

Victory Over Japan

Firstly, I want to say a big thank you for all the kind comments I received in relation to the July issue of the Baseball in Wartime Newsletter—"Negro Leaguers in Service". Whilst, the recognition is great to receive, it's equally good to know that this newsletter is actually being read!

This month's topic covers the final months of the war in the Pacific—the end of the island hopping that brought mainland Japan into sight and, fortunately, the end of the war also.

Iwo Jima

Just 750 miles south of Tokyo, the tiny island had great tactical importance. There were two airfields on the island from which Japanese fighter planes had been menacing American B-29 bombers on their way to bomb Japan. If Iwo Jima could be taken, the airfields would serve as emergency landing strips for crippled American bombers, and as bases for fighter planes to escort the bombers to the Japanese mainland. The island, however, was about as inhospitable as could possibly be imagined. Five miles long with Mount Suribachi at the southern tip, the sulfur-reeking chunk of rock was scattered with steep and broken gullies that cut across the surface and were covered by scraggy vegetation and a fine layer of black volcanic ash.

The Japanese had no doubt about the importance of Iwo Jima, one of their last outer defenses shielding the home islands, and were determined to keep control. With a garrison of around 22,000 under the control of Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, the Japanese took advantage of the island's natural features and turned it into a fortress of underground tunnels and defensive bunkers, riddled with concrete pillboxes, machinegun pits, trenches and mortar sites.

The Marines of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Divisions faced fanatical resistance from the moment they hit the beach, starting on February 19, 1945. Progress was slow and casualty figures were staggering. By the time the Japanese capitulated on March 16, nearly 7,000 Marines were dead.

Okinawa

Okinawa, the next island to be targeted by Allied forces was just 340 miles from mainland Japan, and included the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific Theater. Four divisions of the U.S. 10th Army (the 7th, 27th, 77th, and 96th) and two Marine Divisions (the 1st and 6th) fought on the island, supported by naval, amphibious, and tactical air forces.

The battle was one of the bloodiest in the Pacific, and the Japanese lost over 77,000 soldiers, either killed or through committing suicide. By the time the fighting had finished on Okinawa on June 22, 1945, the Allies suffered 14,009 deaths.

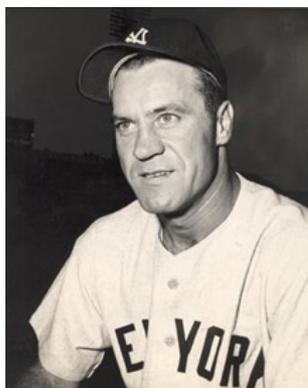
Mainland Japan

With the Japanese refusal to accept the Allies' demands for unconditional surrender, preparation for what was anticipated to be a very costly invasion of the Japanese mainland was under way. The invasion was preceded by an immensely destructive firebombing campaign that obliterated many Japanese cities.

In July 1945, the Allied Manhattan Project successfully detonated an atomic device in the New Mexico desert and by August had produced atomic weapons. An atomic bomb (Little Boy) was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, followed by another (Fat Man) on Nagasaki on August 9. Six days later, Japan announced its surrender to the Allies, formally signing on September 2, 1945.

Major Leaguers at Iwo Jima and Okinawa

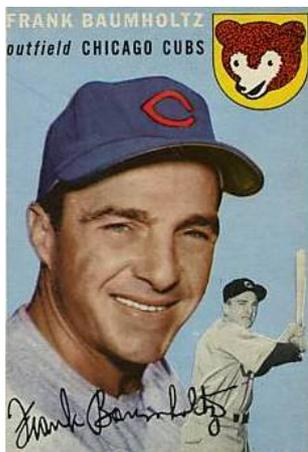
Hank Bauer



Future Yankee great, Hank Bauer, was a Marine Corps sergeant at Okinawa, serving with G Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Regiment of the 6th Marine Division. Sixty-four men were in Platoon Sergeant Bauer's landing group; six got

out alive. Hank himself was wounded on June 4. "I saw this reflection of sunshine on something coming down. It was an artillery shell, and it hit right behind me." A piece of shrapnel tore a jagged hole in his left thigh. Bauer's part in the war was over—after 32 months of combat, eleven campaign ribbons, two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts.

Frank Baumholtz



Baumholtz, who would go on to play 10 seasons in the majors, was the skipper of an LCI mortar ship in the Pacific and was group commander in the Iwo Jima invasions. Going into Iwo Jima, his ship had part of the stern shot away but Baumholtz escaped

injury.

Jim Bivin



Bivin might have played only one season in the majors, but during that year—1935—he pitched in the first big league game under floodlights and was the last major league

pitcher to face Babe Ruth. Bivin served as a private first-class with a quartermaster unit of the 2nd Marine Division. He was in action at Tarawa, Saipan and Iwo Jima, earning a Purple Heart and two Bronze Stars.

Pete Castiglione



A future National League utility infielder, Castiglione served in the Navy as a chief radioman and was at Okinawa.

Mel Clark



Clark, a future big league outfielder, served with the Navy and was assigned to a landing craft at Iwo Jima.

Eddie Collins, Jr.



Collins, a pre-war outfielder with the Philadelphia Athletics, held the rank of lieutenant with the Navy and was a communications officer aboard the light cruiser USS Miami (CL-89). He participated in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa invasions.

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Larry French



Pre-war National League all-star pitcher, Larry French, served as a lieutenant with the Navy Supply Corps and was on the USS New York during the Okinawa invasion.

he "was entrusted with the safeguarding and stenographic preparation of highly classified documents" through "extensive periods of enemy aerial alerts and extensive bombing attacks."

Art Johnson



Left-hander, Art Johnson, pitched three seasons for the Boston Braves before serving with the Navy aboard the carrier USS Langley. At Iwo Jima, the Langley's planes were

involved in the attempted destruction of Japanese defenses on the island. "We were about a mile off shore," he recalled. "Our bombers spent six days bombing the island, but it didn't bother them [the Japanese] a bit because they were deep in the caves. We didn't know that. We found out later, unfortunately, when our marines went ashore."

Bill Greason



Greason, who pitched for the St. Louis Cardinals in 1954, served with the Marine Corps' 66th Supply Platoon at Iwo Jima.

Jake Jones



American League first baseman, Jake Jones, was a Hellcat fighter pilot on the carrier USS Yorktown, flying missions over Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Buddy Hassett



A seven-year major league veteran, Hassett was a lieutenant (junior grade) with the Navy aboard the aircraft carrier USS Bennington (CV-20), which participated in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa invasions.

Sonny Jordan



Niles "Sonny" Jordan, who made it to the major leagues with the Phillies in 1951, served as a radioman on the destroyer USS Bennett at Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Gil Hodges



Dodgers sensation, Gil Hodges, was a sergeant in the Marine Corps. He landed with the assault echelon at Okinawa and was assigned to his battalion's operations and intelligence

section. His Bronze Star citation states that

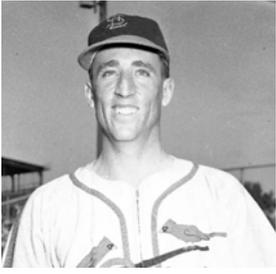
Johnny Lipon

Tigers infielder, Johnny Lipon, earned his Naval aircrewman's wings in 1944, and helped fly casualties from the Okinawa.

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Bill Reeder



Reeder, who would pitch 21 games for the Cardinals in 1949, was at Okinawa with the 96th Infantry Division. In late April, his company was desperately holding on to a hilltop position in the

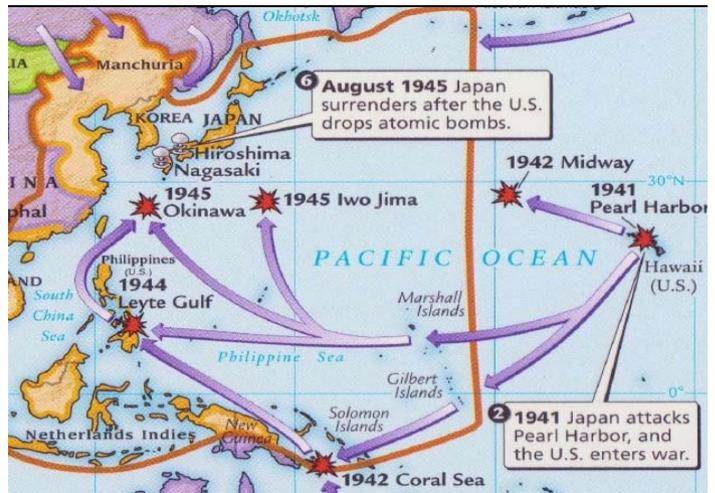
face of a determined Japanese assault. The enemy had mortars dug in about 300 feet down the hillside and they were delivering deadly concentrated fire on the American troops. The mortars were to be eliminated by machine-gun fire and nobody could throw a hand grenade that far, until the company commander, Captain Wilcox, remembered that Reeder was a pre-war professional baseball pitcher. Reeder was called for and he hurled a number of grenades at the mortar positions until they were silenced. The Japanese infantry were then beaten off and the hill remained in American hands. When it was over, Captain Wilcox personally paced off the distance between Reeder's makeshift pitching mound and the Japanese mortar positions. "It was just a little over 300 hundred feet," Captain Wilcox declared. "Try throwing a grenade that far sometime if you don't think it's quite a trick." Reeder was awarded the Silver Star for his action.

Joe Tipton



Tipton, an American League catcher for seven years after the war, served with the Navy aboard the escort carrier USS Kadashan Bay in the Pacific. He was at Okinawa and Iwo Jima, surviving a kamikaze attack on

January 8, 1945, when the Kadashan Bay was hit amidships.



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BIG LEAGUE
CHEW SHREDDED
BUBBLEGUM



Wayne Terwilliger



Terwilliger, who went on to play nine seasons in the majors and spent over 60 years in the game, was a radioman on an amphibian tank with the Marine Corps' 2nd Armored Amphibian Battalion at Iwo Jima.

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Minor Leaguers at Iwo Jima and Okinawa

Ray Champagne



Champagne, a third baseman in the New England League in 1942, was a star on the Third Marine Division baseball team before and after seeing combat at Iwo Jima.

Jim Hedgecock



Hedgecock, who played nine seasons in the minors and was a 21-game winner with Vancouver in 1947, was on the Third Marine Division baseball team before and after Iwo Jima.

Bill Kinney

Kinney, a pitcher in the Tigers organization in 1946, was with the Sixth Marine Division as a reconnaissance spotter during the Battle of Okinawa.

Jim Morris

Morris, who won 24 games in the K-O-M League in 1947, was with the medical battalion of the Third Marine Division at Iwo Jima.

Billy Parish

Parish, who had been signed by the Cubs before military service, was a Pharmacist's Mate with the Third Marine Division at Iwo Jima. More than 50 per cent of his company was killed during that battle.

Negro Leaguers at Iwo Jima and Okinawa

Luther Hall

Hall, who played for the semi-pro Tuscaloosa Red Sox negro team, was with the Army at Okinawa.

Bertrand Patterson

Patterson, who played with the Shreveport Black Sports negro team, served with the 43rd Truck Battalion at Iwo Jima.



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The Ultimate Sacrifice at Iwo Jima and Okinawa

Harry O'Neill

O'Neill, who played one game for the Philadelphia Athletics in 1939, was a first lieutenant with the Fourth Marine Division at Iwo Jima. He was killed by a Japanese sniper on March 6, 1945.

Frank Ciaffone

Ciaffone, who had signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers before military service, served with the Third Marine Division at Iwo Jima. He was killed in action on March 3, 1945.

Norman Duncan

Duncan, who pitched in the Michigan State League in 1941, was a Navy lieutenant on the escort destroyer USS Whitehurst. He was killed during a kamikaze attack off the coast of Okinawa on April 12, 1945.

Robert Holmes

Holmes, who pitched in the Piedmont League in 1943, was with the Fifth Marine Division at Iwo Jima. Commanding a DUKW, six-wheel-drive amphibious truck, he was killed in action on February 22, 1945.

Harry Imhoff

Imhoff, who played for the Baltimore Orioles in 1944, served with the First Marine Division at Okinawa. He was killed in action in April 1945, but his body was not recovered until June 3 of that year.

Frank Janik

Janik, who played four seasons with the Chicago Cubs in the Canadian-American League, was at Okinawa with the 27th Infantry Division. He was killed in action on April 29, 1945.

Harry Ladner

Ladner, a minor league umpire before entering military service, was a staff sergeant with the 77th Infantry Division in the Pacific Theater. He was killed amid stiff

resistance from Japanese troops on Iwo Jima, off Okinawa, on April 18, 1945, the same day and close to where famous war correspondent, Ernie Pyle, lost his life.

Jack Lummus

Lummus, an outfielder in the Texas-New Mexico League in 1941, as well as being a football player with the New York Giants, served as a lieutenant with the Fifth Marine Division in the Pacific. At Iwo Jima, on March 6, 1945, he led an assault on three concealed Japanese strongholds and despite minor wounds received from grenade shrapnel, he singlehandedly knocked out all three positions. The following day, Lummus stepped on a landmine. Both his legs were blown off. Lummus was transferred to the 5th Division Field hospital where he underwent surgery and blood transfusions, but died on the operating table the following day. Lummus was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Jack Nealy

Nealy, who played a single game in the Southern Association in 1943, was a radioman with the Fifth Marine Division at Iwo Jima. He was killed in action on March 2, 1945.

James Stewart

Stewart, who had signed with the Atlanta Crackers in 1943, was at Iwo Jima with the Third Marine Division. He was killed in action on March 22, 1945.

Jim Trimble

Trimble, a standout pitcher at St. Albans prep school in Washington, DC., was signed by the Senators before entering service with the Marine Corps. He was killed in action during a Japanese suicide attack at Iwo Jima on March 1, 1945.

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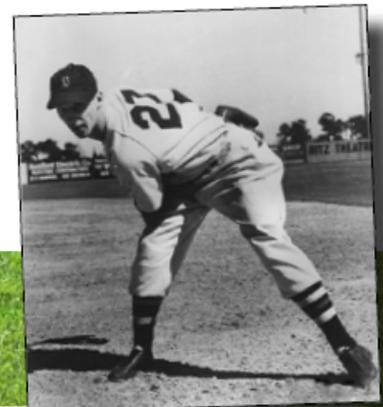
As you know, baseball was an integral part of the war effort both on the Home Front and on the battlefield. Over 400 Major Leaguers and nearly 4,500 Minor Leaguers served in the US military in WWII. While books have been written, panels conducted, and a few specials on TV mention this service, many baseball fans have yet to experience exactly where these actions of sacrifice took place. Now there is an opportunity to see first-hand where players fought, served, and died on the fields of Europe with both military historians and baseball historians. The famed Stephen Ambrose Tours is conducting a one time "Baseball at War" tour which combines both the military history and the "National Pastime" from London to Hitler's Eagle's Nest. As you know, Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose was the exceptional author who made WWII and the regular GIs come alive in his many books, and the shows he advised for such as "Saving Private Ryan" and "Band of Brothers."

If you wish to learn more about this July 2016 adventure visit:
<http://stephenambrosetours.com/tour/wwii-baseball-tour/>
Sincerely,
Todd Anton, Bill Nowlin, and Gary Bedingfield

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Hall of Fame pitcher,
Warren Spahn,
fought in The Battle
of the Bulge.

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\$5,290 per person
based on double occupancy
\$900 single supplement
\$300 deposit required for this tour
A minimum number of participants
are required for tour to run.

Tour Includes:

- Full-time historian and logistical escorts
- Educational road book full of maps and historical information
- Three- and four-star accommodations
- Rooms with private bath or shower, hotel taxes, portage and service charges
- Touring by private, first-class, air-conditioned motorcoach
- Breakfast daily, 14 dinners and a Welcome Reception
- Channel crossing to Normandy via ferry
- High-speed train from Paris to Brussels
- All entrance fees to museums and attractions