



# Clint Eastwood

## Visits the Sands of Iwo Jima

Clint Eastwood's new film 'Flags of Our Fathers' -- about the battle of Iwo Jima in WWII -- highlights the savage fighting between Americans and Japanese on the Pacific island. In doing so, it raises the bar for war movies.

On February 23, 1945, after five days of constant fighting and significant loss of life, the Americans take control of Mount Suribachi, a strategically important hill in the south of the island. To mark the conquest, six Marines and one Navy Corpsman raise the American flag atop the mountain. Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal takes their picture. A few days later, back in the United States, the photograph becomes the centerpiece of a war bond drive that raises more than \$23 billion and helps America win the war.

Oscar-winning director Clint Eastwood tells the story of the men who raised the flag that day, and the story of the soldiers who fought so it could be raised. The film also takes a hard look at the concept of heroism, without diminishing the soldiers' courage and sacrifice.

Of the six men who raised the flag, three survive the battle. Marines Rene Gagnon and Ira Hayes and Navy Corpsman John 'Doc' Bradley are shipped back to the United States to promote the war bond campaign.

Shy at first, Rene Gagnon begins to bask in his popularity. Actor Jesse Bradford, who portrays him, says that back then, there was no such thing as instant celebrity. And yet these men became three of the most famous people in America overnight.

# Flags of Our Fathers Offers an Unblinking Look at Heroism

Continued from page 2

American Indian actor Adam Beach plays Native American soldier Ira Hayes. Hayes is a complex young man who cannot get over the horrors of war and loathes being called a hero because in his eyes, heroes are the ones who gave their lives on the battlefield. "All I have done is to avoid getting shot," he says in the film.

The raising of the flag on Mount Suribachi became a rallying point for U.S. patriotism during the war

Yet the movie clearly presents Hayes as a hero - a soldier who fought for his unit and his country. Actor Adam Beach says he is proud to be portraying the character. "The significance of a Native American hero shaking the hand of the President... I think a lot of younger generation Native Americans need to see that. To show that we have our heroes."

Ryan Phillippe plays 'Doc' Bradley. The Navy corpsman is presented as the most even-tempered and reserved character of the three. But like the others, he had his personal reaction to the war - and to the politics surrounding the photograph.

James Bradley, author of

the best-seller on which the movie is based, says his father handled the public's attention better than the others. "There was a flame of fame. Rene Gagnon got burned by getting too close to it. Ira Hayes got burned by trying to push it away. My dad was the only survivor [of the instant fame] because he just cut it all off and wouldn't deal with it."

In "Flags of Our Fathers," filmmaker Clint Eastwood undertakes one of his greatest challenges as a director. This is a dense, complicated movie with lots of action, tough and bloody scenes, and lots of flashbacks. It is a deep, dark movie that takes a hard, unblinking look at the cynicism of politics at home and the naiveté of the public, that looks for ready-made heroes. It is also an uplifting movie in looking at courage, friendship and sacrifice. Eastwood and his cast deliver a memorable film that celebrates heroism with grace and modesty.

If you like movies that spew clichés, Clint Eastwood will not make your day. Since winning his first directing Oscar, for 1992's *Unforgiven*, Eastwood has been on a

creative roll with the unsparing *Mystic River* and *Million Dollar Baby* (Oscar number two). At seventy-six, he's doing risky work while his contemporaries retire or, worse, conform. Even when the plot of his new *Flags of Our Fathers* steers him toward *Saving Private Ryan* rah-rah and "Greatest Generation" sentiment, Eastwood holds the line.

*Flags of Our Fathers* is a film of awesome power and blistering provocation. An amazing feat, since Eastwood is tied to the nonfiction best seller that James Bradley wrote about his father, John "Doc" Bradley, the last survivor among the six soldiers who raised the flag on Iwo Jima.

The bloody 1945 battle on Japan's volcanic island left 6,800 Americans dead, but the public was rallied by a photo, taken by Joe Rosenthal, that became an iconic emblem of World War II: five Marines and one Navy corpsman (Bradley) planting Old Glory on top of Mount Suribachi in the midst of the carnage. It was the second flag-raising that day, but the only one caught on camera. Eastwood hits you hard with that image. As the soldiers struggle to get the flag aloft, you can almost hear cheering.

Actually, you do hear cheering. The scene, a shocker, is a re-creation of the photo staged for an enthusiastic crowd at Chicago's Soldier Field in the spring of 1945 as part of a fund-raising drive. As the camera pulls back, we see that the mountain is fake. The only reality is the

men in the uniform: Doc Bradley (Ryan Phillippe), Rene Gagnon (Jesse Bradford) and Ira Hayes (Adam Beach). Since the other flag-raisers (Franklin Sousley, Harlon Block and Michael Strank) died in battle, the government exploits the surviving trio to drum up money and bolster flagging support for the war in its final months. No longer asked to be heroes in battle but to play heroes Hollywood-style, the men embark on a nationwide tour. It's pure showbiz. Hide the truth, pump the myth.

It nearly destroys them. Gagnon, 19, adjusts better to fame than the others, mistakenly believing that being a good propagandist will win him jobs after the war. Bradford (*Happy Endings*) deftly uncovers the doubt lurking under Gagnon's surface charm. As Bradley, Phillippe (building on strong supporting turns in *Crash*, *Gosford Park* and *Igby Goes Down*) provides the quiet emotional center the story needs. Eastwood wants the reticent Bradley to be our eyes into the film. Phillippe draws us in with a nuanced portrait of a man who bravely administers first aid to soldiers under fire but can't find words for the horror he's seen, including the death of his friend Iggy (Jamie Bell). Phillippe's hauntingly implosive performance makes it clear why Bradley hardly spoke of the war to his family in later years, prompting his son to write the book.

As Hayes, Beach (*Windtalkers*) burns up the screen, finding the soul of his tormented character. He's a lock for a supporting-Oscar nomination. Hayes, a Pima Indian bruised by racism in and out of battle, numbed his pain with booze. He died in 1955, at thirty-two. Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan both covered a song about him: "He died drunk one mornin'/Alone in the land he fought to save/Two inches of water in

a lonely ditch/Was a grave for Ira Hayes." *Flags of Our Fathers* needed to be a sprawling epic to take in all these stories. The ambitious script by William Broyles Jr. (Jarhead) and Crash Oscar winner Paul Haggis jumps back and forth in time in ways that could have been a jumble if Eastwood wasn't so adept at cutting a path to what counts. That would be the ferocity of battle, edited by Joel Cox and shot in desaturated hues by Tom Stern to show what Eastwood sees as the brutal darkness of it. That would be the parallels to the Iraq War and the lies being perpetrated in the name of blind patriotism. That would be the honor due the soldiers who fight in the face of death on foreign shores and then face disdain at home.

Right at the start, before the first image, we hear a few bars of a 1940s song, "I'll Walk Alone." The voice is a whisper, but the lyrics ("If you call, I'll hear you/No matter how far") resonate. Eastwood's film, a fierce attack on wartime hypocrisy and profiteering, is also an indelibly moving salute to the soldiers who don't deserve to walk alone for following their own sense of duty.

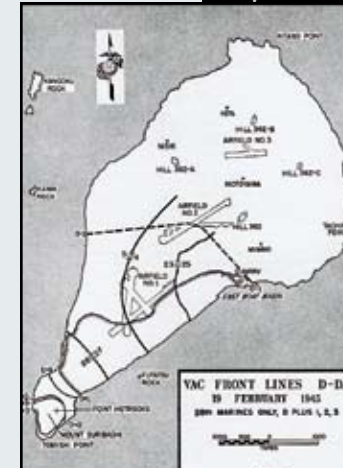
After *Flags*, Eastwood directed *Letters From Iwo Jima*, a feature that tells the story from the Japanese side. The film won't be out till February, but one thing is for damn sure: Eastwood will do it his way. As far as I'm concerned, that's the gold standard.

Clint Eastwood's new film 'Flags of Our Fathers' -- about the battle of Iwo Jima in WWII -- highlights the savage fighting between Americans and Japanese on the Pacific island. In doing so, it raises the bar for war movies.

Continued on page 5

## The Battle of Iwo Jima

By Eva Henderson



The Battle of Iwo Jima (Operation Detachment) was fought between the United States of America and the Empire of Japan during February and March of 1945, during the Pacific Campaign of World War II. As a result of the battle, the United States gained control of the island of Iwo Jima, and the airfields located there. The battle is famous for the image of United States

Marines raising the U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi during the battle.

Japan suffered a heavy loss; about 22,000 Japanese troops were entrenched on the island, and only 1,083 survived. The fighting was intense and the Marines captured the highest point, Mount Suribachi, in the first week of fighting. The United States lost a total of 6,821 men in the battle for the island. The U.S. was obviously gaining ground in the Pacific Theater at this point in the war, and the victory at Iwo Jima was another step towards the Japanese Home Islands.

Iwo Jima is one of the Volcano Islands, part of the Ogasawara Islands, a group of islands about 670 miles (1,080 km) south of Tokyo, 700 miles (1,130 km) north of Guam, and nearly halfway between Tokyo and Saipan (24.754°N, 141.290°E). It is a part of the Tokyo Prefecture, and as such, constituted the first part of Japan's home territories to fall to the Allies during World War II.

In the wake of the American seizure of

Continued on page 5





Continued from page 4

the Marshall Islands and devastating air attacks against Truk in the Caroline Islands in February 1944, the Japanese military leadership conducted a reappraisal of the military situation. All indications pointed to an American drive towards the Marianas and Carolines. To counter such a move, they established an inner line of defense extending generally northward from the Carolines to the Marianas, and thence to the Ogasawara Islands. In March 1944, the Thirty-First Army, commanded by General Hideyoshi Obata, was activated for the purpose of garrisoning this inner line. The commander of the Chichi Jima garrison was placed nominally in command of Army and Navy units in the Ogasawara Islands.

Following the American seizure of bases in the Marshalls in the battles of Kwajalein and Eniwetok in February 1944, both Army and Navy reinforcements were sent to Iwo Jima. Five hundred men from the naval base at Yokosuka and an additional 500 from Chichi Jima reached Iwo Jima during March and April 1944. At the same time, with the arrival of reinforcements from Chichi Jima and the home islands, the Army garrison on Iwo Jima had reached a strength of over 5,000 men, equipped with 13 artillery pieces, 200 light and heavy machine guns, and 4,552 rifles. In addition, the defense boasted 120 mm coast artillery guns, twelve heavy anti-aircraft guns, and thirty 25 mm dual-mount



Continued from page 4

On February 23, 1945, after five days of constant fighting and significant loss of life, the Americans take control of Mount Suribachi, a strategically important hill in the south of the island. To mark the conquest, six Marines and one Navy Corpsman raise the American flag atop the mountain. Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal takes their picture. A few days later, back in the United States, the photograph becomes the centerpiece of a war bond drive that raises more than \$23 billion and helps America win the war.

Oscar-winning director Clint Eastwood tells the story of the men who raised the flag that day, and the story of the soldiers who fought so it could be raised. The film also takes a hard look at

the concept of heroism, without diminishing the soldiers' courage and sacrifice.

Of the six men who raised the flag, three survive the battle. Marines Rene Gagnon and Ira Hayes and Navy Corpsman John 'Doc' Bradley are shipped back to the United States to promote the war bond campaign.

Shy at first, Rene Gagnon begins to bask in his popularity. Actor Jesse Bradford, who portrays him, says that back then, there was no such thing as instant celebrity. And yet these men became three of the most famous people in America overnight.

American Indian actor Adam Beach plays Native American soldier Ira Hayes. Hayes is a complex young man who cannot get over the horrors of war and loathes being called a hero because in his eyes, heroes are the ones who gave their lives on the battlefield. "All I have done is to avoid getting shot," he says in the film.

The raising of the flag on Mount Suribachi became a rallying point for U.S. patri-

tism during the war

Yet the movie clearly presents Hayes as a hero - a soldier who fought for his unit and his country. Actor Adam Beach says he is proud to be portraying the character. "The significance of a Native American hero shaking the hand of the President... I think a lot of younger generation Native Americans need to see that. To show that we have our heroes."

Ryan Philippe plays 'Doc' Bradley. The Navy corpsman is presented as the most even-tempered and reserved character of the three. But like the others, he had his personal reaction to the war - and to the politics surrounding the photograph.

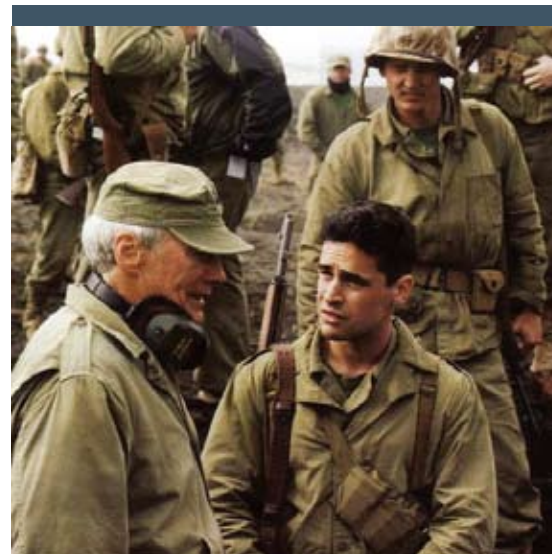
James Bradley, author of the best-seller on which the movie is based, says his father handled the public's attention better than the others. "There was a flame of fame. Rene Gagnon got burned by getting too close to it. Ira Hayes got burned by trying to push it away. My dad was the only survivor [of the instant fame] because he just cut it all off and wouldn't deal with it."

**"Eastwood's film ... is also an indelibly moving salute to the soldiers who don't deserve to walk alone for following their own sense of duty."**

In "Flags of Our Fathers," filmmaker Clint Eastwood undertakes one of his greatest challenges as a director. This is a dense, complicated movie with lots of action, tough and bloody scenes, and lots of flashbacks. It is a deep, dark movie that takes a hard, unblinking look at the cynicism of politics at home and the naiveté of the public, that looks for ready-made heroes. It is also an uplifting movie in looking at courage, friendship and sacrifice. Eastwood and his cast deliver a memorable film that celebrates heroism with grace and modesty.

If you like movies that spew clichés, Clint Eastwood will not make your day. Since winning his first directing Oscar, for 1992's *Unforgiven*, Eastwood has been on a creative roll with the unsparing *Mystic River* and *Million Dollar Baby* (Oscar number two). At seventy-six, he's doing risky work while his contemporaries retire or, worse, conform. Even when the plot of his new *Flags of Our Fathers* steers him toward Saving Private Ryan rah-rah and "Greatest Generation" sentiment, Eastwood holds the line.

*Flags of Our Fathers* is a film of awesome power and blistering provocation. An amazing feat, since Eastwood is tied to the nonfiction best seller that James Bradley wrote about his father, John "Doc" Bradley,



## Clint Eastwood

By Laura Kever

Academy Award winning director Clint Eastwood is known for taking chances in his work, his critically acclaimed and award winning films *Unforgiven*, *Mystic River*, and

the last survivor among the six soldiers who raised the flag on Iwo Jima.

The bloody 1945 battle on Japan's volcanic island left 6,800 Americans dead, but the public was rallied by a photo, taken by Joe Rosenthal, that became an iconic emblem of World War II: five Marines and one Navy corpsman (Bradley) planting Old Glory on top of Mount Suribachi in the midst of the carnage. It was the second flag-raising that day, but the only one caught on camera. Eastwood hits you hard with that image. As the soldiers struggle to get the flag aloft, you can almost hear cheering.

Actually, you do hear cheering. The scene, a shocker, is a re-creation of the photo staged for an enthusiastic crowd at Chicago's Soldier Field in the spring of 1945 as part of a fund-raising drive. As the camera pulls back, we see that the mountain is fake. The only reality is the men in the uniform: Doc Bradley (Ryan Phillippe), Rene Gagnon (Jesse Bradford) and Ira Hayes (Adam Beach). Since the other flag-raisers (Franklin Sousley, Harlon Block and Michael Strank) died in battle, the government exploits the surviving trio to drum up money and bolster flagging support for the war in its final months. No longer asked to be heroes in battle but to play heroes Hollywood-style, the men embark on a nationwide tour. It's pure showbiz. Hide the truth, pump the myth.

It nearly destroys them. Gagnon, 19, ad-

*Million Dollar Baby* set a sort of standard for a man who had been known primarily as an actor in the past.

His latest film in theatres now, *Flags of Our Fathers*, is no exception to the extremely taxing standards that Eastwood has set for himself as a filmmaker. In *Flags* the stories of the six marines who lifted the American flag at Iwo Jima in one of the most famous battles of the South Pacific engagements of World War II. Eastwood chose this project because Iwo Jima is not only the largest invasion in Marine Corp history, but the book that the film was based on is a human interest piece about the men themselves.

"It was the biggest Marine Corp invasion in history," explains Eastwood. "It was the most fierce battle in Marine Corp history, but what intrigued me about it was the book itself and the fact that it wasn't really a war story. I wasn't setting out to just do a war movie. I've been involved with a few of those as an actor, but I liked this and because it was just a study of these people. I've always been

justs better to fame than the others, mistakenly believing that being a good propagandist will win him jobs after the war. Bradford (Happy Endings) deftly uncovers the doubt lurking under Gagnon's surface charm. As Bradley, Phillippe (building on strong supporting turns in *Crash*, *Gosford Park* and *Igby Goes Down*) provides the quiet emotional center the story needs. Eastwood wants the reticent Bradley to be our eyes into the film. Phillippe draws us in with a nuanced portrait of a man who bravely administers first aid to soldiers under fire but can't find words for the horror he's seen, in-



curious about a family who find out things about their relatives much later after the fact and the kind of people - I've talked to many vets of this campaign and many other campaigns and the ones who were on the front lines the most and have been through the most seem to be the ones who are the quietest about their activities."

The film also represented comments on the celebrity of war and the way that war heroes are received when they return stateside from battle.

"Being a young man and thrown into the ultimate celebrity, and this is what I hope the picture makes a comment on, on celebrity, and on being treated like a president, or maybe not always a president, but being treated like a celebrity and they didn't feel that," states the director. "They felt very complex about all of that especially when they had so many of their companions killed in this ferocious battle and the famous photograph, the Joe Rosenthal photograph was taken four or five days into the battle ..."

cluding the death of his friend Iggy (Jamie Bell). Phillippe's hauntingly implosive performance makes it clear why Bradley hardly spoke of the war to his family in later years, prompting his son to write the book.

As Hayes, Beach (*Windtalkers*) burns up the screen, finding the soul of his tormented character. He's a lock for a supporting-Oscar nomination. Hayes, a Pima Indian bruised by racism in and out of battle, numbed his pain with booze. He died in 1955, at thirty-two. Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan both covered a song about him: "He died drunk one mornin'/Alone in the land he fought to save/Two inches of water in a lonely ditch/Was a grave for Ira Hayes." *Flags of Our Fathers* needed to be a sprawling epic to take in all these stories.

The ambitious script by William Broyles Jr. (*Jarhead*) and *Crash* Oscar winner Paul Haggis jumps back and forth in time in ways that could have been a jumble if Eastwood wasn't so adept at cutting a path to what counts. That would be the ferocity of battle, edited by Joel Cox and shot in desaturated hues by Tom Stern to show what Eastwood sees as the brutal darkness of it. That would be the parallels to the Iraq War and the lies being perpetrated in the name of blind patriotism. That would be the honor due the soldiers who fight in the face of death on foreign shores and then face disdain at home. ◀