

Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman



ARMED WITH A PISTOL AND A CAMERA—Staff Sergeant Norman T. Hatch landed on Tarawa with the first wave of Marines from the Second Marine Division on Nov. 20, 1944. His mission was to film the battle as it unfolded.

During a 400-yard slog from his Higgins boat to the shore, Hatch and his fellow Marines were under fire the entire time. “The temptation to lower myself into the water was overwhelming, but the discipline of doing one’s job, in this case preserving my camera and film, was stronger,” he later said.

Several combat cameramen documented the bloody battle. “We had all these young cameramen on the beach who covered it from the beginning to the end ... and it was the first time a battle had been covered that way and also the first time that it had been shot in color,” Hatch said in a 2012 interview with *Leatherneck*.

Along with the footage shot by the other cameramen, Hatch’s 2,000 feet of film was edited and the resulting movie, “With the Marines at Tarawa,” won the 1944 Academy Award for Best Documentary, Short Subject. The award (right) is on display at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, in Triangle, Va.

In the top photo, Hatch, center, is filming an assault on a Japanese command post. His assistant cameraman, Private First Class William F. Kelliher, is to his right.

The inset photo of Hatch is a screen shot from footage filmed during the battle.

Hatch died recently at the age of 96. Read more about his life on page 62.



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