

Iwo Jima veterans mark battle's 60th anniversary

By ERIC TALMADGE
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IWO JIMA, Japan — Aging American combat veterans and a handful of former Japanese soldiers gathered on a hillside over the landing beaches of the Battle of Iwo Jima on Saturday to mark the 60th anniversary of one of the bloodiest and most symbolic battles of World War II.

About 50 U.S. vets, many dressed in their uniforms and helmets, gathered with hundreds of family members at a Japanese military base on the island.

A handful of Japanese survivors — only about a dozen are still alive — joined in the "honor reunion," during which they offered prayers and wreaths for the dead. After the ceremony, they split off to visit battlesites or to pose for photos in a landscape that 60 years ago became a symbol of the savage fighting of the Pacific War.

"The battle of Iwo Jima stands out as an exceptionally hard-fought battle in world war history," said Kiyoshi Endo, who commanded Japanese troops on the northern part of the island.

During about a month of fighting that began Feb. 19, 1945, some 100,000 Americans battled more than 22,000 Japanese desperate to protect the first Japanese home island to be invaded.

Nearly 7,000 Americans died. Fewer than 1,000 of the Japanese survived. Japan surrendered the following August, after one more bloody battle, on Okinawa, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Iwo Jima produced one of the iconic images of American combat, when after the battle for Mount Suribachi six troops raised an American flag, a moment that for many Americans symbolizes the Pacific theater of World War II. The Pulitzer Prize-winning photo was later used as the inspiration for the Marine Corps War Memorial in Washington D.C.

For today's soldiers, the battle of Iwo Jima is the stuff of legend.

"Iwo Jima was the defining moment of the Marine Corps," said Marine 2nd Lt. Earl

Speechley, who has been working out logistics for the anniversary. "Every Marine recognizes the significance of the battle."

"It was the first time I'd seen combat," recalled Raymond Beadle, 79, from Morgan City, La., who first arrived on Iwo Jima as a 19-year-old private. "It was scary because we could hear the Japanese, but we couldn't see them. They were all dug in underground."

Beadle lasted on Iwo for 16 days, until an explosion at an ammo dump blew him 30 feet into the air, riddling his body with shrapnel and burying him up to his chest in rubble. He was evacuated to Guam and returned to Iwo Jima for the first time on Saturday.

"It's awesome to be back," said Beadle, who like many of the veterans carried a bottle to bring some of the island's sand back home. "It's so different now. After fighting here, I kind of hoped the Americans would keep it, but I guess we had to give it back."

The island, about 700 miles southeast of Tokyo, has been used only by the military since the war. About 400 Japanese soldiers are Iwo's only permanent residents, but the U.S. Navy regularly uses an airstrip set up like the flight deck of an aircraft carrier to train pilots.

Most of the American dead have been accounted for, but less than half of the Japanese remains have been recovered since Japan's government first began searches in 1952. Every year the island yields more.

The Iwo Jima of today considered something of an open grave looks like an island forgotten by time. It's tiny, covered with rough jungle and pocked with caves.

Its famous black sand beaches are pristine, save for flotsam washed up from the sea and the remnants of the battle. At the southern tip, a one-lane, dusty road winds its way up Mount Suribachi.

Weeds cover the windows of concrete bunkers, where scorpions nest and rusted cannons sit unattended. Rifles, hand grenades and spent shells of every size are not uncommon inside the countless caves that were formed by lava flows or dug out by the Japanese defenders long ago.

■ DEAN

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accounting for \$5 million, Richter said big grants the school has earned are "extremely tough" to get.

"About 25 to 28 percent of our budget comes from the state for funding and in the old days that was like 70 percent," Richter said. "If we aren't getting funding we will have to raise tuition and we will really have work hard to do research."

The college is looking for research dollars in numerous places, Richter said, including other

colleges suffering from the same crisis. The creation of the Health Sciences division of the university has also helped, she said, create more synergy and communication among its members.

"If you look at all the colleges and see how much money they bring in, schools bring in more money than us, but they are bigger," Richter said. "If you look at it from a per-faculty basis, we are way ahead."

The NIH grant is being used to develop a physical-activity program for high-school girls in South Carolina, Richter said. The grant is important for the school because of its current focus on health

disparities. She said the college is working with University Housing Director Gene Luna on an initiative called "Healthy Campus" to make USC more health-conscious.

"Encouraging physical activity is big for us," Richter said.

Richter said space could be a problem for the school's goals. She said the college "crosses county lines" with its 16 locations.

"Every time we get a grant to do \$1 million in research, we can't just do that anywhere," Richter said. "We have had to rent space off-campus — people have to park somewhere."

In January 2006, the public

health school is expected to move into a new building near the renovated Carolina Plaza. The new building will place the college farther from the center of campus but closer to the community that Richter said the college needs to serve.

"I would like us to see more of an organized institution in community-based participatory research, and the community will play a big role in this, because it plays to their needs," Richter said. "It is worthwhile to us and the state."

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■ RICHTER

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continued growth of the Arnold School of Public Health. I am delighted that she will continue to oversee our expanding research and scholarship in public health education."

Richter earned her bachelor's

and master's degrees from Duke University and her doctorate in education from USC. The Charleston native was driving force behind the creation of the Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities located in the Public Health school.

"I am very pleased to be selected as the dean of the Arnold School," Richter said in a USC

news release.

"Our school is one of the most exciting and productive on campus, with an outstanding

faculty and staff."

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