

Guam and the Northern Marianas

Ten years ago the United States Treasury embarked upon a program of honoring each of our states with their own quarter. Beginning with Delaware (the First State) and proceeding with five states each year, they eventually arrived at Wyoming. During those ten years the Treasury's schedule was modified to include the District of Columbia and the five possessions that make up the dependencies of the United States. These are American Samoa in the South Pacific, Guam, in the Northern Pacific, the Northern Marianas, also in the Northern Pacific, Puerto Rico in the Caribbean and the Virgin Islands of the United States, also in the Caribbean.

Recently, I have come into possession of a quarter honoring the Northern Marianas and also one honoring Guam, and as I have spent some time on all of these outposts in the Western Pacific, I will attempt to make you familiar with a part of this country of ours that you might not know much about.

In the Western Pacific, Guam is by far the largest and most important island under U. S. jurisdiction. It is located about 1,200 miles east of the Philippines and 1,700 miles south of Tokyo, Japan, a location that made it of great importance for the Allied war effort during WWII. A synopsis of the events of the war in the Pacific relevant to this island chain will graphically illustrate the strategic importance of Guam and the Northern Marianas.

December 7, 1941 – Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Guam, Hong Kong, the Philippine Islands, Wake Island and Thailand. U. S. marines on Midway beat off Japanese attack and damage Jap warships. Japan declares war upon the United States and Great Britain.

Dec. 11, 1941 – Japs occupy Guam.

Dec. 24, 1941 – Japs occupy Wake Island

June 3, 1942 – Midway Islands heavily raided by Japanese planes.

June 7, 8, 1942 – Battle of Midway; Japan has heavy aircraft and warship losses.

Jan. 31, 1944 – Americans commenced the invasion of the Marshall Islands, which had been held by Japan since 1914.

Feb. 18, 1944 – Americans occupy more atolls in the Marshalls, attack Truk in the Eastern Carolines

February 22, 1944 – American warships with a large force of carrier-based planes attack Jap positions in the Marianas, including Saipan, Tinian and Guam

May 1, 1944 – Truk, Satawan and Ponape heavily bombed by U.S.

June 13, 1944 – Heavy air raids on Jap bases in the islands of Tinian, Saipan and Guam.

June 15, 1944 – Americans landed on Saipan and Tinian Islands. The Americans now are within bombing range of the Philippines and Japan and at the same time isolate all Japanese armed forces in the Caroline and Marshall Islands.

June 19, 1944 – Japan loses more than 300 planes over the Marianas. This has been referred to ever-afterwards by the American forces as the “Marianas Turkey Shoot”.

July 21, 1944 – American forces landed on Guam.

Aug. 7, 1944 – American task force bombarded Jap installations in the Bonin Islands (600 miles from Japan.)

Sept. 24, 1944 – U.S. marines began occupying Palau, in the Western Caroline Islands, overcoming Japanese resistance.

Oct. 12, 1944 – American occupation of Guam, Saipan and Tinian is complete; however, the last Japanese holdouts did not come down from the mountains of Guam to surrender until the summer of 1956.

Nov. 24, 1944 – The first Super-Fortresses based on Saipan raid Japanese cities. The round trip covered 3,400 miles.

Nov. 29, 1944 – Three raids in six days are made on Tokyo by Saipan-based bombers.

Feb. 19, 1954 – U.S. marines storm ashore on Iwo Jima, 750 miles from Tokyo.

Feb. 25, 1945 – 200 Super-Fortresses from the Marianas bomb Tokyo. The battle is still raging on Iwo Jima.

Mar. 18, 1945 – Enemy resistance on Iwo Jima collapsed. American casualties were 20,000 wounded and 4,000 dead. The importance of the airfields on Iwo was to provide for an emergency landing field for damaged aircraft returning from raids over Japan. More American lives were saved in this way than had been lost in capturing the island.

Mar. 19, 1945 – Two or three times each week, forces of 200-300 bombers from the Marianas attack the principal cities of Japan.

April 1, 1945 – After 10 day's naval assault by Americans and British, Americans made a large-scale landing in the Okinawa Islands, 320 miles from Japan.

April 11, 1945 – One of the fiercest battles of the Pacific War is proceeding on Okinawa.

May 24, 1945 – 550 Super-Fortresses from the Marianas dropped 4,500 tons of bombs on Tokyo before dawn.

June 12, 1945 – All Japanese cities are being raided by huge fleets of bombers from the Marianas.

June 21, 1945 – Jap resistance ceased on Okinawa.

July 12, 1945 – It is estimated that the Americans and Allies have destroyed 27,000 Jap planes, while losing 6,926 of our own.

July 27, 1945 – U.S., Britain and China issued an ultimatum to Japan to surrender unconditionally, or face utter destruction. Japan ignored the ultimatum.

Aug. 6, 1945 – The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, with appalling results. (The plane had taken off from Tinian.)

August 9, 1945 – The second atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki with similar terrible effect.

Aug.10, 1945 – Japan sues for peace.

Aug.5, 1945 – Japan surrenders unconditionally.

This article will continue next week.