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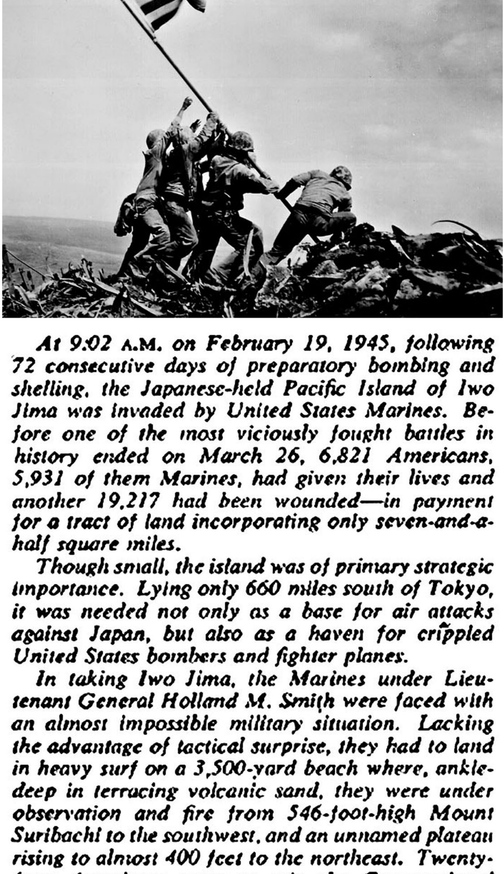
The Picture That Will Live Forever

By JOE ROSENTHAL with W. C. HEINZ



At 9:02 A.M. on February 19, 1945, following 72 consecutive days of preparatory bombing and shelling, the Japanese-held Pacific Island of Iwo Jima was invaded by United States Marines. Before one of the most viciously fought battles in history ended on March 26, 6,821 Americans, 5,931 of them Marines, had given their lives and another 19,217 had been wounded—in payment for a tract of land incorporating only seven-and-a-half square miles.

Though small, the island was of primary strategic importance. Lying only 660 miles south of Tokyo, it was needed not only as a base for air attacks against Japan, but also as a haven for crippled United States bombers and fighter planes.

In taking Iwo Jima, the Marines under Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith were faced with an almost impossible military situation. Lacking the advantage of tactical surprise, they had to land in heavy surf on a 3,500-yard beach where, ankle-deep in terracing volcanic sand, they were under observation and fire from 546-foot-high Mount Suribachi to the southwest, and an unnamed plateau rising to almost 400 feet to the northeast. Twenty-four Americans were to win the Congressional Medal of Honor in this fighting, ten at the cost of their lives; Admiral Chester W. Nimitz was to say: "Among the Americans who served on Iwo Island, uncommon valor was a common virtue."

It was on the summit of Suribachi on D-plus-4 that Joe Rosenthal, then an Associated Press photographer, took the flag-raising picture that was to become the most famous of all war photographs.

CONDENSED FROM HISTORIES OF THE IWO JIMA OPERATION PREPARED BY THE HISTORICAL BRANCH OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS.

TEN years ago, at about noon on February 23, 1945, I stood just inside the rim of an extinct volcano on a small island in the Pacific and snapped a photograph. In 25 years as a news photographer I have taken thousands of pictures, each depicting the passage of a moment in time. This one picture recorded a mere 1/400 of a second in the lives of six men—five Marines and a sailor. It was shortly, however, to outlive three of them, who were killed in combat, and it will outlive the three who survived and the man who took it and our children's children, for something occurred in that small fraction of a second, as the American flag was raised on Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima, of which we were only accidental parts.

This is the story of that picture. This is the first opportunity I have had to tell it all for the record, to recount what went before it and what made it possible and what I know of what has happened since to those of us associated with that picture who still live.

When two of the survivors married, for example, it was news of national importance. The life of the third has been greatly disrupted. I have been accused to my face of not having taken the picture and of having appropriated someone else's film, and less than three months ago a Chicago newspaper reported erroneously on page one that I had directed a re-enactment of the first flag raising on Iwo in order to get this shot of the second.

For a time such misstatements angered and depressed me, but when, five years ago, the World Almanac stated in discussing the picture that "Rosenthal also died later" I realized a truth had inadvertently been written. Joe Rosenthal, who is

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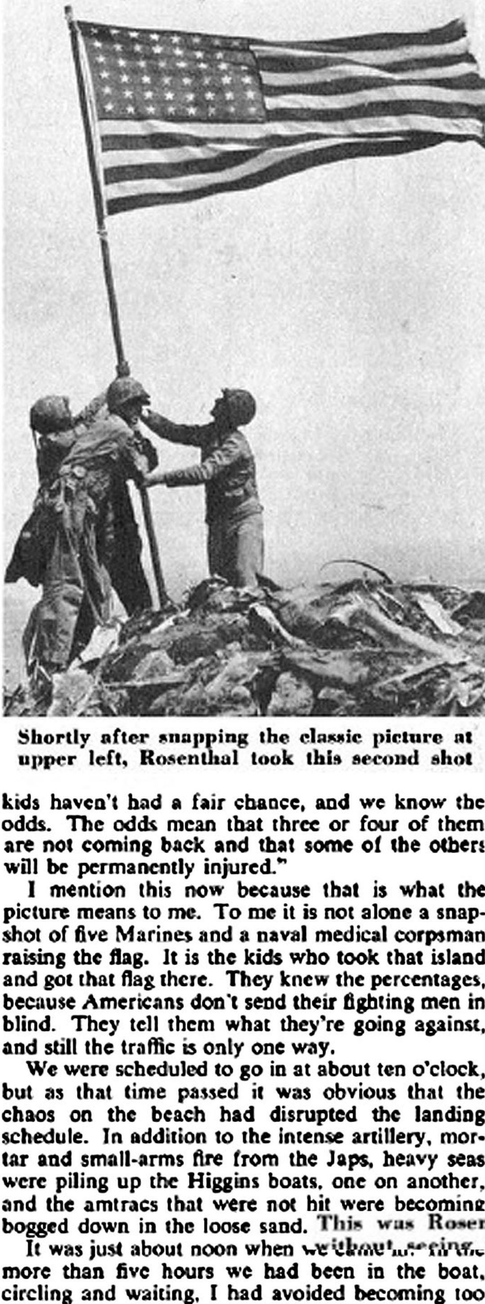

Shortly after snapping the classic picture at upper left, Rosenthal took this second shot

kids haven't had a fair chance, and we know the odds. The odds mean that three or four of them are not coming back and that some of the others will be permanently injured."

I mention this now because that is what the picture means to me. To me it is not alone a snapshot of five Marines and a naval medical corpsman raising the flag. It is the kids who took that island and got that flag there. They knew the percentages, because Americans don't send their fighting men in blind. They tell them what they're going against, and still the traffic is only one way.

We were scheduled to go in at about ten o'clock, but as that time passed it was obvious that the chaos on the beach had disrupted the landing schedule. In addition to the intense artillery, mortar and small-arms fire from the Japs, heavy seas were piling up the Higgins boats, one on another, and the amtracs that were not hit were becoming bogged down in the loose sand. This was Rosen

It was just about noon when we came in. In the more than five hours we had been in the boat, circling and waiting, I had avoided becoming too friendly with any of the kids. This was pure selfishness on my part, because I was afraid that if I made friends it would only be to lose them, but as we moved in through the choppy seas and the grimness weighed even heavier I saw several of the kids looking at me, and I stuck my index fingers up in front of my glasses and moved them like windshield wipers as if to clear the spray. The kids smiled, and then we ducked our heads and the boat beached. I stood up and the ramp went down and I snapped two shots of the kids racing off onto the beach, lugging two-wheeled mortar ammo carriages behind them.

That is a part of the flag-raising picture, too, because in a way it is a picture of a miracle. No man who survived that beach can tell you how he did it. It was like walking through rain and not getting wet, and there is no way you can explain it.

I remember clearly the deep, loose, dark-gray volcanic sand terracing up about 15 feet at a time, and the parts of bodies and the large darker patches of blood seeping into that sand. I remember shooting some pictures of the Marines plowing across the beach, and then I moved off to the left behind a smashed blockhouse. There I tried, unsuccessfully, to get a picture of an ammo jeep that was burning, and then I took off behind two Marines for a shell hole.

It was hard running in the sand and we were in a file, about four feet apart, when I heard a clang and I saw the helmet of the man ahead of me go up into the air about two feet, and then he went two more steps and dropped. The other Marine and I made it to the hole, and as I lay there, getting my breath back, I saw to the left a dead Marine lying up on the side of a shell crater with his gun ready and in the attitude of charging forward.

This scene seemed to me to be symbolic, but I couldn't take it from where I was because the picture would lack composition. In war photography, as in much news photography, you compose a picture by moving yourself, so I made a wide circle,

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really just another news photographer, who did no more than any competent news photographer would have done and a great deal less than some, no longer lives—at least, not as the unknown private citizen he once was.

Because of this picture I have been made one with the celebrities who are customarily on the other side of my camera. I have been introduced as "Joe Rosen*berg* who *raised* the flag on *Okinawa.*" Only the picture—characterized as everything from "phony" to, in the eyes of a Rochester, New York, art critic, comparable to Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper—remains as it was.

It has been, it is said, the most widely reproduced photograph of all time. An engraving from it appeared on an issue of three-cent postage stamps. A painting of it was used as a symbol of the Seventh War Loan drive, and appeared on 3,500,000 posters, 15,000 outdoor panels and 175,000 car cards.

It has been done in oils, water colors, pastels, chalk and matchsticks. A float based on it won a prize in a Rose Bowl parade, and the flag-raising has been re-enacted by children, by gymnasts of the University of Maryland, and as a part of an Orange Bowl pageant in Miami.

It has been sculptured in ice and in hamburger and, by the Seabees, in sandstone on Iwo. A New Milford, Connecticut, man spent 10 months making a wood inlay of it using 10,000 pieces of veneer. A Washington, D.C., sculptor devoted nine and a half years to the $850,000, 100-ton bronze statue that was derived from it and was dedicated as a memorial to all Marines last November 10th near the northern end of Arlington National Cemetery.

How did all this come about?

The immediate succession of events began on March 27, 1944, when I left San Francisco, after a stretch as a warrant officer in the Maritime Service in the Atlantic, to cover the war in the Pacific for the Associated Press on assignment with the Wartime Still Pictures Pool. The pool was an arrangement by which the photographers of the various photo services shared their pictures.

Before Iwo I shot pictures of the D-day landings and the campaigns on Guam, Peleliu and Angaur, and in January of 1945 I was at Pearl Harbor again, waiting while the big names of journalism gathered. For three weeks, men whose by-lines awed me kept coming in, and then, just before we loaded on transports, we were told that the next target in the American advance toward the Japanese homeland would be Iwo Jima.

I was assigned to a battalion of the 24th Regiment of the Fourth Marine Division, but on our way to Saipan, where we were to rendezvous, I learned that this outfit might not land until D-day afternoon. At Saipan I went ashore and told the public relations officer that I had to get onto the beach earlier. "It's the difference between getting the pictures I want," I said, "and not getting them."

The fighting man has no choice of when he will be committed to battle. The photographer or correspondent can make up his own mind when he will go in, and at Guam I had learned that the best time to shoot landing pictures is from H hour plus 1 to H plus 3. If you land earlier you are only pinned down and in the way.

At Saipan, I was transferred to the Second Battalion of the Twenty-fifth Regiment, which was scheduled to land within an hour of H hour, and it was there that we had our final big briefing. About 30 correspondents gathered with the top Marine and naval brass in the officers' wardroom of the communications ship and heard Iwo described as the most heavily fortified island we had ever encountered.

"But the Marines haven't failed yet," Lieutenant General Holland M. (Howlin' Mad) Smith said finally. "Are there any questions?"

"Yes," one of the correspondents said. "When's the next boat back to Pearl?"

That eased the tension and broke up the briefing. Two days later I was in a transport off Iwo, talking with a Marine captain about a place in a landing craft.

"Do you want to go in my boat?" he asked. "We're carrying mortar ammo."

"It's all right with me," I said. "If you guys are going, I'll go."

At 6:30 A.M., just as it was getting light, we loaded into LCVPs. H hour was nine o'clock, but in the early light of a clear day and through the smoke haze we could see the island, 4,000 yards away, erupting under the heavy naval and aerial bombardment. I looked around at the others in the landing craft with me. There were 15 of them, in their late teens and early twenties. I was then thirty-three, not much of a physical specimen and turned down by all the armed services because my natural vision is about one twentieth of normal.

"Here are guys who haven't lived yet," I thought. "I'm not ancient in wisdom, but I've been around a little and I've lived some. I have tried to conduct myself decently, and I think I can face my God, and if I'm killed it will be no great loss. But these

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This was Rosenthal's third photograph of flag raising. He sent all his film to the rear without seeing the prints—and later thought he was being congratulated for this picture

kids haven't had a fair chance, and we know the odds. The odds mean that three or four of them are not coming back and that some of the others will be permanently injured."

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This scene seemed to me to be symbolic, but I couldn't take it from where I was because the picture would lack composition. In war photography, as in much news photography, you compose a picture by moving yourself, so I made a wide circle, running from crater to crater, and by then I saw a second man lying not far from the first. Now I stood up and focused my camera and waited until a Marine running up the beach entered the scene before I snapped it.

I will accept that the flag-raising shot, for which I can take only such a small part of the responsibility, is the best picture I have ever made. The tremendous impact it has had throughout this country establishes that. Yet I have a special fondness for this other picture of the two dead Marines and the living one.

The flag-raising picture, as I shall explain, was largely accidental. In taking this other I had to make an effort to create out of honest ingredients, as much as you can create under fire, a truth, and

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Descending Mt. Suribachi, Marine Bob Campbel took gag shot of Rosenthal in battered chair

to me it is a representation of man's struggle, of the living taking over for the fallen dead because the battle must go on.

In the 11 days that I was on Iwo I took 65 pictures. From time to time, when I was through shooting, I would work my way back to the beach and then hitchhike out to the command ship. There I would write captions for the pictures, hoping to finish in time to have my package go off with the day's official mail by seaplane to Guam.

One day at Iwo it took me 19 hours, moving from one landing craft to another, to get to the command ship just three miles offshore. I traveled from the beach to a hospital ship on an amtrac loaded with wounded on stretchers, and it was dusk and a cold rain was falling and the sea was rough, and yet I never heard one complaint. On the hospital ship the surgeons were working around the clock, and still this terrible backlog of wounded kept piling up.

It was on the morning of D-plus-4, the day the Marines reached the top of Suribachi, that I fell into the water between the command ship and an LCVP.

After I had been fished out, I took a picture of Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal and the Marine commander, General Smith, looking toward the beach with Mount Suribachi in the background. Then Bill Hipple, a magazine correspondent, and I got aboard an LCT heading for the southern part of the beach, and it was here that I heard of the flag raising for the first time.

"We just heard on our radio," the boatswain said, "that a patrol is going up the mountain with a flag."

"The hell you say," Hipple said.

"That's what we heard," the sailor said.

I had been working the north end of the beach with the Fourth Marine Division because there was another pool photographer—Paige Abbott of the International News Service—working the southern beach with the Fifth Marine Division. I didn't know where he was or if he had heard about the flag; it turned out that he was shooting the fighting elsewhere at the time, but if he had been around I would certainly have yielded to him.

Hipple and I started toward Suribachi, picking our way through the marked mines until we got to the command post of the 28th Regiment. There they told us a 40-man detachment had already started off with a flag, following two patrols that had reached the top at 9:40 A.M. There we also found Bob Campbell, who is now on the photographic staff of the San Francisco Chronicle, as am I.

Bob, at the time, was a Marine private and combat photographer. With him was Sergeant Bill Genaust, of Minneapolis, who was to take the fine color-movie sequence of the flag raising, and who was killed nine days later on Hill 362.

"I think we'll be too late for the flag raising," Genaust said. "I'd still like to go up," I said, "and

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Rosenthal made Iwo Jima landing shortly after first wave, during fierce fighting. He took this shot as landing craft ramp dropped and Marines ran out, hauling ammunition carrier

you two guys are carrying guns and I'm not. How about coming along?"

We started up the hill, stopping a half dozen times to take cover while Marines tossed grenades and set off demolition charges in cave openings where Japs were still holed in. About halfway up, we met four Marines coming down the slope. One of them was Staff Sergeant Louis Lowery, then of Pittsburgh, a photographer for Leatherneck, the Marines' magazine, and now photographic director of that publication. Lowery and the others said that the patrol had raised a flag at the summit, and that he had photographed the flag raising.

This flag had been carried off the U.S.S. Missoula, an attack transport, in the map case of the battalion adjutant. It was raised at 10:20 A.M. on a length of iron pipe, part of the wreckage of a radar station at the summit, but it measured only 54 inches by 28 inches, and that is why, although we did not know it at the time, it was to be replaced shortly with a larger flag that would be visible at a greater distance northward on the island and by our ships offshore.

When we heard that the flag had already been raised we almost decided not to go on, but I made up my mind to shoot a picture of it anyway. Campbell and Genaust went along to give me protection, and it was shortly before noon that we came over the brow of the hill and saw the flag.

As I got closer, I saw a group of our men hauling a long iron pipe, and then I noticed still another Marine holding a neatly folded flag.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"We're gonna put up this bigger flag," one of them said, "and keep the other for a souvenir."

The larger flag, it turned out, had been taken off LST 779, which was beached near the base of Suribachi. It measured 8 feet by 4 feet 8 inches.

I thought of trying a shot of the two flags, one coming down and the other going up, but although this turned out to be a picture Bob Campbell got, I couldn't line it up. Then I decided to get just the one flag going up, and I backed off about 35 feet.

Here the ground sloped down toward the center of the volcanic crater, and I found that the ground line was in my way. I put my Speed Graphic down and quickly piled up some stones and a Jap sandbag to raise me about two feet (I am only 5 feet 5 inches tall) and I picked up the camera and climbed up on the pile. I decided on a lens setting between f/8 and f/11, and set the speed at 1/400 of a second.

At this point, First Lieutenant Harold G. Shrier, now a major at the Marine Corps School, Quantico, Virginia, who was in on the first flag raising, stepped between me and the men getting ready to raise the flag. When he moved away, Genaust came across in front of me with his movie camera and then took a position about three feet to my right. "I'm not in your way, am I, Joe?" he called.

"No," I shouted, "and there it goes."

Out of the corner of my eye, as I had turned toward Genaust, I had seen the men start the flag up. I swung my camera, and shot the scene.

That is how the picture was taken, and when you take a picture like that you don't come away saying you got a great shot. You don't know, and within the next few minutes I made another shot of some of the men putting guy ropes on the pipe and still another of a group that I got together to wave and cheer under the flag. On the way down, Campbell and I took gag shots of each other sitting in a chair that was left strangely exposed on the mountainside, and I also took a picture of a Marine with an abandoned kitten and another of a group of Marines holding up a sign they had painted, reading "*Weehawken, N.J.*" When we got to the 28th Regiment command post I looked at my watch. It was 1:05 P.M., and that is the reason I know the picture was shot at about noon.

I took 18 exposures that day, and when I got back to the command ship later that afternoon I

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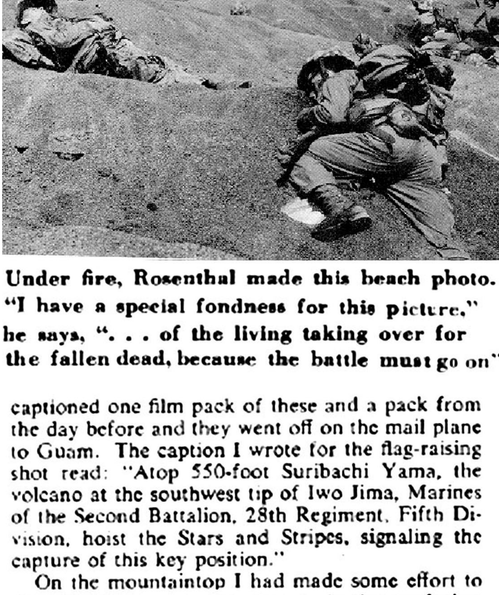

Under fire, Rosenthal made this beach photo. "I have a special fondness for this picture," he says, ". . . of the living taking over for the fallen dead, because the battle must go on"

captioned one film pack of these and a pack from the day before and they went off on the mail plane to Guam. The caption I wrote for the flag-raising shot read: "Atop 550-foot Suribachi Yama, the volcano at the southwest tip of Iwo Jima, Marines of the Second Battalion, 28th Regiment, Fifth Division, hoist the Stars and Stripes, signaling the capture of this key position."

On the mountaintop I had made some effort to identify the men in the picture, in the confusion, but I had failed. Following the overwhelming reception the picture received in the States, however, the Marine Corps went to work, and by checking out the arms and hands, as well as the bodies, and by referring to Genaust's motion-picture strip, they determined that there were six men in the shot.

Identifying the Main Characters

Initially the first figure on the left was identified as that of Pfc Franklin Sousley, of Ewing, Kentucky, subsequently killed in action, and the second figure as that of Pfc Ira Hayes, of Bapchule, Arizona. Later it was determined that Hayes was the first figure and Sousley the second and when, in December of 1946, Hayes complained that one of his buddies was not being given credit, a Texas congressman initiated an investigation, and in April, 1947, another change was made.

The figure on the right, at the base of the pole, was not, it was decided, that of Sergeant Henry O. Hansen, of Somerville, Massachusetts. Hansen had been present at the first flag raising and, several days later, had been killed by attacking Japs as he was being treated by Pharmacist's Mate Second Class John Bradley, of Appleton, Wisconsin, who is the second figure from the right. The figure bending near the base of the pole, it was decided, was that of Corporal Harlan H. Block, of Weslaco, Texas, killed on D-plus-10.

If the fact that I took this picture is important, then I deem it important to recognize the part played in the handling of it by many people. At Guam the picture-pool co-ordinator, Murray Befeler, had to see that my films were processed. The darkroom men had to do their jobs well to get good negative results. The censor had to pass the picture and Murray had to decide that it was good enough to be scheduled via radiophoto, or it would have been passed over and been nothing but a piece of film. As a result of the contributions of all of these people and many others, millions of Americans saw this picture five or six days before I did, and when I first heard about it I had no idea what picture was meant. I had just arrived at Guam, two days after leaving Iwo and nine days after the picture was taken, and had walked into press headquarters. There a correspondent walked up to me.

"Congratulations, Joe," he said, "on that flag-raising shot on Iwo."

"Thanks," I said.

"It's a great picture," he said. "Did you pose it?"

"Sure," I said. I thought he meant the group shot I had arranged with the Marines waving and cheering, but then someone else came up with the picture and I saw it for the first time.

"Gee," I said, "that's good all right, but I didn't pose that one. I wish I could take credit for posing it, but I can't."

Had I posed the shot, I would, of course, have ruined it. I'd have picked fewer men, for the six are so crowded in the picture that of one of them —Sergeant Michael Strank, of Conemaugh, Pennsylvania, who was subsequently killed—only the hands are visible. I would also have made them turn their heads so that they could be identified for AP members throughout the country, and nothing like the ex st-

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ing picture would have resulted.

I have thought often in these 10 years of the things that happened quite accidentally to give that picture its qualities. The sky was overcast, but just enough sunlight fell from almost directly overhead, because it happened to be about noon, to give the figures a sculptural depth. The 20-foot pipe was heavy, which meant the men had to strain to get it up, imparting that feeling of action. The wind just whipped the flag out over the heads of the group, and at their feet the disrupted terrain and the broken stalks of the shrubbery exemplified the turbulence of war.

Congratulatory Wires Arrived

Of the 12 pictures in that film pack, moreover, two had light streaks across them. This picture, number 10, might have been one of those, but it wasn't.

At Guam the first congratulatory wires from the States were waiting, and the misunderstandings that have persisted throughout a decade were starting. One of the correspondents had overheard the opening part of the conversation when I was first asked about the picture, and he wrote that the shot was a phony and that I had posed it.

"How about that guy Rosenthal?" another photographer who did not know me said to me at Guam. "He picked up somebody else's film, and he's taking credit for it."

"I'm Rosenthal, you———," I said, but there's no point in trying to clear what I added after that.

I had already been ordered by the AP to return to the States, and now I was requested to file my answer to the correspondent's charges. I wrote that it was correct to say that this was a picture of the second flag raising, and that I had never said otherwise, but that the shot had not been posed, that I had not picked the site, the men, nor the moment, and that I had not directed the flag raising in any fashion.

Autographs Were Requested

As I left for home I had the fear that, through no fault of my own, I was in the doghouse. When I arrived in San Francisco, however, I found that I was now a celebrity.

I, who had never been asked for an autograph in my life, was now being asked to sign dozens of these pictures. My draft board had changed my classification from 4-F (because of defective vision) to 2-AF (essential deferment). I was being interviewed and photographed and I was then dispatched to New York where, at the AP main office, I, just another bureau photographer, was being received by executives, and where a Rosenthal desk, of all things, was being set up to handle requests for interviews and appearances.

Later I went to Washington, where I met President Truman. From the AP I had received a raise in salary for the D-day landing pictures, and now I received a bonus of a year's salary in War Bonds. With the Pulitzer prize I received $500, and with the award from U. S. Camera there came another $1,000. I was presented with three wrist watches as awards, as well as numerous scrolls, plaques and medals and was offered $200,000 for the statuette rights to the picture.

I never, of course, owned any rights to the picture. It was and is the property of the Associated Press, and although a New York congressman introduced a bill to give the Navy Department exclusive ownership of the photograph, there was no need for that, as the AP has turned over all proceeds from it to the Navy Relief Society, amounting in 10 years to $12,941.84.

What was happening to me was naturally happening to the three survivors —Hayes, the Pima Indian, who is now thirty-two years old, lives in Sacaton, Arizona, and is a warehouse supervisor for the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Bradley, the naval medical corpsman, now thirty-one, a furniture dealer in Antigo, Wisconsin, married and the father of four children, and Rene Gagnon, now twenty-nine, a contractor living in Hooksett, New Hampshire, married

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and the father of one son. They were brought back at President Roosevelt's request to raise the flag over the Capitol in Washington, and then to tour the U.S. for the Seventh War Loan drive.

I met Hayes for the first time in October of 1953 in a television studio in Los Angeles. I saw him again briefly some three months ago when the memorial was dedicated in Washington, and there I met Bradley and Gagnon.

The Other Photographers

They were sitting across the hotel dining room at breakfast when I recognized Ira from having met him and the other two from having seen their pictures in newspapers. I went over and we shook hands, but suddenly our table of four became a table of twelve and I had no chance to talk with them.

I think I know how they feel from what Hayes has said of how he feels, and from what I know of combat men and of myself. Certainly I am grateful for having been fortunate enough to take this picture, but as a photographer I think of Lou Lowery, who went up Suribachi with the 40-man detachment. At one point he had to tumble about 50 feet down the hill to avoid a Jap grenade, injuring himself and smashing his camera, and then my one shot overshadowed the fine series he took of the climb and the first flag raising.

Why didn't my good luck fall to Bob Campbell who, with Bill Genaust, gave me cover? Bob was the father of five kids when he enlisted as a private in the Marines.

"When I see you working in the darkroom, still having to make prints of that picture," Bob says, because we understand each other, "I'm damn' glad I wasn't the guy who took it."

I can name a lot of photographers who were better than I and who better deserved good fortune. I think of Frank Prist of Acme, who was killed on Leyte, of John Bushemi of Yank, who was killed at Eniwetok, and of Damien Parer, the Paramount newsreel man who lost his life at Peleliu.

There were others, but these were men I knew. They projected themselves to get their pictures and their pictures showed it. Parer was moving behind our tanks when a machine gun opened on him, and his last films proved he knew where the bullets were coming from, for he swung the camera toward the gun, and on his film you can see the ground spinning and finally the empty sky.

Raise no shouts for Joe Rosenthal, who became a photographer because, as a kid of twelve in Washington, D.C., he had saved cigar-store coupons and, looking through the catalogue, realized he couldn't get some of the prizes he wanted because he did not have enough coupons, and so took a camera instead. When, in 1930, and a year out of high school, I got an office boy's job with the Newspaper Enterprise Association in San Francisco, I thought that N.E.A. probably stood for the National Educa-

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tion Association.

In 1953, Hayes, the Indian, was picked up on Chicago's Skid Row, drunk, barefooted and with his clothes torn. He was without money, and so he was locked up in the House of Correction, until the Chicago Sun-Times paid his way out and then established a fund for him to which the public subscribed.

Hayes, who has since been winning a brave battle with himself, said his trouble had started when he had been called back to the States to go on the bond tour. He had not wanted to come, but it had been an order, and he had lasted only two weeks.

"People shoved drinks in our hands and said we were heroes," he said. "I was sick. I guess I was about to crack up, thinking of those guys who were better men than me not coming back at all, much less to the White House. On the reservation I got hundreds of letters and I got sick of hearing about the flag raising and sometimes I wished that guy had never made the picture."

When I met Hayes he tried to apologize, saying he had not meant that about the picture. I told him it was unimportant, for I knew what he had meant when he had said it, and I know what Bradley and Gagnon must have thought as the requests have poured in and the attention has been focused on them in the last 10 years.

Now the flag rests in the Marine Corps Museum at Quantico. On the site atop Suribachi stands a memorial and another flagpole and another flag. The camera with which I took the picture is still in service in the Tokyo bureau of the Associated Press, the original 4-by-5-inch negative is locked in a drawer in the AP office in New York, and I am a news photographer on the Chronicle in San Francisco, shooting pictures of fires and society functions, auto accidents and football games.

The only reproduction of that picture I have hanging in the six-room house in San Francisco where I live with my wife, Lee, and our children, Joe, Jr., seven, and Anne, five, is a 2½-by-3-inch etching made by Matthew D. Fenton, of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington. I guess, however, that I myself have made over 2,000 prints of that picture off a couple of negatives that were made from original prints, and I have answered hundreds of letters and turned down dozens of requests for personal appearances because, frankly, it became too physically and financially exhausting.

The Author's Own Copy

At least two dozen relatives of Marines killed on Iwo, each certain that his or her boy is in the picture, have written to me. I remember one letter from a mother who was hoping so much that her son was one of those shown, because he had been killed the day the picture was snapped, and I remember another mother writing that

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one of these must have been her son because he wore that kind of helmet.

I can best sum up what I feel after 10 years by saying that of all the elements that went into the making of this picture, the part I played was the least important. To get that flag up there, America's fighting men had to die on that island and on other islands and off the shores and in the air. What difference does it make who took the picture? I took it, but the Marines took Iwo Jima.

Joe Rosenthal
(image added)

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