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OHIO STATE STUDENTS WALK IN FOOTSTEPS OF WORLD WAR II VETERANS IN PACIFIC

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"Corporal David C. Greene came ashore on Iwo Jima in a Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel, or LCVP on 19 February 1945," writes Caitlin Bentley.

"Today, Greene, along with three Navy and seven other Marine veterans, returned for the first time in 67 years. On an island only four miles in diameter, nearly 28,000 out of the 72,000 American soldiers committed were killed or wounded during 36 days of combat."

Bentley was one of eight Ohio State students selected for History 698.02, The Veteran Experience in the Pacific War, 1944-45. The study tour, organized by Mershon affiliates [Peter Mansoor](#) and [Peter Hahn](#), paired each student with a veteran from World War II combat in the Pacific.

The Mershon Center co-sponsored the event, contributing \$500 in travel costs for each student.

Working with Mansoor and Hahn was the Greatest Generation Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to honoring the sacrifices of veterans and ensuring that their legacies are recorded and retold to future generations.

"We were introduced to the Greatest Generation Foundation through an acquaintance of Gordon Gee," said Mansoor, Gen. Raymond E. Mason Chair in Military History. "This one-time trip to the battlefields of the Central Pacific appealed to us on a variety of levels. We had roughly 18 students apply for the course, from which we chose eight to go on the tour. The Greatest Generations Foundation assigned each student to shadow a veteran of the Pacific conflict, and together they explored the battlefields and the veterans' recollections of their time in uniform."

The tour included stops at Guam, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima, where each student toured the site with his or her assigned combat veteran. Roundtable discussions were held daily, and students blogged about their experiences.

Students unanimously found the tour eye-opening and enriching. At Iwo Jima, Bentley's veteran David Greene collected sand and rocks from the island for his grandchildren and flew an American flag on the top of Mount Suribachi. But he also gave an interview to Japanese press in which he described how his family hosted Japanese exchange students throughout the 1970s.

"This is a man who sincerely appreciates and enjoys the culture and people of a nation with whom he once had been in brutal combat," Bentley wrote.

Andrew Eskander's veteran, Sergeant Al Eutsey, also saw combat on Iwo Jima, landing in the first wave of the attack on Green Beach. Under orders to take Hill 362A, Eutsey was hit in the chest with shrapnel from a mortar attack. A corpsman rushed to his aid wrapping the wound with gauze, and he was taken away on a stretcher.

While carrying Eutsey, the Marines came under heavy fire, and he was thrown into a ditch. Finally he was evacuated to Guam, where he spent a month recovering before being sent home. Fifty years later, Eutsey met one of his stretcher bearers at a Marine reunion.

Prior to leaving for the tour, which ran from March 9-18, Hahn lectured the students on the diplomatic history of the Pacific War, while Mansoor taught them the military history. The group also took a trip to Motts Military Museum in Columbus.

Photo:



Students in History 698.02, The Veteran Experience in the Pacific War, stand on Ason Beach in Guam, where U.S. soldiers landed during World War II. The course, in which students toured World War II Pacific island sites, was taught by Peter Hahn (standing fourth from left) and Peter Mansoor (standing far right). Photo by John Riedy Photography.

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1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

Phone: 614-292-1681 | Fax: 614-292-2407

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