

On Iwo Jima his was 'uncommon valor'

EDITOR'S NOTE: In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, The Lawrence Township Memorial Committee, in cooperation with The Ledger, will feature a column each week during the anniversary year profiling a Lawrence resident.

The sight of the American flag flying above Mt. Suribachi brought renewed spirit and encouragement to the battered and exhausted Marines

on Iwo Jima on Feb. 23, 1945.

D-Day at Iwo began at 0645 hours Feb. 19, when the order was given to "Land the Landing Force," and assault troops of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Marine divisions hit the beaches of the island fortress defended by over 20,000 of Japan's best fighting men. It was on the fifth morning of the fighting that the 3rd Platoon of Tony Dawidowski's Company E, 28th Marines of the 5th Marine Division

pushed their way to the summit of the 556-foot extinct volcano and raised Old Glory.

Anthony Dawidowski was born and raised in Trenton, attended Trenton public schools, and had been employed by Crescent Insulated Wire and Cable Co. for a number of years when he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on Aug. 4, 1941. Many of his closest friends belonged to the 112th Field Artillery and had been federalized earlier that year, which led Tony to enlist. After recruit training and sea school, he was assigned to the Marine detachment in charge of 5-inch guns on the USS Ranger, an

turn and the torpedos passed directly under our fantail, just barely missing us. Our planes sank a lot of ships in the harbor and shot down a lot of their planes, but the Ranger was never damaged. Those torpedos would have sunk us if they had hit. After four days the French surrendered in North Africa."

"After Casablanca," Tony continues, "we sailed up to Norway and our planes bombed some German ships at Bodo. We were also on the alert for a large German warship somewhere in the area and were to try to intercept it, but never did. We then returned to the U.S. and made four trips back and forth to Casablanca transporting land-based airplanes

and their crews. We also stopped off at Bermuda and Newfoundland."

After being aboard the Ranger for two years, Tony was reassigned to Quantico, Va., and then to Camp Pendleton, Ore., where he was assigned to the 5th Marine Division. Four months later the division left for Hawaii, and then were committed to the invasion of Iwo Jima. Iwo had been used by the Japanese as a staging area for much of its Pacific operations and was now needed by the U.S. for fighter planes to escort B-29s bombing the Japanese mainland. Only 660 miles from Tokyo, its loss would also be a psychological blow to the Japanese, who fully anticipated an invasion. The Navy and Air Corps had been pounding the island for several months in an effort to soften it up for the landings.

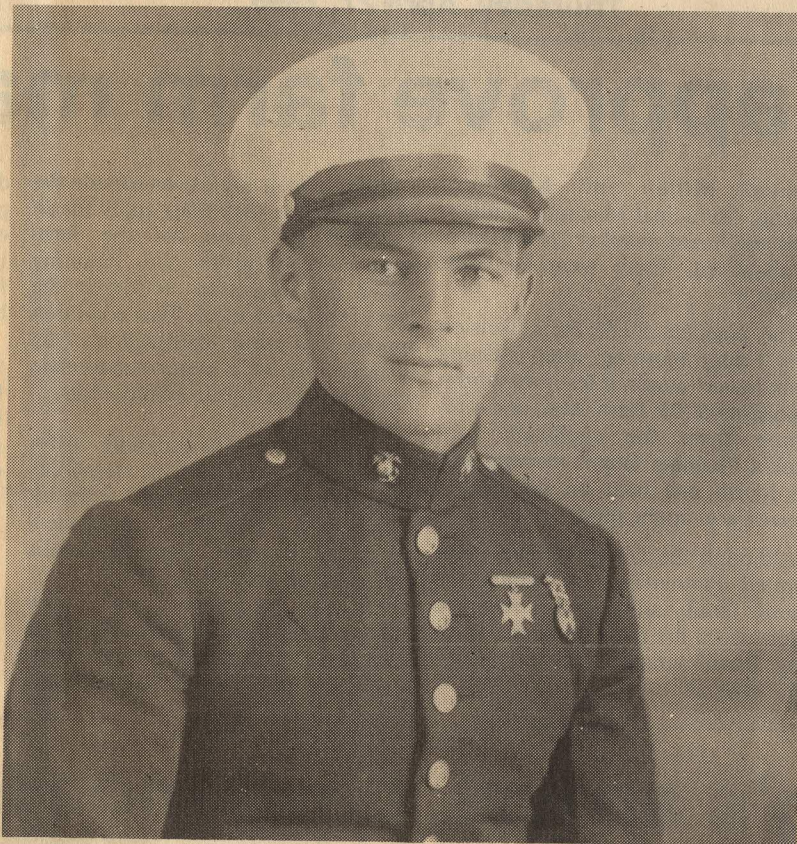
"We went in on the 14th wave," Tony recalls, "and had to wait for the beaches to clear after each wave of landings, then wade ashore in full combat gear. We were under fire almost all the time by artillery, mortars and everything else.

"The Japs were all dug in and never exposed. They were in caves, underground bunkers and pillboxes, and our tanks and equipment kept getting bogged down in the black sand. By the fourth day we had cut off and were part way up Mt. Suribachi. That morning our CO ordered the executive officer, Lt. Schrier, to take the 3rd Platoon to the top and raise the American flag. In the meantime, I had been detailed to the rear to bring up ammunition and water, and by the time I got back, the flag was up. It was a small flag and couldn't be seen from a distance, so about four hours later a larger flag was brought from one of the ships and raised in its place. The second one is the one that was photographed and became famous. Both of those flags are on display at the Marine Corps Museum in Washington."

Mt. Suribachi was secured that day, but the battle for the rest of the island continued for 31 more days. It was March 16 that a sniper bullet took Tony out of action and changed his life forever.

"I had been an extra sergeant," Tony continues, "and didn't have my own squad. On March 15 I was in charge of a detail of men bringing ammunition up to the front lines. We made two trips and lost four men on one trip and one man on the other. The next day, March 16, we were on the front line moving up and a sniper with a machine gun was firing at us

See **VETERAN**, Page 3A



Anthony Dawidowski in Marine uniform in 1941, before heading off to combat in Africa, Europe and the Pacific that climaxed on Iwo Jima 50 years ago.

VETERAN PROFILE

Nicholas Loveless

aircraft carrier.

Late in October, 1942, a large task force was formed at Hampton Roads, Va., and made up a large convoy at sea destined for Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. Early in the morning of Nov. 8, fighter planes, dive bombers and torpedo planes of the Ranger surprised the French fleet in the harbor at Casablanca, that at that time were committed to defend North Africa.

Tony recalls, "We didn't know at that point what the French were going to do, but they fought us with everything they had. Our planes were constantly taking off and returning to gas up and reload bombs and ammunition. Some of them ran out of gas and crashed in the ocean. At one point a submarine almost got us. I heard someone yell 'fish' and could see the periscope in the distance and the wake of four torpedos coming directly at us. Our ship made a hard left

Veteran

Continued from Page 2A

across a gully. He must have run out of ammunition but he still had a rifle. We tried to bypass him, and the next thing I knew, I was hit in the right leg. The medics gave me first aid and moved me back to the rear for treatment, and I was eventually flown to the hospital in Guam."

The sniper bullet that hit Tony did a lot of damage to bone and arteries, and although the doctors at Guam did all they could, they were unable to save his upper and lower leg. He was then sent to Mare Island and then along with 250 other amputees by train to Philadelphia Naval Hospital for rehabilitation and to be fitted with an artificial limb. On April 23, 1946, his military career ended when he was discharged with almost five years service.

In 1949, Anna Helton of Trenton and Tony were married, and in 1951 they moved to Lawrence. They have one daughter, Carolyn, presently living in Florida. After his discharge, Tony worked as a dish decorator for Lenox Co. The injuries that have limited his physical activities have only strengthened the spirit of this tough former Marine, and Tony has always managed to hunt, fish and enjoy the outdoors, as evidenced by the mounted deer horns and trophy fish on the walls of his den.

In their comfortable home at 149 Villanova Drive, Tony is surrounded by memorabilia. A large photograph of the camouflaged USS Ranger, books on the history of the Marine Corps, his old Marine jacket with his hard-earned medals and ribbons, prints of paintings of Marine Corps battles by Waterhouse, and paintings of wildlife, street scenes, the Swamp Angel, and of his daughter Carolyn, that he himself so carefully painted over the years.

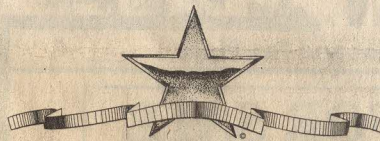
In a frame by the fireplace there is a print that he prizes most of all, "The Strife is O'er, The Battle Done," which depicts a Marine with head bowed, kneeling in prayer, in the aftermath of battle. It was signed

and given to him by Charles Waterhouse at the 45th anniversary celebration in 1990.

In February 1995, Anna and Tony attended the 50th anniversary celebration of Iwo Jima in Washington, and Tony was reunited with his friend, Charles W. Lindberg, who is the only remaining survivor of the two flag-raising on Mt. Suribachi 50 years ago. Iwo Jima was one of the war's bloodiest battles, yet victory had never been in doubt by the men who fought there. A tribute to those men is chiseled in granite on the base of the sculpture of the flag-raising in Arlington, "Among the Americans who served on Iwo Jima, uncommon valor was a common virtue."

The Veterans Memorial Committee is asking veterans from World War II and other conflicts to provide a photograph in uniform, along with their name, present address, branch of service and unit, where and when they served, their principal assignment and summary of their service. Their individual experiences or unusual stories are also welcomed. All photographs will be returned. Families of deceased veterans are also encouraged to submit articles. All materials should be sent to The Lawrence Township Veterans Memorial Committee, P.O. Box 55966, Trenton, N.J. 08638. Inquires may be made by calling 882-9108.

WEEKLY ROLL OF MEMORIAL DONORS



The following donors were recorded in the last week as contributors to Lawrence's planned memorial to war veterans to be erected in Veterans Park:

Janet Henne
Lawrence Senior Club Five
Gussie J. Walker
Irene T. Mando
Lawrence Square Village
Condo Association
Val and Joseph Mahan
Robert M. Erickson
Elizabeth and August LiCari
Mrs. Dorris P. Suppers
Tina M. Tower
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Rubin
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Rhodes
Patricia A. Metzger
Nancy and Joseph Boyd
Alan Wachtel
Patricia and Julius Osowick
Amelia and Henry Nelson
Elaine and Scott Niemann
William Druz

Mildred and Herschel Hutsinpillar
Mrs. Joan D. Feehan
Marietta and Horace Woolverton
Celinda and George Welde
Geraldine and Alan Hoffman
Memory of Victor Bennett
Elizabeth and Alan Griffith
Margaret and Lawrence Marino
Dr. Anthony Muccioli/Mrs. Mary V.
Pierre
Joseph S. Herron
Louise M. Hand
Helen and Andrew Liptak
Family of Joseph M. Toomey
Lida and Jo Ann Linderman
Memory of Horace Linderman
Elizabeth and Francis Strapp
Gryziewicz Family
Diane and Jack Fein
Stella and Frank Bednarski



At the Marine Corps Museum in Washington, D.C., Anthony Dawidowski stands before the flag flown over Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima during 50th anniversary observances in February. It was his Marine platoon that raised the flag, five days after the invasion began.