

No Day at the Beach Story

In 1945, my dad was a muscular 21-year-old Marine, on a steaming hot “Higgins boat”, 100 yards from the glistening black sands of Iwo Jima. He crouched, first in line, behind the thick metal tailgate of the landing craft. When the fast but flimsy Higgins boat came ashore, the tailgate would drop onto the sand, and the Marines would charge out over the tailgate and storm the enemy beach with guns blazing. But when Dad’s landing craft hit the shore, the gate didn’t drop, and the bullets clinked off the front of the tailgate for almost a minute.

Someone yelled, “Climb out... Over the top!”. My dad scrambled up the rope netting that hung inside the walls of the craft, leaped over the top of the big metal gate and splashed down into the mushy black sands of Iwo Jima. Just then, the tailgate opened and crashed down, right on top of his helmet, driving him deep, like a nail, into the hot black sand. He was pinned under the heavy tailgate, up to his chest, in the hot, salt water and sand, as his fellow Marines charged out of the small boat, over top of his cracked helmet. Then, the tailgate slowly lifted from my dad’s head, and the tiny boat throttled back toward the ship that brought him to attack that barren volcanic Japanese island, near the end of World War II.

Dad was mired in the steaming quicksand and salt water and couldn’t move. Bullets whizzed and struck the water all around him. He fought with every fiber of his being to pull himself up and out of the sucking sand. He crawled ashore on his belly, as the war raged around him. But the quicksand had sucked away his boots and his rifle, when he’d finally escaped its grasp. He was attacking the Japanese island of Iwo Jima, with no shoes and no gun! Dad slithered behind a tiny black sand dune, next to another Marine, face down in the sand... dead! Using the fallen soldier’s rifle and boots, he continued the heroic attack on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima, in 1945, five months before the end of World War II.

Against all odds, he survived Iwo Jima, returned home, and with my mom, he started the lives of four children. I am proud to be one of them. Thanks Dad!