

# Fence Post

## Remember heroism of Iwo Jima

It was 65 years ago that the black sand invasion beaches of Iwo Jima turned red with the blood of U.S. Marine landing forces in World War II. It was a ferocious campaign that began Feb. 19, 1945, when 75,000 men of the 4th, 5th and 3rd Marine Divisions began the attack, and ended 35 days later with more than 26,000 Marine casualties, including more than 6,000 killed. Japanese losses were huge; only 216 men of the 21,000 defenders were taken alive. All of this for just eight square miles of barren, wind-swept volcanic rock and sand.

However, Iwo had three airfields from which Japanese fighters had been intercepting our B-29 bombers flying off the Mariana Islands to bomb the Japanese homeland into submission. They had to be neutralized.

U.S. forces had bombarded Iwo Jima for 72 straight days before the invasion, but with little effect, for deep within the bowels of the island the 21,000 Japanese were hiding in 11 miles of interconnecting tunnels and caves. Vicious fighting continued day and night until March 26.

So it went with all of the many Pacific Island battles: hostile jungle islands infested with insects, disease, overwhelming heat, torrential downpours and with a formidable enemy vowing to fight to the death, islands where more than 65 years ago and thousands of miles from their families teenage Americans gave their lives for our freedom, bravely confronting their fears, but many ultimately dying in pain and very alone in

their despair and last memories of home.

In total, about 50,000 Americans died in the Pacific war.

If you can read what I have written herein, thank a teacher — if you can read it in English, thank a veteran.

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