

Passing in Review

BOOKS OF INTEREST TO MARINE READERS

Pivotal Battle . . .

SAIPAN: THE BEGINNING OF THE END—Maj Carl W. Hoffman. Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps. 286 pages, maps, photographs. \$3.25

Sixth in the series of monographs prepared by the Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, this "factually accurate narrative" is far from being a mere compilation of military events. It is a story well told by a man who is both an able historian and a fighting Marine. The author commanded Company G, 2d Bn, 8th Marines, during the battle for Saipan.

In the foreword, the Commandant of the Marine Corps describes Saipan as "one of the key operations in the Pacific War . . . key because it opened the door of distance which meant security to the (Japanese) empire."

This story of the show-down fighting for the gateway to Japan is well articulated. It commences with preparations for the operation which include, in addition to expected items, an account of preliminary high level planning. The story then proceeds on through D-Day and the expansion of the beachhead to continue with an account of the drive northwards which resulted in the capture of Garapan, Tanapag, and eventually the entire island.

The final chapter is of value to the military student and historian. It consists of an analytical summary of the weapons and services which made the Saipan victory possible, together with an assessment of the significance of that victory.

The book is liberally supplied with maps and photographs which make the narrative interesting to the uninitiated reader and doubly so to the Pacific veteran.

In addition to the normal documents found in this type of monograph every effort has been made to present a well-rounded and impartial account by including extracts from interviews and correspondence with participants in the action and comments on the rough manuscript made by individuals who held key positions during the operation. Tribute is paid to the bravery and "inspired patriotism of the Japanese." Controversial questions such as the oft and bitterly discussed relief of MajGen Ralph Smith from his command of the 27th Army Division are handled justly. Such treatment makes a book of this sort particularly valuable.

There were many events of great interest occurring in the Saipan campaign. These are thoroughly covered by the author. For example, the daring assignment planned for LtCol Wood B. Kyle and his 1st Battalion of the 2d Marines, which called for a night landing on the beaches of Magicienne Bay and the subsequent seizure of Mt Tapotchau, is fully examined, not only in the text, but in a special appendix to the book.

In Appendix IX there is a description from a captured Japanese officer's personal account of the last days of LtGen Saito, the Commanding General of all Army forces on Saipan, which makes extremely interesting reading.

Among the other adventurous incidents described is the Japanese tank counterattack which took place on the night of D+1 and which was probably the largest (44 tanks) armored attack launched by the Japanese during the entire Pacific War.

Another account well worth reading is that of the final desperate banzai attack made by the Japanese. Weapons and equipment were so short that some of the attackers were armed with only grenades or spears. Yet so determined was the assault (the individual Japanese desired only to die honorably and to take seven American lives in doing so) that it carried well into the lines of the 105th Infantry and even overran the firing positions of Battery H of the 10th Marines. It was a terrific battle in which hundreds of men were killed. So bloody was the battle field that Robert Sherrod was moved to write of it as "a mass of stinking bodies, spilled guts and brains."

"When we lost Saipan, Hell is on us" said FltAdm Nagano, Supreme Naval Advisor to the Emperor. That perhaps can be the warrior's satisfaction of the 3,000 Americans who unleashed that Hell and who died in doing so. This is a story of brave men—a story which, in these present days of doubt and worry, can be profitably read by all Americans in search of courage.

Reviewed by Col W. M. Greene, Jr.

Horrible Place . . .

THE ASSAULT ON PELELIU—Maj Frank O. Hough, Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, 209 pages, maps, photographs. \$2.50

"Landing over a treacherous coral reef against hostile mortar and artillery fire, the 1st Marine Division, Re-