

ISHN "FDO"
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By George J. Hayward

"LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA" -
one man's opinion:
(Paraphrased)

"Keep this in mind if you go to see "Letters from Iwo Jima."

For those persons who have expressed an opinion on the movie, "Letters from Iwo Jima", please allow me to share how I re-acted to this film.

For lack of a better way to begin, let me say, What "Nice Guys" the Japanese Soldiers Were.

It was obvious to me that the Japanese soldiers who fought the Americans on Iwo Jima were not the same soldiers who fought the Americans on Bataan, or were they?

Being a survivor of the Bataan Death March, I can tell you for certainty, the Japanese depicted in "Letters From Iwo Jima" were in no way similar to the soldiers I encountered on the Bataan Death March. So what does that prove? Well, unless you truly believe that the Japanese soldiers fighting in the Philippines earlier in the war, were different than the soldiers on Iwo Jima, then you must come to the conclusion that the director, Clint Eastwood, was overcome by Japanese propaganda. Eastwood tried to "humanize" the Japanese soldier, and wanted to have the audience see the Japanese as "Nice Guys" fighting a war they didn't want to fight, in a place they didn't want to be.

The film "Letters From Iwo Jima," has been nominated for an Academy Award, which it may richly deserve for the quality of its acting, but the fact remains that as a historical movie, it's a failure, it instead tries to show the enemy as the "Nice Guys" in the war and "so much like we Americans."

Critics have praised the film because it "humanized" the enemy, but was it their humanity that caused the Japanese soldiers on Bataan to shoot and behead those men who were unable to keep up with the rest of the men on the Bataan March. The same Japanese soldiers, who fought on Iwo Jima and were depicted as being "Nice Guys", were notoriously cruel and savage to prisoners of war. On the Bataan Death March, if you didn't walk fast enough or didn't bow low enough you were singled out and tortured, beaten and killed, all at the whim of the Japanese soldier, a private, a corporal, a sergeant or an officer.

Out of 12,000 American soldiers and more than 36,000 Filipino soldiers on the march, less than half of them returned home. In addition to the thousands that died on the March, thousands more died due to brutal barbaric treatment while in POW camps, unarmed and without any means of defense, were tortured and put to death. This is the film where Clint Eastwood wants to portray the Japanese soldier as being, "just like the rest of us": Sensitive, caring and concerned for our fellow man. Don't you believe it! Japanese soldiers, who were medical officers, carried out biological experiments on prisoners of war. The opening scene in "The Great Raid" movie showing Japanese soldiers burning American POWs alive is not fiction. It is reality. The record of the atrocities inflicted by the Japanese soldiers on the American and Filipino civilians is numbered in the thousands. In Manila alone, as the war was winding down and the Japanese

knew the end was near, they slaughtered more than 100,000 men, women and children. The brilliant book "The Rape of Nanking" written by the late Iris Chang, chronicles the appalling savagery of the Japanese army during the 1930s. Ms. Chang uncovered the history of more than 360,000 Chinese men, women and children who were massacred by Japanese soldiers; some were, no doubt, the same "nice guys" on Iwo Jima. It was the Japanese who attacked the United States: It was the Japanese soldier who savagely killed thousands of unarmed POWs, It was the Japanese soldier who placed POWs into bomb shelters and set them on fire so that no one could escape: and it was the Japanese soldiers who refused the offer of surrender when made, while knowing that to continue fighting meant death to hundreds of thousands of their own people.

There were one or two "Nice Guys", but that's about all. Yet the main thrust of the film was "The Japanese soldier is similar to the American soldier." I personally knew of no "Nice Guy" within the enemy soldiers, and I offer this information as fact, not fiction. But the director, Clint Eastwood, along with the Japanese would want you to believe it was "fact".

The above is my reaction to the film, sorry if I hurt some feelings."

Former POW and survivor of the Bataan Death March.

Clint Eastwood's "Letters from Iwo Jima"
Another man's opinion(s)
By George J. Hayward

ISHN Editor, Dave Johnson in April's issue referred to some movies and books in his editorial...may I?

Dave recalled a letter of 20 years earlier where the writer criticized Dave for writing about safety issues in China when the writer selfishly instead was only interested in issues closer to home. This may be close, too.

A friend sent the above fine (paraphrased) message on to me. I find it very interesting and informative an honest view of a very moving series of never to forgotten terrifying images.

I'm not sure how I would have reacted then. I wasn't born until 6 months before Pearl Harbor, but I still try to buy and preach American when possible....I still only purchase U.S. model autos (big three)...even though most are assembled outside U.S.A. The Japanese autos, although assembled and parts made here are more American. Honda & Toyota plants in our territory are serviced by our sales persons and supplied by our Principals, manufacturers we represent, products. I still however shy away from owning them. Goofy too, maybe, but.....Oh, a sidebar:

This year's Daytona 500, for the first time, sported three cars other than the so called, "Big Three" cars. Funny thing, ALL the "American" cars were built outside the US. The other three? Three Toyota's - of Georgetown, KENTUCKY !

My cousin lived and worked as a RN in Pearl Harbor during when it was bombed....an Uncle who fought 3 years in the Pacific against the Japanese.

My feelings are near same about other non American products....Really, mostly it's U.S.A. I'm for - rather than against the others. (I'm English & German - go figure).

My issue:

May I suggest reading "Flyboys" by James Bradley - the author also of "Flags of Our Fathers" (story of Iwo Jima flag raisers). This "Flyboys" is not to be confused by the recent movie of the same name about flyboys in WWI. This is about flyboys in WWII.

The outset, in "Flyboys", Bradley outlines how none of the "nice guys" exist in war or battle history. He tells of extreme torture examples throughout history.... it is done, I think, to neutralize your mind of hatred in order to prepare the reader for the rest of the book.....But truly, homo sapiens are NOT, "nice guys"!

Bradley tells. We weren't ("nice guys") against the Indians - the Indians weren't "nice" to the white men & women. The Germans against the Russians, weren't - the Russians weren't against the Germans. The Chinese - U.S.A. in Vietnam - The current insurgents and al-Qaida folks in Iraq, beheadings - doing them in 'Gitmo' - whites against blacks - blacks against whites - turn on the news every night for "Breaking News"..... WE are not "nice" - NONE OF US. No the "Japs" in Iwo Jima weren't "nice guys" any more than they were north a few hundred miles in Chichi Jima (in Bradley's "Flyboys") or in the Philippine jungles during the Bataan Death March....Are some "nicer" or worse than others? I dunno.

"Nice", I'm convinced, depends which side you're on at the time and who won. I think it terrible....all of it....when will it stop?

The answer?

Not what the other letter author suggests. Rather - to grow we attempt to realize, understand and comprehend - that really "THEY" are no different and we are NOT the "nice guys" either.

If that is understood we ALL must come together, and "MOVE ON".....grow..... to exist in this world....we must...in order to survive. Maybe skip a generation or two without war or terror activities and educate, teach, learn to understand the other guy and his values, needs, culture, etc. Listen and more importantly HEAR the other side.....actually, really - he is a "nice guy", too. I haven't seen the movie, "Letters from Iwo Jima" - yet, but I will and my thought is, it is better that Clint Eastwood has the courage make it it when it is so much easier to show us as the "nice guys"but, a John Wayne (war) movie is NOT real...but fun for us to watch.....but, it is not the way it was/is - at all.

To grow we must see the other side....sure it may be exaggerated, some, isn't everything, over time.....aren't all movies?....But, in Eastwood showing BOTH sides, I think it is more fair than not telling the other side. Left undone does not accomplish anything....just another gung ho U.S.A. war movie we like to see. The problem is there were not all of Japanese left on Iwo Jima, alive, to interview, afterward.

There are two sides to everything. It is too narrow to think otherwise.

Actually, in safety there is only one side the true side and that is documented, studied, discussed and exposed in order to attempt that it doesn't reoccur.

Safety rules are different. But, not too different.

Safety issues are different. But, not too different.

Safety hazards are different. But, not too different.

Safety regulations are different. But, they will not be!

Think about it

George J. Hayward