

Gus Tomuschat

From: Paul C Burton [paulcburton@comcast.net]
Sent: Saturday, March 17, 2012 8:00 PM
To: PaulEsq@comcast.net
Subject: G. Greeley Wells 2nd Battalion 28th Marines
Attachments: G. Greeley Wells Side One.jpeg; G. Greeley Wells Side Two.jpeg

Marines:

Just a note to share a Marine experience. Today I attended the Marine Support Group (Puget Sound) for brunch and heard MajGen Tracy L. Garrett talk about the current and future Marine Corps. She was outstanding. While visiting with Marines before the General's presentation, I was introduced to an elderly gentleman who was accompanied by an Aid and Attendant, Barbara Wells Kenney. That gentleman was G. Greeley Wells, identified in the story below. What an honor and privilege to talk with an Iwo Jima Marine! What a special honor and privilege to talk with, and thank, the Marine who supplied the first American flag raised on Mt. Suribachi. I was truly humbled!

His business card is attached. His apartment number has changed, but he is still in the same complex. FYI.

Semper Fi!

Sgt Paul C Burton

Raising the first flag



Lowery's most widely circulated picture of the first flag raising. This picture is usually captioned as: 1st Lt. [Harold G. Schrier](#) with Platoon Sergeant [Boots Thomas](#) (both seated), PFC [James Michels](#) (in foreground with [M1 Carbine](#)), Sergeant [Hank Hansen](#) (standing, wearing soft cap), Corporal [Charles W. Lindberg](#) (standing, extreme right), on [Mount Suribachi](#) at the first flag raising. However, PFC [Raymond Jacobs](#) disputed these identifications,^[4] and asserted that it should be: Pfc James Robeson (lower left corner; not visible in this cropped version of the photo), Lt. Harold Schrier (sitting behind his legs), Pfc Raymond Jacobs (carrying radio), Sgt. Henry Hansen (cloth cap), unknown (lower hand on pole), Sgt Ernest Thomas (back to camera), Pfc [John Bradley](#) (helmet above Thomas), Pfc James Michels (with carbine), Cpl Charles Lindberg (above Michels).

The famous picture taken by Rosenthal actually captured the second flag-raising event of the day. A U.S. flag was first raised atop Suribachi soon after it was captured early in the morning (around 10:20) of February 23, 1945. [Captain Dave Severance](#) was ordered by 2nd Battalion Commander [Chandler Johnson](#) to send a platoon to go take the mountain.^[5] Severance, the commander of Easy Company ([2nd Battalion, 28th Marines, 5th Marine Division](#)), ordered [First Lieutenant Harold G. Schrier](#) to lead the patrol. Just before Schrier was to head up the mountain Commander Chandler Johnson handed him a flag saying, "if you get to the top put it up." Johnson's adjutant, **second lieutenant Greeley Wells**, had taken the 54-by-28-inch (140-by-71-centimeter) American flag from their transport ship, the [USS Missoula \(APA-211\)](#).^[6] The patrol reached the top without incident and the flag was raised, and photographed by [Staff Sergeant Louis R. Lowery](#), a photographer with [Leatherneck magazine](#).^{[7][8][9]} Others present at this first flag raising included Corporal [Charles W. Lindberg](#), Platoon Sergeant [Ernest I. Thomas Jr.](#), Sergeant [Henry O. "Hank" Hansen](#), Private [Gene Marshall](#) (sometimes disputed as [Raymond Jacobs](#)), and Private First Class [James Michels](#).^[10] This flag was too small, however, to be seen easily from the nearby landing beaches.

The [Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal](#), had decided the previous night that he wanted to go ashore and witness the final stage of the fight for the mountain. Now, under a stern commitment to take orders from [Howlin' Mad Smith](#), the secretary was churning ashore in the company of the blunt, earthy general. Their boat touched the beach just after the flag went up, and the mood among the high command turned jubilant. Gazing upward, at the red, white, and blue speck, Forrestal remarked to Smith: "Holland, the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years."

Forrestal was so taken with fervor of the moment that he decided he wanted the Suribachi flag as a souvenir. The news of this wish did not sit well with [2nd Battalion](#) Commander Chandler Johnson, whose temperament was every bit as fiery as Howlin Mad's. "To hell with that!" the colonel spat when the message reached him. The flag belonged to the battalion, as far as Johnson was concerned. He decided to secure it as soon as possible, and dispatched his assistant operations officer, Lieutenant [Ted Tuttle](#),^[11] to the beach to scrounge up a replacement flag. As an afterthought, Johnson called after Tuttle "And make it a bigger one."^[12]

The roar of the Marines on the islands and ship horns blasting away alerted the Japanese who up to this point had stayed in their cave bunkers. The Americans quickly found themselves under fire from Japanese troops but were able to quickly eliminate the threat with the only casualty being Lowery's camera.^[13]