

ATTENTION

*As you begin the tour and an examination of the Japanese fortifications, it is essential to be a safe battle field explorer. The highly corrosive atmosphere has seriously deteriorated the World War II fortifications; therefore, it is important that you not go inside any of the bunkers. Falling concrete and exposed sharp and rusty rebar present a hazard to those who enter. Just as the buildings pose a hazard to you, you pose a hazard to these historic structures. **DISLODGING LOOSE SECTIONS OF CONCRETE AS WELL AS CLIMBING ON OR ENTERING THE HISTORIC STRUCTURES ARE PROHIBITED.***

Also be aware that removal of any battle artifacts or human remains, from the structures, the ground or the reef is prohibited. There is also the danger of encountering unexploded ordnance (UXO). Do not disturb any cartridges, projectiles, shells, fuses or bombs. Report any such findings to the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll Environmental Office (ext. 5-4218) and the Security Police (ext. 5-6445).

KWAJALEIN BEFORE WORLD WAR TWO

The first recorded exploration of Kwajalein Atoll occurred in 1542, when Spanish seafarer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos reported visiting several atolls one of which was probably Kwajalein. In 1788, William Marshall, captain of the British Royal Navy's H.M.S. Scarborough visited the region and named the groups of islands that comprise the Marshalls after himself. By the nineteenth century, crews from whaling ships, German copra (dried coconut meat) traders, and Protestant missionaries were routine visitors to the Marshalls. Germany's commercial interest in the Marshalls led to their purchase from Spain in 1885. Imperial Japan, as a member of the Allied powers during World War I, quickly seized the islands from Germany in 1914. Japanese control of the islands, despite a strong protest from the United States, was formalized by the League of Nations in 1920, whose members permitted Imperial Japan to retain the islands under a class "C" mandate which allowed no naval or military installations.

The Japanese presence in the Marshalls was of grave concern to American military officials, because the islands provided sheltered bases from which Japanese ships and planes could interdict the American supply lines to the Philippines, at that time an American colony. Army and Navy war planners had labored since 1904 to devise a strategy that, in the event of an attack, would allow American forces to move across the Pacific Ocean to relieve the Army garrison in the Philippines. A foothold in the Marshalls would provide American forces with a base of operations that would assure the recapture of the Philippines. The capture of Kwajalein Atoll would also deny the Japanese important air and submarine bases. These same bases had provided forces in the attacks against Pearl Harbor and Wake Island during the opening days of the war.

The invasion of Kwajalein, Roi, and Namur would be the second time that an American force was thrown against a fortified island. The first attempt, at Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands approximately 300 miles southeast of Kwajalein, had been a near disaster. Thus, many military planners questioned if an amphibious assault against a fortified position could ever work. For this reason the success or failure of the Marshalls invasion could affect future Allied strategy in the Pacific and in Europe. An attack in the Marshall Islands would also be the first on Japanese

territory...land held by Japan before the start of World War II.

The invasion of the Marshalls was a textbook operation. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps planners carefully applied the lessons learned from Tarawa. These included longer periods of aerial bombardment and naval gunfire support, the use of tracked amphibians, and the first use of frogmen (forerunners of Navy SEALs) to scout beaches and search for underwater obstacles. Maximum use of close-air support and the early introduction of armor and artillery were also used to great effect in the Kwajalein invasion. The result was a nearly perfect operation that proved the utility of amphibious assault against fortified positions.

Plans for the invasion of the Marshall Islands, code named Operation FLINTLOCK, were issued on December 20, 1943. The 7th Infantry Division was designated the strike force for the invasion of Kwajalein Island. Opposing the Americans on Kwajalein were approximately 5,000 Japanese soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Korean laborers. After several months of air strikes against many of the islands in the Marshalls, the five day operation began on January 31, 1944, when elements of the 7th Infantry Division began to seize small islands near Kwajalein to use as supply and fire support bases. *Begin your tour at the Marshallese Cultural Center.*

START POINT - The Marshallese Cultural Center. Recent archaeological investigations suggest that Kwajalein Atoll has been inhabited for at least 2,000 years. This has been supported with the discovery of an intact, prehistoric burial on Kwajalein Island. These discoveries have helped anthropologists learn more about western Pacific pioneer settlements. Please take this opportunity to visit the Marshallese Cultural Center and learn more about the culture of our host nation. *After completing your visit to the Cultural Center, move down 9th Street towards the lagoon and turn left on Lagoon Road.*

STOP #1 JAPANESE AIR RAID SHELTER - The white painted concrete structure inside the fenced fuel yard was constructed by Japanese military during World War II. It was part of a large defensive complex built to protect troops from bombardment and protect the island from sea-borne invasion. The Japanese High Command expected the Americans to attack outlying atolls. Thus, Kwajalein Atoll, near the center of the island chain, was thought to be relatively safe from invasion. As a result, construction of fortifications on Kwajalein did not receive priority and were weaker than those on some other Japanese bases in the Marshalls. As on Roi-Namur, most Japanese defenses were oriented to repel an invasion from the ocean side of the island. This structure has been partially covered by earthen fill. The base of the shelter is approximately 5 feet under the surface of the ground. It was originally unpainted. *Continue down Lagoon Road, approximately 7/8 of a mile, to the marker on the left side in the bend of the road.*

STOP #2 FIRST DAY'S FIGHTING - Federal Aviation Administration regulations required this marker, originally intended for the ocean-side of the island to be installed here. American artillery support was provided by 105mm and 155mm howitzers emplaced on Carlson (Enubuj) and Carlos (Ennylabegan) islands, which are north west of Kwajalein up the west reef. These islands can be seen from the lagoon



U.S. Artilleryman Provide Support From Enubui Island

side of Kwajalein. The 184th Infantry Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division assaulted the lagoon side of the island, the left flank. This regiment had been a California National Guard organization before the war and was added to the 7th Division during mobilization. The 184th performed admirably during Operation Flintlock and subsequent 7th Division campaigns. *Continue down Lagoon Road to the intersection of Olympus Drive.*

STOP #3 JAPANESE MEMORIAL - At the intersection of Lagoon Road and Olympus Drive, look to your left and you will see the Japanese Memorial (behind Building 1002). This small Japanese cemetery was dedicated to the memory of nearly 3,500 Japanese soldiers, sailors, and airmen who died while defending Kwajalein. Immediately after the battle, thousands of Japanese dead were interred in common graves. It is not uncommon to find human remains during construction projects. Some remains that were found in post war years were reinterred here. The U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll has special procedures in place to handle human remains. (Should anyone discover what appears to be human remains or other World War II material, they should notify the Environmental Office at ext. 5-4218 and the Security Police at ext. 5-4000.) *Continue down Olympus Drive towards the ocean side of the island and stop at the marker and pillbox on the left side of the road.*

STOP #4 LANDING BEACHES - During World War II, Kwajalein Island was much smaller than it is today. Since the war it has been enlarged with fill to accommodate mission requirements. Olympus Drive generally marks the location of the original shoreline on the western tip of the island. This Japanese pillbox was part of the defenses to guard these beaches from amphibious landings and housed two or more 7.7mm machine guns. A 1995 archaeological investigation suggests that this structure was so heavily damaged that American troops repaired the concrete in some places so that it could be used for their own defense systems. Starting at 0930 on February 1, 1944, the 7th Infantry Division landed over 1200 troops in the first fifteen minutes of the invasion, and continued bringing men and equipment ashore during the entire operation. The assault was conducted by the 184th and 32nd Infantry regiments. The

184th was responsible for moving up the lagoon side of the island, while the 32nd Infantry Regiment was responsible for the ocean side. This end of the island, divided by the Japanese airstrip, provided an excellent sector line between the units. *Proceed on Olympus Drive past Mount Olympus and continue east along Zeus Boulevard. Continue past the ammunition storage igloos and turn right next to the Weather Station (Building 907). Then turn right again on Ocean Road and continue to the marker located outside the entrance of the Ammunition Storage area.*

STOP #5 FIRST NIGHT OF THE BATTLE - The 32nd Infantry Regiment's first day's advance concluded about 100 yards behind you, inside what is now the Ammunition Storage Area. The 3rd Battalion, 184th Infantry set up night defense positions on the opposite side of the island. By the end of the first day, American forces had grown to 6 infantry and 1 engineer battalions, along with 60 tanks and various support units. During the day, most of the Japanese had fought from inside bunkers and pillboxes. As night fell, the Japanese emerged from their bunkers and pillboxes during a chilling rainstorm and attacked American forward positions. The first night for the Americans was long and dismal and filled with terror and confusion. *Proceed east on Ocean Road to the marker and Japanese bunker.*

STOP #6 AMMUNITION BUNKER - The main mission, of both the 32nd and 184th Infantry, on February 2, was to secure the Japanese airfield. This was accomplished by the end of the day. This surviving bunker was part of a vast array of Japanese defensive structures that once dotted the island. Most were destroyed or buried by development during the post-war years. The bunker was built to service several machine gun pillboxes in this area. One of its associated pillboxes has also survived and is located on the shoreline about 90 yards south of your current position. This bunker was captured in the morning of February 2, 1944, by the 3rd battalion of the 32nd Infantry Regiment. As the 32nd continued its drive up the island, the Japanese mounted stiff resistance and the American infantrymen were required to reduce each pillbox and strong point along the way. By the end of February 2, the 32nd Infantry halted and dug in for the night near the end of the present runway, about 1200 yards east of this point. *Follow Ocean Road east and continue about 100 yards past the end of the present runway, then pass through the road side vegetation to the shore line. (Please watch out for aircraft in this area!)*

STOP #7 JAPANESE CONCRETE RIFLE PIT - This seldom visited Japanese fighting position would have included a magazine and a firing pit for a machine gunner or rifleman. Its small window allowed an assistant gunner to pass ammunition from the magazine to the firing pit. The entire structure was mounded with earth up to the top deck at the time of the battle. During the battle, 7th Division soldiers would have faced at least 15 of these rifle pits on Kwajalein. This is the only surviving example of this type of structure. Post-war photographs reveal that this particular structure received little damage during the battle. Most of the deterioration was caused by erosion of the heavy surf. *Continue on Ocean Road to the marker near the flag poles and the Kwaj Lodge.*

STOP #8 THE THIRD DAY AND THE ADMIRALTY AREA - American commanders expected to conclude the

battle on February 3 against light Japanese resistance. They were mistaken. The "Admiralty Area" was the scene of some of the most intense fighting on Kwajalein. Named by American intelligence officers because of the suspected location of the Japanese Naval headquarters, it was heavily developed with a large number of supply and administrative buildings, most of which had been reduced to rubble by bombing and shell fire. This provided excellent cover for the Japanese defenders who had concentrated in this area. They made the Americans pay for every inch of ground. By day's



Evacuating a Wounded Japanese Prisoner

end, the 184th Infantry, still on the lagoon side of the island, and the 32nd Infantry on the ocean side, had not even reached that day's first objective near present day 6th Street. This day of fighting cost 310 Americans killed and wounded. Over 1,100 Japanese died as well. Many enemy soldiers committed suicide rather than surrender to the Americans. In one large blockhouse over 200 dead Japanese were found. *Continue up Ocean Road and stop in front of the chapel.*

STOP #9 ISLAND MEMORIAL CHAPEL - This chapel is one of four American buildings that have survived since World War Two. The Island Memorial Chapel (Building



7th Division Soldiers Take a Break During the Action

683) was built in late 1944. It was built by volunteers from the garrison with surplus materials. Although the chapel's sanctuary retains its original profile, the building has been enlarged and renovated several times since 1944. The memorial stained glass window was installed as part of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Kwajalein.

RICHARDSON THEATER - The "Rich" (Building 664) was named for Lieutenant General Robert C. Richardson who was the Commander of all Army forces in the Central Pacific. It also was built by volunteer labor in 1944 when it was little more than a sheet suspended between coconut trees with coconut log seating. The "Rich" also has been improved several times through the years. It was rebuilt in its present form in 1956. *Continue up Ocean Road and notice the following buildings as you pass them.*

OCEAN VIEW CLUB - (Building 1418) Also known as the "Snake Pit", the club was built in 1945 as an enlisted men's watering hole. It has been enlarged and extensively remodeled during intervening years.

COMMANDER'S RESIDENCE - (Building 241) This was built originally as an officer's club and it became the Commander's Residence in 1956. As with the Ocean View Club, it has also been enlarged and extensively altered. *Continue along Ocean Road to the final marker.*

STOP #10 BUNKER HILL - The 7th Infantry Division continued to meet stiff opposition on the last day of the battle. February 4 became the most difficult day as Japanese resistance strengthened while American soldiers pushed the Japanese to the end of the island. Nike Road in front of this marker generally marks the end of the World War II island. (The area beyond Nike Road is earthen fill added in 1964.) The mound to the front left of the marker are the remains of a Japanese 5 inch dual-purpose gun mount. The guns were captured late in the afternoon on February by G Company, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment. Kwajalein was officially declared secure by General Charles Corlett, Commander of the 7th Infantry Division at 1610 hrs. However, fighting continued to eradicate the last scattered Japanese resistance. Captain Albert W. Pence of Company G, one of the last American casualties, was shot near this spot about 1900 hrs. The last day of the battle proved to be the most costly, 317 Americans were killed and wounded on 4 February.

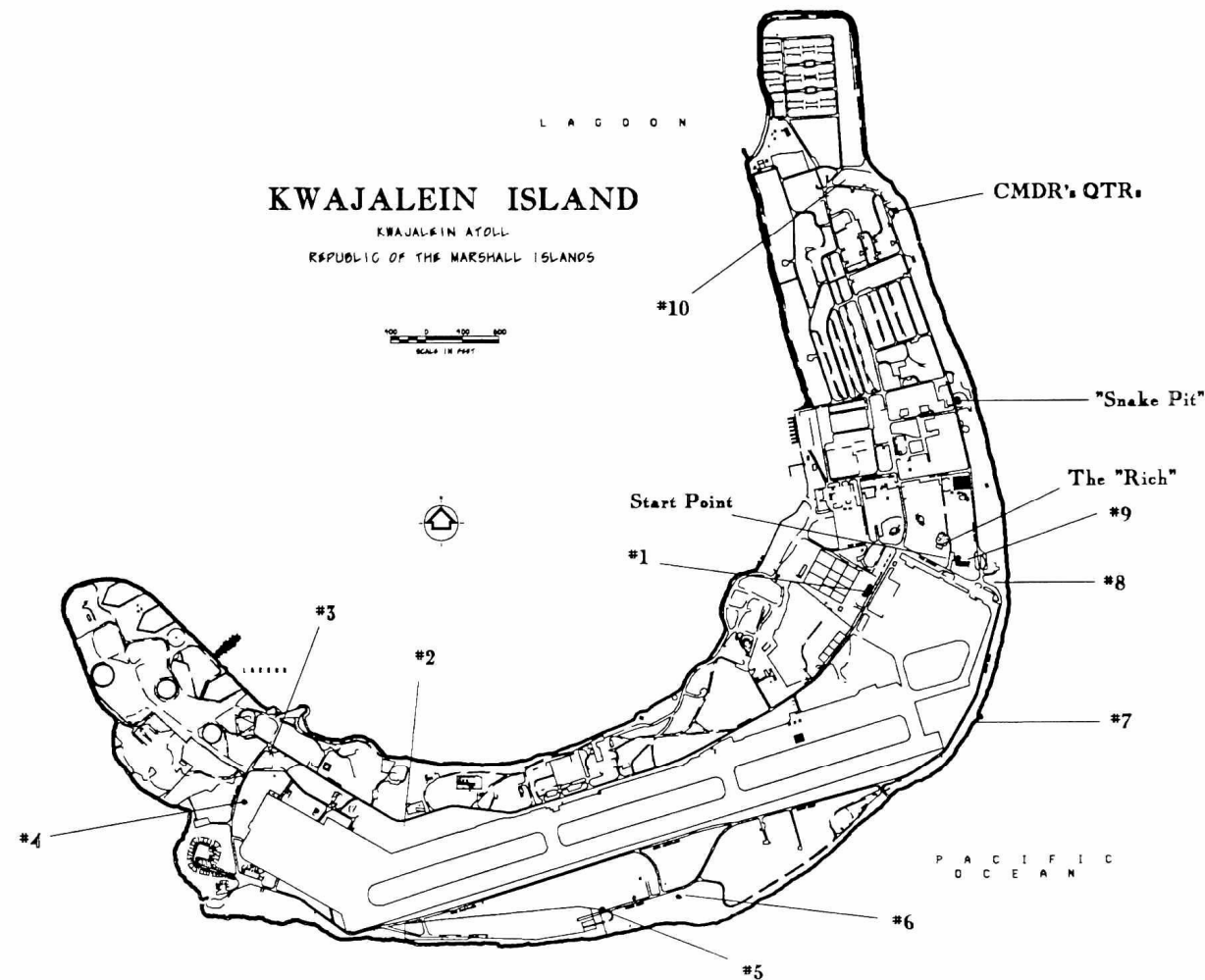
The campaign for the Marshalls was best summed up by Marine Corps General Holland Smith who concluded that "very few recommendations can be made to improve upon the basic techniques previously recommended and utilized in the Marshalls." Casualties for the 7th Division for all southern atoll islands were killed - 142, wounded - 845. Japanese dead numbered 4938, with 206 captured (127 were Korean laborers).

KWAJALEIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

KWAJALEIN WORLD WAR TWO BATTLEFIELD TOUR



Evacuating a Wounded Comrade at Kwajalein



For more information on the battle for Kwajalein Atoll and the historic structures here, we recommend *U.S. Army in World War II, the War in the Pacific. Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls* by Phillip A. Crowl, and *Comprehensive Resource Inventory and Preservation Planning Study for World War II Cultural Resources at the United States Army Kwajalein Atoll*, by Carl Kuttruff, Stephen James Jr., Jack C. Hudson and Nancy Farrell.

This brochure was prepared by the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command Historical Office with support from the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll Environmental Office. For questions concerning the preservation of the battlefields and other historic sites contact the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll Environmental Office (5-4218) or the USASMDC Historical Office at DSN 645-2830 or (256) 955-2830.