on Iwo refused to meet with the survivors of the battle, whom they considered to still be in disgrace. The first issue seemed rather ridiculous as the whole reason the battle was fought was to provide a landing strip for injured bombers returning from raids on the Japanese mainland. But this difficulty dogged Dad until he was eventually able to secure a US Air Force plane

via the Nixon White House. The second issue was resolved by our meeting with the Japanese survivors on Iwo Jima, while we met with the widows in Tokyo the next day.

On February 19, 1970, a group of 35 former members of the 5th Marine Division and family members once again landed on Iwo Jima. I don't really remember our reception, but I am sure that it was much friendlier than 25 years before. I do remember seeing Mt Suribachi and the famous black sand beaches of which I had heard about all of my life. On that first trip we were told not to enter any caves because there could still be unexploded ordnances or booby traps. We met with 17 Japanese survivors on top of Mt Suribachi. Dad spoke, with Major Horie interpreting, the flags of both countries were raised, and Taps was played.

Even for an 11 year old girl, it was incredibly moving.



*Charles Early with
Japanese Major Horie,
who helped interpret*

The meeting with the survivors was a huge success and the next day we met with the Japanese widows of many of the men who had died on Iwo Jima, including the wife of the Japanese General Kuribayashi whose tactics were responsible for the terrible fighting. Kuribayashi knew that they could not win the battle, but they were to exact the highest price for it. He ordered the Japanese soldiers to dig and then conceal themselves in an elaborate system of caves and connecting tunnels. The Japanese were fully aware that they were digging their own tombs as they were not allowed to surrender. Kuribayashi then ordered them to kill at least ten Americans before they died. Thus, this meeting between the American survivors and the Japanese widows was especially emotional as some of the Americans had killed their husbands. I remember one American, George Paulson, who had taken some letters off of a Japanese body. He was able to return the letters to that man's family and they held his funeral in the next several days.

The widows were courteous to us and one group took a special liking to me. This group was composed of women whose husbands had been killed on Iwo Jima, including Baroness Nishi, whose husband was the Gold Medalist in the Equestrian Steeplechase at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1932. (He is the Japanese officer who rides up on horseback in the movie *Flags of our Fathers*) The others were Fumiko Takaishi, Keiko Tokunaga, Fumiko Sugitani, and Mariko Yamanouthi. When we were leaving Tokyo to head back to the US, this group of five Japanese women in their kimonos boarded our plane. They found me in my seat and presented me with a beautiful Japanese doll that they had made for me. The card said "With love and good wishes from us all". I consider this to be one of my greatest treasures and it occupies a place of honor in my home.



Dad became friends with many of the Japanese survivors and Major Horie and Captain Wachi, who became a Buddhist monk, both stayed in my old room when they came to visit us in Sarasota. Reverend Wachi gave me a green marble egg. Dad went back to Japan several more times, including for the 1980 Reunion. He would stay with the family of General Kuribayashi. Mrs Kuribayashi sent Christmas cards to my parents for years.

In addition to being respectful of the Japanese soldier, Dad was also intensely grateful to the Marine who had pulled him from the line of fire after being shot. He only knew him by his nick name, Shad. He searched for him for years and then in 1984 found him, William Shadley, living only a few hours north in St Petersburg, Florida. From then on Dad and Mom would drive to St Petersburg on the anniversary of his being shot and take Shad and his wife to dinner in appreciation for his selfless act in saving Dad's life.

Dad was always proud of being a Marine and especially for having fought on Iwo Jima. He spent hours looking at books about the Marine Corps and Iwo Jima with my son, Patrick. Even though Dad died when Patrick was only 5, he had already instilled in him a desire to serve our country. Patrick graduated from the US Naval Academy in 2015 and is currently a Navy pilot in the fleet replacement squadron flying MH-60 Romeo helicopters.

Below: Charles Early (l.) was pulled to safety by William Shadley (r.) as he lay in an open position, critically wounded by Japanese sniper fire. Photo from a Herald-Tribune 1984 article)



When Dad died in 1998, we placed a vial containing black sand from Iwo Jima in the niche with his remains in acknowledgment of the singular role of Iwo Jima in his life, both as a young Marine whose war wounds irreparably changed the course of his life, but also for allowing him, along with 34 other former Marines and 17 former members of the Japanese Imperial Army, to demonstrate to the world the power of forgiveness.

In his speech on Mt Suribachi Dad said "If these men who once strived so earnestly to destroy each other can receive one another as friends, why can't all people?" Indeed.

Reflections on Reconnecting with an Old Friend

By Dr. Mary (Early) Swain

One of the most significant events of my childhood was participating in the reunion of American and Japanese survivors of Iwo Jima on top of Mt Suribachi in 1970. I had always thought that this momentous occasion was a well known and respected part of the 5th Marine Division history. Imagine my surprise when reading General Larry Snowden's autobiography *Snowden's Story* to come to these words on page 161 "The first time a group of survivors returned to Iwo Jima was in 1985." "No," I thought. "I know that isn't correct because I personally was on Iwo with both Japanese and American survivors in 1970!"

I felt compelled to set the record straight, but how? The answer came approximately 3 weeks later when I received an unusual message at work that a Kath Butler was trying to contact me regarding my father and Iwo Jima! Of course I returned her call and found out that she and her husband John Butler, president of the 5th Marine Division Association, had learned about the 1970 reunion from Marine Marty Connor who had traveled back to the island with my Dad's group. The Butlers had asked that Marty's account of that first Japanese-American reunion on Iwo Jima be printed in the *Spearhead News*.

Kath and John determined to find out even more about this previously unknown to them event. They learned that my father, Charles Early, was the main organizer, but unfortunately he had died in 1998. Kath then went into birddog mode and tracked me down in Tallahassee through my mother's obituary! I'll never forget her first words, "Do you know anything about a reunion in 1970 on Iwo Jima?" I think she was quite surprised when I responded, "Of course I do. I was there!" We talked for over an hour about my experiences and Kath urged me to write my story.

Resolved to spread knowledge of the 1970 Reunion on Iwo Jima to more than the members of the Fifth Marine Division Association, John secured a place on the program of the February 2018 Iwo Jima Association of America symposium in Washington DC. The Butlers then gently insisted that I come and tell my story. It was there that I had my own amazing reunion with Yoshitaka Shindo, General Kuribayashi's grandson, whom I had first met in Japan in 1970.



By a wonderful fate, Shindo-san was the guest speaker for the 2018 symposium, and the coinciding of our two talks gave this unique opportunity for us to meet again after almost five decades.

My family and I are greatly indebted to Kath and John Butler for caring so deeply about the 5th Marine Division to tirelessly pursue and preserve the full and accurate history of Iwo Jima Reunions so that it can be known by all.



Childhood Memories, Dolls, and World Peace



[Dr Mary (Early) Swain reunited with friend Yoshitaka Shindo after nearly five decades]

By Bonnie Haynes

At the IJAA banquet on Saturday night, I welcomed our old friend Shindo-san, grandson of General Kuribayashi, head of The Bereaved Families Group, and an a very influential member in their Congress, The Diet.

When I told him I wanted to introduce him to Mary Swain and started to explain who she was his eyes got wide, he smiled broadly and said, “Yes, yes, I remember her and her family very well,” as he gestured the height of the young girl. “Please bring her over as soon as we start eating dinner.” That was the first knockout. He is a gracious, intelligent, genuine friend and person, but rarely has anyone remembered meeting a little girl and her parents 48 years ago. We walked over and he recognized her immediately and was genuinely delighted to see her.

As they talked about his mother being an actress, his grandmother, Baroness Nichi, her father, John Rich and others, it became clear that this was a seminal event in a young man’s life. He even remembered the doll

Mary had been given as a gift. As they talked more about how their families had spent time together, Shindo mentioned that after the 1970 Reunion, Charles Early, Mary's father had come to Japan, on a second trip, and stayed at their house, as a guest of his mother. He even recalls a picture of Mrs. Shindo and Mr. Early that is still in his house and promised to look for it to give Mary a copy.

This is more than a reunion between two people who were lucky to be part of something larger as children. That trip, was clearly one of the first steps on the road to peace and Reunion of Honor events.

Mary Swain gave a remarkable presentation about her family's trip to Iwo Jima with the Shindo and Nishi families in 1970. She remembers a doll and presents. Americans and Japanese. While this was covered by American news, in part because the Japanese Bureau Chief for NBC, John Rich, was also an Iwo Jima Veteran, the trip itself went largely unremembered in the United States. But in Japan it clearly set the precedent and Japanese mind set for the later Reunions of Honor. When Mary went, Shindo was a young boy. Now he is a very powerful member of the Diet, and rumored to be a possible Prime Minister. He is also the permanent head of the Bereaved Families of Iwo-to. His family, and something we really didn't know until Mary's presentation, the Nishi family, had a different way of looking at the war, and the loss.

His grandfather, General Kuribayashi had spent a lot of time in America, driving through it himself. He liked the culture, the openness and the barbecue. He made many friends. When the Japanese talked about war with America, Kuribayashi advised against it. He rightly believed they had vastly underestimated our military power and ability to fight because of our more laid back cultural characteristics. He was very anti-war, an unpopular position at that time. And, he was of course right.

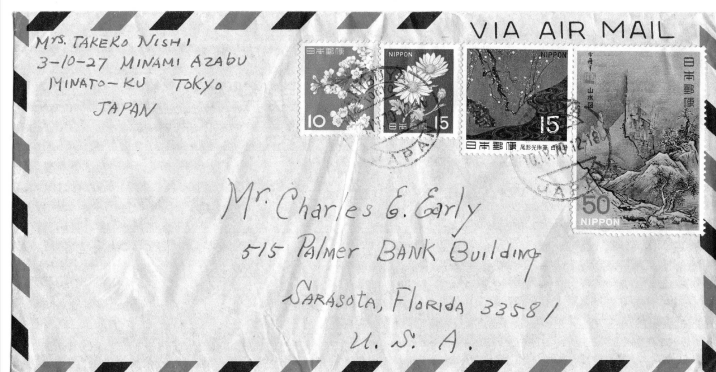
One of the great stories of courage is how Gen Kuribayashi's widow, Madame Kuribayashi found the means to raise her children with his ideals, without the bitterness and hate or the dishonor. In Japan, veterans who survived the war were dishonored. Death before dishonor is the bushido code. Simply by living, and coming home to their families, they were dishonored.

But Mary Swain offers us a glimpse into another way of thinking in Japan. One that was against War, pro-peace and believed in honoring the dead and the living. This idea was taking hold in the 70's but the older politicians were against it. Clearly as General Larry Snowden, who had spent years living in Japan, started campaigning for a permanent Reunion of Honor, he gained support from those who had now become important politicians, such as Shindo, who remembered 1970.

Rev Wachi, then a Colonel, had become a Buddhist monk. We know very little of what had happened to the Nishi's. Mr. Nishi (the Baron's son) was one of the Presidents of the Bereaved Families group but stopped coming. Mary's work shows the involvement of Baroness Nishi, something we have never really known. By 1995 only Madame Kuribayashi and her late grandson, Taro came to the Island. Only in recent years have we seen the strong influx of politicians and government officials on both sides.

It was a pleasure to see Shindo and Mary, the two childhood friends, unite again at the IJAA Symposium.

April 1970 Letter from Baroness Nishi to Charles Early



During the days, while I had been
here, I was thinking about my late
husband - if he were here he should
be so much enjoyed with you all.

I hope if any one could trans-
late the booklet of my husband
for you, you would be under-
stand exactly about him.

(I gave it to Mr. Maclean too)

Karon had really loved your
country and have many intimate
friends.

I could understand what he
was thinking when he was killed.
Isn't it very sad!

But please believe me his mind
is living on me in the rest of my
life.

April 8th 1970

Dear Mr. Charles E. Early

Thank you so much for
your letter. I was so pleased to hear
from you again, especially wonderful your
wife and children.

Mary is such a sweet girl we
all like her so much. Her letter
is a lovely and we thanks for
the nice pictures. I've shared
them for each one.

I'm sorry the pictures from us
were not good than we expected.

All of us had a truly delightful
days and we were much consoled.
Please convey our deep appreciation to
you and the other participants.

I'm afraid you could catch
the meaning in my poor English
letter.

Hoping you and your family
come to visit Japan again.

With best wishes to you all.

Sincerely
Takeko Nishi

TRANSCRIPTION OF LETTER FROM BARONESS NISHI SENT SHORTLY AFTER THE 1970 IWO JIMA REUNION

(Photocopy of 3 page letter and envelope on facing page)

April 8th 1970

Dear Mr. Charles E Early

Thank you so much for your letter. I was so pleased to meet you again, especially wonderful your wife and children.

Mary is such a sweet girl we all like her so much. Her letter is a lovely and we thanks for the nice pictures. I've shared them for each one. I'm sorry the pictures from us were not good than we expected.

All of us had a truly delightful day and we were much consoled. Please convey our deep appreciation to you and the other participants.

During our days where I had been there, I was thinking about my late husband- if he were here he should be so much enjoyed with you all.

I hope if anyone could translate the booklet of my husband for you, you would be understand exactly about him. (I gave it to Mr.Maclean too)

Baron had really loved your country and have many intimate friends. I could understand what he was thinking when he was killed. Isn't it very sad! But please believe me his mind is a living on me in the rest of my life.

I'm afraid you could catch the meaning in my poor English letter.

Hoping you and your family come to visit Japan again soon. With best wishes to you all.

Sincerely, Takeko Nishi

*(Right: Head table at banquet the Japanese hosted for visiting Marines.
Mary standing behind her father Charles Early, seated)*



Part # 3



Yoshitaka Shindo

Yoshitaka Shindo

Member of Japanese Parliament

Grandson of General Tadamichi Kuribayashi
Japanese Imperial Army Commander
Japan's Forces on Iwo Jima



BORN JAN 20, 1958:

**AGE 12 AT THE TIME OF THE 5TH MARINE DIVISION
ASSOCIATION SPONSORED 1970 REUNION IN PEACE
ON IWO JIMA, WHERE AMERICAN AND JAPANESE
VETERANS MET FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER THE
WAR IN A MOVING CEREMONY OF FRIENDSHIP AND
RECONCILIATION ON TOP OF MOUNT SURABACHI.**

As a young boy he took part in greeting the American Marine veterans in Tokyo, and with his mother and grandmother formed lasting ties to the family of Charles Early who had worked so diligently to coordinate the event.

**OCT 1996 – ELECTED FOR THE FIRST TIME AS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL DIET, JAPAN'S BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE.**



- Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications
- State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry
- Chief Director, Committee for Regional Revitalization, HR
- Acting Chairperson, Headquarter of Regional Revitalization
- Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs
- Director, National Defense Division

Yoshitaka Shindo is also the head of The Bereaved Families Group



(Above: Mr. Shindo washing the stone monument close to the Invasion Beach on Iwo Jima. Washing with water and then bowing deeply in prayer is a traditional Shinto ritual
New York Times photo)

(Below: excerpts from 2015 interview by Linda Sieg, Mari Saito REUTERS)

When Yoshitaka Shindo was a boy, he did not hear much from his family about his grandfather Tadamichi Kuribayashi, commander of the Japanese troops who fought and died in the bloody battle of Iwo Jima. For many in Japan the epic battle was long a tragic defeat best forgotten

“As a child, I was told that my grandfather worked diligently for the sake of the country and that he was a very gentle person. But as for details such as what happened when, neither my grandmother or mother really spoke about that.” Mr. Shindo said his mother told him only that he should be proud of his grandfather, who had done *“a hard job for his country.”* Most of what he knew came from books, and about 80 letters from his grandfather on Iwo Jima that the family keeps.

“The battle looms and except when I am tired and sleep, all I think of is the fierce fight, an honorable death, and what will happen to you and the children after that,” wrote the father of three.

Shindo said his grandfather was believed to have been struck down by a bullet after he removed his officer’s insignia and joined his troops in an attack on U.S. forces. Kuribayashi’s bones have never been recovered - nor have the remains of more than half of the Japanese soldiers who died on Iwo.



Mr Shindo carries on his grandfather’s service to his country. But instead of fighting as a samurai warrior on the battlefield, his battles are fought in the arena of diplomacy to help his country maintain its position as a leader on the world stage.



The distance from Tokyo to the west coast of the U.S. is about 5,500 miles, half a globe away.

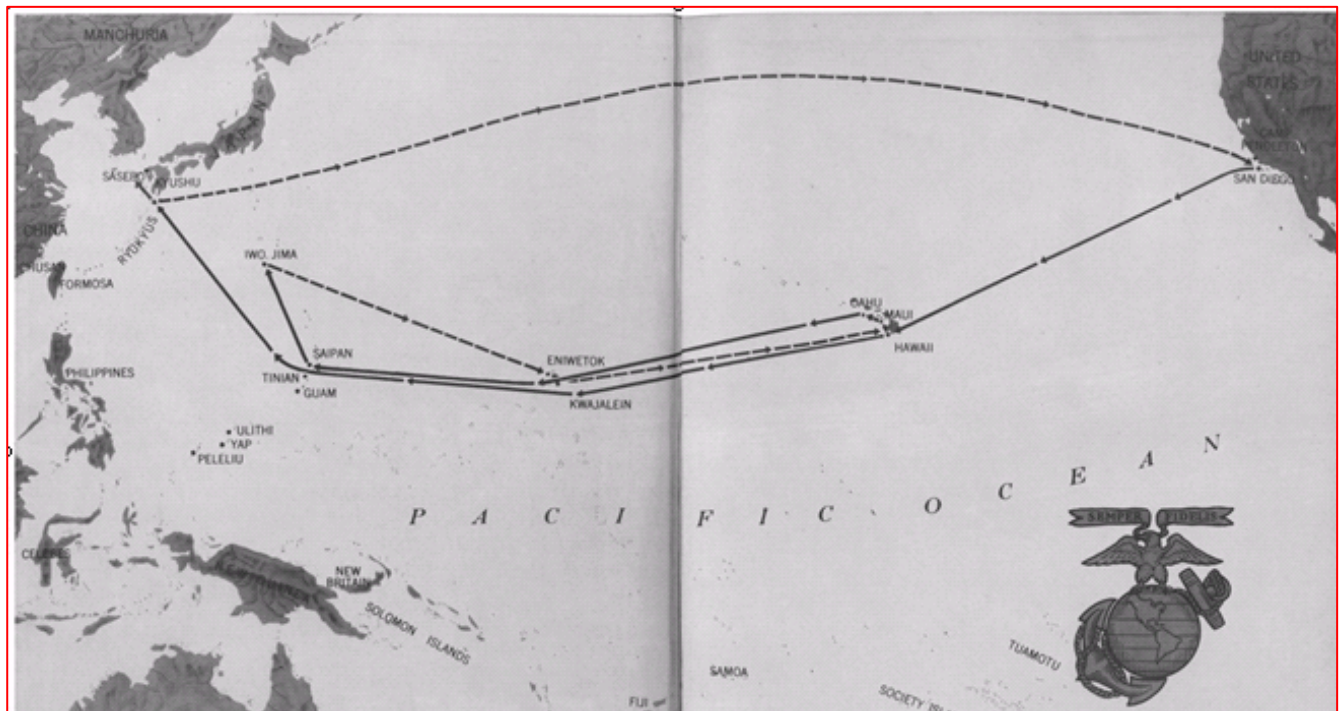
Iwo Jima is about 660 miles from Tokyo and is considered part of the Japanese homeland

Now, three-quarters of a century after a tragic and devastating world war, the bonds between the United States and Japan have been forged into a strong and lasting friendship.

Many deep personal relationships between Japanese and American families have been formed, among them that of Mr Shindo and the late General Fred Haynes and his widow Bonnie Haynes, a FMDA trustee.

Also the revived friendship of the Kuribayashi family and the Early family when Mr. Shindo again met Mary Early Swain after nearly five decades.

The Rev Wachi who had helped carry on the mission to recover Japanese remains to return to Bereaved Families also became close to numerous Marines. His daughter Rosa Ogawa likewise developed close ties with Americans, including the family of John Butler, FMDA president, whose father, BN Commander LtCol John Butler, was KIA on Iwo Jima..





(Left) His Excellency, Yoshitaka Shindo, Japanese Parliament Secretary of Foreign Affairs, receives a gift from the Iwo Jima Veterans Association during a reception held after the memorial service honoring retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt Gen Lawrence Snowden at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Triangle, VA, April 8, 2017. Photo by USMC Sgt

(Presenting the award is Bonnie Haynes, widow of IJAA founder Gen Fred Haynes, and a Trustee of the Fifth Marine Division Association)

By Bonnie Haynes, Trustee Board Member both of IJAA, founded by her late husband, and of FMDA

Yoshitaka Shindo Recipient of the First Snowden Peace and Reconciliation Award

The Iwo Jima Association honored Yoshitaka Shindo, long-time member of the Japanese Diet and grandson of General Tademichi Kuribayashi, Garrison Commander of the Battle of Iwo Jima, now the island of the Iwo-to, at their annual banquet in February. The General Lawrence Snowden Peace and Reconciliation Award was given, for the first time, to Rep Shindo for his long time work on peace. *"It is a great honor and pleasure for me to receive the first 'Peace and Reconciliation' award named after a great hero of the Marine Corps,"* said Rep. Shindo.

"The souls of the brave men from both sides, who fought on Iwo-to were rewarded." He finished by saying to the gathered dignitaries , *"I really look forward to seeing you again next month on Iwo-to,"* a reference to the annual Reunion of Honor event, formalized in 1995 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and General Lawrence Snowden. The first named Reunion of Honor was ten years prior in 1985 and was attended by Shindo's grandmother and the wife of General Kuribayashi, Madame Yoshii Kuribayashi, her late son Taro, Rev Wachi, a Buddhist monk who had been an Imperial Navy Captain on Iwo Jima, and more. While it worried some that it would be too difficult for such great warriors on both sides to come together in peace as friends, Gen. Snowden's and Rev Wachi's inspiration and devotion to peace and friendship paid off. Now, Yoshitaka Shindo spearheads these annual reunions.

Hollywood producer and director Arnold Shapiro, who has been commended by the Marine Corps for envisioning and organizing a "Reunion of Honor" for the Americans and Japanese veterans to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the battle, so named his 1985 meeting of the two former foes on the site of the epic battle. As a film-maker, the event needed a title. And so many believe the first Reunion of Honor was indeed the first meeting of Americans and Japanese on Iwo Jima. But in fact,

fifteen years prior, in 1970, there had been a similar meeting on Mt Surabachi. It too had been an outstanding success and overcame any perceived obstacles of the two former foes meeting in a celebration of Peace. This 1970 event might have been called the “Reunion in Peace,” a term used in one contemporary article about the meeting. It had been sponsored by the Fifth Marine Division Association and chaired by Charles Early.

Certainly for the young grandson of Gen Kuribayashi, the inspiration to continue in the path of his ancestors came long before 1995, when the trips to Iwo Jima by the two sides became an annual event. And before 1985. In 1970, a 12 year old boy and an eleven year old girl went with their prescient parents on that peace trip to Iwo Jima. And that young girl, now Dr. Mary Early Swain, had, by fate, told the story of that 1970 trip at the 2018 IJAA symposium earlier on the day of the symposium banquet. Representative Shindo had been invited to be the guest speaker at the evening banquet, and after almost five decades the two childhood friends met again on that serendipitous February evening in Washington DC.

A month later in Iwo Jima at the 2018 Reunion of Honor, we deplaned and the Japanese delegation was already on the ground. I was the first person Shindo-san walked over to greet and the first thing he said, with a great big smile, was, “How is Mary Early. I sent her a letter last week. She should have it by now.” So I asked, “Did you find the picture of her father?” He laughed apologetically and said, “I am still looking.”

Mary confirmed she has since received a most gracious and welcome two page letter from Shindo-san, apologizing for the delay in answering but saying that his Diet duties had kept him extremely busy since his return from D.C.



In 2020 Mary plans to bring her entire family to Iwo Jima's Reunion of Honor that coincides with the 50th anniversary of the 1970 FMDA reunion. Her son Patrick is now a U.S. Navy MH60 Romeo Helicopter pilot.

Hopefully the two --- the Shindo/Kuribayashi and the Swain/Early families can get together both on Iwo and in Japan.

(Above) Proud parents Jeff and Mary Swain flank son Patrick, grandson of Charles Early, Chairman of the FMDA sponsored 1970 Joint Japanese-American Reunion in Peace on Iwo Jima

Part # 4

Marty Connor



THE 1970 REUNION ON IWO JIMA WAS PROVIDENTIAL FOR BEREAVED JAPANESE FAMILIES AND FOR SURVIVING MARINES WHO RETURNED TO THE SITE OF THAT HORRIFIC BATTLE.

THE GOOD THAT WAS SET IN MOTION BY THIS REUNION REVERBERATED MANY TIMES OVER THE DECADES BECAUSE OF THE MEETING THERE OF MARINE MARTY CONNOR AND JAPANESE REV TSUNEZO WACHI.

*CNN producer/writer
Samantha Bresnahan
documents
the return of artifacts
to Japan*

January 24, 2018



To the Iwo Jima Association of America,

My name is Samantha Bresnahan, and I am working on a book tentatively titled *IN THE BLOOD, FLOWERS BLOOM: A POST-WAR STORY OF FORGIVENESS*. This book will explore one of the last untold stories of the greatest generation. For the past 40 years, USMC Iwo Jima veteran Marty Connor has quietly sent the spoils of war back to where they belong. Along the way, he has forged unique partnerships with his counterparts in Japan: Japanese Imperial Naval captain-turned Buddhist monk Tsunezo Wachi, and Masataka Shiokawa, the resilient son of a Japanese soldier killed at Okinawa.

Though they don't even speak the same language, Marty and Wachi, who first met at the 1970 Fifth Marine Division Association reunion on Iwo Jima, and then Shiokawa, only a baby when his father was killed at Okinawa in 1945, have managed to track down and return countless souvenirs to surviving family members in Japan.

I am very familiar with Marty's story as I wrote and produced the award-winning half-hour documentary "World's Untold Stories: Bridging the Pacific," which aired around the world on CNN International in 2011.

Ultimately, *IN THE BLOOD, FLOWERS BLOOM* is not a war story, but a true account of how the worst circumstances can bring out the best in people, bolstered by the unbelievable capacity of the human spirit to forgive – to see a former enemy as an ally —on both sides.

There is no publication date as of yet for the book, but I will keep Kath Butler posted as it progresses. I'm sorry I cannot attend this year's symposium in person, but hope to be there for an event in the near future!

Thank you,

Samantha Bresnahan



1970

A CNN Special documents the Reunion in Peace as part of a tribute to the Marine who began a four decade long effort of returning artifacts to the Japanese, following his experience at the 1970 meeting of the former enemies on Iwo.

In May 2011, CNN broadcast a segment of their Untold Stories series which featured a 5th Marine Division Private who served on Iwo during the war. He told his personal story of bringing closure to Japanese bereaved families by returning artifacts picked up by Americans on the battlefield. This act also had a cathartic effect on the U.S. servicemen who returned the artifacts.

Marty Connor had begun his quest to befriend old enemies after a 1970 life-changing Reunion on Iwo Jima. During the day on Iwo with other Americans and with Japanese combatants Connor had taken a home movie film. CNN incorporated some of his footage in their coverage of the trip during the second segment of "Bridging the Pacific" which was filmed over four days of interviews by a Japanese film crew at his Syracuse NY home.



The grainy film, from which these screen shots were taken, shows the two groups lined up shaking hands with one another, and the American and Japanese flags being raised on Mt Suribachi. The grainy images also capture the figure of the Buddhist monk Rev Wachi as he stood on top of Mt Suribachi, looking out to sea. The American veterans spent a day on Iwo after arriving on a military transport and then returned for ten days of social events and side trips in Tokyo. Hosts for the dinners included the widows of both Gen Kuribayashi and Baron Nishi



Marty Connor - 40 Year Effort to Bring Peace to Families One Marine Gives Comfort to Hundreds of Former Enemies

Association of Peace and Mourning: War souvenir repatriation

Marty Connor enlisted in the Marine Corps at 18 and fought at Iwo Jima with the Fifth Division. Beginning in 1970, for over 40 years he was instrumental in collecting war souvenirs from other American veterans who fought on the island, and insuring that the items were sent to the proper Japanese contacts for identification and return to bereaved families in Japan.



Connor, like many veterans, returned from the war with battle flags and other artifacts taken from the battlefield. As the Marines had come across enemy dead, they had looked for items that might be useful to the G-2 Section (Intelligence), such as maps, Japanese documents which might have listings of the locations of caves holding Japanese supplies and munitions used to replenish the enemy, or other military information. Interpreters at headquarters scanned the documents for value. The Marines also collected personal souvenir items such as individual battle flags, diaries, bayonets, or photographs.

Connor and many others amassed a collection which was thrown into seabags and forgotten in the process of leaving the island. Even as the Marines sailed from Iwo, there was still enemy resistance, and there was no time to evaluate or even think about what the men had collected. Once back stateside, items were typically stored in trunks in attics or basements, and with the passing of time, forgotten about.

But one phone call, a quarter-century later, would change that. "Some of the Marines were getting back to have a reunion on the 25th anniversary of our landing," said Connor. "I had a call from Charles Early asking if I'd like to go, and I thought yes, I would like to go back." On top of Mount Suribachi, he and other U.S. Marines shook hands with the Japanese veterans they had once fought against. "They suffered, we suffered," said Connor. "We came to tell them what brave soldiers they were... and our people, our Marines, were just as brave."

This 1970 reunion on Iwo Jima, with veterans from both the U.S. and Japan, resulted in Connor's chance meeting with a Buddhist monk, the Reverend Tsuenzo Wachi, and caused Connor to send his artifacts to Japan once he returned home. One of his fellow Marines, George Paulson, had brought his souvenirs with him, and returned them to their owner's grateful and tearful family. The emotional scene stuck with Connor. Rev Wachi explained to him the deep spiritual significance these items had for the families of the dead soldiers. A colleague of Wachi's later told Connor that when he returns something to a family member, "they get pleased as if the person actually came back. They cry and put the item at the family Buddhist altar and offer prayer. All ancestors of the family are dedicated in the altars and the families want their lost soldier to rest in peace with the rest of the family. The bereaved families appreciate anything that could commemorate the war dead."

In appreciation of the efforts by Marty Connor and some of his close Marine friends in helping other American veterans send back their war relics to surviving relatives of the dead enemy soldiers, a Japanese film crew came to the small town outside Syracuse where Connor lives and spent four days at his home interviewing him. He

was the focus of a television special, "Bridging the Pacific." from CNN's World's Untold Stories series. The documentary, shown in 2015 around the world on CNN International, recounts a story of forgiveness, healing, closure and respect - spanning half the globe and more than half a century. The documentary includes footage from Japan that illustrates the emotional impact of the American's gesture to help bring closure, answers, and connection to the relatives of Japan's war dead.

Marty's belief is that sending the artifacts to Japan was a gesture of healing and release, both for grieving families and for graying Marines.

The CNN footage can be viewed through You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com> and entering the search term CNN Bridging the Pacific World's Untold Stories or USMC Iwo Jima Veteran working to return Japanese soldiers artifacts



Marty's battalion endured 989 casualties. At night, the Japanese - hidden underground - would emerge to hurl grenades toward his foxhole. Artillery and mortar fire, he said, "happened every day." He describes, precisely, the way a bullet goes past your ear:

"It sounds like a bee," Marty said, "and then it explodes."

He remembers how he was almost hit by a sniper, twice, as he ran past an opening in the rock to try and help another Marine. The sniper was going for the kill, trying to hit Marty in the head. Both times, Marty heard the bullets then, as he can hear them now. They barely missed.

Above and left: 1945 Marty Connor (center) and two childhood friends who fought on Iwo Jima. Fred Head is on the left and Dave Osborn on the right. In 1995 The same friends pose again together. Both Head and Osborn were wounded in the Battle.



Another of Connor's friends, Hale, was shot in the chest, mortally wounded, and Connor was able to catch him as he fell. Hale died in his arms as Connor was trying to administer a first aid dressing to stop his bleeding.

Marty thinks of Hale, and he thinks of more than 400,000 Americans who didn't come home from the war. In his own way, every day, he goes back. "Iwo's been in my mind when you daydream, or when you wake up in the middle of the night."



(Sources: phone interviews with Martin Connor, CNN.com, and from newspaper articles by Sean Kirst, columnist with The Post-Standard and Tim Reese with the same Syracuse newspaper)

Baroness Nishi

In a telephone interview, **Marty Connor**, a member of the Marine veterans' contingent that in 1970 returned for the 25th anniversary of the landing, reminisced,

"At the lunch back in Japan, Gen Kuribayashi's widow spoke. You got the feeling the Japanese are just like we are. They felt a deep loss of loved ones...but just wanted to let it be over... No grudges and no blaming.

"My wife and I sat right beside **Baroness Nishi** at the luncheon. She was a lovely lady and told us how much her husband had enjoyed his sake. So she returned after the war to the island and took a bottle of sake and poured it in the black sands of Iwo Jima."



BARON NISHI

Nishi won a gold medal in show jumping in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics and greatly enjoyed his time in America, becoming a popular figure around Hollywood. Nishi became something of a celebrity in his own right in America and even received an honorary citizenship to the city of Los Angeles.

He remains Japan's only Olympic medal winner in an equestrian event. In the Battle of Iwo Jima he was a tank unit commander and was killed in action during the defense of the island.

While the nature of his fate has become the subject of folklore, perhaps the most poignant version claims that while defending the island he carried the whip he had used during his Olympic victory, along with a lock of Uranus' mane in his breast pocket. Furthermore, equally heart-rending is the supposed destiny of Uranus, who is said to have succumbed to illness just seven days after Nishi's own demise.



(Colonel Takeichi Nishi and his horse Uranus.)



You are currently viewing page 4 of:

Pacific Stars and Stripes February 19, 1970

Marty Connor remembers at FMDA

annual reunions, friends such as Jay Rebstock, George Paulson, Bill Armond, and he, all 18 year old privates in 1945, were among those who talked about returning to Iwo Jima. But, Connor says, it was Charles Early who spearheaded the event and made it possible.

Quiet Replay By Iwo Vets

SEATTLE, Wash. (AP) — About 36 ex-members of the 5th Marine Div. that stormed Iwo Jima 25 years ago will rendezvous here Tuesday on their way to the one-time island battlefield to meet their former Japanese enemies. "It'll probably be the first time former enemies will meet in peace, in friendship on their

former battleground," said Charles Early, who is organizing a group that will be on Iwo Jima Jima Thursday to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the invasion. About 25 former Japanese soldiers who fought on Iwo Jima were to join the American party in Tokyo for a chartered flight to the island Wednesday, Early said.

"We'll meet with the Japanese in peace and friendship," Early said. "This isn't something thought up by a Marine publicity officer or a chamber of commerce. The idea came from the men themselves."

The Iwo Jima survivors of both nations will hold memorial services to mark the anniversary of the bloody battle.

Part # 5



The Reverend Wachí

The Reverend Wachi, Iconic Figure in All Three Historic Iwo Reunions (1970, 1985, 1995)

The Rev. Tsuenzo Wachi contributed greatly to the spirit of reconciliation evident at the first meeting of former Japanese and Americans enemies on Iwo Jima in 1970. These efforts were furthered at the 1985 Reunion of Honor. Without his prestige in Japan, it is doubtful that these or subsequent ceremonies held on the island would have happened.

(Adapted in part from The Reverend of Iwo Jima by Gen Jarvis Lynch, USNI Magazine, June 2011, and from letters and materials sent to Kath Butler from her friend Rosa Ogawa)

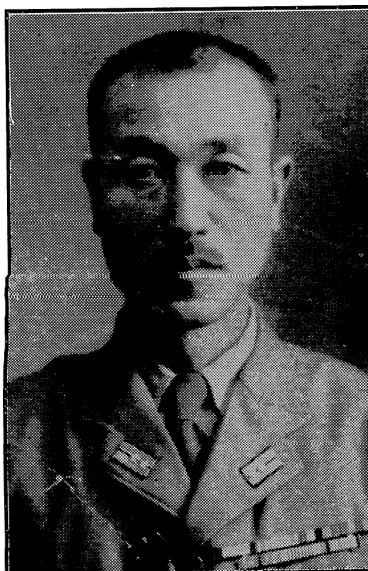
The Reverend was a man of great compassion and a self-appointed emissary for peace. He founded the Iwo Jima Association of Japan in 1953 and worked tirelessly at returning artifacts collected by Marines to the families of Japanese soldiers. Fluent in English, he was able to coordinate with his Marine contact, former PFC Marty Connor, to obtain details of where and when artifacts were recovered by Marines. These details were of immeasurable value to the bereaved families of the Japanese dead. It was Rev. Wachi's impassioned request at the 1970 Reunion on Iwo that so moved the Marines that they made concerted efforts to find stored and, in some cases, long forgotten souvenirs from trunks in attics and basements.

Raised a Roman Catholic, he became a Buddhist monk after the war and dedicated his life to recovering the remains of Japanese lost on the Sulfur Island. He returned to the island countless times to search for the remains of Japanese soldiers and sailors who had been buried in caves, tunnels, and defensive positions. In the nearly 40 years before his death, he accounted for the remains of over 8000 Japanese servicemen.

He also prayed for the souls of the U.S. Marine dead and erected a small monument on the island to honor them. Throughout the years he became fast friends with many of the Marines he dealt with and kept in contact with them. He visited Charles Early at his home in Sarasota, Florida, after the Fifth Marine Division Association sponsored the first Japanese-American Reunion on Iwo Jima in 1970. In time he became the honorary chaplain in the Fourth Marine Division Association, attending reunions at Camp Pendleton. He was known simply as "The Reverend" to the U.S. Marine veterans of that most horrendous of battles on that ugliest of islands.

Wachi was a former Imperial Naval line officer, specializing in gunnery and torpedoes. Ordered to communications and language schools, he then became an intelligence officer. Fluent in Spanish, he was transferred to Mexico and served as a spy master gathering information and military intelligence. He first learned of Japan's attack at Pearl Harbor from a radio broadcast as it happened and immediately felt that a grave mistake had been made by his country. Like Admiral Yamamoto, General Kuribayashi, and Barron Nishi, Wachi knew the capabilities, potential, and temperament of America.





Captain Tsuzenzo Wachi, Iwo Jima's commander and fortifications designer, in his combat uniform. (circa 1944)

In early 1944, he was transferred to Iwo Jima where he was designated the Commanding Officer of the Imperial Navy's Iwo Jima garrison. There he commanded the air defenses against increasingly intense American air attacks while simultaneously preparing defenses to counter the amphibious assault that Tokyo believed would come. In the fall of 1944, the Imperial Army took responsibility for the defense of Iwo Jima. General Kuribayashi assumed command and in October Captain Wachi was ordered back to mainland Japan to prepare for the coming invasion of the homeland by the U.S. He was put in charge of organizing thousands of "suicide boats" whose targets were to be the American troop transports, with a mission to destroy as many American invaders as possible.

Captain Wachi was in southern Kyushu when the war ended. With demobilization under way, he got off the home-bound train in Kyoto to visit a Buddhist monk. After he spoke to the monk of his determination to dedicate the rest of his life to mourn the war dead, especially those lost on Iwo Jima, the monk ordained him.

Rev Wachi Explaining His Becoming a Buddhist Priest

From The August virtue of His Imperial Majesty by Tsuzenzo Wachi, January 1989, translated by Rosa Chikako Ogawa, daughter of the author.

"I can't help wondering about the way I was always given a chance of narrow escape from death. Yes, I went thru the experience three times. All those positions were closely connected to matter-of-life-or-death situation. First, Iwo Jima Garrison Commander, second, Naval Attaché to the Japanese Embassy in Manila and last of all the 32nd Seaside Crash Boat Commander in Kagoshima. All those could have been accidental but I felt strong power of supernatural providence. It was quite natural for me to retreat from the world to be a Buddhist priest.

"At the end of October last year, I was ordered to return to Japan and therefore had to leave behind on the island 5,000 of my subordinates, together with numerous army friends, to face the American attack. In view of the fact that the vast majority of these officers and men died in the battle of Iwo Jima, I feel myself under an exceedingly strong moral obligation to do whatever lies in my power to ensure that the necessary religious rites are carried out in respect of them".

In his final years, in failing health, Wachi accepted the fact that what had become his life's work as a Buddhist Priest....serving the souls lost on Iwo Jima.....was finished. He could do no more. Preparing for death, Wachi left the Buddhist religion and returned to the Catholic church. His daughter Rosa Ogawa continued his good works after his death in 1990, and also became great and good friends with many Marines and their families. She also is fluent in English and still corresponds with many Americans: chaplains, sergeants, and generals. The president of the Fifth Marine Division Association, John Butler, and his wife, Kath, are honored to be counted as those who are among her friends. Rosa always signs off her letters with "Love, peace, and prayers"

(Right: Rosa Ogawa with Kath Butler in Tokyo 2005)



*Thank you letter to Martin Connor from Rosa Ogawa, daughter of Rev Tsunezo Wachi.
Rosa worked to continue her father's work after his death.*

September 14, 2004

Dear Marty,

Thank you very much for your e-mail. I've lately seen you on a video sent me by a Saga NHK director who had worked with NPO members. I was glad to see you very well working in vim and vigor with other cooperators for the bereaved families of Japanese war victims. ...I believe, as you say, my late Dad would be satisfied and grateful that his wish has been pursued by the ex-combatants of both nations with Iwo Jima as their common denominator.

I hope you'll enjoy your beautiful autumn in your area. When I think of autumn in the northeastern part of the U.S., I imagine that the scene described in the poems of my favorite Robert Frost. Is your autumn as beautiful as that?

Thanking you for your effort to pursue your humanitarian activity,

Love, peace, and prayers,

Rosa Ogawa
(Daughter of Tsunezo Wachi)

[BELOW: Rosa Ogawa (r) daughter of Rev Tsuenzo Wachi, and Mrs Taro Kuribayashi (l) daughter-in-law of General Kuribayashi in front of the Japanese Memorial on Suribachi. Rosa carried on the work of her father in locating Japanese families to return souvenirs that were sent by Marine vets.]



The Reverend Wachi, an Imperial Japanese Naval Captain, translated his rank from Japanese to English into the equivalent Marine Corps rank of Colonel as he knew the Naval rank of Captain was three ranks above the Marine rank of Captain. Thus he had introduced himself as Colonel Wachi to Mary Swain, John Rich, Jr, and other Americans.

General Jarvis Lynch said of the Reverend Wachi:

"He was a Japanese patriot who led a full and unusual life. For a time, he was our dedicated foe. He then became our equally dedicated friend. The Reverend was a good man. "

Tsunezo Wachi
2-24-23 Higashicho, Kichijoji,
Musashinoshi, Tokyo-to, JAPAN



VIA AIR MAIL

Mr. Martin C. Connor
113 South Salina Street, - Room 701
Syracuse, New York 13202
U. S. A.

2-24-23 Higashicho, Kichijoji,
Musashinoshi, Tokyo-to, JAPAN.
Dec. 24, 1970

Dear Mr. Martin C. Connor ;

Please forgive the delay in acknowledging you that we were in receipt of your membership card and the check for your initiation fee.

Now that your membership card is in our file with those of other members of the U. S. and people all over Japan, we wish our good will and effort will help console the souls of the war-dead and promote peace in the world.

Thanking you for your joining our association.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Tsunezo Wachi'.

Tsunezo Wachi
President, Association
of Iwojima.

Marty Connor reported that all of the veterans who attended the 1970 Reunion on Iwo Jima were invited to join the Iwo Jima Association of Japan and almost all did. The above letter from the Rev Tsunezo Wachi, founder of IJAJ, confirms his membership.

Connor would continue to work closely with Rev Wachi for years, until Wachi himself, near the end of his life, turned the solemn duty of returning artifacts from lost Japanese soldiers over to another member of his organization.

April 29, 1970

Dear Mr. Martin C. Connor:

It took about three weeks to find out the proper bereaved family of the war-dead who was described in your letter dated March 31, 1970.

The family is living in a town named Takahara in Miyazaki Prefecture of Kyushu.

As the name and the native town of the war-dead were written in a deposit pass-book among the items which were enclosed in your letter, I could contact with the Town Office asking to find out the bereaved family and it's address, and then I could deliver the items to them through the Town Office and also inform the circumstances when you had found them on the western side of Iwo Jima near the Sulphur Quarry about February 26th, 1945.

According to the Town Office the grand mother of the war-dead among the family is still alive with the age of one hundred and three years who is the oldest in the prefecture, and delight and gratitude of the family were quite beyond description. Now they could not only recover those items, but also learn the true date and spot of the war-dead by your kind letter. They are wishing to know as much as possible in detail the circumstances when you obtained the items from the wardead.

By the small pictures of yourself and your wife, I could recall you well, specially I remember well Mrs.'s face through the glass -window at the Haneda Air Port when I saw you off in the last night.

Any how, the Reunion on Iwo Jima of this time was quite significant and I think, your letter shows it's actual proof.

Yours very sincerely,

Tsunezo Wachi
Tsunezo Wachi

President, Association
of Iwo Jima.

March 23, 1984

Tsunezo Wachi

2-24-23 Higashi-cho, Kichijoji

Musashino-shi, Tokyo-to

Japan

Dear Mr. Wachi,

A former marine who was on Iwo Jima with me in 1945 has given me a diary and some personal pictures that he obtained from the body of a Japanese soldier who was killed by shell fire.

I would be happy to send these on to you if you are still locating bereaved families of those who fought on Iwo Jima.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Martin C. Connor

Malone Road, R.D. #2

Syracuse, New York 13215

U.S.A.

ASSOCIATION OF IWOJIMA

2-24-23 Higashicho, Kichijoji,
Musashinoshi, Tokyo-to. 180

May 30, 1984

Martin C. Connor
Malone Road, R. D. *2
Syracuse, New York 13215
U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Connor;

This acknowledges the receipt of your letter dated March 23 and I have to apologize for my rudeness in responding so late.

Be that as it may, we have much interesting of your kind letter and we do hope to send us those items which you have with a memo of your comrade concerning the date and location when he got them if possible.

We may be able to find out the proper bereaved family of those items using the net work of branches of our association all over the Japan.

Waiting those items from you.

Yours very truly,



Tsunezo Wachi
President, Association
of Iwojima

Martin C. Connor
Malone Road, R.D. 2
Syracuse, New York 13215

November 29, 1984

Tsunezo Wachi
2-24-23 Higashicho, Kichijoji,
Musashinoshi, Tokyo-to. 180

Dear Tsunezo Wachi,

I am sorry for the delay in sending the enclosed diary; I was interested in having it translated, but couldn't find anyone to do it for me.

I pray you will be successful in locating the bereaved family of the deceased. Please inform them that the diary, manual and pictures were in the soldier's uniform pocket. The items were found on his body as we advanced up the western side of Iwo Jima just past Hill 262. near Nishi Village.

The soldier was apparently moving forward with other comrades, when a heavy barrage of artillery caught them unprotected and many were suddenly killed. We saw, perhaps, twenty bodies in the area when we passed through after the artillery lifted.

Tsunezo, please let the family know that the Marines who fought on Iwo Jima had the greatest respect for the Japanese soldiers and Navy Personnel who fought against them.

I appreciate hearing from you again, and hope you can locate the soldier's family.

Sincerely,

Martin C. Connor

ASSOCIATION OF IWOJIMA

2-24-23 Higashicho, Kichijoji
Musashinoshi, Tokyo. 180

12 Dec. 1984

Martin C. Connor
Malone Road, R. D. 2
Syracuse, New York 13215

Dear Martin C. Connor;

This acknowledges the receipt of your letter dated Nov. 29 and those items which you got on Iwojima.

It did not take much time to find out the proper bereaved family of the war dead. The name, written in the diary, is SAKUICHI HURUSHOO, an army soldier belonged to the 314 Battalion. His widow named MASUE HURUSHOO is living at HUKUOKA City in KYUSHU and a member of our Association. So it was very easy to contact with her.

to a

According to a report of a committee of the KYUSHUU branch, she was very pleased to hear this news and eagerly to get those items.

I will send those items to the committee to deliver them to her and also ask him to send me pictures of the delivery.

I have meetings with the representatives of Iwojima Return Committee on this Thursday and Friday to confer about reunion on Iwojima on 19 Feb. 1985. I heard that 200 Americans including veterans and bereaved families will come to Tokyo and Iwojima. I will introduce this instance to them and ask them to urge the same thing to the veterans at that time. Anyhow, your items came to me indeed in good time.

Yours sincerely,



Tsunezo Wachi
President, Association
of Iwojima.



Part # 6



Noted War Correspondent John H. Rich played an instrumental role in the 1970 Reunion in Peace

John Rich, the reporter who accompanied the FMDA vets to Iwo Jima in 1970 for the reunion of American and Japanese survivors of that battle, was by that time NBC's Senior Correspondent in Asia with an international reputation for exceptional broadcasting.

Having such a prestigious journalist present at the 1970 reunion further attests to the importance of this first reunion of Japanese and Americans on Iwo Jima.

At the time of the 1970 reunion, Rich had been living in Japan many years and had official recognition with Japanese government officials. He was also the president of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan and helped secure top news coverage for the event in the Japanese media. Being fluent in Japanese, he along with Major Horie, served as interpreters for the FMDA members.

Charles Early had invited his fellow Iwo survivor to be one of the principal speakers at the official ceremony on top of Mt Suribachi. Back in Tokyo, according to FMDA veteran Marty Connor who was on the trip, Rich was also very involved, and on hand to greet the buses of attendees when they returned from side trips during their ten days in Tokyo. He was ever-present in the background making sure all the events stayed well organized with the Japanese.



In World War II, as a Lieutenant with the Fourth Marine Division Rich had participated in four battle landings in the Pacific: at Iwo Jima as well as in the bloody amphibious landings at Kwajalein, Saipan, Tinian. Rich remained in the reserves after the war and according to his oldest son, "The Corps was part of who he was."

Left: War Correspondent John Rich with the Reverend Wachi, who was a former Imperial Navy Captain on Iwo Jima, some time after the 1970 reunion

Rich had learned Japanese at the Navy Language School and following the war, went to Tokyo as a correspondent for the International News Service. His dispatches were synonymous with many of the significant happenings of the world. He was present at the International War Crimes trials in Tokyo, interviewed Tokyo Rose, and while covering the Chinese civil war, made one of the last broadcasts from Shanghai as Chiang Kai Shek's forces withdrew.



*(Left and Below)
Korean War era
photos of war
correspondent John
Rich 20 years before
the Iwo Reunion of
1970*

*Left: Rich with
Sygman Rhee*

Even before the war began, Rich got his start as a war correspondent when he interviewed the survivors of the destroyer USS Reuben James, the first U.S. warship sunk in World War II, five weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor .

After WWII Rich covered the 1948 executions of war criminals and during this period also covered the civil war in China and the Indochina War in which Ho Chi Minh was fighting French forces. Rich's command of both the French and Japanese languages served him well during these turbulent years.

Rich was known as the "Voice of the Forgotten War" for his coverage of the Korean War from Pusan in 1950 to the signing of the armistice at Panmunjom in July of 1953. That set the record for the longest coverage of the war by a single correspondent. He was also noted for his many color photos – rare for the period—taken during that conflict. These were later turned into a book ,and are now part of the permanent collection of the national Museum of Korean Contemporary History in Seoul.

Six months into the Korean War Rich had joined NBC where he reported first on radio and later on television.



From his NBC base in Tokyo, he later covered the war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia until the fall of Saigon in 1975,

His standing in the journalistic community was such that only he and one other American journalist were allowed in China with the "Ping Pong Delegation" A year later, he accompanied Nixon's trip to China. Following that historic visit, he won the Peabody Award, the Overseas Press Club Award for "Best reporting from Asia in any medium."

1971 | NBC Radio and Television

NBC News Far East correspondent John Rich has reported on Asia for two decades. Objective, concise, literate, he has exemplified the finest traditions of American journalism. John Rich has said of himself, "I'm no real authority; I'm a newsman, not an historian." In fact, he has given us the best of both worlds. In recognition of distinguished service as a radio and television journalist, a dual George Foster Peabody Award for Radio and Television News.



In an article in *Leatherneck Magazine*, John Rich is reported to have once said, "My job as a reporter gave me a chance to live in many parts of the world. It made me a realist, but please don't think it made me cynical. All the news is not bad. One simple lesson was driven home to me time after time. When one gets to know people, whatever their background, nationality or racial origin, they are basically alike.

"Penetrate the surface differences and you learn that they all want about the same things that we do. Freedom from want, from fear;

freedom to be independent; to have opportunity; to live lives without excessive government interference; a chance to give their children good educations.

"I'm reminded of Hong Kong. My wife was riding in a taxicab. "Where are you from?" the driver asked in halting English. "America," she said. He paused a moment, thought, and then said, "Lucky."



Part # 7



Media and News Articles

Pacific Stars & Stripes
Friday, Feb. 20, 1970

Historic Meeting in Tokyo

Iwo Jima War Foes Shake Hands

By SGT. LEN BROWN

S&S Staff Writer

TOKYO — Thirty-seven American men stepped unceremoniously from a bus Wednesday evening and filed into the lobby of the Tokyo Prince Hotel, which sits at the foot of the Tokyo Tower.

Inside the hotel's lobby, they exchanged greetings and handshakes with 23 Japanese and talked amiably with them.

Twenty five years ago at Iwo Jima, these men had been enemies.

The Americans were former members of the U.S. 5th Marine Div. which spearheaded the attack on Iwo Jima in February 1945.

The Orientals were former Japanese soldiers who helped to defend the Pacific island where 6,821 U.S. forces, including 5,895 Marines, and 19,000 Japanese were killed in one of the bloodiest battles in American history.

The American Iwo Jima vets had just arrived from Seattle, Wash., where they had a rendezvous Tuesday for the trip here to meet with their Japanese counterparts before proceeding to Iwo Jima Thursday to participate in a joint memorial service at Mt. Suribachi, which U.S. marines took on Feb. 19, 1945, after two days of fierce and costly fighting.

One American was a tall, bespectacled man who walked with a limp as a result of a wound received at Iwo Jima.

He was 43-year-old Charles E. Early, an attorney from Sarasota, Fla., who organized and is coordinator for the Iwo-bound American contingent.

Recounting his experiences in Iwo Jima, Early said:

"I was a private in Charlie Co., 1st Bn., 28th Marines, 5th Marine Div. It was a violent battle, and anyone who was there was shot at many times.

"I remember the nights when you would be there in your hole

and everything was so quiet that you could hear the Japanese soldiers crawling around trying to penetrate your lines. You fought to stay awake for you knew that if you went to sleep you'd be killed.

"We had about nine men in a shell hole. All had been hit from the shoulders up. But it seemed like we always had nine because some would die and another would take his place.

"They couldn't get any stretchers up to us and finally we decided to go back and get them. I was in a mortar section and since we were sometimes as much as 25 yards behind the front lines we were expected to do all the detail-type duties. So we started back for the stretchers.

"My first thought was that I had tripped and it felt almost like somebody tackling you from your blind side in football. But before I hit the ground I began to hurt pretty bad," he recalled.

Early had been shot in the leg. "Ironically, one stretcher had been brought up and since I was the closest Marine to it, they put me on it and took me back behind the lines. I stayed on the island two weeks before I was evacuated."

Reflecting on the day of the historic raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima by the Marines, Early said someone yelled, "Hey look, there's an American flag up there!"

"This was a very important thing to us," he explained, "because not only were we catching a lot of artillery and mortar fire from Mt. Suribachi, but it was a very excellent observation point for the Japanese. In fact as we used to say, and actually it was true, they could tell what we were eating for breakfast," he said.

Commenting on how his ex-Marine group felt about the Feb. 19 25th anniversary reunion at



JAPANESE NEWSMAN INTERVIEWS CHARLES EARLY. AP

Iwo Jima, Early said, "We think it's really a tremendous thing because it provides a good example for people all over the world.

"If men who fought so very hard and effectively against each other on the bloody battlefield in Iwo Jima can meet in peace and friendship," he concluded, "then everyone should be able to be friends and to be at peace with each other."

The contingent of American and Japanese Iwo Jima survivors left Tokyo for the island Thursday morning. The Americans took a plane from Yokota AB, and the Japanese left aboard a Japanese Defense Agency (JDA) airliner. Another

plane from Okinawa, carrying the commanding general of the 3rd Marine Div. there and the honor guard, also landed on the island.

At Iwo Jima, the men were scheduled to take part in a joint reunion and memorial service which had been planned by the United States for several years with the support of the U.S. State Department and the Marine Corps. The American members will also return items which belong to the Japanese.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry, the Japanese Defense Agency and the Association for Realization of a Monument on Iwo Jima also supported the commemoration project.

Iwo Jima Marines Visit War Widows

Tokyo (AP) — Sunday, Feb 22, 1970 — At the height of one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific war, a U.S. Marine commander told his men to be nice to Japanese prisoners of war “because one day we will be friends again.”

The commander, Marine Lt. Carl Tanner, died several days later on Iwo Jima. But the prophetic order lived on in the minds of his men and resulted in a meeting with widows of Japanese soldiers in Tokyo Friday — 25 years later.

A group of 38 American survivors of the battle of Iwo Jima came to Japan after holding a happy reunion with 17 former Japanese enemies atop Mt. Suribachi. The Marines brought mementoes which they collected on the battle ground.

“We came here to meet the widows of our worthy enemy who fought so bravely against us,” an ex-Marine said. “And we particularly wanted to pay our respects to the wife of the Japanese commander on Iwo Jima, Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi.” And they gave a standing ovation when Mrs. Kuribayashi welcomed them in her shy but moving manner. She said she was sure her husband would be “happy in his grave if he knew we gathered here as friends.”



Three ex-Marine survivors of Iwo Jima return Japanese battleflags, old issues of yen and pieces of equipment taken as souvenirs of the World War II battle for the island to Mrs. Yoshie Kuribayashi, widow of Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi, Japanese commander on Iwo Jima during the campaign. Making the presentation Friday during a banquet at Tokyo's Sanno Hotel for American and Japanese survivors of the battle are (left to right) J. Rasplilar Jr., Golfport, Miss.; Floyd Ferris, Salt Lake City, Utah; and Harry Sandosky, Sykesville, Md. (S&S Photo by Hideyuki Mihashi)

Iwo Jima's Japanese Widows Paid Special Tokyo Tribute

TOKYO (AP) — At the height of one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific war, a U.S. Marine commander told his men to be nice to Japanese prisoners of war “because one day we will be friends again.”

The commander, Marine Lt. Carl Tanner, died several days later on Iwo Jima. But the prophetic order lived on in the minds of his men and resulted in a meeting with widows of Japanese soldiers in Tokyo Friday — 25 years later.

A group of 38 American survivors of the battle of Iwo Jima came to Japan after holding a happy reunion with 17 former Japanese enemies atop Mt. Suribachi.

In the battle, U.S. forces including the 5th Marine Div. lost 6,821 men while about 20,000 Japanese were killed.

“We came here to meet the

widows of our worthy enemy who fought so bravely against us,” an ex-Marine said. “And we particularly wanted to pay our respects to the wife of the Japanese commander on Iwo Jima, Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi.”

He said he regarded Gen. Kuribayashi “as one of the finest commanders. Few commanders, either U.S. or Japanese, could have defended such a small island so well,” he said.

And they gave a standing ovation when Mrs. Kuribayashi welcomed them in her shy but moving manner. She said she was sure her husband would be “happy in his grave if he knew we gathered here as friends.”

The Marines brought mementoes which they collected on the battle ground. They included bullet-ridden flags of the rising sun, letters written in Japanese and identification cards.

‘Battle Confirmed Freedom’s Hope’

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Twenty-five years after the day 50,000 U.S. Marines swarmed ashore Iwo Jima, Marine Commandant Leonard F. Chapman paid tribute to both the 20,000 Japanese and 6,000 Americans who died there.

In a ceremony at Washington National Cathedral, Chapman said of the 36-day battle:

“Iwo Jima was a Japanese island as surely as Virginia is

one of the United States. To the men who defended it, its raw volcanic ash represented the holy earth of home. And there the bravery and determination of the Japanese fighting man, already proven in the Pacific war, was increased to an even greater effort to stop the Americans.

“Americans and Japanese met as enemies on Iwo Jima and as enemies they fought one

another — yet as men they shared the agony and bravery of that battle. Now, 25 years later, Iwo Jima is again a Japanese island and again the flag of Japan floats over its barren craters. Is this a contradiction to the American triumph of 25 years ago? It is not. It is a confirmation of that triumph. If that island had not returned to its natural base of culture, then the purpose of American participation in

World War II would have been conquest. If by returning Iwo Jima to its rightful place we consider that battle a futility, then we must consider the hope of freedom.

“This was what Americans fought for at Iwo Jima. This is what Americans have always fought for.”

Pacific Stars & Stripes 7
Sunday, Feb. 22, 1970

STARS AND STRIPES

JAPAN NEWS

New Drive Slated On Air Pollution

TOKYO (S&S)—The Japanese government Friday spearheaded a new drive to cut air pollution by ordering that 48,433 government-owned motor vehicles undergo immediate inspection to ensure that carbon monoxide contained in exhaust fumes is below acceptable limits.

Prime Minister Eisaku Sato issued the order after cabinet approval of an Environment Council recommendation that set minimum standards for the amount of carbon monoxide in the air.

The council — composed of the Prime Minister, the Health and Welfare Minister and the Central Council for the Prevention of Pollution — called for a limit of 20 parts per million during any given 8-hour period and 10 parts per million over a 24-hour period.

Sato said particular emphasis would be put on inspection of vehicles in Tokyo and Osaka where carbon monoxide concentration is greatest, according to local press reports.

The cabinet Friday also approved a Transportation Ministry proposal calling for a limit on carbon monoxide of 5.5 per cent of the exhaust fumes of used automobiles and 4.5 per cent in new cars.

Inspection devices reportedly have been tested and are in operation in Tokyo's Shinagawa Ward and two other places in the nation. The Transportation Ministry said the devices soon would be installed at 67 inspection stations throughout the country.

A ministry spokesman said that of the 4,350,000 vehicles in the nation which undergo annual inspections, about half would not pass the test.

Japan
Briefs

Mutilation Suspect

TOKYO (UPI) — A 27-year-old Japanese ex-convict and the prime wanted suspect in the murder of a Korean snack bar waitress in Tokyo early this month was arrested Friday in Kashiwara City, police said.

Authorities said they believed Akishisa Saito had killed Mrs. U Mal Sun, 29 (Japanese name Sueko Arashi), cut her body into pieces and threw them into a river.

Lindbergh Plane Here

OSAKA (Special) — The Lockheed “Sirius” aircraft flown by Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh to plot the Great Circle route across the northern Pacific in 1931 arrived here late Friday for display during Expo 70.

The plane was airlifted from Andrews AFB in Washington, D.C., aboard a U.S. Air Force Reserve C124 Globemaster.

Traffic Toll Tops 2,000

TOKYO (S&S) — Japan's traffic death toll hit 2,017 Thursday night, the National Police Agency announced Friday.

Tokyo Forecast

Asian Weather Central
Saturday Night: Cloudy becoming partly cloudy. Low 33
Sunday: Partly cloudy becoming fair. High 50

Friday, Feb. 21, 1969

Reunion Set on Iwo

NEW YORK (AP) — A Marine veterans' group disclosed Tuesday plans for a reunion on Iwo Jima on the 25th anniversary of its bloodiest battle one year from Tuesday—with Japanese survivors invited to take part.

The plan was announced by Cecil O. Burlingame of Denham Springs, La., president of the 5th Marine Division Association, composed of veterans of the division that was in the first wave to hit the island of Iwo Jima and raised the flag on Mt. Suribachi. Many Japanese survivors of the fight for Iwo Jima have been contacted and indicated they wish to meet with the Americans on the anniversary, Burlingame said.

The invitation, addressed "to the officers and men of the Imperial Japanese army and navy who served on Iwo Jima," was approved recently at a membership meeting of the division.

The resolution said the meeting would "honor the more than 26,600 brave men of both nations who died there and ... symbolize the friendship which now exists between our people . . ."



**IN 1969,
THE FIFTH MARINE DIVISION
ASSOCIATION
ANNOUNCED THE PLANNED REUNION
WITH JAPANESE VETERANS OF IWO JIMA
TO BE HELD ON THE ISLAND
AT THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE LANDING.**

THE FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION

NEWS RELEASE

OF THE IWO JIMA 25TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

General Kuribayashi's orders to his men were for each of them to kill 10 Marines. This order dictated the course of the entire battle. Not only did the Marines have to fight to control territory, but they also had to destroy all the defenders of such territory. Rarely have two groups of men been more dedicated to the destruction of the other than the Marines assaulting Iwo Jima and the Japanese defending it.

Nevertheless, in 1965 one of the Marines, who served as a private in one of the rifle companies and who was seriously wounded in the battle, thought what a forcible statement for peace and friendship between nations could be made, if survivors of these two groups could meet in friendship on the actual scene of their former conflict. As a result, plans began to be formulated for a joint commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the battle.

In spite of unbelievable obstacles, on February 19, 1970, the 25th anniversary of the battle, the Marine and Japanese survivors met on Iwo Jima. Both groups traveled over the old battlefield, sometimes together. A joint ceremony was held on Mount Suribachi, where both nations' flags were raised simultaneously, prayers offered by a Christian chaplain and a Buddhist monk, short addresses made by the leaders of the two groups, a wreath laid by the Marines on the Japanese monument, a wreath laid by the Japanese on the Marine monument, both nations' national anthems sung, and taps played. At the conclusion of the ceremony there was a symbolic shaking of hands by all the participants. Portions of the ceremony were carried on major U.S. television networks and one of the large Japanese television networks. Photographs and laudatory articles were carried by all of the American and Japanese news services.

There were no attempts by the Marines to in any way celebrate a victory, but only to pay respects to the dead of both nations and the courage and dedication of those men, both living and dead, who had fought on that island 25 years before. No untoward incidents occurred as many had feared. Instead, for those who attended, it was universally agreed that it was one of the most meaningful experiences of their lives. Even the television crews and reporters who started out with a bored attitude, eventually became imbued with the high emotional drama of the meeting and the historical impact of what had occurred.

In spite of their understandable initial reluctance, the next day the Marines hosted a luncheon for the families of the Japanese who had been killed in the battle. Instead of being the awkward occasion which the Marines had feared, it was a beautiful and moving experience. As suggested, many of the Marines brought back personal articles which had been taken from the Japanese, such as swords, flags, and other personal mementos. Attempts were made to locate the families of the men from whom such articles were taken. This was publicized throughout Japan and was most favorably received. In one instance a Japanese family traveled all night by train to meet with the Marine who turned over the mementos, in order to assure themselves that it was really their loved one who had been killed, so that they could have final services for the departed. When the Marines left Tokyo, the family had a gift delivered to the Marine at the airport.

At the luncheon the widow of General Kuribayashi, on behalf of the other bereaved families, welcomed the Marines to Japan and thanked them for their expressions of friendship. At the conclusion of her talk the Marines give her a standing ovation. At the same time one of the Marines, spontaneously took Mrs. Kuribayashi's hand and kissed it. The honor paid to Mrs. Kuribayashi is even more amazing when you realized that all but one of the Marines present had been wounded as a result of General Kuribayashi's masterful defense of the island. Many of those still displayed the results of their wounds 25 years later.

That night the Marines hosted the Japanese survivors of the battle at a banquet. Since only four present were able to converse in the others' language and because of the former relationship of the participants, a formal and stiff evening was expected. This belief, however, was soon dispelled. Although the only connection between the Marines and the Japanese was that they had fought against each other in that battle so many years before, an immediate rapport was established. If a stranger were to have walked by and looked in, he would have believed a group of old friends were meeting. By means of sign language, pointing at maps, and with the aid of the few interpreters, the former enemies learned about what the others did in the battle. Strangely enough there was some kidding back and forth. Some of it of a type which would surprise someone who had not actually been in battle; nevertheless, everything was accepted in the absolute best of humor. Names and addresses were exchanged and friendships established.

The next night the Japanese hosted a lovely cocktail party for the Marines, which was attended by groups of both the survivors and bereaved families, as well as officials from the Japanese government.

Perhaps a few examples will give some idea of the depth of the feeling engendered by the 25th Anniversary.

As the Marines were leaving the Japanese party on their final night in Tokyo, it was noticed that some music was coming over the public address system. The music was Auld Lang Syne – "Should auld acquaintance be forgo –" Twenty-five years before on that very day, they had been using every nerve, every muscle, and all their spiritual strength to kill each other.

At the next meeting of the Fifth Marine Division Association, Major Yoshitaka Horie, who was credited with convincing General Kuribayashi of the strategic concept for defending the island which was so devastatingly successful, was invited to speak and was elected an honorary member of the Association.

In the years that followed, the Marines and Japanese have corresponded with each other; and, whenever any of the Japanese come to the United States, they usually visit with some of the Marines that they met at the 25th Anniversary. One brought his entire family to the United States and stayed with one of his former enemies for a week.

The person-to-person friendship which has developed between the Marines and Japanese who fought on Iwo Jima and the respect that each holds for the other has received much favorable coverage in both Japanese and U.S. media. The media has recognized that nothing symbolizes quite so well the ending of the hostilities between our two countries and the friendship which now exists, as the relationship of those who contended against each other in this most bloody battle.



Marine Veteran Charles Early Of Sarasota
... displays picture of Japanese commander, Gen. Kuribayashi

2B Thurs, Feb 12, 1970

Marine, Japanese Veterans Of Iwo Jima Plan Reunion

By BILL MARDEN
Herald-Tribune Staff Writer

On Feb. 19 a group of US Marine veterans will revisit a barren, rocky island in the Pacific that earned World War II fame as one of the bloodiest battlegrounds of the war.

Meeting them on the 25th anniversary of the battle will be the Japanese veterans of the Imperial Army and Navy who sought to hold the island of Iwo Jima, and lost.

Among Iwo Jima veterans will be Sarasota attorney Charles Early, who is coordinating the activities of both groups.

The American Marines will consist of a group of 55 veterans and their wives and children, and a smaller group of active duty personnel who participated in the battle, in addition to the official representative of the commandant of the Marine Corps.

The Japanese group will include veterans, and the widows of several of the high ranking Japanese officers.

At present, plans are for the ceremony to be held at the top of Mount Suribachi. A Japanese invocation will lead off the ceremony, followed the raising of both country's flags. Remarks will be made by the representative of the commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General William Jones, and by representatives of the Japanese and American veterans.

Wreath laying will be followed by a period of silent prayer, taps, and a benediction by a US Navy chaplain.

There will be additional luncheons and dinners between the two groups upon their return to Tokyo on Feb. 20 and 21.

The official purpose of the meeting is "to honor the more than 26,600 brave men

of both nations who died there and to symbolize the friendship which now exists between our peoples, as well as to serve as an example to the whole world that all men can cooperate together for peace," Early explained.

The meeting will also give the participants in the battle a chance to meet each other and "compare their experiences during the battle."

Early, an enlisted man who was wounded on the island described the meeting as unique in that "the participants of the battle contacted the other participants. It was a private, people to people deal."

Preparations for the reunion began in 1965 when the Marines secured the names and addresses of just two of the men who served on Iwo Jima.

In 1966 the Fifth Marine Division at its annual convention officially authorized investigation of the possibility of a association meeting with surviving Japanese defenders on Iwo Jima in 1970.

Contacts were made with Japanese representatives. Some officials in the Japanese government had formerly informed the Marines they doubted if any of the survivors of the battle would be willing to meet with them, because of the fear of having to reveal themselves as not having died in the battle.

They pointed out that many of the men had never returned home, preferring to let their families think they had died. Others changed their names.

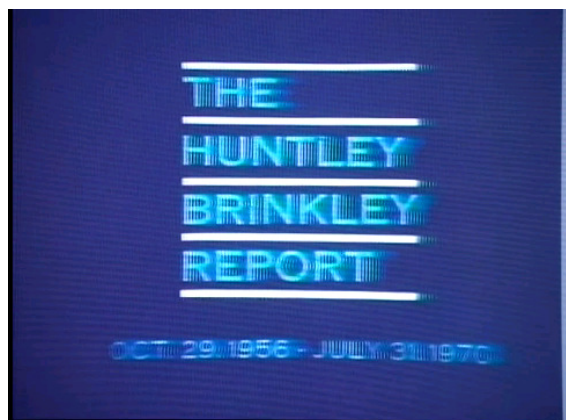
Despite this, in 1968, the Fifth Marine Division voted to invite the Japanese to the reunion, and on Feb. 19 extended the invitation.

A week after the article on the facing page appeared in Charles Early's hometown newspaper, the historic reunion on Iwo Jima which he spearheaded, was realized.

It had taken years of planning and coordinating but Early triumphantly stood on top of Mt Suribachi beside the newly modified SeaBee Memorial and led a ceremony to honor both sides of the combat.



NATIONAL TELEVISION COVERAGE

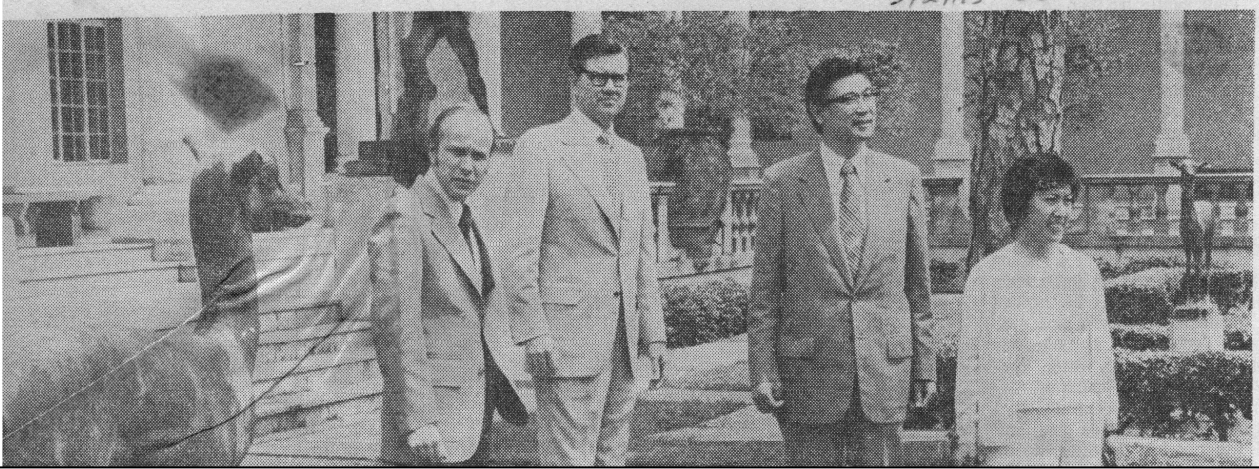


"Good night, Chet. Good night, David. And good night, for NBC"

The Huntley-Brinkley Report was a leading national evening news program that ran until July 31, 1970. During the final year of the 14 year show, the Report featured the February 1970 Reunion on Iwo Jima in a segment which featured NBC head correspondent John Rich.

Mary Swain, daughter of Charles Early who had led a group of former 18 year old privates in organizing the 1970 reunion, remembers her school friends being greatly impressed that the event which she had traveled from school to attend, was covered on national news in the high profile Huntley-Brinkley Report. They had watched the show in her hometown of Sarasota, Florida.

FRIENDS BORN OF IWO JIMA BATTLE



Ringling Museum's Chief Curator Robert Tonkin, left, takes Charles Early, Kuzuo Chiba and his wife Keiko on a tour of the grounds.

By DOROTHY STOCKBRIDGE
Journal Staff Writer

Thirty years after he fought the Japanese at Iwo Jima, one of the bloodiest battlegrounds of World War II, Charles Early is hosting a Japanese friend he met as a result of planning the 25th anniversary reunion of the veterans of that battle.

Kazuo Chiba and his wife Keiko are visiting the Earlys from Atlanta where Chiba is consul general of the newest of Japan's consulates in the United States.

Chiba was Early's first contact in the Japanese embassy when he began planning the Iwo Jima reunion in 1965. After five years of planning a group of 35 U.S. Marine veterans revisited the barren rocky island in the Pacific and met a group of some 17 Japanese veterans, that time on friendly terms. Early coordinated the activities of both groups. A ceremony was held atop Mount Suribachi to honor the more than 26,000 men of both nations who died there and to symbolize the friendship which now exists between the two nations. AP Photographer Joe Rosenthal immortalized the spot with his famous picture of the raising of the American flag.

"Iwo Jima was a different battle. Even men who were in bloody battles before and after it agree on that. It was a tremendous physical, mental and spiritual experience. It's a big part of a person," said Earl who was only 18 at the time.

Chiba said that Japanese-American friendship is strong now.

"We realize we can't cut each other off now. We're like Siamese twins. We depend on each other," he said. "While we don't always agree with the U.S., we are her most consistent supporter."

The word from home is that the Japanese feel the U.S. was justified in taking action against Cambodia in order to regain the captured merchant ship, Chiba said. "As for Vietnam, we feel relief that the albatross is no longer around the United States and that you will be free to conduct a more flexible foreign policy. Of course, we sympathize with your great losses and suffering."

Chiba said that the Japanese government considers the Southeastern United States as "The most dynamic area." From his Atlanta-based consulate he is fostering trade, investment and tourism in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, North and South Carolina and Virginia.

Last year the Japanese invested \$250 million in joint ventures with Georgia companies. That amounted to 11 factories in such areas as textile finishing, electronics, ball bearings and zipper-making. So far the Japanese investment in Florida has included an electronics plant in Fort Lauderdale and a grapefruit operation near Orlando. Phosphate and citrus exports to Japan have long been important.

Today Chiba is in Tampa to attend Governor Askew's conference on trade.

He anticipates more travel by the Japanese to Florida now that the consulate is operating. "The Japanese are fascinated by the tropical climate. Honolulu and Guam have always been favorite vacation spots."

Both Chiba and his wife were educated in this country: He taking advanced work in international affairs at Fletcher School in Massachusetts and she studying at Wellesley College.

Besides sightseeing in Sarasota, Chiba was treated to a tarpon fishing trip off Boca Grande. He landed his first two tarpon, each over 50 pounds but the Early's son, Chuck, landed the largest, an 80-pounder.

Chiba sees many similarities between the two countries in economics and rapid urbanization but he is proud of a much lower crime rate in his country. He credits the tradition of family responsibilities; an efficient, integrated police force which is much respected; strong gun laws and strong drug control laws.

"Of course our country is much smaller and racially homogenous," said Chiba.

He and Early are already talking about the possibility of another Iwo Jima reunion.

Chiba considers that another way of strengthening ties between the people at the grass roots level. Grass roots diplomacy is what he's working for at his Atlanta consulate.

FACTS ABOUT THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF JAPAN

In 1975 when this article was written, Japan's Atlanta consul included Florida. Today, Florida has its own separate consulate, stationed in Miami

Japan in the United States:



In addition to Japan's consulate general in Atlanta, Japan has 26 other representations in the United States. These representations include an embassy in Washington, D.C. consulates

in Anchorage, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland, OR, San Francisco, Seattle, and St. Louis.

United States in Japan:

The United States has 6 representations in Japan.



These representations include an embassy in Tokyo, consulates in Fukuoka, Nagoya, Naha City, Osaka, and Sapporo



The following *Spearhead News* is missing two pages. If anyone has a complete copy, please contact Ray Elliott, current editor. The FMDA would be very grateful to complete copies of all articles that were published in this 1970 edition.



Spearhead News

"UNCOMMON VALOR WAS A COMMON VIRTUE"

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 5th MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION . . .

SPRING 1970

FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION, WEST

NEWS OF THE WEST

A number of Western Association members have just returned from the nationally sponsored reunion on Iwo Jima, tired but happy. Among those who made the trip were Charles Sockett, Cecil Rodgers, Charlie Robeson, Anthony Izzi, Jack Downer and Lloyd Ferrin. All extend a resounding "Well Done!" to Charles Early for an outstanding job of making this trip possible after overcoming all sorts of knotty problems.

Now that the Iwo trip is over, all hands are concentrating upon preparations for the national convention in Washington in July of 1970, but with a target looming on the horizon that is ever on our minds. We refer, of course, to the 1971 convention and reunion at the Hilton Inn in San Diego, California.

Taking the conventions in chronological order, we are presently working on details to publicize and assist our members in getting to the Sheraton Park in July of 1970, to meet with old Fifth Marine Division buddies, and friends from the Third Marine Division. As a means of furthering these objectives, we are having a meeting on May 2, 1970, to select delegates and to firm up plans for transportation, if available, through a military airlift or by group flights to Washington, D. C. This meeting will be our annual dinner/business meeting with election of officers and directors, selection of delegates as mentioned, formulation of plans and policies, convivial meetings and dinner and (sh-h-h) collection of dues.

In regard to the airlift, the officers of the Fifth Marine Division Association, West, are contacting all authorities possible to seek assistance of the Marine Corps in lifting former Fifth Marine Division members and Third Marine Division members, if any, to Washington for the convention. An effort will be made to make this a round-trip airlift, and if all efforts fail along this line, we will do the best we can to help make it easier for our members to get there.

The West Coast convention in 1971 is shaping up in great style, and we have firmed up the dates of June 24 through 27 inclusive, 1971, at the Hilton Inn, San Diego, for our convention site. These dates at this popular spot were also sought by the Fourth Marine Division Association, but were finally given to us. At this writing, we do not know where our buddies in the 4th will meet. The facilities in this caravansary are fabulous, to use an over-worked word,

and the first draft of the program for the convention will be discussed at our May 2 meeting. On the agenda are trips to the recruit depot in San Diego and an all day trip to the sprawling acres of Camp Pendleton. In addition to the convention activities, there are also all sorts of individual opportunities for rest and recreation, including golf, sailing, swimming, bikini watching, or just plain loafing in the magnificent facilities of the Hilton Inn.

A word as to rates at the Inn: Singles are \$16.00 per day; Doubles or Twins are \$22.00; Single, Lanai (outside balcony) are \$22.00 and Doubles, Lanai are \$26.00.

In closing, we expect the 1970 convention in Washington, D. C. to be the greatest ever up to now, to be surpassed only by the 1971 get-together in San Diego!

FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSN., WEST
REA DUNCAN, President
JOHN W. DOWNER, Secretary
AL C. EUTSEY, Treasurer
By JOHN W. DOWNER

IWO IS CALLED SYMBOL OF PERPETUAL SPIRIT

By TOM STOWE
3rd MarDiv PRO

1970 Reunion on Iwo Jima

"Iwo Jima is a symbol of the perpetual spirit of all Marines who have fought and died for this country since 1775, and it remains a testament of their faith in the hope of freedom for all men."

So declared Marine Corps Commandant General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., in colorful ceremonies in the Washington National Cathedral, February 19, paying tribute to the more than 6,000 Americans who gave their lives in the battle for Iwo Jima. Inclement weather forced the event indoors.

(Continued on Page 2)



THE SPEARHEAD

Published twice a year by the 5th Marine Division Association Inc., 340 Marshal Street, Steelton, Pa. 17113.

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Honorary President

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Vice President

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Secretary

CWO ALEXANDER WELTER JR.

Executive Secretary

Editor

IWO IS CALLED SYMBOL OF PERPETUAL SPIRIT

(Continued from Page 1)

Simultaneously, except for the international dateline time differential, similar rededication ceremonies were held atop 550-foot Mount Suribachi. The historic Iwo Jima assembly brought together American and Japanese Iwo Jima veterans to pay tribute to the gallant men who fought and died there a quarter of a century ago.

Included among the invited guests at the Washington Cathedral were top-level government and military officials, other dignitaries and the Marine Corps Band. Among the many Marines present who fought on Iwo was General Graves B. Erskine who led the Third Marine Division to victory there. The CGs of the 4th and 5th Divisions were unable to attend.

The 3rd and 5th Marine Division Associations, which will hold a joint Washington reunion in July with the 25th Iwo and 5th Vietnam anniversary years as the central theme, were also represented on personal invitation from the Commandant, Brig. Gen. Lester S. Hamel, represented the 5th as its president. The 3rd was officially represented by President Austin Gattis a Marine Reserve Colonel, the writer who was a war correspondent on Iwo.

General Chapman laid the wreath and delivered the principal address.

"We are here to remember the heroism that was Iwo Jima," said the 1958 commander of the 12th Marines, who is a native of Key West, Fla.

"It would be inappropriate to that memory to cloud it with negative words because they were a positive breed. Men who triumphed, not men who conquered. Men who gave, not grasped. Men who hoped, not demanded. But this is the main tradition of our Corps. Marines are taught to serve, not to hate. And it was this gift of service that the men of Iwo Jima left as a legacy to all Americans," he concluded.

Meanwhile, on Mount Surabachi three groups totaling about 125 persons, including 25 Japanese survivors of the Iwo holocaust, joined in friendship at a quiet, reverent ceremony honoring the brave men who died on Iwo. They rode up to the peak in trucks.

MGen. William K. Jones, 3rd MarDiv CG, represented the Commandant and led a division group of officers and

men who fought on Iwo. Arriving from Seattle via Tokyo in chartered plane was a 5thMarDiv Association contingent of 55 men, women and children led by Sarasota, Fla. Attorney Charles Early.

"Unbelievable as it may sound to Marines who fought on the desolate island, Iwo today is really quite pretty—a garden spot in comparison to 25 years ago," Maj. John K. McLean, Washington stockbroker who made the trip, told Caltrap. "Green grass, trees and vines cover much of the area," said the former 28th Marines lieutenant.

"What pleased me most," said Major McLean, who speaks Japanese, "was the extreme cordiality between the Japanese and Americans, both on Iwo and in Tokyo where we hosted the Japanese survivors and families of Japanese who died on Iwo. There wasn't the slightest indication of any grudge or resentment over the war."

"What a pity this couldn't have happened 25 years ago," commented Jay Rebstock of New Orleans, La.

The Suribachi ceremonies began with the invocation by Taunexoo Wachi, Buddhist Monk and former Japanese Navy Captain, followed by the raising of the Japanese and American flags, and the singing of both national anthems by the respective groups. General Jones and Dr. Kazuyoshi Morimoto, Iwo veterans, each placed two wreaths at the separate memorials.

"Our two nations have been friends for 25 years," said the 3rdMarDiv CG. "Let us hope that other nations of the world will learn from our experiences and bring us peace," he added.

Group leader Early commented: "Iwo will live forever in history because of the bravery of Japanese and American, living and dead, who fought here 25 years ago. If the blood of brave men can make sand and rock sacred, then this ugly, tortured, torn island is a most sacred place," GySgt A. E. Gaudin, 3rdMarDiv correspondent, said.

Dr. Morimoto, Japanese group leader, expressed pleasure for the historic event, "The monuments dedicated by the two nations, side by side, are a rare thing in the world." A moment of silent prayer followed by the speeches. Kent Arnold, son of Cmdr Anthony Arnold of the American Embassy in Tokyo placed an American wreath on the Japanese monument. His namesake uncle, a 5thMarDiv veteran, was killed on Iwo. The ceremonies ended with the benediction given by Navy Cmdr. John F. Laboon, 12th Marines chaplain from Okinawa.

Former 5th Division men still in the service and stationed on Guam or Okinawa who were on Iwo for the 25th Anniversary.

Cmdr. J. F. Laboon—12th Marines Chaplain—Former submariner whose boat was off Iwo on 19 February.

1st Sgt. E. N. Botwell—8d Recon former 5th Medical Battalion.

Capt. H. N. Glasser—8d Dental former Infantryman 26th Marines now Dental Corps.

Capt. L. S. Eisman—USN former 5th Medical Bn. Past President 5th Marine Division Association.

Col. H. H. Stirling—former 28th Marines.

IWO JIMA WAR FOES SHAKE HANDS

(Continued from Page 6)

Michi Kuribayashi."

He said he regarded Gen. Kuribayashi "as one of the finest commanders. Few commanders, either U.S. or Japanese, could have defended such a small island so well," he said.

And they gave a standing ovation when Mrs. Kuribayashi welcomed them in her shy but moving manner. She said she was sure her husband would be "happy in his grave if he knew we gathered here as friends."

The Marines brought mementoes which they collected on the battle ground. They included bullet-ridden flags of the rising sun, letters written in Japanese and identification cards.

IWO JIMA, Feb. 19—Twenty-five years ago they knew each other from the distance of a rifle, a machine gun, a shell or a flamethrower. They fought each other as best they could from hidden bunkers and caves, from the black volcanic sand and the scraggy bluffs.

Today they met face to face armed only with cameraderie, goodwill and "shooting" each other only with cameras. A group of Americans and Japanese survivors of the bloody battle of Iwo Jima returned to this tiny island in the Pacific Ocean Thursday to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the invasion.

The 38 ex-members of the U.S. 5th Marine Division, some with their wives and children, and the 17 Japanese survivors, accompanied by seven officials and committeemen, arrived in two separate chartered planes from Tokyo. The American contingent was led by Charles Early, a lawyer, from Sarasota, Fla.

The Japanese contingent was headed by Dr. Kazuyoshi Morimoto of Miura, Kanagawa Prefecture.

Maj. Gen. William Jones, commanding general of the 3rd Marine Division, from Okinawa, arrived with his staff to participate in the ceremonies.

The large group was trucked up to the top of Mt. Suribachi, the high point on the tip end of the island from which the defenders had poured down withering fire on the Marines on the beach below. It was from the peak of this mountain that Joe Rosenthal made his most famous picture of the raising of the American flag by the Marines. At the spot is a memorial plaque. Since the reversion of the island to Japan, two Japanese monuments have been added.

Under a bright sun, with a warm breeze blowing, the official ceremonies started with a invocation by a Japanese Buddhist priest. Flags of both nations were raised by an honor guard of Japanese sailors, followed by the singing of the national anthems.

SEATTLE, Wash. (AP)—About 36 ex-members of the U.S. 5th Marine Div. that stormed Iwo Jima 25 years ago will rendezvous here on their way to the one-time island battlefield to meet their former Japanese enemies.

"It'll probably be the first time former enemies will meet in peace, and friendship on their former battleground," said Charles Early, who is organizing the group that will be on Iwo Jima to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the invasion.

About 25 former Japanese soldiers who fought on Iwo Jima were to join the American party in Tokyo for a chartered flight to the island, Early said.

"We'll meet with the Japanese in peace and friendship," Early said. "This isn't something thought up by a Marine publicity officer or a chamber of commerce—the idea came from the men themselves."

The Iwo Jima survivors of both nations will hold memorial services to mark the anniversary of the bloody battle.



CAPTAIN LEON EISMAN, MSC, USN
PRESIDENT 1964-65

Accompanied the Fifth Marine Division overseas in Sept. 1944 and participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima and the occupation of Japan at Sasebo. At the present time he is stationed in Guam with frequent visits to Japan. The last two years Capt. Eisman has been all our source of information on what went on at Iwo Jima. He supplied your historian with a beautiful color photo booklet on the return of Iwo Jima to the Japanese June 1968. Also the other articles that you read of the return in the *Spearhead*.

Capt. Eisman along with the official Marine Corp Party headed by General Jones, CG, Third Marine Division . . . met with 38 former Iwo Veterans for the 25th Anniversary Feb. 19, 1970. He writes that Iwo was a revelation. We all remember it as massive pile of volcanic ash but at the present time the island is slowly turning green. Sword grass is taking root and there is a lot of tangen-tangen trees all over the place. The invasion beach has been completely cleaned up and there is no evidence of beach landing crafts, etc. Even though the island has been cleaned up so there is little evidence of the war. Most of the junk was pushed into the old sulphur pit which the Japanese now call the Million Dollar Hole. The island is inhabited by 32 Coast Guard Men who operate a Loran Station and about 50 Japanese Maritime self defense force personnel headed by a commander who wears wings . . . so guess he is an aviator. There has been no attempt, since the reversion, to bring Japanese families to the island . . . it is strictly a stag affair. The only buildings are a few quonset huts constructed by the US which serve as both office and billets. It is a hellava place to be stationed, says Capt. Eisman.

(Continued on Page 8)

CAPTAIN LEON EISMAN, MSC, USN

(Continued from Page 7)

Our Monument atop Mount Suribachi is being well maintained and the two . . . the Japanese have placed up there are done in very good taste. . . They dedicated their Monuments a year ago the designer being Mr. Akira Kurosaki who as one of the Japanese Officials at the Ceremony.

The Japanese Monk who gave the invocation as Tsunozoo Whachi who was a former Captain in the Japanese Navy. Captain Eisman said he was a very interesting man to talk to and that he was in charge and laying out of the fortification of the island and was called back to Japan in Dec. 1944, just two months before the invasion. At the outbreak of the war he was an assistant Naval Attache in Mexico City and was thus repatriated to Japan after the outbreak of hostilities. He is now a Buddhist Monk but has no connection with any particular temple.

Capt. Eisman's tour of duty is up in July and hopes to be State side for our 25th Anniversary Reunion in Washington, D. C.

JAPANESE NEWSMAN INTERVIEWS

CHARLES EARLY

By SGT. LEN BROWN
S&S Staff Writer

TOKYO—Thirty-seven American men stepped unceremoniously from a bus and filed into the lobby of the Tokyo Prince Hotel, which sits at the foot of the Tokyo Tower. Inside the hotel's lobby, they exchanged greetings and handshakes with 25 Japanese and talked amiably with them.

Twenty-five years ago at Iwo Jima, these men had been enemies.

The Americans were former members of the U.S. 5th Marine Division which spearheaded the attack on Iwo Jima in February 1945.

The Orientals were former Japanese soldiers who helped to defend the Pacific island where 6,821 U.S. forces, including 5,895 Marines, and 19,000 Japanese were killed in one of the bloodiest battles in American history.

The American Iwo Jima vets had just arrived from Seattle, Wash., where they had a rendezvous Tuesday for the trip here to meet with their Japanese counterparts before proceeding to Iwo Jima Thursday to participate in a joint memorial service at Mt. Suribachi, which U.S. marines took on Feb. 19, 1945, after two days of fierce and costly fighting.

One American was a tall, bespectacled man who walked with a limp as a result of a wound received at Iwo Jima. He was 43-year-old Charles E. Early, an attorney from Sarasota, Fla., who organized and is coordinator for the Iwo-bound American contingent.

Recounting his experiences in Iwo Jima, Early said:

"I was a private in Charlie Co., 1st Bn., 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division. It was a violent battle, and anyone who was there was shot at many times.

"I remember the nights when you would be there in your hole and everything was so quiet that you could hear the Japanese soldiers crawling around trying to penetrate your lines. You fought to stay awake for you knew that if you went to sleep you'd be killed.

"We had about nine men in a shell hole. All had been hit from the shoulders up. But it seemed like we always had nine because some would die and another would take his place.

"They couldn't get any stretchers up to us and finally we decided to go back and get them. I was in a mortar section and since we were sometimes as much as 25 yards behind the front lines we were expected to do all the detail-type duties. So we started back for the stretchers.

"My first thought was that I had tripped and it felt almost like somebody tackling you from your blind side in football. But before I hit the ground I began to hurt pretty bad," he recalled.

Early had been shot in the leg.

"Ironically, one stretcher had been brought up and since I was the closest Marine to it, they put me on it and took me back behind the lines. I stayed on the island two weeks before I was evacuated."

Reflecting on the day of the historic raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima by the Marines, Early said someone yelled, "Hey look, there's an American flag up there!"

"This was a very important thing to us," he explained, "because not only were we catching a lot of artillery and mortar fire from Mt. Suribachi, but it was a very excellent observation point for the Japanese. In fact as we used to say, and actually it was true, they could tell what we were eating for breakfast," he said.

Commenting on how his ex-Marine group felt about the Feb. 19 25th anniversary reunion at Iwo Jima, Early said, "We think it's really a tremendous thing because it provides a good example for people all over the world.

"If men who fought so very hard and effectively against each other on the bloody battlefield in Iwo Jima can meet in peace and friendship," he concluded, "then everyone should be able to be friends and to be at peace with each other."

The contingent of American and Japanese Iwo Jima survivors left Tokyo for the island Thursday morning. The Americans took a plane from Yokota AB, and the Japanese left aboard a Japanese Defense Agency (JDA) airliner. Another plane from Okinawa, carrying the commanding general of the 3rd Marine Div. there and the honor guard, also landed on the island.

At Iwo Jima, the men were scheduled to take part in a joint reunion and memorial service which had been planned by the United States for several years with the support of the U.S. State Department and the Marine Corps. The American members will also return items which belong to the Japanese.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry, the Japanese Defense Agency and the Association for Realization of a Monument on Iwo Jima also supported the commemoration project.

EX-SOLDIERS MEET AGAIN ON IWO JIMA

IWO JIMA (Kyodo-Reuters)—American and Japanese soldiers held a memorial service here—25 years after one of the bloodiest battles of World War II in which 25,000 men were killed before U.S. troops secured the island. Eighty American and 25 Japanese survivors of the bitter fighting laid wreaths on the summit of Mt. Suribachi where U.S. troops first raised the American flag over the island.

Part # 8



Conclusion



The peace and friendship now enjoyed between the United States and Japan had an immense price tag in terms of blood, and lives lost, and families changed forever.

There is no better testimony to the honor and bravery displayed by both sides during the tragedy of WW2 in the Pacific than the meetings of both sides at the site of the horrific battle. These reunions began with the Reunion in Peace, organized by the Fifth Marine Division Association in 1970, fifteen years before the following Reunions of Honor which began in 1985 and became annual events ten years later.

In 1970 attorney Charles Early and some other 5th Marine Division veterans of Iwo, who had served as 18 year old enlisted men, reached out to their former enemies and met with them on Iwo Jima. This was indeed a remarkable event and huge first step in the process of healing the wounds of war between nations and the men who fought for those nations.

The event joined American and Japanese veterans of the battle shaking hands on top of Mt Suribachi with full ceremonies of flags raised, national anthems played, wreathes laid, speeches given, and prayers said. It was also attended by Japanese notables of government and history, and honored by widows and families of the highest ranking Japanese military on Iwo Jima. NBC's senior correspondent in the Far East headed the news coverage and the commanding General of the 3rd Division officially represented the Commandant of the Marine Corps

This seminal event was all the more extraordinary because it was a true grass-roots affair, conceptualized, planned, coordinated and carried out by former privates, with no overarching support of the government or the Marine Corps.

Further, as an outcome to this 1970 "Reunion in Peace," a repatriation of war souvenirs on a large scale was begun between Fifth Marine Division Association member Marty Connor and Buddhist monk Rev. Wachi. This effort was of great importance to the bereaved families of Japanese war dead and was deeply appreciated by those families and by all Japanese as well.

Even though the 1970 Iwo Reunion was widely publicized at the time, since it occurred before Internet accessible information, knowledge of the event has almost been lost. The Fifth Marine Division Association hopes to bring the "Reunion in Peace" back into its proper place in the history of Iwo Jima.

The Ghosts of Iwo Jima

by Dan King

In March 2002, I went to Iwo Jima with Military Historical Tours. It was to be the first of ten pilgrimages I would make to that hallowed ground. The most anticipated part of that initial trip was walking those iconic black volcanic beaches. I chose to wear the replica WWII HBT Marine Corps uniform that I received while working on the set of *Windtalkers* as a historical consultant.

On my way down to the beach before the start of the joint US-Japan ceremony, I stopped to greet a pair of Japanese Naval Self Defense Force officers who were stationed on the island. I asked them what cities they hailed from and struck up a conversation about my years of living in Japan. After seeing several people trod back up the slope hefting bags of sand one of the officers asked why the Americans cared so much about the volcanic ash. I responded that many of us feel it is infused with the blood, sweat and tears of family members and men we revere as heroes. "It's sacred ground," I added.

After a few moments one of them said to the other while gesturing at my HBTs, "You know, he's dressed like the ghost on the beach, don't you think?" The other agreed. "Ghost?" I had to ask. On rare occasion just after twilight the translucent figure of a Marine can be seen walking on the beach. "His right hand on his shoulder, and his head is down like this (demonstrated). One can see the top of his camouflage helmet but not his face. It's as if he is looking for something in the sand," the older officer said.

Despite knowing the straight-laced Japanese as I do, I scanned their faces for any hint of humor, and finding none I asked if there were other spirits on the island. I learned that current-day Japanese stationed on Iwo Jima don't venture out on the unlit roads at night as some claim to hear voices coming from the brush. They have no interest in exploring the northern areas and certainly not the tunnels or bunkers that are believed to be haunted. It is common for them to put bottles of water on their nightstands to give comfort to lost souls who are still searching for water to drink even in death. Those who don't follow this custom are sometimes awakened in the middle of the night by strange sounds, unexplained vibrations or frightening nightmares.

The officer added with a tone of gravity, ***"Anywhere one stands could be the spot where one of us, or one of you, died. The whole island is a graveyard."***

