



Support Our Survivors of Iwo Jima

February 19 – March 26, 1945

“uncommon valor was a common virtue”

43 Brinley Way
Newington, CT 06111

**1st ISSUE: SOS TELEGRAM
MAY 2009**

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Message from the Founders

We would like to welcome all readers of this, our first **Support Our Survivors of Iwo Jima** Telegram. Longtime friends and volunteers of the Survivors, Marianne Mihalyo and Gary Roy, developed the idea for formation of this support group from the desire to directly, efficiently and quickly disseminate information and aid the Iwo Jima Survivors Association, Inc. with their goals. We are inviting volunteers to join our group, meet and become friends with the Survivors and help them with their activities. Sometime in the future, we will hold our first meeting. Our mission and goals are presently being refined.

★ Mission Statement

The Mission of the **Support Our Survivors of Iwo Jima** is to offer help to all Iwo Jima Survivors as a way of showing respect and thanking them for their military service and sacrifices. We will work to help them accomplish goals they have, recognize their service, keep alive the memory of the WWII Battle of Iwo Jima, the veterans who fought and died there and to promote education, understanding and respect for WWII Veterans.

★ Membership

- Membership is open to any individual who supports the mission and goals of the **SOS of Iwo Jima**.
- All prospective members shall be admitted to the organization after approval by the Officers.
- Membership is free but donations are welcome to help cover office supplies.
- Individual membership is renewed annually after a vote of the Officers.
- Since it is our mission to serve, members are expected to participate in at least 2 volunteer activities each year.

Feel free to contact us if you would like to join or with any questions, ideas or thoughts you may have.

Sincerely,
Marianne Mihalyo and Gary Roy

Previous Events

During the past few months, we arranged for several articles to be published in local newspapers highlighting survivors who live in those areas. There was also a ceremony held to remember the 64th Anniversary of the Flag Raising on Mt. Suribachi. This was featured on Fox 61 news and WDRC radio by an interview between Ray Rivard and Brad Davis. The story was also published locally in the Herald. The West Hartford Life newspaper's April Edition also featured a story about survivors James Ettinger and Judge William Bieluch.

A Ceremony to Remember the 64th Anniversary of the Flag Raising on Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima

by Marianne Mihalyo

On February 22, 2009, a ceremony was held at the National Iwo Jima Memorial Park to commemorate the 64th anniversary of the historic flag raising that took place at the top of Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima Island. This WWII battle was significant for a number of reasons. The island was at a strategic location and needed for an air base where U.S. B-29 bombers could land for repair or refueling. It was also located midway between the Mariana Islands and mainland Japan and could be used as a launching point for the invasion of Japan if necessary. The U.S. Marines landed on the shores of Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945. On February 23rd, after five days of fighting, a Marine platoon made its way up Mt. Suribachi and raised the American flag, the first time ever on Japanese soil. Six Marines raised the flag, which sent a cheer from the U.S. servicemen on shore below, ships sounded their horns and site of the flag raising boosted the morale of the soldiers. The smaller flag was later replaced by a larger one. This second flag raising was captured in the famous Joe Rosenthal photo after which our monument is modeled. The battle continued until March 26, 1945 and proved to be the bloodiest in the history of the Marines. There were 6,821 Americans who lost their lives on the island, 100 of them from Connecticut. Also, 27 Congressional Medals of Honor were awarded, the most for any battle in history.



The first flag raising, replacing the 1st flag with the 2nd larger one, raising the second flag, cheers from American servicemen.



Despite the cold and rainy day, members of the public were in attendance for the ceremony. About 25-30 dedicated supporters met at 1:00 p.m. to remember the anniversary of the flag raising and honor those that fought and died there. We were pleased to have on hand, survivors from the battle along with members of the National Iwo Jima Memorial Historical Foundation, Inc. and the public. Marianne Mihalyo started the ceremony by giving a brief history of the two flag raisings. A Marine blessing was given by Mr. William



Wood, past president of the Iwo Jima Survivors Association, Inc.

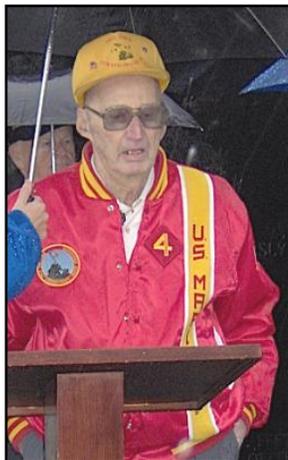
Mr. William Wood



The blessing was followed by a heartfelt version of "God Bless America" sung by Mr. Jim Boyle, also a survivor and member of the Association.



Mr. Jim Boyle attended with his two daughters and Joyce, his nurse. Mr. Jim Boyle, a Sergeant from the Marines 4th Division, performed the honors of laying a wreath at the monument to remember the anniversary and the 100 men from Connecticut that were killed on Iwo Jima.



Mr. William Wood explains what this day means to the survivors.

A speech on behalf of the Iwo Jima Survivors Association was given by past president Mr. William Wood who was a Sergeant in the US Marines, 4th Division. In addition, a speech was given by Dr. John Conant, current president of the National Iwo Jima Memorial Historical Foundation and the proud son of a survivor.



Dr. John Conant talks of memories of his father, a survivor.

The names of the 100 men from Connecticut KIA were read by Mr. William Wood and Mr. Charlie Gellatly, also a survivor, Seaman 2nd Class, Navy, Amphibious Forces. After each name was read, a bell was tolled by survivors Mr. Joseph Roman, 3rd Joint Assault Signaling Company, 3rd Marine Division and Mr. Gerard Stewart, USNR Midshipman, Merchant Marines. We were truly honored to have these survivors present to participate in this ceremony.



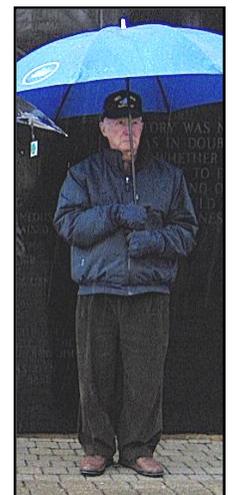
Mr. Charlie Gellatly



Mr. William Wood reads the names of KIA



Mr. Joseph Roman



Mr. Gerard Stewart



The anniversary ceremony was enhanced by the generous contribution of special volunteers. On hand was the (Antique) Veterans Honor Guard of Westbrook who kindly provided the honor guard, rifle volley salute and echo taps to honor all Iwo Jima veterans. After the ceremony, they presented each Survivor with a spent rifle shell.

A large, stunning memorial wreath of fresh red, white and blue flowers was generously donated by the Newington VFW Post 9836, the same post Association founder and survivor Dr. George Gentile belonged to.



We were pleased to have with us for the first time, Mr. Richard Manning, a senior music student from CCSU, who honored the KIA by performing taps. Bagpipe music was provided by our longtime supporter, Mr. Pat Whelan. We are grateful to have these special groups volunteer their time and skills to make this ceremony memorable.



There were some new faces in the audience, Krystal and Sarina, who helped pass out brochures and programs. Eileen Hurst from the CCSU Veterans History Project was on hand to let all veterans how they could participate in this project (www.ccsu.edu/VHP). We hope that many more Foundation members will participate in helping to organize future events. This event was organized by the Iwo Jima Survivors Association, Inc. and the National Iwo Jima Memorial Historical Foundation Inc.



Kevin Jarvis and Diane, both children of survivors, drove from the Boston area to attend. Mrs. Stewart watches as her husband, a survivor, tolls the bell.

Survivors still telling the story

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Sunday, February 22, 2009 10:29 PM EST
BY KAITLIN McCALLUM Staff writer

NEW BRITAIN — Undeterred by Sunday's pouring rain, a small group of Iwo Jima survivors and their families gathered to mark the battle's 64th anniversary. They huddled under umbrellas around the monument, reading the names and recalling the dead.



John Boyle, now 87, is a survivor from Wethersfield and says he's never failed to observe the anniversary. Boyle worked with a survivors group, formed in 1987, to see the monument built. For years, Boyle cared for the monument, raising the flags and maintaining the park. Since he's given up driving, Boyle doesn't spend as much time at the monument, but he came Saturday to read the names, lay the wreath and sing "God Bless America."

As the rain poured off the marble, etched with the 100 names of Connecticut men killed in action on Iwo Jima, attendees read the story of the first and second flag raisings on Mt. Suribachi Feb. 23, 1945. Atop the monument, the six figures, cast in bronze, raise an American flag.

Virginia Stewart, of Wethersfield, clutched a cane to push snow away from the stones, looking for the name of her husband, Gerard Stewart, who was one of the five survivors at the ceremony Sunday. The rest of the group, 200 to 300 scattered across the country, were kept away by health problems and the weather.

Diane Kuebler and Kevin Jarvis, both children of survivors, drove down from Boston for the ceremony. Kuebler pointed to a stone engraved with the name of her dad, Arthur O. Kuebler, a Seabee. Jarvis's father, John F. Jarvis, and his cousin, George Jarvis, are memorialized a few steps away. Both died 10 years ago, but Kuebler and Jarvis continue to remember the battle their fathers fought. "We were there at the 60th anniversary, at Iwo Jima," Kuebler said. This year, the pair stood in the rain as shots were fired, taps was played and the significance of the battle was recounted for the 64th time. The group leaned in, straining to hear survivor Bill Wood, a Marine sergeant, read the Marine Corps Prayer over the rush of traffic and the rain tapping on umbrellas.

Dr. John Conant, president, of the National Iwo Jima Memorial Historical Foundation in Newington, recalled his long struggle to understand the battle. His father, an Iwo Jima survivor, put a small framed copy of the famous photo, taken by Joe Rosenthal, in his room when he was 5. But Conant learned little about the battle besides misinformation for over 40 years. He fears that the memory of the battle — and its significance — will be lost.

"It's extremely important," he said, water dripping from his face. "If you think back to the Declaration of Independence, the guys that signed that paper were at great risk. Many were killed and tortured and they did it for freedom." The men at Iwo Jima defended that freedom, Conant said. "It's about more than just the 100 men from Connecticut lost in the battle, or the 6,821 Americans who died."

That's why the group initially came together, explained Marilyn Mihalyo, vice president of the foundation. Dr. George Gentile, who lived in Newington, set out to find other survivors in 1987. Until 1995, when the monument was completed, the group he founded worked to raise the money and clear the land.

"The survivors raised all the money — \$450,000 — by shaking hands in front of grocery stores and marching in parades," Conant said. And it remains important to them, though the survivors are slowly turning over responsibility to the foundation. "We're trying to get more members to do education in schools and speak to civic groups," Conant said.

The group has other plans, too, Mihalyo said, to raise awareness and care for both the survivors and the park. But they need volunteers to do it. Mihalyo herself was won over by the story of the survivors' struggles and suffering on the island. While she was just visiting the park to take a picture of the monument, Mihalyo met Gentile in 1995. "The guys are so wonderful, you can't help but be involved with them once you get to know them," she said. "It's amazing what they had to go through and how young they were. I feel that we owe these veterans so much."

Valor under fire: Marine veterans remember Iwo Jima

Today, the 64th anniversary of the WWII flag raising on Iwo Jima, 2 veterans who were there reflect on its meaning.

By Kala Kachmar
For the Journal Inquirer
Published: Monday, February 23, 2009 12:41 PM EST

When Howard Whittaker stepped onto a beach of volcanic ash on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima during World War II, the first thing he saw was a dead U.S. Marine. It was 1945 amidst bloody fighting in the Battle of Iwo Jima.

"There were bodies scattered all over — not just hit with bullets, but blown to pieces," said Whittaker, a Marine during the war. "It was hell on earth was what it was."

But Whittaker not only witnessed the brutality of the war but also one of its most historic moments — the raising of an American flag atop Mount Suribachi, which at 556 feet is the highest point on Iwo Jima.

Today marks the 64th anniversary of that famous flag raising, and there were actually two that day. The first, a smaller flag, was raised at the summit by mid morning after fierce fighting by the Marines. Deemed too small to be seen at a distance, however, it was replaced by a second, larger flag raised soon thereafter. It was this second flag raising — by five Marines and one Navy Corpsman — that was immortalized in a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal.

Approximately one-third of all Marines killed in action during World War II were killed on Iwo Jima, a volcanic island about 650 miles south of Tokyo. More than 100,000 Americans fought there, and 6,821 died as a result — 5,931 of them Marines. More than 19,000 Marines and soldiers were wounded. The flags were raised after the Marines captured Mount Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945. It would take another month of battle for them to secure the island from the Japanese.

Whittaker, 84, who recently moved from Windsor Locks to Farmington, was an engineer in the 4th Pioneer Battalion of the 4th Marine Division during World War II. He enlisted out of Hartford in 1942 — just a day after turning 18.

Witness to history

Three days into the Battle of Iwo Jima, Whittaker was knocked unconscious by what he thinks was a shell. He was brought to a nearby hospital ship where the injured were treated. And it was from that ship he witnessed the first flag raising on Iwo Jima. He saw the flag being raised from his ship before going back into battle. "You could hear all the screaming and cheering from the guys on the ship," Whittaker said. "I thought it was the greatest thing in the world." Whittaker said it took great sacrifice to raise the flag, not only for those who died, but also for those who survived.

Later, without officially being discharged by a doctor, Whittaker caught a ride on a small boat that went back to Iwo Jima to retrieve injured men. There, ready to fight again, he reported to his commander. "He told me, 'Whittaker, you're the stupidest damn Marine I ever saw in my life.'" Whittaker doesn't remember anything from the time he went back into battle until the day he boarded the ship to leave the island, which was sometime around Easter 1945. "I don't remember carrying a rifle or nothing," he said. "I was in a fog."

Robert Berger, 84, a lawyer from Enfield, also fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He said the flag raising on Mount Suribachi just meant that he and his fellow Marines would no longer be taking enemy fire from that part of the island. "You were happy that the flag got raised, but that's it," Berger said. Berger never saw either flag being raised because he was fighting elsewhere on the island, but he became aware of it through word of mouth shortly after it happened. "It's not like standing at a ballgame where you're going to stand up, put your hand over heart and listen to someone sing, 'The Star Spangled Banner,'" Berger said. "You were just trying to stay alive."

Important lesson

Berger said it's important for the younger generation to understand what the veterans did for their country, and stressed the importance of taking the initiative to do what has to be done when the need arises. "Everyone has an obligation to stand up when it's necessary and do the job that's required," Berger said. Berger said he lost three of the men that were in his tent on Iwo Jima — Ned Murphy, Charlie Troy Patterson, and Pop Merrick. "I remember the good times,"

Berger said. I try not to remember the bad times.”

Berger joined the military when he turned 18 in 1942, enlisting out of his hometown of New York City. He was a private first class forward observer in the 3rd Battalion of the 14th Regiment of the 4th Marine Division. As a forward observer, he traveled with the infantry and sent coordinates indicating where shells should be dropped.

“When we first landed, we were caught in a crossfire,” Berger said. The Japanese were throwing down fire at him and his battalion from two sides of the island, he said.

Whittaker said when he arrived at the island it took his landing craft vehicle two attempts to make landfall because of all the wreckage. “Naturally, our officers and everyone thought Iwo would be a cakewalk because of all the aerial bombings and naval bombardment we’d done for weeks and weeks and weeks (before the battle),” Whittaker said. “But it didn’t pan out that way.” The Japanese dug out miles of underground tunnels, and even built an underground hospital for their soldiers, Whittaker said.

Fierce fighting

“They’d roll the artillery out, fire, and pull it back it,” Whittaker said.

Berger said the Japanese spent many hours digging themselves into tunnels and caves so they could surprise the Americans. “They were tenacious fighters,” Berger said. The entire island was layered in volcanic ash, which made it extremely difficult for the soldiers to move, Berger said. “You didn’t really walk,” Berger said. “You walked, you crouched, you ran. You hit the deck, you got up and ran some more.”

Whittaker said moving on the island was like trying to walk through grease.

U.S. forces needed to take Iwo Jima so it could be used as a secure air base as an emergency landing site for planes coming back from Japan to Tinian and Saipan, which are in the Northern Mariana Islands. The closest U.S. base was Pearl Harbor — nearly 4,000 miles away from the island.

Whittaker said the only thing relative to the number of casualties on the island was the number of pilots that were saved as a result of the battle.

Iwo Jima was also used as a runway for fighter planes to take off and aid the B-29s that were dropping bombs on Japan.

Berger said he expected to have to invade the Japanese mainland, but the atomic bombs President Harry Truman authorized the military to drop prevented that and ended the war. “We were all able to go home early and get on with our lives,” Berger said.

Memorial in New Britain

In 1995 the National Iwo Jima Memorial Monument in New Britain was built. The monument, which depicts the flag raising on Mount Suribachi as depicted in Rosenthal’s photo, stands 40 feet tall from its base to the top of the flagpole. The flag has 48 stars to make it historically correct — at that time Alaska and Hawaii were not yet states — and the monument is made out of sand and stone that came from Iwo Jima, according to Vincent Thomas, an Iwo Jima survivor and secretary treasurer of the National Iwo Jima Survivors Association. There is one American flag for each of the 100 soldiers who died on Iwo Jima that were from Connecticut, Thomas said. Their names are engraved on the monument.

Berger said he’s been to the monument in New Britain, but not very often. He does, however, attend events that reunite members of the 4th Marine Division.

Every year, the survivor’s association puts on a memorial service at the New Britain memorial on or around the anniversary of the flag raising dedicated to those died on Iwo Jima, Thomas said.

The National Iwo Jima Memorial Historical Foundation, which is based in Connecticut, was created to help sustain the memorial because members of the survivor’s association are getting old, said Marianne Mihalyo, vice president of the foundation. Mihalyo said it’s important to understand what these survivors went through, and that now is a critical time

to remember and honor them because so many World War II veterans are dying each day. "Our freedom today is because of them," she said.

Both Whittaker and Berger are members of the Iwo Jima Survivors Association.

Thomas said there are 130 surviving members from Connecticut and 468 nationally.

"They (the younger generation) should realize the number of people that gave their lives and came out of there crippled so they could have a better life here," Whittaker said.

"War is a terrible thing," Berger said. "People have to understand that those who sacrificed should be respected."

Keeping flame burning undying legacy of Iwo Jima

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2009, by LINDA MEDURA

East Hartford Gazette

Covered with a blanket of volcanic ash, and honeycombed with over 16 miles of underground tunnels built by its Japanese defenders, the 8-square-miles of the island of Iwo Jima are still remembered as one of the bloodiest battles of WWII.

But, as the ranks of those doing the remembering dwindled, they have left behind reminders, large and small, of their encounter with that place and recollections of how high a price was paid by Americans for a place few had ever heard of when the battle was joined.

Some returned and never spoke of Iwo Jima, or what happened when they were there. In just over one month, over 27,000 American soldiers were either wounded or killed in action on Iwo Jima - from February 19 through March 26, 1945. Sixty-four years later, that same number would fill an entire basketball arena (or two) during March Madness.

Robert DeGroat of East Hartford was one of the fortunate ones, not because he had a front row seat at Iwo Jima that month but fortunate in that he was able to return home from the experience.

Just 19, DeGroat was a Navy man, part of the first assault wave of troops who, for 10 weeks, was bombing the tiny island with everything in the Navy arsenal in preparation for a 70,000-strong landing led by the U. S. Marine Corps.

DeGroat passed away in 2006, but before he did, he visited the Iwo Jima Memorial in New Britain many times. He left behind his wife, Louise, to tell his story.

She remembered the day they traveled over to the memorial located just off Route 9 in New Britain for the dedication ceremony in 1995. "He came away so proud and deeply moved," Louise recalled this week. "He was only 17 when he enlisted in the Navy in December of '43. He told me his mother had to sign for him because of his age."

For those who have yet to visit this Connecticut monument – or for those who have been to the original Iwo Jima memorial in Arlington Virginia – its solemn composition of ordinary men has a majestic timelessness. Taken from perhaps the most famous photo of the war, it represents the second flag-raising on Mount Suribachi we now know. Yet knowing that doesn't diminish its effect. The National Iwo Jima Memorial Monument is the only flag-raising monument in the United State specifically dedicated to the memory of the Americans killed at Iwo Jima.



The Connecticut version was conceived and designed by Dr. George Gentile, founder and President of the Iwo Jima Survivors Association and his wife, Winifred, of Newington. His group of survivors – who used to march in East Hartford’s Memorial Day Parade carrying a large American Flag - raised nearly half a million dollars to build it. And it was unveiled to the public February 23, 1995 – the 50th year anniversary of the fighting.

Dr. Gentile died in 2004. His wife remains active in the Foundation and is its current Secretary. “These were just kids who gave their lives at Iwo Jima,” says Marianne A. Mihalyo, Vice President of the National Iwo Jima Memorial Historical Foundation.

The group, along with the Iwo Jima Survivors Association, honored survivors in a recent ceremony at the monument for the 64th anniversary of the Mt. Suribachi flag-raising.

Mihalyo explains that the group is determined to preserve the history of these men and women who are now in their 80s. “If we lose what they have to say about those times, it will be lost forever,” she says.

For those who have never seen it, the Connecticut monument measures almost 40 feet high and has a 48-star American flag flying from the top of its flagpole to make the statue historically correct. On its polished black granite front are inscribed the names of the 100 Connecticut men who died in the battle for Iwo Jima.

Sculpted by Joseph Petrovics of Sculpture House Casting of New York City, the six figures raising the flag are cast in bronze and, if standing erect, each would be 9 feet in height. The battle gear and clothing of the flag raisers is authentically reproduced. Even more impressive is the fact that rocks from the actual historic flag-raising site at Mt. Suribachi have been placed at the feet of the flag raisers in the statue and sand from the invasion beach has been incorporated into the concrete base of the monument.

Also on site is the Chaplains/Medical Corps Memorial and directly in front of that, is the “Walkway of Valor.” The walkway consists of bricks with the names of members of the Survivors Association, including that of East Hartford’s Robert DeGroat.

An eternal flame, lit in 1995 on Veterans Day, burns 24 hours a day, 365 days a year - a reminder of the sacrifices made in defense of freedom throughout the world during WWII.

It is not uncommon to hear that personal stories about the war remain untold until much later in a veteran’s life. In his later years, East Hartford’s DeGroat became a flag person. According to his wife, he would make copies of how to put up a flag and then distributed them at any property flying the American flag. He also wasn’t shy about stopping at a person’s house to tell them that they were displaying their flag incorrectly.

“I used to tell him that folks might not appreciate that, but he’d just smile and say that if you’re going to hang the American flag, you should hang it right.” “I don’t think he ever forgot his experiences at Iwo Jima – all the sacrifices that were made by young men like himself - or how lucky he was to have made it back home alive.”

Mihalyo is driven to make sure veterans like Robert DeGroat are not forgotten.

“They chose to serve their country willingly and bravely,” she explains, “so we could live a better life. They put their lives on the line and witnessed unimaginable suffering, pain and death – all as teenagers or young men. And after the war, they quietly returned to their homes, held jobs, raised families and continued to be valuable citizens all while carrying memories of what they had seen and experienced. We, and future generations, need to preserve their stories and history to ensure it will never be forgotten.”

Earth Day Volunteer Clean Up – April 25, 2009 Iwo Jima Survivors Association, Inc. *by Gary Roy*

On April 25, 2009, the Iwo Jima Survivors Association held the first of what they hope will become an Annual Earth Day Volunteer Clean Up event. Every year, Earth Day is celebrated worldwide on April 22nd. This year, it fell during Volunteer Week, April 19th – 25th, 2009. The Iwo Jima Survivors took this opportunity to recruit volunteers to help clean up the National Iwo Jima Memorial Monument and Park. The project coordinators were Gary Roy and Vincent Thomas. It was a sunny, warm day and a hard working enthusiastic group of volunteers from the Survivors Association, Foundation, Marines Reserve Center and public gathered for the event.

Despite being in their 80's, the Iwo Jima Survivors came ready and willing to roll up their sleeves and work. They drove from all over Connecticut and included members Daniel Vece, Vincent Thomas, Bill Wood, George Abel, Franklin Beattie, Ed Desrosiers, Charlie Gellatly, Joseph Maruca and others. Survivors were also available to talk or answer questions from the public and volunteers. It was a great chance for the Survivors to gather for camaraderie and inspired volunteers to work even harder. Volunteers from the Foundation also came to help with the clean up. Those present were Marge Beattie, Andi Grant, Eric Stevens, John Hanley, Marianne Mihalyo, Ray Rivard, Gary Roy and his son Jason and Carl Venditto. We were very fortunate to have had a group of hard working Marines from the Marine Reserve Center in Plainville volunteer to help. Bob Gary and Jason Roy, new volunteers, joined us and came to help work. The previous day, Mary Pelletier and volunteers from the Park River Watershed Revitalization Initiative cleaned up along the river area that borders the park. They collected many bags of discarded items and trash. Artist Bob Johnson used the garbage to create his "Rivercubes" sculptures. One of his sculptures was on display at CCSU for their "Sustainable?" art exhibit.



Some of the hard working volunteers who participated in the Earth Day Clean Up.



The Earth Day clean up crew focused on removing weeds and redoing edging around the brick walkways, monument and chopping down and clearing the overgrowth from along the guardrail. The Marines from the Plainville Reserve Center were a tremendous help. We would like to give a big "THANK YOU!" to Cpl. Brian D. Warren, LCPL Roberto Diaz and SGT Giovanni T. Roman.

Marines from the Plainville Reserve Center removed weeds from the memorial brick areas and improved the edging.



After clearing of the overgrowth and raking the area, you can now see and hear the brook that borders the park.



Before



After



After



Home Depot bags filled with some of the leaves and overgrowth that was cleared from the area.

There were many area businesses the Iwo Jima Survivors would like to thank for their contributions to the success of this event. Volunteers were alerted and directed to the Clean Up event by a beautiful lawn sign donated by FedEx Office of Newington and publicity by Michael Fox of the Newington VFW. Home Depot of Berlin gave a generous donation of paper leaf bags, plastic garbage bags and work gloves. All of the bags were eventually filled with brush and leaves and everyone was glad to have the gloves since it was discovered that there was a lot of poison ivy growing along the perimeter. Because of the hot day, we were grateful to have a supply of ice-cold water donated by the Fenn Rd. Stop and Shop.

In addition to filling the Home Depot bags, volunteers also cut and cleared many dead branches, logs, and fallen trees that had been thrown along the perimeter for years. The Town of Newington Public Works Department did an excellent job of removing the collected bags of leaves, weeds and the huge pile of overgrowth that was trimmed. Finally, for the comfort of volunteers, Suburban Sanitation donated the use of a portable restroom for the day.



Before: Perimeter overgrowth that was trimmed and removed by volunteers



After: Huge pile of overgrowth was removed by the Town of Newington



Stonehedge Landscaping of Newington provided red, white, and blue pansy flowers to beautify the gardens areas and memorials.

There were also information tables set up to display articles about the Survivors, Battle of Iwo Jima, recent events, books, pictures and information of things people can do to help the organization. Volunteers received a “thank you” Earth Day goodie bag and Certificate of Appreciation.

The Iwo Jima Survivors Association, Inc. wishes to thank all the volunteers and area businesses that came together and generously donated their time, materials and services. Their contributions helped to clean and beautify the Park and were a tribute to the KIA and all who served in the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Upcoming Events

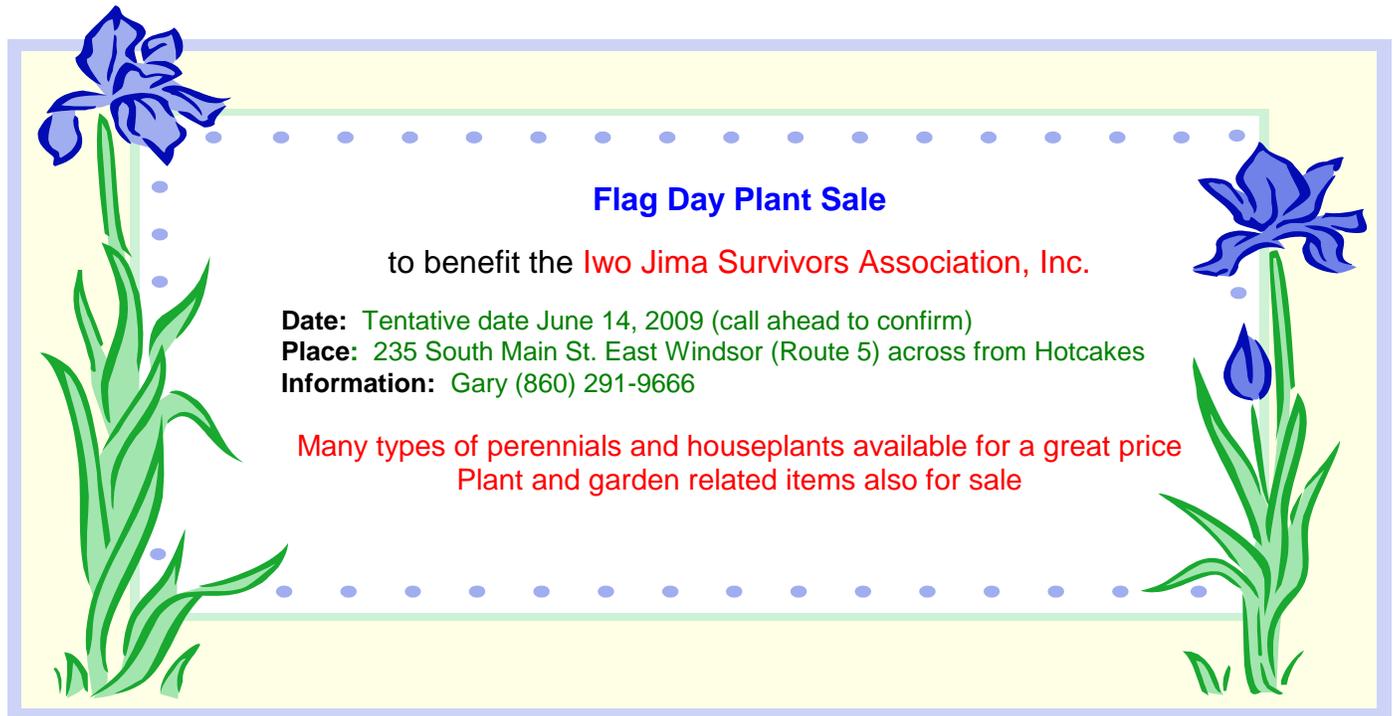
** some events are proposed ideas, please contact us for more details*

Newington Memorial Day Parade

The town of Newington will be holding their Memorial Day Parade on **Saturday, May 23, 2009**. Survivors are invited to ride in a car graciously provided by the Newington VFW. Seating is limited so please let Vincent Thomas know if you would like to participate. The parade starts at 10:30 am and runs along Main St. from the corner of Robbins Ave to the town hall. Contact Vincent at (203) 488-7683.

Memorial Day Ceremony

A Memorial Day Ceremony will be held at the National Iwo Jima Memorial Monument on the traditional Memorial Day of **Saturday, May 30, 2009 at 4:00.**



Flag Day Plant Sale

to benefit the **Iwo Jima Survivors Association, Inc.**

Date: Tentative date June 14, 2009 (call ahead to confirm)
Place: 235 South Main St. East Windsor (Route 5) across from Hotcakes
Information: Gary (860) 291-9666

**Many types of perennials and houseplants available for a great price
Plant and garden related items also for sale**



Flag Day Open House

The State of Connecticut holds a yearly statewide Open House Day for attractions in CT. This year, the Survivors would like to hold a Flag Day Open House on that day, **Saturday June 13, 2009.** Survivors will be on hand to meet with visitors and answer questions, give tours of the monument and memorials, have displays and schedules activities. There may be WWII re-enactors and military displays, guest speakers and demonstrations. Volunteers and donations are **NEEDED!** If you would like to help or participate, please contact Gary at (860) 291-9666 or email vincentthomas@comcast.net.

This Will Be A Major Event !

Outing to visit the Traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

The Traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall is coming to Norwich, **June 17-22, 2009.** Ray Rivard has volunteered to be our Outing and Trip Coordinator. If there is enough interest, he will be arranging for a group of us to see the Wall. Events include the motorcycle group Rolling Thunder "Ride to Remember", WWII programs and Opening Ceremonies. If any of you have not seen the Wall it is a must and is quite impressive. Date will be determined by the dates people are available. Please contact us if you are interested or to find out more details.

Madison Independence Parade 2009

It has been a long time tradition of the Iwo Jima Survivors to march in the **July 4th** parade in Madison, CT. The parade runs along Route 1 starting at Stop and Shop and ends at the Town Beach. Please contact Vincent Thomas if you would like more details.

Candlelight Vigil

The Iwo Jima Survivors Association might be sponsoring a candlelight vigil in memory of their 100 fellow servicemen who did not return from Iwo Jima and for fellow Survivors who have passed on. A special invitation goes out to family members of those being honored. This event might be held in **August or September**. Contact us for more details.

Iwo Jima Survivors Association Picnic

The Iwo Jima Survivors Association might have a summer picnic. The date and time is yet to be determined but it will most likely be held in **August or September** in the southern part of the state. Watch for more details.

News & Announcements

Veterans Memorial Theatre Company

The idea of forming a theater company for and about Veterans and their experiences has been smoldering around the minds of more than a few veterans in the Connecticut area for about a year now. The purpose of the Company is to honor all veterans by staging theatrical productions, which give voice to their experiences, the effects on them, their families and on the world around them. Membership in the Company is open to everyone, as there is probably not one family that has not included a veteran. For further information about membership dues and donations, please call (860) 229-8034. The Theatre Company has offered to give us a show from various scenes of their plays. If interested, contact Marianne Mihalyo at (860) 561-5776.

Adopt-A-Survivor Program

Many Survivors are shut in, have trouble getting around, would like someone to talk to or someone to let them know we appreciate their service to our country. If you would like to "adopt" a Survivor, please contact Marianne Mihalyo to be matched up with someone from your area. You can help by offering to take them to our events, listen to their ideas and thoughts or by keeping them in touch with what is going on in the organizations.

CCSU Scholarship for Outstanding Student Veteran and Veteran Memorial

CCSU is strengthening its support for veterans. They created a Veterans Drop-In Center, completed a "needs assessment" for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and will be holding a Veterans Summit. They have plans to create a Veterans Memorial Garden on campus and are creating a special scholarship fund to honor a student veteran with the CCSU Student Veteran Excellence Award. They are looking for financial support for these programs. For more donation information contact Laura Marchese of CCSU at (860) 832-2554.

Veterans History Project

The Veterans History Project was created in 2000, when the U.S. Congress voted unanimously to preserve and archive the oral histories of men and women who have served in any of our country's wars or any civilian who supported the war effort. The project, housed at the U. S. Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and at CCSU, collects and archives the taped interviews, photographs and documents of veterans.

In September 2005, CCSU became an archive partner with the Library of Congress. The University is privileged to collect and preserve the oral histories of our country's veterans. Trained volunteers and history students



conduct interviews in the CCSU Media Center's studio on our New Britain campus or travel to veterans' homes. All Iwo Jima Survivors and other veterans are encouraged to participate in this worthy project. If you would like to be interviewed, please contact Eileen Hurst at (860) 832-2976 to schedule an appointment. If you live out of the greater Hartford area and would still like to participate, please view the national Veterans History Project web site at <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>

Featured Article

*In each SOS Telegram, we will be featuring an article written by or about a friend of the Iwo Jima Survivors. Many Iwo Jima Survivors also fought in other Pacific Battles including Tarawa. This first article was written by **Mr. Gerald Brooker** from Bethel, CT.*

Tarawa: A Memorial Day Remembrance

There is a tiny atoll in the Gilbert Islands that is called Tarawa. It is located about 3000 miles southeast of mainland Japan, and is the scene of a little known, yet iconic, battle of WW II. If any of us ever needs to have a reason to observe Memorial Day, a day according to the law, "to honor the nation's armed forces personnel killed in wartime," let us simply remember what happened at Tarawa over three days in 1943.



The weather on the day I arrived there recently was much the same as it was on the morning of November 20, 1943 when U.S. Marines landed on a strip of beaches that lay on the inside loop of the lagoon at the islet called Betio. It is one of eight islets that compose Tarawa, now a part of the Republic of Kiribati. Five thousand Japanese soldiers were dug in to protect an expanding airfield that could control much of the central Pacific. The island, half the size of Central Park, was fortified with heavy and light machine guns, mortars, artillery, pillboxes, cement bunkers, barbed wire and coastal defense guns.

It is to be noted that Tarawa is a beautiful place. What I saw from the air as we circled this spit in the sea was a progression of inky ocean, followed by light green water, then cloudy pink reefs, a crystal blue lagoon. Betio is rimmed by hard-rock beach coral that has been pounded by the surf into tiny grains of pinkish tan sand. The scene reminds one of the sunny beaches in the Caribbean.

On the morning of the invasion, Higgins boats were to take the Marines into shore from about a mile out at sea. Because of a miscalculation of the tides, the boats got hung up on coral reefs that were as dry as baked leather. Hundreds of men were forced to abandon the boats and wade chest high into shore while burdened by heavy backpacks, grenades, and weapons. Tetrahedron obstacles and barbed wire set into the water impeded their way to safety. For two consecutive mornings the boats failed to cross the reefs. And for two consecutive mornings, our men were mangled in the sea.



Here is the hard reality of those days: pools of young men's blood red-speckled the glassy waters of Tarawa, dead bodies rocked in the ebb and flow of the tide, and corpses were seen floating miles out into the pitch-black waters of the Pacific. These are the images of war that beckon us to remember.

Ferociously, the Marines swept the short distance to the ocean side of the lagoon. It took a little over three days to complete the job, a few yards at a time, and sometimes in hand-to-hand combat, to destroy an enemy who was taught to fight to his death. In the end, five thousand Japanese soldiers and one thousand U.S. Marines died.

It is not consoling to describe the details of their deaths, yet it is the way to a heart-felt observance of what the men and women in our Armed Services have sacrificed for this country. In the many wars since the beginning of WW I, approximately 637,000 military personnel have died protecting our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Until 1971 when the National Holiday Act mandated that Memorial Day was to be observed on the last Monday of May in order to ensure a three day holiday, the 30th of May had always marked the day. Making it a part of a weekend holiday that has come to mean the beginning of summer has somewhat weakened its observance as a special day when American flags are flown at half-staff, wreaths laid on the tomb stones of veterans, parades held in cities and towns, a moment of national observance at 3 p.m., Eastern Time. It is now more of a day for picnics, the beach and race cars.

Unfortunately, several school systems in the U.S. do not observe the day as a federal holiday, in some cases so the children can get out of school earlier in June. True, sending our children to school on Memorial Day is a sign of the freedom purchased by the blood of those we honor on that day. It is also a sign of disrespect.



The 637,000 military personnel mentioned above are true American heroes. They are not the ones we are asked by the media to honor for throwing a ball into a hoop, or for running through others with a pigskin tucked under their arms. Neither are they rock stars whose artificial lamentations express an angst hardly earned. They are not movie celebrities whose fragile glitz will surely fade against the glare of the morning sun. Rather, they are the men and women who have answered the call to duty, and in the response gave their lives. No greater love hath any man.

by Gerard Brooker

Information Needed

Do You Remember?

by Marianne Mihalyo

One day at the park, I met Julie Washburn and her husband. She told me about her grandfather, Frances W. Espelin. He was in the Battle of Iwo Jima as part of the Coast Guard aboard the USS Bayfield. Here is a reprint of a news article from the Waterbury Republican American, which wrote about him sometime in the mid 1940's.

Julie could not talk to him because he has passed away. She would like to hear from anyone who might have known her grandfather. Please contact her at: julie.washburn@hotmail.com.



FRANCIS W. ESPELIN, S1c

**Espelin Tells
Of Landing
On Iwo Jima**

"Iwo Jima was the toughest battle I have been in to date," Coast Guardsman Francis W. Espelin, S1c, has written to his wife, Mrs. Catherine Espelin, 295 North Main St.

"Saw the cemetery that was dedicated to the Marines who suffered such heavy casualties trying to take the island," wrote the Coast Guardsman who entered the service 33 months ago.

Veteran of Normandy and Southern France invasions, Espelin serves with the deck force and the ship's gun crew.

He also has seen service in the Mediterranean theater, Africa, Italy, England and the Battle of Eniwetok. He saw service in Pearl Harbor, Panama and Honolulu.

His wife, the former Catherine Nolan, has two brothers in the Army, Sgt. Thomas Nolan, who has been in the service 24 months and is now in England; Sgt. Joseph, in the service 38 months, now in the Philippines.

In Memorium

Robert DeGroat	† 2006	† Navy
John Luman	† Aug 15, 2006	† Marines
Fred Tapley	† Dec 17, 2007	† Marines
Robert A. Nichols	† Dec 17, 2007	† Marines
Edward Layman	† Dec 28, 2007	† Marines
Albert D'Amico	† Dec 29, 2007	† Navy
Louis G. Amodio	† April 18, 2008	† Army
Fred Schribert	† May 11, 2008	† Marines
Ralph A. DeRosa	† Aug 19, 2008	† Marines
Albert Pomeranke	† Oct 13, 2008	† Navy
John F. Wortcheck	† Dec 25, 2008	† Marines
Nicholas P. Greci	† Feb 5, 2009	† Coast Guard
Albert J. Giantonio	† Feb 5, 2009	† Navy
Edward J. Nadolny	† April 20, 2009	† Navy
Fred Pucci	† May 5, 2009	† Navy
Paul J. Coen	† 2009	† Army



Our Condolences go out to the families and loved ones as we keep them in our thoughts and prayers. †



THANKS & APPRECIATION



- ★ **The Antique Veterans Honor Guard of Westbrook** for providing their presence and rifle salute at the flag raising anniversary ceremony in February.
- ★ **Newington VFW Post 9836** for donating a spectacular wreath for the flag raising anniversary ceremony in February and support for the Earth Day Clean Up with the help of Michael Fox.
- ★ **Mr. Pat Whelan** for donating his bagpipe playing for our flag raising anniversary ceremony.
- ★ **Mr. Michael Manning** for donating his playing of taps at the flag raising anniversary ceremony in February.
- ★ **The Herald, Journal Inquirer, East Hartford Gazette, West Hartford Life Magazine, Channel 61 Fox News and WDRG Radio** for the splendid stories and interviews they held regarding our events and Survivor veteran interviews.
- ★ **FedEx Office of Newington** for donating the Event Sign for Earth Day.
- ★ **Home Depot of Berlin** for donating paper and plastic bags and work gloves for our Earth Day clean up.
- ★ **Stonehedge Nursery of Newington** for donation of flowers to be planted for Earth Day.
- ★ **Stop and Shop of Newington** for donating ice and bottled water for Earth Day.
- ★ **Suburban Sanitation** for providing a portable comfort station for the Earth Day event.
- ★ **The Town of Newington** for hauling away debris collected during the Earth Day cleaning.
- ★ **The Marine from the Marine Reserve Center of Plainville** who did a tremendous job helping with the Volunteer Earth Day Clean Up.
- ★ **Family of Nick Greci, Fred Pucci** for donations made in their memory.
- ★ **The Iwo Jima Survivors** who helped plan and participated in the flag raising anniversary ceremony in February and the Volunteer Earth Day Clean Up in April.
- ★ **All the Volunteers who helped plan or came to help at our events.**



Contact Information:

Support Our Survivors of Iwo Jima

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 Newington, CT 06111
 (860) 291-9666
SOSiwojima@yahoo.com

- ★ Please contact Marianne with any corrections or comments.
- ★ The next SOS Newsletter will be sent sometime around September.
- ★ Deadline for submissions is August 2009.

Dates to Remember

Armed Forces Day May 16th



Flag Day, June 14th



July 4th Independence Day

Memorial Day

We set aside Memorial Day
Each and every year
To honor those who gave their lives
Defending what we hold dear.

In all the dark and deadly wars,
Their graves prove and remind us,
Our brave Americans gave their all
To put danger far behind us.

They made the ultimate sacrifice
Fighting for the American way;
We admire them and respect them
On every Memorial Day.

By Joanna Fuchs
www.poemsource.com

Flag Day

The U.S. flag is a symbol
Of what Americans treasure;
It represents the values
We cherish beyond measure.

Our flag flies high for freedom,
For legal equality,
For Constitutional rights,
And justice for you and me.

Our flag flies high for bravery,
The courage it takes to fight
And even give our lives
For what we know is right.

Our flag flies high for compassion;
We quickly help those in need;
When there's a need for service,
Americans take the lead.

The American flag is an icon,
Representing the American way;
Our hearts swell with emotion,
When we see it ripple and sway.

By Joanna Fuchs
www.poemsource.com



Observed Memorial Day - May 25th Traditional Memorial Day - May 30th



VJ Day, August 15

You have received this newsletter because you may be interested in two Jima Survivor Association issues.

If you know of anyone who would also like to receive it, please tell them to contact us.

If you would like to be removed from our email list, kindly let us know.