

EMPIRES IN THE SUN

American Marines splashed ashore. On Beach Blue (nearby Tulagi) over 5,000 scrambled ashore. Everybody was equipped with the latest in war-fighting, providing the equipment reached the shore, including the new style American helmet. The wave after wave that landed was composed of a hard core of seasoned Marines, yet in the midst were hundreds of new recruits. With the men and officers were the war correspondents, medics, and the unforgettable "Padres." There would be much fear and death before the battles of Guadalcanal—which became some of the most bitter contested land battles of 1942—would finally end.

The men of the cloth, reverends, were needed to give strength. Religion seems always more indispensable when someone is trying to kill you, as one observer who was there put it. War correspondents, medics, and chaplains would go wherever Americans were sent. In every theater of war, whether major or minor, they were to be common; they, together with the troops, would be there for the duration.

Initial landings were unopposed on August 7, 1942. The resistance on Guadalcanal was surprising—zero; only the crack of the ocean waves, scattered U.S. gunfire, plus the rumble of naval vessels offshore was heard, after aerial bombardment. It was eery. It formed a complete tactical surprise.

Assault units slowly moved onto shore.

The ordeal of war's horrors started hours later, especially on Tulagi.

The Japanese garrison that had retired deep into Guadalcanal chose to shoot at the allies from treetops of the green jungles as they wandered in.

On the island of Tulagi, the Japanese, 3,000 strong, waited until near nightfall before attacking the Marines.