



Everyone called Joseph John Rosenthal "Joe." It was Joe Rosenthal who took the famous flag-raising photo at Iwo Jima.

Joe loved photography and wanted to join the military as a photographer. The U.S. Army turned him down, however, because he had poor eyesight.

Undaunted, Joe took a job with the Associated Press and was embedded with the U.S. Marines in the Pacific Theater of Operations.

Rosenthal loved "[my Marines](#)." While he was still alive, Joe was named an honorary Marine on April 13, 1996 (by then-Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles C. Krulak).

On September 15, 2006 - less than a month after he died in his sleep, at the age of 94 - Joe was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Public Service Medal by the United States Marine Corps. It includes these words:

For exceptionally distinguished public service in support of the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

On February 23, 1945, a bespectacled Mr. Rosenthal made a picture of five U.S. Marines and one U.S. Navy corpsman that immortalized the American Fighting spirit during World War II and became an everlasting symbol of service and sacrifice, transcending art and the ages. Mr. Rosenthal's poor eyesight prohibited him from serving in the armed services, so, he instead went to war summoning the craft he had practiced since the Great Depression.

He bravely accompanied island-hopping forces in the Pacific as a civilian news photographer. On Iwo Jima, Japan, short of breath from climbing the 546-foot volcano, Mr. Rosenthal, in haste, stood on top of shaky rocks in search of the best graphic composition. As the six men hoisted an iron pole and the American flag unfurled in a smart breeze for all to see, Mr. Rosenthal captured the precise moment, unaware, until much later, of its significance.

Since that very day, his iconic photo has stood as a testament to the perseverance, esprit and dedication of American Marines. In recognition of his own service and dedication, Mr. Rosenthal is posthumously awarded the Department of the Navy Distinguished Public Service Award.

Even in the 21st Century, [Rosenthal's flag-raising photograph](#) remains famous. Now you know something about the less-famous man who took the photo.

Credits:

Image of Joe Rosenthal, embedded with the U.S. Marines, online courtesy U.S. Marine Corps.

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