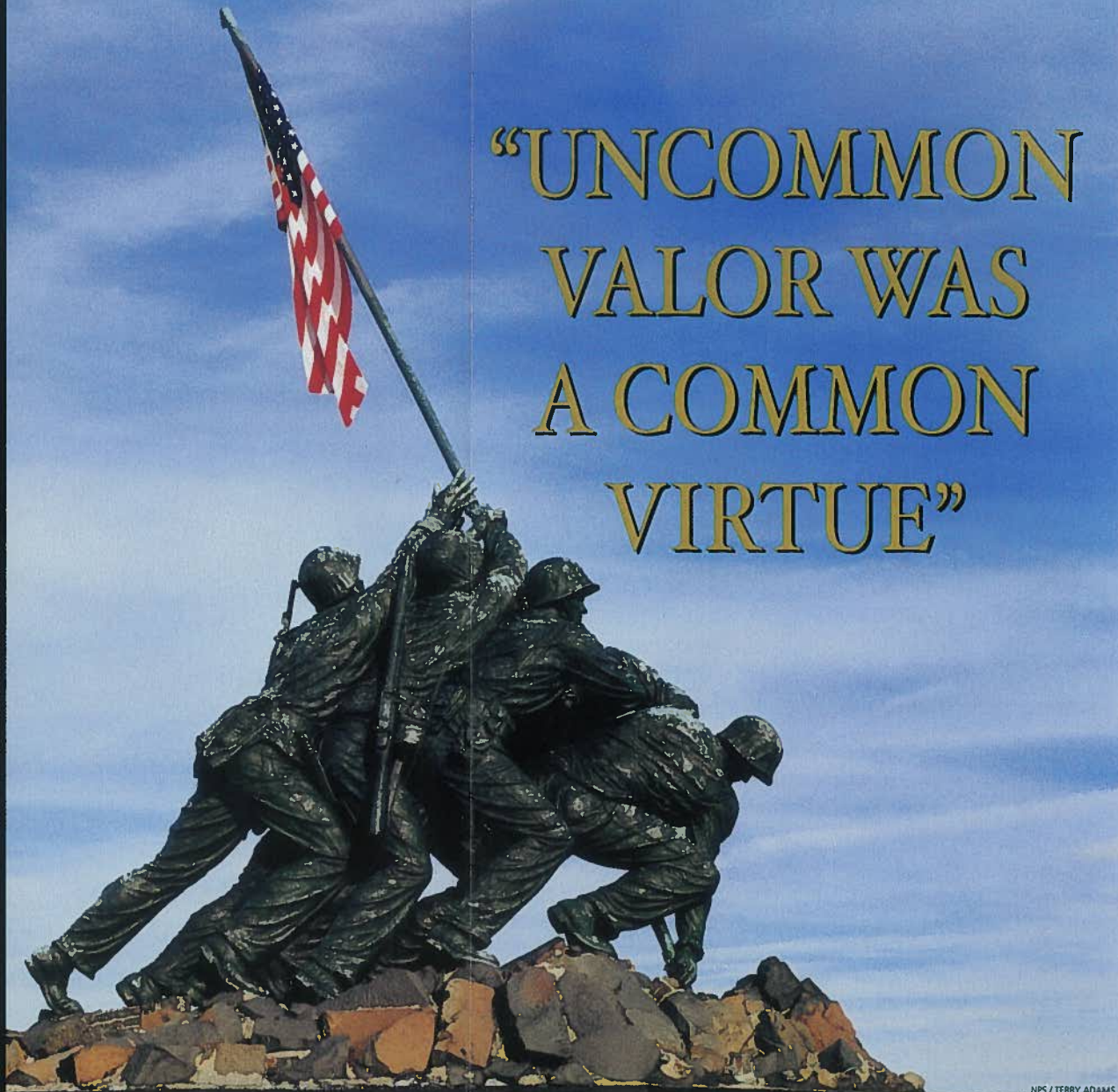


United States Marine Corps War Memorial

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

George Washington
Memorial Parkway
District of Columbia/Maryland/Virginia



“UNCOMMON
VALOR WAS
A COMMON
VIRTUE”

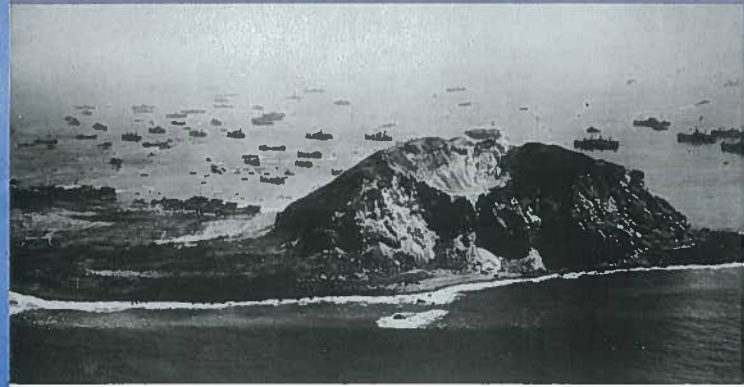
(1945 IWO) JIMA OKINAWA KOREA 1950

REVOLUTIONARY WAR 1775-1783 FRENCH NAVAL WAR 1798-1800 SPANISH WAR 1898 PHILIPPINE INSURRECTION 1898-1902

NPS / TERRY ADAMS



REVOLUTIONARY WAR 1775-1783 • FRENCH NAVAL WAR 1798-1800
SPANISH WAR 1898 • PHILIPPINE INSURRECTION 1898-1902



Mount Suribachi dominates the landing beaches where the battle for Iwo Jima began.

A Memorial to Courage and Freedom

A fraction of a second . . . one click of a camera . . . and a powerful image is captured that engrosses a war-weary nation and fuels its resolve to push for final victory. This memorial, inspired by and based upon that image, is a testament to the bravery, honor, and sacrifice of the United States Marine Corps in its long and celebrated history.

Japanese troops on Iwo Jima, commanded by Lt. Gen. Tad-amichi Kuribayashi, had prepared a formidable series of defenses to protect the island. They vowed to defend it to their death. The Marines had the ability to take the island, but at what cost?

The origins of the memorial began on Iwo Jima, a small volcanic island 648 nautical miles south of Tokyo. Iwo Jima's location, midway between the Japanese home islands and American bomber bases in the Mariana Islands, was key to each country's strategy in the final year of World War II.

The battle for Iwo Jima lasted 36 days—from February 19 to March 26, 1945. Over 70,000 American troops, mostly Marines, under Lt. Gen. Holland M. Smith's command, engaged over 21,000 Japanese defenders in one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Almost 7,000 Marines, sailors, and soldiers were killed or missing during the battle and almost 20,000 were wounded. Of the Japanese soldiers, only 1,100 survived.

The Japanese had built airfields on Iwo Jima by February 1945, which they used to launch attacks against U.S. bases in the Marianas and American long-range B-29 bombers. If Americans held the airfields, U.S. fighter planes could escort bombing missions, and damaged bombers could use the island as a sanctuary.

Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz called the capture of Iwo Jima "as necessary to us in our continuing forward movement toward final victory as it was vital to the enemy in staving off ultimate defeat."

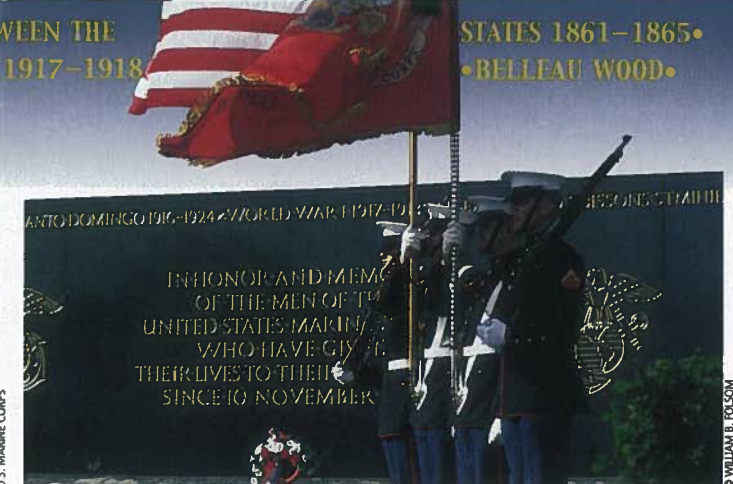
SOISSON • ST. MIHIELZ • BLANC MONT • MEUSE-ARGONNE • NICARAGUA
SHALL ISLANDS • MARIANAS ISLANDS • PELELIU • 1945 IWO JIMA • OKINAWA



Marines dig in near Mount Suribachi as enemy fire sweeps the beach.



Rene Gagnon poses for sculptor Felix W. de Weldon.



Principal Marine engagements are inscribed on the memorial.

The Flag Raisings

Once ashore on February 19, 1945, the 28th Regiment, 5th Marine Division, began its assault on Mount Suribachi, an extinct volcano that rises 550 feet to dominate the southern tip of the fan-shaped island. The Marines reached the base of the mountain on the afternoon of February 21; by nightfall the next day they had almost completely surrounded it. On the morning of February 23, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines, began the arduous climb up the rough terrain to the top. At about 10:30 am, U.S. troops were thrilled to see a small American flag flying from atop Mount Suribachi.

Pearl Harbor) was raised by Navy hospital corpsman John H. Bradley and Marines Harlon H. Block, Rene A. Gagnon, Ira Hayes, Franklin R. Sousley, and Michael Strank. News photographer Joe Rosenthal caught the flag raising in an inspiring photograph that won him a Pulitzer Prize and inspired creation of the United States War Memorial.

That afternoon a second, larger flag (salvaged from



The second, larger flag is raised as the first flag is lowered.

Making the Memorial

Sculptor Felix W. de Weldon, then with the U.S. Navy, found Rosenthal's photograph so inspiring that he immediately began sculpting a small wax model of the scene. He was then asked to build two nine-foot-tall versions for a war bond drive. De Weldon was subsequently commissioned to sculpt the present 78-foot-high memorial. Gagnon, Hayes, and Bradley, three survivors of the flag raising (the others had been killed in later phases of the battle for Iwo Jima), posed for the sculptor. De Weldon modeled the other men using photographs and descriptions.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower dedicated the memorial on November 10, 1954, the 179th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps. The memorial is dedicated to the Marine dead of all wars, and their comrades of other services who fell fighting beside them. No public funds were used building the memorial. Marines, Naval Service members, and friends donated the cost of \$850,000.

Memorial Statistics

The 32-foot-high figures are shown raising a 60-foot flagpole; the flag flies 24 hours a day. They occupy positions similar to those in Rosenthal's historic photograph. As you stand before the memorial (see cover photograph at left), the four figures in front are (left to right) Hayes, Sousley, Bradley, and Block. The two in back are Strank (behind Sousley) and Gagnon (behind Bradley).

The six figures stand on a jumble of igneous rock that represents the volcanic debris atop Mount Suribachi. On the memorial's base, engraved and burnished in gold, are the names and dates of principal Marine Corps campaigns and battles.

On the base is the tribute of Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz to the fighting men on Iwo Jima: "Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue." Below this is "Semper Fidelis," Latin for "always faithful," motto of the United States Marine Corps.

The United States Marine Corps

The United States Marine Corps was established by the Continental Congress in November 1775 to serve as shipboard infantry for the fledgling Continental Navy. It has evolved into a multi-purpose force dedicated to the defense of freedom in both the United States and abroad.

efforts to promote freedom around the world, the U.S. Marine Corps has enjoyed a reputation as an effective fighting force. The names of principal campaigns engraved on the memorial are a testament to the sacrifices U.S. Marines have made in service to America.

From the first amphibious operations in the American Revolutionary War to today's



The U.S. Marine Corps Sunset Parade features the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps and Silent Drill Platoon. Tuesday evenings in summer. Free; no reservations needed. Schedules call: 202-433-6060.