

Beyond Airfield Number One, the enemy began his use of harassing smoke against our tanks. Although it proved annoying and slightly nauseating, it did not impair the fighting or operational efficiency of our crews to any great extent. In fact, we found that rainstorms imposed a more serious limitation on visibility.

When the first stalemate developed, Colonel Collins enlisted the assistance of the third and fourth Tank Battalions and, after a scrap, a breakthrough was made around Airfield Number Two. Three tanks of "Able" Company were knocked out in this push, and we had our first serious casualties when one platoon leader and three men were killed as their tank hit what must have been a huge land mine. The platoon leader had the day before courageously evacuated Lieutenant Stenkowski from a disabled tank.

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Initially the battalion supply problem was almost impossible, but as things became organized the amphibious tractors came to our aid. They worked wonders. Telephone communication was estab-

lished through the efforts of our "Comm O," Lieutenant John Ostby, with the cooperation of artillery's Major Hank Smart. This proved invaluable on about the fifth day, when artillery fire was brought to bear on key points as the tanks and infantry made a coordinated attack. Much of the intense and accurate AT and artillery fire our people had been receiving was rendered inoperative by this artillery support, and the attack of that morning went according to plan. When this doctrine proved worthy, more and more coordination with the artillery was sought and received. Around Airfield Number Three, where the tanks had to cross a particularly open flat table top, artillery fire covered both our approach and withdrawal.

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As the battle progressed the enemy used more and more mines, and the cooperation of the infantry's attached engineers to clear routes for us was continually sought. Tank people wanted to be in on the fight with the infantry, but it became increasingly annoying when our tanks were destroyed by mines behind the front lines.

Air Support on Iwo

By Corp. B. W. von Wettberg

It was D-day off Iwo Jima. In a matter of minutes it would be H-hour. The assault waves were in boats awaiting word to head into the beaches. Warships were still pounding the island with high explosive projectiles. Overhead planes were scuttling back and forth dropping bombs and firing rockets.

Deep in the superstructure of a transport, the Fourth Marine Division's Air Office was the scene of great activity. In a far corner of the radio-lined room, Lt. Colonel William R. Wendt, Division Air Officer, was carrying on a two-way conversation with our air observer. Beside him a non-com, Sergeant Yancey C. Sims, monitored the Fifth Division's air observer. Another enlisted man, Stf. Sergeant G. M. Torgerson, logged the requests for air support as they came in from the assaulting regiments.

Captain Lyford Hutchins was on watch as filter officer, moving quickly back and forth from position to position, receiving and passing on messages from Operations, and spotting enemy positions and movements of our troops on a large map of Iwo Jima. The rest of the watch audited Naval gunfire circuits, handled outgoing messages to the Chief of Staff and the Commanding General, kept records of requests, and filed various memoranda coming in from the other Division offices aboard ship.



Planes played a vital part in the taking of Iwo, and worked closely with ground troops.

Two facts became quite evident by the end of the second week. First, the war was hard on our Battalion Staff officers. Lieutenant Lou Miller was hit in the foot with a mortar fragment while working liaison with the infantry, and Captain Svoboda, on a similar mission, was hit in the hand by sniper fire while talking into a telephone. Second, every time we moved the Battalion CP we were in for a downpour, and the enemy would replenish his supply of drinking water. Had the Tank Battalion been able to stay put, the enemy would have run out of essential water sooner, but the war had to move and we with it.

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Our final CP location was adjacent to a huge sulphur blowhole studded with numerous caves that soon proved a great hunting place for Japs and souvenirs. At least 50 flags, and numerous other items were flushed out. Higher echelon used a loudspeaker in an attempt to get the human occupants to come out but to no avail. Pfc. Ackley, of H&S company, used his own version of Jap-American conversation when he heard activity while hunt-

ing in one of the many caves. The reported and verified conversation of Pfc. Ackley with the hidden Japs ran as follows:

Jap: "O.K.?"

Ackley: "O.K."

Japs (chorus) "O.K."

Ackley (impatiently) "O.K.***O.K.***O.K.!!!"

Pfc. Ackley was more successful than the interpreters. The Japs gave up.

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"Charlie" company rejoined the battalion when the flag had been raised on Suribachi, and was immediately thrown into the scrap to the north. Platoon Sergeant McIntire of this company got his tank bellied up on some rocks forward of our lines. It was inoperative and could not be evacuated, as the Japs immediately began to swarm the tank in spite of protective fire from the other tanks of his platoon. Lieutenant "Dusty" Blake radioed:

"Don't be afraid Mac—open your hatch and drop a grenade on them!"

"But I am afraid, Mr. Blake," replied Mac tersely, but evenly. Nevertheless he opened his hatch and dropped several. Then he radioed back:

Over the speaker the Fourth's air observer reported the progress of the assault. The tension in the room grew.

"First wave 300 yards from Red One . . . landing on Red One at 0859. . . . First wave landing on Green One, time 0900 . . ."

The Naval gun fire control officer cut in on his circuit with the order:

"Move fire back 400 yards."

The air observer continued:

"Landings on Yellow Two at 0902. . . . Lead waves, Blue One at 0906 . . ."

A moment later an officer with the First Battalion, Twenty Third Regiment, which hit Yellow One reported:

"Enemy fire from terraces above beaches heavy. Send strafing mission at once."

At 0910 the laconic report came in: "Mission completed."

A few minutes later, a message came in which Captain Hutchins read to all hands. "Our troops are moving inland. At Yellow One they are in 125 yards; 200 yards at Yellow Two and Blue One. They have not negotiated the terraces." It was evident that this was going to be no pushover.

At 0930 this realization was strengthened when the first ambulance boat was dispatched.

At 0955 the 27th Regiment of the Fifth Marine Division was reported by our air observer as crossing the lower edge of Motoyama Airfield Number One. More strikes were called for. More missions were reported completed.

Major General Clifton B. Cates, Commanding General of the Fourth, entered the rooms.

Capt. Hutchins alone paid him any attention. The rest were too busy. General Cates leaned against a radio transmitter, wrote out a note on a scratch pad, and handed it to Lt. Col. Wendt. Without looking up the Colonel nodded his head affirmatively and called our observer:

"Two tanks reported bogged down on Yellow Beach One. Report."

You could almost see the plane swing about and pass over the beach area. Back came the reply:

"Only one tank on beach. Appears to be bogged down."

The General said: "Right. Thank you." Smoking his cigarette with nervous puffs, he left the room.

The 25th Regiment, holding the right flank, requested a bombing mission against an enemy point ahead of their lines. They had located a concentration of mechanized equipment and a dump in the vicinity of some wrecked houses. The requested mission was completed. Our air observer swept over and reported.

On patrol our air observer noted enemy fire coming from several areas on the north end of the island. His reports were logged and turned over to the scheduling officer who decided which point to strike. Planes came in from station on assignment and hit enemy strong points. More positions were found, more strikes made. Minutes passed into hours. Lt. Col. Wendt drank coffee and ate sandwiches but stayed at his post. The others stayed, too, until time for the new watch.