

# Jack Carelli Describes Battle of Saipan

In order to attack the main island of Japan, the American military had to capture islands that could be used to put our bombers within striking distance of Japan. The islands of Saipan and Tinian were the islands attacked in June of 1944. The battle started on June 15, 1944 and lasted 24 days before the battle was over. 543 ships and 127,570 military were used in this battle. On the first day 2,000 Marines were killed. During the 24 days, 71,034 men were landed and 3,100 were killed and 13,100 wounded. The Japanese had 31,629 on the island and 29,300 died. Hoosick Falls had 12 men involved in this battle. They were part of the First Battalion Headquarters of the 105' Infantry. This group was part of the 22 men that left Hoosick Falls in October, 1940 when the local Guard was Federalized. On July 7, 1944, 3,000 Japanese charged in the largest suicide rush of WWII. They overran the local group and Bernard Zilinskas, James McGarvin and Herman Barnhart of Petersburg were killed. Albert Butkas, William Fox, John Carelli, and Ronald Johnson were wounded. Peter Davendonis, Walter Sluzas, Robert Fitzpatrick, Edward Brodeski, and Fran Downing were also part of the battle. Enclosed is a letter written by John Carelli to his brother Dominick. There were four Carellis serving in the War. (Dominick, James, John, Joseph) P. L.



John Carelli



Dominick Carelli

The Standard Press is indebted to Corporal Dominick Carelli for the opportunity to publish the following letter from big brother, Sgt. John Carelli, with First Battalion Headquarters Detachment, 105th infantry, describing the Battle of Saipan.

Sgt. Carelli was at first reported missing in action but a later report from the War Department stated that he had been slightly wounded in action on Saipan on July 11. Sgt. Carelli's letter follows:

"I received your letter while in the thick of the battle of Saipan but was unable to answer sooner as I lost your address. I just found one of your old letters in my barracks bag, so I'll take a chance and hope your address hasn't changed since.

"Well Dom, I am going to attempt to tell you a little bit about the battle of Saipan. Of course you have already heard that it

was the bloodiest battle in history. I know that takes in a lot of territory but it is true.

The first thing I saw when I landed was some wounded that were being brought along the beach. I could also smell the stench of dead bodies. It made me sick to my stomach and I couldn't eat for the first day and a half but finally had to start eating regardless of my feelings. My first scare came during an air raid the first night ashore. The next day I got a taste of Jap artillery. Boy, they were coming in pretty close and I hit the dirt and never prayed so hard before as I did then. Each time I heard them whistle my mind would play tricks on me. I had the feeling that the next one was going to hit me in the middle of the back. You just can't imagine the feeling you get till you have experienced it yourself. My high spot the next day was when I saw three Jap planes shot down. One was shot down by a boy in our company with a fifty caliber machine gun. Almost everywhere we moved we were shot at by snipers which really got to be troublesome. Jap machine gunners almost constantly fired at us from mountain positions which were very hard to find. Believe me it wasn't fun dodging bullets when they were coming so close that you could feel the rush of air around your ear, or kick dirt in your face. At one time I was talking to a friend of mine, we were both in a crouch near our foxhole, when someone called to me. I answered and both of us stood up and as we did so a bullet whizzed between us head high. We weren't over a foot apart at the time. One position we had taken in the mountains was so littered with Jap dead that I could hardly stand it and to top it off we had to set up our perimeter there. One good thing about that spot was that our boys had knocked out one of the Jap artillery pieces that was giving us hell and making us hit that good old dirt in a hurry. A lot of the boys back there are grouching about the extra weight that is added by the good old shovel. I know I use to do it myself. But the boys in the outfit and myself often wished that they were twice as big. I would be more satisfied to carry a much bigger one next time I go into battle. Believe me you can never dig in fast enough. Your helmet is another one of the big gripes you find in the army. The third day a piece of shrapnel hit my helmet. After that I even learned to sleep in it and liked it. They make a good head rest with a little practice. My Waterloo came on the 7th day of July during the Japs' last stand. It's the counter attack that you read about in the papers and magazines. The boys in the army call them Sake Raids because the Japs are known to get pretty high before they go out on these suicide attacks. (Sake is a drink made from rice). The boys that have tasted it say that it will raise the hair off your head. Well, Dom, in that attack I was shot in the thigh just above the knee and if it wasn't for a friend of mine that helped me to the rear, and the good Lord, the Japs would have got me sure. However, before I got knocked out of the fight I killed three Japs that I was sure of. All of the fighting in that raid was at close quarters and a lot of it was hand-to-hand. Two days after this attack the Stars and Stripes was flying high over Saipan. The island was secure.

"Well Dom, I will close now and I hope this letter finds you in the best of health. Good luck and God Bless You".