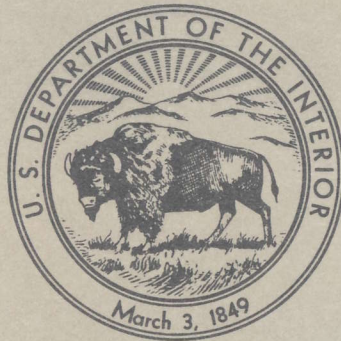


Asan Beach Guide

War in the Pacific National Historical Park



United States Department of the Interior



As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States - now and in the future.

"After advancing a few yards you find that the [butt] handle of the [sub] machine gun on your shoulder, your pack and shovel, canteens, knife, and machete all stick out at right angles and are as tenacious in their grip on the surrounding underbrush as a dozen grappling hooks."

Infantryman, 77th Army Division



"It was raining every day, and we were wet to the skin."

Sergeant Masashi Itoh, Japanese Soldier

The National Park Service at *War in the Pacific National Historical Park* is interested in compiling oral histories of World War II, particularly on Guam and other islands in the Pacific. If you have personal memories that you would like to contribute, please contact the park.

Begin your tour by turning right onto Marine Drive as you exit the Visitor Center parking lot. Drive .7 miles to the entrance to the Asan Beach Unit, and turn right into the park at the National Park Service sign. An MK14 MOD5 torpedo is on display at the entrance to the park. This type of torpedo, launched by submarines, served as the primary anti-shipping weapon during World War II. Follow the road to the left, past the restrooms into the parking area. The map of the Asan Point area (centerfold map) will help you locate features and sites.

This flat, grassy area has seen many uses, and its landscape and contours have been considerably altered. From 1892-1900 it was the site of a leper colony. It has been a prison twice: for exiled Filipino insurgents (1901-1903), and for the crew of the German cruiser *Cormoran* for three weeks during World War I (1917). It became a U.S. Marine Corps camp in 1922. Before World War II, the area was the site of Asan village, with coconut trees and rice paddies. The invasion destroyed the village, which was subsequently located across Marine Drive where you see it today. After the war (1945-47) the site was a camp for the Seabees (U.S. Navy Construction Battalion), and the area was filled with 2 feet of rubble to provide a foundation for the Naval Hospital Annex which occupied the site from the 1950s to 1972. Before the buildings were razed, they served as a refugee camp for Vietnamese in 1975. Today, this is a favorite spot for jogging, picnicking, kite flying, or just enjoying the beach.

WALK #1 - MONUMENTS

To the right of the parking lot (as you face the sea) is a paved trail lined with coconut palms that leads to four monuments. You come first to two monuments honoring Apolinario Mabini, a Philippine patriot who was exiled to Guam in 1901 with 51 other Philippine heroes for their refusal to cooperate with the United States, and for their criticism of the U.S. military government of the Philippines. He and the others lived on this site until 1903, when all but one took an oath of allegiance to the United States of America.

As you continue on the path, you are walking along the beach where the U.S. Marines landed on July 21, 1944, to recapture Guam from the Japanese. A monument to the event has been erected on the site by the Third Marine Division Association.

The U.S. Landing Monument, the fourth along the path, is dedicated "to the gallant men of all the services who fought and fell in the assault, seizure and occupation of Guam." The capture of the Mariana Islands opened Japan to attack and hastened the end of the war in the Pacific.

On the far side of the parking lot, at the base of the cliff at Asan Point, is the Liberator's Memorial, placed in 1994 to honor all U.S. forces involved in the recapture of Guam. It was erected by the National Association of Uniformed Services on the 50th anniversary of the 1944 campaign.

WALK #2 - ASAN RIDGE

A wide, mowed path behind the restrooms will take you to the top of the hill where you will be rewarded with an excellent view of Asan Beach and the hills inland. **The undeveloped trail is steep and may be slippery when wet or raining, so watch your step.**

A short distance past the restrooms, the trail forks. The right path goes to the top of the smaller hill. Take the left trail to the top of Asan Ridge. You will soon pass the collapsed entrance to a cave. **Entry is prohibited. For your own safety and the preservation of the historic scene, do not climb down into the cave.** Just after the trail begins to flatten out past a steep, rocky part, there is a small trail off to the right. This area is best explored on the way down.

One of the prominent plants you see is tangantangan (*Leucaena*), a tree native to South America. Repeated shelling during the invasion denuded the hill-sides, and much of the island was subject to severe erosion. To solve the problem, the U.S. Navy seeded the island with tangantangan. However, tangantangan has now become a dominant pest in the ecosystem. Look for the compound leaves with small leaflets and the long "pea" pods.

At the top of Asan Ridge, pause under the ironwood trees and enjoy the cool breeze. Try to imagine the peaceful scene you see today as it was in July

1944: over 20,000 U.S. Marines, tanks, howitzers, naval gunfire--the sounds and sights of war!

As you look back toward the Visitor Center, you see the curve of Asan Beach. The white buildings past the beach are the Governor of Guam's offices on Adelup Point. The beach area from Adelup Point to Asan Point, where you are standing, is one of two beaches on Guam where the U.S. Marines landed in July 1944 to retake the island from the Japanese. (The other is Agat Beach to the south, another unit of *War in the Pacific National Historical Park*.)

The ridgeline to the right as you look toward Adelup Point is called Asan Ridge (where you stand) or Bundschu Ridge (closer to Adelup Point). The top of Bundschu Ridge, where you now see U.S. Navy buildings, is the Fonte Plateau, also called Nimitz Hill. The crest of this ridge was the beachhead, the high ground from which the



"Some of the most rugged country I have ever seen."

Lt. General Alexander A. Vandegrift, Commandant of the

surrounding area could be controlled, and was the objective of the U.S. forces that landed on Asan Beach July 21-29, 1944. These hills, now inaccessible and covered with a thick tangle of vegetation, were the site of some of the heaviest fighting as U.S. forces struggled for control of this strategic position. The area was well defended by Japanese, who took shelter in natural caves and crevices primarily at the eastern end above Asan Point and at the western end above Adelup Point. Vegetation is thick, and other features--foxholes, trenches, gun emplacements and shell craters-- may also exist.

In the opposite direction, beyond the power plant, is the Orote Peninsula and Apra Harbor. The Japanese stronghold on the Orote Peninsula was a prime target for American bombardment



"The enemy, circling overhead, bombed our airfield the whole day long. When evening came our carriers bombers returned but the airfield had just been destroyed and they ... were unable to land and had to crash. 'The Tragedy of War' was never so real."

*Lt. Colonel Hideyuki Takeda,
Japanese 29th Division*

for several days prior to the Marine's assault. Apra Harbor was desired by the American forces because of the security it would provide as a fleet supply base.

Importance of Guam

The Marianas island chain was strategically important to the United States war effort. The larger islands of Guam, Tinian, and Saipan were needed by the Americans for airbases from which B-29 aircraft could make roundtrip bombing runs to Japan. Possession of these islands would also cut the Japanese supply route to other Japanese-held islands, effectively neutralizing them. Other significant justifications for the U.S. assault were the recapture of U.S. territory (Guam had been U.S. territory since 1898) and the liberation of native Chamorros from Japanese domination. The recapture of Guam from the Japanese was integral

to the end of the war and is representative of World War II on the Pacific islands.

"I am going to try and advance up that mess in front of me.... Company E is down to half strength. They have no strength to push on."

Col. W. Carvel Hall, 3rd Marines

Recapture of Guam

Even before Saipan fell to U.S. troops on July 9, 1944, the U.S. strafed and bombarded Guam from planes, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and carriers, in preparation for the invasion. Primary targets were the Orote Peninsula installations (around Apra Harbor) and beach defenses. The Japanese were ready and willing to defend Guam. Anti-

aircraft fire brought down 16 planes before U.S. assault troops hit on W-Day. Under cover of American fire, Navy Underwater Demolition Teams did essential reconnaissance of the invasion beaches at Asan and Agat, removed obstacles, and improved the reef approach for landing.



One interesting aspect of the recapture of Guam was the role played by Navajo Indian servicemen. The Navajo servicemen operated the radios, openly conversing in their native language, which was unknown to the Japanese. This successful tactic completely baffled the Japanese, who expected to hear coded English. The Navajo were justifiably proud of their unique contribution.

U.S. Troop Landing and Advance

At 8:29 on the morning of July 21, 1944, the 3rd Marine Division landed on the beach in Asan (Map A). A simultaneous assault was made on Agat Beach to the south. The push from the north began at Asan Beach east of Asan Point. Troops quickly moved to the west as well, into the Piti area. The Japanese were forced to retreat to the beachhead at Fonte Plateau and near Mt. Chachao and Mt. Alutom as

"The flies and mosquitos regard us as nothing but walking blood banks."
Infrantryman, 77 Army Division

the Americans pushed forward and westward to secure Cabras Island. The forces from Agat Beach also advanced northward (Map B).

Many Japanese survived the pre-landing bombardment by sheltering in a complex cave system in Asan Ridge and on Adelup and Asan Points. The Japanese moved reserves from the Fonte Plateau area to fight the U.S. assault, and despite constant U.S. air strikes and naval bombardment, continued moving men to strategic defensive positions.

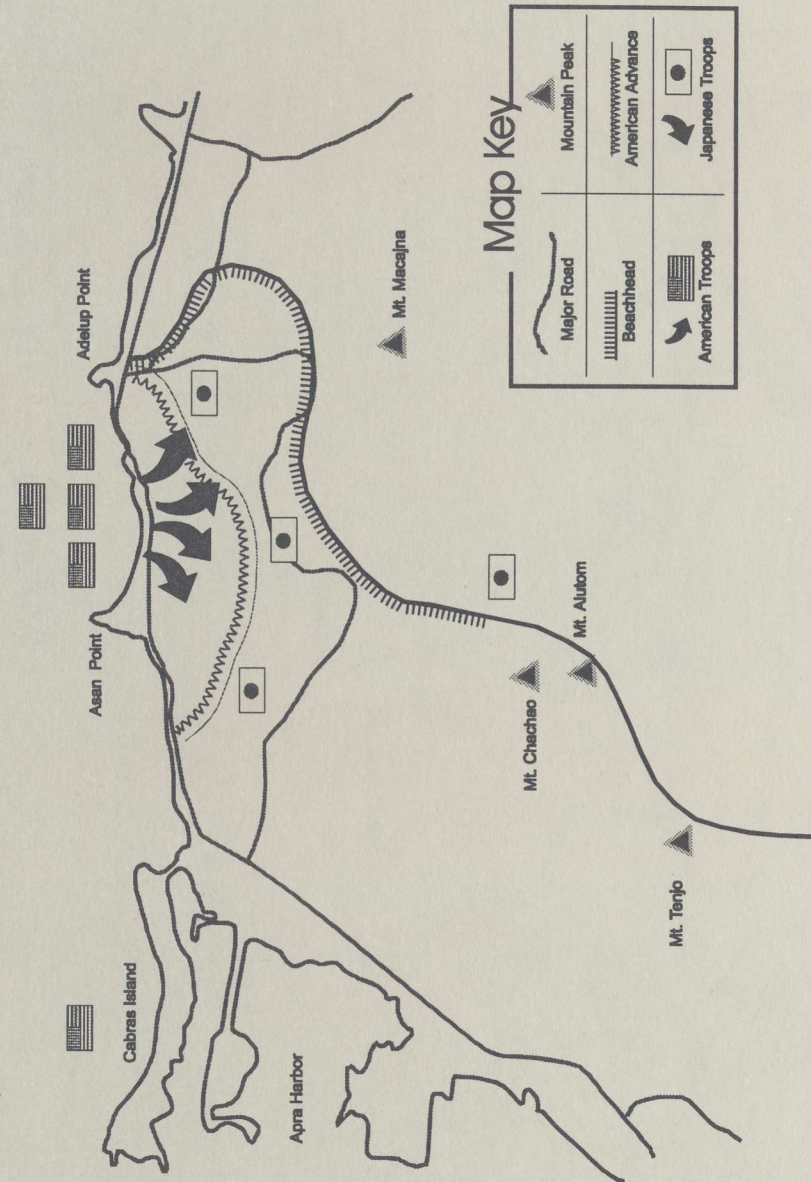
The heat, humidity and lack of water, combined with the inactivity of long shipboard confinement also took its toll on the U.S. troops. Many fell from sheer exhaustion. Due to the intense downpours of the rainy season (approximately 30 inches or more in June and July alone) and the heavy bombardment, Asan was literally a sea of mud. The tangled mass of jungle growth, jagged limestone, heaped boulders, and rubble impeded movement and made visual contact difficult.

By July 25-26, the Japanese had called for reinforcements. That night Japanese troops attempted a banzai counter assault on Asan Point. Except for a few penetrations, the American lines held (Map C). It was the last major Japanese assault; 3,200 Japanese soldiers were lost that night. Each side fought fiercely, but on July 29, the beachhead was secured and the Japanese retreated to

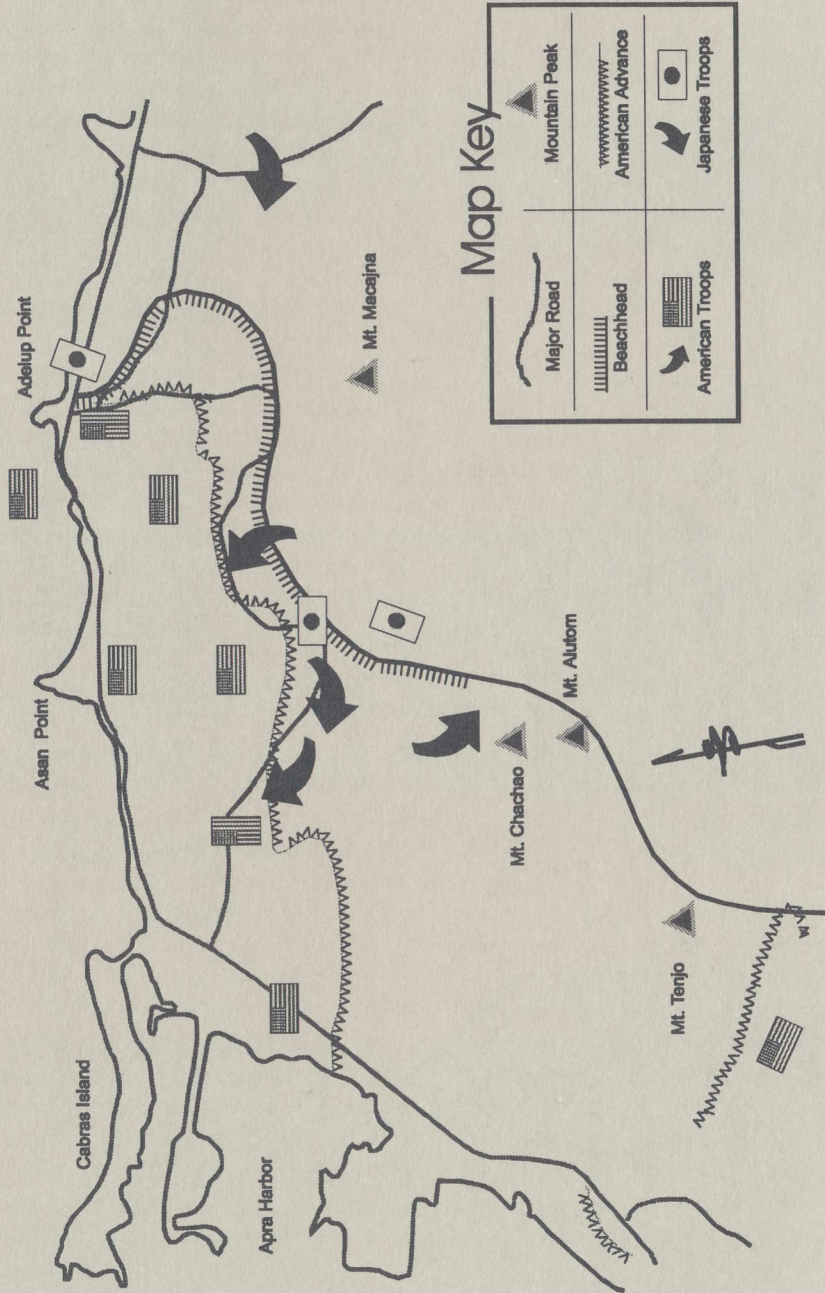
the north of the island (Map D).

It wasn't until August 10 that the Americans successfully eliminated organized Japanese resistance on the rest of Guam. The last major stand made by the Japanese was near Mount Mataguac in Yigo. The site is marked today by a Japanese shrine.

Of the 55,000 U.S. troops that landed on the island, 1,747 were killed in action or died of wounds.



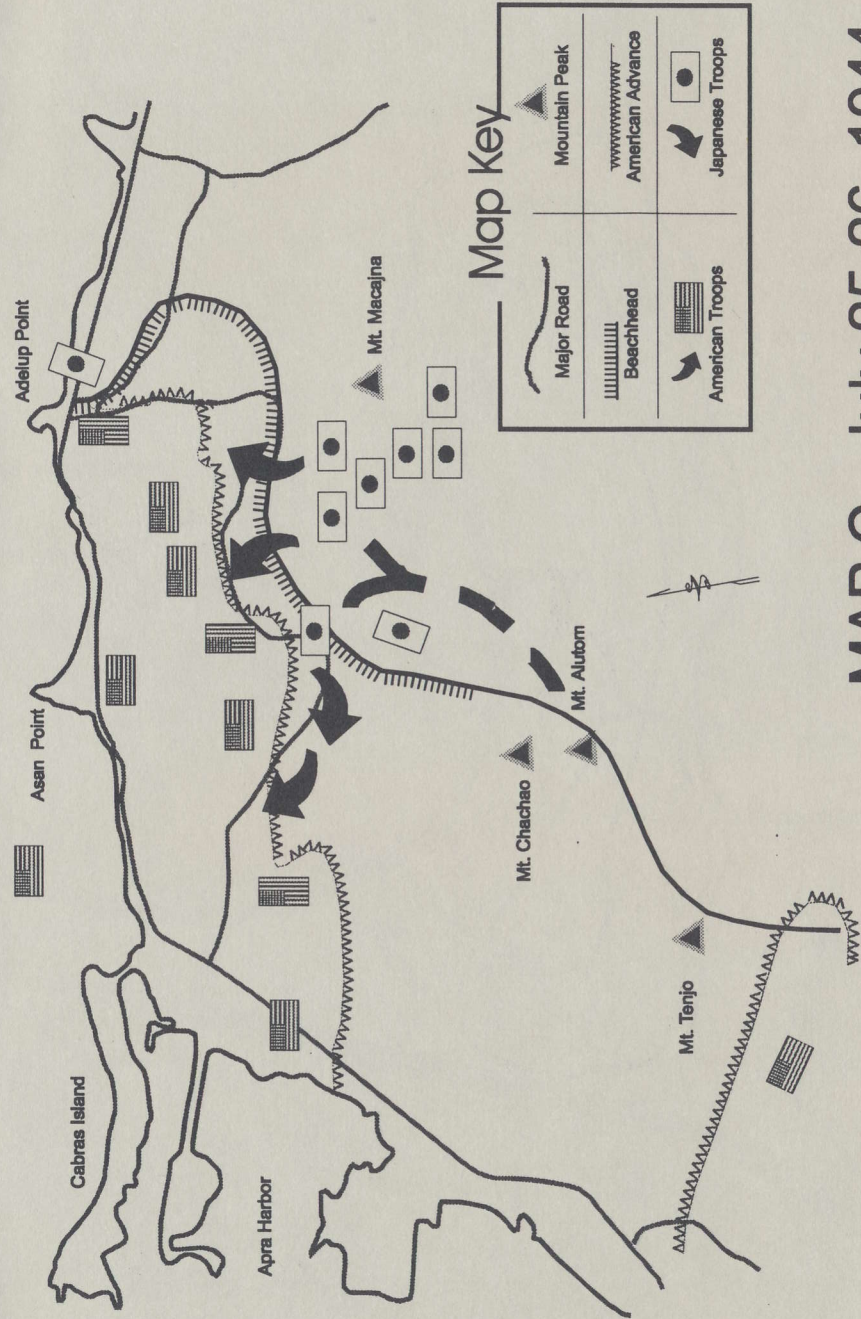
MAP A - July 21-22, 1944



Map Key

Major Road	Mountain Peak
Beachhead	American Advance
American Troops	Japanese Troops
American Troops	Japanese Troops

MAP B - July 23-24, 1944



Map Key

Major Road	Mountain Peak
Beachhead	American Advance
American Troops	Japanese Troops
American Troops	Japanese Troops

MAP C - July 25-26, 1944

Asan Point

CORAL REEF

Liberator's Memorial

Mabini Monuments (2)

Restroom

3rd Marine Monument

Landing Monument

Gun Enplacement 2

Trails

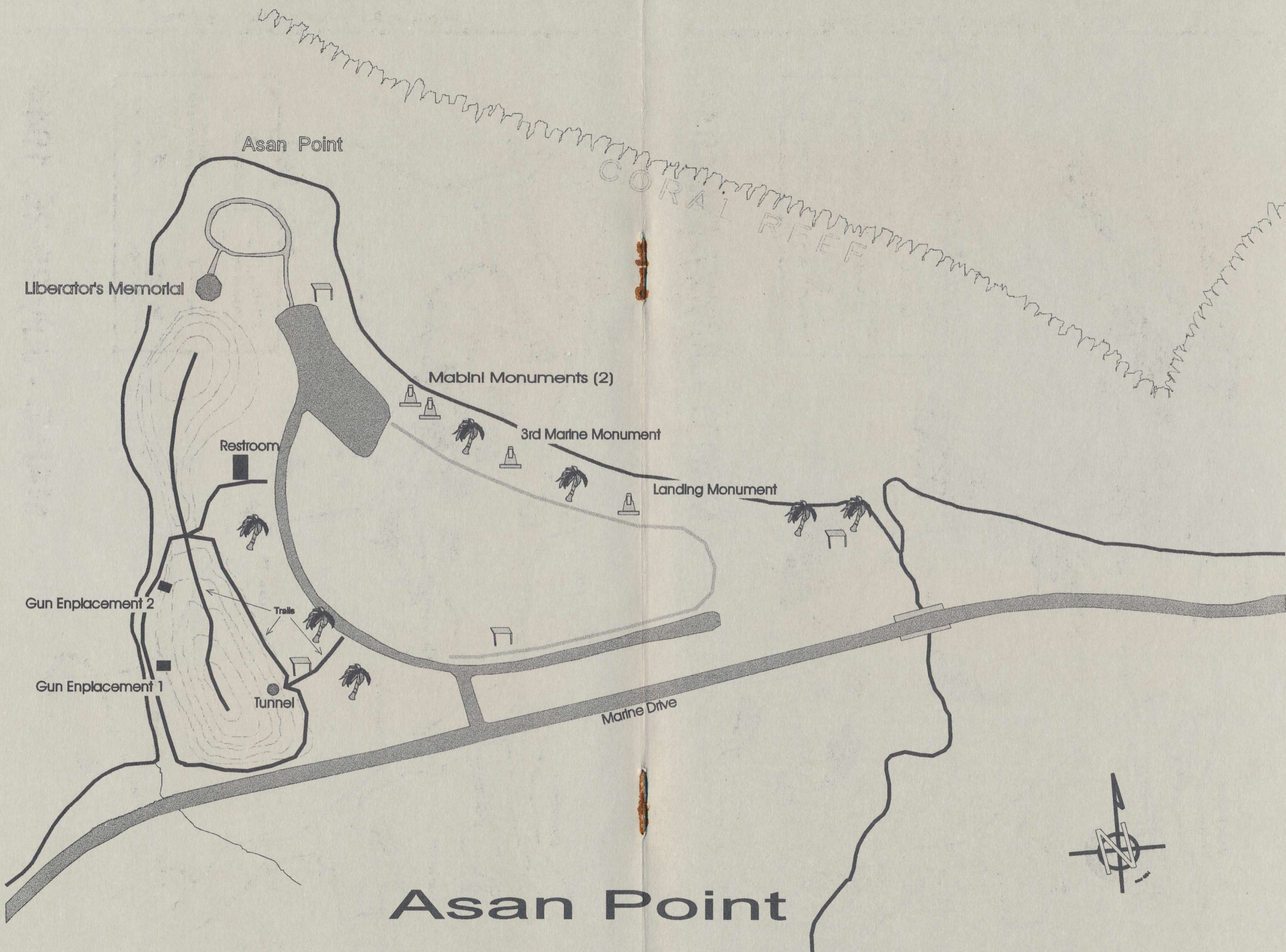
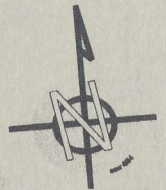
Gun Enplacement 1

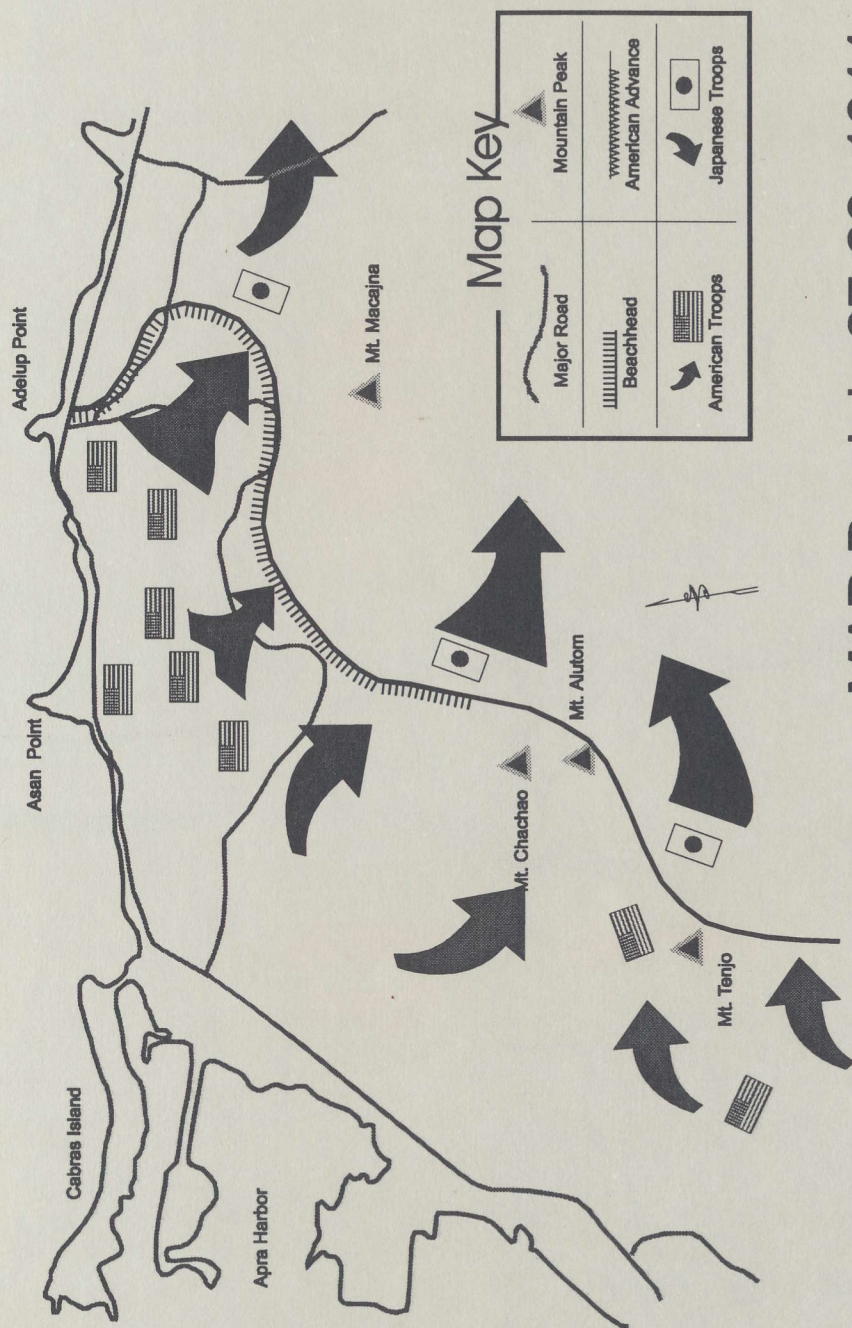
Tunnel

Marine Drive

Asan Point

Asan Beach Unit, War in the Pacific NHP





MAP D - July 27-29, 1944

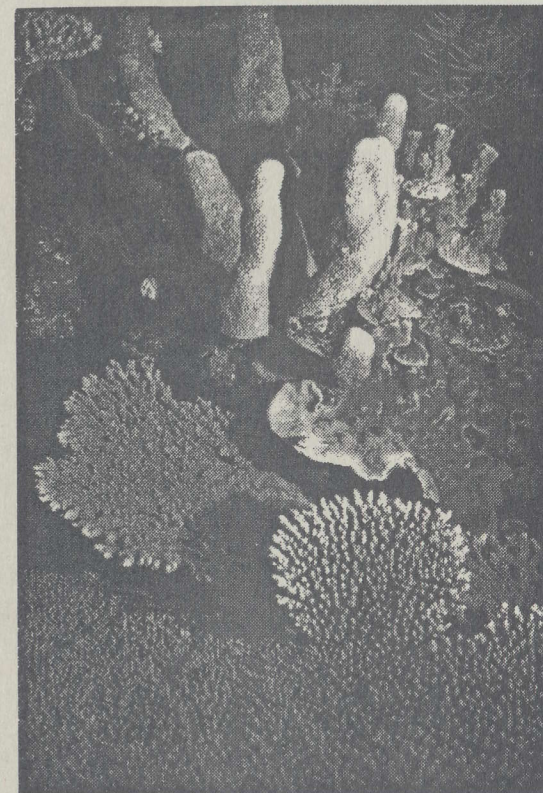
Another 5,250 were wounded. Japanese defenders and Korean labor force numbered about 18,500. Only 1,250 were taken prisoner; the rest were either killed in action, died of wounds, or committed suicide. The exact number of Guamanian casualties is unknown. Just prior to the assault most of the Chamorro people were moved to detention camps on the other side of the island, which (ironically) saved many lives.

THE REEF

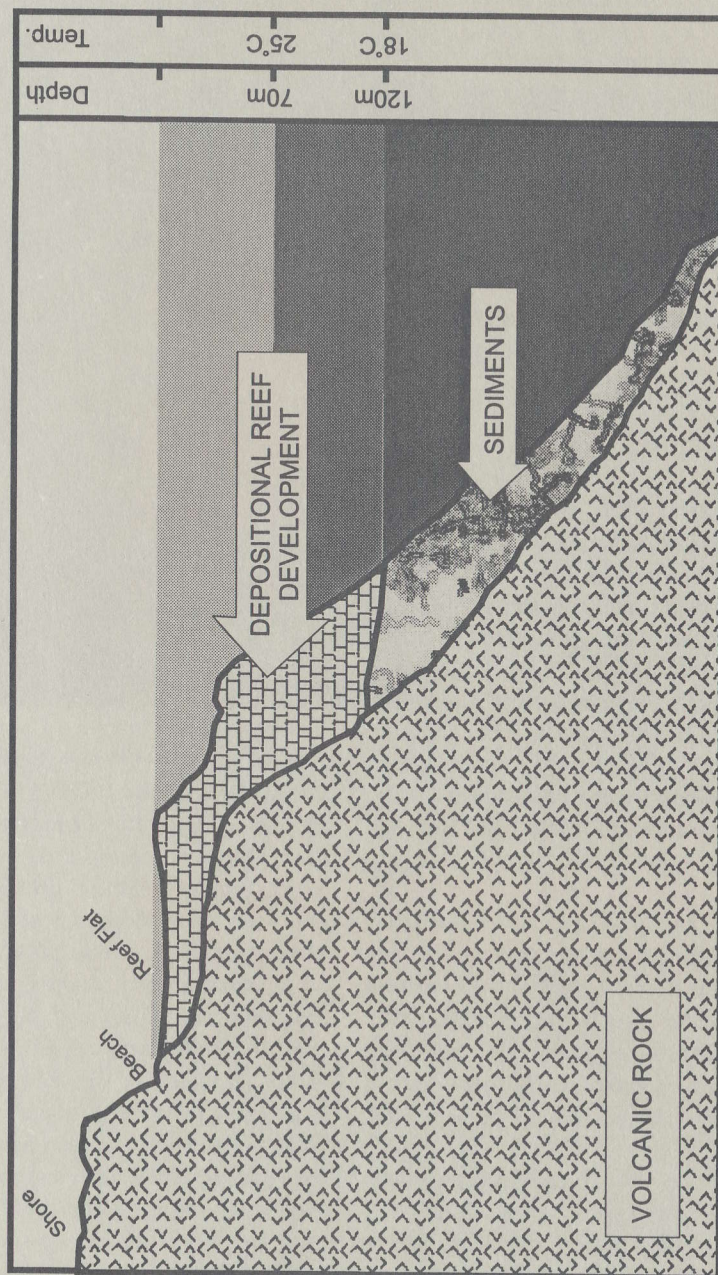
Have you noticed in Guam (as on other Pacific Islands) that waves break far from shore? You can tell by the location of the wave crests and the different color of the water where the coral reef stops and the deeper blue ocean begins. Swimming is easy shoreward of the breakers because the water is relatively shallow and calm, and the turquoise-blue water is incredibly clear.

Most of Guam is surrounded by either a fringing or barrier coral reef that causes the ocean's energy to be expended on the outer edge of the reef rather than on the beach. Note how the outer reef in Asan Bay makes a "V" toward shore just east of Asan River.

Corals and algae, primitive marine animals, thrive in the warm, shallow, and clear water. Guam's surface water is 82-86°F (28-30°C) all year, well within the range needed by coral. The



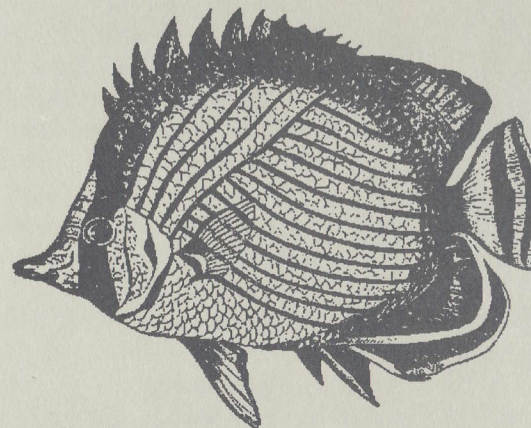
shallow water, 0-335 feet (0-100 meters) but mostly less than 100 feet (30 meters), must be clear to allow sunlight penetration. Most corals co-exist with algae which require light for photosynthesis, thus restricting the depth of live coral. These organisms exude limy secretions which subsequently harden into external skeletons. Over time, this lime (or calcium) builds upon itself to form the reef. The edge of the reef, where the waves first hit shallow water, marks the boundary between the deep ocean (in this case the Philippine Sea) and the shallow shoreward area called the reef flat, which may be only 4 feet deep or less (1.2 meters). In some parts of Guam (Apra Harbor and Cocos Lagoon) as elsewhere



Typical Reef Profile

in the tropical Pacific, there may be only a narrow reef flat and the outer reef is separated from the shore by a deep salt-water lagoon. This reef is then called a **barrier reef**.

part of a complex ecosystem which also includes seaweeds, seagrasses, phytoplankton (microscopic floating plants), zooplankton (microscopic floating animals), crustaceans (crabs and shrimps), mollusks (snails, clams, oysters), corals, echinoderms (sea urchins and starfish) as well as the so-popular fishes. Biologists say that coral reefs are to the marine world what tropical rainforests are to life on land. They support the most diverse ecosystems in the oceans.

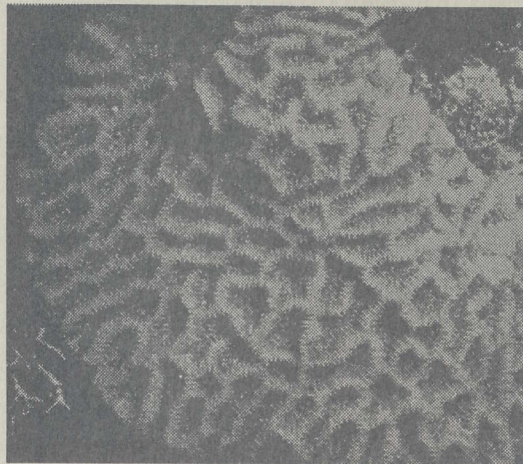


Not only do coral reefs provide such rich habitat for marine life, they have also traditionally provided food resources for native islanders, in Guam the Chamorro. You may see fishermen with poles or nets gathering fish and other food from the reefs and lagoons surrounding the island.

Guam lies in what biologists call the Indo-West Pacific zoogeographic region. This part of the Pacific is particularly rich in fish, with about 870 species in waters around the Marianas. (In contrast, Hawaii has about 460 inshore species; and the Philippines to the west has over 2000 species.) The greatest number are located in the coral reef ecosystem because of its complexity and variety of depth zones.

The complexity of the reef ecosystem creates the variety of habitats that support the colorful fishes the typify tropical islands. But the fish are only a





sandy beaches are actually tiny pieces of eroded coral.

(5) They serve as protective barriers against high seas, from typhoons or tsunamis (commonly called tidal waves).

Coral reefs around the world are increasingly being threatened by pollution, damage from boating and anchors, and deliberate destruction. You can do your part in preserving this vital natural resource by not damaging any reef environment or collecting any

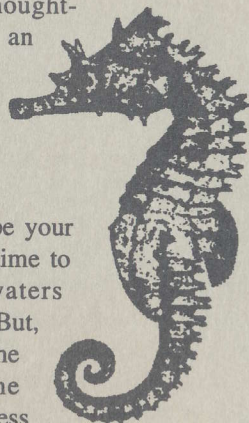
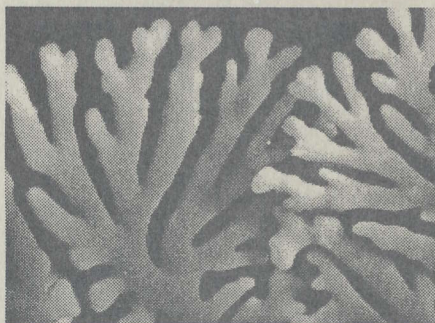
coral, either alive or dead, or any other organism. Not only is it illegal, but it thoughtlessly destroys an important and beautiful resource for future generations.

We hope your visit gives you time to enjoy the waters around Guam. But, remember that the ocean, and the seemingly harmless lagoon, can be potentially dangerous. Be alert to the potential dangers of unpredictable currents or tides. Always use proper equipment, respect the marine life, and never swim alone.

Return to the base of Asan Ridge by the restroom building, and continue your walk towards Marine Drive.

Coral reefs are an important component of tropical Pacific islands for many reasons:

- (1) They provide habitat for a rich variety of marine life of interest to novice and scientist alike.
- (2) They provide food resources for native islanders.
- (3) Their beauty attracts tourists and provides recreation for both visitors and island residents.
- (4) Old and dead coral is a source of aggregate in an environment where sand and gravel is scarce. Most of the white



WALK #3 - JAPANESE FORTIFICATIONS ON ASAN POINT

Japanese Tunnel

Walk on the grassy area toward Marine Drive. On the eastern side of Asan Ridge (see centerfold map) you can see a Japanese tunnel. Look for large roots on the exposed limestone cliff, the last exposure of rock before Marine Drive. Below the roots are some large dead tree trunks lying at a slight angle, almost horizontal. Access is somewhat difficult through the undergrowth, but you will see a faint trail through the grass that will take you to the tunnel. The tunnel goes straight in for about 25 feet before making a right-angle turn to the left into darkness.

This tunnel is just one example of the many Japanese fortifications that were dug by forced Chamorro labor.

Although the vegetation may be scratchy, there is little need to worry about snakes or poisonous plants. There is the possibility, however, of an encounter with a brown tree snake. This snake's bite is relatively harmless to most people--about the severity of a bee sting--but can be potentially dangerous to persons who are very elderly, very young, or in poor health.



A marine investigates a building in Asan, which was destroyed by the bombardment.

Trail Along Marine Drive

The following directions take you through the roadcut to the west side of Asan Point. The trail is rocky and uneven; watch your step.

Follow the mowed path up to the powerpole near the road and walk **inside the guard railing** through the roadcut. When you see a broad path leading from a power pole off to the right, follow it through the jungle. As you enter any of these historic structures, remember two important points. The caves and concrete are old and have not been stabilized. For your own safety, watch your footing and your head. Please do your part as well to preserve these

pieces of history for everyone who visits War in the Pacific National Historical Park. Do not deface or remove any artifacts.

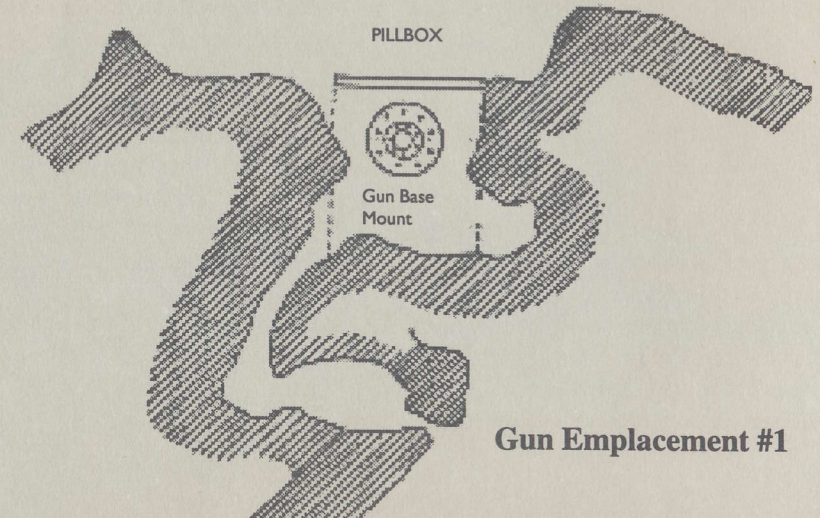
Gun Emplacement #1

The small river emptying into Piti Bay to your left is the Matgue River. When you reach the shoreline, you will come to a shallow cave. Behind a straight, low concrete wall are the remains of a steel gun base. After the landing, Marines reported finding three 20-cm short barrel naval guns in this area. For this fortification, the Japanese took advantage of a large,



winding crevice in the limestone cliff. For preservation and safety precautions, the original structure has now been reinforced with metal beams and wire fencing. The crevice extends back a short distance before turning and rising to the left, where there is a small opening in the cliff. **Do not enter this area; the cave part of the structure is closed to the public.**

and algae reef that was subsequently uplifted along with the island. Notice how sharp and jagged the rocks are. **A fall on these rocks would do serious damage to your skin, so be careful!** Limestone is easily dissolved in carbonic acid. Rainwater mixed with a little carbon dioxide from the air creates a weak form of this acid (any carbonated soft drink is stronger). When raindrops hit the limestone over hundreds of years, little bits



Gun Emplacement #1

In this cave, in others, or along the trail, you may see coconuts that have been tied to roots or rocks. The partially severed coconuts, with the meat exposed, serve as lures for coconut crabs, which are a food source for the Chamorros. Gathering of food resources from the reef and shoreline areas is allowed by law, so please do not disturb any coconut lures that you may find.

of the rock are dissolved, leaving the little sharp, jagged peaks that make the rocks an uncomfortable resting place.

As you continue walking around the point, stay toward the rocks along the shore to avoid the underbrush. The rocks are limestone, part of an old coral

The prominently undercut rocks along the shore have been sculpted by high tides and storm surges. Periodically high water dissolves the lower portion of the limestone rocks, undercutting the cliff. Eventually, the upper portion breaks away, maybe during a storm or an earthquake, and falls into the sea - an example of how the rocky coastline is continually changing.

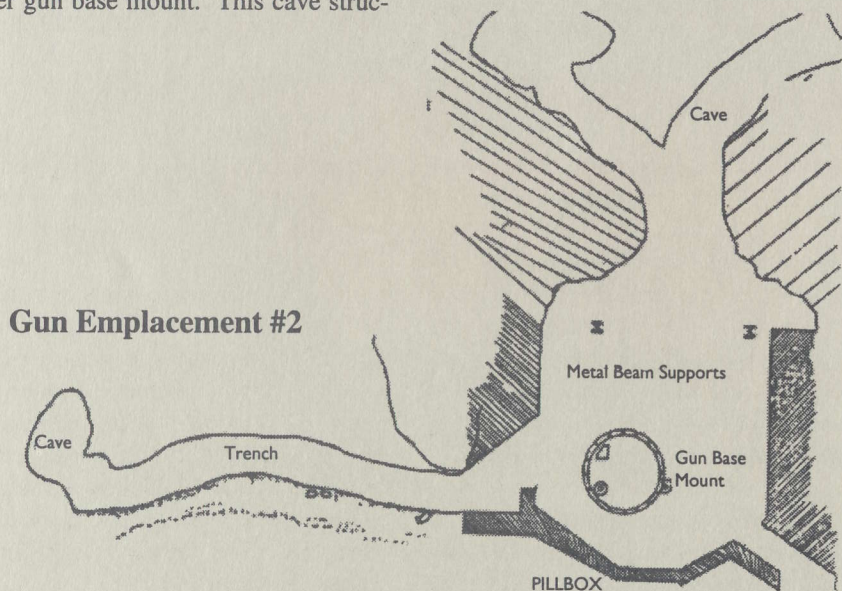
Where you see a large undercut rock on the left which at high tide will be a tiny island, the trail goes away from the water slightly. As the trail goes up into the rocky area, notice a large tree on the right that has been killed by a strangler fig, also called banyon or nunu. The fig begins growing as a vine, then sends down many roots which eventually envelope and kill the host tree. This is a common occurrence in jungles because the plants are competing for light at the top of the vegetation canopy. The best way for the vine to get "its place in the sun" is to take it away from an existing tree.

Gun Emplacement #2

The trail goes between the large rocks you see ahead. When the trail again reaches a beach area, it turns sharply inland where it will lead you to a second fortification. In a shallow cave behind an angled concrete wall is another gun base mount. This cave struc-

ture has also been reinforced with metal beams and wire. A glance at the ceiling of the cave will tell you why! The cave extends up to the hilltop (you saw it from the trail as you climbed the hill), but the rocks are unstable and dangerous. Entering beyond the gun mount area could cause injury to yourself or irreparable damage to the historic site. **Please do not climb!**

Near the entrance to this cave is a large tree with large and deeply cut (lobate) leaves. This is one of many types of breadfruit, valuable as food crop in the tropics. The ship *Bounty* was on a mission of procuring and disseminating breadfruit when the infamous mutiny occurred. This particular species is seedless and must be propagated and spread with human help.

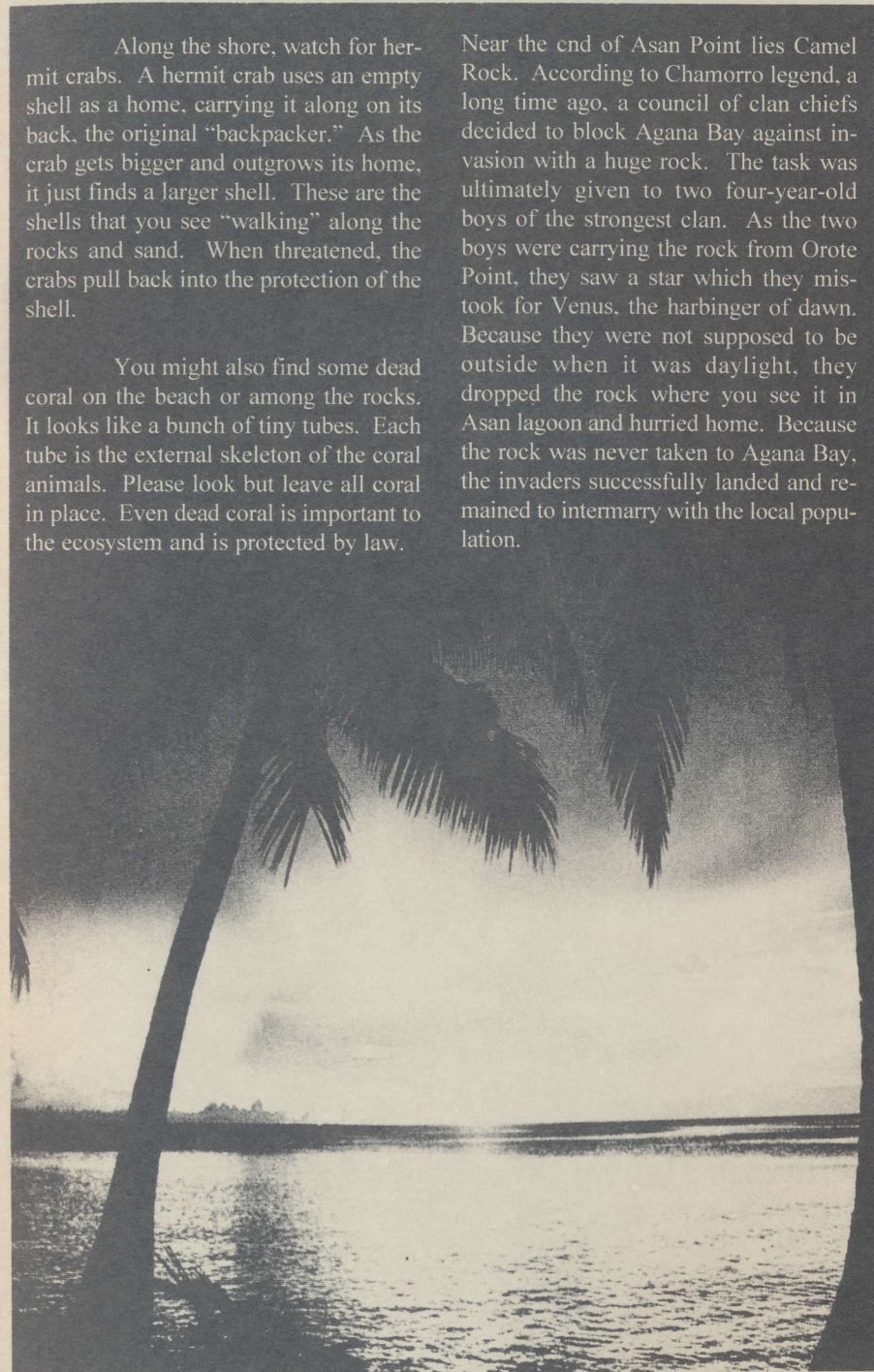


Gun Emplacement #2

Along the shore, watch for hermit crabs. A hermit crab uses an empty shell as a home, carrying it along on its back, the original "backpacker." As the crab gets bigger and outgrows its home, it just finds a larger shell. These are the shells that you see "walking" along the rocks and sand. When threatened, the crabs pull back into the protection of the shell.

You might also find some dead coral on the beach or among the rocks. It looks like a bunch of tiny tubes. Each tube is the external skeleton of the coral animals. Please look but leave all coral in place. Even dead coral is important to the ecosystem and is protected by law.

Near the end of Asan Point lies Camel Rock. According to Chamorro legend, a long time ago, a council of clan chiefs decided to block Agana Bay against invasion with a huge rock. The task was ultimately given to two four-year-old boys of the strongest clan. As the two boys were carrying the rock from Orote Point, they saw a star which they mistook for Venus, the harbinger of dawn. Because they were not supposed to be outside when it was daylight, they dropped the rock where you see it in Asan lagoon and hurried home. Because the rock was never taken to Agana Bay, the invaders successfully landed and remained to intermarry with the local population.



War in the Pacific National Historical Park

was established in 1978

"to commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of those
participating in the campaigns of the
Pacific theater of World War II,
and to conserve and interpret outstanding
natural, scenic and historic values and objects
on the island of Guam
for the benefit and enjoyment
of present and future generations."

Produced by

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Published by

Arizona Memorial Museum Association

1994

