

No regrets: 'My duty was to be there,' recalls Iwo survivor

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NEW BRITAIN — Admiral Chester Nimitz called uncommon valor a common virtue at the Battle of Iwo Jima, a tiny piece of rock and misery that cost 6,800 American lives between February 16 and March 16, 1945.

Of those, 100 were from Connecticut, their names now etched forever into the cold black granite of the National Iwo Jima Memorial off Route 9. With a single bell toll, each name was called out in turn Sunday for the park's annual Memorial Day Ceremony.

Five members of the Iwo Jima Survivors were on hand for the ceremony, complete with military color guard and a bag pipe player.

Shelton resident Franklin Beattie was a fresh-faced Marine private first class at the battle. The memories still linger. "It was all bad," he said. "It was like a nightmare."

Even so, there are no regrets. "My duty was to be there," Beattie said.

Kerry Hotaling, himself the son of an Iwo Jima survivor, touched on the memories best during the ceremony, reading a first-hand account from the book "Never in Doubt," an oral history of the battle.

Hotaling read an account by a Marine quartermaster named James Boyle who at the time was in charge of a small unit of men responsible for ferrying weapons and ammunition to front-line units, and carrying casualties on stretchers out.

"I didn't know anybody was shooting at me. I just did what I had to do," Hotaling read from Boyle's account. "You just went ahead and did your job."

Boyle was so busy, so caught up in doing his job that he barely noticed the now famous flag raising over Mount Suribachi, the image of which the Iwo Jima memorial now bears testament.

During the ceremony, Iwo Jima survivor Mike Timura touched on the history of Memorial Day, much more than a long weekend but a day now 146 years old, first celebrated as Decoration Day in 1866 in Waterloo, New York, with the laying of flowers on the graves of those killed during the Civil War.

A Farmington resident, Timura was a bombardier in the Army Air Corps at Iwo Jima. Service members killed in defense of their country "deserves a big thank you," he said.

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Rob Heyl, Photographer

Sailors and Marines from the Naval Training Center in Plainville provided the Color Guard at the ceremony honoring the hundred Connecticut residents killed in the battle. 05.29.11 for 05.30.11