

# The Battle of Iwo Jima: A family waits for news, 1945

## Introduction

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As part of the effort to secure land close enough to Japan to launch attacks against the mainland, the US Army and Navy began bombing the Bonin Islands of Iwo Jima, Hajajima and Chichijima, in June 1944. Army and Navy bombers hit Iwo Jima for over eight months, culminating in seventy-four straight days of continuous airstrikes. Thirty-three of Lieutenant Bob Stone's forty bombing missions were flown in the Iwo Jima campaign.

The amphibious assault on the island began on February 19 and continued for 36 days. The United States suffered casualties of more than 6,800 dead and 20,000 wounded. Of the 20,000 Japanese soldiers defending Iwo Jima, only 1,083 survived.

For the Stone family, Iwo Jima must have been particularly nerve-wracking. Four of the five Stone sons were involved in the invasion, including Bob and his stepbrother Barry Marks. Barry, a Marine, was stationed on Guam at a base near Bob's. The brothers were able to visit each other frequently and share family news.

Almost a month after the invasion of Iwo Jima began, Bob informed his parents that Barry was a part of the invasion.

*Excerpt from Robert L. Stone to Jacob Stone and Beatrice Stone, March 4, 1945. GLC09620.164*

Until now I was unable to discuss the whereabouts of Barry's outfit because it hadn't come out in the newscasts or the papers. When I returned from rest leave, [on February 9th], he left me a note saying "when you next bomb Iwo be careful you don't hit me" so of course I knew the 3<sup>rd</sup> marines were Iwo bound. From all the news reports their going has been tough, but I'm certain Barry will come through with flying colors. I've often thought what a small world it is when we were hitting Iwo during the invasion, and knowing that my brother was down on the beaches. If I get any word about his outfit, I'll write as soon as censorship regulations permit. Ordinarily you've got to wait until it's been related on the radio or in the papers, however.

While the letters that Jacob and Bee Stone wrote to their son no longer exist, Bob's letter of March 17, 1945 indicates the anxiety they must have felt. In this passage, Bob acknowledges how difficult the war must be on loved ones at home.

*Excerpt from Robert L. Stone to Jacob Stone and Beatrice March 17, 1945. GLC09620.166*

You've asked numerous times if I'd heard from or about Barry. As yet I've had no word from him, but I know it's because he's too busy to write. You must have faith that he's O.K. and that no news is good news. Before too long the campaign ought to be over, and you can expect to hear from him but until then you'll just have to wait and keep your fingers crossed. As soon as I have any word of him or his outfit, I'll of course let you know, providing it is within censorship regulations. I know that a war of waiting and hoping must be hell on you with five sons all

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scattered around the globe, but so far God has been kind and you've handled yourselves beautifully. We've all been through alot, but I guess it's been no tougher than for you who are at home. I've been through a number of close calls when at the time there seemed to be no chance, but somehow everything worked out for the best.

Barry survived Iwo Jima and returned to the United States shortly after the invasion.

### Questions for Discussion

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1. How does Bob Stone reassure his parents regarding Barry Marks? Cite specific passages from the letter in your answer.
2. What limits Bob's ability to provide specific details on activities in his battle area? Is this a curb on his right to free speech? Explain.

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Image

The Marianas  
March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1945

Dear Dad & Bee——

I'm afraid I've been a mighty poor correspondent for the last ten days or so but I'm sure you can appreciate that we've been fairly busy. All of your various letters have been swell, and they do wonders for keeping up the old morale when the going gets rough.

Until now I was unable to discuss the whereabouts of Barry's outfit because it hadn't come out in newscasts or the papers. When I returned from rest leave, he left me a note saying "when you next bomb Iwo be careful you don't hit me" so of course I knew the 3rd Marines were Iwo bound. From all the news reports their going has been tough, but I'm certain Barry will come through with flying colors. I've often thought what a small world it is when we were hitting Iwo during the invasion, and knowing that my

Robert L. Stone to Jacob Stone and Beatrice Stone, March 4, 1945.  
(The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09620.164 p 1)

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## Transcript

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Robert L. Stone to Jacob Stone and Beatrice Stone, March 4, 1945.

[draft]

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A week or so ago I was up to see Jack Naylor. I've intended to see him a hundred different times, but never got to it until then. He was fine as ever and asked to be remembered to all of you. It was loads of fun hashing over old times with Jack. Really had a pleasant dinner and evening with him.

Still plugging along on our missions. I now have twenty-seven and going strong. When you get up above twenty they seem to slow down and tell on you more. As you near the end you seem to get jumpy and tense about the least little thing that goes wrong, just as on the first few missions.

[3] I don't know whether I requested or not, but I'd appreciate it if you'd send me a couple of rolls of 620 film. Speaking of pictures, have you received my crew picture yet?

That's all for now but I'll try to write again in a few days.

Best love—

Bobby



## The Battle of Iwo Jima: A family waits for news, 1945

Image

2

The tension on a crew plays hell with you until you've finally flown your 40<sup>th</sup>. Once you have most of your missions completed, you're constantly thinking about flying the last few. Before a man has completed his tour of combat duty, he's mentally been through the torture of the damned.

I was certainly surprised when you sent me that press release, Dad. I had no idea it would ever be printed. While on test here our crew was interviewed, but we thought nothing would ever come of it.

You've asked numerous times if I'd heard from or about Barry. As yet I've had no word from him, but I know it's because he's too busy to write. You must have faith that he's O.K. and that no news is good news. Before too long the campaign ought to be over, and you can expect to hear from him but until then you'll just have to wait and keep your fingers <sup>crossed</sup>.

Robert L. Stone to Jacob Stone and Beatrice Stone, March 17, 1945.  
(The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09620.166 p 2)

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Robert L. Stone to Jacob Stone and Beatrice Stone, March 17, 1945.

[draft]

The Marianas  
March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945

Dear Dad & Bee—

Here's your Pacific Ocean reporter again with very little in the way of new developments from this theater.

All of your various letters have been coming through regularly and are appreciated, as always. This morning a box of food arrived and as you know, it was most welcome. A tasty snack always hits the spot between our otherwise drab meals. Many thanks for your thoughtfulness in remembering my love for good eats.

We finally broke into the home stretch and now have thirty-one missions under our belt. It may not seem like much to fly nine more, but each raid is twelve hours which is a long, hard pull. The last few raids are always the toughest (that is mentally) because every little thing is magnified way out of proportion. [2] The tension on a crew plays hell with you until you've finally flown your 40<sup>th</sup>. Once you have most of your missions completed, you're constantly thinking about flying the last few. Before a man has completed his tour of combat duty, he's mentally been through the tortures of the damned.

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You've asked numerous times if I'd heard from or about Barry. As yet I've had no word from him, but I know it's because he's too busy to write. You must have faith that he's O.K. and that no news is good news. Before too long the campaign ought to be over, and you can expect to hear from him but until then you'll just have to wait and keep your fingers [*inserted: crossed.*] [3] As soon as I have any word of him or his outfit, I'll of course let you know, providing it is within censorship regulations. I know that a war of waiting and hoping must be hell on you with five sons all scattered around the globe, but so far God has been kind and you've handled yourselves beautifully. We've all been through alot, but I guess it's been no tougher than for you who are at home. I've been through a number of close calls when at the time there seemed to be no chance, but somehow everything worked out for the best. It doesn't take long in combat for a man to become a real believer in God. Although it's been an unpleasant lesson, I've learned after several personal experiences that you should never give up hope no matter how black things are at the time. Often that's hard to do but it helps alot if you can force [3] yourself to look for the best. 'Nuff said or I'll be rambling for pages!

Once again the rainy season has started out here and we have from eight to ten downpours a day. Naturally we have to wallow through seas of mud wherever we walk.

That's about all for now so I'll say adieu until the next time I have to write.

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Love to you all—

Bobby