



IWO JIMA TRIBUTES

AUTO-ORDNANCE HONORS THE BRAVE MEN WHO FOUGHT IN ONE OF WWII'S FIERCEST BATTLES **BY FRANK JARDIM**

➔ If any one event could be pointed to and credited with making the reputation of the U.S. Marine Corps forever more, it was Iwo Jima. The ferocity of the battle was beyond all expectations and marked a turning point in Japanese defensive strategy. Hotly contested beach landings and foolish banzai charges were abandoned in favor of drawn-out defenses that made the Americans pay the highest possible cost in blood for every victory.

Iwo Jima was barely 8 square miles of barren, volcanic black sand and rock. The Marines expected to capture it in a week, but it took 36 days to secure. By the end, the Americans had taken over 26,000 casualties, with more than 6,800 killed. The Japanese lost their entire garrison of 21,000 men, with more than 19,000 killed, 1,083

captured and the remainder missing—probably consumed in the maelstrom of combat frequently so violent that USMC Lieutenant Colonel Justus M. Chambers said, “You could’ve held up a cigarette and lit it on the stuff going by.”

At the 2019 Athlon Outdoors Rendezvous,

Auto-Ordnance announced the upcoming release of its limited-edition Iwo Jima commemoratives, which mark the battle’s 75th anniversary. The series includes an M1A1-style Thompson with a 16-inch barrel so no NFA paperwork is required, an M1 Carbine and an M1911A1 pistol. You’ll find

laser engraving throughout on the metal and wood, and the guns also have custom Cerakote finishes.

SPECIAL EDITIONS

Like Auto-Ordnance’s earlier commemoratives, these are beautiful works of art that are also fully functional.



“THE GUNS FEATURE SPECIAL ENGRAVINGS OF MARINES FIRING THEIR WEAPONS IN CLOSE COMBAT.”



Auto-Ordnance builds these guns to be accurate and reliable, then sends them to Outlaw Ordnance of Monroe, Louisiana, for the artistic touches. Outlaw Ordnance was a perfect partner because it shares the same enthusiasm for patriotic projects, especially anything that honors our military.

As with the commemoratives that preceded it, the artistic approach for the Iwo Jima series was to consider all of the guns' exterior surfaces as blank canvases for the imagination. The design concepts were 30 days in the making, most of it spent researching the battle and studying period photographs to select and create the most evocative and historically important imagery to represent the epic fight.

The guns feature special engravings of Marines firing their weapons in close combat. The pistol's slide shows a Marine squad advancing. The last man has an M2

flamethrower on his back. This important because, while the flamethrower unit on Iwo Jima was effective in driving Japanese soldiers from their pillboxes and caves, these men suffered a high casualty rate of 92 percent. The calculated average lifespan of the Marines who carried such 80-pound weapons during the battle was just four minutes.

The pistol's right grip bears a fouled anchor topped with a bald eagle, suggestive of the USMC's trademarked eagle, globe and anchor emblem, but also of the sailors and airmen that participated in the battle. The slide has an advancing American flag on both sides.

The M1 Carbine's stock shows members of all Naval branches involved in the battle—Marine infantry, a Navy bugler and a Seabee from the now famous Naval Construction Battalions first

formed in World War II. At the head of them, near the wrist, is the face of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, commander of the Fifth Fleet who led the campaigns that captured Iwo Jima. The right forend of the carbine shows the advancing American flag and a Marine

BAR gunner firing on the enemy. The left forend has a close-up of a charging rifleman and another flamethrower operator. A Sherman tank represents the Marine armored units that used their big guns, and in some cases flamethrowers, to blast or burn out the defiant Japanese from their strongpoints.

The Tommy gun's buttstock has the same image of a Marine infantryman as the M1 Carbine, but larger and with more detail. The standing Marine aiming his Tommy gun at the enemy while his comrade, armed with a BAR, advances at a crouch ahead of him, is copied from an actual Iwo Jima combat photograph.

All three pieces have a copper-brown Cerakote finish, but Outlaw Ordnance achieves a battle-worn look. All three are engraved with "Iwo Jima," the dates of

the battle, its "Operational Detachment" codename, an image of the second (and more famous) flag raising on Mount Suribachi, and the legendary quote from Fleet Admiral Chester A. Nimitz: "Among the men who fought on Iwo Jima, uncommon valor was a common virtue."

FOR THE HEROES

Over 16 million Americans served in uniform during WWII. Fewer than 250,000 are still alive today to tell their stories. Justin Moon, the founder and CEO of the Kahr Firearms Group, explained his motivation for all the Auto-Ordnance military commemoratives: "It is very important to me and my team members to express our gratitude to the men and women of the armed forces for the enormous sacrifices they make preserving our freedom. My father was imprisoned and tortured by the communists during the Korean War. American soldiers liberated him, saving his life. Paying tribute to America's heroes in uniform is a way for me to thank them for what they have done for me and our country. For more information, visit auto-ordnance.com."