The Picture That Will Live Forever

By JOE ROSENTHAL with W. C. HEINZ

At 9:02 A.M. on February 19, 1945, following 77 consecutive days of preparatory bombing and aerial assaults, the island of Iwo Jima was invaded by United States Marines. Before one of the most viciously fought battles in the Second World War, 1,350 United States Marines were killed and 5,931 of them Marines, had given their lives and another 19,217 had been wounded—"in recognition of a pact for the transfer of land incorporating only seven-and-a-half square miles."

In taking two Jima, the Marines under Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, successfully defended the island with an almost impossible military situation. Lacking the advantages of tactical surprise, they had to land on a bare, wild rock with the added disadvantage of the entire Japanese army, now in the last stages of the battle, deep in trenching 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 two island uncommon valor was a common virtue."

It was the moment of Suribachi, D-Day 4 that Joe Rosenthal, then an Associated Press photographer, took the flag-raising picture that was to become the most widely reproduced photograph of World War II. The picture was published in the April 8, 1945, issue of Life magazine and was used extensively by newspapers and magazines around the world. The picture was so iconic that it became known as the "Flag Raising on Iwo Jima." The picture showed six American soldiers raising the American flag on a flagpole on Iwo Jima.

The picture was taken on February 23, 1945, and it is one of the most iconic images of World War II. The picture was taken by Joe Rosenthal, a photographer for the Associated Press. The picture was published in Life magazine on April 8, 1945.

The picture was taken on Iwo Jima during the fighting to capture the island from the Japanese. The picture shows six American soldiers raising the American flag on a flagpole on the island.

The picture is considered one of the most iconic images of World War II and is widely reproduced in books, magazines, and other media.

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 a passage of a moment in time. This one picture cut through 400 of a second in the lives of six men—five Marines and a sailor. It was short, however, to observe three of them: who killed in combat and who will outlive the three who survived and the man who took it and the children's children, for something occurred in that small fraction of a second, that, as an American flag was raised on Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima, of which the picture remains a symbol. This is the story of that picture. This is the first opportunity I have had to tell it all for the record. It is a story that will give you a vivid idea of what was 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 of my face of not having taken the picture and of having instructed someone else to, the 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, for in 25 years I dare say, with Almanac stated in discussing the picture that Rosenthal also died later. I realized a truth had inadvertently been written. Joe Rosenthal, who is
Shortly after snapping the elastic 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 casual medical corpsman raising the flag. It is the kids who took that island and got that flag there. They knew the percentages, the Marines' minutes, and the Japs' minutes, and they sent four fighting men in blind. They tell them what they're going against, and still the traffic is only one way.

They moved in about ten to twelve ene, 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 Rommel.

It was just about noon when we "tucked" up, 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 there was a sense of peace and the grimness weighed even heavier I saw several of the kids looking at me, I struck my indomitable flippers up in front of my glistening dress to meet them like windshield wipers as if to clear the sky. The kids smiled, and I couldn't help feeling the boat beached. I stood up and the ramp went down and we snapped two shots of the kids racing off onto the beach, legging two-wheeled mortar ammuntion 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 volacic 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 back, 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 a few more Marine helmets up on the side of a shell crater with his gun ready and in the attitude of charging forward.

This scene seemed to go in at a symbolic, but I can'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.
Rosenthal

really just another news photographer, who did no more than any competent news photographer in the world. Perhaps the only one who lived longer—and, at least, not as the unknown pri-

ciate citizen he once was.

I have been one made with the celebrities who are customarily on the roving press ships in the Atlantic. “The Lifeboat’’ of Kodak’s Joe Rosenberg who held the flag on Oi-

kawna.” Only the picture—characterized as every-

thing—that was the subject of the report.

and New York, art critic, comparable to Leonardo da

Vinci’s Last Supper...remains as it was. It had been pro-

duced in the darkroom of the ’New Yorker, according to a

photograph of all time. An engraving of it ap-

peared in an American magazine.

A painting of it was used as a symbol of the Seventh

War, a London drive, and appeared on 3,300,000 post-

cards. It has been reprinted by hundred thousands, and

has been reprinted by hundreds of newspapers.

It has been done in oils, water colors, pastels, chalk

and matchsticks. A boat based on it won a prize in

an art contest. It has been a popular painting for

years. It has been reprinted by hundreds of

people as a part of an Orange Bowl program in Miami.

It has been sculptured in ice and in hamburger

and, by the Seabees, in sandstone on two

New Milford, Connecticut, man spent 10 months tak-

ing a wood inlay of it using 10,000 pieces of ven-

et. A Washington Post...told us of a deviated nine-

half years to the $850,000, 100-ton bronze statue that

was dedicated frieze...and was dedicated as a

memorial to all Marines lost November 10th near the

northern end of Arlington National Cemetery.

How

The immediate succession of events began on

March 27, 1944, when I left San Francisco, after

six weeks in the Orient, arriving at Pearl Harbor

in the Atlantic, to cover the war in the Pacific

for the Associated Press on assignment with the

47th Pacific Fleet. This was a real change of

arrangement by which the photographers of the vari-

ous services were exchanged.

Before two I shot pictures of the D-day landings

and the campaigns on Guam, Peleliu and Angaur.

I was made a correspondent of the Army Air For-

again, waiting while the big names of journalism

gathered. For three weeks, men whose bylines

are known throughout the world came into the

office before we loaded on transports, we were told that the next tar-

get in the American advance toward the Japanese

island of Okinawa.

I was assigned to a battalion of the 24th Regi-

ment, which had just come into the island of Saipan

way to Saipan, where we were to rendezvous,

learned that this outfit might not land until 1 D-day.

A day before we were dispatched on the

public relations officer that I had to get onto the

beach earlier. “It’s the difference between getting

in and getting into the battle.”

The fighting man has no choice when he will

be in a battle. It’s not “when,” it’s “now.”

That eased the tension and broke up the briefing.

Two days later I was in transport off talking, with a Marine captain about a place in a landing

raft.

“Do you want to go in my boat?” he asked.

“Sure.”

“All right. It’s all right with me,” I said. “If you guys are going, I’ll go.”

We got on a LCM, 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

darkness of the night, we were off the island. We

rolled away, erupting under the heavy naval and

airborne bomb attack before the rest of the landing craft with me. There were 15 of them, in

their late teens and early twenties. I was then thirty-four, at Saipan, and the climate and

turns by all the armed services because my

natual vision is about one twentieth of normal.

That makes me a failure...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

and if I’m killed it will not be great loss. But these

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This was Rosenthal's third photograph of flag raising. He went all his film to the rear of the boat where he succeeded in getting his picture and he was congratulating for this picture kids haven't a fair chance, and we know the odds. The odds mean that three or four of them will not come back and that some of the others will be permanently injured.

I mention this now because that is what the picture means to me. It is not alone a photograph 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 there was a break in the weather and we delayed a little longer and got the picture. The last men we saw were jumping into the Higgins boats, one on another, and the arakats that were not hit were becoming bigger in the sea in the sun.

It was just about noon when we came in. In the more than five hours we had been in the boat, circulating 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 I would only lose them. When we moved in through the choppy seas and the grimness wept over every hand I saw several of them look at me, and I struck my index fingers up in front of glasses and moved them like windshield wipers, and I could see that dark gray, clouded look of those kids, and then we ducked our heads and the boat headed. I stood up and the ramp went down and I snapped two shots of the kids running off into the beach, luging two-wheeled mortars amoam couages 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 was there that beach can tell you how he did it. It was made, we went through rain, and yes, and yes, we went through and got the flag, but not yet, and there is no way you can explain it.

It was dark gray, dim, and the boats had arrived 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 any news photography, you compose a picture the way you see it. This time I saw a Marine running from crater to crater, and by then I saw a second man lying not far from the first. Now I stopped the camera and my mind 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 glory of that picture is a part of the country and it country established that. Yet I have a special fondness for an old picture of the two dead Marines and the living one.

The flag-raising picture, as I shall explain, was largely a cooperative effort. We tried to do this to make an effort to create out of honest ingredients, as much as you can create under fire, a truth, and...
Rosenthal

Desecrating Mt. Suribachi, Marine Bob Campbell took gap shot of Rosenthal in batteried charger to me it is a representation of man’s struggle, of the living taking over for the fallen dead because the war must go on.

In the 11 days that I was on Iwo I took 65 pictures. From time to time in the hours of silence after the 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 so seaplane to Guam.

My first day at Iwo it took me seven days, 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 apron loaded with wounded, 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 to ward the beach with Mount Suribachi in the background. Then Bill Hippie, a magazine correspondent, and I got aboard an LCT heading for the beach. I turned to him here: I heard of the flag raising for the first time.

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

"The hell you say," Hippie 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 Abbit 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. Hippie and I started toward Suribachi, picking our way through the burned houses and trees until we got to the post on the 23rd Division. 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.

Later, 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-tinted picture of the flag raiser, and who was killed nine days later on Hill 362.

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

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Rosenhadel made two Lima landline shots after first wave, during force flying. He took this shot as landing craft ramped and Marines ran out, hauling ammunition carrier

you two guys are carrying guns and I'm not. How about getting some fighters here."

We started up the hill, stopping a half dozen times to take cover while Marines tossed grenades and set off demolitions charges in cave openings where Japs were still holed in. About halfway up, we met Captain Kent and the rear gunner of Vio- bachi. They had heard that the flag had already been raised and we were almost decided not to go on, but I made a request to the CO, and he ordered me to close up on the hill. I shall never forget the feeling of elation and pride that I felt when I saw the white flag in the hand of Captain Kent and the men getting ready to raise the flag. When we moved away, Genusa came across in front of me with his movie camera and took a picture of me and the flag. The ground line was in my path. I put my Speed Graphic down and quickly picked up some stones and a Jap sand- bag. I put the stones in the sand-bag and took the picture of the flag. I picked up the camera and climbed up on the peak. I decided to use a less sensitive setting between 1/2 and 1, to get the speed at 1/4 to 1/5 of a second.

At this point, First Lieutenant Harold G. Shires, now a major at the Marine Corps School, Quantico, Virginia, who was in on the first flag raising, stepped between me and the men ready to take the flag. When he moved away, Genusa came across in front of me with his movie camera and took a picture of me and the flag. I shall never forget the feeling of elation and pride that I felt when I saw the white flag in the hand of Captain Kent and the men getting ready to raise the flag. When we moved away, Genusa came across in front of me with his movie camera and took a picture of me and the flag. The ground line was in my path. I put my Speed Graphic down and quickly picked up some stones and a Jap sand-bag. I put the stones in the sand-bag and took the picture of the flag. I picked up the camera and climbed up on the peak. I decided to use a less sensitive setting between 1/2 and 1, to get the speed at 1/4 to 1/5 of a second.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that to the left was the flag. I was surprised to see that the flag was still waving, and I was even more surprised to see that the men were still standing around it. I decided to use a less sensitive setting between 1/2 and 1, to get the speed at 1/4 to 1/5 of a second.
Under fire, Rosenthal made this beach photo.

"I have a special fondness for this picture," he said, gesturing toward the fatal shot 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-raisng shot read: "Atop 550-foot Suribachi Yama, the volcano at the southwest tip of two Ijima, Marines of the Second Battalion, 28th Regiment. Fifth Division at Okinawa. The capture of this key position."

On the mountaintop I had made some effort to identify 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 Goebbels's movie 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 Souleye, of Ewing, Ken-

tucky, subsequently killed in action, and the second figure as that of PFC Ira Hayes, of Bapchule, Ar-

zona. Later it was determined that Hayes was the first to reach the summit and when, in December of 1945, Hayes explained that one of his buddies was not being given credit, a Texas congressman investigated, and in April, 1947, another change was made.

In February, 1945, nearing the base of the pole, it was not, it decided, that of Sergeant Henry G. Hansen, of Somerville, Massachusetts. Hansen had come within a few feet of the flag pole and, when a few days later, had been killed by attacking Japs as he was being treated by Pharmacologist's State 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 decided was that of Corporal Hartlan E. Block, of Westlake, Texas, killed on D-Day-16.

"This picture is important, then I deem it important to recognize the part played in the handling of it by many people. At Annapolis, the coordinator, Murray Re-

feler, had to see that my films were processed. The darkroom man might have got negative results. The censor had to pass the pictures and Murray had to decide that it was good enough to be released. It could, 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, this picture was not received at Guam, two days after leaving two 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-raisng shot on two." "Thaans," I said. "It's a great prize," he said, "Did you pose it?"

"Durr," I said. "I thought he meant the group shot I had arranged with the Marines waving and cheering, but then I saw he was calling a picture with the picture and I saw it for the first time.

"Gee," I said, "that's all right, but I didn't pose that one. I wish I could."
ing picture would have resulted. I have thought often in these 10 years of the things that happened quite incidentally in my life that gave to these events their qualities. The sky was overcast, but just before we left the boat we turned our motors directly overhead, because it happened to be about noon, to give the figures a socalled 'golden glow'. The sky was heavy, which meant the men had to strain to get it up, imparting that feeling. The skippers would also keep the flag out over the heads of the group, and from the tops of the groves you could see the broken stairs and the broken slabs of the shanties exemplified the turbulence of war.

Conratulatory Wires Arrived
Of the 12 pictures in that film pack, many of the events were light subjects excepting one. This picture, number 10, might have been one of those, but it wasn’t. It was one of the first congratulatory wires from the States were waiting, and the misunderstandings that have persisted for a decade were about to be vanishing. One of the correspondents had told me the previous day and I had been looking forward to the moment when I was first asked about the picture, and he wrote that the shot was a phony and that I had posed it. I’m Rosenthal, your’s,” I said, but there’s no point in trying to clear it up. I added later that the story had never been ordered by the AP to return to the States, and now I was asked if I would file the picture to the correspondent’s charges. I wrote that it was correct that I was the same person who had photographed that flag down on the field of battle and that I had never said otherwise, but that the shot had not been posed, that I had not directed the picture in any way, and 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 being denied a trip to the White House. When I reached San Francisco, however, I found that I was now a celebrity. The man 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 effective volunteer service. After the flag raising I was being interviewed and photographed and I was then dispatched to New York where I was at the publisher’s office, I, just another bureau photographer, was being received by executives. The White House and Rosenthal things, was being set up to handle re- quiements of correspondents. Later I went to Washington, where I met President Truman. From the AP I had through the mail a request for D-day landing pictures, and now I received a bonus of a year’s salary in World War II money, that the Pulitzer prize I received $500, and with the award from the S. Camera there came one $1,000 contribution. Then three wire watches as awards, as well as numerous souvenirs, and a medal through United States, was offered to the statute right for my services.

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 Dep- artment a right of first refusal to the photograph, there was no need for that, as the AP has turned over all proceeds from the sale of the pictures to the Navy, amounting in 10 years to $12,941.84. When I came back to San Francisco I naturally gave a chance to the survivors —Hayes, the Pima Indian, who is now the owner of gold, like the Navajo, Arizona, and is a warehouse supervisor for the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Brad- ley, the Brooklyn Giant, and old college buddy thirty-one, a furniture dealer in Antioch. We saw the picture of the four children and René Gagnon, now twenty-nine, a contractor living in Hoosierant, Hawaii, married 

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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 have a list of photographers who were better than I and who better deserved good fortune. I think of Frank Pрист of Acme, who was killed on Leyte, of John Bushemi of Yank, who was killed at Eniwetok, and of Damien Pa-

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 enemy, and on his film you can see the ground spinning and finally the empty sky.

There were 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. So he went 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-

9 Rosenthal and the father of one son. They were brought back at President Roosevelt's request to give a lecture in the Capital in Washington, and then to tour the U.S. for the Seventh War Loan drive.

I met Hayes for the first time in Oc-

tober of 1953 in a television studio in Los Angeles. I saw him again by some three months ago when the me-

morial was dedicated in Washington, and there I met Bradley and Gagnon.
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 for once seemed waiting for a brave battle with himself, said he 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 here I was—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. I had been one of the first to flag raising and I knew 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.

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 a new one had been made. I read 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.

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. I've had a 4-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 plates and I am a news photographer 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...
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)