



# *GEM STATE GEMS*

## **Gem State Branch 382**

**Fleet Reserve Association**

[www.fra382.org](http://www.fra382.org)

[fra-nwregion.org](http://fra-nwregion.org)

[www.fra.org](http://www.fra.org)

**March 2024**

## **News from the Branch**

### **President:**

Winter is over, "we think". Plants and trees are starting to bud, grass is starting to green. Don't plant outside yet, Idaho winter usually has at least one last surprise.

Activities at the branch are still fairly quiet. We still have a couple of projects on the docket as well as preparing for the weekly grounds maintenance and building upkeep.

Just a reminder; National Vietnam War Veterans Day Welcome Home Celebration is Friday, March 29th from 1300 to 1530 at Kleiner Park, 1920 Records Way Meridian.

Mark your calendar and arrive early.

New FRA Membership application forms are available. These forms reflect the current membership fees. Please see the attached form.

Branch Coffee Klatch happens each Wednesday at 1400 at Lucky Perks at the corner of Cherry Lane and Linder in Meridian. Join us for coffee and Sea stories.

Plan ahead for this year's FRA Conventions:

Northwest Regional Convention will be at the Clover Island Inn Kennewick, WA September 6th - 8th.

The National Convention will be at the DoubleTree by Hilton Annapolis, MD November 8th - 18th.

At the March Branch meeting on Mar 9th 1000 hours, we will be visited by Northwest Regional President Rex Faubion. He will have the latest updates and information from National as well as the Region. Come early for coffee and donuts. Hope to see our local members who don't regularly attend.

In Loyalty, Protection & Service,  
Bill Hall,  
President Branch 382  
(208) 695-1664

## **News from the Branch 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:**

No input was received.

In Loyalty, Protection and Service  
Stephen Loop  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Branch 382

## Branch and Unit Events:

### March

Women's History Month

03 – Navy Reserve Birthday (109 Years)

05 – Seabees Birthday (82 Years)

05 – Kilroy Coffee Klatch Warhawk  
Museum (10 AM)

06 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

09 – Branch Meeting (10 AM)

10 – Daylight Savings Time Begins

13 – K9 Veterans Day

13 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

17 – St. Patrick's Day

20 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

21 – Rosie the Riveter Day

25 – Medal of Honor Day

27 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

29 – National Vietnam War Veterans Day

29 – Good Friday

31 – Easter

### April

Month of the Military Child

Military Saves Month

01 – April Fool's Day

02 – Kilroy Coffee Klatch Warhawk  
Museum (10 AM)

03 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

05 – Gold Star Spouses Day

09 – National Former POW Recognition Day

10 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

13 – Branch Meeting (10 AM)

17 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

22 – Earth Day

24 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

30 – National Military Brats Day

## Branch Birthdays:

### March

05 – Robert Burmeister

07 – Robert Day

13 – Bruce Wood

20 – Clovis Johnson; John Maltsberger

### April

04 – Barbara Foster

05 – Philip Halstead; Tanner Striecher;  
William Sutherland

06 – Donald Matthews

07 – Cynthia Jones

09 – Ron Thompson

10 – Vera Flanik

11 – Gene Hunter

14 – James Shadwick

15 – Gene Riddle

21 – Donald Franklin

28 – Andrew Morales

## Membership Milestones:

L Liggett – 25 Years

Lisa Streicher – 40 Years

## This Day in U.S. Navy History:

**March 3, 1776** - Under the command of Commodore Esek Hopkins and Marine Capt. Samuel Nicholas, the Continental Navy makes the first American amphibious landing operation at New Providence, Bahamas, and captures the forts for much needed ordnance and gunpowder.

**March 3, 1945** - During the Battle for Iwo Jima, three Marines and two Sailors each commit acts of such conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty to have them later awarded the Medal of Honor. The servicemen are: Cpl. Charles J. Berry, (posthumous); Pvt. 1st Class William R. Caddy (posthumous); Sgt. William G. Harrell; Pharmacist's Mate 3rd Class Jack Williams (posthumous); and Pharmacist's Mate 2nd Class George E. Wahlen.

**March 5, 1942** - The "Seabees" name and insignia are officially authorized. Rear Adm. Ben Moreell personally furnishes them with their official motto: Construimus, Batuimus -- "We Build, We Fight."

**March 14, 1945** - During the Battle for Iwo Jima, Marine Pvt. George Phillips and Pvt. Franklin E. Sigler each perform acts of conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life. Both are awarded Medals of Honor; Phillips receives his posthumously.

**March 16, 1945** - During the Iwo Jima Campaign, Pharmacists Mate 1st Class Francis J. Pierce provides aid to a wounded Marine while disregarding his own injuries and directs treatment of the injured man and fires on the enemy to provide cover for his fellow troops. For his "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life," he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

**March 19, 1942** - Secretary of Navy James V. Forrestal places the newly-established construction battalions, later called Seabees, under the command of officers with the Civil Engineer Corps who are trained in the skills required for the performance of construction work.

**March 19, 1969** - While serving with Battery D, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marines, at Phu Loc 6 in Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class David R. Ray is killed in action while providing medical aid to injured Marines during an enemy attack on his unit. Petty Officer Ray is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism in that action.

**March 21, 1917** - Loretta Walsh becomes the first woman Navy petty officer when sworn in as chief yeoman.

**March 24, 1919** - The battleship USS Idaho (BB 42) is commissioned. Idaho serves with the Pacific fleet, participating in gunfire support of the Aleutian, Marianas, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa Campaigns, and is in Tokyo Bay Sept. 2, 1945 when Japan formally surrenders.

**In honor of the Marine Corps 248<sup>th</sup> Birthday, the newsletter will be running a multiple part story about the Battle of Guadalcanal**

## **Guadalcanal campaign**

### **Naval Battle of Guadalcanal**

After the defeat in the Battle for Henderson Field, the IJA planned to try again to retake the airfield in November 1942, but further reinforcements were needed before the operation could proceed. The IJA requested assistance from Yamamoto to deliver the needed reinforcements to the island and to support the next offensive. Yamamoto provided 11 large transport ships to carry the remaining 7,000 troops from the 38th Infantry Division, their ammunition, food, and heavy equipment from Rabaul to Guadalcanal. He also provided a warship support force that included two battleships, Hiei and Kirishima, equipped with special fragmentation shells, which were to bombard Henderson Field on the night of 12–13 November and destroy it and the aircraft stationed there to allow the slow transports to reach Guadalcanal and unload safely the next day. The warship force was commanded from Hiei by recently promoted Vice Admiral Hiroaki Abe.

In early November, Allied intelligence learned that the Japanese were preparing again to try to retake Henderson Field. In response the U.S. sent Task Force 67, a large reinforcement and resupply convoy carrying Marine replacements, two U.S. Army infantry battalions, and ammunition and food, commanded by Turner, to Guadalcanal on 11 November. The supply ships were protected by two task groups, commanded by Rear Admirals Daniel J. Callaghan and Norman Scott, and aircraft from Henderson Field. The ships were attacked several times on 11 and 12 November by Japanese aircraft from Rabaul staging through an air base at Buin, Bougainville, but most were unloaded without serious damage.

U.S. reconnaissance aircraft spotted the approach of Abe's bombardment force and passed a warning to the Allied command. Thus warned, Turner detached all usable combat ships under Callaghan to protect the troops ashore from the expected Japanese naval attack and troop landing and ordered the supply ships at Guadalcanal to depart by early evening 12 November. Callaghan's force comprised two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and eight destroyers.

Around 01:30 on 13 November, Callaghan's force intercepted Abe's bombardment group between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. In addition to the two battleships, Abe's force included one light cruiser and 11 destroyers. In the pitch darkness, the two warship forces intermingled before opening fire at unusually close quarters. In the resulting *mêlée*, Abe's warships sank or severely damaged all but one cruiser and one destroyer in Callaghan's force; both Callaghan and Scott were killed. Two Japanese destroyers were sunk, and another destroyer and the Hiei heavily damaged. Despite his defeat of Callaghan's force, Abe ordered his warships to retire without bombarding Henderson Field. The Hiei sank later that day after repeated air attacks by aircraft from CAF and the carrier Enterprise. Because of Abe's failure to neutralize Henderson Field, Yamamoto ordered the troop transport convoy, under the command of Tanaka and located near the Shortland Islands, to wait an additional day before heading towards Guadalcanal. Yamamoto ordered Nobutake Kondō to assemble another bombardment force using warships from Truk and Abe's force to attack Henderson Field on 15 November.

In the meantime, around 02:00 on 14 November, a cruiser and destroyer force under Gunichi Mikawa from Rabaul conducted an unopposed bombardment of Henderson Field. The bombardment caused some damage but failed to put the airfield or most of its aircraft out of operation. As Mikawa's force retired towards Rabaul, Tanaka's transport convoy, trusting that Henderson Field was destroyed or heavily damaged, began its run down the slot towards

Guadalcanal. Throughout the day of 14 November, aircraft from Henderson Field and the Enterprise attacked Mikawa's and Tanaka's ships, sinking one heavy cruiser and seven of the transports. Most of the troops were rescued from the transports by Tanaka's escorting destroyers and returned to the Shortlands. After dark, Tanaka and the remaining four transports continued towards Guadalcanal as Kondō's force approached to bombard Henderson Field.

In order to intercept Kondō's force, Halsey, who was low on undamaged ships, detached two battleships, the Washington and South Dakota, and four destroyers from the Enterprise task force. The U.S. force, under the command of Willis A. Lee aboard the Washington, reached Guadalcanal and Savo Island just before midnight on 14 November, shortly before Kondō's bombardment force arrived. Kondō's force consisted of the Kirishima plus two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and nine destroyers. After the two forces made contact, Kondō's force quickly sank three of the U.S. destroyers and heavily damaged the fourth. The Japanese warships then sighted, opened fire, and damaged the South Dakota. As Kondō's warships concentrated on the South Dakota, the Washington approached the Japanese ships unobserved and opened fire on the Kirishima, smashing into the Japanese battleship repeatedly with both main and secondary battery shells and causing fatal damage. After fruitlessly chasing the Washington towards the Russell Islands, Kondō ordered his warships to retire without bombarding Henderson Field. One of Kondō's destroyers was also sunk during the engagement.

As Kondō's ships retired, the four Japanese transports beached near Tassafaronga Point on Guadalcanal at 04:00. At 05:55, U.S. aircraft and artillery began attacking the beached transports, destroying all four, along with most of the supplies that they carried. Only 2,000–3,000 of the army troops reached the shore. Because of the failure to deliver most of the troops and supplies, the Japanese were forced to cancel their planned November offensive on Henderson Field, making the battle a significant strategic victory for the Allies and marking the beginning of the end of Japanese attempts to retake Henderson Field.

On 26 November, Japanese Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura took command of the newly formed Eighth Area Army at Rabaul. The new command encompassed both Hyakutake's 17th Army and the 18th Army in New Guinea. One of Imamura's first priorities upon assuming command was the continuation of the attempts to retake Henderson Field and Guadalcanal. The Allied offensive at Buna in New Guinea, however, changed Imamura's priorities. Because the Allied attempt to take Buna was considered a more severe threat to Rabaul, Imamura postponed further major reinforcement efforts to Guadalcanal to concentrate on the situation in New Guinea.

## **Battle of Tassafaronga**

The Japanese continued to experience problems in delivering sufficient supplies to sustain their troops on Guadalcanal. Attempts to use only submarines the last two weeks in November failed to provide sufficient food for Hyakutake's forces. A separate attempt to establish bases in the central Solomons to facilitate barge convoys to Guadalcanal also failed because of destructive Allied air attacks. On 26 November, the 17th Army notified Imamura that it faced a food crisis. Some front-line units had not been resupplied for six days, and even the rear-area troops were on one-third rations. The situation forced the Japanese to return to using destroyers to deliver the necessary supplies.

Eighth Fleet personnel devised a plan to help reduce the exposure of destroyers delivering supplies to Guadalcanal. Large oil or gas drums were cleaned and filled with medical supplies and food, with enough air space to provide buoyancy, and strung together with rope. When the destroyers arrived at Guadalcanal they would make a sharp turn and the drums would be cut loose, and a swimmer or boat from shore could pick up the buoyed end of a rope and return it to the beach, where the soldiers could haul in the supplies.

The Eighth Fleet's Guadalcanal Reinforcement Unit (the Tokyo Express), commanded by Tanaka, was tasked by Mikawa with making the first of five scheduled runs to Tassafaronga using the drum method on the night of 30 November. Tanaka's unit was centered on eight destroyers, with six destroyers assigned to carry between 200 and 240 drums of supplies apiece. Notified by intelligence sources of the Japanese supply attempt, Halsey ordered the newly formed Task Force 67, comprising four cruisers and four destroyers under the command of Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright, to intercept Tanaka's force off Guadalcanal. Two additional destroyers joined Wright's force en route to Guadalcanal from Espiritu Santo during the day of 30 November.

At 22:40 on 30 November, Tanaka's force arrived off Guadalcanal and prepared to unload the supply barrels. Meanwhile, Wright's warships were approaching through Ironbottom Sound from the opposite direction. Wright's destroyers detected Tanaka's force on radar, and the destroyer commander requested permission to attack with torpedoes. Wright waited four minutes before giving permission, allowing Tanaka's force to escape from an optimum firing setup. All of the American torpedoes missed their targets. At the same time, Wright's cruisers opened fire, hitting and destroying one of the Japanese guard destroyers. The rest of Tanaka's warships abandoned the supply mission, increased speed, turned, and launched a total of 44 torpedoes in the direction of Wright's cruisers. The Japanese torpedoes hit and sank the U.S. cruiser Northampton and heavily damaged the cruisers Minneapolis, New Orleans, and Pensacola. The rest of Tanaka's destroyers escaped without damage but failed to deliver any of the provisions to Guadalcanal.

By 7 December 1942, Hyakutake's forces were losing about 50 men each day from malnutrition, disease, and Allied ground or air attacks. Further attempts by Tanaka's destroyer forces to deliver provisions on 3, 7 and 11 December failed to alleviate the crisis, and one of Tanaka's destroyers was sunk by a U.S. PT boat torpedo.

## **Japanese decision to withdraw**

On 12 December, the Japanese Navy proposed that Guadalcanal be abandoned. At the same time, several army staff officers at the Imperial General Headquarters (IGH) also suggested that further efforts to retake Guadalcanal would be impossible. A delegation led by Colonel Joichiro Sanada, chief of the IGH's operations section, visited Rabaul on 19 December and consulted Imamura and his staff. Upon the delegation's return to Tokyo, Sanada recommended that Guadalcanal be abandoned. The IGH's top leaders agreed with Sanada's recommendation on 26 December and ordered their staffs to begin drafting plans for a withdrawal from Guadalcanal, establishment of a new defense line in the central Solomons, and shifting priorities and resources to the campaign in New Guinea.

On 28 December, General Hajime Sugiyama and Admiral Osami Nagano personally informed Emperor Hirohito of the decision to withdraw from Guadalcanal. On 31 December,

Hirohito formally endorsed the decision. The Japanese secretly began to prepare for the evacuation, called Operation Ke, scheduled to begin during the latter part of January 1943.

### **Battle of Mount Austen, the Galloping Horse, and the Sea Horse**

By December, the weary 1st Marine Division was withdrawn for recuperation, and over the course of the next month the U.S. XIV Corps took over operations on the island. This corps consisted of the 2nd Marine Division and the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry and 23rd "Americal" Divisions. U.S. Army Major General Alexander Patch replaced Vandegrift as commander of Allied forces on Guadalcanal, which by January totaled just over 50,000 men.

On 18 December, Allied (mainly U.S. Army) forces began attacking Japanese positions on Mount Austen. A strong Japanese fortified position, called the Gifu, stymied the attacks and the Americans were forced to temporarily halt their offensive on 4 January. The Allies renewed the offensive on 10 January, attacking the Japanese on Mount Austen as well as on two nearby ridges called the Sea Horse and the Galloping Horse. After some difficulty, the Allies captured all three by 23 January. At the same time, U.S. Marines advanced along the north coast of the island, making significant gains. The Americans lost about 250 killed in the operation while the Japanese suffered around 3,000 killed, about 12 to 1 in the Americans' favor.

### **Ke evacuation**

On 14 January, a Tokyo Express run delivered a battalion of troops to act as a rear guard for the Ke evacuation. A staff officer from Rabaul accompanied the troops to notify Hyakutake of the decision to withdraw. At the same time, Japanese warships and aircraft moved into position around the Rabaul and Bougainville areas in preparation to execute the withdrawal operation. Allied intelligence detected the Japanese movements but misinterpreted them as preparations for another attempt to retake Henderson Field and Guadalcanal.

Patch, wary of what he thought to be an imminent Japanese offensive, committed only a relatively small portion of his troops to continue a slow-moving offensive against Hyakutake's forces. On 29 January, Halsey, acting on the same intelligence, sent a resupply convoy to Guadalcanal screened by a cruiser task force. Sighting the cruisers, Japanese naval torpedo bombers attacked that same evening and heavily damaged the cruiser Chicago. The next day, more torpedo aircraft attacked and sank Chicago. Halsey ordered the remainder of the task force to return to base and directed the rest of his naval forces to take station in the Coral Sea, south of Guadalcanal, to be ready to counter a Japanese offensive.

In the meantime, the Japanese 17th Army withdrew to the west coast of Guadalcanal while rear guard units checked the American offensive. On the night of 1 February, a force of 20 destroyers from Mikawa's 8th Fleet under Shintarō Hashimoto successfully extracted 4,935 soldiers, mainly from the 38th Division, from the island. The Japanese and Americans each lost a destroyer from an air and naval attack related to the evacuation mission.

On the nights of 4 and 7 February, Hashimoto and his destroyers evacuated the remaining Japanese forces from Guadalcanal. Apart from some air attacks, Allied forces were still anticipating a large Japanese offensive and did not attempt to interdict Hashimoto's evacuation runs. In total, the Japanese successfully evacuated 10,652 men from Guadalcanal. Their last troops left the island on the evening of 7 February, six months to the day from when



the U.S. forces first landed. Two days later, on 9 February, Patch realized that the Japanese were gone and declared Guadalcanal secure.

## **Aftermath**

After the Japanese withdrawal, Guadalcanal and Tulagi were developed into major bases supporting the Allied advance further up the Solomon Islands chain. Besides Henderson Field, two additional fighter runways were constructed at Lunga Point, and a bomber airfield was built at Koli Point. Extensive naval port and logistics facilities were established at Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Florida. The anchorage around Tulagi became an important forward base for Allied warships and transport ships supporting the Solomon Islands campaign. Major ground units were staged through large encampments and barracks on Guadalcanal before deployment further up the Solomons.

After Guadalcanal the Japanese were clearly on the defensive in the Pacific. The constant pressure to reinforce Guadalcanal had weakened Japanese efforts in other theaters, contributing to a successful Australian and American counteroffensive in New Guinea which culminated in the capture of the key bases of Buna and Gona in early 1943. The Allies had gained a strategic initiative which they never relinquished. In June, the Allies launched Operation Cartwheel which, after modification in August 1943, formalized the strategy of isolating Rabaul and cutting its sea lines of communication. The subsequent successful neutralization of Rabaul and the forces centered there facilitated the South West Pacific campaign under MacArthur and Central Pacific island-hopping campaign under Nimitz, with both efforts successfully advancing toward Japan. The remaining Japanese defenses in the South Pacific Area were then either destroyed or bypassed by Allied forces as the war progressed.