

AN ERA ENDS
FOR THE "YANKEE" ISLES

The Bonins and Iwo Jima Go Back to Japan

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Photographs by JOE MUNROE

THE PATRIARCH OF CHICHI JIMA, largest of the Bonin Islands, gazed out over a cobalt-blue Pacific and warmed to his favorite subject.

"I'll tell you one thing," said Uncle Charlie Washington. "We're thankful for what the United States has done. I can't express it—the way they treated us, the kindness. They gave everybody a show to earn a livin'."

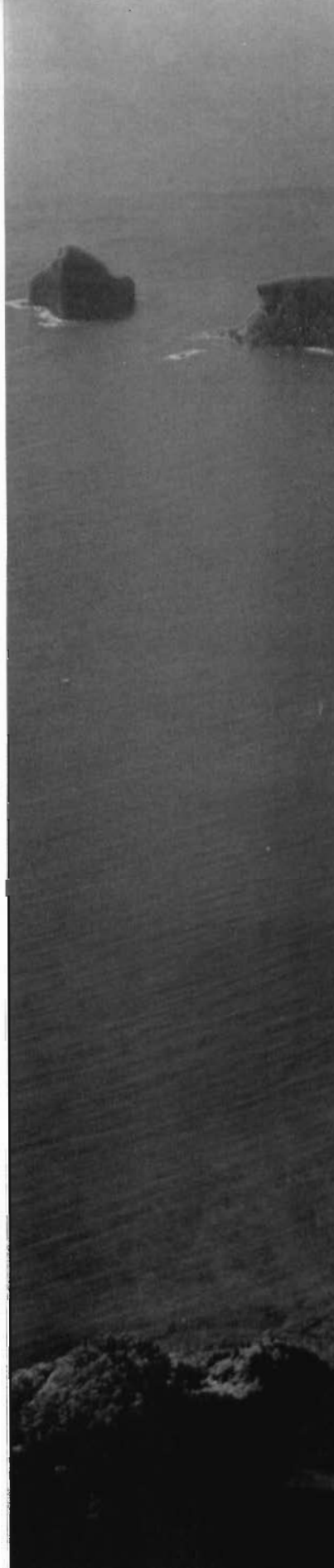
We stood on a height overlooking the harbor of this island, some five miles by three, rising in gentle peaks 600 miles south of Tokyo (map, page 132). The brush-tangled hills were honeycombed with tunnels, caves, and crumbling gun emplacements—relics of Japanese last-ditch determination in World War II.

Uncle Charlie, a wiry little fisherman with a handlebar mustache, spoke with special fervor. After 23 years of American control, his home islands were reverting to Japan.

I marveled silently at Uncle Charlie. Now 87, he was born on Chichi—a Japanese island—yet he breezed along in fluent, colloquial English salted with traces of Massachusetts. He spoke of the "cam" water, and of the "com-mahnder" of the U. S. Navy base below. His weathered sailor's face bore no hint of the Orient; in his dungarees and faded work shirt he would have looked at home on a dock in New Bedford (page 135).

Semitropical Chichi Jima, the only one of the Bonins now

Lush Eden to early seafarers, the Pacific island of Chichi Jima still shelters descendants of New Englanders who first settled the Bonins in the 1830's and 40's. During World War II, Japanese fortified Futami Bay, including the distant village of Omura; they also beached the torpedoed freighter *Hinko Maru* as a barrier against a feared United States landing attempt. For 23 years the U. S. Navy has administered Chichi and its sister islands; now they revert to Japan.





inhabited, has been an outpost of New England for nearly 140 years. Many of the 202 islanders, legally Japanese citizens, trace their ancestry to Yankee sailors. Nathaniel Savory, of Essex County, Massachusetts, arrived with the first settlers in 1830 and founded a dynasty that still produces island leaders. Uncle Charlie is the son of a Negro cabin boy who jumped an American whaling ship here in 1843.

Photographer Joe Munroe and I were the first journalists permitted by the United States Navy to study the Bonins intensively since World War II. We found a happy handful of people with a whole group of islands to themselves. Their goats scrambled freely over the hills; they fished off the islets in outriggers.

Before the war, nearly 6,400 Japanese colonists had dominated the Bonins, but Japanese and “Yankees” alike were evacuated at the height of the Pacific campaign. The United States allowed the descendants of the original settlers—135 in all—to return in 1946. Joe and I soon saw that two decades of American rule had reinforced the islanders’ original heritage. We attended a meeting of the island council, whose five elected members represent the Savorys, Gilleys, Robinsons, Webbs, and other Chichi families. It reminded us of any small-town council in the States.

Return of Japanese Stirs Hope and Fear

Yet we also saw a happy union of East and West in our weeks of wandering on Chichi Jima. Where else, I mused, could Kayu Yashiro marry George Washington and settle down in a frame bungalow built by the United States Navy and fitted with a Japanese bath?

The Yankees who grew up on Chichi before the war attended Japanese schools, but learned English in their homes. “I had to speak English to my father or he would beat me,” recalled Nat Savory, a great-grandson of the original Nathaniel.

Nat’s features, like those of most middle-aged and older people on Chichi, strongly suggest Western origin. The younger inhabitants reflect increasing intermarriage with Japanese. Some of the girls are classic Eurasian beauties; many of the boys look Japanese. The shy island children wear clothes ordered from mail-order catalogues and listen to American country-and-western records.

Nineteen-year-old Irene Savory summed it up poignantly: “We are children of two worlds.”

In the twilight of Western ascendancy, I found Chichi Jima awaiting the return of the Japanese with an uneasy mixture of hope and apprehension.

The Japanese claim to the Bonins goes back to 1593, when, they say, Ogasawara Sadayori, a warrior prince, landed on the chain. Subsequent expeditions confirmed that the islands were *munin* or *bunin*, “empty of men”—hence the name “Bonin.”



Trained by the Navy, 24-year-old Jimpei Komata mans an air hammer on a public-works project. His face reflects English, Polynesian, and Japanese ancestry.



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Western features of Jesse Webb recall his English grandfather, who came from Surrey in 1847. Jesse, a cousin of Jimpei, has long worked for the Navy as a painter.

Great-granddaughter of a Yankee, Lulu Savory Ashcraft married a U.S. sailor from Chichi's 30-man Navy base and, with their two young daughters, will go with him to his next post. Her forebear, Nathaniel Savory of Massachusetts, arrived in 1830 and led the little colony for 44 years.



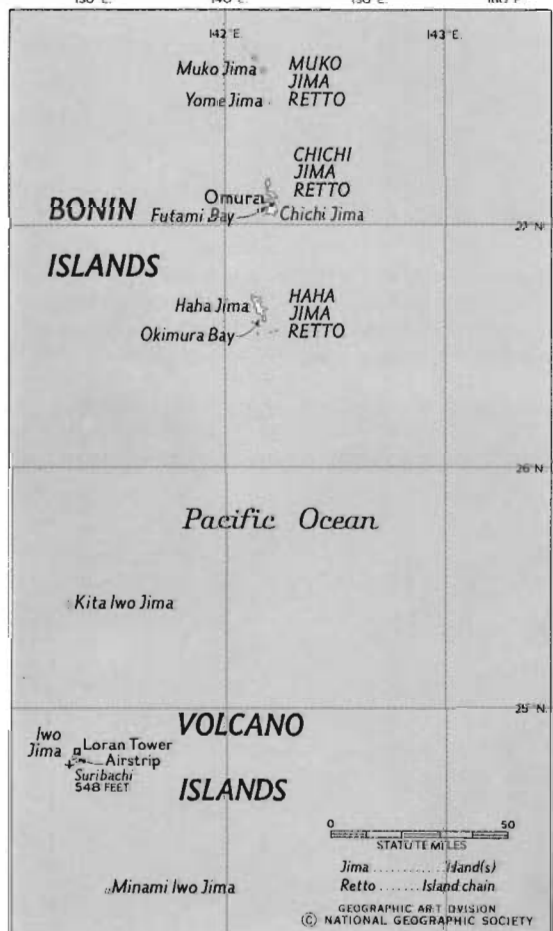
Descendant of a Portuguese seaman, Episcopal rector Isaac Gonzales cultivates Chinese cabbage. He also teaches island children Japanese to prepare them for the return to Japan's sovereignty.



AGFACHROME (RIGHT) AND KODACHROMES © N.G.S.

At the American school run by the Navy, 14-year-old Ruth Savory masters eighth-grade work. Last year, two dozen Chichi youngsters attended high school and college on Guam.





Chichi Jima was still uninhabited when Nathaniel Savory and a mixed band of about 30 colonists—British, Genoese, Danish, and Hawaiian—arrived from Hawaii in 1830 to establish a new home and life. In the years that followed, drunken whaling crews and pirates often drove the settlers from their homes to refuge in hill caves. Savory, a natural leader, was elected chief magistrate, and helped to impose order at last on the rough-and-ready island.

Japan formally annexed the Bonins in 1876, two years after Savory's death. Japanese colonists trickled in. Within ten years all the Western settlers had become naturalized Japanese. They clung to their separate

Land ladder to Tokyo Bay, the Bonin and Volcano Islands, plus Marcus Island and the coral atoll of Parece Vela, total only 40 square miles. They were *bunin*, or empty of men, until five Westerners and 25 Hawaiians settled on fertile Chichi Jima in 1830. Impressed by its strategic location, American Commodore Matthew Perry spent his own money to buy land in 1853 from Nathaniel Savory for use as a coaling station, but his plan died. Japan annexed the Bonins in 1876 and began colonization; she later added the other islands. In World War II, Chichi, Iwo, and Marcus served as Japanese bases.



Siren song of the sea holds fisherman Willie Savory as it did his forefathers—sailors, seal hunters, and whalers. Off Chichi's harbor he harpoons the hard-fighting wahoo with the spear resting between forked sticks on the red outrigger of his canoe. Dropping a bright fish-shaped lure, Mr. Savory will watch for wahoo, or giant mackerel, through a glass-bottom "look box." Closer to shore, he hunts sea turtles.

identity, however, and banded together in a village called Yankeetown.

I wondered how the islanders had fared during World War II, and asked Nat Savory. "The Japanese were good people," he told me, "but when the war started, they changed."

Some of the Yankees were drafted into the Japanese Army; others were forced to work on island fortifications. Their Western faces aroused hostility.

"I remember," said Jerry Savory, another great-grandson of Nathaniel, "a Japanese officer telling me, 'Jerry, your ancestors' country is finished.' This hurt me very much."

When Pacific combat forced the evacuation of the colonists to Japan in 1944, nearly

7,000 persons left the Bonins and Iwo Jima, in the Volcano Islands, 170 miles away. At that time the Japanese feared an American attack on either Chichi or Iwo and heavily fortified both islands. Iwo Jima, because of its strategic importance as the best available air base between the Mariana Islands and Tokyo, was the actual target. After it was taken, the Bonins were bombed almost daily, but never invaded. U. S. Marines occupied Chichi Jima in December, 1945.

Then the United States assumed jurisdiction over the Bonin and Volcano Islands. The Navy administered them, although Japan retained "residual sovereignty." Following long negotiations, Japan expected to resume

Stiff as a board, a frozen wahoo rides the shoulder of Willie's brother, Moses Savory. He carries it from a freezer in the fishing cooperative. An old fish tally marks the wall. The Navy provided the freezers and shipped fish without charge to Guam, but set a quota because of limited space. Now, under Japan, Chichi Jima's fishermen must make new marketing arrangements.



KODACHROMES BY JOE MUNROE © N.G.S.



control of both island groups in the spring or early summer of 1968.

On the eve of that much-discussed event, Uncle Charlie Washington said, "I can't say anything against the Japs. They treated us O.K. Of course I was born under the round ball, the rising sun."

Yet we found that many of Chichi's older people were worried. "To tell you the God's truth," one of them told me, "I wish they never would come back. We're content. The Navy has always treated us good. What more could we want?"

Young islanders, however, hope that the Japanese will liven up Chichi Jima. They anticipate, perhaps too optimistically, instant resort hotels, tourists, new stores, and new faces to spice the quiet routine.

"The Japanese will be more active and progressive," 20-year-old Diana Washington declared. But she added, wistfully, "I guess there won't be as much running around barefoot and picking oranges in the hills."

Terror Follows Boredom on Chichi Bird

Joe and I saw many barefoot girls but few oranges on Chichi Jima. For a time I feared we would not even see Chichi. Getting there was half the trouble.

At the time of our trip, two main routes spanned the blue Pacific from Guam to Chichi Jima. For years three valiant old Navy Grumman HU-16D's, amphibious planes collectively dubbed the "Chichi Bird," flew there on an irregular schedule. The flight, one passenger told me, meant "five hours of boredom and ten seconds of sheer terror." (The moments of terror came when the Bird skimmed

mountaintops, twin engines sputtering, and plummeted into the tiny harbor.)

A typhoon had grounded the Chichi Bird, so Joe and I took the alternative. We boarded the USS *San Joaquin County*, a Landing Ship, Tank, that shuttled back and forth from Guam to Chichi to Japan. The LST brought supplies to the islanders and the 30-man Navy facility, and carried the island's fish catch to Guam. The cargo on our trip was typically varied: 10,000 pounds of rice, a drill press, 125 cases of beer, a portable water cooler, 1,088 pounds of bread, a reflector antenna, 2,300 pounds of plywood, a pinball machine.

For five long days the flat-bottomed LST wallowed from trough to trough. Finally, we sailed into the sheltered harbor called Futami Ko—a remnant of a volcanic crater—at Chichi Jima. Rolling ceased; spirits soared.

The dull orange sun was disappearing into the Pacific behind us. A petty officer came on deck, pointed to the golden afterglow on the green mountains, and said, "I'll always remember the Bonins. These people are good, real good. The natives and the Navy here are just like a big family."

Joe and I joined the family. Though the only telephones on Chichi were the Navy's eight rural-style crank sets, word of mouth transmits news at teletype speed. No one seemed surprised to see two strangers strolling the oiled dirt road that serves as main street of Omura, Chichi's sole village.

Soon after I arrived on Chichi, I was stopped on the main street by a gray-haired man. "My name is Willie Savory," he said. "I work just now as a painter for the Navy, but I'm a fisherman" (pages 132-3).



Scourges of paradise: Giant African snails, brought from Japan only 30 years ago, ravage gardens. When the five-inch mollusks climb high, islanders say, a typhoon approaches.

Leafy ginkokai grows in impenetrable walls; the Japanese planted the Central American shrub to camouflage gun positions. Now children at play blow its seeds through peashooters.



KODACHROMES © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Grand old man of Chichi Jima, 87-year-old Uncle Charlie Washington reminisces about his youth. His father, a Negro cabin boy from Bermuda, deserted a vessel here in 1843; his mother was a daughter of Nathaniel Savory. During the days of sail, Charlie shipped aboard whalers and sealers that called at Alaska and San Francisco. Through it all, he recalls, "I never had hard times, you know."



Clearly, Willie's deeply lined, tanned face said man of the sea, and his boyish, tooth-filled grin bespoke one of the warmest hearts on the island. We became good friends.

The dark-blue waters around the Bonins teem with fish—wahoo up to 100 pounds, mackerel, tuna, rock cod, and many varieties of small reef fish. Schools of sardines scud through shallow waters like dark clouds. The islands supported a major fishery and two Japanese whaling stations before the war.

Chichi fishermen regularly cross the open sea to the now-uninhabited isles of Muko Jima, 40 miles away, and Haha Jima, 25 miles, when fishing promises to be better there. Willie described one visit to Muko:

"I told the guys, 'I say it's going to blow. We gotta go back.' But they didn't listen to me. So, O.K., next day it started to blow. We had enough chow for that day. But after that

we had none, so we had to go out and chase wild goats. We ate barbecued goats for five days. And we dug down into an old well to get water."

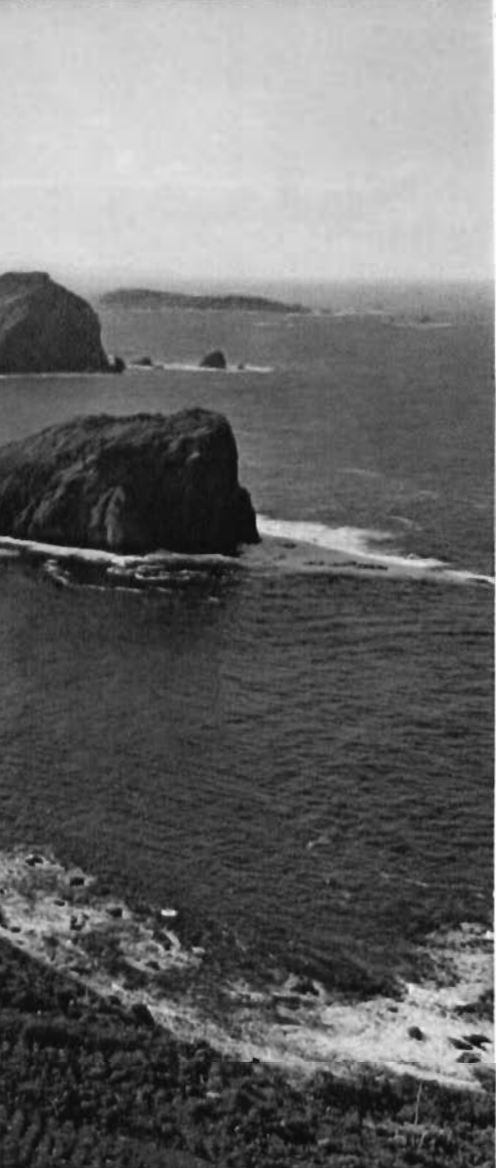
Jerry Savory explained that the quota for each fisherman was 800 pounds a month; they could easily catch much more, but space was limited on Guam-bound Navy ships.

Navy Leaves a Mark on Island Life

"Even if a man gets only 500 or 600 pounds of fish a month, and is not lazy and comes to the Navy and works," Jerry said, "he can earn at least \$200 a month. We live better than the medium-class people in Japan."

Like many other islanders, Jerry was worried about the Bonins' economy, if and when the Navy pulled out. About 60 men and women regularly worked for the Navy, earning a total of \$7,300 a month. Some weeks later I





Bound for a breeding place of storms, a Navy weather balloon, released from its green shroud, will sail up to 100,000 feet in this typhoon belt. Instruments will relay atmospheric data to electronic gear in the fiberglass dome. The U. S. is turning over to Japan the weather station on Chichi.

Grim reminder of combat, a Japanese coast-defense gun still points seaward from Chichi. During World War II, Japanese troops dug dozens of gun emplacements in the hillsides, improved the harbor to accommodate warships, and stored supplies for their airbase at Iwo Jima, 170 miles to the south. In 1944 nearly 7,000 civilians were evacuated to Japan from the Bonins and the Volcanoes. After the 1945 surrender, the U. S. Navy permitted 135 Chichi islanders of Western descent to return.



KODACHROMES © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

learned that the base would, indeed, be closed, but that Japan would continue to operate the weather station.

The islanders lived in houses the Navy helped them build. The Navy treated their illnesses, educated their children, and provided bingo games and movies.

Under the Navy, the Yankees became even more American. Close friendships developed between the islanders and Navy families, which included 13 wives and 16 children when I visited Chichi. They fished together, played softball, and exchanged Sunday visits.

"These people are as nice as any I've met," said Chief Boatswain's Mate Robert McClure, who had spent the day helping a fisherman repair his outboard motor. "If you do them a favor, they repay it right away. I give them cake, because they do so little baking here. As soon as I get home, there's a boy with a bag

of tomatoes or some other gift at my door."

Though the Navy families on Chichi lived far from home—"Amer-ee-ka Jima," as they called it—their modest frame bungalows had all the comforts of suburbia, including barbecue grills. Standard stateside brands filled the commissary shelves. The movie theater consisted of an outdoor screen and folding chairs. Attendance was almost compulsive.

"You should see us on a cold, rainy night, bundled up in raincoats and boots and watching 'The Benny Goodman Story' for the fifth time," said the wife of a Navy yeoman.

Chichi Jima occupies a strategic spot in the Pacific, and the small base was designed to support the U. S. fleet. Municipal services, however, soon rivaled naval duties.

"I have been a civil engineer, cashier, accountant, foreman, and government adviser," said Lt. Comdr. Dale W. Johnson, officer in

ROUGH BACK COUNTRY challenges ramblers. Half-wild goats clamber on steep slopes and forage in tropical undergrowth until their owner shoots them for food. In a wind-tangled stand of bamboo, Savory cousins pursue a favorite island pastime, boonie-stomping—a search in the “boondocks” for World War II relics.

138 EXTACHROME (OPPOSITE) AND KODACHROME © N.G.S.





charge of the base. A doctor, a corpsman, and a nurse took care of the islanders' medical needs.

Lt. Wayne F. Crossman, the medical officer, told me one startling fact: At least half the adult islanders suffer from symptoms of peptic ulcers.

"I don't have the facilities to make tests to show if they are, in fact, ulcers," he told me in the island's gleaming dispensary. "In periods of stress the symptoms increase—say when fishing is bad, or in the typhoon season. I suspect it comes from living in a closed society, where everyone knows everyone else very well. Nervousness and tension would be natural products."

Though the islanders may indeed suffer from a sophisticated malady, they hold to simple beliefs. Even petite Anna Washington Stettenbenz, the native-born island nurse, admits to a few superstitions.

"Babies born on a falling tide will have a short life," she said. "All the old people keep track of this, and they know it's true. The first thing my father did when I was born was to go out and check the tide. Fortunately, it was rising."

Children Face a Language Problem

Uncle Rodrick Webb, an island leader, summed up two major worries on Chichi Jima about the Japanese return: education and property.

"I have a child in third grade," he said. "She has learned only English. If they start teaching only in Japanese, she'll have to go back to kindergarten.

"Most of our houses are not built on our own property. They were put where they are because of the water lines and electricity the Navy installed. We are worried about what we will have to do when the Japanese come back. Move the houses?"

Some of the houses occupy land owned by former Japanese farmers. Before the war, rich soil, a mild





D-Day on Iwo Jima: Marines hit the beach on February 19, 1945. Struggling through volcanic ash, they isolate 548-foot Mount Suribachi, only high ground on the eight-square-mile island. Some 21,000 Japanese defenders, concealed in caves, blockhouses, and pill-boxes, fought on for a month. The death toll: 6,821 Americans and all but 1,083 Japanese.

Up goes the flag. Americans take Suribachi on February 23, a moment immortalized by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal. For the next 23 years the Stars and Stripes flew from the height day and night. Now a copper reproduction of the flag honors the campaign in which, in Adm. Chester W. Nimitz's words, "uncommon valor was a common virtue."

Rusty wreckage of battle, a remnant of a Japanese tracked vehicle appears on an Iwo beach; the restless sea constantly exposes and buries such debris. Plans call for the U. S. to continue operating loran (long-range navigation) stations on Iwo and Marcus Islands.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOE ROSENTHAL (ABOVE) AND U. S. MARINE CORPS (OPPOSITE);
KODACHROME BY JOE MUNROE © N.G.S.



climate, and adequate rainfall made the Bonin Islands a huge natural greenhouse. Papayas, pineapples, bananas, and oranges grew plump and juicy in the warm sun. Ornamental, medicinal, and spice plants fetched good prices in Japan. Sugar cane was important, particularly on neighboring Haha Jima.

Today, on Chichi and Haha, you see only scattered patches of sugar cane still pushing through undergrowth. Vegetable farms have shrunk to backyard gardens.

Unhappily, farming in the Bonins has fallen victim to the giant African snail (*Achatina fulica*), the Oriental fruit fly, and an appallingly prolific scrub tree called ginkokai.

Wherever it goes, the giant snail devastates plants. Five inches long and equipped with thousands of rasping teeth, the brown-and-white pest has a king-size appetite (page 134). I saw snails crawling all over the island; whenever I stepped off a road, dry shells crackled underfoot.

Promoters introduced the snails, native to east Africa, into Japan and later the Bonins as a food and a "cure" for everything from tuberculosis to kidney trouble. The Japanese took snails to many Pacific islands as protein for their soldiers. But even as a last-resort food, the snails were unpopular.

The giant snails, islanders say, do serve one useful purpose. The natives are convinced the snails forecast typhoons.

"That's right," Uncle Charlie told me. "If you see these snails crawling up high, you got something comin'. That's no dream. They know it before the weather hits."

New World Tree Overgrows the Bonins

Islanders fence their gardens with corrugated iron to keep out the snails. But fences don't stop the Oriental fruit fly, a pest that apparently came to Chichi Jima in wartime shipments of fruit.

The fast-growing ginkokai (*Leucaena glauca*), with its feathery leaves and long green seed pods, is rather attractive, taken one at a time; en masse, it is an ecological nightmare. Originally from Central America and the West Indies, it grows into a nearly impenetrable jungle. The Japanese brought ginkokai to Pacific islands to camouflage gun positions. It has overgrown the Bonins.

Shortly before our visit to Chichi ended, Joe and I went to a party at Nat Savory's little yellow-painted teahouse. We wanted to see Jerry Savory's Japanese basket dance.

Jerry, the picture of dignity when sitting as a council member, unbends at parties.

Roy Gilley accompanied him, tapping a table and a dish with a stick and singing in a nasal monotone. Jerry put a blue kerchief on his head and stepped out the simple, rhythmic folk dance as he pretended to catch fish in a rice field and put them in a basket.

Then Roy whipped out his harmonica and ran through his repertoire, ranging from a Japanese chanty to "Auld Lang Syne." Jerry, who longs to become a United States citizen, delivered his favorite "Stars and Stripes Forever" speech, an eye-misting display of unashamed flag-waving. He wound up by belting out "Carolina Moon."

Ghost Towns Guard Lonely Haha

The next morning Joe and I embarked on a trip to Haha Jima, wrapped in haze on the southern horizon 25 miles away. Before the 1944 evacuation, 2,050 Japanese colonists had lived on Haha, which means "mother," compared with the 4,300 who lived on Chichi, or "father." Only fishermen and Japanese graves visitation teams called at Haha for a long time after the war. The last residents had left nearly 24 years before we made the trip in a Navy air-rescue boat.

Haha still lay deep in its long slumber as we poked into placid Okimura harbor. A school of fish rippled the water; two wild geese glided near shore. No other sign of life—only eerie silence. The narrow beach ended abruptly at a solid wall of ginkokai and brush. Behind slept the ghost town of Okimura, once the largest settlement on Haha.

Jeff Gilley, Roy's younger brother, unsheathed a machete and hacked a path through the tangle. Sunlight filtering through the green leaves cast bizarre shadow patterns.

We reached the shells of two brick warehouses. Wartime bombings and time had obliterated every other structure in Okimura, except for a concrete communications building on the hill overlooking the harbor. No trace remained of the broad road that once led from the beach.

Pushing up past a rusted Japanese Army truck and a field gun with barrel missing, we found a hillside cemetery choking in dense growth. Plastic flowers, left months before, brightened many graves.

Back at the beach, we heard a faint buzzing: a reconnaissance plane. A Navy officer with us said the Japanese had been given



EKTACHROME BY JOE MUNROE © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

“I would go back to the Bonins tomorrow,” a 65-year-old native of Haha Jima tells her granddaughter. Now living in Tokyo, Mrs. Ito Takahashi recalls leaving her farm and tobacco shop in 1944 with a few possessions, including the pincushion she holds. Wall poster shows a Bonin breadfruit tree and speaks of love for her birthplace. With the Bonins reverting to Japan, she and hundreds of others hope for an early return to their island homes.

permission to photograph the island to plan for its future development. With this reminder that Haha Jima would surely reawaken, we slipped out of Okimura harbor.

On a bright, breezy morning Joe and I said goodbye to our Yankee friends and boarded the Chichi Bird. It lumbered into the air, bound for a more famous island also scheduled for reversion to Japan. Its name, somber in memory: Iwo Jima.

An hour later, Iwo poked out of the haze—a flat little island shaped like South America, but ending in a bump. The bump was historic Mount Suribachi. We circled closer and I saw the Stars and Stripes snapping in the breeze

atop the volcanic cone. White surf washed the black beaches. Time slid backward for me to the bloody battle for Iwo Jima.

February 19, 1945, was D-Day for 30,000 Marines who hit that beach of gritty volcanic ash. The narrow strip looks scarcely big enough to hold such a horde, to say nothing of the tanks, bulldozers, trucks, artillery, gasoline drums, and tons of supplies.

Just four days after the landing, 40 Marines crawled warily up the north face of Suribachi. They overwhelmed a small Japanese force in a brief, fierce fight, and planted the American flag on the 548-foot height. Later in the day, six Marines replaced the banner with a larger

flag, and Joe Rosenthal of the Associated Press recorded the scene in one of the most famous war photographs ever made (page 141).

Only after 26 days of slaughter was Iwo Jima secured. We suffered 26,038 casualties, including 6,821 killed. The 21,000 Japanese fought to the end, yielding only 1,083 prisoners.

"Among the Americans who served on Iwo Jima uncommon valor was a common virtue." These simple, moving words of Adm. Chester W. Nimitz leap from a plaque under the United States flag that flew night and day atop Mount Suribachi. Just before the reversion agreement was signed, the flag was replaced with a copper reproduction, thus preserving the symbol of heroism—and simplifying its maintenance.

"In this constant breeze a flag is tattered in three weeks," said Maj. Paul Gerber, commander of the U. S. airbase on Iwo.

We stood on Suribachi, overlooking the entire island. Once 50,000 U. S. and Japanese troops had swarmed over it; now only 78 Americans were there—40 at the Air Force base and another 38 Coast Guard men. The ten civilian employees included no Japanese.

Ironically, the airbase had no planes, and the Coast Guard station had no boat. The Air Force maintained the 9,800-foot runway as an emergency landing field. The Coast Guard beamed loran (long-range navigation) signals from a 1,350-foot tower.

Ghosts of War Linger in Dark Caves

Major Gerber drove me from Suribachi down to the beach where the landing took place. It rises in a series of broad flat terraces. I sank up to my ankles; black sand filled my shoes. Every step took effort.

"Imagine crawling over this stuff in a field pack with your clothes soaking wet and shells bursting all around you," said the major.

It was easy to imagine. I felt even closer to the war two days later when Joe and I pushed our way through a tangle of dripping wet ginkokai to a typical Japanese cave. The entrance was scarcely bigger than a rabbit hole. We slid in feet first, dislodging a small avalanche of dirt and stones.

Dust of the old burrow started me coughing. The air was stifling. Littering the low passages lay the debris of war. I saw rifle ammunition, live hand grenades, land mines, small artillery shells, rusty helmets, long-dry canteens. Joe beamed his flashlight up a side passage, and two dusty brown skulls stared

back. We had seen enough. I clambered out into a rain that suddenly seemed refreshing.

The heat in Iwo's caves comes from volcanic activity. Before the war, residents mined steaming sulphur pits. Like the Bonin Islanders, they raised sugar cane and vegetables, and did a little fishing. The 1,200 Japanese on Iwo and Kita Iwo Jima, a small island to the north, were evacuated in 1944.

Prewar Residents Dream of Return

Shortly after the war, former residents of the Bonins and Iwo formed the Ogasawara Association to work for repatriation. In Tokyo I found members jubilant over the news of the islands' reversion to Japan.

"It is like a dream," said Mrs. Ito Takahashi. "I was born on Haha Jima, and I never have forgotten to keep wishing to return. Life on the island is much better. The cold weather here is very hard on me."

We sat in Mrs. Takahashi's little house in a damp industrial district near Tokyo Harbor (preceding page). The 65-year-old widow once ran a small shop on Haha, selling tobacco, saki, and light meals.

"I still have property on Haha Jima, and I'd like my sons to develop it," she said. "I'd like to have a little shop there again."

Almost all the former colonists I talked with in Japan were eager to return to the Bonins. Even when I described the dense growth that obliterated the farmland, especially on Haha, they talked of sending at least a vanguard of returnees back by autumn of 1968.

Imaichi Okuyama, of Chichi Jima, now on the staff of the Ogasawara Association, realizes that the Japanese Government will have to provide aid to develop the islands, particularly to promote tourism, now just a dream. His tiny, cluttered office is battered by Tokyo street sounds. As we talked, traffic hissed in the rain, horns blared, sirens wailed occasionally. But Mr. Okuyama's eyes sparkled. He was in the Bonins, blessed by the bright sun and fruitful sea.

"I think fishing and agriculture will be rebuilt first," he explained. "But I have a dream for the future. I hope we can use the special features of this subtropical land to make it a paradise for the Japanese people."

I hope so, too. And I hope it will also become a paradise for Uncle Charlie Washington, Willie Savory, and all the other good people I came to know on that remarkable little outpost of America in the far Pacific.