

Heavy Losses Suffered at Iwo Jima

by Jay M. Jones

Seventy Five Years ago marked the concluding events of World War II. This is the third in a series of articles highlighting some of the contributions of people from Iron County to the successful termination of the war.

American intelligence had estimated that it would take only one week to overwhelm the Japanese defenders on the island of Iwo Jima in February 1945.

What they did not recognize until after the battle began was the complex network of tunnels and the determination of most of the Japanese on the island to fight to the death.

The battle began on February 19, 1945. Heavy bombing and artillery from ships did little to weaken the underground Japanese defenses, and Iwo Jima became one of the fiercest battlegrounds in the Pacific during World War II.

Clyde Hunter of Cedar City was with the first Marines to land on the island, and was there for the duration of the battle. His service continued after the war, being promoted to full colonel in 1967.



Postage stamp issued in 1945 based on the photo by Joe Rosenthal of the flag raising on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima.

Emil Mace Graff of Hurricane, who attended the Branch Agricultural College in Cedar City, was a medical corpsman for the Marines that gave his life on Iwo Jima tending to wounded soldiers on February 19.

On February 21, the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga, supporting the attack on Iwo Jima, was hit by 3 kamikaze planes and five aerial bombs. Boyd Edwards of Cedar City was serving on the Saratoga and survived the attack. 123 sailors did not, and another 192 were wounded.

On February 23, Joe Rosenthal, an Associated Press photographer, took a photo of Marines raising the American flag over Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima that has become perhaps the most iconic picture of the war.

It was actually the second flag raising on the site, and it was witnessed by Floyd Robison, a Navy veteran now living in Cedar City, who watched the event from a ship near the beach below.

On March 3, Elmo W. Platt from Kanarraville was killed in action on Iwo Jima. He was 19 years old, and had joined the Marine Corps in December of 1943 on his eighteenth birthday.

Two days later, March 5, Earl Duvall Hyatt of Parowan, an 18 year-old Marine, gave his life in battle. He had arrived on Iwo Jima on February 28 and wrote to his parents from his foxhole on March 1. The letter arrived home a few days before his parents were notified of his death in late March.

The American victory on Iwo Jima was completed on 26 March 1945, five weeks after the battle began.

A letter written by James Ward, a grandson of a Parowan woman, was published in the Parowan Times on April 27, 1945 giving an account of the Iwo Jima battle. Ward was a radioman on an amphibious gunboat and coordinated efforts on land, sea, and air to defeat the enemy. He wrote, "Never before have the armed forces worked so well together as a team."

Others from Iron County who served on Iwo Jima or on supporting Navy ships offshore include Kent Lister, Mack Mulliner, James Urie, Durrel Woolsey and Sherman Dalton.