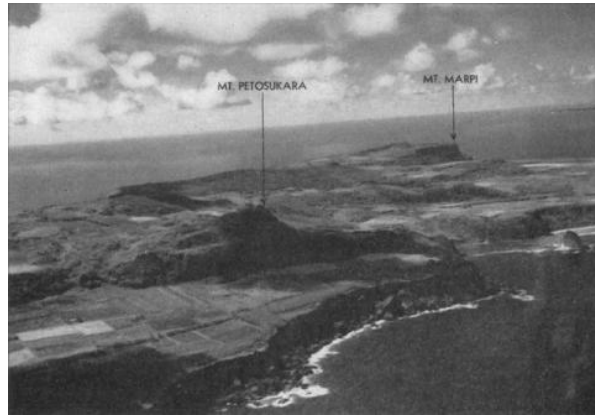


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This photo—from *Saipan: The Beginning of the End*, a U.S. Marine Corps Historical Monograph by Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC, at page 219—depicts an aerial view of the northern part of the island of Saipan. The author describes the image: “Mt. Petosukara was seized by the 25th Marines on 6 July, and Mt. Marpi by the 2d Marines on 9 July. Rocky coastline offered last ditch positions to stubborn Japanese.”

It wasn't that the Americans were unfamiliar with the Japanese banzai attack. As one Marine told the story:

Whenever we cornered the enemy and there was no way out, we faced the dreaded banzai attack. The 23rd Marines had a few of these during our Saipan adventure, as did all the other outfits. I dreaded these attacks and yet welcomed them, which is quite a paradox. They generated a great deal of fear but, when it was over, that particular sector was Jap-free. (See BREACHING THE MARIANAS: The Battle for Saipan, by Captain John C. Chapin, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Retired, at page 31.)

General [Holland Smith](#), one of the most famous Marines of World War II, predicted the attack was coming. His men knew it too. One of them recalled what happened:

For hours, we could hear them preparing for their banzai attack, as it was the end for them and they knew it. Because it was against their heritage, their training, and their belief, they would not surrender. All that was left was a final charge, a pouring in of all their troops in one concentrated place with their pledge to take as many of us with them as possible. (Chapin, at page 31.)

When the attack actually came, it was frightening even for battle-hardened Marines:

Suddenly there is what sounded like a thousand people screaming all at once, as a hoard of “mad men” broke out of the darkness before us. Screams of “Banzai” fill the air, Japanese officers leading the “devils from hell,” their swords drawn and swishing in circles over their heads. Jap soldiers were following their leaders, firing their weapons at us and screaming “Banzai” as they charged toward us.

Our weapons opened up, our mortars and machine guns fired continually. No longer do they fire in bursts of three or five. Belt after belt of ammunition goes through that gun, the gunner swinging the barrel left and right. Even though Jap bodies build up in front of us, they still charged us, running over their comrades' fallen bodies. The mortar tubes became so hot from the rapid fire as did the machine gun barrels, that they could no longer be used. (Chapin, at page 32.)

It was equally frightening for men of the 27th Infantry Division which lost more than 1,000 troops during the suicidal charge. Their heroic efforts, contributing to the ultimate victory in Saipan, are less well-known because the GIs were under the command of Marine Lt. General Holland Smith during the Saipan battle.

As we learn from the Division's official historian, Captain Edmund G. Love:

The 1st Battalion, 10th Infantry, was destined to become, before the close of the battle on Saipan, both the most colorful and the busiest unit in the 27th Division. On the morning of July 7, its members were to stand in the face of the greatest single Banzai raid of the Pacific War. They were to die almost to a man in one of the more courageous struggles of American military history.
(Edmund G. Love, quoted by Francis A. O'Brien, in *Battling for Saipan*, pages 122-23.)

Who was leading the battalion at that time?

Much of the credit for the record of this fine battalion must be given to its commander, Lt. Col. William J. O'Brien. A cocky little rooster of a man who couldn't stand still, O'Brien's characteristics were mirrored in his battalion. (O'Brien, *Battling for Saipan*, page 123.)

To Marines in the foxholes, it seemed as though the Banzai charge would never end.

Although each [attack] had taken its toll, still they came in droves. Haunting memories can still visualize the enemy only a few feet away, bayonet aimed at our body as we empty a clip into him. The momentum carries him into our foxhole, right on top of us. Then pushing him off, we reload and repeat the procedure.

Bullets whiz around us, screams are deafening, the area reeks with death, and the smell of Japs and gunpowder permeate the air. Full of fear and hate, with the desire to kill...[Our enemy seems to us now to be] a savage animal, a beast, a devil, not a human at all, and the only thought is to kill, kill, kill...Finally it ends. (Chapin, at pages 32-33.)

Some of the Japanese soldiers were only armed with rocks or a knife mounted on a pole. Others tried, but failed, to make it to Japanese ships in Saipan's harbor. Their final death count was 4,311 men. The vast majority of those casualties died in the banzai charge.

But the self-inflicted slaughter was not over. The next day, July 8th, would bring mass Japanese suicides.

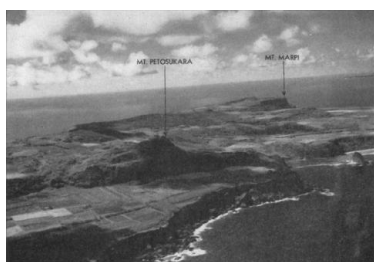
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BANZAI-CHARGE-at-Saipan-Wind-Talkers-Navajo-Code-Talkers-in-WWII>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



Saipan in 1944

This photo—from *Saipan: The Beginning of the End*, a U.S. Marine Corps Historical Monograph by Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC, at page 219—depicts an aerial view of the northern part of the island of Saipan.

The author describes the image:

Mt. Petosukara was seized by the 25th Marines on 6 July, and Mt. Marpi by the 2d Marines on 9 July. Rocky coastline offered last ditch positions to stubborn Japanese.

Among other things, many Japanese people used the "rocky coastline" to commit suicide when it appeared that Saipan would fall to the Allies. This aerial photo depicts a view of part of that coastline.

Click on the image for a better view.

From "Saipan: The Beginning of the End," a U.S. Marine Corps Historical Monograph by Major Carl W. Hoffman, online via HyperWar Foundation and iBiblio at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

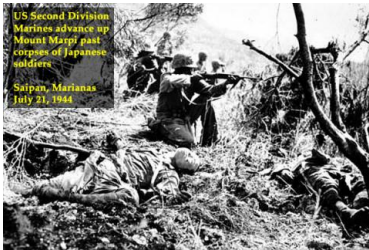
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General Holland Smith

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/General-Holland-Smith>



Marines Advance Past Dead Japanese Soldiers

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Lt. Gen. Holland Smith and the 27th Infantry

The image, above, is an official U.S. Navy photo, online courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

Navy and Marine officers in the photo, left to right, are:

Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner, USN;

Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, USMC;

Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, USN;

Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, USN;

Major General Roy S. Geiger, USMC;

Rear Admiral Richard L. Conolly, USN; and

Brigadier General Pedro A. del Valle, USMC

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William J. O'Brien - Battle of Saipan

Photo of Lt. Col. William O'Brien, commander of the 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry, 27th Division, from *Saipan: The Beginning of the End* (a USMC Historical Monograph by Major Carl W. Hoffman, USMC) - at [page 224](#).

Online, courtesy HyperWar Foundation, hosted by [ibiblio](#) at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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