

NOTICE: THIS VIDEO CLIP ABOUT A WORLD WAR II BATTLE COMBINES HISTORICAL FOOTAGE, FROM THE U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES, WITH INTERVIEWS AND RECREATED SCENES.

After the Allies launched their surprise assault at Guadalcanal, Japan attacked ships which were supplying ground forces. Australia and the U.S. lost ships in the naval battle which ensued, causing undamaged vessels to leave the area. Because so many supplies had not yet been off-loaded, the Marines called the offensive "Operation Shoestring."

Guadalcanal was the Allies' first ship-to-shore landing in the Pacific war. Capturing the island from Japan, and controlling its air strip, were critical to protecting the shipping lanes between America, Australia and New Zealand. Guadalcanal was a fight which the Allies could not lose, but no one knew whether amphibious landings would be effective.

Beach landings, during this first Pacific offensive, were not difficult for Allied forces. In marked contrast to future battles, there was no opposition, and Marines were able to seize the airstrip (named Henderson Field after a Marine pilot who was killed at Midway) with relative ease. Vicious fighting erupted later, after experienced Japanese forces were sent to Guadalcanal, intent on retaking the airfield.

At 3:30 into the video clip, Sid Phillips (a close friend of Eugene Sledge) describes what happened during the Guadalcanal Campaign. Without supplies of their own, Marines (who felt abandoned and expendable) survived on left-behind Japanese rice.

As fighting for the island continued, and worsened, bodies of dead Marines were desecrated by Japanese soldiers. "After that," says Phillips, "I don't remember that our battalion ever took a prisoner."

Thirteen days into the fight, U.S. planes began to land on the airstrip. Observes Phillips: "It looked like Uncle Sam was going to fight for that miserable place after all."

At about the same time, however, a Japanese commander - writing in his diary on the 21st of August, 1942 - expectantly noted Japan would be victorious at Guadalcanal.

After months of fighting, the Allies were successful. Shipping lanes to Australia and New Zealand remained open and, for the first time in the war, the Japanese army no longer seemed invincible.

In August of 1944, two years after the attack on Guadalcanal, Henderson Field was still an important airfield for the Allies.

See, also:

Video: Sid Phillips - A Fearful Time

Credits:

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The War - Directed by [Ken Burns and Lynn Novick](#) - available [in DVD](#) and [supporting book](#) (online, courtesy Google Books).

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Sid-Phillips-Describes-War-in-the-Pacific0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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