



**The Battles of
Kwajalein and Roi-Namur**

SATAKE

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FEBRUARY 1974

This month marks the 30th anniversary of the invasion of Kwajalein in 1944. As far as we know, an extensive history of the battle has never been published on the island. The account which follows, we hope, will be regarded as a worthwhile step in that direction. Though we have focused our attention primarily on the operations at Kwajalein Island, we can find no better words to introduce our history than those below, sent to us by Bill Bacon, a young Marine who landed at Roi-Namur. His words, we feel, might well have been written by any of the 40,000 GI's and Leathernecks whose courage turned the eyes of the world to Kwajalein Atoll three decades ago.

Passing Scene-The Battle 30 Years Ago . . .

Please excuse my delay in answering your letter. Trying to put my thoughts, impressions, and recollections together after 30 years—Good Lord! Has it really been that long?—is not as easy as I thought.

I was one of many members of the Fourth Marine Division who landed and then contested with the Japanese for Roi and Namur Islands. As I remember, this operation was a first in several ways: first to be staged and totally trained for in the States; first in which troops sailed from the States and went directly into battle; first contest for real estate involving land which had been under Japanese control prior to the war.

As with most Pacific Islands, when we got our briefing at sea, the question that came to mind was, "Where in hell is that?" You no doubt can guess that I learned my Pacific geography the hard way.

Now for what I remember—scattered fragments of years gone by. We landed from the lagoon side . . . Vivid in my memory is the fear as we went in to the beach . . . I was stunned by the total destruction. There was the concrete operations building on Roi and a large concrete communications building and the commanding officer's house, and that was all. All buildings were battered and shell-holed. Dead Japanese lay everywhere . . .

I remember having a very detached feeling as if I

wasn't there and that it was like watching a movie. I remember just when I grew up: it was when a friend of mine got hit and I realized that this was for real and I was there. The torpedo dump on Namur went up and I thought the world had come to an end. Quite honestly, I am surprised there was anything left.

I have a few slides of the islands as they now look . . . I remember the beach on the lagoon side and thinking how beautiful it must have been . . . I see that my impressions were correct. My compliments to all who have made those two dots on the map the beauties they should be.

You spoke of the fact that I possibly would not want to talk or write about the war and my small part in it. War is an odd thing. At best it is horrible but it is also an experience that will make an individual far more understanding and compassionate for having been through it. There was a thrill and excitement that can be found nowhere else. My personal feelings are that I could not bury it in my mind to fester nor could I speak lightly of it. I have found that I can live with it and I am glad we got the job done.

Thank you for asking, and I do hope that my recollections will in some way help your publication.

—BILL BACON
CANYON, TEXAS

THE BATTLE OF KWAJALEIN—A HISTORY

This account of the battle for Kwajalein was researched and written in the BTL Public Relations Office, Kwajalein Field Station. Requests to reproduce this history in whole or in part should be addressed to the BTL Public Relations.

BY ROBERT J. O'BRIEN

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and a series of U.S. setbacks culminating with the fall of the Philippines, the critical battles of Guadalcanal and Midway checked

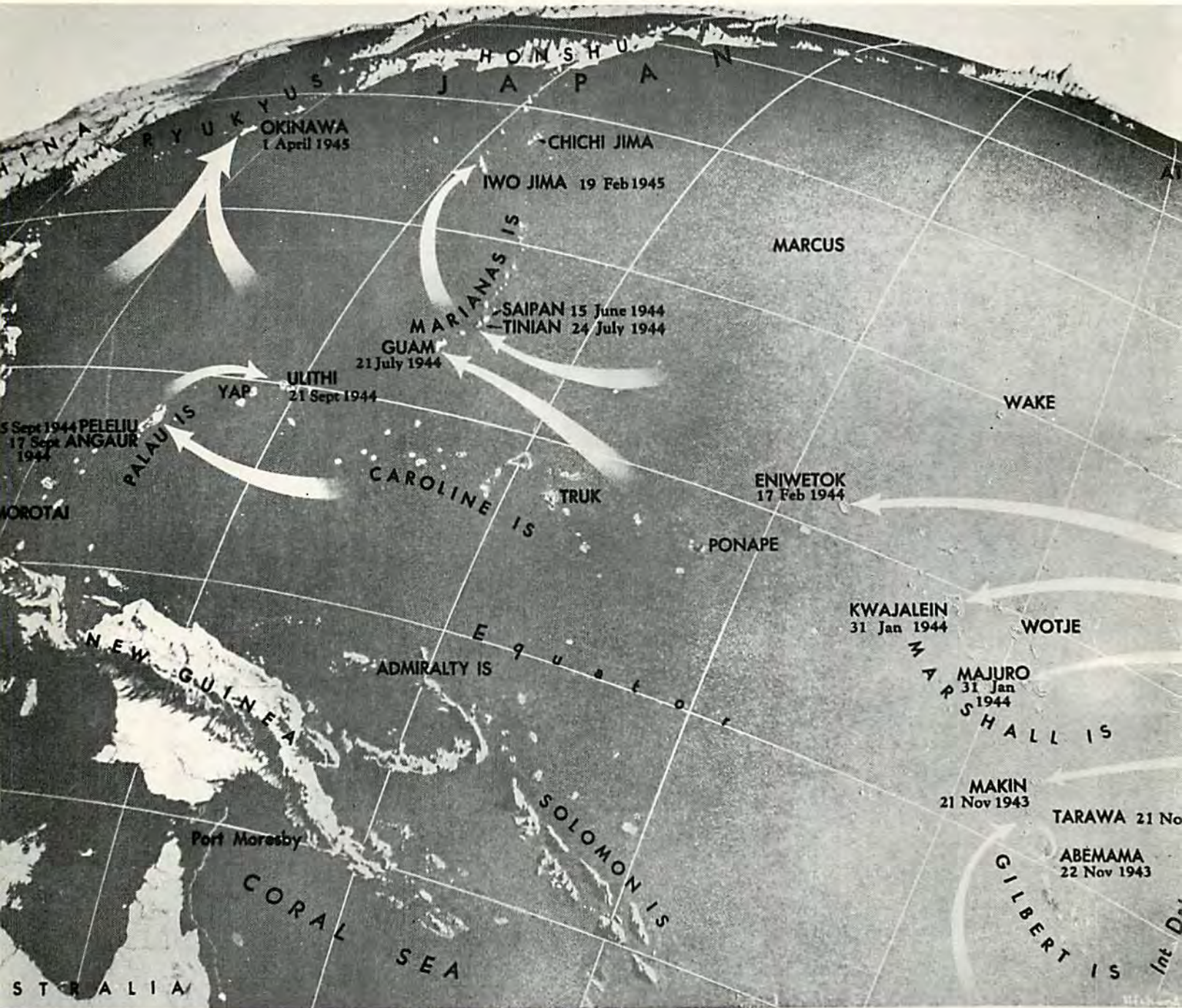
further Japanese expansion in the Pacific.

Subsequent American strategy called for a two-pronged offensive. A southern attack route directed by General MacArthur would move through the Solomon Islands, New Guinea and the Philippines. A second route was necessary, however, to break up Japanese control in the Central and Northern Pacific and to prevent Japan from cutting American supply routes to the south.

On May 11, 1943, at the Trident Conference in Washington, the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to move against the Marshalls. It was in

preparation for this first strike into Japanese territory, code-named "Flintlock," that Makin and Tarawa atolls in the Gilberts were assaulted in November, 1943. Both atolls were secured—at heavy cost—and were promptly employed as staging points for air strikes against Kwaj, Wotje, Jaluit and other bases in the Marshalls.

The attack against the Marshalls was to spearhead the drive across the Central Pacific. After considerable debate, American strategists decided that the Central Pacific offensive, rather than MacArthur's southern route of attack, would pave the way for



Map shows location and sequence of engagements during the long U.S. advance across the Central and Northern Pacific, beginning with operations at Tarawa and Kwajalein appearing at lower right.

the eventual strikes against Japan proper.

Admiral Nimitz' plan for the Marshalls provided that undefended Majuro be taken first for the sake of its anchorage, that Roi-Namur and

Strategy — Island Hopping Across The Pacific

Kwajalein Island be taken next, and that Eniwetok be taken as soon thereafter as possible. Despite the objections of many on Nimitz' staff, all the rest of the atolls, even those with airfields, would be neutralized, "leapfrogged" and left to "wither on the vine." The plan was bold, but Nimitz rightly believed that U.S. carrier forces and land-based aircraft in the newly won Gilberts could eliminate Japanese air power in the

Marshalls before the landings began.

Also, there were now enough battleships and heavy cruisers to challenge the main Japanese fleet if it ventured from its stronghold in Truk.

Japanese strategists considered the Marshalls untenable, but the forces occupying them were reinforced to fight "delaying" actions against what was then the most powerful invasion force assembled in the history of warfare.

Planning for "Flintlock"

After American seizure of the Gilberts, the Japanese expected an attack in the Marshalls, but as Admiral Nimitz had guessed, they did not expect it at Kwaj, the weak spot in the island chain's defenses.

Nor could the Japanese here have anticipated the unprecedented striking power of the American armada. Under the command of General Holland ("Howling Mad") Smith, the Army's 7th Infantry Division, under

Major General Corlett, was to attack the southern part of Kwajalein Atoll. With its reinforcing units, the 7th known as the Hourglass Division, counted some 22,000 troops and 9,000 reserves. The northern part of the atoll was to be assaulted by the 4th Marine Division, under Major General Schmidt.

Supporting these landing forces at Kwaj were nearly 200 ships. Task Force 52, under Admiral Turner, concentrated its entire firepower on Kwaj and Ebeye, while Task Force 53, under Admiral Conolly, did the same at Roi and Namur.

Additionally, other task forces with scores of warships—including fast carriers, battleships, light and heavy cruisers and destroyers—as well as fourteen squadrons of land-based bombers and fighters, brought their combined power to bear simultaneously on a half dozen tiny islands.

The invasion troops trained in

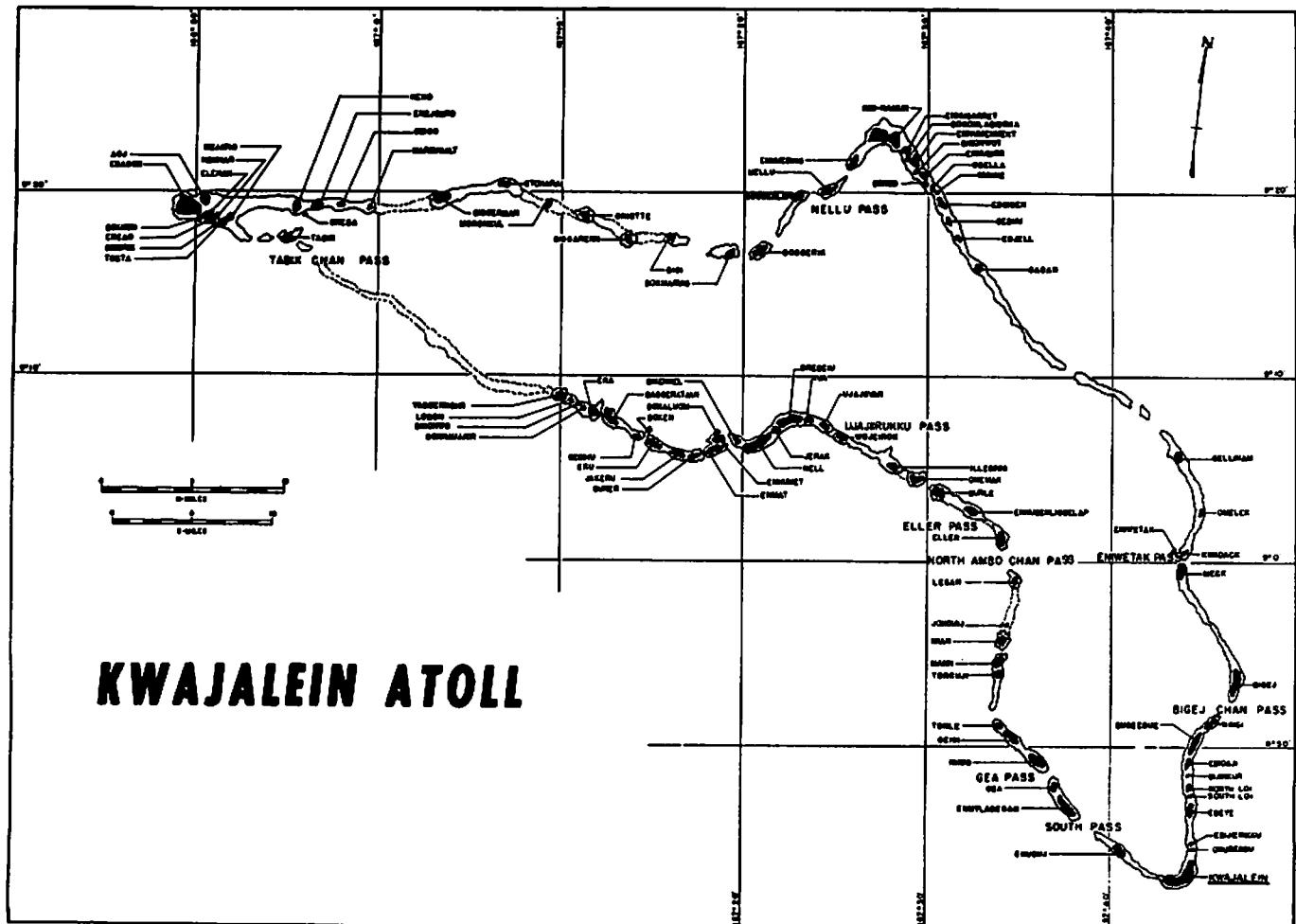
"There was divided opinion as to whether you would land at Jaluit or Mille. Some thought you would land on Wotje but there were few who thought you would go right to the heart of the Marshalls and take Kwajalein."

*—Commander Chikataka Nakajima
Imperial Japanese Navy*

Hawaii, and made practice landings on Oahu and Maui, under the direction of General Richardson (for whom our theater was eventually named). Units of the 7th had seen action on Attu, but the 4th Marines were green, and all of the GI's and Marines needed preparation for jungle warfare.

The lessons of Tarawa and Makin were also studied.

Preliminary naval and air bombardment was to be increased dramatically prior to the landing. Additionally, the islands adjacent to



KWJALEIN ATOLL

Objective of Operation Flintlock was Kwajalein. The Atoll contains 90-odd islands and encompasses the world's largest lagoon—nearly 1,000 square miles.



Kwaj on January 31, 1944. Invasion began following day on west end of the island (top of photo). Runway at left was about half completed. Note diagonal anti-tank ditch at lower left. Building complex in right foreground was known as the Admiralty Area; approximately where the Richardson Theater now stands. Defensive positions had been established primarily along the ocean shore. The Japanese felt that potential invaders would land there. As a result, when the invasion force approached from west, the garrison was ill-prepared to defend the island in depth.

Kwaj and Roi-Namur were to be seized first and then employed as field artillery bases before, during, and after the landings. Frogmen were to be used for the first time ever to scour the beaches for mines and other obstacles. Improved landing craft were introduced. Better aerial reconnaissance was achieved. Improved communication between tanks and infantry was planned.

Similarly, much closer coordination between ship, shore, and air units was absolutely essential. This was attained at Kwaj by the introduction of the headquarters command ship, which supplanted the battlegroup as the point for coordination and control during the invasion. The flagships for Flintlock were the **Rocky Mount** with Admiral Turner at Kwaj, the **Appalachian** with Admiral Conolly at Roi and the **Cambria** (a modified attack transport) with Admiral Hill at Majuro.

The Japanese at Kwaj

Finally, no one, least of all the troops themselves, wanted a repetition of the slaughter on Red Beach at Tarawa. During that operation, despite extensive preliminary shelling, five or six Japanese machine gun positions on Betio poured withering fire directly into the Marines as they struggled toward the beach. As Admiral Hill later put it, "That was five or six too many."

During the week-long voyage from Hawaii to Kwaj, the GI's and Marines wondered if Kwaj might be another Betio in the making. Meanwhile, the admirals were determined that any resistance on the beaches at Kwaj would not only be softened up, but annihilated.

The Japanese had controlled Kwajalein since October, 1914, when naval squadrons seized it and other Micronesian archipelagos and laid claim to them from Germany.

Kwaj played a notable role in the initial strikes against the U.S. Its lagoon harbored the submarines which attacked Pearl Harbor and the task force which assaulted Wake Island. In early 1944, it was headquarters for the 6th Base Force, which was subordinate to the Combined Fleet stronghold at Truk. Rear Admiral Monzo Akiyama was in command on Kwajalein Island.

Kwaj was the nerve center for all bases in the Marshalls, through which shipping, supplies, and reinforcements flowed to the other atolls.

There were also communications, reconnaissance and weather observation units on Kwaj itself, as well as an air unit at the seaplane base on Ebeye. At Roi, there was a major air and submarine base.

In 1944, there were about 8,000 Japanese in the atoll, split more or less equally in the northern and southern sectors. Among them, however, were several hundred Korean labor troops working on the unfinished bomber strip at Kwaj, and at least 200 civilians engaged in administrative work. Few of the regular army units had combat experience. One unit, scheduled for transfer to Wotje, never got out—it was trapped on Kwaj when the invasion began.

There were smaller units on the outer islands, as well as lookout points at Gea (where the rusting tower still stands) and Bigej.

Compared to Tarawa, Kwaj was lightly defended. The Japanese did not expect an attack to begin with, and even the defenses available were designed primarily to contest an ocean-side landing.

It was, however, no pushover. About 40 pillboxes, numerous blockhouses, shelters and pits covered the island. A concrete seawall stretched along the oceanside and wrapped around its northern and western ends. The center of the island contained a large tank trap.

Surprisingly, apparently no effort was made to mine or defend the deep water channel entrance to the lagoon at Gea and other passes. This omission enabled the invasion forces to bring scores of ships directly into the lagoon for close fire support without risk of attack by submarines.



“Downtown” Kwaj, 1944—In this view, north is at right; present-day 6th St. crosses the island vertically, leading off onto Echo Pier at top. Running horizontally are Lagoon Road (top) and Ocean Road (bottom). Note camouflaged buildings at lower left, where Macy’s and Post Office are now located; also, the Japanese hospital at far right.

Preliminary Attacks

The first attack on Kwajalein came long before the invasion in 1944. As early as February, 1942, just three months after Pearl Harbor, a fast carrier force under Admiral Halsey staged a raid on Kwajalein, launching nine torpedo bombers and 37 Dauntless dive bombers from the **Enterprise**

just before sunrise, February 1. At Roi, moderate damage was inflicted on the Japanese fighter fleet, and at Kwaj a transport was sunk and nine other ships were damaged.

In the latter part of 1943, land-based B-24’s, flying from Nanomea, made a couple of long-range strikes. In the first, of the eight planes, only one got through to drop fragmentation bombs on Roi. In the second, six tons of bombs were dropped on various islands and valuable reconnaissance photos were taken.

The Japanese tried to avenge these early humiliations during the American invasion of Tarawa and Makin. While U.S. ships waited off Makin in support of the slow-moving assault, a

“Planes seem to be completely around us . . . Fire on water off our port beam. That’s one down off our port quarter now . . . They are using flares . . . We are holding field day: Another down . . . Another . . . One ship hit with torpedo . . . Has regained steering control, everything OK . . . 0125: The moon set—Thank God.”

—Radio messages from U.S. ships during raid on Kwajalein, December 5, 1943.

Ed. Note—the U.S. ship torpedoed was apparently the carrier **Enterprise**. The attacking Japanese planes were based on Roi.

dozen planes based at Roi staged a spectacular but unsuccessful night attack on Admiral Turner's task force on Thanksgiving evening, 1943.

Through December and January, Kwaj and other atolls were subjected to repeated attacks. On the morning of December 5, Admiral Pownall's carrier forces launched 246 planes against the atoll. At Roi, nineteen Japanese interceptors were shot down and four medium bombers were destroyed (one while taking off), but many planes were camouflaged and escaped destruction. There were also hits on two light cruisers and a freighter.

At Kwaj, nearly thirty ships—mostly offloaded merchantmen—were anchored in the lagoon. Seven were sunk and several others damaged. Two flying boats on Ebye were destroyed before Japanese fighters from Roi flew south and forced a retreat. The ships sunk during this raid, and other vessels which went down in later ones, were "rediscovered" in the

1960's at Kwaj as scuba enthusiasts took up shipdiving in earnest.

Another major carrier strike came on January 29, 1944, just prior to the invasion. Planes from *Essex*, *Intrepid*, and *Cabot* struck Roi, where 92 planes were based that morning. By 0800 not one enemy plane was able to contest American mastery of the skies over the entire atoll.

Planes from *Cowpens*, *Monterey* and *Bunker Hill* bombed the airfield and admiralty area on Kwaj on their first strike, and then continued to bomb and strafe the island continually throughout the day. B-24's from the *Gilberts* also joined in, dropping 18 tons of bombs on the atoll during the day and another twenty tons of bombs in a night raid on Kwajalein Island.

On January 30, D-Day minus one,

400 sorties were flown against Kwaj and four hours of naval bombardment were concentrated on the islands during the morning and afternoon.

That night, lights could be seen on Kwajalein Island by assault troops waiting in their transports. They were lights from raging fires started during the previous day's bombardment.

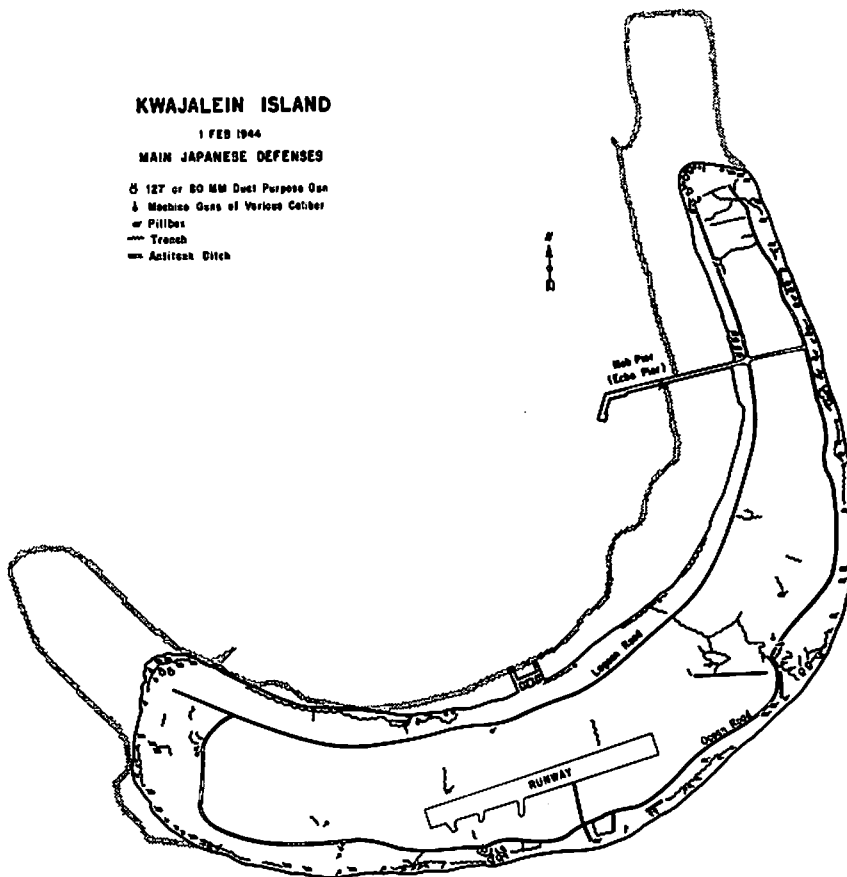
As sunrise approached on D-Day, when initial landings were to be made on the west reef, the atoll had indeed been "softened up" for the strike. Air resistance had been eliminated not only at Kwaj, but at every Japanese base within reach of it. The Japanese garrison on Kwaj was dazed, its defenses were already largely destroyed, and worst of all, it was totally isolated. Moreover, the worst of the preliminary pasting was yet to come.

D-Day—The West Reef

It was still dark on Monday morning, January 31, 1944 when troops of the 17th Regimental Combat Team left their transports and set out in rubber boats to take Carter (Gea), and Cecil (Ninni), the two islands guarding the vital pass leading into Kwajalein lagoon.

It was a moonless night, with strong ocean currents and high winds, and in the darkness some confusion developed. The team assigned to land on Ninni, north of the channel, mistakenly landed on Chauncey (Gehh) instead at 0545. Nonetheless, the time and place marked the first American combat landing on an island that had been part of the Japanese Empire before the war. Ironically, Gehh turned out to be more strongly garrisoned than Ninni, Geas, Carlos or Carlson, the four islands on the west reef which were to be captured that day.

About 100 Japanese surprised the American force in the thick underbrush on Gehh, and though half the Japanese were soon killed, the two GI's slain became the first American casualties in the invasion of Kwajalein. Since the objective was actually to secure Ninni, the Americans on Gehh broke off the engagement, left a guard force behind, and proceeded southeast along the reef in rubber boats to Ninni, which turned out to be unoccupied.



Defenses on Kwajalein Island. Post-war landfills are outlined. The road system has changed little. This and subsequent maps by Noland C. Hisey.

(Two days later, on February 2, another U.S. force made an oceanside landing on Gehh. As American troops swept the island, another 115 Japanese were killed in a firefight and the island was secured. More importantly, a beached tugboat at Gehh was found to contain maps and other intelligence which proved valuable in planning the remainder of the invasion.)

In the meantime, the other landing team hit the southwest end of Gea at 0620. It headed north toward the lookout tower, where a single Japanese sentry was slain, and then combed south again. It then encountered and overcame about 20 Japanese in hand-to-hand fighting. The two channel islands were now secure and Gea Pass was swept for mines.

Two important objectives on D-Day were Carlos (Ennylabegan) and Carlson (Enubuj), which were assaulted from the oceanside at 0900 by two battalions of U.S. troops. Carlos was lightly defended, and soon became the center for supplies, repairs and ammunition storage. Carlson, with its radio towers and communication facility, offered only nominal resistance, including some artillery fire from the Japanese garrison on Kwajalein.

Carlson soon bristled with the 7th Division's artillery. Four battalions of 105mm howitzers, and another of 155's, were brought ashore and set up there during the day. By nightfall, they had begun bombarding Kwajalein. Kwaj had received no respite at all during the west reef operations January 31. Carrier strikes and heavy naval gunfire had raked the island all day long. The Japanese garrison there now had to face steady fire from Carlson throughout the night.

Earlier that day, the first U.S. ships had begun slipping through Gea Pass as planned. At 1000 and again at 1600, as the battleships **Pennsylvania** and **Mississippi** provided cover, frogmen in rubber boats ranged over the approaches to Kwajalein, scouring the area for mines and underwater obstacles. None were found and surf and reef conditions were deemed satisfactory.

Everything was now in readiness for D Plus One, the landing on Kwaj itself, which was scheduled for 0930 the following morning, February 1.



Above, Roi Island under attack. Hits on Japanese planes, runways may be noted. Below, U.S. planes attack Japanese cargo ships at anchor in Kwajalein lagoon (note Echo Pier in bottom photo—the blockhouse at its midpoint stood where Marina guard house is presently located).



H-Hour — 7th Hits The Beach

The sun rose at 0712 on February 1, and despite squalls and cloud cover which soon developed, the final preparatory bombardment of Kwajalein—unprecedented in the Pacific in both volume and effectiveness—began on schedule.

Precisely at sunrise, the battleship **Mississippi** moved to within 1,500 yards of the western end of Kwajalein and began firing repeated broadsides at visible targets in the landing area. At 0745 other ships took up systematic shelling from the same range. These included the battleships **Pennsylvania** and **New Mexico**, the cruisers **Minneapolis**, **New Orleans** and **San Francisco**, and eight destroyers. The destroyers **Ringgold** and **Sigsbee** then sailed into the lagoon and commenced firing also. That was only the beginning.

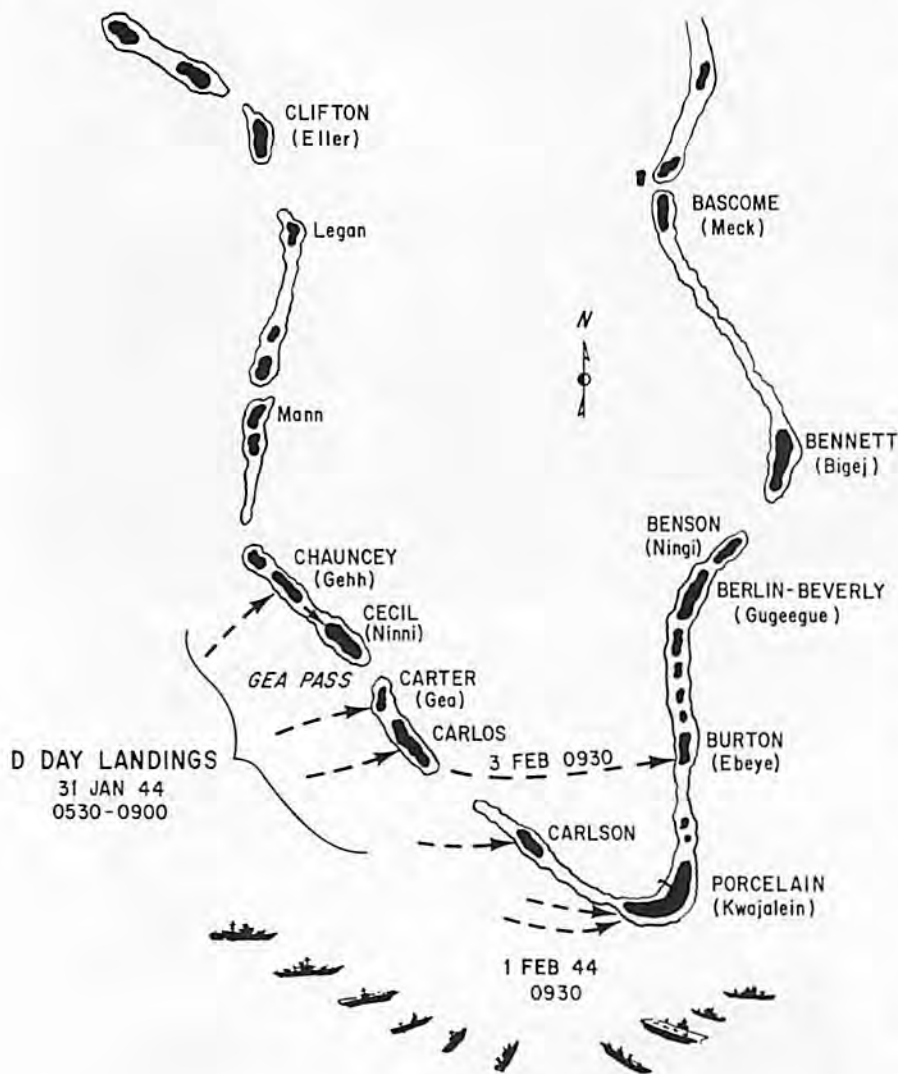
At that point 7,000 naval shells, 29,000 artillery rounds, and fifteen 1,000 and 2,000 pound bombs rained down on Kwajalein. In addition, six aircraft carriers, including the **Enterprise**, **Yorktown** and **Belleau Wood**, launched 44 sorties which strafed and bombed the island incessantly.

The results were devastating. The area inland of Red Beach, roughly along Olympus Drive, was reduced to rubble. Just before the landing, two shells per second exploded in this area. Concrete emplacements were shattered, coconut palms were smashed and flattened, and the ground was pock-marked with huge shell craters.

Fire on the beaches lifted at 0928, just two minutes before the first wave of landing craft hit the western end of the island. The line of departure for the assault waves was on the ocean-side just west of Carlson Island. It was

"Since landing on this island, there have been no days off because of continuous duties and details. Most of my time has been spent digging trenches."

—Kinichi Ijiya, Japanese soldier on Kwaj, in his diary, 25 January 1944



D-Day: Map depicts the initial 7th Division landings on the west reef at Kwajalein January 31, as well as subsequent invasions of Kwajalein Island and Ebeye. Fourth Marines assaulted Roi-Namur.



Catholic troops of the 7th Division attend Mass shortly before the landings on Kwajalein Island.



Hitting the beach—Kwajalein Atoll.

a 30-minute run for the landing forces, which made the 5,000-yard trip without mishap and landed exactly as scheduled at 0930.

They were greeted by some light machine gun and small arms fire. Much of this originated in partially destroyed bunkers beyond Red Beach (some of it no doubt from the concrete bunker still standing near Launch Hill), but not a single life was lost during the landing. The bombardment had been almost 100% effective, and the landing itself—in contrast to Tarawa—was smooth and uncontested.

One observer at the battle described Kwaj (which was code-named "Porcelain") as a banana which the 7th Division had to split down the center and carefully peel. The description was apt enough, but the operation was not quite so easy. The original plan, once landings were completed on the western end of the island, called for a rapid advance and establishment of a perimeter the night of Feb. 1. Next day, the 184th Regimental Combat Team, whose previous experience had included an unopposed landing at Kiska in the Aleutians, was to proceed along the lagoon side of the island to Echo Pier. Meanwhile, the Attu veterans of the 32nd Regimental Combat Team were



Artillery emplacement on Carlson

to advance along the ocean side of the island as far as 6th Street and Ocean Road, where the Crossroads now stands. The 32nd was then to fan out and push to the northern tip of the island, to the Japanese gun emplacements located where Bunker Hill now stands. Helping spearhead the assault were over 60 light and medium tanks from the 767th tank battalion.

The plan seemed reasonable enough—to everyone except the Japanese, whose determined resistance had yet to be reckoned with. In the end, it took four days—not two—to strip Kwaj from end to end, and the battle was not to conclude until long after the Northern Attack Force had completed the capture of Roi-Namur.

February 1 - Easy Day, Rough Night



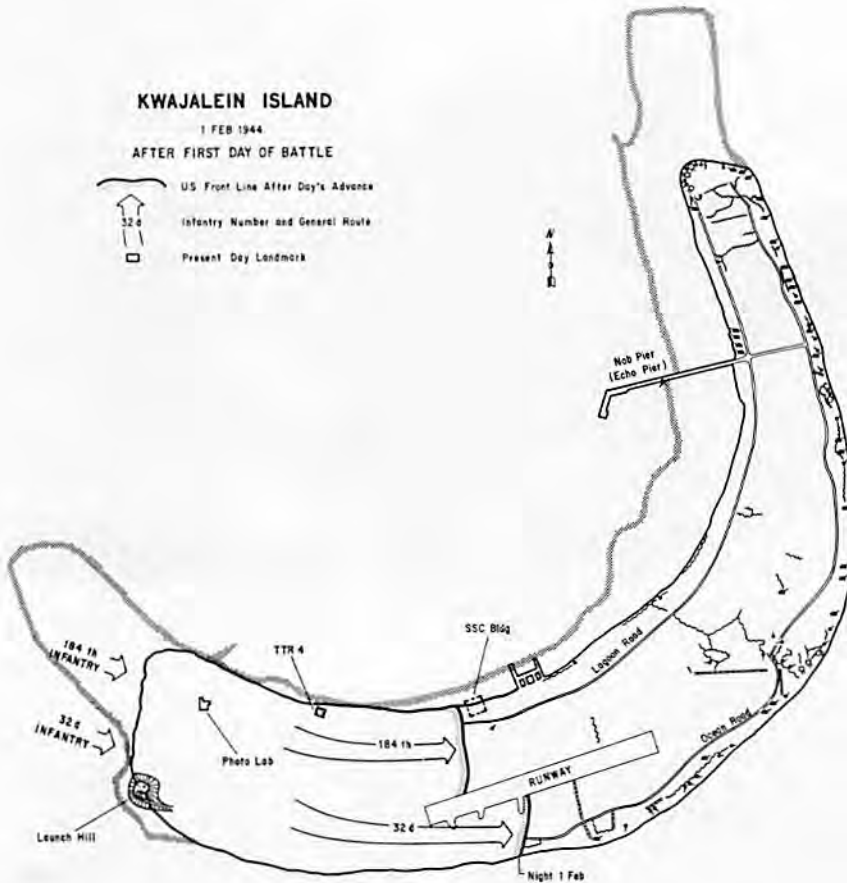
H-Hour: First waves head for Red Beach on Kwaj.

Following the landings, both the 184th and the 32nd advanced rapidly inward on Kwajalein. The western end of the island was defended by half a dozen pillboxes manned by Japanese soldiers quartered in barracks located where the Kentron Photo Lab now stands. These were reduced with light casualties, and the beach head line was established along Olympus Drive, as planned, at 1030.

The advance continued with little opposition until nightfall, when a defense perimeter was established. The night perimeter was anchored at the lagoon where the SSC building now stands. From there it stretched to the airstrip, receded behind the end of the runway, and then curved forward again to the ocean at the western end of Holmberg Fairways. Total U.S. casualties for the entire landing and initial advance were 17 killed and 36 wounded. Five hundred Japanese had died, and eleven were taken prisoner.

Shortly after dark, enemy guns still operative at the northern end of Kwaj continued to drop shells on the landing beaches. When the destroyer **Sigsbee**, in the lagoon, cast illumination light across the airfield, it was challenged by Japanese anti-aircraft guns positioned on Echo Pier, almost exactly where the Marina Guard Shack now stands. The destroyer silenced these guns quickly.

Japanese infantry soon began infiltrating the American perimeter.



The first day's advance.



Major General Corlett (left), Commander of the 7th, on Carlson Island



At left, 7th Division assault troops move inland. Smoke and rubble from bombardment slowed the initial advance (right).

Several were successful and were not stopped until they had nearly reached the landing beaches.

One attack almost became a breakthrough. After strong winds and a heavy rain had drenched the troops, the Japanese, from positions roughly in the area of the Range Operations Building, laid down a lethal curtain of light mortar fire. This destroyed machine gun positions of the 184th, and the Japanese then began driving the Americans back along what is now Lagoon Road.

Across the road, however, heavy machine guns of another U.S. platoon swung left, caught the advancing Japanese on their exposed flank, and halted the advance. The Japanese kept up harrasing fire throughout the night, and several American casualties occurred in both units. Meanwhile, artillery on Carlson continued to spray the remainder of the island with shells throughout the night. Few, if any, got any rest this first night of battle.

One recorded incident is worth relating. There was a large wood pile located on the current taxi strip just across from the SSC Building, and the Japanese held this area at least part of the night. Two Americans patrolling this area came under sniper fire. One was seriously injured in the chest, but

"The entire island looked as if it had been picked up to 20,000 feet and then dropped."
 —An Army observer, describing the aftermath of the Kwajalein bombardment.



Sitting tight as tanks move forward.

the other escaped the bullets. Both fell into a trench and lay quietly. Investigating, the Japanese examined the soldiers, concluded both were dead, and then sat down on top of

them. Neither GI dared move. Over four hours later, the Japanese finally decided to leave as daybreak approached, and both soldiers survived to tell the tale.

February 2 — The Going Gets Tougher

The plans for the second day's attack called for close cooperation between the two regiments. Jumpoff time was 0715. The 32nd was to advance rapidly on the ocean side to the northern part of the island. The 184th was to advance along the lagoon side and assist the 32nd in getting past the tank trap that stretched across what is now the eastern end of the catchment basin. The jumpoff was preceded by 15 minutes of preparatory fire from Carlson. The advance started well for both combat teams.

The 184th advanced until it formed a line near what is now the ZAR Receiver and fresh water tanks. Here the 184th encountered snipers and machine gunners that had taken cover in the debris. Combined tank and rifle fire cleared the area.

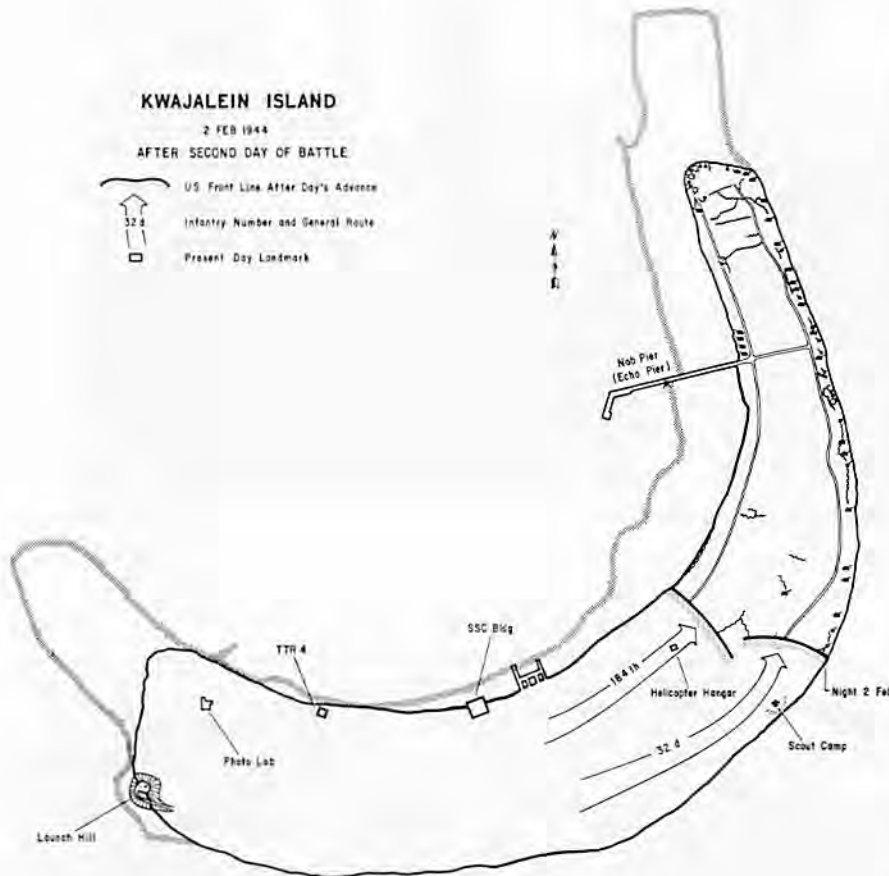
The 32nd, in its advance along the ocean side of the island, ran into several areas of stiff resistance, one of them where Camp Hamilton and the Country Club now stand. This area was so well defended that it took two hours for the tanks and riflemen to advance 200 yards. The tanks assigned to the 32nd lost considerable time getting past the tank trap.

Finally, four tanks drove out along the ocean beach to bypass the trap. Meanwhile, infantry and engineer demolition teams were reducing strong points. The Japanese had refused to surrender, and only one prisoner was taken.

By that time it became necessary to organize night defense perimeters. General Corlett, knowing how the Japanese fought, then issued the following warning:

"Be alert for a counterattack at any time, day or night. It's bound to come. The Japanese makes his suicide counterattack at dawn on the day after his cause becomes hopeless."

The night, however, was relatively quiet. Mortar fire and grenades caused some disturbance until about 0320 hours, and after that things quieted down. American casualties for the day were 11 killed and 241 wounded. Japanese losses, from ground action, naval and artillery fire and 70 carrier sorties that day, were estimated at over 1,000.



The advance on February 2



Reducing a pillbox

February 3 — The End in Sight

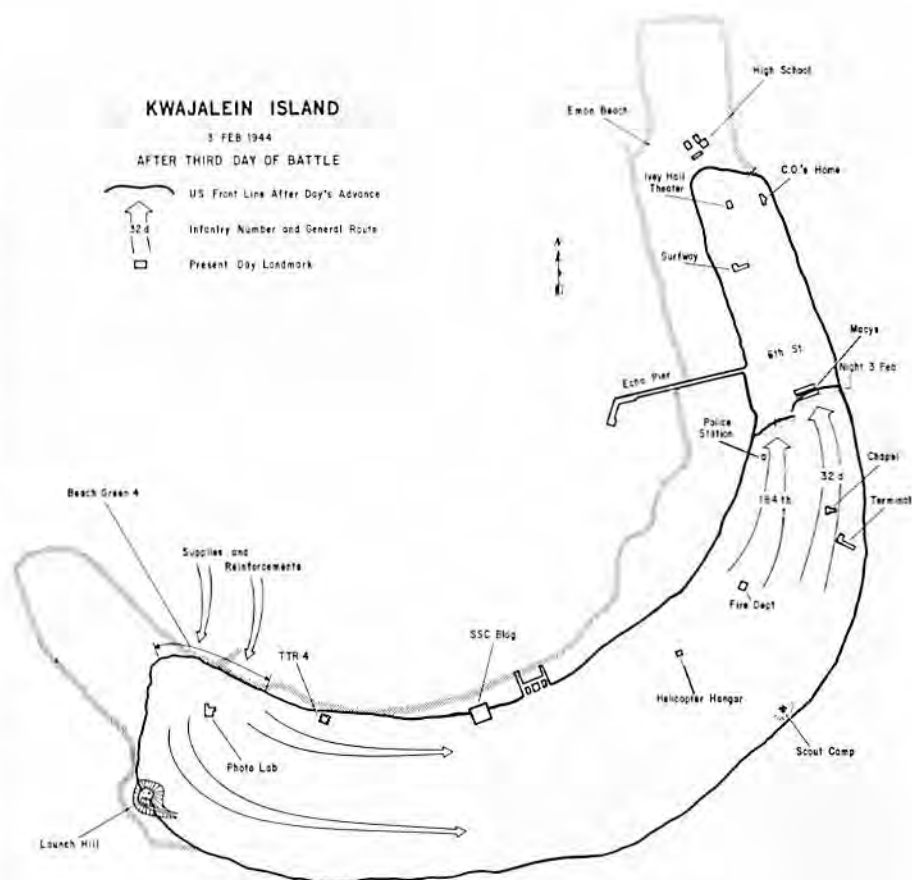
The Marines had already secured Roi-Namur, and as the third day dawned, victory on Kwajalein Island was only 2000 yards beyond American lines. But there was some grueling action ahead. The first objective for the day was 6th St., 1300 yards forward. This road crossed the island and continued out onto Echo pier. The usual preparatory fire was conducted for ten minutes. Prior photo reconnaissance of the remainder of the enemy territory was poor, and there were many more bunkers, pillboxes and reinforced concrete shelters than expected. Most of them were in the 184th sector.

The 32nd, advancing on the ocean side of the island, met little resistance for the first 350 yards, placing it in the vicinity of the air terminal. But a large concrete pillbox about 150 yards to the left caused a temporary halt. The pillbox was about where the projection booth of the Richardson Theater is now. Demolition charges and 75mm shells from the tanks drove the enemy out. Advancement continued, and by 1140 hours, the 32nd had outdistanced the 184th and had taken the area of the present day Bachelor Swimming Pool.

The 184th advanced the first 225 yards without serious opposition. Beyond that point, the most heavily fortified positions on the island came into view. The infantry didn't have its usual tank support, so the 184th attempted to bypass this resistance. The Japanese sensed what the Americans were up to, and they came out of their shelters to fight. That was in the vicinity of the existing Japanese air raid shelter close to where the fire station is now. In this area U.S. forces also made a concerted effort to destroy a warehouse which contained nothing more than the entire Japanese supply of candy, saki and beer. All of it was destroyed.

At this time, the area in the vicinity of the fire station was a mass of rubble, smoke, debris, and fallen and shattered coconut palms.

The fight soon became a series of



The third day's advance



A pause in the advance

actions between small, uncoordinated units, and to make matters worse, some of the 184th's fire was hitting the exposed flank of the 32nd, which was well beyond the scene of action. Tanks arrived but were of little use because of communications problems. Only the foot soldier and whatever demolitions he could carry with him were effective in routing the enemy and reducing fortifications.

At the end of February 3, the forward positions were on a line from Bachelor's Pool and Pacific Dining Room across to the lagoon. But there were many salients in the line. Fifty-four U.S. troops were killed on February 3, and 225 wounded. Japanese losses again exceeded 1,000. During the day, supplies and reinforcements continued to pour in at Green Beach (where Coral Sands Beach is now located), and American casualties were evacuated to the Hospital Ship *Relief* stationed in the lagoon.



Advancing yard by yard

"Always the rain and mud, torrid heat and teeming insect life. . . and no hot chow for weeks. . . and fury by day and terror by night and utter weariness all the time. And death."

—U.S. Marine Major



Tanks spearheaded the drive along Ocean and Lagoon Roads.



Fire, smoke and debris were everywhere



The long road back home

After Dark, A Nightmare Of Confusion

To the exhausted soldiers in their foxholes, and to the impatient General Corlett, the events of the night of February 3rd were just a foretaste of at least another long day of battle ahead.

The night of February 3rd was one of terror for many of the troops of the 184th and 32nd. In many areas, there were no front lines as such. Japanese and American soldiers were intermingled at close range in several places—probably in a line running from where Macy's and Ten-Ten now stand on back to the Central Police Station.

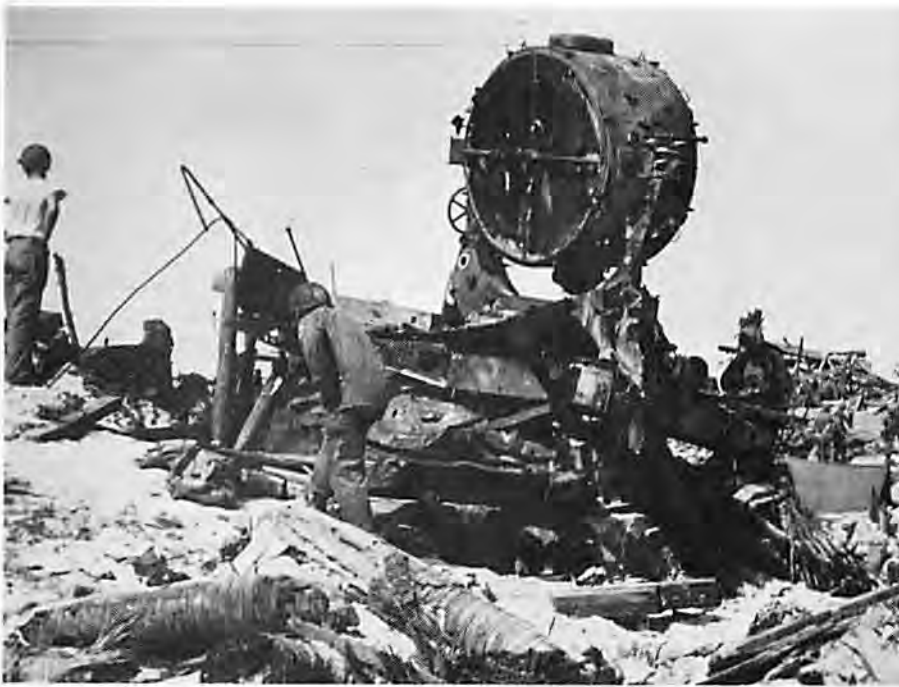
Through the night, flickering fires, shell-bursts, and flares lit up the battlefield, silhouetting moving men who could not be identified by either side as friend or enemy. To the rear, two great fires raged, casting an eerie red light over the entire area. Bugles could be heard sounding among Japanese in shelters at 6th and Lagoon (at the base of the pier), and shortly after, a headlong counterattack by screaming Japanese advanced along Lagoon road up the length of the present reefer buildings. This and subsequent attacks were broken up off and on until 0530. There were also repeated attempts to infiltrate near the Community Center and the Pacific Bachelors' Quarters.

"I hope to God that we don't have to go on any more of those screwy islands."
—U.S. soldier,
veteran of many invasions

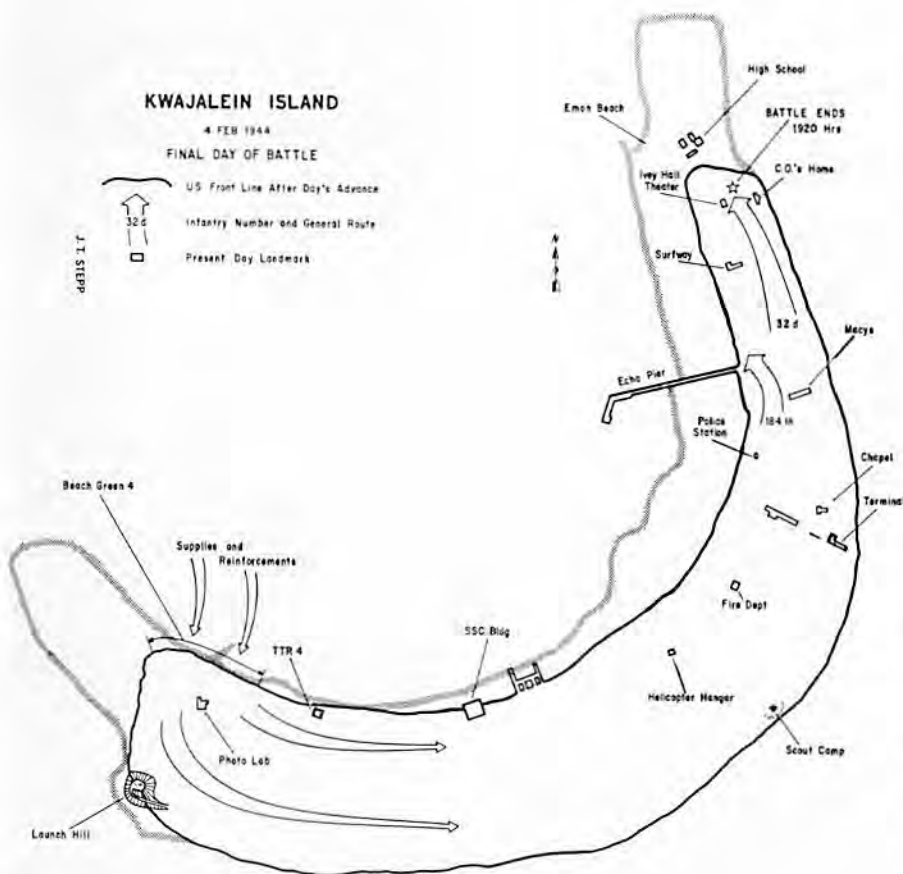
February 4 — The Final Push

On the morning of February 4, the weary 184th was assigned a limited objective: to take the 200 yards of ground between it and the Pier on the lagoon side. The 32nd, covering the oceanside half of the island, was to advance to Sixth street, pinch off the 184th's sector, and then fan out and continue north to the end of the island.

After an artillery barrage from



Searchlight near Quarters 227 was one of the last Japanese strongpoints on Kwaj.



Advance of February 4



Tanks move toward the front. Late in the afternoon of 4 February, tanks rushed to the island's north end to crush remaining resistance. Another day's battle was thus avoided.



Dugouts like this one, being examined by three GI's, were common on Kwaj and several of the outer islands.

Carlson, the units jumped off, but momentum was quickly lost. Offensive spirit had been dampened by the loss of key officers and the numbing effects of sniper fire during the preceding night. The advance was agonizing and slow. The 32nd reached 6th Street as planned and no Japanese were found on Echo Pier. The unit then fanned out for its final advance.

Many obstacles and determined resistance slowed the attack. There was a large blockhouse at Quarters 494B which had to be reduced, as well as several pillboxes near Ivey Hall Theater which resisted for over an hour. Along the lagoon shore, the advance proceeded more quickly, and one platoon reached the seawall behind Quarters 103 shortly after 1500. The troops rested on the beaches behind the wall for a time, oblivious of the battle raging a few blocks back. Before long, however, rifle fire started whizzing over their heads, and this unit promptly worked



Infantry column advances.



LST's brought in supplies and reinforcements at Green Beach 4, located on the lagoon side of the island, close to present-day Coral Sands Beach.

its way east and south back into the struggle.

Major opposition was encountered at the five gun emplacements at the northern end of the island. These were 5" guns, each mounted on a concrete foundation behind a five-foot circular wall. The understructure of each contained a shelter. One of the five was located where Bunker Hill now stands, the others were approximately positioned at Quarters 223B, 103, 105B and 106A. Japanese snipers and machine gunners fought here with savage determination before being overcome.

It was during the attack on Bunker Hill and these positions, in the final stages of the battle, that PFC Bucholz met his death leading an attack on a Japanese blockhouse. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and in 1967 our airfield was named in his honor.

The battle dragged on late into the afternoon. Along the ocean side, the going had been tough. The 32nd fought through pillboxes and entrenchments near the Commanding

Officer's house, behind which the Japanese had placed numerous wooden guns to mislead potential invaders.

In this area the troops on the oceanside came under heavy sniper fire from the vicinity of Quarters 227, where a destroyed Japanese searchlight was located.

This unit was pinned down for an hour, and it looked as if still another day would be needed to complete the

capture of the island.

At dusk, however, tanks which had been pulled back for resupply rumbled north along Lagoon and Ocean roads. One by one the troops rose without command. The tanks led the advance and fired into the Japanese position at the searchlight. At 7:20 pm, as darkness fell over the island, resistance finally ceased and the world's largest atoll was now in American hands—almost.



37-mm anti-tank gun.

A Battle For Ebeye, Some Surprises On Outer Isles

Though the main contest for southern Kwajalein Atoll concluded the evening of February 4, the fighting had also been going on elsewhere, and it was still far from over.

On February 3, Ebeye (code-named Burton) was assaulted. The 17th Infantry, which embarked in two transports from Carlos Island, sailed directly across the lagoon and landed on the southern tip of Ebeye about 0930.

Heavy bombing and strafing had raked the island since the invasion began, but it was still heavily fortified. The seaplane base and over 100 machine shops and buildings on the island were defended by a garrison of about 450. Pillboxes were numerous and entrenchments laced the island.

Ironically, though not a casualty had occurred during the large and complex landings on Kwaj, the landings at Ebeye were contested. As landing craft neared the shore at Ebeye, Japanese gunners on Big Bustard and on the pier at Ebeye began pouring fire into the incoming troops. Four Americans were wounded before these guns were silenced.

From that point, a battalion of troops—supported by tanks, aircraft and naval shelling—proceeded north along the island. Resistance was stiff most of the way, and over 24 hours were needed to secure the entire



Infantry on Carlson Island. Twisted wreckage in background was one of two radio towers the Japanese had installed there.

island. Seven Americans died on Ebeye, and 82 were wounded.

After Kwaj itself fell the next day, there still remained at least a dozen islets in the southern part of the atoll, each of which had to be swept and secured individually. Army units landed on every island on the east reef as far north as Gellinam, and on the west reef almost as far up as Illeginni. There were some surprises on a few of them.

On the west reef, most of the islands from Tonle to Legan were unoccupied. But on Eller Island, still farther up, 100 armed Japanese sailors (who had presumably fled during the air strikes on Japanese ships in the lagoon), had taken refuge. They were overcome easily, but one GI was killed and four were wounded.

On the east reef, there was much more activity. On South Loi, 40 Marshallese cheerfully greeted the invading troops, while on North Loi a score of Japanese sailors and Korean laborers were overcome without casualty. Farther north, nearly 200 Japanese were cleared from Gugeegue at a cost of 3 GI's killed and four wounded. One U.S. soldier was

killed on Ningi and another was wounded by the single Japanese soldier found there.

Across the channel, Bigej was much tougher to take. A firefight there lasted several hours, and a number of blockhouses, pillboxes and machine gun nests were reduced with the help of tanks and naval shelling. Ninety-four Japanese were counted there. U.S. losses were one killed and two wounded.

As a matter of interest today, American forces did land on Meck Island (code-named Bascome), but found no one on it. Gellinam, Omelek, and Eniwetak were also unoccupied, but several Marshallese were found on Kwadack.

With the completion of similar landings by Marines on the outer islets in the northern part of the atoll, all of Kwajalein was now in U.S. hands.

Seventh Division casualties for the entire operation were 142 killed, 845 wounded and two missing in action. Official estimates of Japanese losses were 4,938 killed. Over 200 were taken prisoner, of whom 127 were Korean laborers.

"It was like trying to steer a true course through a thousand acre garbage dump."

—U.S. soldier, describing the third day's advance on Kwajalein.



Ebeye in 1944—Big Bustard, Little Bustard and Kwajalein appear at upper right.



The Stars and Stripes went up on Bunker Hill.

"His ears were keyed to all the sounds of night, and from long experience he sifted out the ones that were meaningless. If an animal rustled in its hole, he paid no attention; if some crickets chirped, his ear disregarded them. Now he picked up a muffled slithering sound which he knew could be made only by men moving through a thin patch of jungle..."

"Then he heard a sound which pierced his flesh. . . Someone called from across the river, 'Yank! Yank!' Croft sat numb. The voice was thin and high-pitched, hideous in a whisper. . . 'Yank!' We you coming-to-get, Yank!"

—The terrors of night warfare from Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*



Japanese and Korean prisoners under guard.



Weary soldier rests on Echo Pier.



On Kwaj itself, GI's relaxed with their first hot meals.



Buddies help a wounded GI.



JAPANESE MEMORIAL



Victory was announced to the world on February 5

The Struggle Ends

Kwajalein Island, February 5, 1944—"Although there is still some occasional rifle fire and the smoke still curls from the ruined concrete pillboxes, the veterans of the Army's 7th Division are now sitting under the trees or lying on the ground with V-Mail blanks, writing their first letters home.

"Most of the letters are short and simple. The men cannot say that they are on Kwajalein, cannot give details of the action they fought here, cannot name friends who were injured, cannot give the date and cannot say where they came from and where they are going. They can't say much of anything except 'I'm still alive and well.' But that is enough.

"This morning hundreds of tropical white birds, driven away by the battle, have returned to the island and are resting again on the tops of what they still recognize as trees. A Special Service officer is looking for the best place to hang the screen for the outdoor movies that will begin in a few days. A site for a Post Exchange will be selected tomorrow.

"Already a half dozen bulldozers are rolling the

runways of the half-completed airstrip so hurriedly abandoned by the Japs. . .

"The few enemy bicycles here are too small and too mangled to ride. But T-5 Robert Fuller, a coast artilleryman from Kansas City, Kansas, started tinkering with the engine of a shrapnel-scarred truck with a left-hand drive. A few minutes later he was taking passengers all over the island.

"Hot coffee and hot chow are available for the first time in the Company's CPs. Vienna sausages, beans, meat and vegetable hash are being cooked over dozens of fires in shell craters.

"There is a rumor that bacon and eggs will be served tomorrow. No one puts much stock in it.

"Tonight it will be possible to sleep, but not many of us will. No one can do much sleeping 24 hours after a battle anyway."

—Sgt. Merle Miller
 "After the Battle at Kwajalein"
 in YANK, The Army Weekly

The Battle in Perspective

Military historians have often described the invasion of Kwajalein as a perfect amphibious operation, masterfully planned and ably executed.

Its success was due in large part to naval and air superiority and heavy preliminary bombardment, which was unprecedented in the Pacific War and never again equalled in intensity or effectiveness. Kwajalein was only one of 100 islands invaded during the war in the Pacific, but yard for yard it was more thoroughly plastered than Guadalcanal, Saipan, Iwo Jima or Okinawa.

It was estimated that one hundred pounds of bombs and shells had plowed into every square foot of the island. "The nightmare of noise," said one officer, "was almost inconceivable."

Total casualties among Army

troops involved were about 5 percent, and loss of life was little more than one half of one percent. By contrast, in climactic struggles like Iwo Jima, every American unit engaged suffered casualties of 50 percent or more.

Kwajalein was thus an unqualified success. Its capture signaled an encouraging beginning for Admiral Nimitz' Central Pacific Advance, which was ultimately to bring the conflict to Japan's doorstep. After the battle at Kwajalein, this drive moved ahead rapidly.

Only two weeks later in February, the atoll was employed as a jump-off point for the invasion of Eniwetok. Soon after that, B-29's were using Kwajalein's runway for heavy bombing strikes against Japanese fortresses in the Marianas.

Meanwhile, Japanese bases on

Jaluit, Mille, Wotje, and Maloelap had been effectively neutralized and bypassed. Enemy garrisons there waited for help that never came. Many Japanese, faced with eventual starvation, tried to escape the isolation by setting out in small boats. One such group was picked up on the northern fringe of Kwajalein Atoll more than a year after the battle here ended. This group had gone on a fishing expedition from Maloelap—over 200 miles away.

The loss of the Marshall Islands, which had been Japanese territory for 30 years, was a stinging blow to Tokyo. Although the Japanese had been unwilling to commit the combined fleet at Truk in defense of Kwaj, and could not have mounted a counter-invasion once the atoll was lost, they did not resist the temptation to strike back at least once.



The invasion force bids farewell to Kwajalein.



Kwaj after the battle—note rows of planes along airstrip.

On February 12, after American carrier protection over Kwaj had been withdrawn, the Japanese sent a flight of four-engine bombers to hit Roi-Namur. These planes left Saipan, staged through Ponape, and surprised the American garrison at Roi.

Since repairs to the runways there were not yet completed, no interceptors were available to challenge the attack. Ammunition dumps and other installations were hit during the bombing, and the severe explosions that resulted took many lives and destroyed vast quantities of supplies and equipment.

The attack marked the end of combat activity in the atoll. Historically, it was but a tragic footnote to an otherwise brilliant success. But it was also a sobering reminder that at Kwajalein only a battle—and not the war—had been won.

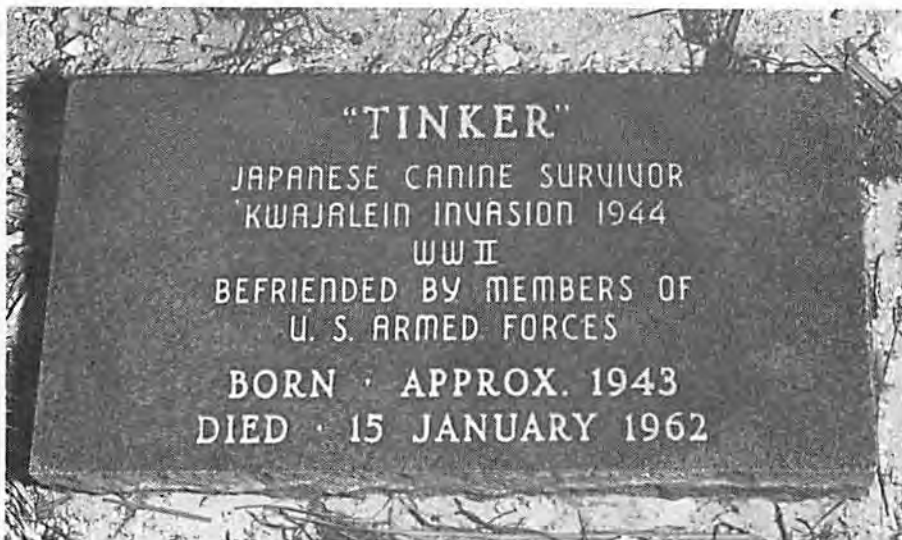
Some Reminders



Bucholz Monument



"Lone Palm"



“Tinker’s Grave,” by fish pond near SSC.



Bunker, Red Beach



A few of the battle relics unearthed over the years.



Lookout Tower—GEA



Pillbox—Oceanside Kwaj



Bomb shelter in present-day fuel farm.

"... artillery did things to you. We'd been told not to duck when we heard the screaming of shells; it would be too late. But we ducked anyway. Even the almost silent pop of the mortars was frightening. We got to know exactly where a shell would land."

—A GI Corporal



Bunker Hill Today

Some Letters

Back in December, we decided to ask readers to help us locate people who served with the U.S. Armed Forces during the invasion of Kwajalein. The response was more than satisfying. Several current residents, it turns out, had been here themselves in 1944. Many more had friends or relatives who had been with the forces that assaulted the atoll.

Some of those we contacted were unwilling to discuss their experiences here, and that is understandable. The impressions and recollections of others appear on these pages.

The Nicest Thing Was Leaving . . .

"A friend of mine sent me a notice from your paper and asked me to write you. I was on Kwaj from Nov. 1944 to July 1955. He also sent me some pictures of the island now, and it sure doesn't look the same, but I'll tell you a few things someone else might not mention . . .

"I remember it used to rain a lot, but that didn't stop us from sitting in the rain, watching a movie at one of the three outdoor theaters. Most of the time the rain was warm, which reminded me of our shower house. They had a tank on top and you pulled a chain to get wet. Then you

soaped down and pulled the chain to rinse off. If the weather was warm, you got a warm shower; otherwise it was cold.

"There wasn't much to do there; we played a lot of ping pong at the Red Cross, and as I remember there were a couple of natives that were good ping pong players. We went swimming, but had to watch out for the coral. They had a few boxing matches. At least there was one good thing about the island—and that was when it was time to leave."

—Chester Merritt
Ventura, California

MANY MEMORIES OF THE MARSHALLS IN 1944

"I was serving as a merchant seaman (16 years old) on a liberty ship, the 'S.S. Richard Miczkowski' in 1944, and spent approximately three months—Sept., Oct., and Nov.—in the Marshalls.

"My most vivid memories of Kwajalein and Eniwetok are: the complete devastation of the islands by the naval bombardment and subsequent combat; the tremendous job the Seabees were doing constructing facilities on the islands; the wind-powered washing machines, built by Seabees, scattered everywhere on both Eniwetok and Kwajalein; the massive naval armada gathering in the Marshalls for the Philippines campaign . . . The happy Marines and Seabees offloading 7,000 cases of beer from our holds at Kwajalein.

"I also remember outdoor movies while sitting in the rain on coconut logs; the daily flights of B-24's on

bombing raids over Truk and other islands in the Central Western Pacific; fishing at night, under the cargo lights, while anchored in the lagoon at Kwajalein . . .

"I recall listening to the Armed Forces Radio Station 'On The Road to Tokyo,' and WXLE on Eniwetok with the best disc jockey in the Pacific; meeting Betty Hutton during a USO show; being fired at by snipers while sailing too close to several islands by-passed by our forces; high winds and heavy seas tearing loose an ammunition barge from our ship at Kwajalein during a storm. Heaviest rains and strongest winds I had ever experienced . . . and the high morale of all the American forces in that area, and the general feeling that we were winning the war and were truly 'on the road to Tokyo.' "

—Rod Peterson
Albuquerque, N.M.

KWAJ THEN AND NOW: THE CONTRAST IS STRIKING

"I arrived at Kwajalein in 1945, after the area was safely in American control, and was assigned there for about a year with the Navy. My recollection of the island is that it was flat, treeless, and covered with American tents and quonset huts.

"My assignment was actually on Ebeye, which was a seaplane base. I served as a Navy radar technician, servicing radio/radar equipment on the seaplanes. These planes were beached by pulling them up the inclined ramp which exists today, and serves as a dock for the Tarlang boat (at least in 1968).

"Ebeye at that time was populated only by Navy personnel. All the native Marshallese people lived across the lagoon, on Carlos or Carlson, I believe. Our only contact with the natives occurred when some of them worked on Kwajalein or Ebeye during the day. The principal activity of planes from Ebeye at that time was flying to Bikini in preparation for atomic testing.

"I returned to Kwajalein for a two-year assignment, 1966 through 1968. Having been there during WWII, of course, made it interesting to return, and the contrast from 1946 to 1966 was striking. Needless to say, Kwajalein today is a more beautiful and comfortable place to live than in 1946."

—W.B. Hood
BTL, Madison, N.J.

RECALLS 'UTTER DESTRUCTION'

"During early 1944, I was a Naval aviator assigned to the staff of Fleet Air Wing Two as an assistant operations officer. Our objective was to provide pre-invasion and invasion

planning. As such, I flew highspeed, low-level attack/photo reconnaissance missions to provide information for staff use.

"I do not remember the actual date I arrived on Kwajalein, but it was after the runway was made usable by the Seabees. I lived in a tent on Ebeye Island, and flew missions against other islands until we moved up to Eniwetok. The one outstanding impression I had during that period was of the utter destruction of everything except the pier. I returned to Kwajalein on various occasions during 1944, and was there as an air evacuation patient in the hospital on VJ Day, 1945."

—H.J. Treon
BTL, Whippany, N.J.

(Like Mr. Hood, Mr. Treon also spent a tour of duty at the BTL Field Station in the sixties.)

REMEMBERS THE "SMALL ITEMS"

"After 30 years the seemingly small items stand out in my memory of Kwajalein—the limits on fresh water and the resulting salt water showers; old Kwaj-Lodge AM radio with the Sack Rats; two cokes or two cans of beer per day; the coral island with no trees, and our air strip. . . the Dream Boats (B-29's) headed for the Marianas and the C-54's with wounded headed for Pearl Harbor.

"After 30 years I can only express my surprise at what Kwaj is today. At least I did recognize the old air strip—fantastic!"

—Cal Van Meter, Manager
IBM, Washington D.C.

(Ed. note: IBM's Ed Lilly adds that Mr. Van Meter was at Kwaj in 1944 as a member of one of the first radar crews on island. He has since visited Kwaj on several occasions. The VIP trailers, he thought, were a marked improvement over the quarters he was assigned here 30 years ago.)

MECK ISLAND— WAY BACK WHEN

"In 1945, Bascome Island, on the east side of Kwajalein Atoll, was the home of one of two U.S. Navy hydrophone stations along the periphery of the lagoon. The other station was located on the west side of the lagoon on the island immediately south of what is now called Gea Pass. The stations were connected by underwater cable to two series of hydrophones (underwater microphones lying on the lagoon floor) leading north across Gea Pass and west across the lagoon from Bascome.

"Assuming Gea Pass to be the only deep water pass south of the east-west line from Bascome, the two stations and attendant hydrophones made undetected penetration of the lagoon by underwater vehicles difficult, if not impossible. Further, the Bascome station aided in detection of surface vehicles traveling north or south during the night.

"During my tour of duty on Bascome in the summer and fall of 1945, unidentified surface vehicles frequently were detected heading south towards Kwajalein. Eventually, however, all craft were identified as friendly, putting to rest the excitement generated so naturally each time.

"Bascome was a lovely island then. Warm, lush, and inviting.

There were 23 of us living there in 1945. The monitoring station and mess hall were located in WWII standard housing—quonset huts. We lived in tents abundantly shaded by palms by day and open to the lovely sea breezes at night. Life was easy; food and beer abundant. Supplies were arranged from Kwajalein with the use of an LSVP. It was always an occasion to go on the weekly reprovisioning run to Kwajalein. Recreation was limited to softball, movies, cards, and, of course, use of the beautiful lagoon.

"Although we didn't miss it then, as it was relatively new, what a shame we didn't have snorkeling and scuba equipment to while away our many free hours. We all got along surprisingly well, 23 Yankees thrown together on a Pacific Island. Then, and in retrospect, it was an idyllic existence.

"Where is Bascome? A quick look at a map and selected hydrographic charts indicates that an ideal spot for the monitoring station in the east-west string of hydrophones would be Meck Island. Indeed, Bascome was the code name for Meck during WWII. I returned there several times during a tour with BTL at Kwajalein from 1961 to 1963. Bascome was largely unchanged—warm, lush, inviting. My next visit was not until January of 1970. . ."

(By then, of course, things at "Bascome" had changed a great deal indeed. . .)

—Gene Alger
BTL, Whippany, N.J.



Zero destroyed on the ground at Kwaj—one of several photos Mr. Peterson sent along with his letter.

Life On The Rock — Marshalls In 44

In October and November, 1944, the fighting had long since ceased in the Marshalls. But Kwaj and Eniwetok, as bases that still figured importantly in the Pacific War, were very much alive at this time. During this period, thousands of servicemen passed through both atolls. While here, they were kept abreast of the world news through a number of mimeographed newspapers published by the military. These included the APO 241 News printed on Kwaj and The Island Advance, "Published Along the Road to Tokyo," and distributed at Eniwetok.

Excerpts from these papers, sent along to us by Rod Peterson of Albuquerque, provide some idea of what was going on in late '44, and what life "on the rock" was like for the first Americans in the Marshalls:

WORLD NEWS

PHILIPPINES: American liberation forces, facing possibly 45,000 desperate Japanese fighting men, continued to hold the initiative Monday in the mountains of western Leyte Island, Central Philippines.

On the formidable Yamashita front—named after the new Japanese commander in the Philippines—the Yanks drove three miles southward to seize dominating positions on the 2,300-foot Mount Catabaran overlooking the Ormoc Corridor where the Nipponese are hemmed in...

PARIS: Prime Minister Churchill, speaking in French at a reception in his honor by French Liberation Committees, said Sunday that the Nazis—disheartened and under relentless Allied pounding—might be beaten within the next six months...

WASHINGTON: Shipments of whole blood by air to Paris from the United States have been increased to nearly two tons a day, to meet increased demands resulting from Western Front casualties, the War Department reported...

LOS ANGELES: "So help me this is true!" exclaimed the Army Public Relations Officer, "Pearl Harbor is enlisting into the WACS."

The Army announced Sunday that Miss Pearl Harbor of North Hollywood has joined the fight to avenge the name—the seventh member of the Harbor family to do so.

LOCAL NEWS

Mail, that good old morale builder, is beginning to take a turn for the better, now that we have become located long enough to get a few returns from those first frantic appeals for more frequent "sugar reports."

Glad to see November rolling in and with it beer once more (and payday—ed). Being on the wagon the past week has been a campaign in itself... She came, we saw, we gaped—yes, Betty Hutton is gone, and for the society page, she wore a black pleated shirt and blouse.

The very touchy subject of our daily diet and the monotonous fare of "C" Rations is definitely the principal topic of discussion at this base, and a vast majority refuse to accept the possibility that it may be caused by military necessity...

Seems everyone is spider-conscious in the lower camp lately. Here is another thing—a guy who cleans out his tent to look for black widow spiders and admits it, is OK. A guy

who just cleans out his tent to get it clean is OK. But when a guy cleans out his tent to look for spiders and says he is looking for cockroaches, that definitely ain't OK—not mentioning any names.

When a solid number comes blaring forth from the neighborhood theater's loud speaker, and you get the sensation a block buster has hit this rock, don't run for your wolf-hole. It's only that hep-cat from hut twenty-six, getting in the groove. He's solid, Jackson.

ENTERTAINMENT

SHOWING TONITE AT THE RICHARDSON THEATER: "Mr. Skeffington" with Bette Davis, Claude Rains, Walter Abel, Jerome Cowan (Performance starts at 1930).

OTHER RADIO PROGRAMS:

0645 — Pin-Up Girl
1145 — G.I. Jive
1200 — Kwaj Lodge
1830 — Bob Hope

At 1200, lovely Georgia Gibbs, singing star of screen and radio, takes over another **PERSONAL ALBUM** detail, and offers "Swingin' on a Star," "As Time Goes By" and "Summertime."

"Maryk steered for the atoll. There was nothing between the Caine and the Japanese island but a few thousand yards of choppy water with whitecaps. Willie could see details on the beach now... He thought he had never seen a green so deep and rich... nor a white so white as its sands..."

"It was a queer battle, the fight for Kwajalein. It had been won thousands of miles away, months before a shot was fired. The admirals had guessed correctly that the Mikado's 'unsinkable carriers' were short of an important commodity: planes... As for warships, the remaining ones had become precious to the empire; and frugally guarded weapons are no weapons at all. With the mere arrival of the American array of ships and men, the battle was theoretically over. There was nothing at Kwajalein but a few thousand Japanese soldiers to face the monstrous fleet rising out of the sea... a white flag should have flown from each island at sunrise, by all logic of war."

—Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny*

Here Then, Here Now — Six Stories

Erwin Hood, a supervisor in Global Associates' Billeting Department, was here during the invasion. Though he saw little of Kwaj and none of the conflict itself, he did see many of its tragic results firsthand. He was an 18-year-old Pharmacist's Mate aboard the Hospital Ship **Relief**.

"The **Relief** was the oldest hospital ship in service then," he recalls. "It was commissioned sometime in the 20's and it carried the largest naval gun at Kwaj—and probably the world. It was an 18-inch model constructed for a battlegun that never got built. So they put it on the **Relief** and we used it as ballast."

He remembers taking position near the Kwajalein shore to receive casualties from the first part of the battle. It was the first time a hospital ship was moved so close to shore during an invasion.

"At Kwaj, we took on about 300 American casualties in two hours' time. The crew gave up their beds and most of us slept on the decks during the long trip to Pearl.

"I didn't see anything of the battle



ERWIN HOOD

on Kwaj itself, but we heard a lot of it over the radio on the **Relief**. A lot of GI's on Kwaj had fought before in the Aleutians, but tropical warfare was something else. They had a rough time before it was over. And none of them seemed sorry to leave Kwaj behind."



DON RICKARD

As a second lieutenant with the 184th, **Don Rickard** hit the beach at the west end of Kwaj with the first assault waves. Today, as field security chief for the Atomic Energy Commission, he occasionally visits Kwaj on TDY. Recently, he retraced the advance of his unit during the battle. Standing atop Launch Hill and looking toward Carlson, he pointed out the route his landing craft took.

"I thought we'd never get here," he said. "There were some enemy shells falling as we came in. Then we started wading across the reef, and it seemed like forever before we got there. About all I remember is being scared. You never got over it—no matter how many landings you made."

The third day's fighting, **Don** recalls, was by far the worst. It was on that day, too, that his unit secured what must have been the Japanese bank or payroll office here. Several thousand dollars worth of yen was found.

The evening of February 3, he vividly recalls Japanese bugles blaring, and the banzai charges near today's Police Station.

"From our holes, we could barely

see the Pier through the mist a couple of hundred yards away. Every time the Japanese blew their bugles, our own bugler, a Navajo we called 'Injun Joe,' sounded off to retaliate."

The battle ended early next morning for **Don**. Shortly after the 184th jumped off, he was wounded in the back by grenade fragments and evacuated to Pearl on the hospital ship **Relief**. He was probably wounded near today's laundry facility on Lagoon Road.

Don later rejoined the 7th and stayed with it through the remainder of the war. He was also wounded in the Philippines and Okinawa.



JERRY CUBA

Jerry Cuba, MDCA Test Center Director, was a 17-year-old artillery observer with the 4th Marines in the assault on Roi-Namur.

"Our assignment was to land on Mellu, near Roi, on January 31 and set up field artillery to support the major landings the next day.

"When we left the task force behind and headed in, the seas were heavy, and it was raining. Looking back at the big boats was the loneliest feeling in the world. We landed safely though, and there was little opposition. We then started firing without let-up on Roi and Namur."

Jerry's artillery unit landed on Roi February 2 to give direct support to the final phase of the assault.

"I clearly remember the causeway connecting the islands," Jerry says, "and firing on the enemy trying to cross it to get over to Namur."

"I never dreamed I'd ever come back to Kwaj. But in 1960, as Douglas, WECO and BTL were moving in here, I came out on TDY and got up to Roi. The place had hardly been touched—there was so much debris, ammunition and shells all over the beaches even then. If I didn't know better, I would have thought the battle had ended the day before."

Jerry completed a first tour of duty here in 1963 and returned to Kwaj in 1972 for his current assignment.

from excavating along the reef. We secured Mellu and later reconnoitered the causeway at night prior to the final assaults."

After Roi-Namur, Hank fought at Eniwetok, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. Eventually, he also served in Korea and Vietnam.

Hank came to Kwaj late last year, but didn't quite leave his Marine training behind.

"For a few weeks I was still thinking like a scout," he says. "Each time I'd catch sight of a group of palms somewhere on Kwaj, I'd instinctively look up to see if any snipers were hiding in them."



HANK DENTON

Hank Denton, who works with BTL Support in the SSC Security Office, was also with the 4th Marines as a scout sniper. His unit was the first to land on Mellu. Though neither knew it at the time, he and Jerry Cuba were undoubtedly there at the same time. With Hank was another young Marine named Lee Marvin, the current screen star. Hank and Marvin were good friends who campaigned together throughout the Pacific. Marvin, Hank says, was every bit as reckless in real life as he appears to be now in his films: "On the screen, Lee is usually just being himself, believe me..."

"It was quite an outfit—the Scouts. We trained and traveled separately, came to Kwaj in a destroyer which flew a skull and bones alongside the Stars and Stripes. Our objective was to secure Mellu first and later other islands up there to keep the Japanese

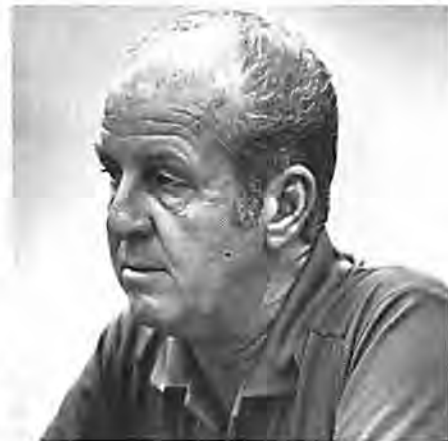


RUSS WINGFIELD

Russ Wingfield, who works with the Global Security Department on Kwaj, first came to the atoll early in 1944, toward the close of the battle. As a fireman/radio operator on the seaplane tender *St. George*, he arrived when sweeping operations were under way in the lagoon. He spent six or seven months on Bigej, which served as a fuel and supply station. Bigej (code-named Bennett) was the site of a brief but spirited battle after Kwajalein Island itself fell on February 4.

"I do recall coming down to Kwaj from Bigej now and then to watch movies at the Rich. The theater was located in the same place then, and it was already going by that name. The other big attraction on Kwaj was the beer hall, and I believe it was located about where Ten-Ten is now."

Russ, who eventually married a Japanese woman, spent twenty years in Japan after the war. He speaks and reads Japanese fluently.



BOB FLYNN

As a 17-year-old anti-aircraft gunner on the carrier **Monterey**, **Bob Flynn** saw action at Makin and Kwajalein, and just about every naval battle in the Pacific theater thereafter. He is also with Global Security today.

Of Kwaj he remembers almost continuous sorties being flown against the island by planes from the **Monterey**. He also recalls the counter-attacks after sunset each night by Japanese "Betty Bombers". After the invasion, the **Monterey** came in close, about a mile or two off the south side of Kwaj, for a look at the island. Bob is certain he remembers seeing what we now know as the "lone palm" standing alone along the ocean shore. "Everything else was rubble," he says. "It looked like a burnt out forest."

"I never dreamed that I'd come back here some day," he adds. "Now I play golf all the time by that same tree."



Kwaj '44



Kwaj today



Some Final Thoughts

There were no white flags over Kwajalein the morning of January 31, 1944. Nor were any to appear during the five days of battle that followed. By the evening of February 5, when the Stars and Stripes were up on Kwaj, Roi, Namur, Ebeye and other islands, hundreds of Americans and thousands of Japanese lay buried in the coral sands of Kwajalein Atoll. Today, 30 years later, Kwaj and such places as Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Guam, Peleliu, and Iwo Jima are remembered as bitterly contested bits of land where half a world war was won.

After this undertaking, our impression is that the Kwajalein of 1944 remains a place many thousands of Americans would just as soon forget. But the heat, the rains, the death and devastation everywhere on Kwaj are still stamped indelibly in their minds. Nor can we forget that Kwaj was the first and last trip to the fabled South Pacific for the several hundred Marines and GI's who fell here.

The grim determination of the Japanese themselves cannot be overlooked. Tactically surprised and heavily outnumbered to begin with, they fought tenaciously, without benefit of air cover, naval support, or any armor or artillery to speak of. Nor was there any prospect of reinforcement or resupply. It was a hopeless cause, but it was one they did not abandon.

The Japanese were not aware that

the Marshalls had long since been written off by Tokyo as outposts that would inevitably be lost. After the blood-bath at Tarawa, which yard for yard was the most heavily defended atoll ever taken by Americans, Japanese strategists hoped only to fight major delaying actions at places like Wotje, Maloelap, Kwaj, and Eniwetok.

Today, 30 years later, visitors and newcomers have a hard time believing a battle took place here at all. So do the rest of us. Though official accounts are not hard to come by, it still seems impossible that warships once spanned the horizon just off Kwaj, that thousands of troops overran it, and that wave upon wave of warplanes strafed and bombed it to ruin.

Figures vary on the amount of ordnance that fell on Kwaj, but it was

roughly equivalent to the destructive power of a 20-kiloton atomic bomb. At the time, some believed the island would sink before the invasion itself got started.

If you knew a veteran of Kwaj back home, chances are he responded with shock and disbelief at the news you were coming here to live and work. Many residents report comments like those below:

"Kwaj! That place? I was there in '44. . . we flattened it. What's left of that rock, anyway?"

"The first time I saw Kwaj, it was through a bombsight. It wasn't very pretty. Why are you going there?"

Times have changed. Some prefer to forget it all. Certainly that is easier. But perhaps we owe it to ourselves, to our island, and to those who fought here to remember the price that was paid for our little piece of the Pacific.

Thanks . . .

The talent and cooperation of many people helped make it possible to publish this history of the battle. Shirley Gray-Lewis fought a long but successful battle of her own with the manuscripts, rough drafts and countless revisions. She typed the copy in its entirety and helped materially with research and editing.

Thanks also to Joe Baca and Herb Sisson of SANDIA; Peggy Ice, SSC Librarian; Monty Kicklighter, Global Associates, Roi-Namur; Dave Morgan, KMR; Bill Shaffer, BTL, Murray Hill; Dale Tubbs, SAFSEA; to the staff of the HOURGLASS and to the Kentron Photo Lab, in particular Larry Allen, John denDekker, Vic Foote and Nate Jackson.

We are also indebted to Lloyd Brink, BTL Support, who printed the entire issue and supplied valuable background material filed away during his ten years of service at the Field Station.

The combat photographs published were taken by official U.S. Army photographers with the 7th Division. The maps, drawn by Noland Hisey, are also based on official military documents.

Although the preceding account is accurate to the best of our knowledge, it should not be regarded in any way as official or definitive.

The Battle for Roi-Namur

"This northern bend of Kwajalein has a peculiar beauty as one approaches it on a bright, gusty winter day such as the last day of January, 1944. Sea and land seem to enhance each other, making their colors unbelievably vivid: the most dazzling white whitecaps on the deepest of blue seas, reflecting luminous clouds.... brightest of green foliage on islets bordered by coral beaches the color of rich cream, with surf dashing up...."

By Robert J. O'Brien

Samuel Eliot Morison, the renowned naval historian, wrote that description of Roi and Namur islands as they looked the day before the U.S. 4th Marine Division invaded them.

Forty-eight hours later, the rich green would be gone. The most intensive bombardment in the history of warfare would sweep the islands of all vegetation, leaving little but the charred ruins of a few buildings and fortifications and the severed trunks of a handful of coconut palms. The gleaming white beaches would be strewn with rubble and debris. Amid the devastation, grave sites would be cleared for the 4,000 Americans and Japanese who would fall here.

Hours after the struggle ended, newspapers across the U.S. would carry the news. The first piece of pre-war Japanese real estate had been captured in combat, and American losses were light. To a nation frustrated by two years of setback and stalemate in the Central Pacific, and still shaken by the slaughter on Red Beach at Tarawa just a few months before, news from Roi-Namur was heartening beyond measure.

Moreover, the 4th Marines themselves, who had completed training and broken camp in California just a few weeks earlier, had successfully pierced the Japanese defense

perimeter and emerged bloodied but decisively victorious their first time under fire.

"As a first battle for the Division," recalls one veteran, "it was good. Our casualties were minimal, the operation lasted only a couple of days, and it was a great confidence-builder for bigger and better operations in the future, like Tinian, Saipan and Iwo Jima." Though final casualty lists were relatively short, no military historian would minimize the importance of the battle at Roi-Namur. Like the struggle for Kwajalein Island ("Interceptor,") Jan/Feb 1974), the contest was far more significant than statistics alone might indicate.

At stake on the beaches at Roi-Namur was the entire strategy for victory in the Pacific war. After much heated debate, the admirals had chosen island warfare—with Marines leading the way—as the route to Japan proper. Success would hinge on

revolutionary tactics, newly designed equipment and men as yet untried in tropical warfare. Makin and Tarawa had been chosen as proving grounds, but the results there had been far from perfect.

Now came Roi-Namur and Kwaj, the critical tests. Mistakes in the Gilberts, it was hoped, would be corrected. At Roi-Namur, planners left nothing to chance. The invasion was to be executed with surgical precision.

On the long voyage to the Marshalls, the 4th Marines were well aware of the nightmare the 2nd had faced at Tarawa. But they also knew that this time they had with them the most powerful armada ever assembled.

On January 31, 1944, every Leatherneck in the Northern Attack Force felt that the Marshalls were the first milepost on the route to Japan, and that the long road to Tokyo would lead straight from Roi-Namur.



Roi airfield under attack. Note causeway which connected the island to Namur at right.

The Initial Strikes

For Operation "Flintlock," the invasion of the Marshalls, Admiral Nimitz himself had selected Roi-Namur and Kwajalein as the primary targets. He felt that the victory in the Gilberts should be followed quickly by a surprise strike at the heart of the Marshalls, and that other strong Japanese bases, like

Jaluit, Mille, Wotje and Maloelap, should be neutralized, bypassed and isolated. The plan was not without risk, as the Admiral's subordinates were quick to point out, but it did catch the Japanese completely off

—Rear Admiral Pownall
Final instruction prior to U.S. carrier strike against Roi-Namur and Kwajalein, December 4, 1943

"Be accurate, keep cool, and hit 'em hard!"

"We have the air power, we have the guns, we have the men. We are not taking any chances. We aim to pin the enemy to the ground with our carrier and land-based aircraft, to blast him with naval artillery, and to go in on foot and dig him out."

—News dispatch
from the invasion force en route to Roi-Namur

balance, as Nimitz had hoped.

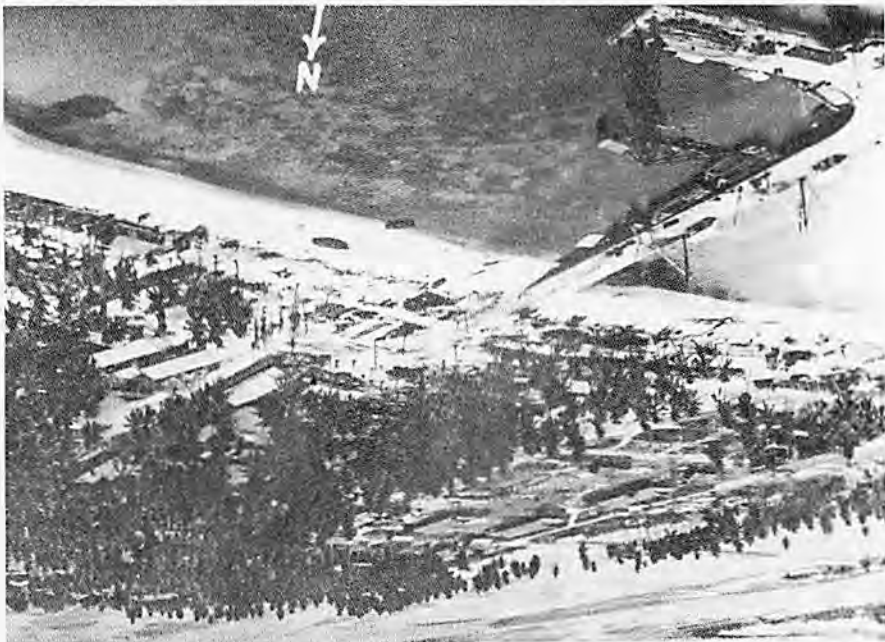
There were about 3,500 Japanese at Roi-Namur, where a major air base and submarine supply depot were located. After the seizure of Tarawa, the first major strike at Roi-Namur came on December 4, 1943, when a half dozen aircraft carriers, under Admiral Pownall, staged a 250-plane attack from a point 115 miles to the northeast. Three Japanese bombers and sixteen fighters were destroyed on the ground at Roi, and another 10 bombers and 18 fighters were shot down in aerial combat. Many enemy planes, however, had been expertly camouflaged around Roi's three air strips and escaped destruction.

In the lagoon near Roi-Namur, the light cruiser Isuzu was damaged but not sunk. The Asakaze Maru, the largest transport present, blew up violently and sank rapidly, indicating she was probably carrying large quantities of munitions. During this same attack, Pownall's planes inflicted substantial damage on Japanese shipping and base facilities at Kwajalein and Ebeye, 50 miles to the south. Only five American planes were lost in this attack.

Roi-Namur was far from neutralized, however, Japanese planes from Roi and Maloelap staged a determined but futile counterattack on Pownall's task force that same afternoon, and followed it later that night with a spectacular aerial assault over bright, moonlit seas. Many of the Japanese planes were shot down, but not before moderate damage had been done to the carrier Lexington. In mid-December, as U.S. carrier forces withdrew to Hawaii to regroup for "Flintlock," landbased B-24's from Tarawa began systematic bombing of Roi-Namur and other Japanese bases in the Marshalls. But as late as January 27, just four days before D-Day, nearly 100 serviceable aircraft still remained at Roi.



U.S. ships in Marshalls fire at attacking Japanese planes.



Namur Island—Green Beach Two prior to bombardment. Note hammerhead crane on Yokohama Pier, at left.

Victory in the Skies

On the 29th, the carrier forces returned to rejoin the attack. Early that morning, waves of Navy Hellcats and Avenger torpedo-bombers descended on Roi-Namur. By 8:00 a.m., after carefully coordinated strafing and a series of spirited dogfights, every Japanese plane in the atoll had been destroyed. Only four Hellcats and one Avenger had been lost in the skies over Roi-Namur, and these islands, once the pride of Japanese air power in the Marshalls, now lay wide open to aerial attack and close-range naval bombardment. That same night, the battlewagons moved in close to bombard the shoreline. The following day, another major carrier strike battered the Japanese again.

THE BOMBARDMENT BEGINS

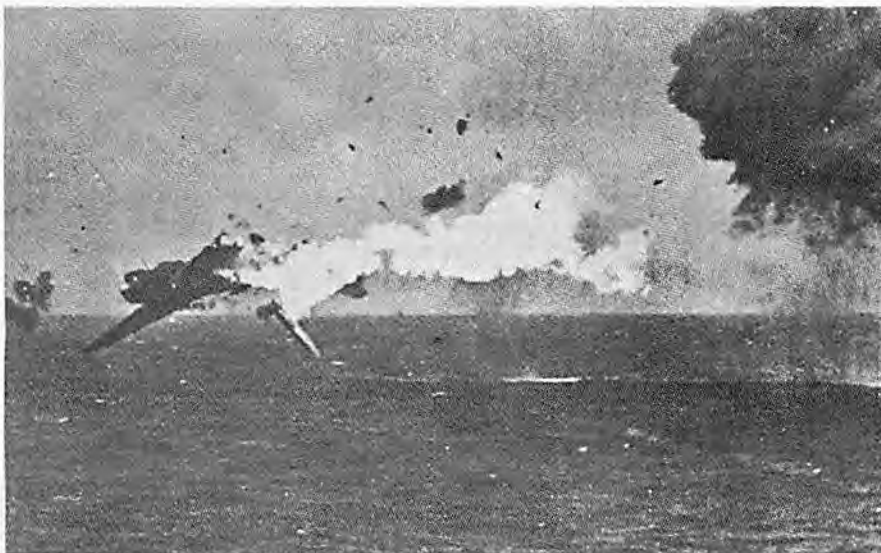
In many respects, the tactics employed during the landings at Roi-Namur were similar to those used by the Army's 7th Division for the simultaneous invasion of Kwajalein Island.

Basically, the plans called for merciless aerial strafing and bombardment of the major objectives, coupled with continuous naval shelling. Additionally, the islets flanking Roi-Namur were to be seized first to secure the deep-water lagoon entrance, and to serve then as field artillery bases for close-fire support. As at Kwaj, the final assaults on Roi-Namur were from the lagoon rather than the ocean side, where the Japanese expected the attack and defenses were stronger.

As in the southern part of the atoll, the Japanese made no serious attempt to defend the channel islands.

Roi-Namur, however, was not lightly defended. There were many coastal defense guns and heavy and medium anti-aircraft guns. Machine gun nests, rifle trenches, tank traps, blockhouses and about 52 pillboxes laced the islands.

The attacking force, by any standard, was awesome. Nearly three hundred ships, hundreds of aircraft and fifty-four thousand men were on hand for the assault on Kwajalein Atoll. At Roi-Namur, the Fourth Marines were under command of Major General Harry Schmidt, with the overall Northern Attack Force di-



Japanese "Kate," hit by anti-aircraft fire from a carrier, is brought down.

rected by Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly.

Two days before D-Day, January 31, Admiral Conolly's task force, along with the aircraft from the supporting group of carriers, began pouring bombs and shells into every square yard of Roi-Namur. The battleships Tennessee, Maryland and Colorado, along with five cruisers and nineteen destroyers, blasted the islands without let-up. At one point, when Japanese gunners returned the fire with annoying persistence, Admiral Conolly ordered the battleship Maryland to move to point-blank range to silence the enemy guns. For this action he won the well-known nickname "Close-in" Conolly, as well as the abiding affection of Marines who hit the beaches at Roi-Namur and other islands throughout the war.



"Roi and Namur were covered with such towering plumes of smoke that one air observer reported the ceiling to be 'absolutely zero'.... The air and naval gunfire bombardment had reduced the entire zone of action to a shambles.... There is no enemy resistance.... Don't think a bird could be alive."

—Marine Observers

This photo, sent to us recently by a Stateside veteran of the battle, was taken during the January 29 air attack on Roi-Namur by a plane from the carrier Essex. The view, from an altitude of 500 feet, shows Namur at left, Roi at right. On the sandspit, a fuel or ammunition facility has just been hit by attacking U.S. aircraft.

An Armada Sets Sail

"Willie stared at the blotchy mimeographed words. He tossed aside the thick operation order and snatched a war atlas from the bookshelf. Turning to a map of the Central Pacific, he saw that Kwajalein was the largest of the atolls, in the very heart of the Marshalls, surrounded by Jap strongholds. He whistled...."

"On a bright warm January day, a horizon-spanning horde of ships swarmed out of the harbors of Hawaii, formed itself into a vast circular pattern, and set a course for Kwajalein."

"The armada moved peacefully over the wastes of the sea, through quiet days and nights. There was no sign of the enemy, nothing but rolling waters, blue by day and black by night, an empty sky, and ships of war in every direction as far as the eye could see, steaming in a great majestic diagram under the stars and the sun. Radar, the ghostly measuring rod, spanning empty space accurately to within a few yards, made the preservation of the diagram a simple matter. This vast formation, so precise and rigid, yet so quick and fluid to change course or rearrange itself, a seagoing miracle surely beyond the dreams of Nelson himself, was maintained with careless ease by hundreds of officers of the deck, not one in ten of whom was professional seaman: college boys, salesmen, schoolteachers, lawyers, clerks, writers, druggists, engineers, farmers, piano players—these were the young men who outperformed the veteran officers of the fleets of Nelson...."

—Herman Wouk
describing the invasion of Roi-Namur
"The Caine Mutiny"

D Day - Marines Seize Crucial Islets

Early on the morning of January 31, as assault troops of the Army's 7th Division were landing on Gehh Island in the southern part of the atoll, the 4th Marines were preparing similar attacks on five islets bracketing Roi-Namur.

The first objectives were Ennuebing and Mellu islands, lying southwest of Roi. Despite heavy seas, faulty communications and many delays, the 25th Marine Regimental Combat Team and the Marine Scout Company quickly secured these islands as planned. Marines landed on Ennuebing at 0952, about an hour behind schedule, but secured the island by 1015 after killing thirteen Japanese and taking three prisoners.

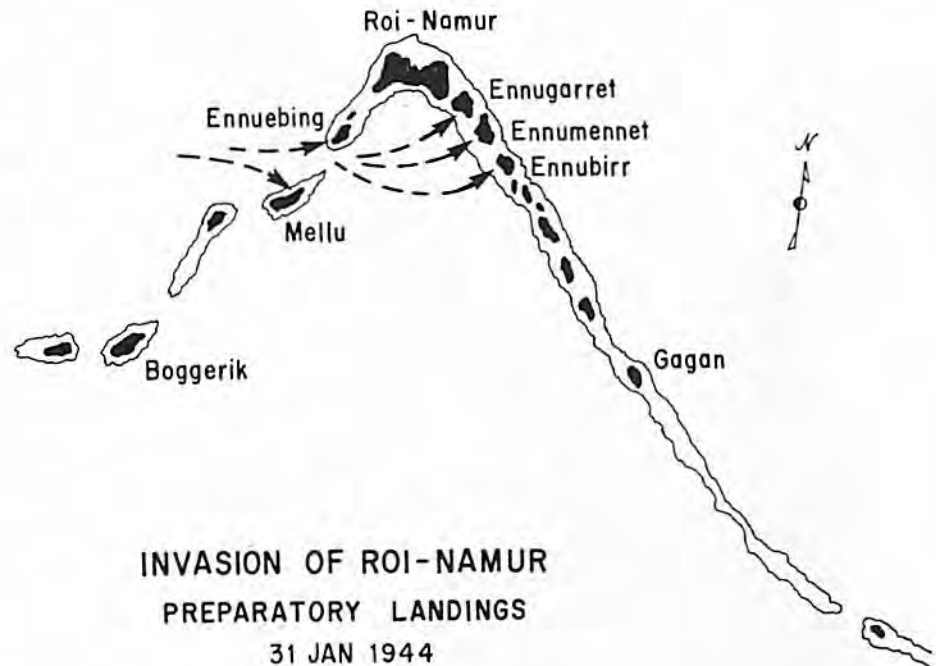
The seizure of larger Mellu was even further delayed as LVT's attempting ocean side landings encountered severe difficulty in high winds and heavy surf. After one LVT capsized on the reef, drowning several Marines, the Scout Company ignored orders, entered the lagoon, and beached on the southeast side of the island at 0955. By 1145 Mellu was secure. Seventeen Japanese were killed and two were taken prisoner. Within a few short hours, Marine gunners were emplacing 75-mm pack howitzers and 105-mm howitzers on Mellu to support the aerial and naval bombardment of Roi-Namur.

With the capture of Ennuebing and Mellu, the pass was swept for mines, and ships and landing craft began slipping into the lagoon for the next series of assaults, on Ennubirr, Ennumennet and Ennugarrett, the three islands lying immediately southeast of Namur.

After some confusion and considerable delay, Marines hit Ennumennet and Ennubirr about 1500, overrunning them quickly and killing 34 Japanese, but suffering several casualties themselves. Both islands were secure by 1630.

"The American attacks are becoming more furious. Planes come over day after day. Can we stand up under the strain?"

—Japanese soldier,
Marshall Islands, in his diary,
January, 1944

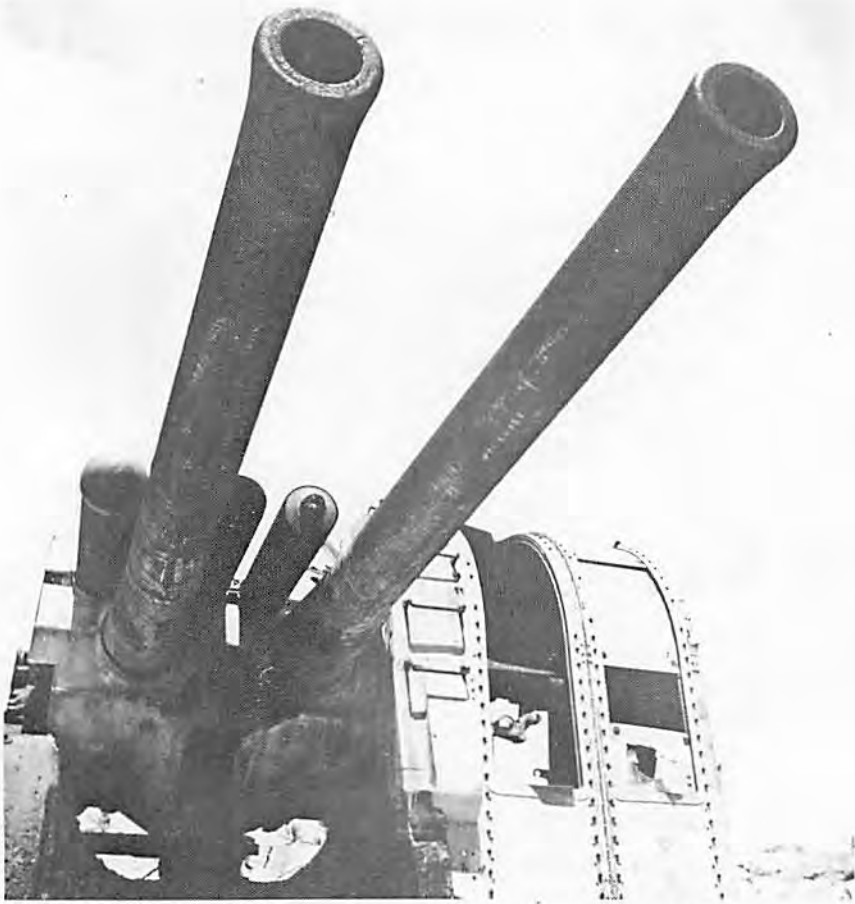


INVASION OF ROI-NAMUR
PREPARATORY LANDINGS
31 JAN 1944

The initial landings on D-Day

—map by Noland C. Hisey





These twin five-inch rifles, still pointing seaward from Roi-Namur, were no doubt among those which challenged Admiral Conolly's task force before the invasion.



Several miles from the M-5 tank, heading southeast along the reef, lie the rested remains of a Japanese RO-60 coastal submarine, whose aft section is pictured here. Though the sub is believed to have grounded in late 1941 through navigational error, it was no doubt bombed and strafed by American pilots during the 1944 invasion of Roi and Namur. The vessel was launched in 1923, weighed 988 tons and was about 250 feet long.
—Photo by Hal Fowler

"The mere fact that the enemy is able to attack the Marshall Islands must not be taken too lightly."

—Radio Tokyo, Dispatch
February 1, 1944



This American LVT, resting on the Lagoon bottom just east of Mellu, may well have been one of those which sank in heavy seas during the initial landings by the Marine Scout Company. It was found just two months ago by Phil Givson and Bill Kievenaar of Roi-Namur. Hal Fowler of Global Associates took the Photo.



This American M-5 light tank apparently became disabled on the reef just off Ennumennet Island during Marine landings there January 31, 1944. Photo above was taken a few weeks ago by Hal Fowler.



Arrow pinpoints the tank in an aerial photo taken after the battle.

... As Final Preparations Are Made

Artillery was to be brought ashore on these two islands also, but lagoon waters were extremely rough and delays were encountered here also. Four Marines were lost when one amphtrac capsized in the surf during these landings. Gun crews worked throughout the evening and night to ready the guns for fire support during the major landings.

The final preparatory landing on D-Day took place at Ennugarret Island, just southeast of Namur. After a daring first lieutenant had personally reconnoitered water depth and reef conditions by wading the entire distance from Ennumennet, the Marines landed on Ennugarret and occupied much of the island by 1915. Six enemy were killed, but others apparently escaped across the reef to Namur.

As darkness fell on D-Day, the Marines had captured all five island objectives for the day. Japanese losses were 135 killed, while twenty-six Marines were dead or missing (many of these in boat acci-

dents) and forty were wounded in action. Four battalions of artillery had been emplaced to support the landings on Roi-Namur.

In the meantime, Admiral Conolly's battlewagons, cruisers and destroyers had pounded Roi-Namur throughout the day. As at Kwajalein, an underwater demolition team scoured the reef within 50 yards of the landing beaches, but found no mines or obstructions. During the night, as destroyers kept up intermittent fire on Roi-Namur, Marines of the 23rd and 24th Regimental Combat Teams got what rest they could as the countdown for H-Hour continued.

"President Roosevelt said today American operations in the Marshalls apparently are going well and they are aimed at utter defeat of Japan and a drive on Tokyo itself."

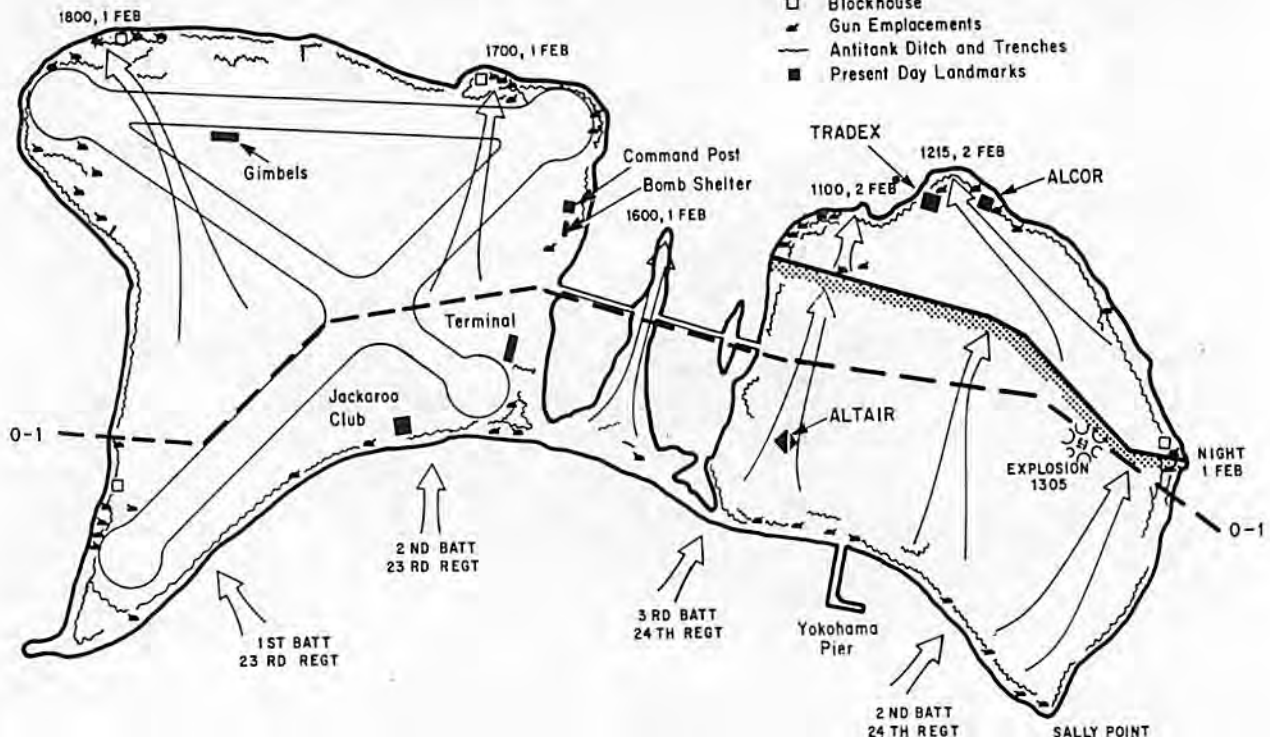
—AP Dispatch
Honolulu "Star-Bulletin"
February 1, 1944

CAPTURE OF ROI-NAMUR

1-2 FEBRUARY 1944

JAPANESE DEFENSES

- Blockhouse
- ▲ Gun Emplacements
- Antitank Ditch and Trenches
- Present Day Landmarks



—Map by Noland C. Hisey

More Bombs Before The Assault

As dawn broke on D-plus one, Marine artillery, naval guns and carrier planes began the climactic bombardment of Roi-Namur. At 0645, four battalions of artillery, bristling on nearby islets seized the previous day, began blasting the landing beaches. At 0650, battleship Maryland, cruisers Biloxi and Indianapolis, and destroyers Mustin and Russell opened up on Roi. Shortly after, battleships Tennessee and Colorado, cruisers Mobile and Louisville, and destroyers Morris and Anderson started pounding Namur. Waves of planes from carriers Intrepid and Cabot dropped tons of bombs, and fighter formations, flying just a few hundred feet overhead, strafed the landing beaches on both islands throughout the morning. By the time the first Marines hit the beaches toward noon, about 6,000 tons of shells and bombs had pulverized the Roi-Namur rectangle. The total was nearly three times the amount of ordnance that had preceded the invasion

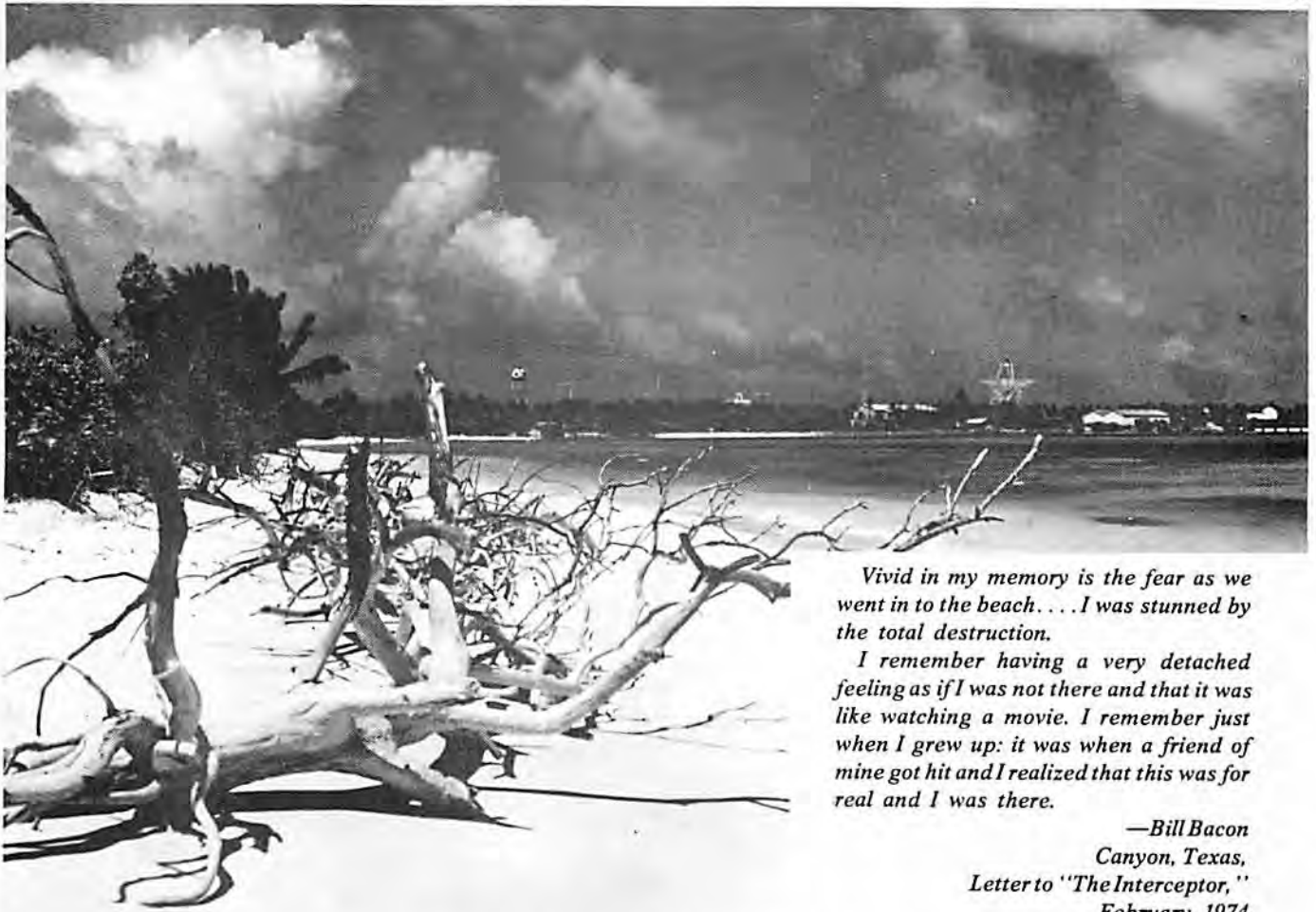
of Tarawa just a few months before.

The effectiveness of the bombardment was beyond question. On Roi Island, it was later estimated that 63% of the defenders had been killed before a single Marine stepped ashore.

Though the shelling had been coordinated almost perfectly, the landings themselves were not. Heavy seas, high winds, poor communications and inexperienced boat crews accounted for most of the confusion. Repeated delays occurred as nearly 500 landing craft circled about and crisscrossed the lagoon to find their proper place in the departure line and assault waves. The first waves finally started out at a signal from destroyer Phelps, and the first Leatherneck reached the shores of Roi Island just after 1130, two and a half hours later than planned. Though the landings definitely lacked the perfection of those staged by the 7th Division at Kwajalein Island, the aggressive Marines quickly made up for lost time once ashore.



Nearly total devastation



Vivid in my memory is the fear as we went in to the beach. . . . I was stunned by the total destruction.

I remember having a very detached feeling as if I was not there and that it was like watching a movie. I remember just when I grew up: it was when a friend of mine got hit and I realized that this was for real and I was there.

—Bill Bacon
Canyon, Texas,
Letter to "The Interceptor,"
February, 1974

Red Beach, Roi Island, 1974

Leathernecks Hit Red Beach at Roi

The 23rd Marine Regimental Combat Team reached the beaches first. With its 1st battalion on the left and the 2nd on the right, it began crossing the beaches at Roi just after 1133. There was little, if any opposition. The preparatory bombardment, one observer reported, had apparently been so effective that the Marines were able to come in standing up.

With groups of tanks spearheading the attack, the two battalions moved inland rapidly. What little resistance there was came from small groups of dazed defenders who had taken refuge in drainage ditches and piles of debris along the airstrips. By 1217, less than one hour after landing, the 23rd had reached the 0-1 Line, the first objective (see map), which ran across the islands a few hundred yards from the lagoon shore. Since

this line itself could hardly be recognized in the rubble and wreckage of Japanese planes which littered the area, the tanks, and then the infantry, proceeded well beyond it, encountering only small pockets of Japanese as they advanced. At no point were the Japanese able to establish a consolidated force to slow down the assault.

"Harding pointed off the port bow and handed Willie the glasses. Willie saw, at the horizon, on the line between sea and sky, a thin irregular smudge, perhaps a fingernail wide. 'Roi-Namur,' said Harding. . . .

"And now Willie Keith found himself in a honest-to-goodness war, one-sided, because there was still no firing from the beach, but real deadly business, nonetheless. The green islands trimmed with white sand were already aflame and smoking in many spots. Tubby old battleships, targets of so many journalists' sneers in peacetime, were briskly justifying thirty years of expensive existence by volleying tons of shells into the tropic shrubbery every few seconds, with thundering concussions. Cruisers and destroyers ranged beside them, peppering at the atoll. Now and then the naval fire stopped, and squadrons of planes filed overhead and dived one by one at the islands, raising clouds of white smoke and round bursts of flame, and sometimes a skyscraping mushroom of black, as an oil dump or ammunition pile went up with a blast which jarred the decks of the Caine. All the while the transports kept disgorging attack boats, which were fanning out along the gray choppy water in neat ranks. The sun rose, white and steamy."

—Herman Wouk,
"The Caine Mutiny"

And Sweep Quickly Across the Island

Since the advance had gone so rapidly, the Marines who had crossed O-1 were in danger of naval shelling which was still hitting the ocean side of the island. The advance was therefore halted and the line was pulled back and consolidated. At 1600 the 23rd Regiment again jumped off. After two hours, leading elements reached the north coast of the island without difficulty. Though some confusion and several casualties were caused by Japanese snipers throughout the afternoon, Roi Island was overrun by 1800 and declared secure little more than an hour later. Victory had come within six hours, and the Marines had spent only three of them in actual assault.

It was a far cry from Tarawa—or even Kwajalein 50 miles south where 7th Division troops were just beginning to dig in after the first of four solid days of battle. Marine casualties at Roi were amazingly light—three killed and eleven wounded. It was a price much lower, in fact, than that paid for the capture of the outer islets in preparation for the assault on Roi itself.

In securing the north coast of Roi, Marines of the 23rd Regiment discovered a trench filled with Japanese soldiers who had committed hara-kiri. They had placed the muzzles of their rifles under their chins and pulled the triggers with their toes. In retrospect, the

desperate situation of the Japanese should be recognized. With no tanks, no aerial or naval support, no hope for reinforcement, and orders to defend the island to the last, many chose suicide as the hopelessness of the struggle became apparent.

No less chilling a sight must have been the many trenches, pillboxes

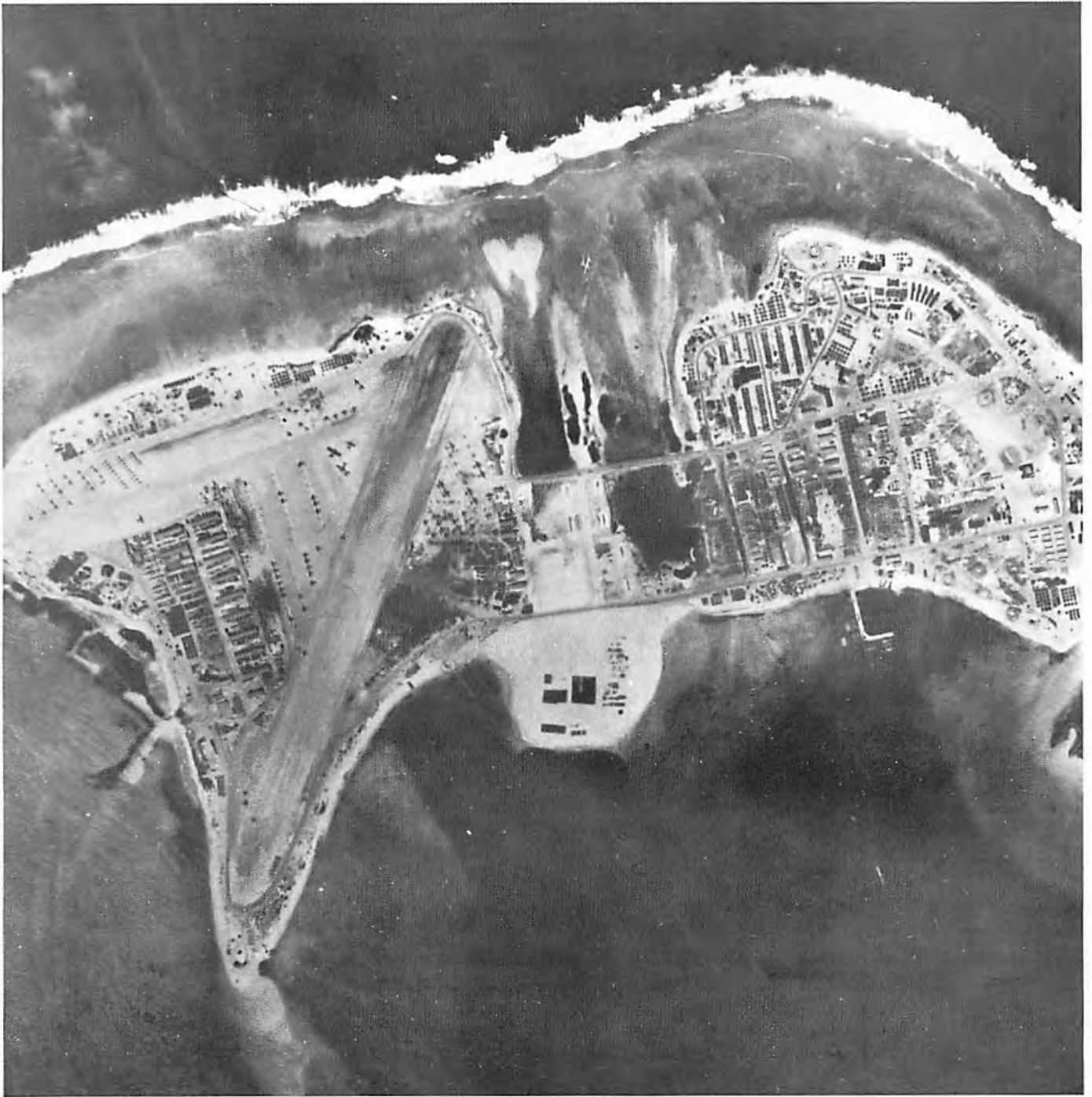
and blockhouses which bristled along the ocean shore of the island. Among them were huge circular blockhouses of German design, with four-foot concrete walls. Sliding steel panels covered firing ports commanding what would have been lethal fields of fire had the Marines chosen to make an ocean side landing.



Tanks lead the way inland



Landing beach, Roi-Namur, 1944



Roi-Namur as it looked as an American base in 1945. Note large number of planes parked on the Roi Island airfield, as well as the causeway connecting the Island to Namur and the new landfill area in the lagoon between the islands. It is

of interest to note that Namur, today largely covered by jungle and dense underbrush, was completely stripped of its original vegetation during the battle and crowded with U.S. base facilities.



Massive concrete blockhouses, like the one above still standing, would have greeted incoming Marines had they landed from the ocean side. The deadly field of fire the Japanese would have commanded is shown at right.



Marines move ahead cautiously through shattered palms.



Medium tanks advance across the Roi airfield. Note disabled Japanese planes at left and right.

Taking a Blockhouse

"On Roi Island, about 500 yards north of the 0-1 line, was a blockhouse constructed of reinforced concrete approximately three feet thick. It had three gun ports, one each facing north, east, and west, another indication of the enemy's mistaken assumption that the Americans would attack from the sea rather than the lagoon shore. Two heavy hits had been made on the blockhouse, one apparently by 14-inch or 16-inch shells and the other by an aerial bomb. Nevertheless, the position had not been demolished. . . .

"Dillon then ordered Company G to take the blockhouse. The company commander first sent forward a 75mm halftrack, which fired five rounds against the steel door. At this point a demolition squad came up and its commander volunteered to knock out the position with explosives. While the halftrack continued

"Platoon leaders found it hard to maintain control. . . . In the words of one sergeant, 'The men wanted to find the Japanese so they went out on their own.' "

—4th Marine Division Journal, describing the initial advance on Roi



Then and now: in the photo above, Marines cover a surrendering Japanese emerging from the torpedo assembly building on Roi. Arrow indicates a second Japanese soldier crawling out from the structure. In picture at right, the building today, with the arrow indicating the Japanese soldier's position 30 years ago. With its original steel doors removed and a loading platform added, the building is now used for paint storage.



... The Hard Way

to fire, infantry platoons moved up on each flank of the installation. The demolition squad placed charges at the ports and pushed Bangalore torpedoes through a shell hole in the roof...

"Cease fire was then ordered, and after hand grenades were thrown inside the door, half a squad of infantry went in to investigate. Unfortunately, the engineers of the demolition squad had not got the word to cease fire and had placed a shaped charge at one of the ports while the infantry was still inside. Luckily, no one was hurt, but as the company commander reported, 'a very undignified and hurried exit was made by all concerned.' Inside were three heavy machine guns, a quantity of ammunition, and the bodies of three Japanese."

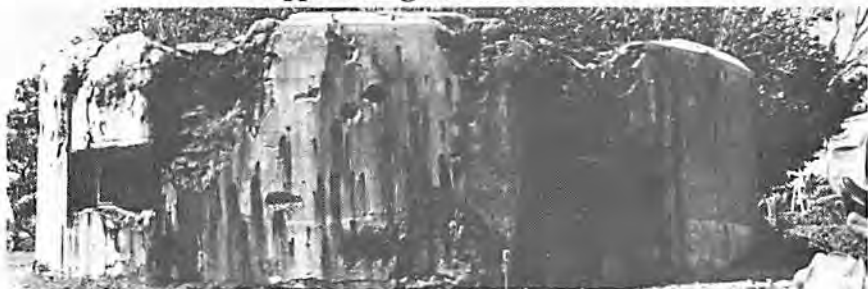
—Operations Report, Roi-Namur
2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines

"President Roosevelt said today American operations in the Marshalls apparently are going well and they are aimed at utter defeat of Japan and a drive on Tokyo itself."

—AP Dispatch
Honolulu "Star-Bulletin"
February 1, 1944



Approaching a blockhouse



Most were battered by shells and bombs



... then blasted and burnt out within by demolition squads.



Assault waves streak toward Namur



Landing beach, Namur, 1944



The beach on Namur, 1974—viewed from tip of Yokohama Pier.

Namur—'A Much Tougher Nut to Crack

A Violent Blast Stops The 24th Cold

On nearby Namur, where the 24th Marine Regimental Combat Team hit the beaches between 1145 and 1200, the going was much tougher. The Japanese had even stronger defensive positions here, and the good deal of vegetation which survived the bombardment provided excellent cover for the determined defenders. Additionally, many Japanese had fled to Namur from the open terrain of Roi when the shelling began. Still others, no doubt, sought refuge there from Ennugarret when that island was seized the preceding day.

On the right side of Namur, Green Beach Two, the Second Battalion received light small arms fire as it landed. It quickly advanced 200 yards inland, though one strong pocket of resistance, on the southeast of Namur at "Sally Point," was isolated and eliminated later. The Third Battalion, on the left at Green Beach One, had the misfortune to hit the toughest beach in the entire atoll that day. Its zone of responsibility extended from the southeastern tip of Roi Island, across the sand spit between Roi and Namur, and then on to Yokohama Pier on the right. There were several undamaged pillboxes covering these beaches, and many Marines were hit as they stepped from the landing boats. Rather than halt the attack to contend with pillboxes, the assault companies bypassed them and left them to the demolition teams which followed. At 1400, the battalion paused and reorganized, waiting for tanks and halftracks to come up.

The Second Battalion, on the right, was also moving ahead and had

"The mere fact that the enemy is able to attack the Marshall Islands must not be taken too lightly."

—Radio Tokyo, Dispatch
February 1, 1944

reached a point just shy of the 0-1 Line when the most unforgettable event of the entire battle occurred.

At 1305 a large blockhouse loaded with torpedo warheads exploded without warning. There was a deafening roar, the island shook violently, and a tower of pungent black smoke shot 1,000 feet into the sky. The force of the explosion was so great that a Marine Corps air observer, flying overhead, found that his plane had been lifted 1,000 feet higher by the blast. "Great God Almighty!" he reported, "the whole damn island has blown up!"

The blast was remembered by the Fourth Marines as the most devastating they would ever witness. It stopped the battalion's advance cold and threw the attack on Namur into temporary disarray.

Worse yet, it took the lives of at least twenty Marines, wounded another thirty or forty and caused over half the battalion's casualties for the entire Namur operation. Marines not killed immediately by blast or concussion were felled many seconds later as huge chunks of concrete, twisted metal, wood beams and torpedo warheads began falling back down to earth.

Study later revealed that the blast was not caused by the Japanese, as was initially believed. The blockhouse itself was apparently mistaken for a gun position by Marine demolition crews, which tossed a sixteen-pound satchel charge inside. Afterwards nothing remained of the building but a huge water-filled crater whose outline may still be seen today.

"Our assignment was to land on Mellu, near Roi, on January 31 and set up field artillery to support the major landings the next day.

"When we left the task force behind and headed in, the seas were heavy, and it was raining. Looking back at the big boats was the loneliest feeling in the world. We landed safely though, and there was little opposition. We then started firing without let-up on Roi and Namur."

—Jerry Cuba

*17-year-old Marine Artillery Observer,
Now MDCA Test Center Director*



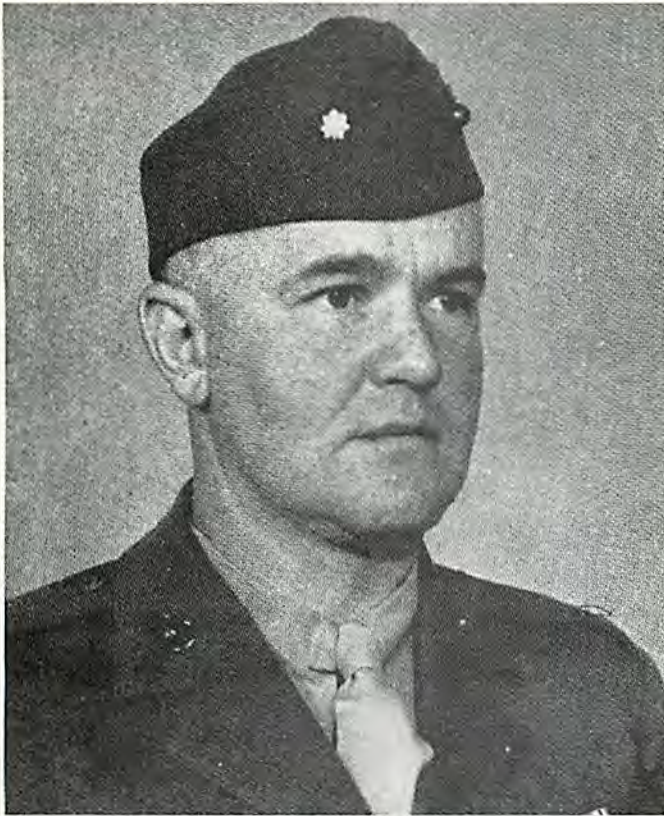
Marine sharpshooters fire on Japanese snipers.



Marines move through Japanese buildings.



Other Leathernecks prepare to continue the advance.



Lieutenant Colonel Dyess

A Banzai Charge, Then Final Victory



Dedication ceremony, Dyess Field, 1967

Meanwhile, the Japanese were recovering from the numbing effects of the bombardment, and they took immediate advantage of the unexpected halt in the Marine attack. When the Third Battalion, on the left, again jumped off at 1630, it quickly ran into deadly opposition from Japanese pillboxes and machine gun nests. These were taken one by one, often with great personal heroism on the part of Marines involved. On the right, the Second jumped off half an hour later, at 1700, and it, too, made only slow progress through rubble, partially destroyed buildings and tenacious Japanese defenders. By 1930, when a night perimeter had to be secured, the Second had advanced only 300 yards, while the Third, on the left, had progressed to within a few hundred yards of the north shore.

During the night, the remaining Japanese on Namur staged a Banzai counterattack under cover of rain squalls and darkness. The Third Battalion, on the left, took the brunt of the assault, which lasted for several hours and at one point forced Companies I

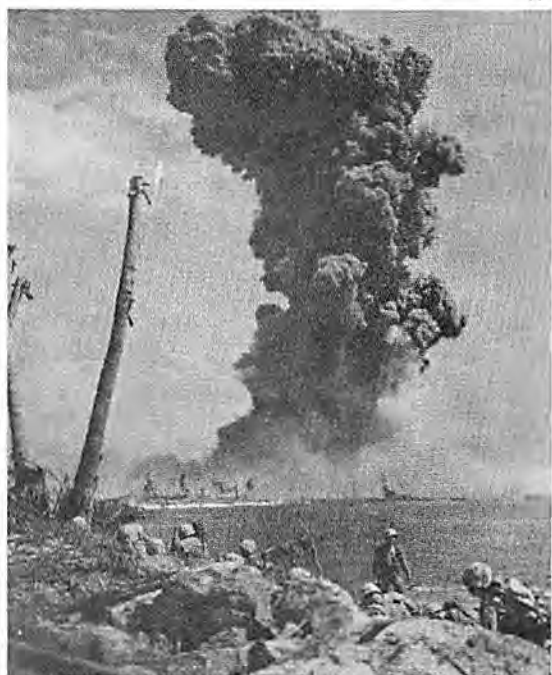
and L to retreat and regroup. During these attacks, a good deal of hand-to-hand fighting occurred, and many died on both sides before the attack was stopped.

The following morning, only isolated bands of Japanese were still active. Between 0900 and 1000 tanks and halftracks moved up to destroy the last pillboxes and blockhouses, and the island was declared secure at 1215, just over twenty-four hours after the landing.

Just before the flag went up over Namur, Lt. Col. Aquilla J. Dyess, while personally leading his men forward in an assault against the last Japanese position, was struck by machine gun fire and killed. He was the highest ranking officer to lose his life in the entire operation. For his valor he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. (Four Medals of Honor were awarded to the 4th Marines that day, believed to be a record for 24 hours of fighting.) In 1967 the Navy again honored Lt. Col. Dyess when the Roi-Namur airfield was dedicated in his name.



A building identical to this one on Namur housed the torpedo warheads that exploded shortly after the battle began.



The explosion

The Whole Damn Island has Blown Up

"An ink-black darkness spread over a large part of Namur such that the hand could not be seen in front of the face. Debris continued to fall for a considerable length of time, which seemed unending to those in the area who were unprotected from the huge chunks of concrete and steel thudding on the ground about them. Before the explosion, the large blockhouse was conspicuously silhouetted against the skyline. After the explosion, nothing remained but a huge water-filled crater. Men were killed and wounded in small boats a considerable distance from the beach by flying debris. Two more violent explosions, but lesser in intensity than the first, occurred among the assault troops during the next half hour."

*—Eyewitness account,
Explosion of torpedo warheads
on Namur Island*

"It was quite an outfit—the Scouts. We trained and traveled separately, came to Kwajin in a destroyer which flew a skull and bones alongside the Stars and Stripes. Our objective was to secure Mellu first and other islands up there to keep the Japanese from escaping along the reef. We secured Mellu and later reconnoitered the causeway at night prior to the final assaults."

*—Hank Denton
Marine Scout Sniper,*



The results: a huge crater and scores of Marine casualties.



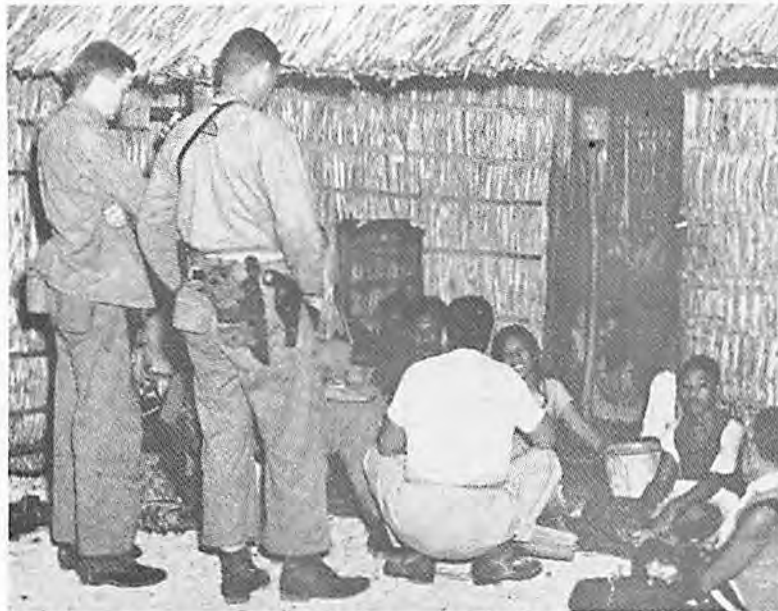
The same area today. Note the charred soil [at right] still evident thirty years later.



Wrecked Japanese crane, Yokohama Pier. A U.S. destroyer accidentally hit the crane with its final salvo, thereby ruining American plans to use it.



Command post after the battle. Note the sign—Marines and Seabees had already unofficially christened the Roi Airstrip as "Dyess Field."



Marines interrogate Marshallese on Ebadon Island, Kwajalein Atoll.



Demolished Japanese headquarters building.



U.S. plane on lagoon bottom near Mellu—one of several stripped and discarded after the War.



Seabees remove dud shells after the battle.

The Aftermath

In little more than 24 hours of fighting, Marines had overrun all of Roi-Namur. Marine deaths totalled 195, and 545 were wounded. Japanese losses included 3,472 killed and 91 prisoners, of whom 40 were Koreans.

As patrols combed through the debris after the battle on Roi-Namur, other Marine units began systematic landings on the outer islets in northern parts of the atoll. These included all islets on the north reef, those on the west about as far south as Illeginni, and all those on the east reef nearly as far down as Meck. There were few Japanese. More often, there were friendly Marshallese who welcomed the Marines. Most of the islands, one Marine recalled, were far more difficult to pronounce than to capture.

Meanwhile, the 7th Division had barely half completed the seizure of Kwajalein Island. As the battle ended on Roi-Namur, the 32nd and 184th Regimental Combat Teams had progressed only to the area where the helicopter hangars and ZAR complex are now located.

Plans for Kwajalein, like those at Roi-Namur, called for rapid advance and victory within a day or two. But

victory on Kwaj took nearly four. These facts have often invited comparisons that are at best misleading. Marines as a rule generally push an attack more vigorously than Army Troops, and then return later to clear up bypassed opposition. Army combat doctrine, however, called for heavy preliminary shelling before any advance, and thorough, methodical progress in which all opposition had to be eliminated. In short, the difference at Roi-Namur and at Kwajalein was essentially a matter of style. Further, Kwajalein, a much larger Island shaped like a narrow boomerang, was much easier for the Japanese to defend in depth. Roi and Namur were more like polygons and allowed a good deal more room for maneuver during the attack.

In any event, the Japanese had the final word at Roi, if not the victory. While Seabees were bulldozing the debris and wreckage, clearing the ruins and rehabilitating the airfield there, a high-flying group of Japanese bombers, staged from Ponape, made a surprise attack on February 12, ten days after the battle ended. Incendiary bombs hit the American

garrison there, and one of them by chance struck the ammunition dump. Seconds later the island was an exploding inferno. One observer described "solid sheets of flame" that resulted from exploding ammunition and TNT. The raid lasted only five minutes, but bombardment from the ammo dump continued much longer.

Casualties were numerous. Damage amounted to at least a million dollars. Worst of all, since American carrier forces had been withdrawn from Roi for other operations, not a plane was on hand to pursue the attacking Japanese aircraft.

Once again, however, the Seabees began the grim task of clearing up the islands and repairing the runways. Before long Roi-Namur, once a major Japanese air base in the Marshalls, was playing an identical role for the U.S. After the victory there, the 4th Marines had completed the first leg of the long trip to Tokyo, and American forces were now well on their way to Eniwetok, the Carolines, the Marianas and Iwo Jima. With resounding victory in the Marshalls, the drive across the Central Pacific moved steadily westward to meet the Rising Sun.



A new base takes shape: March, 1944 view shows Namur in foreground, Roi in the distance.



Above, one of the badly battered buildings still standing testifies to the volume and intensity of the American bombardment. At bottom, rusted examination table and stool in the so-called "underground" hospital saw their last patients over thirty years ago. Sheets of X-ray film are scattered about on the floor. Upper right, the Japanese memorial.

Reminders . . .



Our Thanks

Our account of the battle for Roi-Namur would not have been possible without the cooperation of Frank Serafini, Global Associates' Assistant Resident Manager for Roi-Namur and the Outer Islands. Frank, who fought elsewhere in the South Pacific during the War as an Army tank commander, came to Roi-Namur in 1961. At that time the islands had been practically untouched since 1945. Over the past 13 years, Frank has been primarily responsible for transforming Roi-Namur from battle-scarred waste into what might easily qualify as an island paradise, by anyone's standards.

Our thanks also to Carl Blake and Paul Lambert, MIT/Lincoln Lab; Ray Currid, Global; Tom and Mary Jo Burke, RCA, for lending us the "Cruise Record of the 95th Seabees"; Larry Allen, Kentron, who took all of the current photos used in our account; Noland Hisey, who drew the maps; Hal Fowler, Global, who helped a great deal with research and photography; and Peggy Ice, Patty Igawa, John denDekker and Lloyd Brink for typing and reproduction.



Frank Serafini—Global's Assistant Resident Manager at Roi-Namur. In the foreground is a bomb fuse, one of many types of ordnance which continue to turn up regularly.

Final Thoughts

"I have a few slides of the islands as they look now, including the commanding officer's house and bunker. They are just as I remembered them except for the toll that time has taken. I remember the beach on the lagoon side and thinking how beautiful it must have been. I see that my impressions were correct. My compliments to all who have made these two dots on the map the beauties they should be. Thank you also for keeping a small part of them as I saw them and will forever remember them."

*—Bill Bacon
Canyon, Texas
Letter to "The Interceptor,"
February, 1974*



A Leatherneck Looks At The South Pacific

*Have you ever sat through a picture show
While the rain seeped into your trousers, Joe?
Have you ever labored in mildewed clothes,
Or stepped on a lizard with naked toes?
Have you ever stood till you thought you'd choke
In line for ice cream or a glass of coke
Only to hear the familiar shout,
"We're sorry, mates, but we've just run out."
To be just a little more specific,
Have you ever been in the South Pacific?*

*Have you ever wakened in chilling fright
To the awesome sounds of the tropic night?
Has your skin ever turned a yellow-green
From the daily dose of atabrine?
Has sweat ever dripped on your writing pad
While you penned a letter to Mom or Dad?
Have you ever been tempted to moan and sob
At the fate of a lonely, land-based gob?*

*Have you ever wished that you could strip down bare
And roll in the snow a way back there?
If you don't think THAT would be terrific
You've never been to the South Pacific.*

*Have you ever thrilled to the symphony
Of the gentle surf of an azure sea?
Have you ever sifted the coral sand
For the ocean jewels of this storied land?
Have you ever walked under hanging moss
Or gazed in awe at the Southern Cross?
Have you ever watched the moonlight trace
Soft patterns of gold and silver lace?
Then you've never tasted the joys prolific
Of the fabled isles of the South Pacific.*

*Have you ever stood on a jungle ridge
and yearned for the sight of the Brooklyn Bridge?
Have you ever sloshed through the tropic rains
And dreamed of the sweep of the Texas plains?
Would you trade any one of these fancied thrills
For a Sunday hike in the Berkshire Hills,
Or a berry patch in the Carolines,
Or a hunter's shack in the Northern pines?
Then, to be just a little specific,
YOU belong out here in the South Pacific.*

—Author unknown.





THE ATOLL. Around Kwajalein Atoll is the earth's biggest ocean. Within it is the world's largest lagoon. Between them lies Kwaj, a necklace of 90-odd coral islets on a backdrop of blue. With six square miles of land in 70 million

square miles of sea, Kwaj is one of the remotest places on earth—and home for 5,000 Americans living and working at Kwajalein Missile Range.



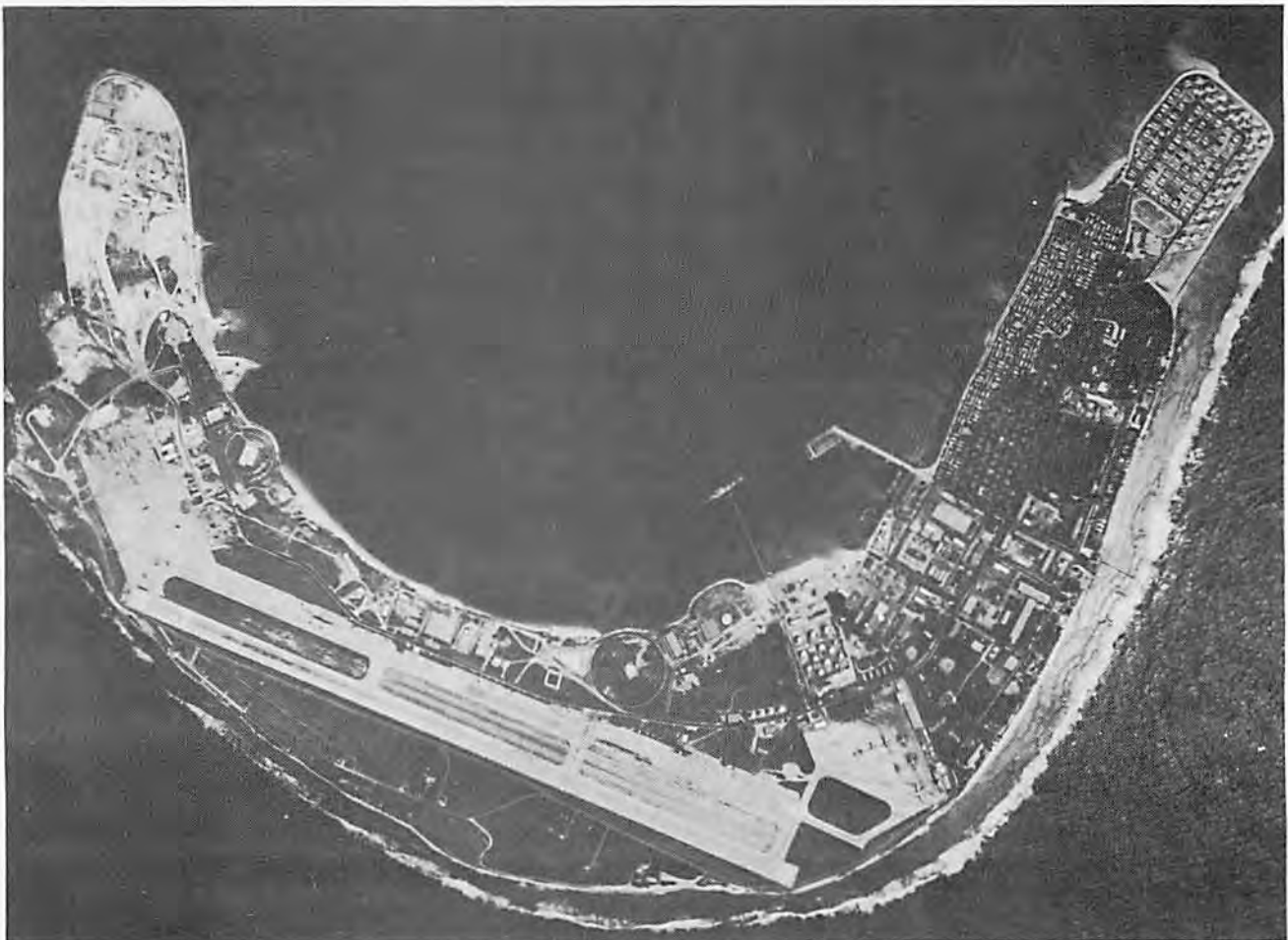
GOLF COURSE. Flat but fun, the Kwajalein course attracts hundreds each week.

Kwajalein— An Album

The first Americans on Kwajalein, the Marines and GI's who landed in 1944 remember nothing but the total devastation wrought by the battle here. Today, thirty years later, Americans on Kwajalein must look hard to find any evidence that a battle took place here at all.

In past issues of "The Interceptor," and in this, our final issue, we have covered in detail what happened here three decades ago. In our final photo essay, we think it's appropriate to conclude regular publication by turning from Kwajalein "then" to Kwajalein "now."

The photographs on the following pages represent an album of Kwajalein memories which Field Station families may wish to keep or send back home to friends and relatives. Though not comprehensive, the "album," we feel, does cover many of the places, things and events which have made living in this extraordinary part of the world a unique and unforgettable experience.



THE ISLAND. This recent vertical view of Kwaj shows many details in the housing and technical areas.



SEATRIN, ECHO PIER. The Seatrains are Kwajalein's lifelines to the "real" world over the horizon. To Island residents, the familiar "beep-beep" in the marina area signals the arrival of another Seatrain, and with it thousands of tons of goods and supplies.



FARAWAY PLACES. As far as our location goes, the sign at the air terminal just about says it all.



SATURN This Saturn Airways DC-8 brought many of us to Kwajalein for the first time and will take many of us home this summer.



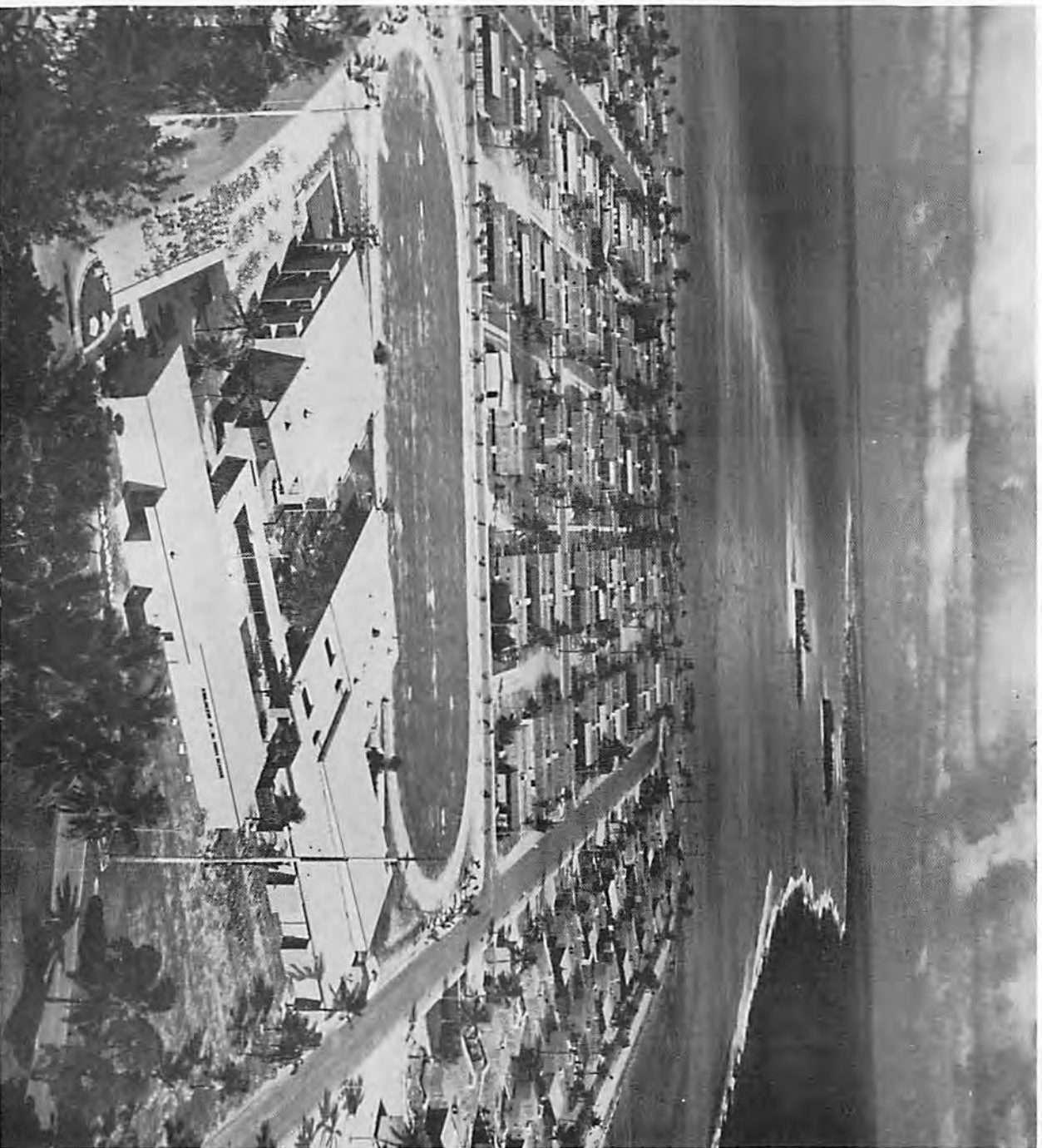
PALM BQ. The Palm is one of several Bachelor Officers Quarters located near the downtown area.



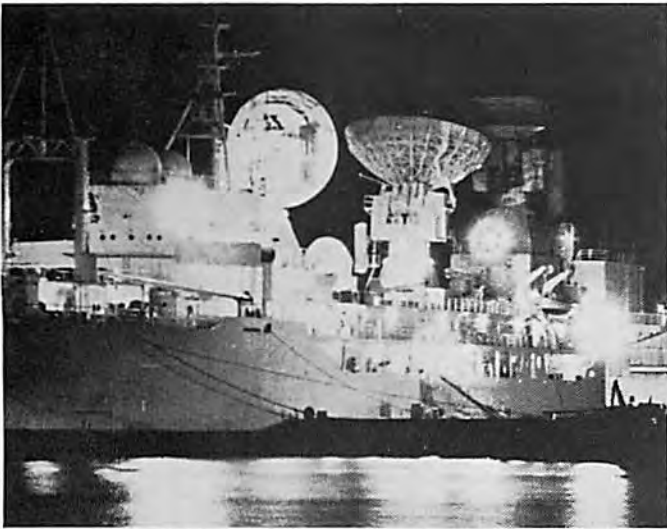
FAMILY HOUSING. Most housing units on Kwaj were constructed during the Fifties by the Navy.



TOUCHDOWN. The Capitol International Airways DC-8 handled MAC passenger and cargo service between Kwaj and Hickam AFB for 11 months last year. This photo was taken on New Year's Day, 1973, as Capitol made its first landing on Kwajalein.



SILVER CITY. In 1965, Martin-Zachry Constructors 200 trailers were installed. In the photo, the Kwajalein completed the 39 acres of gleaming coral landfill which was Jr.-Sr. High School appears in the foreground. to become known as 'Silver City.' Three years later nearly



TRACKING SHIP, ECHO PIER. Vessels like the one pictured here are frequent visitors in Kwajalein's harbor.



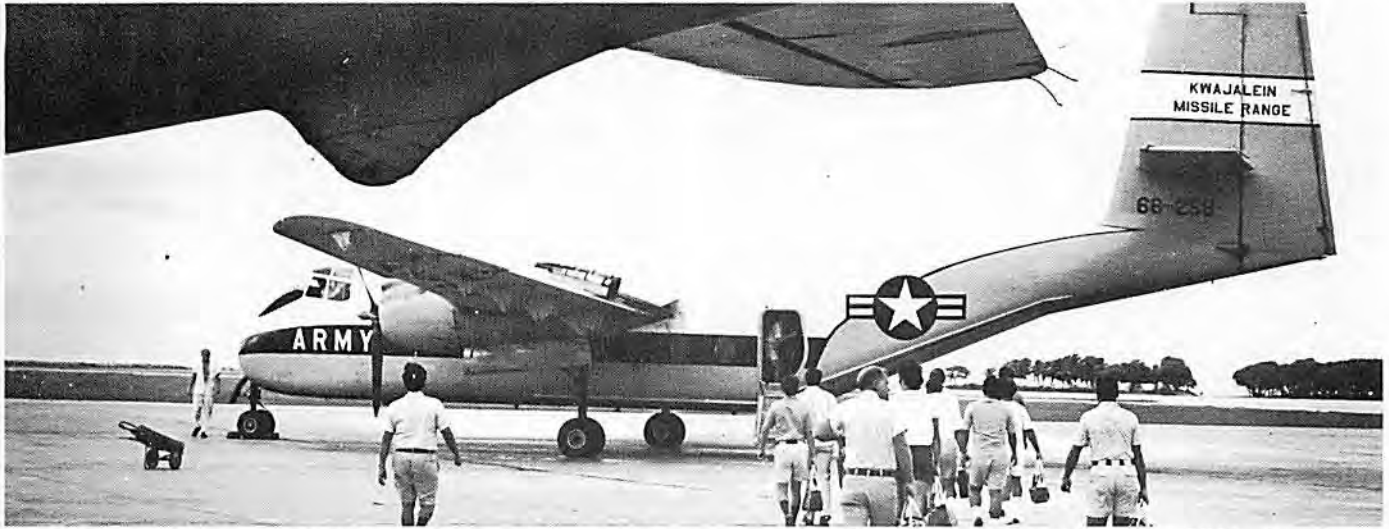
TTR-4. Constructed in 1960, the TTR-4 is one of the best known landmarks on the Island.



SSC BUILDING. Still better known to the Island's taxi drivers as the "JTO," SSC has been the BTL Field Station's administrative headquarters since 1960.



CHOPPERS. The familiar "Huey" helicopters transported Field Station commuters to and from Illeginni. The panoramas of sea, sky and reef enjoyed by passengers en route were often nothing short of spectacular.



CARIBOU. However ungainly their appearance, the Army's Caribou aircraft have proved exceptionally reliable and ideally suited to their job as local "commuter specials." Since their debut at KMR in 1967, the planes have transported tens of thousands of WSC passengers to and from Meck each day.



ILLEGINNI. This island, located 32 miles northwest of Kwaj, served as the Remote Launch test site until its closing at the end of 1973.



SPRINT MISSION



SPARTAN MISSION



MECK ISLAND. The launch complex, the MSR, the MICB and the runway are the major landmarks on this tiny island, the site of SAFEGUARD missions.



C-141. Sometimes called the "Whale Tail," the giant C-141 Starlifter is often seen in Kwajalein's skies.



The 141's, like the one pictured at Hickam AFB, bring hundreds of tons of mission cargo to Kwajalein each year.



TEN-TEN. The variety store markets everything from food and beverages to stationery and paperback books. If it isn't in Macy's or Macy's West, and you can't find it here, it's time to fill out a catalog order or send an SOS back home.



POST OFFICE. At 4:30 p.m., parking space is at a premium and traffic can be hazardous as just about everybody on Kwaj converges on the P.O. to look for a letter or parcel from home.



MACY'S. Though somewhat smaller than its New York City namesake, the Kwaj department store stocks camera and stereo equipment, jewelry, giftware, clothing and many other items.



MACY'S WEST. Hardware, luggage, small appliances, bicycles, sporting goods and a variety of knickknacks are sold in the department store annex.

DOWNTOWN KWAJ. Not big, but usually bustling, the area near the Post Office is the closest thing to a metropolis anywhere in the Marshalls. Coconut palms dominate the "skyline" of Kwajalein.



AN EVENING IN MICRONESIA. With a cast of several hundred, this presentation last fall was a highlight for many interested in the history and culture of our neighbors.



“AIR MIKE” The graceful 727's operated by Continental Air Micronesia link Kwajalein with Honolulu and the rest of the Trust Territory. The planes bring mail three times a week and take many Field Station personnel on vacation trips to Ponape, Truk and other areas of the Trust Territory. In this picture, beneath Air Mike are the tails of a C-54 and a C5A Galaxie.



TARLANG. The word means “Storm-proof” in Marshallese. The boat brings several hundred Marshallese from Ebeye each day to work at Kwaj.





FISH POND. One of the few places on Kwaj where you can really get away from it all [at least a mile or so], the fish pond is popular for picnics,

picture-taking and relaxing on a weekend afternoon.



RICHARDSON THEATER. The "Rich" was named after the Army General who directed training for the Kwaj invasion, and was one of the first buildings to go up on Kwaj after the battle. While Seabees were still clearing debris, the troops were already filing into the Rich nightly at 1930 to watch the show. Coconut logs served as the theater's first

benches. Today, the evening feature and the Saturday night "sneak" are always well attended. A box of salt air popcorn and a can of coke seem to go well with "cinema under the stars," but most residents learn quickly that a raincoat or umbrella is standard equipment for a night at the Rich.

POSTSCRIPT — JUNE 1978

As a matter of interest to the readers of this booklet, Kwajalein and Roi-Namur, as well as several other small islands of the atoll, remain fully operational as the Kwajalein Missile Range.

KMR is under operational control of the U.S. Army and staffed by personnel employed by a number of U.S. civilian contractors. Bell Telephone Laboratories, the originator of the articles presented in this booklet, departed Kwajalein in 1975. Currently in residence are CDC, Global Associates, General Electric, Kentron International, McDonnell Douglas Astronautics, Martin Zachary, MIT/Lincoln Laboratories, RCA and TRW. Total population is currently approximately 3,000 employees and dependents.

V.F.W. Post 10268
Kwajalein, Marshall Islands



ST 29