

IWO JIMA INVASION

1st Day: D-Day. February 19, 1945
H. Hour - 0900

Went on watch at 3:45 a.m. Monday morning and flashes of heavy bombardment could be seen on horizon: Relieved for chow at 0500! At daylight outline of island could be seen especially volcano at one end. Naval bombardment intensified and dive bombing by planes began about 0730. We swung into allotted position and watched! Seemed as tho nothing could survive blasts of gunfire from battle wagons (16in) and cruisers plus rockets, incendiary's and bombs from planes. 0800 Marines left ship in LVT's and proceeded to line of departure 1500 yards from shore. We were 5500 yards! Our men 23rd marines were 1st assault wave, first wave was tank artillery! 0900 first marines hit beach without much opposition and proceeded up bluff slowly! We stayed in position and were all at GQ on lookout for Japanese planes: Heard 1st airfield taken 1 hour later. Opposition stiffened and succeeding assault waves were hard hit: Mid morning. Japanese started to throw shrapnel at us and we hit the deck in a hurry: Continued thru out the day with plenty of near misses but no hits. Bombardment and bombing continued thru out the day. By nightfall ominous reports were coming back about murderous mortar fire of Japanese, LCVP's wrecked and blown apart plus LVT's and tanks lined beach along with dead personnel. Secured from GQ at 1700 and condition II set up! Had chow and went on watch until 2000! GQ sounded due to air raid alert but false alarm! Hit the sack at 2130 and GQ sounded once more at 2330! Prepared to move onto beach!

Moved in and were at GQ rest of the night until secured at 0830 Tuesday morning. Moved into within 300 yards of beach where Japanese immediately began shelling us with 47 mm and mortars: Took LVT's aboard and loaded ammo and stones aboard for beach. Continued all night long! No hits by Japanese guns except occasionally hit by shrapnel bursts. No one hurt! Spent most of time on deck in gun tub! Japanese shelled marines on beach all night long and blew up 3 ammo dumps made up of ammo brought to shore from this ship. Several LVT's had to be abandoned but driven returned safely on others. Beach is mess with wrecked equipment, bodies and wounded: Continual stream of casualties from shore to hospital ship!

Other LST's were ordered to move closer to beach along with us but considered it too hot and refused until morning. Marines needed equipment. By morning we were practically unloaded! Only ship in close all night long and shells really whistled overhead D+2 now that day is here wagons, cruisers and destroyers have moved in again and intensified bombardment. Myriads of aircraft dive and rocket bombing. Japanese counter attacked during night and drove marines back but they reorganized and are now at 2nd airfield. Bombing continued throughout the day. GQ secured during day and unloading continued plus refueling of LVT's.

Stood 4-8 watch last evening and watched bombardment continue all night long. Slept form 9 to 3:30 a.m. D+2. On watch from 0400 to 0800. Bombardment still going on! Aircraft returned at daybreak for observation and bombing purposes. Slept when off watch 9 to 1130 a.m.

Unloading top deck now and platoons put in water. Small boats taking them a shore. Island still under continuous bombardment from wagons, cruisers and destroyers: Our casualties so far said to be 60%. Japanese very accurate with mortar!

Wednesday 21st: Lay to all day taking LVT's aboard for refueling and repair. Bombardment going on day and night without letup. Air raid alert about 1700! Was secured twice but called right back again each time. Ten Japanese planes came over and five were shot down! Damaged a PA and LST. Secured from GQ at 2100. Another alert at 0330 and secured at 0400!

Thursday - Bombardment continued all day. Marines slowly advancing:

Friday - Big artillery battle at dawn; Japanese still have plenty left! American Flag raised on Volcano top at 1010 a.m. Air raid alert 300 p.m. to 3:30. Marine casualties already 5000 now. Air raid alert from 700 p.m. to 1000 p.m. Opened up with guns but no planes brought down. Quite a curtain of soot.

Saturday - Saw body with only head; two arms and shoulders one lung hanging out exposed. Boat went out and removed dog tags! Was an American sailor. While cleaning gun in morning saw T.B.F. Avenger shot down in flames. Two men jumped out but parachute failed to open. Beached LST at 1400 and unloaded trucks, tanks, men and supplies. Air raid alert 2030 until 2230. Japanese bombed other side of island and dropped supplies to defenders. Got off beach about 2300 and no more marines aboard.

Sunday - Battle still continues strong. Found shell shocked marine laying in disabled LVT on tank deck: was taken to hospital ship. Salvaged three .50 cal machine guns and five .30 cal from LVT's going back to Japan. Also plenty of ammo and grenades. Started in to clean ship which needs it badly. Saw movie on tank deck last night "Nice Girl". Got underway to tie up along side KA 65.

Monday - D+7 Reveille at 5:30 a.m. All hands turned to loading 105 mm ammo etc. Loaded supplies all day long from KA including ammo, ordnance gear, trucks, and K rations etc. Practically wrecked ship bumping alongside small boat will have to be surveyed. Brought ship onto Blue Beach II at 2000 and went on guard duty on beach to prevent boarding. Beach was being shelled by Japanese mortar fire so we dug in. Finally got too hot so marine unloading party was secured and we recalled. Two of the marines shot by sniper. Ramp closed and watch secured but ship remains on beach. Shell fire continues and no one is allowed topside. Have to evacuate all starboard sleeping quarters due to its facing Japanese positions. Have Japanese .31 cal ammo as souvenir. Disarmed hand grenade and have it as souvenir. Hottest day and night yet on this beach. Gas line dump hit. Stayed on beach all night with ramp closed and departed at 0500! Landed again on yellow I at 0800 and began to unload. Cannot get permission to go ashore. On watch from 1200 to 1600 at about 1500 two shells thrown at us with one hit. Seven shrapnel holes in stbd side. Dug into foxhole with marines. Relieved at 1530 to hear mass aboard in stbd component. Priest gave general absolution and we all received communion. I owe one confession. Just received orders to depart for scar area. Orders once again changed and we now go back to KA to reload.

Tuesday - Spent day loading on ammo, vehicles, food, electrical supplies, clothing, etc. Ship taking awful pounding banging against KA. Lot of damage being done to sides - deck gear etc. Finished loading 8:00 p.m. and headed for beach once again! Wouldn't let us land so waited until morning: Hit beach 4:00 a.m. air raid alert.

Thursday - D+10. Opened bow doors and ramp and working party came aboard to unload. On watch at bow doors from 0800 to 1200! Went ashore at 1300 and met two marine friends at foxhole and went souvenir hunting. Went up to airfield and got aluminum from Japanese bomber (Belly) Then found pillbox with four dead Japanese. Got helmet, cigarettes, .31 cal. Ammo, powder box etc. Helmet all blood, box can be cleaned. Japanese bodies blown apart and stink. Had Japanese grenade but pin was pulled so got rid of it by burial. Saw a lot of dead marines and they also were blown apart and decomposing. Tough site. Came back aboard and ship pulled off beach at 1700. C. Bee working party aboard to help unload KA's. Change of orders now we are to be screening ship for convoy. Provide smoke protection: Had GQ at night and got in way of one of our own 5" shells. Smashed into stbd side and thru generator providing power for twin 40 mm mounts. Stopped at tank decks twin 40's can now only be used by manual control.

Friday: Broke down 20mm for 1st time since leaving Japan and cleaned it. Got 14 bbls of fog oil fluid abd plus new smoke generator for screening purposes. Also 20 smoke pots. Had movie on tank deck "Tales From Manhattan". Interrupted by GQ but was resumed again. Mail came aboard for 1st time since Japan and received 6 letters and 4 valentines. 5 letters from Mary, one from mother and Tommy. Good for morale! Second class G.M. rating also came thru so I am now raised a notch.

Saturday - March 3 - Broke down and cleaned another 20 m.m.'s. Best weather since leaving Japan. C.Bee's gone ashore again and general cleanup of ship. Plenty of PBM and Y's now anchored around here. C47's came over this morning and dropped supplies. Cubs now use airfield. We're one of the few ships left from original invasion convoy. Most others have returned and been replaced! Movie played tonight Life Begins at 8:30 Monty Nooly pretty good.

Sunday March 4 - Came alongside water barge to renew our supply.

Monday March 5, 1945: Then tied up to a merchant ship and began to load vehicles etc. Took all day and part of night and then we hit beach once again. Had 8 to 12 watch on beach and watched wounded being brought back from front. Saw movie at night. Unloaded and pulled away from beach during night and came back to load up once again.

Tuesday March 6, 1945: Tied up to merchant vessel unloading bbls of fuel oil. Cleaned spare parts and bble mail came aboard in 10 sacks. Sure is welcomed these days. Island is now almost entirely in our hand but bombings have been continuous on Japanese held section. Our big planes now being landed on airfield. Good to see them. No air raid alert for a couple of nights now. Getting some good nights sleep.

Wednesday March 7, 1945: Hit the beach on other side of island. Some fighting still going on. Japanese sneak everywhere at night. May try to reach ships when unloading. Moved from white beach.

Thursday March 8, 1945: Morning to yellow I under foot of surabach. Can see Japanese prisoners in stockade. Had 2400 to 0400 on watch. Unloaded by 0200 so we retracted. Went out to anchor. GQ called at 03:30 a.m. lasted until 05:00. Sacked in and slept until noon. Had movie in crew's quarters.

Saturday March 10, 1945: Terrific artillery barrage being laid down this morning. Evidently going all out to secure the island. Hit the beach again last night with a load of vehicles.

Sunday March 11, 1945: Wrote letter in morning. Slept awhile in afternoon and got paid. Let mine remain in quarters. Played cards at night and saw double feature movie.

Monday March 12, 1945: Lay at anchor all day long. Worked below decks on .30 cal machine guns. Wrote letter to Mary, played cards and saw movie in crew's quarters.

Tuesday March 13, 1945: Cruised aimlessly all day long before anchoring. Marine's now mopping up on island. Cleaned rust from 20m.m. magazines. Double feature movie in crews quarters.

Wednesday March 14, 1945: Remained at anchor and cleaned more 20 mm magazines of rust. Loaded up with vehicles from beach and anchored out. Saw movie.

Thursday March 15, 1945: Unloaded vehicles onto PA and ship took quite a beating. Sides and beams caved in etc.

Friday March 16, 1945: Island finally secured 1800 and marines now being taken off island. On beach taking off marine supplies now. Took marines and gear out to P.A. tied alongside. Saw some men we had aboard on way here and many among them gone. 8/3 casualty in Company. Personal friends of mine gone.

Saturday March 17, 1945: Hit the beach once again and took more marines and equipment onto army transport.

Sunday - 18th!