Pacific Legacy: Image and Memory from World War II in the Pacific by Gerald A. Meehl

Fascinating Book

My Personal Review:
I've read a lot of books about the Pacific war, but this one is definitely my favorite. Rex Alan Smith served 36 months as an Army Engineer in the Pacific. Since then, he has traveled extensively, visiting and talking with other veterans of the Pacific war. Gerald Meehl has spent years combing the Pacific and photographing the places which played important roles in WWII in the Pacific: places such as Pearl Harbor, Wake Island, Bataan, Corregidor, Guadalcanal, Tulagi, Munda, Tarawa, Guam, Saipan, Tinian, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, Okinawa; along with lesser-known, but exotic outposts, such as Bora Bora and Pago Pago.

What emerges from their work is a series of more than 20 essays on individual battles, in the order in which they occurred, from the attack on Pearl Harbor to the final surrender at Tokyo Bay. The essays begin with explanations of why the battles were fought, and what strategies were employed. Aerial photographs give you an overall view of the operation. First-hand accounts by the men who fought there give you a chilling sense of what it was like to charge up the beach in the face of withering enemy fire. There are hundreds of photographs - about half in black and white, which were taken during the actual fighting; and half in color, taken by Mr. Meehl some years later, often of the same scenes. The color photographs are beautiful and haunting. You'll see the rusting hulk of an abandoned tank, or the crumbling rubble of a bombed-out pillbox, surrounded by sparkling white beaches with swaying palms, crystal clear ocean waters, and blue skies with fluffy white clouds. In his introduction to the book, Joe Foss, Medal of Honor winner at Guadalcanal, says, "We could not cover every campaign in detail, nor was it our purpose to present a comprehensive history of the Pacific war. Rather, we tried to create for the reader, while the veterans themselves can recall it, what that war was like--how it looked and felt and smelled--and to examine the legacy today of a war so fiercely fought on faraway Pacific Islands."