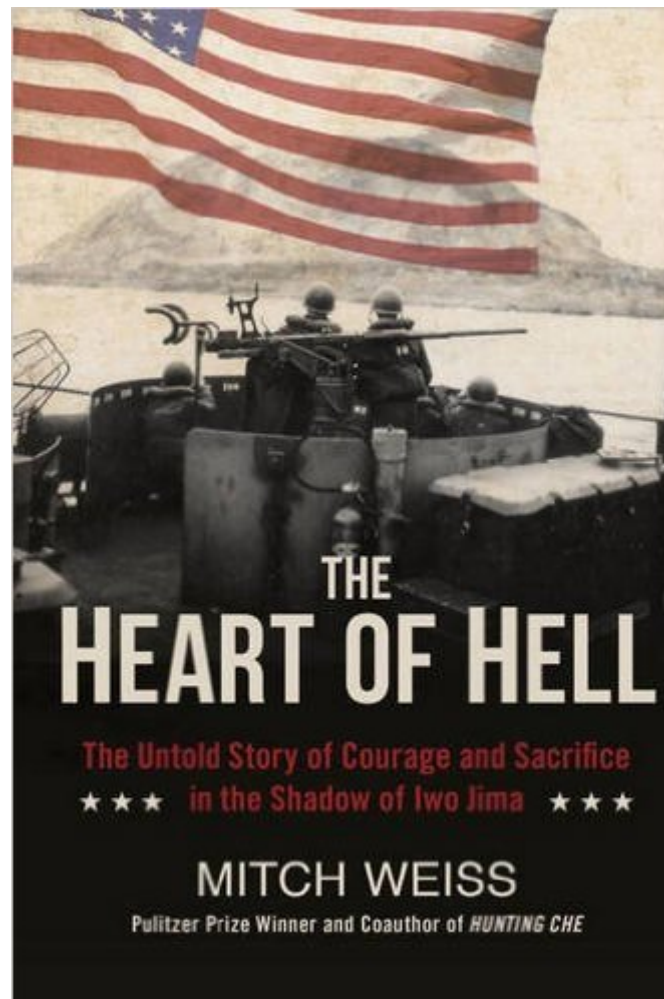


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The Heart Of Hell: The Untold Story Of Courage And Sacrifice In The Shadow Of Iwo Jima



Synopsis

The Battle of Iwo Jima, a major event in the Pacific Theater of World War II "and one of the bloodiest in United States history" began on February 19, 1945. But what happened two days earlier has largely been a footnote, until now... On February 17, Landing Craft Infantry 449 was among a dozen gunboats helping to prepare the area for their invasion two days later. U.S. military leaders thought they had weakened Japanese forces in the area so they were not expecting any action. From the towering slopes of Mount Suribachi, Japanese forces opened fire, forcing the U.S. commanders to recalculate battlefield plans. They shelled and bombed the newly discovered enemy positions. It was a move that saved countless lives two days later, when tens of thousands of Marines stormed the beach. The Heart of Hell is the untold story of the crew of Landing Craft Infantry 449. Based on 130 exclusive interviews with sailors who survived the battle, the families of the men killed in the fight, and more than 1,500 letters the sailors mailed to loved ones during their long months at sea, this is a story of duty, brotherhood, love, and courage.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

By 1944, the Americans were driving the Japanese back across the Pacific. The battles for the Marshalls and Marianas had stripped Japan of much of her interior line of defense. The Japanese home islands were now within reach of the American B-29 bombers. But the American commanders needed additional airfields on the route to Japan. Iwo Jima fit this requirement. Located only 650 miles from Japan, Iwo Jima could serve as an emergency air base for damaged B-29s as well as house fighter escorts. In February, 1945, the Americans set out to take Iwo Jima. The invasion was

scheduled for February 19, 1945, but there was work to be done before the actual invasion. These few days leading up to the invasion are the basis of "The Heart of Hell". Before the actual invasion, frogmen, protected by gunboats, would land on shore and check for coral reefs and other obstacles that might hinder the invasion. The job of the gunboats was to provide cover while the frogmen worked. The story of LCI 449 begins earlier than the Iwo Jima invasion. This gunboat also took part in the Marshalls and Marianas campaign, providing gunfire support against Japanese targets on the beach. Crewed by 70+ men, the 449 distinguished herself in battle. The story was different on Iwo. Struck by three Japanese mortar shells in a matter of five minutes, the 449 was severely damaged and suffered over 40 killed or wounded. Only quick thinking by surviving members of the crew kept the 449 from sinking. I've read several books about the battle of Iwo Jima, but never one dedicated to the fire support missions of the gunboats. Author Mitch Weiss has done a fine job of describing the life of LCI 449 and the members of her crew.

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