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Cover: A Stuart light tank in North Africa. These tanks were no match for Rommel's panzers at Kasserine.
See story page 80.
Photo: National Archives.

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The atomic bomb brought World War II to an end and changed the future of mankind.

The events of early August 1945 brought World War II in the Pacific to an end and ushered in a new era of warfare, one with the potential for apocalyptic annihilation. U.S. President Harry Truman had weighed the consequences of two terrible courses of action. The American military was marshalling its might off the coast of the Japanese home islands as an outright invasion loomed. In the effort to subdue Japan and forcibly occupy the country, there was no doubt that a bloodbath would occur. Casualties among American forces were estimated at a million or more.

The alternative for Truman was to authorize the use of a new and terrifying weapon, its destructive force far greater than any ordnance the world had ever known. Truman had only become aware of the Manhattan Project and the development of the atomic bomb after the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in April, and he understood the magnitude of the decision he was compelled to make. The destruction of one or two Japanese cities meant the deaths of thousands of civilians as well as military personnel and infrastructure, but it might well bring the war to an end and save the lives of many Americans who would return home, go to college, marry, and live their lives.

The choice for Truman was difficult but inevitable.

Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, a 29-year-old pilot who had participated in the first U.S. air raid on Nazi-occupied Europe two years earlier, was then halfway around the world. At the controls of his Boeing B-29 Superfortress, nicknamed "Enola Gay" after his mother, Tibbets revved the engine of the big plane. Burdened by the weight of the atomic bomb nicknamed "Little Boy," the bomber strained into the night sky from North Field on the island of Tinian in the Marianas in the early hours of August 6, 1945.

Four Japanese cities, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Kokura, and Kyoto, had been left relatively untouched thus far during the massive American bombing of the Japanese home islands. These, therefore, were selected as possible targets for the first atomic bomb. Kyoto was later removed from the target list due to the presence of numerous religious shrines in the city, and Hiroshima, an industrial center of 350,000 people, was selected for destruction.

Having flown 1,750 miles, "Enola Gay" released Little Boy—equivalent to 12,500 tons of TNT—which exploded at an altitude of 1,900 feet, incinerating an estimated 80,000 people instantly. A huge mushroom cloud boiled skyward as temperatures on the ground reached an estimated 300,000 degrees Centigrade. Many more people died in the days that followed, victims of burns or radiation poisoning.

Captain Robert A. Lewis, co-pilot of "Enola Gay", recalled that an immediate cheer at the release of the bomb was swiftly followed by an eerie and reverent silence. He whispered, "My God, what have we done?"

Despite the tremendous destruction, the Japanese government remained torn between factions that advocated continuing the fight to the death and those who desperately sought peace with the United States to prevent further such catastrophic attacks.

Emperor Hirohito was caught between the vise of national pride and the obvious conclusion that Japan could not win World War II. The hesitation and infighting in Tokyo precipitated the dropping of the second atomic bomb, "Fat Man," on Nagasaki, three days later.

This event shook the Japanese further, and Hirohito, uncertain whether the U.S. possessed many more such devastating weapons and could soon rain them down on other Japanese cities, addressed his people with the news of their defeat on August 15.

In the days ahead, celebrations took place in the Allied countries as the most destructive armed conflict in human history finally ended. However, the story of the atomic bomb is a cautionary tale, and its shadow stalks mankind to this day.

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CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

KEVIN SEABROOKE
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN M. HYMEL
Research Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Mark Carlson, Joshua Donohue, William R. Hogan, David Alan Johnson, David Lippman, Tim Miller, Kerria Seabrooke, Kevin Seabrooke, Neil Taylor, Allyn Vannoy

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
MARK HINTZ, Publisher
(703) 507-4976
mhintz@sovmedia.com

LINDA GALLIHER, Ad Coordinator
570-322-7848, ext. 160
lgalliher@sovmedia.com

BUSINESS OFFICE:
MARK HINTZ
Vice President & Publisher

STEPHFANIE RUPP
Subscription Customer Services
customerservice@sovhomestead.com

PUBLISHERS SERVICE ASSOCIATES
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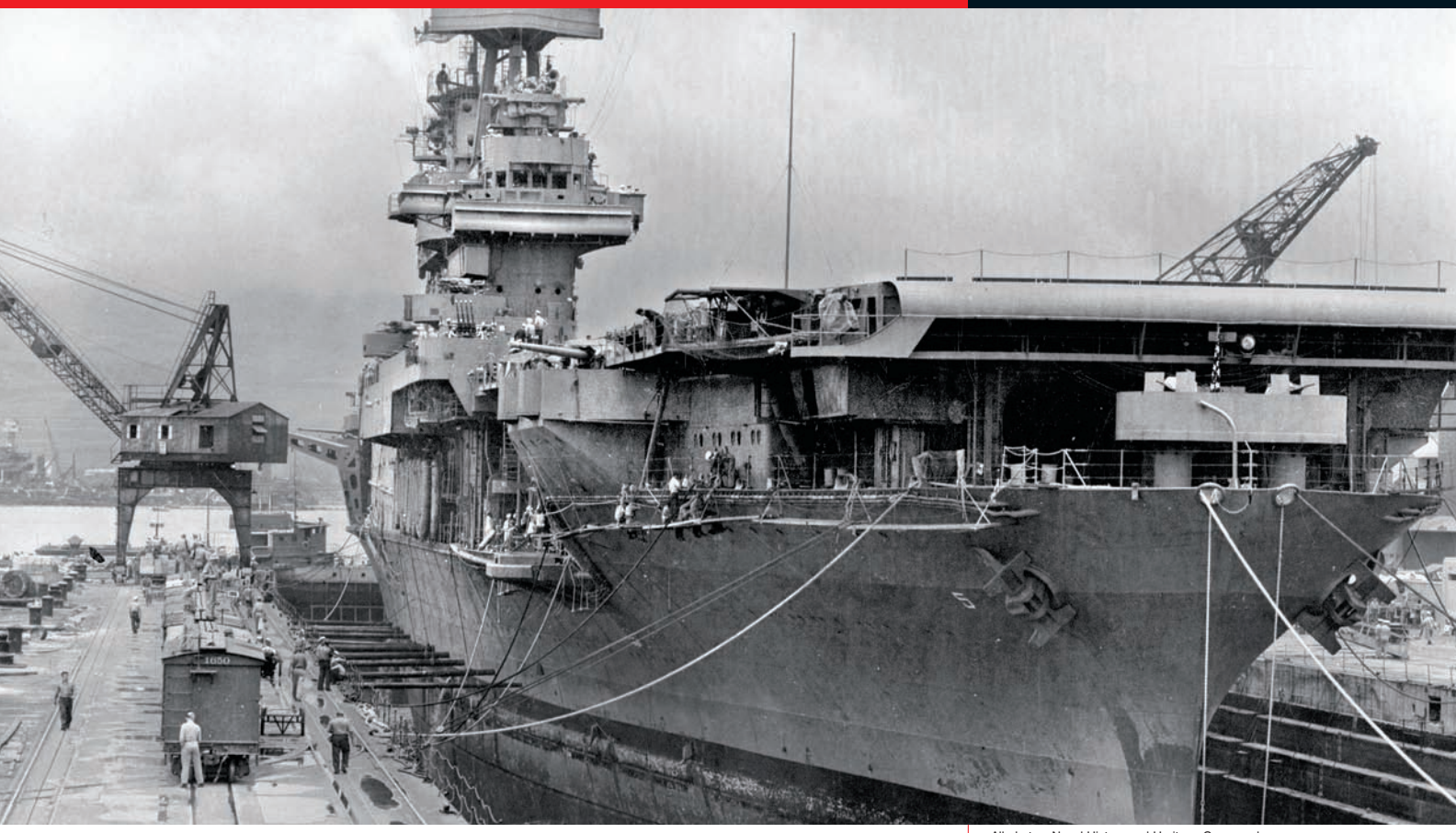

All photos: Naval History and Heritage Command

Heavily damaged at the Battle of the Coral Sea, the repaired USS *Yorktown* joined the pivotal Battle of Midway.

The Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942 was the first naval engagement in history to be fought between aircraft carriers. Too far apart for visual contact, the battle was a study in missed opportunities, mistakes and bad judgment. The Japanese were determined to sink the American carriers as they, in turn, tried to stop the Japanese landings on Port Moresby in New Guinea.

When Lieutenant Commander Kakuichi Takahashi's Aichi D3A "Val" dive bombers found Task Force 17 on May 9, a swarm of 19 went for the *Lexington* and 14 others descended on the *Yorktown*. Among several near misses, two bombs hit the *Lexington*, but Wildcats from the *Yorktown* managed to break up the attacking Vals.

The ship's luck changed for the worse when a single armor-piercing 551-pound bomb tore into the *Yorktown* flight deck 15 feet inboard from the superstructure and exploded four decks below, causing great internal damage. The lighting on three decks was out and more than two dozen main hull frames were wrecked. But the carrier remained afloat and her gunners brought down two more of Takahashi's dive bombers.

One small Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) carrier, the *Shoho*, had been sunk in the battle and big new *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, both veterans of the Pearl Harbor attack, were forced to return to their homeland. For the U.S, the beloved "Lady Lex" was lost and the *Yorktown* badly damaged.

Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher chose to head back to Pearl Harbor. The Japanese broke off and returned to Japan, claiming both carriers sunk. The battle forced Vice Adm. Shigeyoshi Inoue to cancel the Port Moresby invasion, but it had far more profound effects on the course of the war.

Back at Pearl Harbor, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CINCPAC), already knew that Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander in Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, was about to launch a massive raid and landing on the tiny atoll of Midway, 1,200 miles northwest of Hawaii. Nimitz knew that could not be allowed to happen for, if Midway fell, it would provide a base for repeated strikes and landings on Hawaii. The *Enterprise* and *Hornet* of Task Force 16 under Adm. William F. "Bull" Halsey were still able to fight. But with the loss of the *Lex*, Nimitz had only two undamaged carriers. *Yorktown* might require protracted repairs on the mainland and the *Saratoga* was still out of commission after being torpedoed in January.

It was a matter of simple arithmetic.

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The aircraft carrier *Yorktown* is shown operating in the Pacific in February 1942, three months before she was heavily damaged at the Battle of the Coral Sea. This photo has been reviewed by censors, and the CXAM-radar antenna atop the foremast has been retouched.

Nimitz needed a third flight deck, even if it was not in perfect condition. With *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku* out of commission, Adm. Chuichi Nagumo would still have four big carriers from which to hit Midway. But how could the battered *Yorktown* help in the Navy's hour of need?

While TF 17 commander Admiral Frank "Black Jack' Fletcher limped home with his remaining ships, Nimitz received preliminary reports of the damage to the *Yorktown*. The final assessment would have to wait until she reached Pearl around May 28. With the brilliant cryptanalysis from Station HYPO at Pearl, Nimitz knew that Nagumo was to attack Midway on June 4, leaving him exactly seven days to work a miracle.

Yorktown's captain, Elliott Buckmaster, pushed his crew and damaged ship as fast as possible. She reached a sustained speed of 20 knots, not quite enough for air operations. An iridescent slick of oil trailed for 10 miles in her wake. During the 18 days it took her to reach Oahu, her engineers and damage control parties managed to patch the gaping hole in the flight deck, doing so well that it appeared pristine. But much more had to be done below decks. Buckmaster prepared a detailed report of her damage, and on May 25, 100 miles from port, a plane managed to take off and deliver it. Nimitz ordered the Pearl Harbor Yard superintendent, Capt. Claude Gillette, and a team of specialists to fly to *Yorktown* aboard a Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boat and determine how best to get the ship back to sea as soon as possible.

As for Task Force 16, Admiral Halsey would not be at Midway. During the past two months, the tough old sailor had run himself physically ragged. He had lost about 20 pounds. His uniform, usually neat, hung on his thin frame, and his eyes were sunken. He had contracted a serious case of contact dermatitis, which had spread all over his body, and no one could do anything about it. *Enterprise* and *Hornet*, with the cruisers and destroyers, entered Pearl Harbor at 1100 hours on May 26 and tied up at docks F2 and F10 on Ford Island. Barges and water hoses began loading, arming, and fueling the ships. Since they had not expended any ordnance on their run to and from the Coral Sea, no bombs or torpedoes would be needed. But the crews needed some time on solid ground. In 12-hour shifts, sailors and junior officers went ashore. None knew what was coming, but they probably sensed some urgency in the air.

The two carriers received new aircraft and more than 19,500 barrels of fuel oil, while the gasoline lighter YO-24 pumped 82,000 gallons of aviation fuel into their tanks.

At 1352 hours on May 27, a day earlier than expected, the damaged *Yorktown* limped slowly up the channel to the Navy Yard where she was tied up at Berth 16, awaiting her entry into Dry Dock No. 1. Immediately, teams of engineers, welders, and surveyors streamed aboard and assessed what had been done to the ship by Japanese bombs. Captain Buckmaster oversaw the work of putting *Yorktown* back into service. He was determined to see his ship sail again, but he didn't see how she could be repaired in less than two weeks.

When a tired Fletcher arrived at CINCPAC headquarters, he gave his assessment of the battle. But what he next heard shocked him right down to his toes.

"We are going to fix you up right away and send you to Midway," Nimitz told his TF 17 commander.

"Midway?" Fletcher repeated, astonished.

"Yes. Midway," Nimitz said, and explained the details of Operation MI and how both Task Forces 16 and 17 would be heading north to attack the Japanese carrier force before they could hit and occupy Midway.

"But *Yorktown* will need months to be repaired," Fletcher protested. He was stunned when Nimitz insisted *Yorktown* would be back in service in time for the battle.

The worst damage was from the armor-piercing bomb that had smashed through the center of the flight deck near the island superstructure. It tore through the galley deck, hangar deck, and decks one and two before

hitting the bulkhead of the forward engine room and exploding. It destroyed six compartments, damaged and bent 24 hull frames, and put an elevator out of commission. Two more near misses on both port and starboard dented and ruptured hull plates and frames, allowing fuel oil to leak. While much of the damage was extensive, it was the twisted and torn hull frames and deck beams that were the most critical. These had to be repaired or replaced to prevent fatal weakening of the hull.

After hearing the reports from the yard engineers, Nimitz broke a cardinal rule of safety by voiding the standing rule to pump out the tanks of aviation gasoline before any work could be done on the ship. Pumping out the volatile fuel would cost a full day, time CINCPAC could not afford. At 0645 hours, *Yorktown* slid into the cavernous dry dock, coming to a stop as the huge steel doors closed. Immediately the huge pumps began draining the concrete pit. Even before it was dry, Nimitz and Rear Admiral Edward Furlong, commander of the Navy Yard, were sloshing around under the massive hull, inspecting the damage.

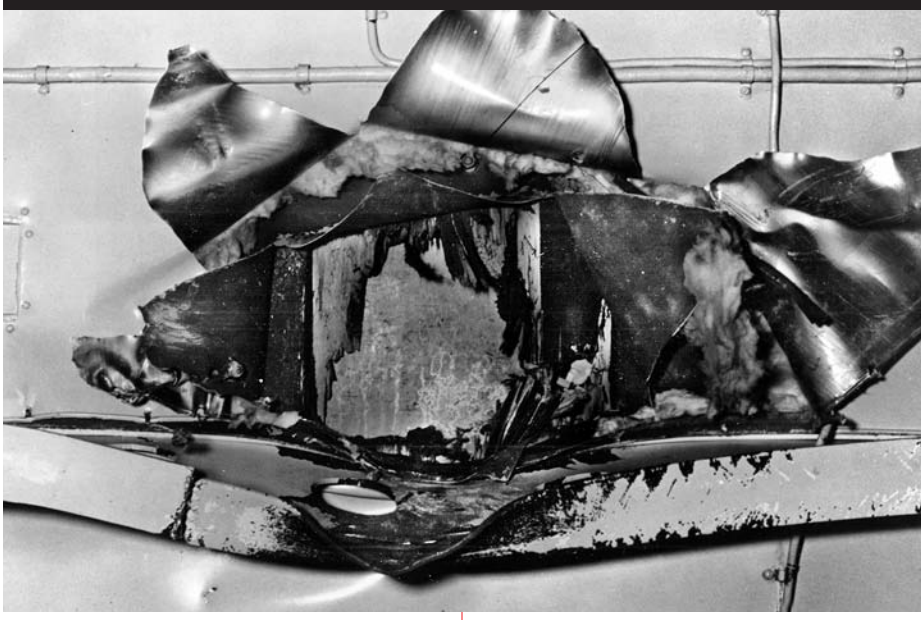
Nimitz, wearing hip waders, turned to Lt. Com. H. J. Pfingsta and said in a grave voice, "We must have this ship back in three days."

Suppressing a lump in his throat, the hull repair officer nodded and said, "Yes, sir."

So began one of the most incredible efforts in the history of any navy to repair the crippled *Yorktown* in time to steam to Midway.

As Nimitz climbed the ladder to return to his headquarters, more than 1,400 welders, technicians, electricians, shipfitters, plumbers, and draftsmen went below to begin work on the massive job. So much power was required for lighting, generators, pumps, ventilators, arc welding, and cutting that Nimitz made a special request to the head of the Hawaiian Electric Company to divert city power to the yard. For the next two days, Honolulu endured a series of rolling blackouts, which were explained as emergency tests.

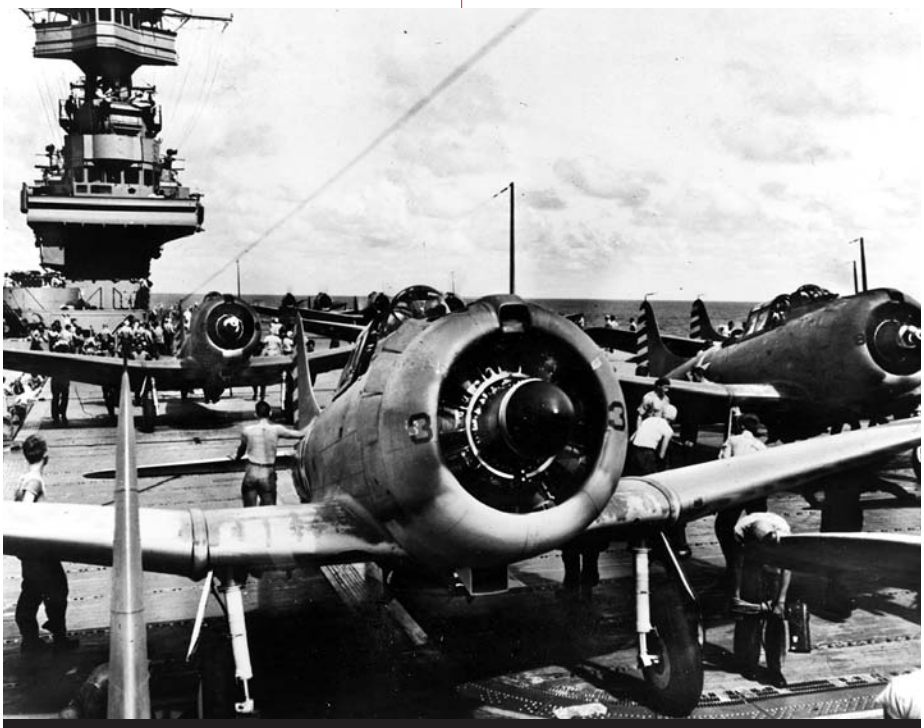
Only the most vital spaces and frames were repaired. The ship's service store, soda fountain, and one laundry room were left to be repaired later. The starboard hull and deck frames were dealt with one by one. After cutting torches removed the worst damage, wooden templates were quickly built to match the missing metal. Then each one was taken topside where a steel plate was cut to the same shape, brought down to the frame, and riveted or welded into place. More than 20 steel beams and bulkheads were replaced in this way.



ABOVE: This photo reveals the damages *Yorktown* sustained to her third and fourth decks from a Japanese bomb during the Battle of the Coral Sea. The blast killed or wounded 66 American sailors. BELOW: The impact point of the bomb that struck the *Yorktown*'s flight deck during the Battle of the Coral Sea is shown from the underside. A patch has been installed to cover the gaping hole.

There was no time for drawings or blueprints. Every part was custom-made and fitted with no regard for neatness. On it went, frame by frame, beam by beam, in cramped, hellishly hot, stinking spaces with only emergency lighting to penetrate the gloom. Ventilators hummed and pumped fresh air into the spaces while men worked shirtless and sweating. The foremen made sure every man drank plenty of coffee and water and ate the hundreds of sandwiches brought down by mess stewards. Injuries were unavoidable, but most men simply wrapped a bandage on the wound and returned to work. It was a heroic effort. They knew *Yorktown* had to be repaired and they would do it no matter what it took.

Planes from the mainland brought new hoists for the damaged elevator and new radar and radio equipment. Through the nights, *Yorktown* was caught in a nimbus of bright



ABOVE: A Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless dive bomber is shown on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown* during the Battle of the Coral Sea. *Yorktown*'s planes played a crucial role in the Battle of Midway as well. TOP: Aircraft from *Yorktown* inflicted heavy damage on the Japanese aircraft carrier *Shokaku* during the Battle of the Coral Sea. *Shokaku* is seen in this image while under attack by *Yorktown*'s planes.

yard lights as tiny blue sparks from the acetylene torches flared like fireflies. The noise of riveting guns and screeching metal never ceased. The huge ship was slowly coming back to life with the efforts of more than 1,000 dedicated men. Little effort was made to paint the new steel except to prevent corrosion.

As for the rupture in the hull, Pfingsta chose not to cut the damaged plating out. Instead, his crew manhandled a large steel plate over the rent and welded it tight. Hasty repairs like this could be redone later on the mainland. All they were trying to do was get *Yorktown* back into service.

It was decided that once the two task forces were clear of Hawaiian waters, they would rendezvous on June 3, about 325 miles northeast of Midway at 32 degrees north latitude, 173 degrees west longitude, a place euphorically called "Point Luck."

Here the carriers, under the overall command of Fletcher, could hit the First Air Fleet from the flank, hopefully before its bombers hit Midway. Timing was critical. They had to be close enough to hit Nagumo first, but not so close as to invite a certain attack by the same planes that had bombed Pearl Harbor. There was no uncertainty about the skill of Nagumo's "Wild Eagles."

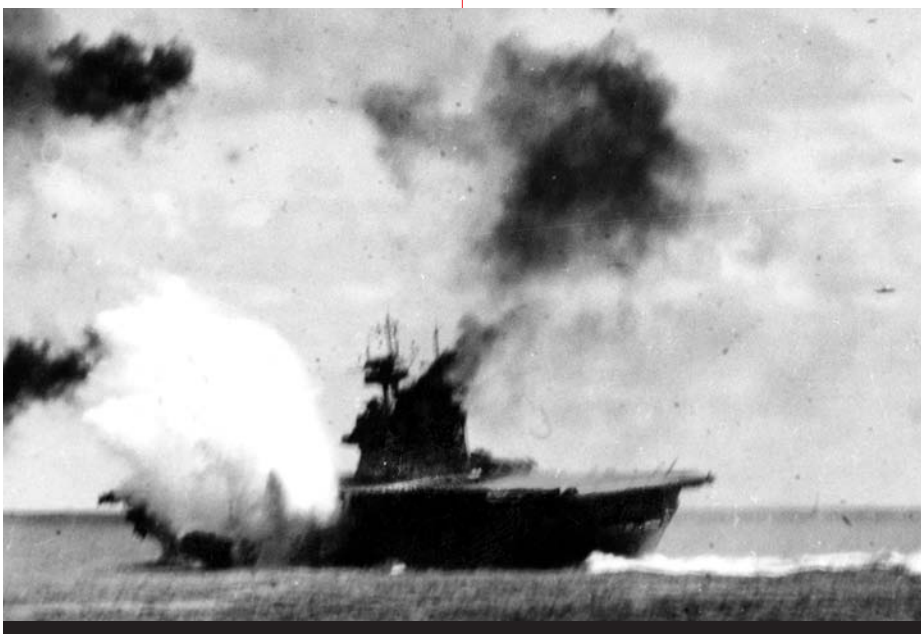
It was hoped that the American strikes could hit Nagumo with armed and fueled planes on the flight decks—the moment they were most vulnerable.

Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, who inherited Task Force 16 from Halsey, moved his force out of Pearl at 0800 hours on May 28, starting with the destroyers and followed by the cruisers at 1015. At 1115, *Enterprise* steamed slowly out of the channel on one boiler while hundreds of men paused in their labors and lined the wharves and shore to cheer the Big E. She was followed at 1235 by *Hornet* under the command of Capt. Marc "Pete" Mitscher, a name that would soon become synonymous with fast carriers.

When they reached the open sea south of Oahu, they turned to a course of 155 degrees and bent on 25 knots. Steaming 2,000 yards apart, preceded by the destroyers, the only intact carrier task force headed north for Point Luck.

At 0600 on May 29 (May 28 Hawaii time), as Task Force 16 was leaving Pearl, bells rang on board Yamamoto's dark gray flagship as her moorings were cast off. A hazy plume of smoke rose from the giant battleship *Yamato*'s single funnel, and the hull thrummed with the power of four mighty turbine engines. All around the anchorage in Hiroshima Bay, a score of battleships, cruisers, destroyers, oilers, and minesweepers weighed anchor and turned to face the channel to the Inland Sea. *Yamato*, led by a semicircle of destroyers, steamed like a great mountain of gray steel with her nine 18.1-inch guns pointing the way into the wide Bungo Strait between Kyushu and Shikoku before turning south.

Yamamoto went over the myriad details of his all-out plan to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Ahead lay 2,500 miles of open ocean,



A Japanese Type-91 aerial torpedo slams into the port side of the *Yorktown* during the Battle of Midway. This was one of several torpedoes that struck the carrier on June 4, severely damaging the carrier.

but most of that was under Japanese control. From the vast anchorages at Truk Lagoon in the Carolines, Nagumo and the First Air Fleet steamed out and headed east to change the world. *Akagi*, the second-oldest IJN carrier after *Hosho*, led *Kaga* on the starboard column while *Soryu* trailed *Hiryu*. The First Air Fleet had 250 bombers and fighters, while the cruisers carried 16 floatplanes.

A hundred miles behind them were the

ships of Tanaka's Occupation Force, with more than a dozen transports with a screen of cruisers and destroyers in a protective ring. Vice Adm. Nobutake Kondo's support force was in close proximity to cover the landings. Far to the north Vice Admiral Hosogaya's small carriers *Ryujo* and *Junyo* were ready to launch air strikes on the remote naval base at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians.

The First Carrier Striking Force was headed east, supremely confident that the U.S. Pacific Fleet was unaware of their approach, and that the two remaining American carriers would be surprised and overwhelmed.

There would be a nasty shock for at least one fleet commander, but it would not be either Fletcher nor Spruance. At 1100 hours on May 29 the dry dock was flooded and the patched *Yorktown* had water under her keel again. After being towed to the 10-10 dock, more equipment was hoisted aboard and installed. The elevator and radar were back in working order a few hours later. Fuel oil was pumped into her tanks as hundreds of yard workers continued to work inside her hull.

In a remarkable 48 hours, 20 less than Nimitz had insisted on, *Yorktown* had risen from the dead. While she was nowhere near fully repaired, she would be at Point Luck on time, ready to fight.

What *Yorktown* needed at that moment was a new air group. Since *Saratoga* was still on the West Coast, Air Wing 3 was at Naval Air Station Kaneohe Bay on eastern Oahu. Their SBDs, TBDs, and F4Fs would be consolidated into Air Wing 5, which had been cut down at the Coral Sea. *Saratoga*'s VF-3 merged with *Yorktown*'s VF-5 under Lt. Com. John "Jimmy" Thach, who was already recognized as a premier fighter pilot in the Pacific. His brainchild was the innovative "Thach Weave," a cooperative maneuver between two Wildcat fighters that proved to be deadly against the more nimble Zero.

Instead of the old F4F-3, the new air wing had the F4F-4, which had folding wings, allowing the ship to carry 24 fighters. Likewise, several of Com. Max Leslie's SBDs and pilots of Bombing 3 and Scouting 3 joined *Yorktown*, as did VT-3's TBD Devastator torpedo planes under Lt. Com. Lance "Lem" Massey. The American practice of shifting air wings between carriers proved to be a huge benefit for Nimitz.

Yorktown **capsizes and sinks on June 7, 1942, after being struck by two torpedoes fired from Japanese submarine *I-168* that had been stalking the damaged carrier after the battle.**

Yamamoto was unable to determine what Nimitz was up to. He was certain that only two American carriers were still afloat, but since they were seen in the Coral Sea in early May, they would not have time to be ready when word of the attack on Dutch Harbor sent them racing north.

But then a blow struck the First Air Fleet. Nimitz was not the only admiral faced with a sick subordinate. As *Akagi* steamed eastward toward Midway, Admiral Nagumo learned Com. Mitsuo Fuchida, his air wing commander, had to undergo surgery for appendicitis.

Two days later *Akagi*'s air operations officer, the man who had helped plan both the Pearl Harbor and Midway attacks, Com. Minoru Genda, was in sick bay with influenza and a high fever. Nagumo, like many Japanese sailors, believed in omens. And this was a bad one. But his inborn pragmatism would not allow him to become despondent. His mission came first. Nagumo had always been a surface ship commander. While an aggressive destroyer division commander, he was often hesitant with the carriers. His failure to launch a third wave at Pearl Harbor was still a stain on his honor and courage. The Midway air strikes would be led by Hiryu's air wing leader, Lt. Joichi Tomonaga, who was more aggressive than Fuchida and not as well liked in the air fleet.

The reborn aircraft carrier *Yorktown* steamed out of the channel on the morning of May 30, preceded by her cruisers and destroyers. With even more enthusiasm than they had shown to *Enterprise* and *Hornet*, thousands of men waved and cheered the carrier as she sailed serenely past the team who had worked a virtual miracle. She would be a nasty surprise for Nagumo, who had every reason to believe her on the bottom of the Coral Sea. Fletcher, Buckmaster, and her crew were bone-tired from three months of combat operations and work, but they were ready to face the enemy.

After rounding Barbers Point, Task Force 17 headed north to join Task Force 16.

The next blow to Yamamoto's complex plan came when the extensive submarine cordon intended to interdict the American ships arrived late. Even if they had been on time, it would have been too late. The American carriers had passed on June 1, two days earlier. The subs could not warn Nagumo that three, not two, U.S. carriers were already waiting for him. Although the final outcome was three days in the making, the Battle of Midway ended Yamamoto's wild run.

The fact that *Yorktown* had made it to Midway was critical to American success. Since *Hornet*'s dive bombers did not find Nagumo's ships on June 4, it was the dive bombers of *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* that decided the outcome of the Battle of Midway and ended Yamamoto's ambitions to rule the Pacific.

Lost in the battle were two American ships, the destroyer *Hammann*, and the valiant *Yorktown*, which had come back from near destruction to fight one last time. During the Battle of Midway, she had taken hits from three bombs and two torpedoes. On June 7, 1942, as she was being towed back to Pearl Harbor for another attempt at resurrection, *Yorktown* was hit and sunk by two torpedoes from the IJN submarine *I-168*. □

Author Mark Carlson has written extensively for WWII History *magazine. He is an expert on World War II in the Pacific and on various aspects of wartime aviation history.*

After bailing out of a bomber over enemy territory, an Army general became a leader in Nazi POW camps.

Mission No. 443, dispatching the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Air Divisions against Nazi-occupied Europe was launched by the U.S. Eighth Air Force on June 27, 1944. No aircraft were reported as lost.

During the mission Brigadier General Arthur W. Vanaman, recently appointed A-2 (Chief of Intelligence) at Eighth Air Force headquarters, flew as an observer with 1st Lt. Clarence Jamison's crew aboard the 379th Bomb Group's Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber "Big Barn Smell." The target was the V-1 weapon storage area at St. Martin l'Hortier, about 28 miles northeast of Rouen, France. After a shell burst near the plane's No. 4 engine, the flight engineer (top turret gunner) reported a fire.

The pilots saw flames coming from the engine's oil filter plate on the nacelle and immediately alerted the crew for possible bail out. The burning engine was shut down, but as the flames persisted, intermittently trailing from the wing back to the tailplane, and as an explosion appeared to be imminent, the pilot gave the bail out order. The navigator, bombardier, engineer, co-pilot, and General Vanaman complied, leaving by the nose hatch. Lieutenant Jamison had difficulty engaging the auto-pilot, but before he could leave the cockpit one of the crew members in the rear of the plane reported that the fire had gone out. Seeing this, Jamison countermanded his order and stayed at the controls. After jettisoning the bomb load, Jamison was able to fly the B-17 safely back to base.

Both: National Archives

A-2 Intelligence Chief of Eighth Air Force Brigadier General Arthur W. Vanaman was aboard a B-17 bomber as an observer on a raid northwest of Rouen, France, when one of the plane's engines caught fire. After the pilot gave the bailout order, Vanaman and four other airmen jumped before the fire went out and the plane safely returned to England. TOP: One of its flak-damaged engines streaming smoke, a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber struggles to stay aloft during a mission over Nazi-occupied Europe. General Arthur Vanaman bailed from a B-17 under similar circumstances and was captured by the Germans.

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General Arthur Vanaman was held by the Germans at Stalag Luft III after he bailed out of a stricken B-17 Flying Fortress bomber and was taken prisoner. After he was captured, Vanaman became a leader of the Allied POWs held by the Germans at Stalag Luft III—site of the famous "Great Escape."

National Archives

Apparently during the fateful mission a fuel line had been severed and escaping gasoline had been ignited by the engine exhaust. There was little damage and the aircraft was scheduled for operations the next day.

After bailing out of the bomber *Big Barn Smell*, Vanaman's story would take some unique and interesting turns. General Vanaman spent the rest of the war as a POW. Because of the circumstances of his arrival, his captors were suspicious that he was a deliberate plant by counter-intelligence.

He was born on May 9, 1892, in Millville, New Jersey. He graduated from the Drexel Institute of Technology in 1915 and studied aeronautical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was commissioned as a 1st lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Service on July 1, 1920. In 1937, he graduated from the Army War College. Soon after, he was appointed as an air attaché to Berlin. In August 1941, Vanaman returned to the U.S. and was assigned as Secretary of the Air Staff in Washington, D.C.

Landing in the French countryside between Contay and Puisieux on the Somme, the four airmen who parachuted from the stricken B-17 were able to escape, but Vanaman, injured in the jump, was immediately captured. One of the highest-ranking American POWs of World War II, he was taken to Stalag Luft III. In 1945, Nazi officials brought Vanaman and Col. Delmar T. Spivey to Berlin in an attempt to conduct clandestine peace negotiations with the Allies.

The post strike report of the 379th Bomb Group, dated June 28, 1944, indicated that 14 aircraft of the bomb group, part of the 41st Combat Wing, were airborne at 1524 hours, as part of the mission strike force to hit military installations at St. Martin l'Hortier. At 1819 hours, the group crossed the English coast at 26,000 feet, then crossed the French coast at 1839. Bombs were dropped at 1926, on a "target of opportunity," as the GH equipment (electronic targeting device) of the lead aircraft was jammed. Two runs were made over the primary target in an attempt to bomb visually, but cloud cover prevented this.

Weather over the primary target was reported as "6/10" cloud cover with tops at 15-16,000 feet. The report said that flak was "meager, but accurate," encountered at 1846 hours.

No aircraft were lost, but five men had indeed bailed out of aircraft number 42-32093 at 1915 hours at 24,000 feet.

Lieutenant Jamison reported, "We were making our first run-on the primary target. Flak started coming up and I heard it hit the ship. A few minutes after we got the flak the formation turned and we followed them. Right after that I heard someone yell over the interphone that the #4 engine was on fire. I was still flying formation. I looked over at #4 and couldn't see anything wrong with it. The co-pilot kept looking out the right window and then I looked again and could see flame coming out of the oil filter plate on the side of the nacelle so I gave the order to prepare to bale (sic) out. This was at 1915 hours…The co-pilot wasn't getting ready to bale out so I motioned him out and down. This was one minute after the warning. Then I called over the interphone, 'Bale out'. I yelled that about three times. Then I started and got caught in the controls and couldn't get out. Just as I started out I put the ship on AFCE *[Automatic Flight Control Equipment]*. The elevator control wouldn't work and was in full nose-high position. The nose of the ship pulled up sharply. I pulled it down again and tried to center the lights on the AFCE but could not do so, so I started out again. Just at this time I heard someone in the waist call over the interphone to say that the fire was out. We were at about 24,000 feet and as the bomb bay doors were still open I dropped the bombs in an open field at this point. I looked out the window and couldn't see any more fire so I just kept flying the ship. It seemed as though fire was really out as I turned and tried to follow the formation. I was too busy to follow them though as I only had three engines. I just

headed straight for the nearest water, cross the Channel, found the base and landed."

The bombardier of Jamison's crew was George Rogers. He recalled: "Over the target area, the plane… (was) struck by antiaircraft fire and the number four engine caught on fire. Engine fires in these aircraft were dreaded, because the entire wing of the plane was filled with gasoline tanks, and once they caught fire there was little hope of escape. The engine was shut down, but the fire persisted, so the Pilot (Clarence Jamison) signaled the crew to abandon ship."

The navigator, then Vanaman, then George (the bombardier) left the plane. George related that he and the general landed together and that there was disagreement as to the next course of action. George thought that the best course of action was to hide and let the advancing Allied troops pass over them. This was a few weeks after the Normandy invasion, but nearly a month before Operation Cobra and the Normandy breakout was launched. The general had other ideas, and so they split up. George was able to evade the enemy, and eventually returned to Allied control.

National Archives

General Arthur Vanaman (left) visits with aviation pioneer Orville Wright at the Wright Field laboratories and test chambers in October 1942.

Radio operator Technical Sergeant Kanpp L. Vallas, remembered, "We were getting near the target when flak hit us. A few minutes later #4 engine caught on fire and the Engineer reported it to the Pilot on the interphone. The Pilot told the crew to prepare to bail out. The next order was the order to bail out which followed just a few moments later. Immediately the Bombardier, Navigator, Co-Pilot, Engineer and the General bailed out. The waist gunner and the Ball Turret man proceeded to the rear exit to bail out. Then the Ball Turret man noticed that the fire was out so we informed the Pilot of this fact. At this time there was [sic] only five men left in the plane. The Ball Turret man crawled back to the tail to administer oxygen to the Tail Gunner. The Pilot immediately started descent. For the next five minutes we all stood ready to bail out because the fire came back once to twice and we didn't know whether it would continue to burn."

Tail gunner Staff Sergeant Salvatore Tomaselli recalled, "We were on the bomb run and got hit by flak. Somebody said that there was gas leaking out of #4. I could see it streaming back to the tail. Then someone called 'fire.' The pilot told us to prepare to bail out. I took my flak suit off and went back to the tail escape hatch. At this time [I] passed out due to lack of oxygen and didn't

National Archives

The sprawling grounds of Stalag VII-A in Moosburg, Bavaria, 36 miles northeast of Munich, where American prisoners were relocated after Gen. Arthur Vanaman negotiated with their German captors for improved conditions. Stalag VII-A was liberated by Allied troops on April 29, 1945.

hear a thing until the Ball Turret Gunner came back and woke me up. We were at about 16,000 feet then. After we got down to about 12,000 to 13,000 feet I went up to the nose to see if I could get the bomb bay doors closed. I then went back to the tail to look out for fighters since we were all alone. The pilot took action to avoid being picked up by enemy radar on the way back.

Captain John J. O'Connell, a staff officer of the 379th Bomb Group, officially reported, "Due to the failure of the Gee-H equipment and the fact that there was 9/10's clouds at the target, the primary target was not bombed. In aircraft number 42-32093, which was flying lead position in our High Squadron, piloted by 1st Lt. Clarence E. Jamison, Brig. Gen. A.W. Vanaman, who is A-2 of the 8th Air Force was riding as observer, in the nose of this plane. During the bomb run on the primary target at about 1900 hours, this aircraft was hit by flak and the #4 engine was set on fire. The pilot reports that the fuel line was broken and that gasoline was streaming… There was [a] large sheet of flame from the trailing edge of the wing back to the tail. The pilot gave the order to bail out at 1915 hours after first giving a preparatory order. Gen. Vanaman, the Co-Pilot, Navigator, Bombardier, and engineer immediately bailed out at 490 North-010/30' East from 24,000 feet. As the pilot was preparing to bail out [he] heard one of the crew members call over the interphone that the fire had gone out so he continued operating the plane. About five minutes later the pilot dropped the bombs in an open field. The plane descended to about 15,000 feet. The pilot was able to get it under control and returned to base with the remaining four members of the crew, being the radio operator, ball turret gunner, waist gunner, and the tail gunner."

Stalag Luft III was located near the town of Sagan in Lower Silesia, now Żagań, Poland, near the German border. The camp held Western Allied air force personnel and was best known for two escape plots by Allied POWs. One was in 1943, described in the book, *The Wooden Horse*, by Eric Williams. The March 1944 plot, known as the "Great Escape," was conceived by Squadron Leader Roger Bushell of the RAF and authorized by Herbert Massey, the senior British officer at Stalag Luft III. Former POW Paul Brickhill would write a book about this attempt that would form the basis of the film *The Great Escape* (1963).The camp was liberated by Soviet forces in January 1945.

Vanaman succeeded Colonel Spivey as the senior American officer in the camp. Spivey had been captured on August 12, 1943, while flying as an observer with the 92nd Bomb Group. As the USAAF expert on aerial gunnery, Spivey was on the mission to evaluate possible improvements to gun turrets. Spivey had assumed command as senior American officer in the center compound of Stalag Luft III, in August 1943. He created a history of the camp which would serve as the foundation of the book, *Stalag Luft III—The Secret Story, a history of the camp*, by Col. Arthur A. Durand.

There were many rumors about how Vanaman arrived at the camp. One suggested that he had flown over the area in a bomber and bailed out. At the time there were reports that many American, British, and French generals who were prisoners of the Germans lived in several manor houses or castles—all Allied generals but one, that being Vanaman, who was at Stalag Luft III. Some thought that Vanaman was German, although he was an American citizen. Another theory suggested that as the military attaché to the American ambassador in Berlin before the war, he knew the top members of the German government. Vanaman had indeed served in the Nazi capital city from 1937 to 1941, and was fluent in German. There were also rumors that Vanaman was visited by senior German

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officials while at Sagan.

Because Vanaman was held at this camp, there were stories of special treatment given the prisoners there and that the quarters, recreation facilities, privileges, and food were of a better standard while representatives of the Red Cross could enter and leave as they pleased. The camp had been in operation since 1942, two years before Vanaman's arrival.

It was said that the general was constantly negotiating with the camp's commandant about the slightest thing that he did not consider proper, that the commandant was afraid of Vanaman as the general was apparently well known in Germany. This all led to the belief that Vanaman's being at the camp was not an accident.

On January 12, 1945, as Russian forces were advancing into Germany, Vanaman was said to have addressed his fellow prisoners, telling them that what he thought was to happen. He announced that the German guards would either evacuate or surrender the camp to the Russians, that orders would be issued to kill the prisoners, or that they would be evacuated on a long march across Germany in an effort to keep them out of the hands of the Russians. The last of these three possibilities turned out to be true as the prisoners were forced to march west under guard in the dead of winter.

Once organized and marched from their camp at Sagan, they reached a temporary refuge in a brick factory near Muskau. Vanaman told his men that he had met with the commandant and a general of the staff of the Luftwaffe and that Hitler had directed the Luftwaffe to march the prisoners to Berlin. There they were to be held in the city as hostages to prevent further bombing from the Allied air forces. Vanaman explained to a Luftwaffe general that such action would be considered direct and willful murder of prisoners of war. He told him that they, the prisoners, had no intention of going to Berlin, and that if anything should happen to them, the general and every general of the Luftwaffe would be held directly responsible.

It was obvious that the war would be over in a short time. Vanaman told his fellow prisoners that in a day or two that he and several other representatives of the prisoners would leave for Spremberg, Germany, and meet with a Luftwaffe general after he had conferred with his superiors. If Vanaman failed to change their minds regarding the order to proceed to Berlin, and with the Russian Army so close, it might mean the need to overpower the guards, then hide out for several days. He indicated that this was to be a last resort and that no man was to desert or make any foolish attempt on their own.

The next day the camp commandant, after attending a high level conference with Luftwaffe officials, informed the prisoners that they would continue to Spremberg the next day, February 4.

Reaching Spremberg in the next evening, the prisoners were fed and placed in barns. Vanaman told the men he was to meet with several Luftwaffe generals at their local headquarters in Spremberg the next day. There was speculation among the prisoners as to what Vanaman might propose to the Germans as to their care and destination. It was believed that he would ask them to allow the prisoners to remain in Spremberg until the Russians arrived and, in return, promised the Germans their lives and certain concessions after the prisoners had been liberated.

On Monday, February 5, the prisoners were marched to the western edge of the city to a large Luftwaffe fighter base, where they were housed in several hangars—facilities that were much better than the barns they had been in. Each hangar had toilets, running water, and plenty of space. The prisoners received word that Vanaman had been engaged in negotiations with several German generals and expected to reach an agreement by the next morning.

The following day, a large crowd of prisoners had gathered outside the main administration building of the base when Vanaman, Spivey, the commandant, and three Luftwaffe generals appeared. Two Luftwaffe chauffeured cars then appeared, and Vanaman, Spivey, the three German generals and their two aides departed, leaving a Captain McGee in charge of the prisoners.

Later that day McGee received a message from Vanaman which he read to his charges: "Gentlemen, I have made an agreement with several high-ranking German generals whereby you will be moved, starting late this evening. Several freight trains will be made available to the Spremberg marshaling yard, and you will be moved by boxcar from Spremberg to the western front. Your new prison camp will be Moosburg (Stalag VII-A), located about halfway between Munich and Nuremberg. You will be out of danger here. Everything cannot be revealed to you at this time. I must go to Berlin with the German generals. I am taking Colonel Spivey with me, and I may not see you again until the end of the war. I have talked to the commandant regarding your treatment, and I am certain that you will be treated well. Good luck to each of you. Until we meet again, remember to keep your faith and trust in God."

After arriving at Stalag VII-A, on February 18, the prisoners received word that Vanaman, Spivey, and the three German Luftwaffe generals had made it to Berlin. They found the city in ruins as a result of the tremendous bombing. There they gathered papers, money, and belongings and then returned to Spremberg, From there, the group drove to Munich, then on to the Swiss-German border. The border guards did not question the three German generals. It seemed that Vanaman had promised freedom from war crimes trials and a return to civilian life for the generals and guards who did not harm American prisoners of war. Although one would have to question his authority to do so—maybe it was simply based on his personal relationship with the Luftwaffe officers. It was believed that the general was taking the German generals to Supreme Allied Headquarters to report on the location and condition of the prisoners, their needs, and plans to evacuate them safely.

After surviving his harrowing mission and capture, Vanaman had done his utmost to care for the prisoners entrusted to his command, and his efforts were noted. During May-June 1945, he served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Prisoner of War Affairs in France. He remained with the Air Force until retiring in 1954 with the rank of major general. During his career he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Bronze Star, and the Belgian Croix de Guerre with Palm. He died in 1987 at the age of 95. □

Author Allyn Vannoy has written extensively on a variety of topics related to World War II. He resides in Hillsboro, Oregon.

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In 1940 the R.A.F. was producing 115 trained pilots every two weeks to fly planes such as this Supermarine Spitfire. BELOW: Pilot Officer Prune says—"I hope you've taken *Tee Emm* regularly and that it did prevent that Thinking Feeling!"

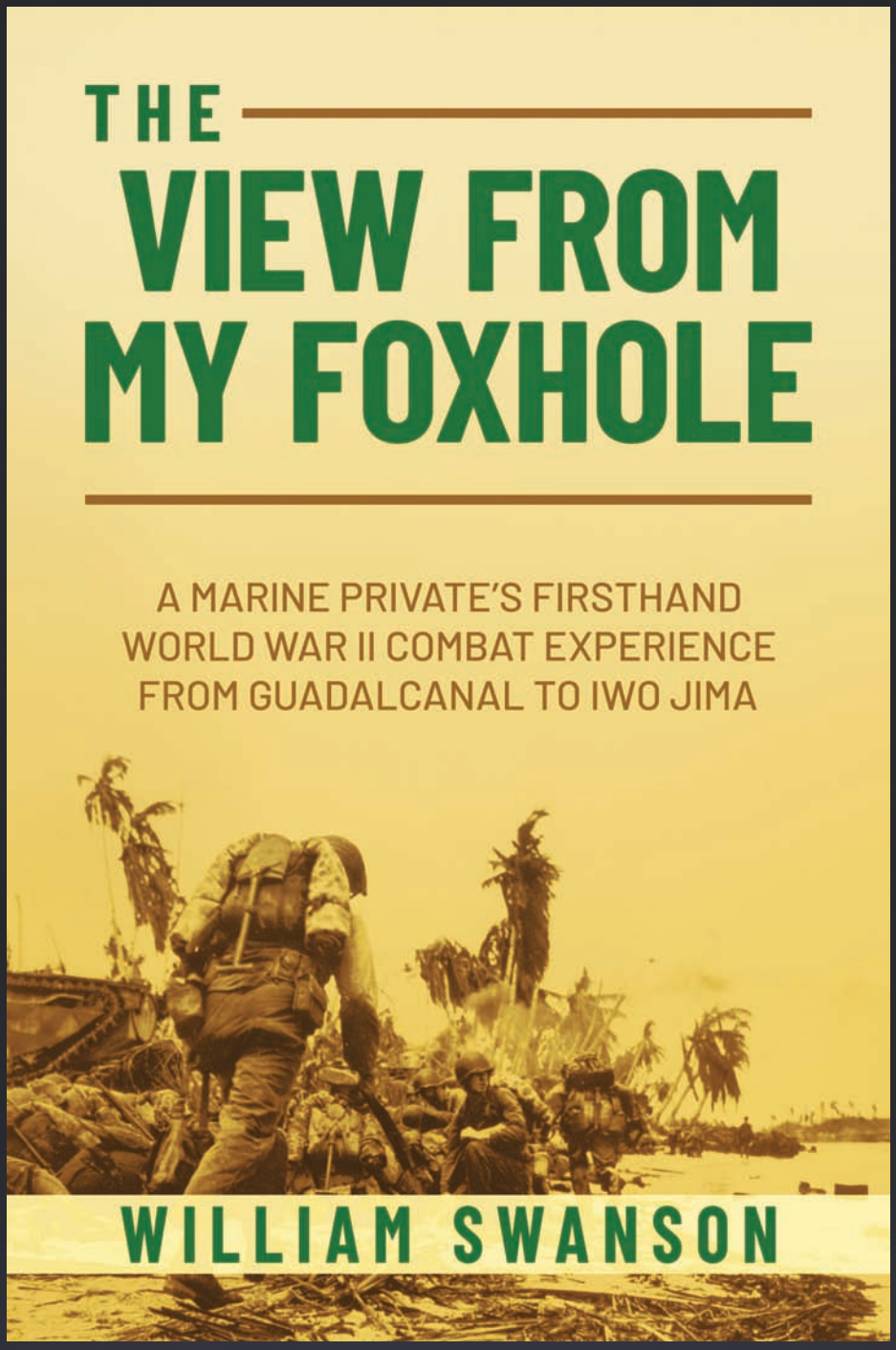
Comic, accident-prone, Pilot Officer Percy Prune had a serious mission for the Royal Air Force during World War II.

After German Chancellor Adolf Hitler had rejected all offers of peace, Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared in June 1940 that "The Battle of Britain is about to begin." France had just surrendered and now the island nation stood alone against Germany's powerful Luftwaffe and the looming threat of a large-scale amphibious attack by the Wehrmacht as part of Hitler's ambitious invasion plan—Operation Sea Lion.

As the main defensive force for Britain, the Royal Air Force (RAF) Fighter Command had a growing number of Spitfires and Hurricanes, but they were outnumbered by the Luftwaffe, which was then the most technologically advanced airforce in the world. As the need for air power increased, the RAF was able to build, buy and lease aircraft to meet its needs. Pilots for those planes, however, was another matter.

For the coming campaign, the RAF realized they had to expand their fighter pilot ranks quickly, calculating they would need to maintain a pool of about 1,400. Spitfires and Hurricanes were excellent planes, but training time for new pilots fell to as little as two weeks, putting them at a disadvantage against the more experienced Luftwaffe fighter pilots in the Messerschmitts Me 109s and 110s. The RAF had recently revamped their Operational Training Units (OTUs) and added three additional fighter OTUs—producing 39 trained pilots every two weeks—for an overall output of 115 trained pilots every two weeks.

Wikimedia



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Even without enemy fighters and antiaircraft flak, flying is an inherently dangerous activity affected by any number of factors—crew inexperience, fatigue, weather, mechanical failure, type of aircraft and even the mission target. Add to that the fact that almost all of the new aircrew and the more than 200 new pilots produced each month were in their late teens or early twenties. For the RAF in WWII, 51 percent of aircrew were killed on operational flights, while 12 percent were killed or wounded in non-operational accidents.

Undergoing high physical and mental demands for hours on end, bomber crews had to fight the enemy as well as hazards such as lack of oxygen and frostbite in their high-altitude environment. Night operations added layers of complexity to the mission. Bomber crews suffered a high casualty rate—55,573 killed out of a total of 125,000 aircrew (44.4 percent). Some 8,403 men were wounded in action, with 9,838 taken as prisoners of war.

Featuring inexperienced recruits flying older aircraft meant flight instruction was also dangerous. Some 8,000 RAF men were killed in training or other non-operational flying during the war.

Wikimedia

Imperial War Museum

RAF Bomber Command aircrew show off the damage to their Halifax bomber after a raid over Cologne in 1943. Their plane was hit by a falling bomb from another aircraft on the raid. In spite of the severe damage, there were no injuries and the pilot managed to fly back base in Yorkshire. BELOW: Pilot Officer Prune's inability to "get his finger out" in a crisis spawned the Most Highly Derogatory Order of the Irremovable Finger (MHDOIF)—a monthly award for airborne carelessness.

The enemy was the enemy, and would do their worst, but the top brass at the RAF needed to reduce the number of non-combat casualties. It was here that Pilot Officer Percy Prune entered the picture.

While never a real person, Pilot Prune's exploits would become known worldwide and leave a lasting legacy on Britain's Royal Air Force. The creation of William John "Bill" Hooper, Prune would rise to worldwide fame through RAF training manuals where he appeared in cartoons that used wit and humor to bolster aircrew morale and effectively communicate memorable lifesaving training techniques and tips throughout the war.

Hooper was born in Lichfield, Staffordshire, on August 21, 1916, and completed his education at a boarding school in Kent. He went on to study metallurgy at Imperial College, London. However, he left after completing two terms and attempted a series of jobs, including a security guard and a painter in Ireland. When World War II broke out, just nine months before the Battle of Britain began, Hooper applied to become an RAF pilot. Despite the shortage of pilots, he was considered too old. Hooper, who would turn 24 in August, was discouraged to find out that he would have had to apply before his 23rd birthday to get in.

Instead, he was sent to gunnery training as the RAF was also short on experienced aircrews, due to the losses in the Battle of France and Norway. This included the need for air gunners, and Hooper finished gunnery training in June 1940, just at the start of the Battle of Britain.

He was assigned to the 54 Fighter Squadron at Hornchurch, Essex, on the outskirts of London, where, as sometimes happens in the military, they had no need for an air gunner. Soon after, he was transferred to ground staff where, between repairing and maintaining Spitfires, Hooper entertained his peers at the Hornchurch Air Station with satirical drawings from his "doodle diary" where he sketched cartoons depicting many of the pilot gaffes he heard about on a daily basis. From these sketches, the "prune-like" character of Pilot Officer Percy Prune emerged, starring as a bumbling but lov-

able goof. Hooper shared his sketches with the pilots as they awaited the alert to head to their planes and "scramble" when an enemy plane had been spotted.

The Air Ministry was alarmed by the growing number of accidents caused by the young pilots who rarely read the notoriously dull standard training manuals. Rookie mistakes were common, including landing with the wheels up, low flying, running out of fuel, releasing a parachute inside the aircraft, and landing in the wrong airfield.

The RAF suffered numerous losses at a time when it was seeking to strengthen its front line. In his book, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz observes, "Countless minor incidents- incidents-the kind you can never really foresee-combine to lower the general level of performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal. Iron will-power can overcome this friction; it pulverizes every obstacle, but of course, it wears down the machine as well."

The ministry needed to take action and decided that 40 hours of pilot training before being posted to the front lines was not sufficient and that the solution was to provide the pilots with additional, easily digested information on a regular basis.

In the meantime, Hooper's cartoons had become popular with the fighter command, which led to his Group HQ asking him to illustrate a pamphlet with life-saving nuggets of advice for novice aircrew. Called "Forget-me-nots for Fighter Pilots," it used dark cautionary humor and practical advice for novice aircrews who were under pressure before and during the Battle of Britain. In his paper "Entrenched Culture: Soldiers' Culture in the Aftermath of the First World War," military historian Dr. Tim Cook argues that "humour is used as a shield" and a coping mechanism in a culture of survival. The antics of Hooper's Percy Prune were rapidly becoming one more coping mechanism in the pilots' survival arsenal.

The pamphlet soon came to the attention of Squadron Leader George Anthony Armstrong Willis, who had been tasked with developing a new training manual. Willis, who wrote for the British magazine Punch, under the pseudonyms "Anthony Armstrong" and "AA" had been invalided out of the army reserve and was appointed to contribute to the war effort by setting up and writing the RAF's new monthly training memorandum, nicknamed "Tee Emm,"

Wikimedia

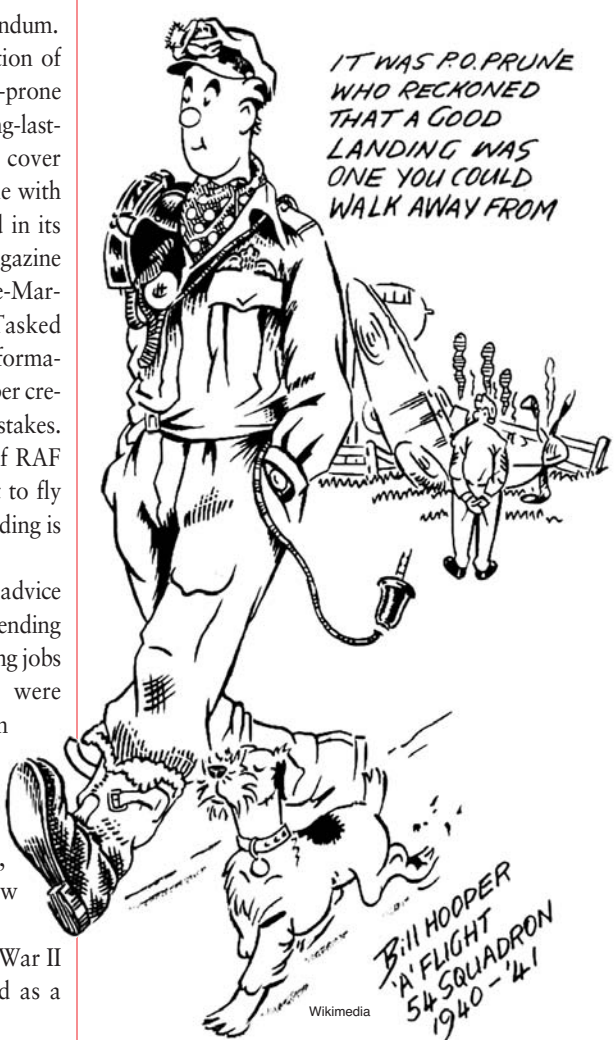
Scene from *Deck Landing*, a World War II era instructional film designed to help new British pilots learn how to land on aircraft carriers shows a number of non-fatal crash landings.

short for Training or Technical Memorandum.

Willis was certain that the combination of his strong prose and Hooper's accident-prone Prune would create a memorable and long-lasting impact on the recruits. The iconic cover design of the manuals was an RAF eagle with pince-nez spectacles and a pen gripped in its talons, and was designed by *Punch* magazine cartoonist Cyril Kenneth Bird. Air Vice-Marshal R. E. Saul wrote the foreword. Tasked with providing procedural and safety information for the newly recruited pilots, Hooper created visual warnings against rookie mistakes. Prune soon became a legendary part of RAF history, teaching rookie pilots how not to fly with catch phrases such as, "A good landing is one you can walk away from."

While always cloaked in humor, the advice was serious. For example, when recommending that pilots wear proper gear for completing jobs aboard high-altitude bombers, they were advised to dress for the temperature, as in the article "Brass Monkeys, and How to Avoid Becoming One," where they were warned, "You never know when you've got to turn out to do a job aft, where the ice-gremlins are inclined to stow away."

"Gremlins" were the bane of World War II aircraft and were universally accepted as a



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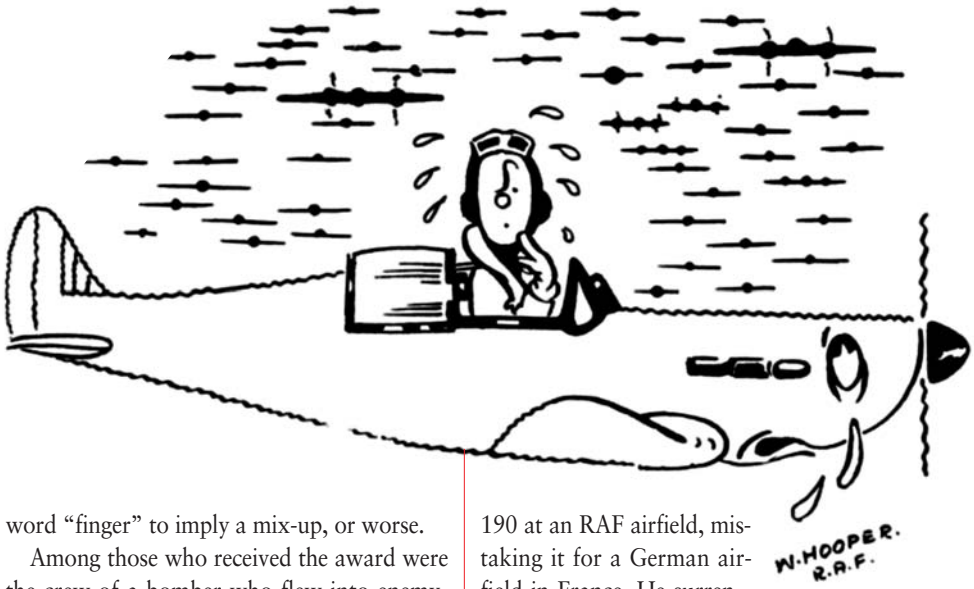
metaphor for human error and mechanical failure. These mischievous creatures were popularized during the war, which led to Pilot Prune considering himself something of an expert or "Gremlorist" and dispensed advice for dealing with the malicious devils.

Tee Emm debuted on April 1, 1941, and was so successful that Hooper and Armstrong were enlisted to create spin-off books. The Air Ministry, "Minutes of meeting to consider training to improve morale and discipline," 6 January 1944, AIR 20/4583 wrote of the enduring popularity of *Tee Emm* as "A training manual which was widely distributed. Its most enduring feature was a cartoon character called Pilot Officer Percy Prune, a creation of cartoonist Bill Hooper. Prune was made to survive disaster after disaster, in a humorous attempt to teach safety lessons and demonstrate mistakes to avoid. So popular did Prune become that there were concerns that airmen needed a role model who was not quite so ludicrous and brainless." The aircrews disagreed, feeling that Percy Prune was one of them, and they eagerly awaited the monthly additions of *Tee Emm*, impatient to find out what new havoc Prune had caused.

Willis and Hooper produced 60 issues in 6 volumes from April 1941 to March 1946, with Hooper using the pseudonym "Raff." The character of Percy Prune was a comical example of what not to do. He became famous for his inability to "pull his finger out of his rear" when necessary. To honor his ineptitude, a spoof military award was created, called the Most Highly Derogatory Order of the Irremovable Finger (MHDOIF), and it was awarded each month to members of the RAF for military incompetence throughout the war. The image of the award was a clenched fist with the index finger fully extended to indicate blame being pointed. The phrase "Pull your finger out!" (meaning—Get your Finger Out of your Rear) became a ubiquitous RAF phrase. Pilot Prune famously held out his "Prunery" finger in the cartoons, and pilots had only to invoke the word "finger" to imply a mix-up, or worse.

Both: Wikimedia

Bill Hooper's illustration of "The Gang." From left, Sergeant Straddle (Air Bomber), Flying Officer Fixe (Navigator), Sergeant Backtune (Wireless Operator), Sergeant Winde (Air Gunner), and Pilot Officer Prune. BELOW: P.O. Prune agrees that being mixed up with a lot of 109's without ammunition causes acute embarrassment.



Among those who received the award were the crew of a bomber who flew into enemy-occupied territory and got lost. After a dangerous crash landing in a field, the crew set fire to the plane to prevent the enemy from accessing the technology. As they hiked covertly, seeking a safe area, they discovered they were just outside a public house, a mere five miles from their own airfield.

Just before VE Day, Luftwaffe pilot Oberleutnant Armin Faber, landed a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 at an RAF airfield, mistaking it for a German airfield in France. He surrendered his aircraft to the station commander, who infamously yelled, "Tell the pilot of that Mustang to observe proper landing procedure." The final MHDOIF award of the war was given to the British station commander for mistaking a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 for a Mustang.

For the duration of the war, Percy Prune retained a cult-like status with the British fliers. His legacy, though considered humorous, was

many times life-saving. During a retreat through a jungle in South East Asia, an RAF squadron of Hawker Typhoon aircraft was attacking a Japanese installation. As bombing and strafing raids were carried out on the wood huts, the pilots spied a message on one of the corrugated iron roofs of one of the huts that read POWS JAPS GONE. The commanding officer feared it was a ploy and ordered the pilots to continue the attack the next day. When they flew in for a second strike, the word FINGER was written in whitewash on the roof. The commanding officer immediately recognized the "Prunery Finger" reference and finally convinced the rest of the squadron that the sign could only have been written by an RAF and meant that the Japanese had vacated the area.

The Tee Emm manuals were strictly classified, but copies eventually reached enemy hands. At one point, Hooper was said to have been notified by the German Captured Documents Department in Berlin that he was qualified for the Deutsche Kreuz in Eiserne, the Iron Cross for his mass destruction of Allied Aircraft.

Hooper continued to add "Pruniverse" characters to the Tee Emm training manuals to include the diversity in the ranks and the growing number of women in the RAF, including a New Zealand bombardier, Sergeant Straddle, a Canadian navigator, Flying Officer Freddie Fixe, a Scottish radio operator, Sergeant Backtune, and Sergeant Willy Winde, Royal Australian Air Force mid-upper gunner. Aircraftman Plonk, a mechanic, and "Ernie the Erk," an armourer, were added to the ground crew along with Binder, Percy's terrier dog. Eventually, the Percy Prune character married Aircraftwoman 2 WAAF Winsum, modeled after Hooper's real-life wife, WAAF Noelle Lang.

By the end of the war, Pilot Officer Percy Prune had survived but was quickly retired on May 8, 1945. Prune lives on through the 14 books of cartoons Hooper wrote as he transitioned to a successful career in cartooning and media after retiring from the RAF in 1946. Hooper worked as a political cartoonist for the *Sunday Chronicle* and later for *The Star* newspaper. His career highlights include working as an animator and presenter for the series "Willy the Pup" and forming an animation studio for the BBC and ITV television networks. Later, he worked as a columnist for the *Sunday Pictorial*. Hooper "departed the fix" on October 14, 1996, at the age of 80. ■

National Archives

German attack at Bari, Italy, and the burning of the SS *John Harvey*'s secret mustard gas cargo was a chemical disaster.

ABOVE: U.S. Army physician Lt. Col. Stewart Alexander led the investigation into the aftermath of the disastrous raid on Bari that involved the discharge of lethal mustard gas. TOP: Allied vessels burning after a Luftwaffe raid on the Italian port of Bari on December 2, 1943, sank 27 cargo and transport ships, including the US Liberty ship *John Harvey*—with a secret cargo of 2,000 M47A1 mustard gas bombs, each holding 60–70 lbs of the chemical agent.

Stewart F. Alexander Papers

Ensign Kay Kopl Vesole, USNR, did not like being a sitting duck. Normally he would have enjoyed the warm Italian sunshine, but as commander of the Navy Armed Guard aboard the *John Bascom*, a 7,176-ton Liberty ship, he was not permitted to relax while his ship lay moored in crowded Bari harbor, a small though vital port on the heel of Italy.

In the 12 weeks since elements of the British 1st Airborne Division had secured Bari on September 11, 1943, the port had become a logistical base critical to the advance of the British Eighth Army fighting its way up Italy's Adriatic coast. More recently the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force had moved into the array of airbases on the Foggia plain approximately 80 miles northwest. Now a steady stream of Allied convoys arrived in Bari carrying all manner of war materials from ammunition and jeeps to aviation fuel and spare parts.

The *John Bascom*, with Vesole and his gunnery crews aboard, had departed the Sicilian port of Augusta on November 28 as part of Convoy AH.10A arriving in Bari on December 1. The ship, commanded by veteran Capt. Otto Heitmann, sailed through the harbor entrance into the midst of a floating menagerie of more than 50 merchantmen and warships. Given the sheer number of vessels and the lack of port unloading capacity, cargo ships were forced to anchor throughout the inner basin or stern-first against the long Nuovo Molo (New Pier) that formed the northern and eastern boundaries of the harbor.

Berth 31 of the Nuovo Molo became the temporary anchorage of the *John Bascom* as it waited its turn to unload. To starboard lay the 5,202-ton Italian cargo ship *Frosinone* and to port another Liberty ship, the *John L. Motley*, its holds crammed with 5,231 tons of ammunition. The *John Bascom* carried its own deadly cargo—50-gallon drums of acid and high-test gasoline. Nearly every ship in the harbor carried volatile war materiel.

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Vesole's previous voyages had been uneventful, but here in Bari, surrounded by a floating and highly flammable arsenal, he felt uneasy. Despite assurances from port authorities that the Luftwaffe seldom ventured this far south, Vesole instructed his men to check their guns again and be on the lookout for enemy aircraft.

Vesole's concerns were well founded. After a week of reconnaissance, Luftflotte 2 commander Feldmarschall Freiherr von Richthofen sent a strike force of 105 twin-engine Junkers Ju-88 bombers from I. and II./Kampfgeschwader 30 (KG 30) based at Ghedi and Villafranca, I. and II./KG 54 at Cameri and Bergamo, and I and II../KG 76 at Villaorbia and Aviano.

Along the way a number of aircraft were forced to return to base for mechanical and other reasons, leaving 88 aircraft to press home the attack as they neared Bari.

Several factors contributed to the success of the imminent raid. The main radar station for Bari's antiaircraft defenses, operated by the American 548th Mobile Signals Unit was out of service. Second, only one light antiaircraft unit was located in Bari, the British No. 2862 AA Squadron equipped with 40mm Bofors guns, although these were supplemented by the merchant ships' gun batteries.

At 1907 hours the ground controlled interception radar of 8010 Air Ministry Experimental Station north of Bari detected two aircraft inbound, but in a matter of seconds these contacts disintegrated into a confusing mass of echoes. Unbeknownst to the defenders, the leading aircraft in the Luftwaffe formation, three Ju-88s of 6. Staffel KG 54, had dropped *Düppel*, aluminum strips similar to the "window" used by British and American aircraft, to jam Allied radar. A handful of night fighters from the U.S. Army Air Forces 416th Night Fighter Squadron and the Royal Air Force Nos. 255 and 600 Squadrons scrambled but failed to make contact with any enemy aircraft.

At 1923 hours other pathfinder aircraft from 6./KG 54 made a pass over the harbor, dropping parachute flares to illuminate targets. Seven minutes later Oberleutnant Gustav Teuber led the first wave of Ju-88s onto the target. The first bombs hit the city, but soon Luftwaffe bombers swarmed over the harbor, striking hard and fast. Many of the leading aircraft conducted shallow diving attacks while approaching ships from abeam.

Moored along the Nuovo Molo, the first ship hit was the *Joseph Wheeler*, a 7,176-ton Liberty ship packed with ammunition that immediately caught fire. Farther down the row, the *John L. Motley* took a direct hit in its No. 5 hold and burst into flames.

In the adjacent berth, the *John Bascom* went to battle stations as soon as the first flare dropped. Vesole's guns crews leaped to action, firing blindly into the night sky as damage control parties readied their fire hoses. The first bracket of bombs seemed to spare the *John Bascom*; then suddenly four bombs hit in rapid succession and fires erupted everywhere. Hit in the shoulder and chest, Vesole moved from gun to gun directing their fire before assembling a party to go below decks to rescue wounded sailors.

Two ships down the line, a bomb struck the 5,074-ton Norwegian naval coal ship *Vest*, burying itself in the vessel's coal hold before exploding.

Other ships along the Nuovo Molo took hits. The *Lars Kruse*, a former Danish cargo ship hauling 1,400 tons of aviation spirit, took two direct hits and exploded. The 1,268-ton Norwegian cargo ship *Lom,* with its 906 tons of equipment and benzene, was ablaze. Next to it, the 646-ton British coastal tanker *Devon Coast*, had a parachute flare lodge in the ship's mast, starting a fire that quickly spread out of control before a bomb exploded in the No. 2 hold.

The 1,409-ton Polish cargo ship *Lwow* received a direct hit and burst into flames. A second bomb rocked the vessel, blowing seamen overboard. HMS *Vienna*, depot ship for the 20th and 24th MTB Flotillas, was damaged by flying chunks of concrete.

Just outside the harbor, three ships, the 7,176-ton American Liberty ship *Samuel J. Tilden*, the Polish cargo ship *Lublin*, and the British trawler minesweeper HMS *Mullet*, witnessed the destruction unfolding inside

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Flames leap from the forward section of the U.S. Liberty Ship *John Harvey*, which was secretly carrying 2,000 lethal mustard gas bombs. Numerous personnel were injured by the poison, which complicated the rescue and salvage efforts after the raid. LEFT: Great clouds of smoke gush from a cargo ship hit during the German raid on Bari. OPPOSITE: The German Junkers Ju-88 bomber was a fast, effective weapon. On December 2, 1943, 105 of them completely surprised the port at Bari, Italy, sinking 28 ships.

Bari harbor. The *Samuel J. Tilden*, clearly lit by one of the harbor searchlights, was hit by an incendiary bomb and the captain ordered the ship abandoned.

The attack ended as suddenly as it began. By 2000 hours, the last Ju-88 had banked to the northwest and fled over the Adriatic.

The ships moored against the Nuovo Molo had suffered the worst of the attack. The *John L. Motley* broke free and drifted toward the *John Bascom*. From the *John Bascom*'s shattered bridge, Heitmann saw his ship was doomed and turned to evacuating his crew. Vesole oversaw the loading of the wounded into the sole surviving lifeboat.

Noting Vesole's severe wounds, Heitmann ordered him into the lifeboat, but Vesole refused choosing instead to assemble his gun crews on deck for evacuation. It was only when they physically forced him into the lifeboat that Vesole reluctantly left the ship.

After carefully maneuvering between the *John Bascom* and the *John L. Motley*, the packed lifeboat pulled alongside the Nuovo Molo, but there were no stairs, just sheer stone wall to the top of the mole. Covered in oil and grasping the cracks in the stone with their fingertips, the uninjured clawed their way to the top. Then, with the assistance of jury-rigged stretchers they hoisted the more seriously injured out of the lifeboat.

Once atop the pier, the crew found their way to the main dockyard blocked by the row of burning cargo ships. Heitmann ordered everyone to retreat to the end of the pier, where they found two open shelters in the seawall beneath the harbor lighthouse.

Time, however, was running out. The fiercely burning *John L. Motley* crashed into the Nuovo Molo just as its cargo of cyanide and ammunition went up in a thunderous explosion and it began to sink rapidly. Nearby, the 7,176-ton cargo ship *John Harvey* caught fire. Less than 1,000 feet away, the Liberty ship *Lyman Abbott* was showered by debris from the *John L. Motley*, including a six-ton section of steel deck plating, that heeled the ship to port.

Nearby, the Italian merchant auxiliary cruiser *Barletta* erupted in flames and began to drift toward the *Lyman Abbott*. With 2,300 tons of fragmentation bombs in the No. 3 hold, the ship's master ordered the the crew to abandon ship. Picking their way through expanding oil slicks and scattered debris, the escaping crew members made it to the Vecchio Molo Foraneo, one of the inner harbor piers, where they joined survivors from other ships. British troops identified those in need of medical treatment and

rushed them off to hospital while the others walked to the nearby Navy House, where they received dry clothing and hot tea.

Aboard the *John Harvey* , the crew fought a losing battle against the rapidly spreading flames. One unit in particular fought to prevent the unthinkable from happening. Members of the 701st Chemical Maintenance Company, led by 1st Lt. Howard D. Beckstrom, were among the few who knew of the *John Harvey* 's secret cargo. Stored in her holds were 2,000 100-pound M47A1 pressurized liquid mustard bombs, loaded in Baltimore with the express permission of the White House. They were shipped to Italy for possible retaliatory action by the Allies if the Axis powers used chemical weapons in the Italy. Beckstrom's soldiers, who regularly checked for cracks in the bomb casings to guard against dangerous leaks, were now fighting for their lives.

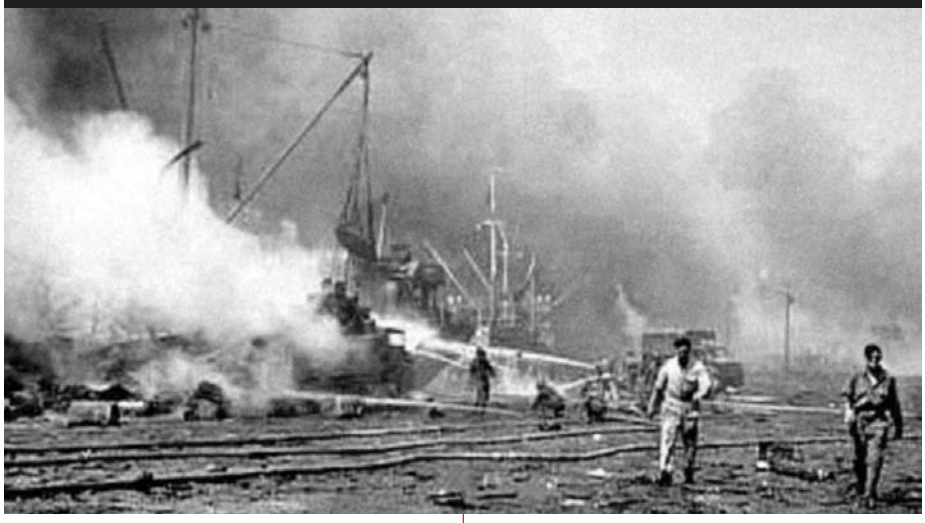
As the fires intensified, the *John Harvey* 's mooring ropes burned away, and the ship started to drift into the harbor. Nearby ships' crews, fighting their own desperate battles, had no idea what was about to happen. In a blinding flash, the bombs in *John Harvey* 's hold ignited, exploding in a towering, technicolor cloud of smoke and toxic gas that rose more than 1,000 feet in the air. The *John Harvey* disappeared in the cataclysmic explosion, instantly killing everyone aboard and showering nearby ships with massive chunks of steel and red hot shrapnel. Air rushed into the vortex created by the mushroom cloud, spiraling upward before the concussion from the blast pounded ships and buildings all around the harbor, blowing out windows and straining moorings. Then, a blast-created tidal wave swept across the harbor nearly swamping other vessels and crews who were struggling to survive.

The 5,083-ton British Coastal Forces tanker *Testbank*, moored to port of the *John Harvey*, had managed to avoid bomb damage during the raid, but when the *John Harvey* exploded the tanker was ripped apart killing all aboard. A similar fate befell the small Yugoslavian coastal vessel *Yug*.

Moored further away in the outer basin, the *Fort La Joie*, a 7,134-ton British cargo ship, had avoided any serious bomb damage except for a parachute flare that fell into the starboard defensive gun position, setting it

National Archives

ABOVE: In the aftermath of the devastating Luftwaffe raid on Bari, Allied officers survey the destruction wrought on the harbor and shipping within. Fires still rage in the distance while rescue and salvage operations are underway. BELOW: Debris from the damaged ships and shore facilities struck by German bombers at the Italian port of Bari litter the surroundings while military personnel man fire hoses in an attempt to quell some of the flames. The Bari raid became the subject of an intense investigation in the following months.



Wikimedia

and the gunners' quarters below on fire. When the *John Harvey* exploded, shrapnel peppered the British ship igniting new fires. A 10-foot by 6-foot piece of plating wrapped itself around one of the winches, and all the hatches were blown off. Its crew attempted to move the vessel to safer waters, but the steel pins on the anchor cable shackles refused to budge, forcing the *Fort La Joie* to remain put. Luckily it suffered no further damage. Nearby, the derrick from another ship (possibly the *John Harvey*) struck the Latvian 1,096-ton naval ammunition ship *Dago* and buried itself in the lower deck. Although the *Dago* carried a load of ammunition, no fires or explosions occurred, and the ship survived its ordeal.

The blast from the *John Harvey* fanned the fires aboard the *Joseph Wheeler* moored further down the Nuovo Molo. When flames reached the ammunition stored throughout the ship, the *Joseph Wheeler* became the third ship to blow up. Next to it the 10,000-ton British freighter *Fort Athabaska* broke into flames, and minutes later the fire reached the hold carrying two captured PC-RS500 German rocket bombs slated for examination by Allied weapons specialists in Algiers. The rocket bombs exploded in the intense heat, leaving the *Fort Athabaska* a shattered hulk. Except for two men who had gone ashore earlier, none of her crew survived.

Imperial War Museum

The destroyer HMS *Zetland*, one of two Hunt-class destroyers at Bari at the time of the raid, sustained damage from nearby bomb blasts and was showered with bomb fragments in a near-miss. In this photo from 1942, Royal Navy seamen man a two-pounder pom-pom antiaircraft gun aboard *Zetland*. Another destroyer, HMS *Bicester*, suffered heavier damage in the German raid.

Amid the explosions, panic, and pandemonium, many men ignored their own safety to save others. The small motor torpedo boats of the 20th and 24th MTB flotillas, many of them only partly crewed, moved among the burning hulks taking aboard stranded seamen or pulling half-drowned and severely injured sailors out of the water. Many were so badly injured that MTB officers and crewmen had to partially disrobe and dive into the harbor to assist them into the boats. Two crewmen aboard MTB 243 pulled many survivors out of the water and at one point boarded a cargo ship to attend to another sailor whose leg was trapped between the bridge structure and a vent pipe. While fires raged around them, they used a hacksaw to slowly carve off pieces of the pipe to finally free the sailor. All then reboarded MTB 243, which ferried those rescued to the depot ship HMS *Vienna*, now functioning as a temporary aid station.

For those still trapped onboard ships, marooned on jetties, or floundering in the fouled and burning waters of the harbor, it was a life and death struggle to escape the inferno. Although Vesole, his captain, and crewmates had found temporary sanctuary at the extreme end of the Nuovo Molo, their situation was dire. Flames from the row of exploding ships lining the pier barred their only escape route to the main dockyard, and it was too far to swim from the lighthouse to the Molo San Cataldo on the other side of the harbor entrance.

Vesole dispatched a signalman to the end of the jetty to signal for help. Fortunately, the USS *Pumper*, an American tanker moored near the Molo San Cataldo, had launched its whaleboat to rescue survivors in the water when it noticed signals coming from the base of the lighthouse. Several burning ships blocked the whaleboat's path, making it nearly impossible to reach these trapped men; only by approaching from the ocean side was the whaleboat able to reach the jetty and begin extracting survivors from their perilous perch. Vesole, although severely injured, continued to put others' needs ahead of his own and refused to leave with the first boatload of survivors. It took the remaining crewmen to force him into the next load.

The British destroyers HMS *Zetland* and HMS *Bicester*, both damaged when the *Joseph Wheeler* exploded, also participated in the rescue effort. Five crewmen from the *Zetland* took their launch into the blazing inferno as flames spread from ship to ship and across the harbor's surface. Relentlessly, they trawled the inner harbor rescuing seamen from certain death. Another *Zetland* work party, ordered to board the drifting *Devon Coast*, attempted to secure a tow rope so the *Zetland* could pull the tanker away from the spreading flames. Hampered by debris and searing flames, the work party realized the futility of their efforts and reluctantly abandoned the tanker.

The burning *Devon Coast* then threatened the nearby French tanker SS *La Drome*, whose moorings were still holding. This time the *Zetland* work party managed to secure a tow line, and slowly the British destroyer maneuvered the tanker into a more secure berth nearer the dockyard. Another heavily damaged ship, HMS *Vulcan*, a former trawler now acting as a repair ship for the British MTB flotillas, also drifted perilously close to the spreading fire. When the *John Harvey* exploded, the resulting tidal wave had smashed *Vulcan* against its jetty, severing the mooring lines and cracking her steam pipes. Her courageous engineers battled the damage and finally succeeded in starting the auxiliary dynamo, enabling them to navigate the ship to a safer berth along an inner harbor pier.

Outside the harbor, the abandoned and burning *Samuel J. Tilden* now posed a hazard to the small number of cargo vessels and warships seeking to escape the harbor inferno. If she sank and blocked the harbor entrance, it could be weeks or months before the ships trapped inside could escape. MTB 297 was dispatched to take care of this threat. After ensuring there were no more survivors awaiting rescue in the immediate vicinity, the torpedo boat put two torpedoes into the side of the *Samuel J. Tilden*, sinking her in deep water away from the harbor entrance.

As more explosions erupted from burning and gutted cargo ships along the Nuovo Molo and elsewhere in the harbor, several ships capable of producing steam and navigating under their own power were ordered out of the harbor.

Moored at the Nuovo Molo berth closest to the harbor entrance, the 1,057-ton Dutch freighter SS *Odysseus* survived several near misses before a bomb exploded portside.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: With its secret cargo of mustard gas aboard, the Liberty Ship SS *John Harvey* was set ablaze during the German air raid on the Italian port of Bari in December 1943. The damage caused mustard gas bombs to rupture and release the deadly toxin into the water, injuring many personnel. BELOW: An example of the M47A1 mustard gas bomb, which contained up to 70 pounds of sulfur mustard. Some 2,000 of these were aboard the SS *John Harvey* at the time of the Bari raid and caused numerous casualties when inadvertently released into the waters of the harbor.

Although the vessel suffered no damage below the waterline, its funnel was blown away. Crew members fashioned a makeshift funnel out of several hatch covers to facilitate raising steam, then hurriedly steered the *Odysseus* out of the harbor. Meanwhile, the 1,124-ton British MV *Coxwold*, after surviving several near misses, set sail for Barletta where she unloaded her dangerous cargo of high-octane fuel and ammunition. The 7,128-ton Canadian-built British cargo ship *Fort Assiniboine*, caught unloading at the main pier close to the port director's offices in Navy House when the raid began, escaped damage but was ordered to clear the harbor since her holds were packed with blockbuster bombs. Slowly, she picked her way through the outer basin, squeezing past several burning ships. A few days later, she returned to Bari to continue unloading her cargo.

The destroyers *Zetland* and *Bicester*, after taking many survivors aboard, were ordered to sail for Taranto. During this voyage strange symptoms appeared among their crews. Men began to develop painful blisters across all parts of their bodies—some went blind, and others lost their hair. Upon reaching safety in Taranto, many sailors were sent to hospital for treatment. They were not the only ones to suffer these strange afflictions.

Back in Bari, bombing survivors were rushed to the various service hospitals scattered throughout the city, including the 3rd New Zealand General Hospital, the 98th British General Hospital, and the 26th U.S. General Hospital. Wards rapidly filled beyond capacity, and casualties spilled into the hallways. Many patients had sustained serious blast injuries, while others were covered in a choking, thick coating of oil. Other less seriously injured patients exhibited typical signs of shock: exhaustion, weakness, pale skin and low blood pressure. Doctors and nurses swamped by emergency cases gave priority to those requiring immediate surgery. Other survivors, coated in oil, badly burned, and seemingly suffering from shock, were wrapped in blankets and given hot tea to comfort them.

Plasma was administered to many of the burned. There was no time to strip the men of their fouled clothes or to wash them down. Instead, they sat or lay in whatever space was available and were urged to remain calm. Medical staff, unaware they were dealing with noxious chemicals, only made matters worse by keeping the men wrapped in their fouled clothes. The liquefied mustard gas remained in constant contact with their skin, enabling the toxic mixture to be absorbed into their bodies or inhaled with each breath.

Within hours of arrival, patients began exhibiting skin blisters and mysterious burns. Many of them complained about burning eyes and vision loss. Those diagnosed as suffering from shock exhibited low blood pressure and a slow pulse but not the other normal symptoms of clinical shock, such as restlessness or shallow breathing. Instead, they acted lethargically and apathetically. Doctors suspected something else was happening but were unable to identify a cause.

In the following days, as patients began to die from the strange symptoms, doctors raised the alarm. Gen. Fred Blesse, deputy chief surgeon at Allied headquarters in Algiers, was notified of the strange symptoms and advised that some of the medical staff believed a toxic agent was involved, possibly associated with chemical bombs that the Germans might have used during their attack. Blesse immediately dispatched Lt. Col. Stewart F. Alexander, consultant officer in chemical warfare medicine, to Bari to investigate.

Alexander was well suited for the assignment. He had graduated from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1937 and was commissioned a 1st lieutenant in the Medical Corps Reserve, U.S.

National Archives

The badly decomposed body of an unidentified Allied sailor killed during the raid on the Italian port of Bari is pulled from the waters of the harbor some time afterward. The release of mustard gas into the harbor caused increased casualties in the wake of the German air raid and precipitated an investigation.

Army, that same year. After briefly serving as a surgeon with the 16th Infantry Division, he transferred to the Medical Research Division, Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, where he studied the effects of mustard and nitrogen mustard agents.

After flying to Bari, Alexander rushed to the nearest hospital. Upon arrival, he immediately noticed a distinct garlic odor permeating the medical wards, an odor that was often associated with mustard poisoning. Next, he focused on the terrible skin lesions. The burns and blisters matched the level of patient exposure to the contaminated water in the harbor. Those who had been blown into the harbor were covered from head to toe by the reddish-brown burns. Those who had only reached into the water to pull men out were limited to burns on their arms. Clearly something in the water had caused the burn patterns.

Alexander ordered autopsies of the dead and a chemical analysis of the oil from the harbor. The lungs of the deceased often exhibited extensive congestion and a mottled mauve surface, effects that could be attributed to the inhalation of a toxic agent. For Alexander all the evidence pointed to mustard gas. When he received a call from a British officer advising they had found a mustard bomb casing in the harbor, Alexander concluded that the Germans had used chemical weapons during their attack. It was only when U.S. Fifteenth Air Force officers examined the casing and identified it as an American M47A1 100-pound bomb normally used to carry liquid mustard that Alexander learned the awful truth—the mustard bombs belonged to the Allies.

Upon learning the cause of the burns and blisters, hospital staff changed their course of treatment. Blisters were lanced and drained, oral sulfonamide was administered to treat irritated respiratory tracts, and fluids were forced down patients' throats even though the process was extremely painful. Despite these emergency measures, the death toll from mustard exposure began to climb but eventually ran its course over several days.

Initially, British port authorities denied that any of the Allied ships carried mustard, but after Alexander assembled technical data and eyewitness accounts he was able to pinpoint the *John Harvey* as the source. Only then did port authorities acknowledge the existence of mustard bombs.

In the end, more than 1,000 men were reported killed or missing after the Bari raid. Vesole was one of those who died. Rushed to hospital after his rescue from the Nuovo Molo, he later succumbed to his wounds. For his actions on December 2, 1943, Vesole was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. The citation read in part, "… His exceptional fortitude and self-sacrificing concern for others were in keeping with the highest tradition of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country."

An additional 800 servicemen were hospitalized, and of these 628 suffered from mustard exposure. Two weeks after the raid, 69 men had died, wholly or partially as a result of this exposure. Many Italian civilians died or suffered from mustard poisoning, their true numbers never to be known.

For the Germans, unaware of the chemical disaster, the raid was a tremendous success. Twenty-eight merchant ships carrying more than 31,000 tons of cargo were sunk or so badly damaged that they were written off. A further 12 ships were damaged but able to continue in service. This devastating blow had been accomplished for the loss of only two Ju-88s downed by antiaircraft fire. The significant loss of ships and cargo has led many historians and commentators to refer to the Bari raid as "the second Pearl Harbor."

A cover-up was immediately imposed at the highest levels of Allied command to prevent the Germans from learning about the Allies' stockpile of chemical weapons and possibly retaliating. British officials, at the insistence of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, struck all references to mustard gas from their official reports – deaths were attributed to "burns as a result of enemy action."

American officials also tried to keep the existence of mustard a secret but eventually admitted to the accident in February 1944. Official U.S. records were sealed and only declassified in 1959. The British took even longer, only admitting to the presence of mustard gas at Bari in 1986. Although largely forgotten by the general public, for the families of the debilitated and horribly suffering survivors of the raid, the nightmare continued. □

Author Neil Taylor has written numerous articles for WWII History *magazine. He resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

SMASHING IN

In their first large-scale urban combat operation, U.S. armor-infantry teams with flamethrowers and mobile artillery assaulted the Siegfried Line at Aachen.

BY WILLIAM R. HOGAN

National Archives

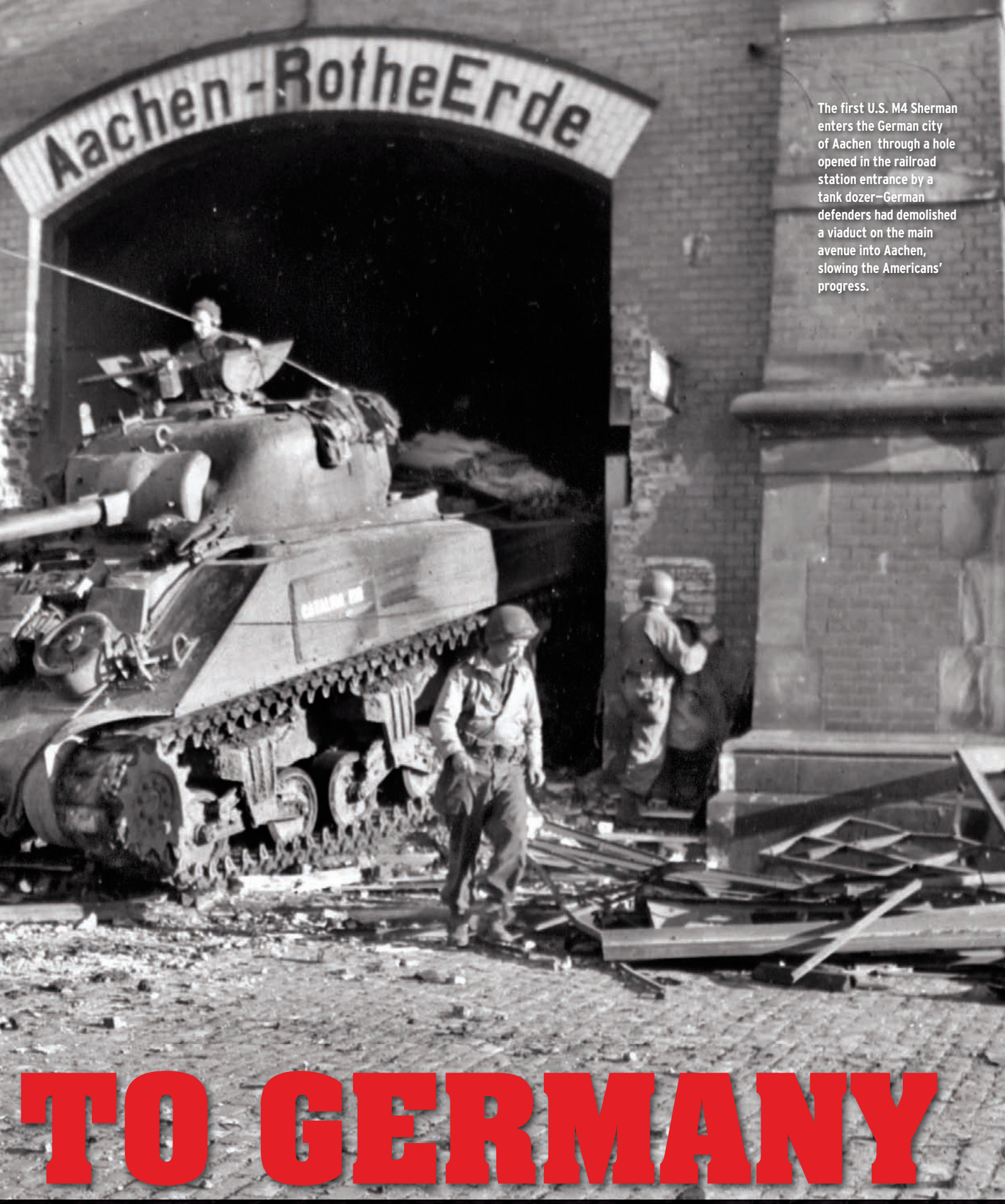
Task force commander Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Hogan, eager to get any advantage over the entrenched enemy of the 12th Infantry Division, requested a section of M2 flamethrowers from the 23rd Engineer Battalion. The six soldiers, each armed with a flamethrower and heavy fuel canister strapped to their back, divided up among the infantry squads. The "reconnaissance in force" resumed by nightfall along suburban streets south of the German city of Aachen lit up by tank cannon muzzle flashes and the orange glow of burning napalm inside cellars. The flamethrowers' tactical and psychological impact helped the Americans advance from east to west toward the center of the industrial town of Stolberg and the main intersection of town, where they would halt and wait for other units to come on line.

After landing at Omaha Beach on June 23, 1944, Hogan and his 3rd Battalion (33rd Armored Regiment) had fought in the hedgerows, at Mortain, at Mons and the closing of the Falaise Pocket. Once again in an urban environment, his task force faced German tank-killer teams armed with the Panzerfaust anti-tank rockets, covered by machine gunners, that knocked out lead tanks and sent the accompanying infantry scrambling for cover in doorways and drainage ditches. Tanks returned cannon and machine-gun fire at the buildings on either side. Grunts and Landsers spent the day in house-to-house fighting with advances measured in meters. The work was exhausting especially for the flamethrower crews, who kept up with the advance while carrying a 68-pound container of napalm strapped to their back. Lieutenant R. Eells of the 23rd Engineers reported that night that it was the first organized use of flamethrowers in urban combat operations in the European theater to "encourage" an enemy to abandon fortified positions.

This was the first phase of the operation to capture the German city of Aachen and the Americans were getting a taste of how hard urban combat in Germany was going to be—the city and its surrounding area had been incorporated into the Siegfried Line (West Wall), Hitler's formidable defense of his western border.

The battle for Aachen in September/October 1944 became one of the U.S. Army's largest, and toughest, urban battles of World War II. It was the Army's initial exposure to large-scale combat operations in a city and would play an important part in the development of effective "Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain" (MOUT) for the service going forward.

The experience at Aachen would be studied for decades and become the basis for an emphasis on combined arms for MOUT operations, as previous military doctrine had discouraged the



The first U.S. M4 Sherman enters the German city of Aachen through a hole opened in the railroad station entrance by a tank dozer—German defenders had demolished a viaduct on the main avenue into Aachen, slowing the Americans' progress.

TO GERMANY

use of armor in urban areas where defenders enjoy almost all of the advantages as each building offers multiple opportunities for cover and concealment, forcing attackers to treat each one as a bunker that must be neutralized before they can advance. Streets can be used to force attackers into ambushes. Mobility and fields of fire are restricted. Armored vehicles are virtually blind and easily attacked at close quarters. It became necessary for infantry and armor to work together, each compensating for the other's weaknesses, and forcing them to improvise combat tactics in a complex and confined environment.

Valuable lessons can still be drawn today from the battle for Aachen, where an American force, untrained in urban combat, whose higher numbers were negated by the terrain and the enemy's fanatical use of a new generation of portable anti-tank rockets, fought and won. Agile and adaptable mission command, ingenious employment of heavy artillery and flamethrowers, engineer mobility assets, and old-fashioned aggressiveness along with close-quarter fighting won the day.

Though it had been incorporated into the Siegfried Line near Germany's border with Belgium and Holland, Aachen (pop.165,00), had little strategic value. After fighting their way northward into Belgium from the beaches of Normandy by early September, the Allies were much more interested in crossing the Rhine River to target the coal and steel plants of the Ruhr Valley. Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) commander Gen. Dwight David Eisenhower had not expected the Allies to reach this position until May 1945—the rapid advance had surrounded five German divisions before they could take positions on the defensive line. On September 5, 1944, Eisenhower ordered that "We should advance rapidly on the Rhine by pushing through the Aachen gap in the north and the Metz gap in the south" toward the Third Reich's industrial heartland. Initially, the plan was to surround, then bypass, Aachen on the way to this objective in order to avoid the costly street fighting inherent in urban combat.

The best argument for capturing the first large city on German soil was symbolic—the city loomed large in the psyche of the Nazi Party. The Frankish king Charlemagne had been born in Aachen in 742 CE and it had been the capital of his Holy Roman Empire, or the "First Reich," as Adolf Hitler called it. Otto von Bismarck's unification of Germany was the Second Reich, and Hitler styled his regime as the Third Reich. Its loss would be a blow to the Nazi cultural center of gravity and chip away at the government's credibility in the eyes of its people.

For General Omar Bradley, commander of the 12th Army Group, the largest body of U.S. soldiers ever to serve under a single commander (four field armies, over 39 infantry and airborne divisions, and 15 armored divisions) the capture of Aachen would validate his strategy of attacking through Belgium to secure the road network and the crucial Rhine crossing into Germany—the terrain beyond the "Aachen Gap" was flat and suitable for motorized forces.

Bradley designated Major General Charles H. Corlett, commander of XIX Corps, and Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins of VII Corps, to spearhead the attack. The plan was for them to encircle the city, which was protected by the West Wall's Schill and Scharnhorst lines.

Corlett's XIX Corps—the 29th and 30th Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Armored Division—would break through into Germany from Holland north of the city and drive south to Bardenberg and Würselen. Acting as the advance element of Collins's VII Corps, the 1st Infantry Division reached the western outskirts of Aachen on September 10 and began a series of reconnaissance patrols around the southern edge of the city. The rest of VII Corps

National Archives

ABOVE: Carrying a shoulder-fired Panzerfaust anti-tank weapon—lethal against Allied armored vehicles at close range—a German panzergrenadier of the Volkssturm runs past a Sturmgeschutze self-propelled assault gun in the town square of Aachen. OPPOSITE: On October 17, 1944, soldiers of Company G, 2nd Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment advance down an Aachen street heavily damaged by Allied bombing. In their first large-scale urban combat, the Americans met stiff resistance from a vastly outnumbered enemy.

National Archives

would then push to the east below Aachen near Stolberg and hold in place, until time to push north and rendezvous with XIX Corps.

Knowing the importance of the city as a symbol, the Allies expected a hard fight—which they eventually got—but didn't realize how lightly defended Aachen was in the first half of September. Indeed, most of the city's population had left after Hitler ordered all civilians to evacuate. By the time Maj. Gen. Gerhard Graf von Schwerin, commander of the 116th Panzer Division, arrived on September 12 to take over the defense of Aachen he found only 7,000 civilians cowering in the city. Von Schwerin's division, gutted in the summer by the 30th Infantry Division at Mortain, consisted of 1,600 men, three tanks, a few assault guns and two Luftwaffe fortress battalions. Including a random mix of other units, he initially had only 6,500 men to defend the city.

Assessing the situation, von Schwerin saw that his most reasonable move was to surrender and wrote a letter addressed to the Americans to that effect on September 13. Unfortunately for von Schwerin, that was the same day that Hitler ordered him to counterattack and the letter was never delivered. Instead, it found its way to the Führer, who had von Schwerin arrested by the Gestapo (reprimanded, he would serve on the Italian front).

His replacement was Colonel (Oberst) Gerhard Wilck, commander of the 246th Volksgrenadier Division—many of whom had received fewer than 10 days of infantry training. Hitler also brought Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt out of retirement to help organize the defense in the west and began transferring as many units as possible from the Eastern Front to the Aachen Gap—which he ordered to be defended at all costs.

On September 10, the Big Red One (1st Infantry Division), including TF Hogan, penetrated the south side of Aachen, at first finding the lines of bunkers and obstacles to be largely deserted. They continued east, with increasing opposition until they reached Stolberg, occupying an arc around the southern perimeter of the city. By September 21, 1944, Task Force Hogan's advance up to the main intersection helped secure central Stolberg for the 3rd Armored Division. Pockets of German resistance continued to the north, so Hogan enlisted the help of Stolberg's Nazi Mayor, who surrendered rather than face Lieutenant Eells' flamethrowers. Hogan did not trust the doctor, putting him to good use at the head of the column, sitting on the hood of a jeep. This way he was "motivated" to help identify mines and possible ambush sites set up to slow the Americans.

After missing the opportunity to quickly seize Aachen, or have it surrendered to them, the Allies now faced a problem of their own making. As they had pushed toward the Rhine River, the Germans had been falling back in village after village across France, leading to the idea that a bold move into Germany could have the war "over by Christmas." Bradley surely thought that his plan to take Aachen and seize the Ruhr Valley was that bold move. Eisenhower himself favored an approach on multiple fronts, but overstretched supply lines and logistical issues wouldn't allow it.

By mid-September the optimism to end the war quickly had reached a fever pitch, especially in the eyes of British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who called for "one powerful full-blooded thrust across the Rhine and into the heart of Germany backed by the whole of the resources of the Allied Armies."

On September 17th, 1944, after only about

a week's preparation, the Allies launched Montgomery's Operation Market-Garden.

After eight days, the ambitious but ill-conceived operation failed in its objectives for a variety of reasons. In doing so, as many as 17,000 men were killed, wounded, and captured and 88 tanks destroyed.

The shortages began to be felt more acutely around Aachen as the 3rd Armored Division reported on September 18 that it had only 75 operational medium tanks out of its authorized 232. On September 22, just as it seemed the 12th Army Group was poised to break through into Germany, Bradley called a halt to the operation due to critical shortages of artillery shells, fuel and other supplies. Cloudy and overcast conditions due to record rainfalls in Central Europe in the fall and winter of 1944 also meant they would lose their close air tactical support. It also limited the delivery of supplies by air. The Allied supply lines extended all the way back to Normandy and with many secondary roads washed out, vital resupply convoys carrying the large quantity of artillery shells, hand grenades, and small arms ammunition could only reach Aachen by a few hard surface roads.

An uneasy stalemate descended on the area, but the capture of central Stolberg helped VII Corps isolate Aachen, control the city's water supply, and trap German forces in the Hürtgen Forest where the 9th Infantry Division had began its advance on September 19 and was soon followed by the 4th, 8th, 28th, and 1st Infantry Divisions, plus the 2nd Ranger Battalion and a combat command of the 5th Armored Division. The Battle of Hürtgen Forest would involve more than 200,000 men and last until February 10, 1945.

By the end of September, supplies of ammo and fuel began to reach the Aachen front with sufficient quantity and regularity that the planned pincer attack was ordered to resume. After a four-day bombardment of an 11-mile sector to the north between Geilenkirchen and Aachen, XIX Corps' 30th Infantry Division (under Maj. Gen. Leland S. Hobbs) and the 2nd Armored Division (under Maj. Gen. Ernest Harmon) were set to launch on their mission to cross the Wurm River and West Wall on October 1, but heavy downpours delayed them 24 hours.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: American urban combat teams used the 155mm M12 Motor Carriage "Door Knocker" (pictured here) or a towed 155mm howitzer "Long Tom" for heavy direct fire against fortified German positions at Aachen. TOP: Tech Sergeant Chester Szczekocki uses a flamethrower in Chemical Warfare training, June 27 1944, in Louisiana. The Americans used flamethrowers to subdue diehard German defenders in Aachen. OPPOSITE: With troops of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment along for a ride, an M4 Sherman medium tank of the U.S. 3rd Armored Division rolls through the Stolberg on October 14, 1944. The fight for Aachen and the surrounding area was arduous, a taste of things to come as Allied troops struck deeper into Nazi Germany.

This advance was immediately met with fierce German resistance, requiring the extensive use of flamethrowers and explosives to clear deeply entrenched pillboxes. Progress was agonizingly slow and costly; one company lost 87 troops in just an hour, and another suffered 93 casualties out of 120 from a single German artillery strike. The fighting quickly devolved into brutal house-to-house engagements and hand grenade duels, particularly in areas like Palenberg. The arduous task of forcing a crossing of the Wurm and establishing a bridgehead alone cost the 30th Infantry Division approximately 300 dead and wounded.

As previously planned, the 16th Infantry Regiment would secure the eastern flank while the 18th ID moved northward to the east of the city to link up with the 30th Infantry Division near Würselen. The task of capturing Aachen itself would fall to the 26th Infantry Regiment, sup-

ported by Task Force Hogan's armor. They launched from the south on October 8, aiming to capture key high ground positions such as Verlautenheide and Crucifix Hill. These initial advances, though costly, set the stage for the eventual encirclement of the city. The German high command's demand to "hold to the last man," coupled with Aachen's immense symbolic importance, fostered a desperate, almost fanatical resistance. For the Allies, the refusal to surrender meant that even after encirclement and heavy bombardment, the fight would remain a brutal, house-to-house grind, testing the endurance and morale of their own troops.

The brunt of this fighting was borne by combined arms teams, typically built around an infantry company, supported by bazooka teams, flamethrowers, and tanks or tank destroyers. The 26th IR, for instance, effectively integrated close air support, indirect and direct artillery fire, and TF Hogan's armor (M4 Shermans, M10 tank destroyers) with infantry and engineers, pushing these diverse weapon systems down to the company level. This provided commanders with the flexibility to counter unique German defensive positions while minimizing casualties. Filled with hard targets by design and improvisation, an urban environment requires an enormous amount of ammunition. As an example, Army records show that at Aachen the 2nd Battalion alone fired 5,000 mortar rounds, threw 4,300 grenades and torched 50 gallons of flamethrower fuel. They also fired 40,000 .30-caliber machine-gun rounds and 27,000 other small arms rounds. One of the key components of success for an attacking army is to keep moving stockpiles of ammo and supplies as far forward as possible at every opportunity.

Surrounded by woods and hilly terrain, the "Sentinel of the Rhine" lay in a plain that started at the foothills of the Ardennes Forest and swept east toward the city of Cologne with its bridge over the mighty river. High ground encircled the city, and the Lousberg Heights looked down upon the center of town, an ideal observation post from which to call artillery. Reinforced concrete pillboxes, camouflaged and with interlocking fields of fire, covered approaches and key intersections. An above ground railway line looped around the inner city, the equivalent of a medieval wall to thwart invaders. Antitank obstacles, mines and booby traps rounded out the defenses.

The 1st Infantry Division with Task Force Hogan attached received the mission to capture downtown Aachen. Maj. Gen. Clarence Huebner, the division commander, split his 26th Infantry Regiment along two axes of advance, attaching his 1st Battalion, under the command of Major Francis W. Adams, to Task Force Hogan. Their orders were to move under cover of darkness into the outskirts of Aachen to a factory district from which they would jump off at noon on October 19. Objectives "Red" and "Blue," the heights and road junction beyond, controlled access to the old city center and the Aachen-Laurensberg highway, along which German counterattacks were expected.

Defending Fortress Aachen were 6,500 men assembled under Oberst (Colonel) Gerhard Wilck from his own 246th Volksgrenadier Infantry Division. Northeast of Aachen, elements of the 1st SS Panzer Corps augmented by Tiger tanks of the veteran 506th Heavy Tank Battalion readied themselves to counterattack against any U.S. gains.

By October 10, with the city more than halfway encircled, the 1st U.S. Army Commander had a message delivered into the city under a white flag offering the German Garrison Commander the opportunity to surrender. After no reply within the specified 24

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hours, the formal assault on Aachen began with artillery shelling and bombing runs from the Army Air Corps. The city would be reduced to rubble with 80 percent of its buildings damaged or destroyed.

The final attack began amid a gray industrial landscape that matched the low gunmetal clouds dropping a cold drizzle that turned roads to muck. Artillery preparations and aerial bombing reduced some parts of the city to rubble with German infantry inside cellars, along rooftops, and in every nook and cranny of collapsed masonry.

The tank-infantry teams advanced, each M4 Sherman supported by a platoon of infantry; the Shermans would "light up" up a building, driving the German defenders into the cellars and basements. There was no knocking on front doors, just blowing holes into side walls with satchel charges or tank fire so the infantry could come in where least expected while staying clear of enemy kill zones. The infantry then moved up and down stairs, using grenades or flamethrowers to kill anyone not surrendering. The infantry squad leader would yell or signal "Cleared!" and the tank would shift fire to the next building. Radio or voice commands, wired field telephone, and runners provided the redundant communication between tanks, infantry, and their higher command. This slow and deliberate sledgehammer approach combined firepower and aggressive movement, minimizing friendly and civilian casualties.

Once in the city center, lead American elements drew up toward the Lousberg Heights. Immediately below lay a park carved into a spur. Several large buildings edged around Farwick Park. The Kurhaus served as a German tactical command post, and the Quellendorf Hotel was a battalion headquarters. The area had changed hands three days prior when the Germans launched a counterattack, which recaptured the Kurhaus from the hard-fighting troops of 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry. Now, reinforced with Hogan's tanks, it was time for the Americans to capture these objectives for good.

At first light on October 19, the Americans charged up the hill to their northwest. Mud slowed the tanks' advance, but they succeeded in isolating the Germans' fortified positions at the Quellendorf and then engaged enemy infantry entrenched on the slope of the Lousberg. Sniper fire, incoming mortar rounds, and the chatter of heavy machine guns greeted the oncoming Americans. Several bunkers and Germans occupying the steeple of the Salvatorberg Church on the forward slope of the heights required elimination before the advance resumed.

When enemy bunkers supported one another, the technique was to bring up a "Long Tom," a towed 155mm howitzer, and blast away. The concussion was sufficient to bring down walls already weakened by bombardment. A hit by its 90-pound round against a bunker resulted in massive headaches and bleeding from eyes, nose, and ears for the German defenders, who quickly thereafter surrendered. For the smaller bunkers, infantry identified the vision slits and attacked their enemy's blind flanks with grenades, stopping only to blow up obstacles and for the engineers to clear mines. This method of overcoming hardened urban defenses became known as the "Knock 'em all down" approach, coined by Lt. Col. Derrill Daniel of the 2nd Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment.

Forward observers riding on Shermans called in suppressive fire and the steeple on the Salvatorberg exploded in a gray cloud of debris as the first 76mm tank rounds and artillery in direct fire mode reduced the German observation post to a mound of dusty rubble.

To the right of the tanks, the 3rd battalion, 26th Infantry, Lieutenant Colonel J.T. Corley, commanding, infiltrated L Company into the Quellendorf Hotel tennis courts at first light and began clearing the outer buildings. Corley's own "Long Tom" moved onto a tennis court and began firing on the Quellendorf and the Kurhaus. The rounds poked gaping holes in the façade of the elegant hotel and suppressed the antiaircraft cannon the enemy had assembled piece by piece in the upper floors. The battle increased in tempo as the ripping of machine-gun rounds and the lung-vibrating detonation of tank and artillery fire continued.

Task Force Hogan's two understrength tank companies pressed on in enveloping wings, their movement commanded and controlled by Hogan's command Sherman situated toward the rear of the center area of advance. Behind the tank columns, the accompanying infantry heard heavy fighting as Corley's troops exchanged grenades with the Germans inside the hotel lobby and German infantry holed up in the Quellendorf basement fought tenaciously.

Sherman engines roared as the American tank-infantry teams struggled up the northeastern slope past the smoking ruins of the Salvatorberg church to their left. The top of Lousberg Hill, Objective Red, lay another 200 yards up. The Americans surged over and around the hill, pausing only to mop up a squad of German infantry. Consolidating his command on the hilltop, Hogan called a halt in order to evacuate 15 infantrymen wounded on the move through the town and onto the heights. Two armored half track ambulances moved forward, and medics got to work patching up the wounded troops.

The columns resumed the advance onto the reverse slope of Lousberg and headed downhill with the sinking sun. The final objective, a manor house 200 yards away, Objective Blue, severed the Aachen-Laurensberg highway. Task Force Hogan set up a hasty roadblock to await German counterattacks.

After the day's loss of ground, Wilck moved his headquarters to a hardened air raid bunker on the Lousberg Strasse. He issued a communique exhorting the remaining German defenders to fight to the death and not yield any ground. Task Force Hogan's tanks stayed on guard all night with artillery prepared to fire toward the approaches of the Aachen-Laurensberg highway. Unbeknownst to the Americans, the 1st SS Panzer Corps was directed to give up relief of the Aachen garrison.

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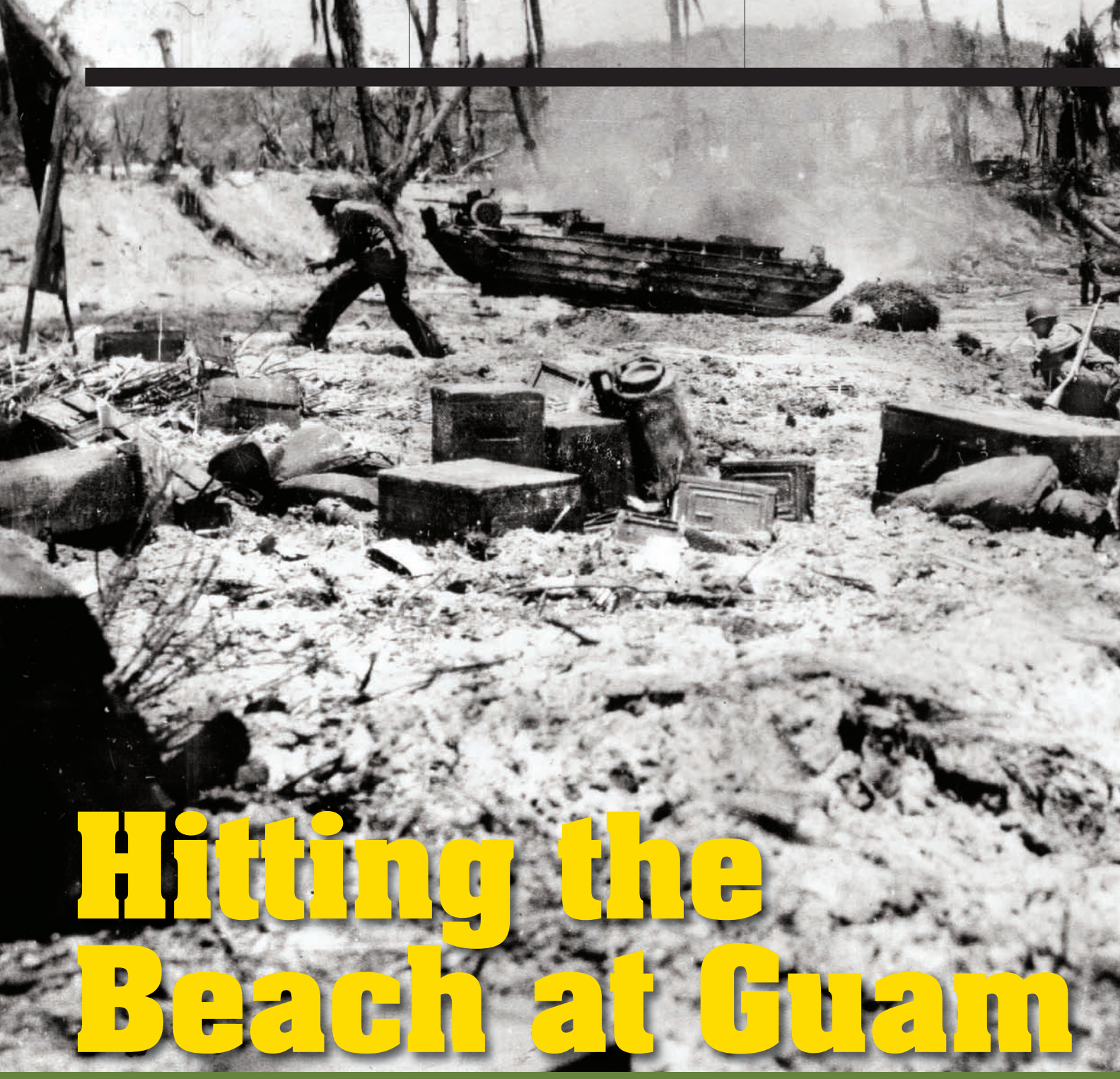
ABOVE: German Colonel Gerhard Wilck exhorts his men to fight to the death to stop the U.S. advance, but by October 20, 1944, organized resistance in Aachen had largely subsided amid heavy casualties. Wilck surrendered the city to the Americans on October 21. OPPOSITE: An American tank destroyer firing on the streets of Aachen in October 1944. After waves of U.S. Ninth Air Force bombers, ground troops moved into the shattered city to dislodge the German defenders.

Dawn gave the Big Red One's infantry another push into the German garrison's final redoubt. Lieutenant Colonel Corley called up his 155mm Long Tom and began pounding the air raid bunker. At 10:26 a.m., Wilck disobeyed his own orders to save his eardrums and surrendered. It was October 21, 1944. Brig. Gen. George Taylor, assistant division commander for the Big Red One, accepted the surrender and the ceremonial handing over of Wilck's sidearm.

The juxtaposition of the overwhelming Allied numerical superiority (100,000 soldiers) against the significantly smaller German defending force (13,000 soldiers and 5,000 Volkssturm) with roughly equivalent casualty figures (approximately 5,000 for each side) vividly illustrates the brutal nature of urban warfare. Despite being heavily outnumbered, the German defenders inflicted comparable losses, highlighting the "meat grinder" aspect of the battle. The high number of German prisoners (5,600) relative to their initial strength indicates that while they fought tenaciously, the eventual encirclement and systematic clearing of the city led to mass surrenders once resistance became futile.

On October 22, Task Force Hogan, released from attachment to the 1st Infantry Division, headed back to Stolberg and into reserve to rest and prepare for whatever came next. Beyond Aachen was Cologne, then the industrial heartland of the Ruhr, and the advance toward Berlin. However, Hitler had one last ace up his sleeve on the other side of the Ardennes Forest, and the Battle of the Bulge was only weeks away. □

William R. Hogan is a fourth-generation U.S. Army officer who has served across the world from Bosnia to Haiti and Afghanistan. He is the youngest son of Colonel (Ret.) Samuel M. Hogan and the author of Task Force Hogan: The World War II Tank Battalion that Spearheaded the Liberation of Europe.



Hitting the Beach at Guam

For the Marines and Army troops that captured the island in the Marianas, the liberation of Guam meant recovering American territory.

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON

Sometime during the middle of July 1944, a well-meaning war correspondent asked an officer with the Third Marine Division if his men were ready for the landings on Guam. It was meant as a routine question—the invasion was only a few days away, and the reporter just wanted something to put in his daily summary. But the response he received was anything but routine.

"Guam?" the officer shouted in exasperation. "Goddamit, man, these men have had Guam until it's been coming out of their ears!"

The officer was not exaggerating. For the past several months, the men of the Third Division had listened to lectures, attended briefings,

An amphibious DUKW landing vehicle burns in the background of this photo as US Marines have taken cover on the landing beach near Asan, Guam. The image was taken by AP photographer Joe Rosenthal, who would take the iconic photo of the flag raising on Iwo Jima six months later.

watched films, and looked at maps of the island. Although there is really no such thing as "overtraining" for any amphibious operation, everyone had certainly had their fill of Guam by the time the landing date had arrived.

At least the men could be certain that all the information being drilled into them was factual and up to date. Maps and briefing materials for some previous operations had been woefully inadequate. Planners had to make due with ancient British Admiralty maps and charts that had probably been obsolete 50 years earlier. And the maps were of places that most Americans had never even heard of—islands like Guadalcanal, and Tulagi, and Tarawa. But this was not the case with Guam, far from it.

Until December 1941, Guam had been a possession of the United States for over 40 years, ever since the Spanish-American War of 1898. The US Navy established a naval base near the village of Piti in 1899. Americans had not only heard of the island, but many had relatives who had served there. Guam was probably as well-known as Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Some of the older Marine officers and non-coms in the landing force had been stationed there before the war.

The old Marine barracks were still there, but had been occupied

All Photos: National Archives

ABOVE: American landing craft leave white wakes as they make their runs toward the landing beaches on Guam. Smoke from the pre-invasion bombardment drifts toward them during their approach. OPPOSITE: Marines leap from their landing craft on the beach at Guam while heavy Japanese fire forces them to take immediate cover.

by Japanese troops for the past two and one-half years. In the 1930s, Guam was a base for the Pan American Clipper service between the United States and the Orient, and was also one of the stations of the pre-war trans-Pacific cable network. Part of this system was still intact, including the link between Guam and Midway. Once in a while, someone on Midway would tap out an obscene message for the Japanese garrison on Guam. A few minutes later, some angry-sounding gibberish would come snapping back through the telegraph line.

Because of the many American connections with Guam, both political and sentimental, retaking Guam was not just another step in the Pacific island-hopping campaign. To the Marines who would be landing on its beaches, Guam was "ours." The commanding general of the amphibious force, Major General Roy S. Geiger, made this announcement to the invasion force just prior to the landings: "The eyes of the nation watch you as you go into battle to liberate this former American bastion from the enemy." Guam may not have been the 49th state, but it was the next thing to it. Taking Guam meant taking back a piece of the American homeland.

The plan to occupy the Marianas Islands—Guam, Saipan, and Tinian—began to take shape in March 1944. It was known simply as the "Marianas Operation," and was given the code name "Forager." Forager was eventually refined to treat each island as a separate objective with its own code name. The Guam landings were called "Stevedore." According to plan, Stevedore was tentatively scheduled for June 18, 1944, three days after landings were to take place on Saipan; the invasion day was designated "W-Day."

Photo reconnaissance flights over Guam began in late April and continued into June. Modern, up-to-date maps were also used for planning purposes. The submarine USS *Greenling* took photos of the landing beaches and provided information on the tides and the water depth offshore. Every effort was made to give as much information as possible to the units of the landing force during the planning phase of the operation.

When naval intelligence was satisfied that they had found out everything possible about the landing areas, and after the Marines and army troops had made countless practice runs onto beaches similar to those at Guam, a landing date was set. W-Day would be June 18, 1944; H-Hour would be 0530. The word went out, in code, to all commands.

The date turned out to be optimistic, to put it mildly. Landings had taken place on the neighboring island of Saipan on June 15, and Japanese resistance turned out to be a lot more determined than anyone expected. The Guam operation was postponed until Saipan could be secured, which took the better part of a month. On July 9, Admiral Richard K. Turner officially announced that Saipan was in American hands. Operation Stevedore could proceed.

By the time the Guam landings finally began at dawn on July 21, 1944, the island had already undergone 13 days of "softening up" by U.S. warships and carrier-based aircraft. The first day of concentrated bombardment was July 18, when the battleships *Pennsylvania, New Mexico,* and *Idaho*, along with the cruiser *Honolulu* and several destroyers, pounded the landing areas

for several hours. Just before W-Day, the battleships *Tennessee* and *California* joined the bombardment group and added their substantial firepower to the already considerable barrage. Gunners on board the warships wondered if anyone could still be alive on the island.

The pre-invasion bombardment on July 21 fired on specially selected targets near the western beaches, as well as on objectives further inland. "Fourteen-inch guns belching fire and thunder sent spectacular blossoms of flame spreading on the fields and hillsides inland," is the way one Marine described it. "It was all very plain to see in the glow of star shells which illuminated the shore, the ships and the troops who lined the rails of the transports and LSTs which brought the US Marines and soldiers ashore."

By about 0600, the landing craft had already been launched and began to circle, waiting for the signal to head for the beaches. The men aboard these LVTs (Landing Vehicle, Tracked) and LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel) had been awake since 0230, and had had their breakfast and made last minute checks on their equipment several hours earlier. The order to "land the landing force" was not given until just after 0730, when the landing craft finally broke their circle and began moving eastward, toward the shore. A Marine in the bow of an LVT looked toward the beaches and wondered the same thing as the gunners aboard the battleships and cruisers—could anyone still be alive on Guam?

The Third Marine Division came ashore on Asan Beach, on the western side of the island, while the First Marine Provisional Brigade landed at Agat, several miles to the south, and also on the other side of the Orote Peninsula. An Army unit, the 305th Regiment of the 77th Division, also came ashore at Agat. Two other regiments of the 77th Division stayed aboard the transports as a floating reserve.

At 0833, an air observer flying above the island announced, "Troops ashore on all beaches." This was very good news for General Geiger, but did not have much of an impact on the troops. The men quickly discovered that many Japanese troops were still very much alive on Guam, in spite of the naval bombardment.

The Third Marine Division landed almost literally right on top of the Japanese command post. Lieutenant General Takeshi Takashina, commander of the 29th Japanese Division, had his headquarters on the sandstone cliffs that dominated the landing beaches. General Takashina's troops began firing at the Marines as they approached the beaches and kept up their mortar and artillery fire after they came ashore. Snipers had a perfect view of the beaches from the high ground, and soldiers rolled grenades right down the cliffs onto the Marine positions.

The Marines' first objective was to dislodge the Japanese from their stronghold. Gunfire from the warships offshore, joined by a mortar barrage from the newly landed Marines, was supposed to have softened up the Japanese position in advance of the Marine attack. But the enemy very quickly recovered from the shellfire, and just as quickly began firing at the exposed troops as they tried to make their way up the cliff. "Four times they tried to reach the top," one of the Marines recalled. "Four times they were thrown back … they attacked up a 60-degree slope, protected only by sword grass, and were met by a storm of grenades and heavy rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire."

Tanks from the Third Tank Battalion were finally brought up from the beach. Between fire from the tanks and flamethrowers carried

by Marine infantrymen, the Japanese position on top of Chonito Cliff was finally overrun—"cleaned out" in the Marines' vernacular.

On the southern beach, at Agat, the First Provisional Brigade was finding Japanese resistance just as intense. A concrete block house with a four-foot thick roof was the main problem. The pillbox was situated in a perfect position, almost squarely in the middle of the landing beach, and was armed with two 75mm howitzers, one 35mm gun, and several machine guns. It was effectively camouflaged and had not been spotted by photo interpreters, which also meant that it had not been marked as a target either for air bombardment or naval gunfire. Several LVTs had been knocked out by the blockhouse before they could even get close to the beach.

Most of the LVTs managed to get past the gunfire and onto the beach—there were simply too many landing craft for the Japanese gunners. Once they reached the shore, the Marines came across a system of enemy trenches that one of them described as "excellent but unmanned." The Marines were able to take possession of the deserted trenches without any resistance at all. By 1330, the massive pillbox that had caused so many problems for the landing force had been knocked out—the Marines had worked their way around it and had surprised the defenders by attacking from the rear.

At about the same time, General Lemuel Shepherd, commander of the First Provisional Brigade, established his command post on the beach. General Shepherd and General Allen Turnage, commander of the Third Marine Division, could be satisfied that their respective landings had been a success, and also that their respective units were in better condition than they might have imagined. At the end of the day on July 21, General Shepherd sent this cryptic message to General Geiger: "Our casualties about 350. Enemy unknown. Critical shortages of food and ammunition of all types. Think we can handle it. Will continue as planned tomorrow."

But the day was not over yet. At about 1730 hours, an estimated 750 men of the Japanese 38th Regiment began what is usually referred to as an "all-out assault" on the Agat beaches. The focal point was Hill 40, a strategically positioned hill overlooking the Marine positions. Both sides recognized the vital importance of Hill 40. The men of the 38th Regiment did their best to take the hill; the Marines of the 4th Regiment managed to hold their position, but just barely.

A major with the 4th Regiment wrote, "K Company with about 200 men fought them all night long from Hill 40 and a small hill to the rear and northeast of Hill 40." When morning came, "the Marines counterattacked with two squads from L Company ...and two tanks. A number of men from Company K died that night, but all 750 Japanese soldiers were killed."

"If the Japanese had been able to recapture Hill 40," another officer recalled, "they could have kicked our asses off the Agat beaches."

At the end of the first day, the Marines were safely ashore but their beaches were still vulnerable. They occupied two shallow, unconnected beachheads, but the enemy controlled the high ground just inland, which meant that they were not only in danger of counterattack, but were also within range of Japanese mortars and artillery. General Shepherd and General Geiger could see how absolutely vital it was to get off the beaches and capture the high ground.

On July 22, the Third Division and the Provisional Brigade began their move to get off the beaches. The most critical area was Bundschu Ridge, named after Captain Geary Bundschu, who had been killed in an attack on that ridge shortly after coming ashore. The drive to capture this ridge, which stretched along the northern third of the Asan beaches, began on the morning of July 22. But the Marines did not reach the crest of the ridge until noon on the

following day. They spent the rest of July 23 overrunning any remaining Japanese strongpoints, officially known as "pockets of resistance."

The Marines resumed their push inland on July 24. The 9th Marine Regiment did their best to link up with the First Provisional Brigade during the morning hours. The 9th Marines already had a measure of success, capturing the Piti Island Naval Base three days before, and were looking forward to joining forces with the First Brigade and consolidating their two landing beaches.

But progress turned out to be a lot slower than anyone had expected. The tropical heat and humidity were the main culprits for the slow advance, along with exhaustion—the steady fighting since the 21st was taking its toll. The Marines did capture a food and ammunition depot that the retreating Japanese had left behind but did not make anything resembling an all-out effort to make contact with the Agat beaches.

The Marines on the Agat beaches were holding their ground. All of their artillery had landed, along with "a steady stream of supplies." Also, additional units of the 77th Division had been put ashore and were in place all along the beachhead perimeter. Japanese forces in the area had withdrawn to the Orote Peninsula, a long, finger-like spit of land that pointed off to the northwest.

ABOVE: American Marines hit the beaches at Guam at several locations in the southwest of the island. Guam had been an American possession prior to its seizure by the Japanese in the early days of World War II in the Pacific. OPPOSITE: A U.S. Marine uses a flamethrower to subdue the Japanese defenders occupying a fortified bunker on the island of Guam.

Even though the Japanese on Orote were bottled up and isolated, they still posed a threat—they were lurking behind the American position on the Agat beaches and could cause considerable trouble if they decided to break out of their confinement. General Geiger decided to attack the enemy forces on Orote before they could do any damage. Because the 77th Division was defending the beachhead perimeter, General Geiger could send the entire First Provisional Brigade against the Japanese on the peninsula.

General Shepherd prepared to begin his attack on the morning of July 26. The 22nd Marine Regiment would attack on the right, and the 4th Marines were to attack on the left. Fifteen minutes before the attack, the Army's 902nd Artillery opened fire on the Japanese defenses and were joined by other Army and Marine artillery units.

But in spite of all the planning and support, the 22nd Marines had a hard time gaining ground because of a mangrove swamp at the base of the peninsula. Their line of advance was rerouted to the Agat-Sumay Road, which was much easier for the Japanese to defend. But the 4th Regiment, moving up the other side of the peninsula, had a much easier time. To keep from bypassing the 22nd, and from opening a gap between the two regiments, the 4th shifted its position to cover part of the line that had originally been assigned to the 22nd.

The fighting did not get any easier for the 22nd Marines the following day. The morning of July 27 began with a steady rain, which filled everyone's foxhole with water. Later that morning, Japanese artillery fire sent the men scrambling back to their foxholes, "water or not water," as one sergeant put it. The artillery finally did let up, allowing the Marines to get under way. They did not get far before encountering Japanese infantry units—"The resistance was picking up," one Marine put it.

It quickly became evident exactly why the resistance was increasing. "The area was full of pillboxes and bunkers," the same sergeant reported. "It was a yard by yard fight."

Sometimes Japanese mortar and machine-gun fire forced the Marines either to stop dead in their tracks or to withdraw out of range of the enemy fire. Whenever that happened, Sherman tanks were brought up to neutralize the enemy positions. With their 75mm howitzers and .50-caliber machine guns, they made short work of any pockets of resistance and allowed the stalled advance to start moving forward again.

The infantry was stopped by a line of pillboxes and trenches on July 27, and again a day later. In both instances, Sherman tanks were sent in to support the Marines, and in both instances the infantry and the tanks destroyed and overran the enemy's emplacements. Surviving Japanese troops withdrew to the vicinity of Orote's airfield, which was about two-thirds of the way up the peninsula.

General Shepherd decided to push right up the length of Orote on July 29. The old Marine barracks had already been retaken, and it looked as though it would take one more major assault to capture the airfield and secure the entire peninsula. Bombardment by Army and Marine artillery began during the early morning hours of the 29th, along with gunfire from the Navy's warships just off the coast. After the barrage lifted, the Marines and all available tanks, including several M-10 tank destroyers, began moving forward at about 0800. Resistance was described as "meager." By the end of the day, the Marines captured the airfield and pushed their way to the lighthouse on Orote Point, at the extreme end of the peninsula.

Japanese troops who survived the fighting committed suicide rather than surrender. Some jumped off the island's steep cliffs. Others blew themselves up with hand grenades. A Marine private with the 4th Regiment watched some of the suicides from his position. "I could see the Japanese jumping to their deaths," he said. "I actually felt sorry for them. I knew they had families and sweethearts like anyone else."

This mindset, that suicide was preferable to capture, came as a jarring shock to the Americans. Japanese soldiers would hold a grenade under their chin and very calmly wait for the explosion. Or they might take 10 minutes to climb to the top of a cliff before jumping to their deaths, as though this was the most normal thing in the world. It was a strange and frightening philosophy for young men from Kansas and Michigan and Alabama, who never dreamed that such a way of thinking even existed.

Not every Japanese soldier was ready to commit suicide, though. As the fighting on Orote began to wind down and it had become evident to both sides that the Japanese were about to lose possession of the peninsula, a small, underfed Japanese private was taken prisoner. A Maine interpreter asked the soldier exactly why he decided to give up.

"My commanding officer told us to fight to the last man," came the reply.

This seemed more like an evasion than an answer, so the interpreter insisted, "Well?"

"I am the last man."

The Orote Peninsula was finally secured on July 29. Construction units began filling in the many shell holes that pockmarked the airfield almost as soon as the fighting stopped. Six hours after the first bulldozer clanked onto the field, a U.S. Navy TBF Avenger torpedo



Marine Private Frank Witek (left) received the Medal of Honor for heroism during the fighting on Guam. Army Gen. Andrew Bruce (center) commanded the 77th Division, which received high praise from its Marine comrades, and Gen. Lemuel Shepherd (right) commanded the Marines that fought to secure the island. BELOW: A Marine howitzer booms on Guam as American forces advance to take control of the airfields and villages across the island. The fighting was heavy, and Orote Airfield, a key objective, was finally secured on July 29, 1944. OPPOSITE: Suddenly caught in a Japanese crossfire, Marines take cover behind an M4 Sherman medium tank and a Jeep during their advance on Guam.

bomber made an emergency landing. It would be the first of many hundreds of such landings.

That afternoon, a flag-raising ceremony was held on the grounds of the old Marine barracks. The Stars and Stripes were hoisted at 1530 hours, with "To the Colors" played on a captured Japanese bugle. General Shepherd gave an emotional speech to a gathering of senior officers, which included Admiral Raymond Spruance and General Geiger, as well as to a "hastily cleaned up" honor guard made up of Marines who had been fighting just a short while before.

The general called Guam "hallowed ground," and went on to say, "You have avenged the loss of our comrades who were overcome by a numerically superior force three days after Pearl Harbor. Under our flag, this island again stands ready to fulfill its destiny as an American fortress in the Pacific." Marine losses on Orote are given as 115 killed, 728 wounded, and 38 missing. Japanese dead were 1633; total losses 2,500.

While the Provisional Brigade was pushing its way up the Orote Peninsula, the 77th Division was joining forces with the Third Marine Division. Reconnaissance patrols discovered that the remaining Japanese forces had moved away from the landing beaches to the northern part of the island. Natives who lived in the area confirmed that the Japanese had evacuated to the north.

On July 27, Major General Andrew D. Bruce, commanding general of the 77th Division, asked permission to take possession of Mount Tenjo. Mount Tenjo was about two miles inland from the base of the Orote Peninsula, strategic high ground still occupied by Japanese troops. General Geiger immediately gave his permission. By 0830 that day, a company of the 305th Regiment reached the summit of Tenjo. That afternoon, the 307th Regiment made contact with the Third Marine Division, which meant that the two beachheads had merged and the American lines were now continuous. There was no longer a southern landing area and a northern landing area, just one defensive line. Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison remarked, "It only remained to clear the enemy out of the northern half of Guam."

But clearing the enemy out of the north was not going to be as simple as Admiral Morison made it seem. Japanese troops had established strong rear guards to give their retreating troops time to organize and were digging defensive positions against the advancing enemy. They knew they did not have much hope of driving the Americans off the island but were determined to make them pay for every foot of ground.

The offensive began on July 31, with the Third Marine Division advancing on the left and the 77th Division on the right. The First Provisional Brigade relieved elements of the 77th Division as defenders of the southern part of Guam.

The first objective to be secured was the city of Agana, Guam's capital, about halfway up the island on the northwestern shore. The Japanese abandoned the town to units of the Third Division. When the Marines entered Agana on the 31st, they discovered that the retreating Japanese had left nothing behind but ruins.

Agana had been Guam's most heavily populated city before the war; about half of the

island's population lived there. A news reporter wrote this stark description of what was left of the city. "The cathedral and churches were gutted by shells and fires," he wrote. "It was not wanton destruction, but incidental to the overall necessity of neutralizing Agana, which the Japs had made into one of their chief supply bivouac areas.

"Virtually every building was a shambles, most of them beyond recognition," the reporter went on. "The coconut trees which once shaded the streets had broken like snapped twigs, withered by fires, while debris littered every foot of the once beautiful Plaza Espana in the city's heart."

After searching Agana for Japanese holdouts, the Marines left it behind and began moving north again. They made fairly steady progress throughout the day, until they were slowed down by mines on the morning of August 1. But when bomb disposal experts removed the mines, the northward drive began again. Enemy resistance had been fairly light, to the relief of the advancing Marines, and a lot less of a threat than the mines had been.

The 77th Division had also moved out during the early hours of July 31, and also ran into enemy opposition that was described as "negligible." By the end of the day, two regiments, the 305th and 307th, rescued about 2,000 Guamanians that had been held in the Japanese detention camp at Asinan. Residents in the area told the Marines that the Japanese had left for the town of Barrigada, several miles up the island.

General Bruce assigned Barrigada to the 307th Regiment, with the 305th moving in the same direction but on the 307th's right. By dawn on August 2, the two regiments were in position. General Bruce also sent about a dozen tanks on an armed reconnaissance of the town in advance of the infantry. His plan was to bring overwhelming force against the enemy, a combination of rifles and armor. But any thoughts of an easy walk into their objective were quickly laid to rest.

A dug-in Japanese position outside Barrigada effectively stopped the tanks with vicious and well-aimed fire. An infantry attack backed by artillery, which began at about 1330, was also stopped. By the end of the day, the two regiments dug fortifications of their own and waited for the morning to come, hoping that the next day's fighting would represent a marked improvement over the past 24 hours.

ABOVE: One of the few Japanese soldiers to surrender on Guam is assisted from his bomb-proof shelter by Marines who have coaxed the dazed man from his position with the offer of a cigarette. Japanese casualties on Guam exceeded 11,000 killed, wounded or captured. OPPOSITE: U.S. Marines ride aboard a truck headed into Agana, Guam's devastated capital, after the island has been secured.

As it turned out, August 3 did bring about a change in fortune—for both sides. An artillery barrage allowed the 307th to advance to the Barrigada well, close by the town itself. Access to the well not only gave the men access to the town, but also ended the scarcity of drinking water that had been a major problem since the landings.

By mid-afternoon, the 307th had advanced to the summit of Mount Barrigada, about a mile beyond the town and one of the highest points on the island. All three objectives connected with Barrigada—the town itself, the well, and the mountain—were now in American hands. Japanese units withdrew further toward the northern end of the island.

A few miles beyond Barrigada, the Third Marine Division, which had been joined by units of the First Provisional Brigade, was battling for possession of the village of Finegayan. During the night of August 2, Marine artillery fired nearly 800 rounds at the Japanese positions around Finegayan. At 0700 on August 3, the 3rd and 9th Regiments began moving forward and promptly ran into what one officer called "the toughest" defenses he had encountered on Guam. Two Japanese medium tanks came out of nowhere, "shot up the area," and disappeared again. Another group of Japanese tanks was driven off by artillery fire later the same day.

During the fighting around Finegayan, Private First Class Frank P. Witek ran ahead of his unit to take on an eight-man Japanese position that was holding up their advance. He was killed during the course of his one-man attack and was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously. This was the sort of determination that put Finegayan in American hands by the end of the day on August 4.

By this time, the end of the Guam campaign was in sight. The Third Marine Division, First

Provisional Brigade, and 77th Division all began their final advance on that day. At this stage, the jungle terrain and undergrowth, along with the rain, mud, and insects, posed more of a problem than the enemy. American units met with no organized resistance at all on August 5. Whenever pockets of resistance were encountered, they were quickly overwhelmed. The 9th Marine Regiment was held up by enemy riflemen who had hidden themselves in the underbrush, but the Marines fought their way through the Japanese position with the help of several tanks.

The Japanese line of defense had been completely overrun by August 7. During the next three days, all Army and Marine units steadily advanced northward supported by air strikes and artillery fire. A patrol from the First Provisional Brigade actually reached Ritidian Point, the island's northernmost point, on August 8. But this was only an advance unit and was pulled back from the coast to dig in for the night. Other units in the area also dug themselves defensive positions. The enemy was still active and just might launch some sort of attack during the night.

During their drive up the island, units of the 77th Division discovered the underground headquarters of General Hideyoshi Obata, commander of the 31st Army. The Japanese defenders opened fire with machine guns and rifle fire that drove the surprised Americans back—no one knew that they were attacking General Obata's headquarters. Instead of trying to drive the Japanese out of their underground caves, the soldiers decided to use explosive charges to seal the enemy troops inside them.

When the caves were opened a few days later, the bodies of over 60 Japanese were found inside. General Obata's was among them. He had committed ritual suicide on the morning of August 11, after writing a letter in which he apologized for losing Guam. "Our souls will defend the island to the very end," he wrote. "I pray for the prosperity of the Empire."

By the time General Obata had committed suicide, General Geiger had already declared that all organized resistance on Guam had ended. The bodies of 10,984 Japanese had been counted up to that time, but there were still several thousand Japanese on the island that were armed and dangerous—between 7,000 and 10,000, depending upon which source is consulted.

Some of these soldiers staged ambushes or fired at the Americans from concealed positions. But with the death of General Obata and his staff, the Japanese no longer had any central command, which meant that none of the attacks were coordinated. Also, Japanese troops were too preoccupied with food—they were too weak from hunger to offer much in the way of resistance. Some managed to make their way into Marine food storage depots at night, where they stole a few days' rations. Many were too weak even to attempt this and blew themselves up with hand grenades in desperation.

On the same day that General Geiger declared Guam to be secure, August 11, four of the highest ranking American Navy and Marine officers—Admirals Raymond Spruance and Chester Nimitz, along with Marine generals Holland M. Smith and Alexander Vandegrift—arrived on the island for a strategy conference with Geiger. The meeting took place without any incident. This was a stronger endorsement of the island's security than any statement that General Geiger could possibly have issued.

Since the initial landings on July 21, Marine casualties were reported as 1,190 killed, 377 who died from wounds, and 5,308 wounded. The 77th Division's casu-

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Hurricanes in the
ARCTIC SKIES

The Royal Air Force conducted extensive fighter air operations based in the Soviet Arctic in 1941.

BY NEIL TAYLOR

Pilots of RAF No. 14 Squadron man their Hawker Hurricane Mk IIB fighters during a scramble from the snowbound Vaenga airfield near Murmansk in northern Russia. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had pledged to supply RAF fighters and pilots to the Soviet Union and to train Red Air Force pilots to eventually fly the aircraft.

Nestled among patches of dwarf birch trees on the side of a hill gently rising above the dockyard of the Russian Northern Fleet in Severomorsk (formerly known as Vaenga) lies a nondescript cemetery bearing witness to the savage conflict that engulfed the Soviet Union's northern frontiers during the latter half of 1941.

Not far from the entrance to the Cemetery of Soviet Heroes are five black granite headstones surrounded by carefully groomed gravel and a black wrought iron fence. Each stone bears the name and details of a British or Commonwealth airman who died in the inhospitable tundra of the Russian Federation's far northern Kola Peninsula during World War II. How did they come to be buried here, so far from their homelands, in the inhospitable tundra of the Russian Federation's far northern Kola Peninsula?

The graves of these men, buried so far from their homelands, is a testament to the strange symbiotic relationship forged between two former adversaries brought together, through necessity and expediency, in the days immediately following the launch of Operation Barbarossa—Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union.

In the interwar period, there was little cooperation between the democratic United Kingdom and the communist Soviet Union. In fact, at the conclusion of World War I, Britain intervened in the Russian Civil War in an effort to topple the Bolsheviks' new socialist government. Although Britain recognized the newly established Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1924, Anglo-Soviet relations were continually beset by distrust and intrigue.

The Soviets signed a nonaggression pact with the Nazis in August 1939, but the outwardly shocking treaty was a sham in the mind of Adolf Hitler—a short-term agreement that would not stave off his invasion of the Soviet Union which began on June 22, 1941. The attack brought the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union together in an unlikely alliance against the Nazis.

Though he cited his aversion to Communism in a radio broadcast to the nation that night, Prime Minister Winston Churchill nevertheless pledged Britain's support to the Soviet Union, noting that "any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid. … It follows therefore that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people." Three days later a military delegation, called "30 Mission," was dispatched to Moscow under the command of Gen. Noel Mason-MacFarlane, a skeptic who doubted Russia's ability to survive the Nazi juggernaut.

While Mission 30 and a similar Soviet mission to London grappled with intelligence exchanges and the identification of Soviet military needs in supplies and equipment as the Red Army faced the Nazi onslaught, Stalin, despite his deep-held

All Photos: Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: A trio of Hurricane Mk IIB fighters from No. 81 Squadron RAF fly over the Vaenga airfield in northern Russia, waterlogged from rains and probably melting snow as well. Approximately 2,700 RAF personnel from 151 Wing sailed from the anchorage at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands of Scotland for Russia on August 17, 1941. Fifteen Hurricanes, loaded in crates, were aboard ship with them. OPPOSITE: RAF ground crewmen inspect a Hurricane Mk IIB fighter of No. 134 Squadron in its revetment at Vaenga. This photo was likely taken in September 1941 during the first operational RAF missions in Russia.

distrust of the British prime minister, finally responded on July 18 to Churchill's offer of assistance by demanding the opening of additional fronts in northern France and the Arctic. In his reply, Churchill pointed out the impossibility of opening fronts in either location due to Britain's limited military resources, but for the first time, he offered to base British fighter squadrons in the arctic port of Murmansk.

A few days earlier, on July 12, the Soviet Mission in London along with representatives from the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force concluded that the airfield at Vaenga, northeast of Murmansk, could be used as a base for protecting Allied convoys bringing critical war supplies into Murmansk and Archangel. With Churchill's commitment in hand, Chief of the Air Staff Sir Charles Portal created No. 151 Wing which, under the code name Operation Benedict, would be transported to northern Russia by aircraft carrier and convoy.

The No. 151 Wing aircraft and crew were placed under Wing Commander Henry Neville Gynes Ramsbottom-Isherwood, a 35-year-old New Zealander who had joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the 1930s and proven himself as a capable test pilot, winning the Air Force Medal for his accomplishments.

Two squadrons were activated to form No. 151 Wing: No. 81 Squadron, whose nucleus of airmen was drawn from A Flight of No. 504 Squadron, based at RAF Fairwood Common, and No. 134 Squadron, formed around the former commanding officer and 10 pilots of No. 17 Squadron based at RAF Elgin. Squadron leaders Tony Rook and Tony Miller were assigned command of the 81st and 134th, respectively. The squadrons were activated at Leconfield, Yorkshire, a busy Fighter Command airfield housing English, Polish, and Czech fighter squadrons.

Ramsbottom-Isherwood's orders were to exercise full operational control of the wing while under the general command of Maj. Gen. A. A. Kuznetsov, Commander of the Air Force of the Russian Northern Fleet, with the primary responsibility of defending the naval base at Murmansk and cooperating with the Soviet forces in the Murmansk region.

After several disappointing delays, the Wing's personnel were finally mustered in full uniform and kit on August 12 and dispatched by train to Liverpool, where they boarded the ex-luxury liner SS *Llanstephan Castle*. A group of 24 pilots stayed behind for a special task. They flew to Abbotsinch Airfield on the outskirts of Glasgow on August 18, transferred to trucks for a short journey to the dockyards, and then boarded the escort carrier HMS *Argus*. Also aboard were 24 new Hawker Hurricane IIB fighters stowed below the flight deck with their wings detached for storage.

The next day, the HMS *Argus* departed Greenock for Scapa Flow, the primary base of the British Home Fleet. By then, the *Llanstephan Castle* had already left Scapa Flow destined for Iceland, where the first trial convoy to Russia (code name Operation Dervish) was assembling. The convoy, led by Capt. J.C.K. Dowding, Royal Naval Reserve, contained several aging

merchantmen loaded with wood, rubber and tin. Buried deep in the freighters' holds was their most valuable cargo—15 new Hurricane IIBs stored in individual crates weighing five tons each. These, along with the 24 Hurricanes aboard *Argus*, would be flown operationally by the two squadrons before being passed on to the Russians.

The Dervish convoy departed Iceland on August 21, circling through the Denmark Strait between Iceland and Greenland, and out into the Norwegian Sea. Wary of German U-boats and long-range reconnaissance aircraft, the convoy swung far to the north before turning east.

After *Argus* reached port, a Fleet Air Arm officer had told 134 Squadron Leader Miller to pull back hard when his aircraft reached the sloped launch ramp at the end of the flight deck of Argus and give it a good thump to get airborne. Miller revved up the Hurricane's Merlin XX engine, released the brakes and sprinted down the deck. Pulling the stick into his stomach, Miller felt his fighter hit the ramp leaping into the air. He had done it, but in the process damaged the undercarriage—the Hurricanes were not as sturdily built as the Grumman Martlet fighters (the British name for the F4F Wildcat) normally carried aboard the *Argus*.

The next two Hurricanes to take off also struck the ramp, one breaking off a length of propeller, the other severely damaging the undercarriage. Taking their positions in a Vic formation, the three damaged aircraft circled the *Argus* then flew off towards the Russian mainland.

The remaining Hurricanes took off without further incident and headed towards the coast. After 20 long minutes, the fog and clouds broke, and the pilots could see the barren landscape awaiting them. The airfield, a large oval of sandy ground lacking paved runways or any major buildings, was spotted easily, and except for the two damaged Hurricanes whose undercarriages collapsed when they touched down, the entire flight landed successfully.

In Archangel, a Russian labor gang had completed the new wharf and offloading began. A small engineering party from No. 151 Wing under the command of the wing's engineering officer, Flight Lieutenant Harry Gittins, put ashore at Keg-Ostrov, a small airfield located on an island across from Archangel. Here the engineering party found 15 crated Hurricanes dumped on a mudflat outside a row of hangars. Gittins' group, charged with assembling the Hurricanes as quickly as possible, immediately ran into problems—the specially designed propeller wrenches required for the heavy three-bladed propellers were missing. Luckily Gittins' Russian counterpart, using a set of hastily drawn sketches, was able to machine new wrenches and other tools.

Another snag arose when a lifting tackle, used to cradle and maneuver Hurricanes until they were standing on their undercarriages, was found to be wanting. Again the Russians came to the rescue, providing three one-ton cranes and an assortment of heavy cables and bolts. Working countless hours, Gittins' crew successfully uncrated and assembled all 15 Hurricanes in only nine days.

At Vaenga, the pilots who had flown off the *Argus* were getting accustomed to their new home. With the airfield less than 30 miles from the frontlines, it was frequently targeted for attack. Knowing that above-ground hangars would be susceptible to Luftwaffe attack, the Russians dug out 40-foot-wide underground hangars, erected roofs, then covered them with turf. In one day the Russians created 39 dugouts, easily accommodating all the Hurricanes to be based at Vaenga.

The Hurricanes' armament was another concern. Normally equipped with 12 .303-inch Browning machine guns, those flown off the *Argus* had only been fitted with 6 as a weight-saving measure. Additional guns shipped overland arrived without their firing

and safety mechanisms, rendering them useless. An emergency message to the Air Ministry requested immediate shipment of the necessary parts by Catalina flying boat, but pending their arrival, two aircraft in each of the four six-plane lights were stripped of their guns so the remaining aircraft could be fitted with at least eight machine guns for combat.

The pilots of No. 151 Wing began their operational sorties from Vaenga on September 11, even though the aircraft being assembled at Keg Ostrov were not yet available. All four flights from 81 and 134 Squadrons flew orientation patrols guided by a Russian pilot who showed them their operational area and the frontline. Although no enemy aircraft were encountered, several of the Hurricanes were plagued by engine cut-outs. All engines were successfully restarted in flight, but ground crew examination upon landing quickly discovered that Soviet aviation fuel had a lower octane rating than British fuel leading to fouling of the Merlin XX engines. This proved to be an ongoing problem until better quality fuel arrived.

Following the first snowfall of the looming Russian winter, Flight Sgt. Charlton "Wag" Haw led a patrol of five Hurricanes from 81 Squadron over enemy lines west of Murmansk where they intercepted five Messerschmitt Me-109Es of I./JG 77 escorting a Henschel Hs-126 two-seater reconnaissance aircraft. Haw's flight turned toward the enemy who astonishingly turned tail and fled for safety behind German lines. The fleeing Me-109s took no evasive action, and Haw's flight dove after them. Haw caught their leader in his sights and a 10-second burst left the 109 in flames; it then rolled onto its back and dove into the ground. Haw's wingman, a Canadian, Pilot Officer Jimmy Walker, turned into two Me-109s for a head-on pass before spotting a 109 closing in on Haw. Pulling in behind the enemy pilot, Walker fired two short bursts before the Me-109 rolled over and fell toward the ground pouring smoke. Walker followed its downward path until it crashed.

Meanwhile, Sergeant Ken "Ibby" Waud found the tiny Hs-126 drifting across his gun sight so he gave it a short burst. The Henschel pilot fled but could not outrun a Hurricane. Waud overtook him and unleashed another long burst before the Hs-126 erupted in a plume of white smoke. Misgauging his closing speed, Waud yanked on his control stick, narrowly missing the stricken observation plane.

Regaining some height Waud then spotted a Hurricane and a Messerschmitt circling each other, each trying to get into position for a deflection shot. Pushing his nose down, Waud dove on the Me-109 and unleashed a burst from his machine guns before pulling sharply away. Waud circled and made a second run, forcing the enemy aircraft to break for home. As the enemy pilot flew at ground level following a dry riverbed, he made the mistake of not taking evasive action. Waud closed for a third time and carefully lined up his target before pressing the firing button. The Messerschmitt began smoking, skidded to port, and crashed into the riverbank.

Meanwhile, Haw had gotten himself into another tangle with an Me-109 but broke away when he spotted a smoking Hurricane losing altitude quickly. Diving after it, Haw pulled alongside and saw his friend Sergeant Norman "Nudger" Smith struggling to release the cockpit canopy. A giant hole had been punched through the fuselage behind the cockpit, evidence that the aircraft had taken German cannon fire. Helpless to intervene, Haw could only watch in horror as his friend's aircraft continued its descent, then broke up as it impacted the ground.

With the skies cleared of enemy aircraft, the Hurricanes made their way back to Vaenga.

No. 81 Squadron had drawn first blood, destroying three enemy aircraft and claiming a probable fourth. It was an auspicious start to their tour, tempered nevertheless by the death of Smith.

On the same day that the Vaenga-based Hurricanes achieved their initial successes; the first batch of nine Hurricanes assembled at Keg-Ostrov was finally ready to fly north. Flight Lt. Mickey Rook (cousin of Squadron Leader Tony Rook) led the flight. With a Russian bomber as a guide, the group headed north across the White Sea, landing to refuel at Afrikanda before continuing on to Vaenga. The last six Hurricanes followed the same route on September 15.

Also arriving in Vaenga, late on September 12, was the last contingent of No. 151 Wing —the headquarters team, under the Wing Adjutant, Flight Lt. Hubert Griffith. The team had left Archangel by train four days earlier, embarking on a circuitous 600-mile route through Belomorsk and Kandalaksha, to Murmansk. During the arduous journey, the men were jammed into two passenger coaches whose only furnishings consisted of pine boards spread on the floor of the coaches and covered with straw-filled mattresses. The quarters were so tight, only half the men could lie down at a time.

The rail line consisted of a single track, so the train had to pull into sidings on a regular basis. Twice the British airmen found themselves parked next to Russian hospital trains filled with bandaged and bloodied Russian soldiers who flashed thumbs-up at their RAF comrades. At these sidings, railway officials would often board bearing cans of boiling water to make hot tea. At one stop the RAF airmen were given a concertina, and throughout the journey Russians and British airmen, ignoring the language barrier, would break into song.

When the troop train finally pulled into Murmansk, there was a collective sigh of relief. Although the Luftwaffe regularly targeted train traffic in the region and German forces were nearing Kandalaksha, the RAF headquarters party had arrived unscathed.

Over the next few days, No. 151 Wing flew local patrols and attempted interceptions but failed to engage any enemy aircraft. On September 17, the Wing scored again while providing escort cover to a group of Russian Petlyakov Pe-2 twin-engine dive bombers. Squadron Leader Tony Rook led seven other members of 81 Squadron aloft, and as they patrolled the frontline near Petsamo, Rook noticed two Me-109s preparing to attack the bombers. Rook locked onto

ABOVE: Soviet Air Force Petlyakov Pe-2 dive bombers such as these were escorted on missions against German targets in Russia by the RAF fighters, who shot down a number of German aircraft on these missions. OPPOSITE: As a Hurricane fighter is refueled in the background, RAF pilots of No. 134 Squadron head for a debriefing by their intelligence officer after escorting Soviet bombers on a mission over areas of Russia occupied by German forces.

the leader and delivered a short burst that hit his opponent's radiator. Leaking glycol smeared Rook's windscreen as he chased the 109 down on the deck. After emptying his machine guns, slowing the Me-109 dramatically, he broke away to allow Sergeant Sims, on his starboard quarter, and Sergeant "Avro" Anson, on his port quarter, to make passes. Bullets from both planes struck home, and the enemy aircraft began to disintegrate before plummeting into the ground.

Haw gave chase to a second Me-109, firing once and missing before the enemy aircraft turned across him, opening up a quarter attack from behind. Smoke poured from the stricken aircraft before its pilot jettisoned the canopy and bailed out.

Pilot Officer Bush, on high alert, spotted six other Me-109s diving from above and behind. Turning sharply into the attack, he

engaged the nearest aircraft. Soon the airplanes were locked in a deadly turning duel. With its tighter turning radius, Bush's Hurricane steadily gained on the Messerschmitt, finally getting behind it to deliver a long burst that sent it flaming into a hillside.

No. 81 Squadron returned to Vaenga in triumph—they had downed three Me-109s without a loss. The wing's tally was growing at a rapid rate.

Foul weather grounded the wing for the next few days before the first major snowstorm of the year blanketed the region in white on September 22. As the weather worsened, the wing was warned that good flying days would be few and far between as Arctic air relentlessly spread across northern Russia. The arrival of winter conditions also brought the northern ground war to a standstill. German forces in Norway retreated to the west bank of the Litsa River and assumed defensive positions—they would no longer pose a serious threat to Murmansk.

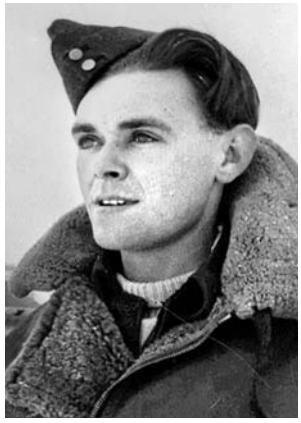
On September 26, No. 151 Wing participated in another bomber escort mission—12 Hurricanes from 81 Squadron escorted 4 Russian bombers on a raid on Petsamo. B Flight was bounced by a group of Me-109Fs, cannon shells streaking past the Hurricanes. The four Hurricanes turned into the attack, and from directly head-on Sgt. Vic Reed poured rounds into the nearest 109, causing it to erupt in black smoke before spiraling into the ground. Pilot Officer Basil Bush found himself under attack from two Me-109s, but Pilot Officers Scottie Edmiston and Arty Holmes came to his rescue raking both enemy aircraft with deadly fire. Holmes recorded a kill, and Edmiston a probable, as they thwarted the enemy attack. Flight Sergeant Reed also claimed his first victory.

The next day, while on another escort operation with Russian Pe-2 dive bombers and Pe-2FT heavy bombers, 81 Squadron again came under attack. In the ensuing dogfight, Haw recorded his third victory and Edmiston his second.

However, the Luftwaffe was not about to accept these losses without retaliating. Late on September 27, the Germans struck back, dispatching a formation of Junkers Ju-88 bombers to bomb Vaenga airfield. The base was soaked from the recent snowstorms, with standing water covering the airfield and most of the dispersal bays. To get through the bog, pilots resorted to extra engine power, which required two ground crew members to drape themselves over each of the Hurricane's horizontal stabilizer to keep the nose up and prevent the aircraft from tipping over.

No. 134 Squadron stood at readiness that day, so when the German bombers were spotted approaching, the squadron's Hurricanes scrambled to intercept. Flight Lt. Vic Berg dashed to his airplane, fired up the engine and, as soon as the chocks were removed, opened the throttle. Aircraftmen James Ridley and Glanville Thomas had draped themselves over the tailplane expecting Berg to taxi across the bog to a drier spot for takeoff. When he suddenly

ABOVE: During the funeral of RAF pilot N.H. Smith of No. 81 Squadron, members of RAF No. 151 Wing lower his coffin into the ground while a second coffin is also lowered nearby. Behind the RAF personnel an honor guard of Soviet sailors prepares to fire a salute for Smith, the first RAF casualty in the Soviet Union. BELOW: Flight Commander Lt. Jack Ross of No. 134 Squadron RAF teaches Soviet pilot Lt. Viktor Pavlovich Maksimovich some fine points of the Hurricane fighter before the pupil attempts to fly the plane. Maksimovich became a squadron commander and flew 343 sorties against the Nazis by May 1945, shooting down 8 enemy aircraft.



From left to right: Squadron Leader A.H. Rook, Flight Sergeant Charlton Haw, and Flight Lieutenant J.E. Walker, a Canadian pilot with No. 81 Squadron who finished the war with 12.5 victories. TOP: Members of a flight crew from No. 81 Squadron sit on the tail of a Supermarine Mk IX Spitfire to hold it down during an engine test after the squadron transferred to North Africa in 1942. A similar practice in Russia led to the deaths of two RAF ground crewmen.

threw open the throttle, the two ground crew members were pinned against the tail by the slipstream. Berg roared across the airfield and upon achieving flying speed pulled the throttle back. His Hurricane rose into the air with the two men still clinging to the tail. The airplane stalled when it reached an altitude of 60 feet, then nosed over and plunged to the ground. It cartwheeled on impact, throwing Ridley and Thomas high into the air, killing them instantly as they hit the ground. Berg was pulled from the wreckage unconscious and severely injured. He woke up in a Russian hospital unable to remember the accident. Eventually, he was evacuated back to Britain where his fractured thigh had to be reset—it was two years before he flew again.

Ridley and Thomas were buried in plots next to Smith in the Cemetery of Soviet Heroes overlooking Vaenga. A solemn burial party, drawn from the ranks of the RAF and the Soviet Air Force, fired a final salute as most of the wing looked on. It was a bitter moment for No. 151 Wing—its members were prepared for death at the hands of the enemy but to lose two members in a tragic accident was numbing.

While 81 Squadron had achieved considerable success in the air war over Murmansk, 134 Squadron had little opportunity to demonstrate its aerial combat skills. Its primary role was to teach Russian pilots how to fly Hurricanes and Russian ground crew and engineers how to service and maintain them. The airfield commander, Major General Kuznetsov, was anxious to take a Hurricane aloft, so he used a Russian female interpreter to write out the cockpit drill and quiz him on the details. An experienced aviator and former flight instructor, he quickly grasped all that was required, and on September 25 he became the first Russian to solo in a Hurricane.

Training progressed at a fevered pitch, but it was not without its problems. Initially, the Russian pilots were hesitant to fly the Hurricanes with their canopies closed—they were used to the open cockpits of the Polikarpov I-16s fighters. They also had a habit of not winding up the undercarriage after getting airborne, and it took a stern warning from General Kuznetsov to get them to comply.

One of the biggest problems was the Hurricanes' armament. The 12 Browning machine guns, while seemingly packing a tremendous punch, had difficulty penetrating the armor on German aircraft. The Russians joked that "these light weapons were good only to spoil the Germans' paint." To overcome this problem, later shipments of Hurricanes had their Browning's replaced by two ShVAK 20mm cannon and two 12.7mm Berezin UB heavy machine guns.

As September drifted into October, weather conditions worsened as the sky darkened and periods of rain, sleet and snow alternately

assaulted the airfield. The skies cleared enough on October 6 to permit flying for the first time in a week. Taking advantage of the good weather, the Germans dispatched a formation of 14 Junkers Ju88 bombers from their northern Norway base. In what would prove to be a costly mistake, an expected escort of Me-109 fighters never arrived.

A patrol of six Hurricanes from 134 Squadron spotted the Junkers as they approached Vaenga from the west. After a quick radio call to base, every available fighter was scrambled. Bombs were already falling as the last of the pilots—Bush, Edmiston, and Holmes—opened their throttles. Holmes' aircraft was buffeted by one explosion, but Arty managed to will the Hurricane into the air. Edmiston wasn't as lucky; a bomb explosion near him produced a shock wave that seized his engine. He scrambled onto the wing only to have another bomb blast blow him into a deep snowdrift, dazed but unhurt.

Overhead, the 134 Squadron pilots tore into the enemy formation. Pilot Officer Neil Cameron attacked the leading Ju-88 firing a long burst from below and astern of the aircraft. Its starboard engine erupted in black smoke as he swept past. Turning tightly he opened fire at a second bomber but registered no results. He then bore in, attacking a third Ju-88 head-on, setting both engines on fire. Cameron's wingman, Pilot Officer Rex Furneaux, made several passes on another Ju-88, setting its port engine ablaze. Hook, the 81 Squadron leader, joined the attack and scored hits on the starboard engine, sending the bomber into a dive from which it never recovered. Sgt. A. J. Gould also scored hits on another Ju-88 before losing it in the swirling battle.

Other members of 134 Squadron, who had scrambled from Vaenga airfield as the bombs began to fall, now entered the fray. Flying Officer Tim Elkington locked onto the tail of a Ju-88 beating a hasty retreat toward Norway and fired two long bursts into its tail, ripping it apart. Flight Sergeant B. Barnes joined in the attack, closing to within 50 yards as he poured rounds into the starboard engine. Return fire from the bomber's rear gunner forced Barnes to break away, but after a third attack, the rear gun fell silent and the bomber

ABOVE: As temperatures in Russia plunge to -15 degrees Fahrenheit in October 1941, Flight Engineer Gittins of No. 151 Wing RAF talks with sentries at a snow covered airfield. BELOW: Russian sentries patrol the Vaenga airfield in October 1941 as an RAF Hawker Hurricane fighter prepares to take off. Vaenga was located only 15 miles from the front lines.

exploded in flames. Although Elkington and Barnes then lost sight of the bomber, it was later claimed as destroyed.

No. 81 Squadron also inflicted further damage on the enemy bombers. Sergeant K. Bishop, along with two other Hurricanes, brought down a Ju-88, and Pilot Officers Alan McGregor and Jimmy Walker set bombers on fire which then managed to escape by flying at treetop level. By the end of the engagement, the two Hurricane squadrons had destroyed three aircraft, recorded another three probables, and damaged at least six more bombers. It made for lively conversation in the various messes that night.

By the second week of October, the Russian winter had descended in earnest, with temperatures falling to 10 and then -15 degrees Fahrenheit. Snow blanketed the ground and cold penetrated all aspects of operations as pipes and hoses cracked, fuel and lubricants froze, and batteries failed

prematurely. Still, the training of Soviet airmen not only continued, but accelerated.

On October 12, No. 81 Squadron turned all of its Hurricanes over to the Russians. No. 134 Squadron flew a few more bomber escort missions involving both RAF and Russian pilots, but on October 19 delivered all of its planes and equipment to Major General Kuznetsov's forces. No. 151 Wing's time in Russia was drawing to a close.

For Ramsbottom-Isherwood, the biggest problem was how to keep his idled airmen occupied. Some of them took to cross-country skiing and tobogganing, but drinking the low-cost alcohol available in the messes and teaching their Russian colleagues how to play darts were particularly popular.

While the wing sat idle, rumors circulated as to its next destination. Communications from the Air Ministry notified the wing to prepare for transit across the Soviet Union to the Middle East. It was only after repeated communiques, documenting the terrible status of the Russian rail network and the massive amount of provisions that would be required to make the journey across a war-torn country, that the idea was abandoned. Instead, it was finally agreed that No. 151 Wing would be evacuated back to Britain by the Royal Navy.

The first party departed on November 16 aboard the Royal Navy minesweepers HMS *Hussar*, *Gossamer* and *Speedy*, which were unexpectedly called to assist an incoming convoy bound for Archangel. The violent seas made it a memorable voyage, and when the minesweepers neared Archangel, they needed to drop anchor and transfer the RAF men to a much larger Russian icebreaker that through brute force got them into Archangel where they were transferred to various merchant vessels for the journey home.

After returning to Great Britain from their Russian deployment, pilots of the No. 81 Squadron fly their new Supermarine Spitfire fighters in this photograph from June 1942.

On November 21, the cruiser HMS *Kenya*, joined a day later by the destroyers HMS *Bedouin* and *Intrepid*, anchored off Murmansk. The bulk of No. 151 Wing boarded these vessels. There was, however, one last task for these ships to accomplish before the wing could depart Arctic waters forever.

The convoy that *Kenya* was to escort was delayed, so the Royal Navy decided to commit its warships to another combat action. Two Russian destroyers, the *Gremyaschi* and *Gromki*, were invited to join the three Royal Navy vessels in staging a raid on the Norwegian coast. The ad hoc task force hoped to trap a German supply convoy, but finding the seas empty it sailed to Vardø at the extreme northeastern tip of Norway and bombarded the fort and harbor facilities.

The few remaining members of No. 151 Wing were put aboard various merchant ships at Archangel forming up as a return convoy to Britain (assigned the convoy number QP-3). Departing was not to be an easy task as the estuary at Archangel was frozen solid. Thanks to the efforts of the massive Russian icebreaker Lenin, the convoy escaped the icy grip of the Russian winter on November 27. Even with that assistance, the ships had to move quickly; it was so cold that the ice in their wake quickly refroze.

Having broken through the ice pack, the merchant ships formed on their naval escorts for the long, dangerous voyage around the top of Norway. In a final fitting gesture, a squadron of Hurricanes, flown by the Russians the British had trained and led by the Soviet ace, Capt. Boris Safonov, passed over the convoy and waggled their wings to say goodbye.

The next day, *Kenya*, *Bedouin* and *Intrepid* joined the convoy's escorts and together again, albeit on separate ships, No. 151 Wing sailed for home. Arctic gales and massive waves viciously tossed the ships about, then an alert claiming a German U-boat was operating in the area caused the convoy to scatter. Luckily, no other problems ensued and one by one the warships and merchantmen straggled into British harbors. *Kenya* arrived first on Decem-

Continued on page 97

Paris Under the SWASTIKA

Once, during the Nazi occupation of Paris, a German officer made his way to the attic of 7 Rue des Grands-Augustins, home and studio of the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso. Picking up a postcard reproduction of "Guernica," Picasso's commemoration of the Basque civilians killed by the Luftwaffe in 1937, the officer asked, "Did you do this?" Picasso replied, "No, you did."

Even if this story is apocryphal, it is undoubtedly true that Picasso occasionally hid fugitives from the German authorities and gave money to one or another resistance group. Throughout the war he collected propaganda clippings that denounced him with such phrases as "Picasso the Jew," "the decadent Pablo Picasso," and "the obscene pornographer." During the liberation of Paris it is said that the fighting became a part of his paintings. Amid a series depicting a tomato plant, in one picture the sky seen out his window becomes yellowish, that afternoon being the day the Allies destroyed a fuel depot. And as the fighting on the street below became even more intense and the Allied victory was certain, he took to painting "The Triumph of Pan."

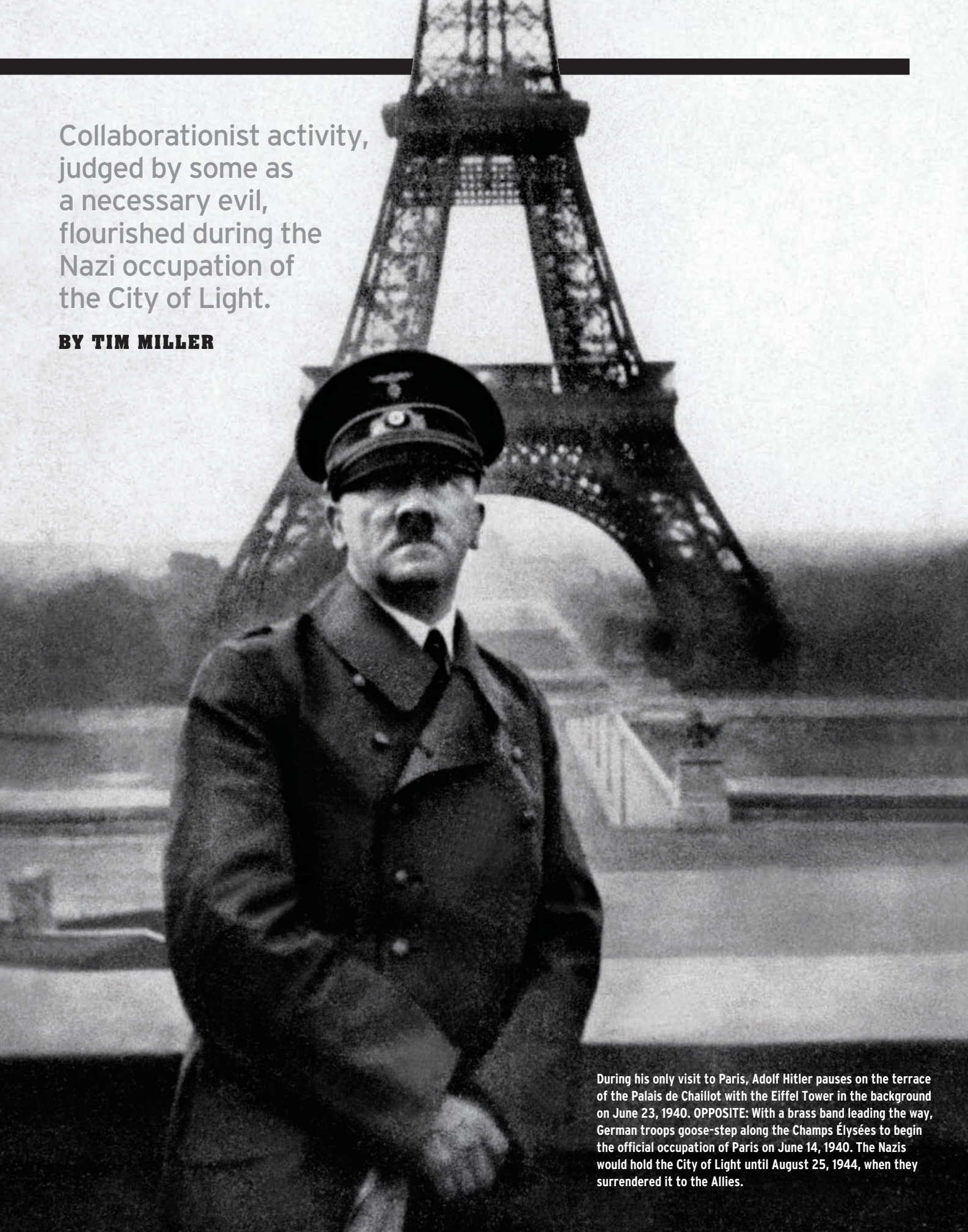
None of this would have been possible had Picasso not remained in Paris, where he had been living for nearly four decades. His mistress, Françoise Gilot, remarked, "What would have changed if Picasso, who certainly was no good with armaments, had thrown a grenade? Nothing. No, his position was being against the Germans and staying in Paris. For people of my generation, that symbol was very important. Just by being there and not losing our dignity, you could do certain things." Similarly, when war broke out the guitarist Django Reinhardt had been traveling with his band in London, but he preferred Paris and returned there immediately. As artist Henri Matisse wrote to his son in New York, "If everything of any worth flees, what will remain of France?" Indeed, from June 1940 to August 1944, millions of others also remained in Paris, and in reflecting on just how they did so—bought bread, rode the Metro, went to the theater, or just walked down the street amid a Nazi presence—the difficulty of everyday life reveals itself.

As the exodus from the city began ahead of the advancing Germans, the Paris Opera closed its production of Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* on June 5, 1940. Nearly three months

Both: Bundesarchiv Bild

Collaborationist activity, judged by some as a necessary evil, flourished during the Nazi occupation of the City of Light.

BY TIM MILLER



During his only visit to Paris, Adolf Hitler pauses on the terrace of the Palais de Chaillot with the Eiffel Tower in the background on June 23, 1940. OPPOSITE: With a brass band leading the way, German troops goose-step along the Champs Élysées to begin the official occupation of Paris on June 14, 1940. The Nazis would hold the City of Light until August 25, 1944, when they surrendered it to the Allies.

Bundesarchiv Bild

later, Paris was an open city and millions who fled had returned; the Paris Opera reopened with the same Berlioz on August 24, but now to a French and German crowd. The ease with which this and other forms of cultural life reasserted themselves, or just how easily life went on, now with Germans everywhere, seems to have embarrassed everyone. A teenager wrote in her diary during the war: "It is ignoble to become accustomed to seeing the German cross flying over the Chamber of Deputies; nonetheless we did become used to it."

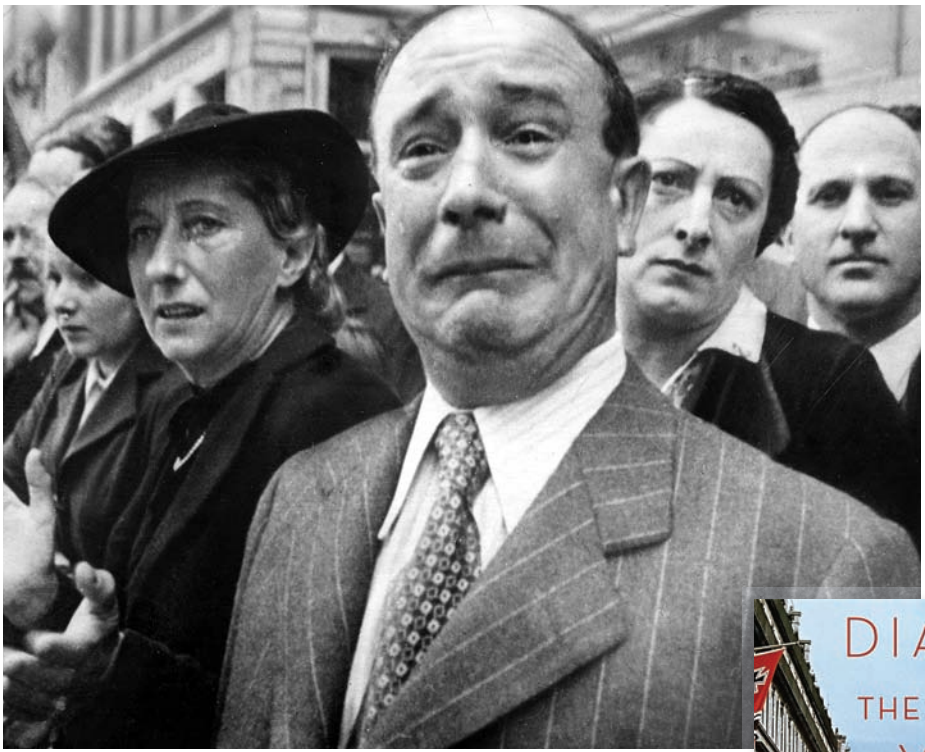
The situation was ready-made for the Nazis, who, as ever, were keen exploiters of human frailty and need; and so, in Paris as elsewhere, their victims were put in a position that implicated themselves in their own subjugation. Faced with a seemingly indefinite occupation, a columnist in *La Gerbe* wondered why Parisians should be condemned "because we try to forget our sorrows, and their piteous burden, by going to see a show." Hitler himself seems to have enjoyed their difficulties, remarking to his architect, Albert Speer, "Does the spiritual health of the French people matter to you? Let's let them degenerate. All the better for us." While it seems regrettable that until 1942 the Germans required only 30,000 men to watch over the entirety of France, as with other aspects of everyday life that seem at first easy to judge, beneath each is a greater complexity. A recent writer lists only a few of the unanswerable questions, repeated every hour of every day for four years: "Should a woman reject a seat offered by a German in the Metro? Should one have refused to receive civilized, non-Nazi Germans whom one had known before the war? Should one have turned one's back on a German friend in a public place?"

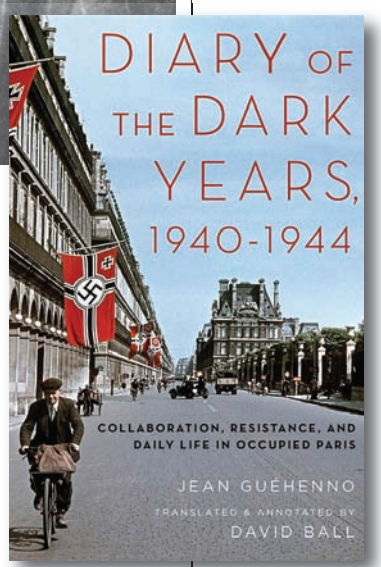
And so, in those early months of the occupation, movie theaters reopened, but American and British films were banned and only the lightest French fare was allowed to be shown or produced. The Louvre was partially reopened, but other propaganda exhibits (whether anti-Semitic, or against Freemasonry or Communism) also opened in the city, and throughout the war years these exhibits also toured the rest of the country. And on October 3, 1940, the Statute Against Jews was promulgated, excluding them from being teachers or working in the government, civil service, or the press. It was another two years before they were no longer allowed to appear on stage and were required to wear the yellow star.

A teacher herself, the philosopher and novelist Simone de Beauvoir signed a paper under oath declaring she was neither Jewish nor a Freemason. "I thought it repugnant to sign, but no one refused: for most of my colleagues, as for myself, there was no way of doing otherwise." At the same time, the *Paris-Soir* was jubilant at the statute, with such headlines as "The Purification Begins: Jews at last expelled from all public jobs in the country." As would later be asked, surely there was a large gap between teachers keeping their livelihoods rather than resigning in protest (and no doubt helping their students grapple with the situation) and rags like the *Paris-Soir*, which reflected the worst of French anti-Semitism.

Paris nightlife also carried on as the brothels, cabarets, and music halls all performed for their unwelcome guests. But on any given night it could all be subtly undermined; comedians were known to fill their acts, already in French, with slang and argot the Germans would never catch, even as very few spoke out against the occupation directly. Similarly, Josephine Baker performed for German audiences just as she had for Parisians, yet a French intelligence officer posed as her secretary, and when she traveled to Lisbon she was able to pass sensitive information on German troop movements, written in invisible ink on her music scores.

National Archives





ABOVE: A Frenchman in Paris weeps openly in this widely circulated photo of the early days of the Nazi occupation. Captured during a German Army parade through the streets of the City of Light, it came to symbolize the national humiliation experienced by the French people. RIGHT: The publication of Jean Guehenno's book detailing the ordeal of Nazi occupation in the French capital of Paris brought to light new aspects of the experience for the civilian population of the great city. It was not translated into English until 2014. OPPOSITE: Humiliated French officials stand passively as German soldiers raise their swastika-emblazoned flag atop the Arc de Triomphe in Paris on June 14, 1940. The German spectacle as their occupation began created even greater hostility among the people of the City of Light.

The career of singer Edith Piaf during the war provides another example of ambiguity. She was popular with Parisians as well as German officers, singing for the latter in some of the finest venues in the city. Her success allowed her to live in a luxury flat above the L'Étoile de Kléber, a famous nightclub and bordello close to the Paris Gestapo headquarters. This, along with her Berlin concerts sponsored by German officials in 1943 and 1944, led to accusations of collaboration. In a post-war hearing to avoid being banned from the radio, Piaf and her personal secretary, Andrée Bigard (who claimed to be in the French Resistance), testified about their involvement in a plan to help French POWs obtain identity documents to aid in their escape. No action was taken against Piaf, who sang for Allied forces in Marseille in December 1944. However, there is no indication that Piaf sought out opportunities like this, or that she was thinking of anything but her own career. There is evidence she helped some of her Jewish friends, especially financially, but her claims of helping prisoners in Berlin comes only from her and Bigard. She saw no reason to cease performing during the occupation, and her remark in 1940—"My real job is to sing, to sing no matter what happens"—can be interpreted a dozen ways. But then, would any men she did help have cared about her motives?

Without knowing of these schemes, both Baker and Piaf could have been slandered for dealing politely with the German authorities. Yet anyone who went out to lunch in Paris could have been accused of the same, since German bands or choirs frequently performed outside the Paris Opera; other times, Parisians sunning near the Luxembourg Gardens could also enjoy a German brass band. As one scholar has said, none of these crowds approved of the occupation; instead, they were drawn "by the magnet of music." In July 1941, the composer Francis Poulenc said as much: "Musical life is intense and everyone finds in it a way of forgetting the present sadness."

Were those who saw concerts or sunned themselves, were those who went shopping or just laughed out in public, somehow giving their tacit approval to Vichy and the occupation? Did one's attachment to culture and a brief need to forget encourage or cancel out more obvious instances of collaboration? Because there were always men like the French pianist Alfred Cortot, who during the occupation toured France and Germany and played with German orchestras and was even congratulated for his "useful act of collaboration." At the same time, however, Jacques Rouché, musical director of the Paris Opera, was forced to fire 30 Jewish musicians, even as he continued to pay them for another two years. Similarly, the Society of Authors, Composers and Editors of Music (SACEM) did the same for the Jewish composers they had dismissed, or the wives of those who had been deported.

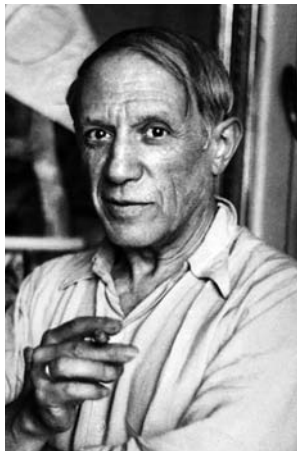
To all outward appearances Piaf, Baker, Rouché and SACEM were collaborating—leading to two questions: how could everyday civilians, without their influence or prominence, pretend to do otherwise? Or, was Paris riddled with multiple layers of subterfuge, with most people knowing who was "really" collaborating and who was only doing so to achieve other ends?

For a country that prides itself on its writers and thinkers, France's authors and publishers had it worse than other media in many ways. As might be expected, the most eloquent voice on the topic was unknown during the war years, until the writer Jean Guéhenno's *Diary of the Dark Years* was published in 1947 (It

wouldn't appear in English until 2014). Constantly railing against the weakness of his fellow authors and refusing himself to publish a word during the occupation, he wrote of those who appeared in print under the Nazi censor: "The man-of-letters species is not one of the greatest species in the human race. The man of letters is unable to live out of public view for any length of time; he would sell his soul to see his name 'appear.' A few months of silence, of disappearance, have pushed him to the limit. He can't stand it anymore. All he quibbles about now is the size or font of the characters that will print his name, or his place in the table of contents. Of course he's chockfull of edifying reasons: 'French literature must go on,' he says. He thinks he is French literature and French thought, and they would die without him."

Yet elsewhere Guéhenno admits that he was "lucky enough not to be obliged to write for a living ... [and so] if you weren't absolutely obliged to 'appear' because of the need to earn a living, the least you could do was hide." But what, indeed, about those citizens who had no other source of income like those Parisian women who slept with Germans in return for rations or other favors for their children and families. The difficult questions remain. In August 1941, Guéhenno himself said of the occupation, "There is nothing we can do now, and there will be nothing we can do for a long time to come." Nothing, that is, except staying alive to live day to day until a better moment. And how exactly should one do that?"

Guéhenno is especially harsh on new writers, who he sees as opportunists rushing in to fill a void left by those with "standards." Yet what could the then-unknown Albert Camus do, when his *Myth of Sisyphus* was published in 1944, but remove the positive mention of a Jewish writer (Franz Kafka) at the censor's command? And if his acquiescence was unfortunate, did the prominence the book gave him, alongside his work in the Paris theater during the occupation, his editing of the underground newspaper *Combat*, and his postwar role as voice for morality and conscience justify "collaboration" in this form? The journalist and novelist Colette, who wrote her most famous work, *Gigi*, during the war years, contributed



FROM LEFT: Artist Pablo Picasso, singers Josephine Baker and Edith Piaf. Each responded to the Nazi occupation of Paris and France in a different way. Picasso joined the Communist party, while Baker was a spy for the Allies and Piaf was often more concerned for her career than for the liberation of the French people. OPPOSITE: German soldiers, left, salute a group of officers seated at an outdoor cafe in Paris on Bastille Day, 1940. The people of Paris rose up against their Nazi occupiers with the approach of Allied forces in the summer of 1944.

to collaborationist and even pro-German newspapers, all while hiding her Jewish husband in their Palais Royal apartment. Was this simply what was necessary?

What Guéhenno would not allow, his fellow writers nevertheless became a gold mine when he observes the small gestures of everyday Parisians. "Faces in the Metro were morose. But could we know what that seamstress was carrying in her handbag, between her lipstick and her compact? That ordinary-looking package a young student had set down on the floor next to her was a radio transmitter, lists of airdrops, mail from London, or weapons." Elsewhere, he observes with pride a blind man outside the Metro playing the Marseillaise on his accordion, and Guéhenno remarks that everyone who passes "thinks he is being revenged by this blind man," since the Germans, because of his infirmity, refuse to make him stop. Another time, he has his own moment of triumph, in this encounter with a German soldier, who he only addresses honestly back home and in his diary: "[Y]ou were wandering around like any lost little soldier, looking for Notre-Dame cathedral. So I condescended to understand you, and with a gesture, without saying a word, I pointed to the towers rising in the sky on the other side of the river, staring you in the face. You felt stupid, you blushed, and I was glad. It has come to this." He also records a similar encounter of a lost soldier, whose French guide gives up with the words, "Poor guy. Man, are you dumb. What the hell are you doing here? It's too complicated for you."

And yet after smiling over stories like that, the dumb soldier remained, and the French remembered that he was there because they had surrendered. It becomes empowering but then slightly pathetic to find pride in a fellow Frenchman refusing a cigarette when it is offered by a German. At times this was the best they could do; at others, Guéhenno brings every caustic remark back on himself. "The worst is that we manage to live in it. Toward the end of a meager meal, we turn the dial on the radio. We calmly listen to them say that fifty-five hostages were shot in Lille, two divisions were exterminated in Russia, Malta has just undergone its 2,000th bombing, etc. ...Then we savor that drop of wine we had been saving for the end of the dinner, we keep it in our mouths for a long time, dreaming of wine cellars and barrels; finally we make up our minds to swallow it.... I am ashamed of this monstrous apathy. Have I forgotten? I know, however. I saw men die. Could I no longer feel anything of that immense pity I was filled with at the age of twenty-five? Have these past twenty-five years worn away all our humanity?"

This feeling of both weakness and guilt, powerlessness coupled with self-laceration, went

on for four years. Should anyone feel so bold as to join the resistance groups that began cropping up, the fate of those who were caught was never far away. In early December 1943, Guéhenno described an evening walking on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, when suddenly he heard the Marseillaise being sung. "It was prisoners being taken in police wagons to Fresnes or the Santé. A few people on the sidewalk barely stopped to watch them go by. It's true that night was already protecting us, but the black-uniformed police were watching. I hope the people were at least clenching their fists in their pockets."

One of the resistance members who was on the inside of another of these convoys later wrote: "What a contrast: as we were going toward our deaths, thousands of people were enjoying the August sunshine and sitting idly at sidewalk cafés. A few noticed us, and I remember seeing, through the slats in the side of the truck, some horror-stricken Parisians watching our convoy pass. A few women were weeping." Even the most strident forms of waiting it out or patient subterfuge must have crumbled at scenes like these.

The fates of women and children during the occupation are among the most difficult. Many French children were overawed by the uniformed Germans, who made it easy by giving them looted chocolate. With evidence of their country's capitulation all around them and surrounded by German propaganda posters—one of which declared, "Abandoned population, put your trust in German soldiers!"—how could they not? As one Frenchman remembered from his childhood, "What adolescent of my generation did not dream, even if only briefly and shamefully, of being a young, twenty-year-old SS soldier, leaning on his tank, spreading butter on his bread with his dagger?"

Almost immediately after returning to Paris after the exodus, Simone de Beauvoir overheard a Frenchman speak openly, even with a grin, about French women sleeping with German soldiers and there now being "some little Germans in the works."

"I heard this sentence ten times," she writes, "and never did it carry any blame." However, around the same time, 15-year-old Flora Groult referred to French women flirting with Germans as "bitches in heat." With so many husbands, fathers, and older sons imprisoned in Germany, it should come as no surprise that an estimated 80,000 to 200,000 babies were born during the occupation to French mothers and German fathers. Dubbed *enfants maudits,* "accursed children," they were shamed on all sides, since the Wehrmacht forbade such relationships just as much as the French eventually came to. Whore houses were one thing, and perhaps many Germans knew some of them were fronts for spies looking for information, but it is not so unlikely that men and women on both sides, amid a daily life everyone became inured to, and during which only certain groups were

Continued on page 98

Wikimedia Commons

EMBATTLED

During the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and other U.S. military installations on Oahu on December 7, 1941, the Marines fought back as best they could.

BY JOSHUA DONOHUE

Lieutenant Commander Shigeru Itaya eased the throttle lever forward in the cockpit of his Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero fighter as it left the deck of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) carrier Akagi just after 6 a.m. on December 7, 1941. Having risen through the ranks since the Sino-Japanese War, Itaya was chosen to lead the first wave of fighters from the six IJN aircraft carriers deployed for the attack on Pearl Harbor.

As the first wave arrived at the northern tip of Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, the Zeros split into two groups ahead of the torpedo bombers to seize control of the skies. Their first target was the Marine air station at Ewa Mooring Mast Field, followed by Hickam Army Airfield and the Naval Air Station at Ford Island.

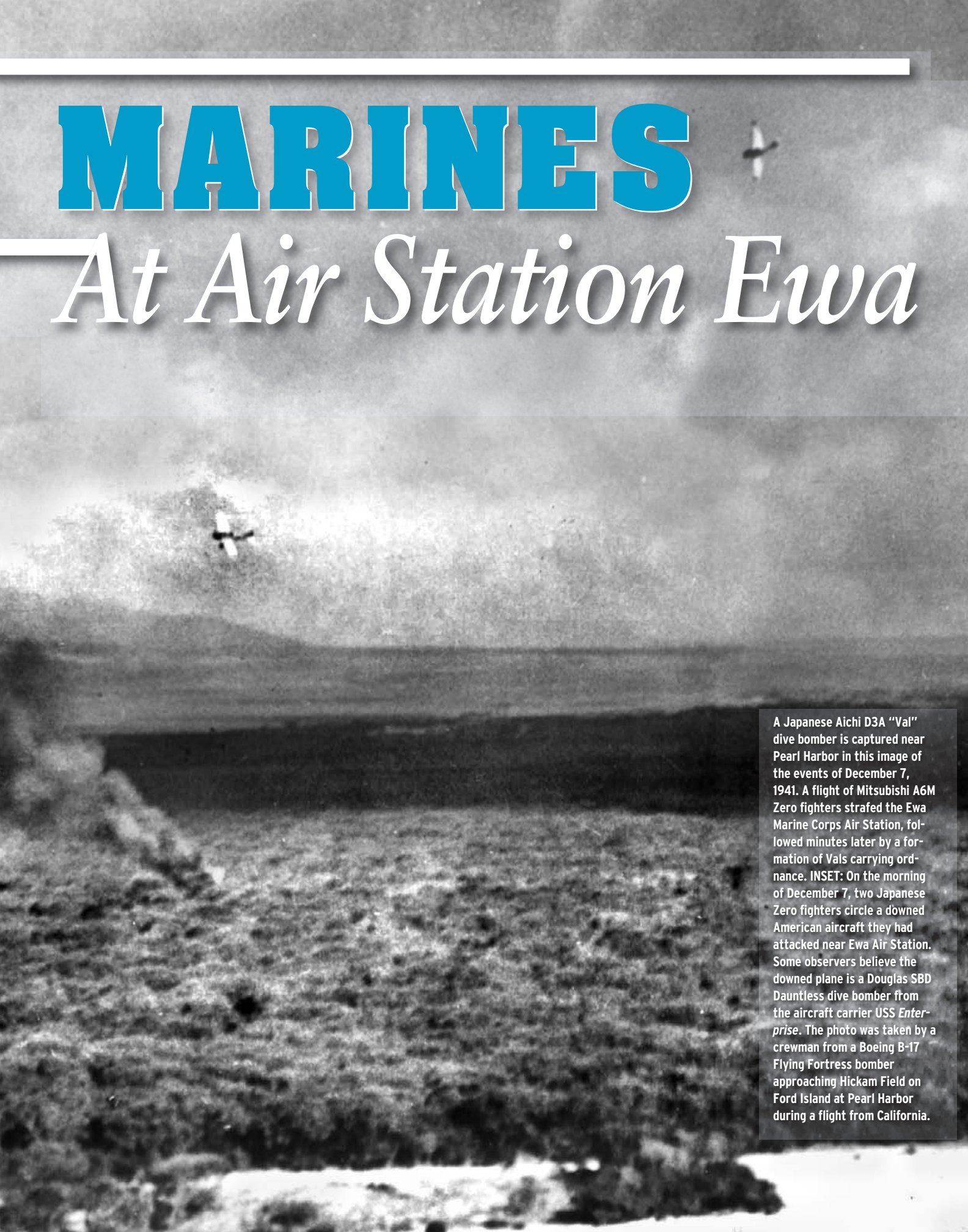
Both: Navy History and Heritage Command

Around that same time, Marine Corps Air Station Ewa's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Claude A. Larkin, affectionately known as "The Sheriff," was en route to the base from his home in Honolulu in his 1930 Plymouth, when the first wave of Japanese planes filled the skies above him. About a mile from the station's main gate, a lone Zero began firing on his car, forcing him to abandon it with the engine still running. Taking cover in a nearby ditch, Larkin waited for his attacker to pass, jumped back into his car, and after narrowly avoiding another strafing Zero, got to Ewa at 8:05 a.m.

Itaya's group of nine Zeros were already in the process of working over Ewa's flightline when Larkin stepped out of the Plymouth and was hit by shrapnel. In one of several displays of resiliency under fire that morning, he refused immediate medical treatment and continued to direct the defense of the base.

Following the outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914, Larkin enlisted in the United States Marine Corps on December 21, 1915. His first official duty following his enlistment was aboard the battleship USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37) when it was commissioned

MARINES
At Air Station Ewa



A Japanese Aichi D3A "Val" dive bomber is captured near Pearl Harbor in this image of the events of December 7, 1941. A flight of Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters strafed the Ewa Marine Corps Air Station, followed minutes later by a formation of Vals carrying ordnance. INSET: On the morning of December 7, two Japanese Zero fighters circle a downed American aircraft they had attacked near Ewa Air Station. Some observers believe the downed plane is a Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber from the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*. The photo was taken by a crewman from a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber approaching Hickam Field on Ford Island at Pearl Harbor during a flight from California.

in Philadelphia on May 2, 1916. After a year and a half, he was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant and joined the famous mounted soldiers known as the "Horse Marines" in Cuba. After transferring to aviation, Larkin became a naval aviator on April 6, 1930, when he completed his flight training at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida. He piloted a variety of aircraft during this time and gained valuable experience and flight hours while attending the Army Air Corps Tactical School in Montgomery, Alabama.

In November 1941, Larkin took over the "command and the destinies of the emergent Ewa Field," serving as the temporary commanding officer.

At the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Marine Corps Air Station at Ewa (pronounced "Eva") was also known as Ewa Mooring Mast Field. Originally belonging to the James Campbell estate, the site selected for the field sat on approximately 3,500 acres purchased by the Navy. By 1925, a single runway was constructed along with a 160-foot mooring mast meant for the docking of the Navy's new rigid airships. It was during this time when the United States Navy was experimenting with the use of dirigibles and planned for Ewa to serve as a major operational station during the expansion of their Z-Craft program. By 1935, three of the Navy's airships, USS *Shenandoah*, USS *Akron*, USS *Macon*, were all lost to accidents and the program was abandoned soon afterward.

Before the outbreak of war, Congress allocated funds to help bolster the defenses of the Hawaiian Islands. Ewa's mooring mast was lowered to approximately 77 feet in 1932 and was repurposed as the airfield's control tower. Upon the arrival of the Second Marine Aircraft Group (MAG-2) in January 1941, the base was officially commissioned as an operational air station by early February. Before arriving in Hawaii, MAG-2 was based in San Diego, California, and consisted of around 100 officers and 800 enlisted men. The group embarked on the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) on January 11, 1941, and arrived at Pearl Harbor on January 21.

By the autumn of 1941, the pace of activity in and around the base was increasing with

Both: U.S. Marine Corps

ABOVE: The Marines at Ewa had constructed numerous sandbag revetments for the protection of parked aircraft before December 7. However, many planes were parked in the open on the morning of the fateful attack due to fears of sabotage. TOP: As the focus of Ewa Marine Corps Air Station changed from airships to military aircraft operation, the dirigible mooring mast was converted into a control tower, as shown in this February 1941 image. OPPOSITE, TOP: Planes at Ewa Marine Corps Air Station in early 1941, including four Grumman F3F-2 biplane fighters of Marine Fighting Squadron-2 (VMF-2), 13 Douglas SBD-1 Dauntless dive bombers of Marine Bombing Squadron-2 (VMB-2), and other planes.

foundations laid down for nine 128-foot wooden barracks with two hot water systems shipped to the base for installation. The Marines were finally beginning to leave the tent city that dotted the northwestern side of Ewa's main runway. A railroad spur from a line which ran along the northern perimeter of the base helped expedite the amount of building supplies and other materials needed for construction. By the end of October, Ewa's enlisted men had moved into the newly constructed barracks, which soon increased by five more buildings.

When Itaya and his wingmen finished their strafing runs on Ewa's flightline, the nine Zeros turned their attention to Hickam Army Airfield and Naval Air Station Ford Island. Ewa's Marines barely had time to recover when another formation of nine Zeros, this time from the IJN carrier *Kaga* and led by Lt. Yoshio Shiga, approached the base for a follow-up attack. Shiga's pilots banked their planes toward the base and swarmed in at treetop level to finish off any remaining planes that may have been missed. Both fighter groups had concentrated

U.S. Marine Corps

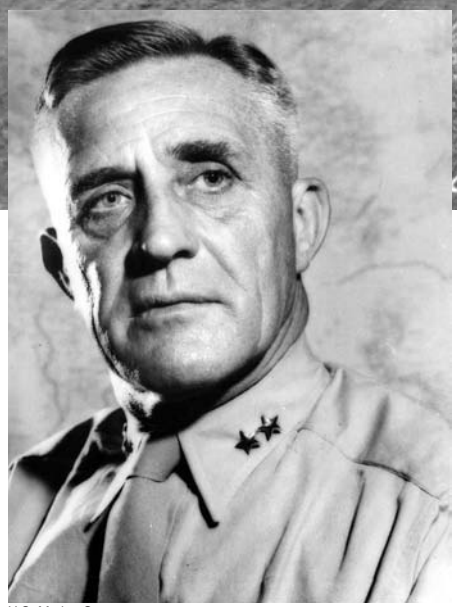
their fire on the wing tanks of Ewa's vulnerable aircraft to ensure their complete destruction.

Approaching from the opposite direction from Itaya's group, Shiga's fighters made repeated passes on Ewa, reaching altitudes as low as 20-25 feet. In a matter of 15-20 minutes, most of Ewa's parked aircraft were set ablaze by incendiary rounds. As Ewa's Marines began to fire back at the Japanese planes, another instance of American heroism under fire was noted by Shiga himself: "I strafed those parking planes with 7.7mm guns with pretty ease. I noticed a gallant soldier on the ground attempting to fire at us with his pistol, to whom I paid a good respect." The rounds came from the .45-caliber pistol of Private First Class Mel Thompson, who was stationed at Ewa's main gate during the attack.

About 10 to 15 minutes after these initial attacks from Itaya and Shiga's Zeros, two more fighter units approached Ewa from the north. Nine Zeros from the 3rd Combat Unit led by Masaji Suganami from the carrier *Soryu* were joined by six fighters from the 4th Combat Unit led by Kiyokuma Okajima from the *Hiryu*. Flying through thick columns of smoke billowing from the blazing aircraft on the ground, Suganami and Okajima's Zeros experienced a heavier volume of fire from the defending Marines on the ground.

Master Technical Sergeant Emil S. Peters rushed to the central ordnance depot, hoping to find a weapon or any ammunition stores. Finding no success, Peters noticed one of the base's Douglas SBD-2 Dauntless dive bombers was parked behind the tents belonging to VMSB-232. Pvt. William Turner, the squadron's clerk, assisted Peters with getting .30-caliber belted ammunition for the rear gun position. The two Marines sprinted out to the SBD, and Peters manned the Browning in the aft cockpit while Turner stood on the wing holding the ammunition belt. This particular SBD-2 (2-B-6) was a former Navy machine belonging to the USS *Lexington* that had escaped serious damage at that point during the raid.

Turner and Peters endured a barrage of enemy fire as they began to draw the attention of the Japanese fliers. As dangerous as Ewa's parking apron was at that moment, they continued to pour accurate fire from the parked dive bomber. Their fire claimed one, possibly two, Japanese planes before Turner fell from the wing with a wound to his abdomen. Peters survived the attack, but Turner lost his life five days later at Ewa Plantation Hospital. Both men received



U.S. Marine Corps

Both: Navy History and Heritage Command

CLOCKWISE FROM CENTER: Marine Lieutenant Colonel Claude A. Larkin; Sergeant Emil Peters; Private William G. Turner. Larkin was in command at Ewa on the morning of the Japanese attack. Peters and Turner fought back at Ewa and both men were wounded. Turner died several days later. The pair is credited with shooting down at least one Japanese plane. During his long career Larkin reached the rank of Major General in 1945.

U.S. Marine Corps/Claude Larkin Collection

ABOVE: Debris from shattered Consolidated PBY Catalina flying boats destroyed on the ground litters the area at Ewa Marine Corps Air Station on December 7, 1941. After taking a direct hit from a Japanese bomb, a hangar is fully engulfed in flames as smoke billows skyward. OPPOSITE: After dropping its lethal cargo, a Japanese Nakajima Type 97 "Kate" torpedo bomber speeds away from Hickam Field on Ford Island. In the image, taken from a Japanese aircraft, the runways at Hickam are visible in the lower section.

the Bronze Star for their actions. Larkin's Marines did not have to wait long until yet another wave of Japanese planes arrived.

At 8:35 a.m., a formation of Japanese planes approached the heavily damaged base from the east. Lt. Cdr. Kakuichi Takahashi led a string of Aichi D3A Val dive bombers from the carrier *Shokaku* at treetop level to strafe and bomb the base. The Vals were returning from their runs over Pearl Harbor and Hickam with the intention of expending any remaining 7.7mm ammunition and bombs on Ewa.

Sergeant Carlo A. Micheletto, 26, was another Marine who found himself amid the maelstrom at Ewa. Micheletto had entered the Marine Corps in 1939 and was attached to Marine Utility Squadron 252. During the first wave, he rushed to VMJ-252's parking area and was one of several Marines who assisted in extinguishing the numerous fires that had broken out. As the intense strafing attacks continued, Micheletto dropped his firefighting equipment, grabbed a Springfield rifle and took cover behind a small pile of lumber. As Micheletto fired away at the incoming planes, the Japanese pilots concentrated their fire on his position with each pass. The brave sergeant held firm until a burst of enemy fire struck him in the head, killing him instantly.

At 9 a.m., more planes appeared over Ewa, but this time in the form of friendlies—six SBD Dauntless dive bombers from the *Enterprise* had been sent ahead of the carrier and landed at the base amid the chaos and confusion. The *Enterprise* had been scheduled to return to Pearl Harbor at the exact time of the attack, but had been delayed by weather on its return trip from delivering Major Paul A. Putnam and VMF-211 to Wake Island. The planes were quickly refueled and sent back into the air with 500-pound bombs and ammunition for their guns.

A third and final attack on Ewa came at 9:30 when a group of at least 15 Vals from the carriers *Kaga* and *Hiryu* flew east after dropping their bombs on the ships moored at Pearl Harbor. Ewa from the direction of Pearl Harbor. They, too, were looking to get rid of any remaining ammunition and fired 7.7mm rounds at anything they could see through the rolling smoke. With their two forward-firing machine guns and a rear gunner position firing a Type 92 machine gun, the D3As were just as menacing as the Zeros. The Val pilots would typically pull up from a dive and maneuver their planes to give the rear gunner a more favorable angle of attack. Just as in the previous attacks, the last group of Vals flew in just above treetop level with short bursts of machine-gun fire.

In addition to the deaths of Micheletto, Turner, and Pfc Edward S. Lawrence of VMSB-232, a fourth Marine, Sgt. William E. Lutschan, Jr., lost his life under mysterious circumstances during the attack. Larkin himself even makes mention of the incident in his report of action dated December 30, 1941, in which he details the events which occurred at Ewa on December 7.

"Every officer and man on this airdrome during the attack, with one exception and in this case report has been made to the Major General Commandant, displayed courage, willingness to perform any duty required, initiative, leadership in numerous instances, and eagerness to fight back with any weapon at hand," Larkin wrote.

That "one exception" was undoubtedly Lutschan. Multiple accounts of his death have surfaced in the aftermath of the attack, but the exact details remain unknown to this day. A closer examination of the events surrounding the death of the young sergeant on the morning of December 7 based on eyewitness accounts offers a revealing perspective on what might have occurred.

What is known about Lutschan is that he enlisted in the Marine Corps on April 18, 1936, and was attached to Headquarters and Service Squadron, 8th Marine Corps Reserve. Following his reenlistment on May 21, 1940, he served as a truck driver attached to HQ & Service Squadron 21 at Ewa by 1941. It has been theorized that Lutschan was suspected of being a spy along with accounts of him allegedly committing acts of sabotage during the attack on Ewa. Although these accusations have never been proven conclusively, a comprehensive historiography on the incident may provide new explanations. In the 1992 monograph, "Infamous Day: The Marines at Pearl Harbor 7 December 1941," by Robert Cressman and Michael Wenger, there is a mention of the Lutschan incident: "A tragic drama however, soon unfolded amidst the Japanese attack. One Marine, Sergeant William E. Lutschan, Jr. USMC, a truck driver, had been 'under suspicion' of espionage and he was ordered placed under arrest. In the exchange of gunfire that followed his resisting being taken into custody, though, he was shot dead."

Another account of the Lutschan incident was described by Colonel Willis R. "Bill" Lucius in Stan Cohen's 1981 book, *East, Wind, Rain: A Pictorial History of the Pearl Harbor Attack*. Upon arriving at Ewa, Lucius noted that "everything there was in a state of chaos. One specific incident: A Marine private by the last name 'Lucas' has reportedly been found in the nearby cane fields starting fires in the shape of an arrow, obviously directed toward our base and which can be seen from the air. He was promptly shot by Marines."

In a September 3, 1995, *Honolulu Advertiser* article Domingo Bolosan, who was 13 in 1941, describes what he and his friends witnessed that morning. Bolosan lived at the Ewa Plantation village, near the air station's main gate. Bolosan said they witnessed a group of Marines firing their rifles and machine guns into a metal scrap pile.

While he never saw who they were shooting at, Bolosan describes how he later saw a car "racing back and forth" as a Marine fired his Thompson submachine gun into the scrap pile. Shortly afterward, he described how this same car left the scrap pile with the body of a deceased man mounted on the rear rack of the car.

Navy History and Heritage Command

U.S. Marine Corps/Claude Larkin Collection

U.S. Marine Corps/Claude Larkin Collection

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE, LEFT: A burning Marine Lockheed JO-2 Electra military transport and passenger aircraft at Ewa Marine Corps Air Station on December 7, 1941. ABOVE, RIGHT: A Marine Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber burns near the runway at Ewa long after the Japanese aircraft have gone. Ewa was seriously damaged along with other military installations on the island of Oahu. TOP: An American Vought SB2U Vindicator dive bomber lies wrecked and enshrouded with smoke at Ewa Marine Corps Air Station. The Marines were taken by surprise with the Japanese attack but fought back as best they could. Numerous acts of heroism in defense of the field were witnessed.

Bolosan and his friends approached the car as it stopped at a nearby railroad spur. He goes on to describe how they asked who the deceased man was, and why he was killed by his fellow Marines. After further questioning of the Marines (including asking if he was a spy), they told the group of teenagers that the dead Marine's name sounded like a Sergeant "Loo-zhun. While Bolosan's story is compelling, it does seem odd that these Marines who are presumably the same group who allegedly killed Lutschan would simply stop with his body on the back of the car and answer such direct questions from a random group of teenagers. However, there are details in Bolosan's story which correlate with the account described by Marine Corporal Albert Grasselli.

Appearing in the April 1991 issue of *Naval History* magazine, Grasselli wrote a firsthand account of the events that took place at Ewa. Grasselli recounts the events from the moment he sprang into action, threw on his khakis, grabbed his Springfield 1903 rifle, and looked

National Park Service

Fully alert following the first attack on Ewa Marine Corps Air Station, these Marines, armed with rifles, have taken cover in anticipation of another attack by enemy planes. At Ewa, numerous Marine aircraft were destroyed on the ground during the surprise Japanese attack of December 7, 1941.

skyward. Grasselli was among the group of Marines who were gathered along Ewa's swimming pool as they fired at the incoming Japanese planes. As Grasselli recounted, "I immediately headed for the nearest shelter, which so happened to be the freshly laid cement foundation for the new swimming pool."

He also goes on to describe how he was a participant in the killing of Lutschan. "One instance which I will never forget involved the shooting of a fellow Marine. Shortly after the first attack, the duty officer gave orders to my tent mates to arrest one of our fellow tent mates who, we were told, was a German spy. Corporal Werner had lived and worked with us over the past 11 months. We had, therefore, grown very close. He resisted our effort to arrest him and opened on us; he was subsequently shot and killed. There were so many bullet holes in him that, thankfully, we never knew which one of us had fired the shot that killed him."

In 2015, The Department of Land and Natural Resources released a 213-page application form which was a major first step in adding Ewa into the National Register of Historic Places. The Lutschan incident is referenced in the historical section of the application and concludes that "this Marine was cleared of spying charges posthumously, and was buried in a military cemetery in California."

Following the attack, the entire military establishment along with the civilian population on the islands was in a state of chaos. The hospital tents in Ewa Field's Camp Area which housed the sickbay and dispensary had been set on fire by incendiary ammunition, and a large quantity of equipment and medical supplies were damaged by enemy gunfire. For three weeks after the raid, Ewa provided quarters, mess and operating assistance for the 46th Army Pursuit Squadron, which could not operate from its home base at Wheeler Army Airfield due to the heavy damage suffered at the hands of the Japanese pilots. Ewa also provided quarters, mess and clothing for personnel from the battleships USS *California* and USS *West Virginia* immediately following the attack in order to furnish some relief from demands of such service to the Navy shore units in the Pearl Harbor area.

In January 1942, the tactical strength of Ewa was also bolstered by the addition of the entire USS *Saratoga* air group. By mid-June 1942, the physical aspect of Ewa Field had changed so drastically that it bore little resemblance to its original configuration.

In November 1943, Larkin was presented with the Legion of Merit for outstanding service for planning, arranging, and operating air activities as "SNAP" of Marine Aviation Units in the Hawaiian areas in the defense of Wake Island and in the battles of Midway and the Solomon Islands. He was later in charge of air operations in the Northern Solomons as Deputy Commander General of Marine Aircraft, South Pacific, from May 21 to June 14, 1944. From August to December 1944, Larkin was commanding officer of the Third Marine Aircraft Wing in the Pacific. He later served as Commanding General of Marine Fleet Air, West Coast, until the end of his military career.

In an effort to generate public support for the preservation of the battlefield, local Ewa historian John Bond has also pushed for endorsement by the National Park Service, which oversees other historic locations involved in the Pearl Harbor attack. Following the submission of the formal plan for Ewa's recognition as a historic location in May 2015, the National Park Service outlined future plans for the battlefield. Ewa was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2016. In 2018, Bond drafted a proposal with the intention of converting MCAS Ewa into a historic park.

There are plans to have Ewa become part of the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, which formally recognizes significant sites which contributed to the Pacific Theater of War. □

Historian Josh Donohue has previously written for Sovereign Media on the Japanese assault against Wake Island. This article is dedicated to the memory of Demi Bamber, September 12, 1989 to September 12, 2023.

In the North African desert, green U.S. troops take on Rommel and his Afrika Corps at Tunisia's Kasserine Pass. **BY DAVID LIPPMAN**

CHAOS *at the* PASS

The message was sent to a staff officer for Brig. Gen. Paul Robinett to read, and it made very little sense. "Move your command, that is, the walking boys, pop guns, Baker's outfit and the outfit which is the reverse of Baker's outfit and the big fellow to M, which is due north of where you are, as soon as possible. Have your boss report to the French gentleman whose name begins with J at a place which begins with D which is five grid squares to the left of M."

Robinett commented that the message took him as long to decipher it as it would any Germans monitoring the radio transmission to do so, as well. But the baffling order was typical of the communications, both radio and verbal, of U.S. II Corps commander Maj. Gen. Lloyd R. Fredendall, a beady-eyed Anglophobe who was a stickler for regulations and wore his overseas cap at a rakish angle. Fredendall had other deficiencies…he was harsh on his subordinates, hurled obscenities in all directions, criticized his superiors, and ignored complaints to remove anti-Semitic Vichy French officials from important positions.

Once deciphered, Robinett understood that his mission was to take his force, Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division, north to connect with General Alphonse Juin's French forces at Djérissa in Tunisia to counterattack against German forces on January 21, 1943. The counterattack went in. It made progress against stiff German resistance but ultimately failed.

It was a typical outcome for the U.S. II Corps in its fighting against the German Fifth Panzer Army in Tunisia so far. Ever since the Allies had invaded French North Africa in November 1942, their advance to Tunisia had been marked by sluggish movement caused by bad weather and worse logistic problems.

Meanwhile, the Axis had reacted to the invasion with alacrity, shipping elements of two panzer divisions, paratroops, and Italian divisions to Tunisia to successfully stop the advance. By January 1943, the Allies were on the defensive on the "Eastern Dorsale," a line of hilly terrain with passes that choked advances.

To make matters more difficult for the Allies, leadership was weak. Fredendall was digging a massive bunker-like underground headquarters at Tebessa, 80 miles from the battlefield, officially named "Speedy Valley," but called by wags, "Lloyd's Very Last Resort." From there, he tried to micro-man-

dpa picture alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

Standing on what is most likely a PzKpfw. III, a German tank commander scans the desert horizon in North Africa. The battle-hardened forces of Gen. Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps would inflict a stinging defeat on the Americans at Tunisia's Kasserine Pass in February 1943

National Archives

age an entire corps. Vast numbers of U.S. Army engineers worked on the bunkers, doing so by night to irritate Fredendall, instead of digging fortifications at the front. The American forces were extremely inexperienced. They did not make use of high ground, concentrating their forces in passes instead. The 1st Armored Division was the only one of the 20 such outfits the U.S. Army fielded that did not get desert training. Logically, 1st Armored was the only such division that fought in the desert. Because of shortages, it did so with radios provided by the Connecticut State Police.

Fredendall's boss was the commander of the British 1st Army, Lieutenant General Kenneth Anderson, a Scot who defined the term "dour" with his unsmiling face and laconic speech. His codename was "Sunray." To add to the difficulties, the French forces, former Vichy troops with considerable animosity toward their former British allies, would not work with them. In addition, while the French force included such legendary elements as the Foreign Legion, it had been under equipped for years and still was.

The British 1st Army was divided into three groups, British forces in the north, French in the center, U.S. II Corps in the south.

The Germans were determined to redeem the situation. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Panzer Army Africa was retreating from El Alamein, slowly but steadily pursued across Libya to the Tunisian border. There Rommel placed his men in the pre-war French Mareth Line, designed to prevent an Italian attack into Tunisia.

The Axis plan was a double pincer by Colonel General Jurgen von Arnim's Fifth Panzer Army to the north through the Faid Pass and a second pincer by Rommel himself through El Guettar. The two pincers would meet at Kasserine, drive north through Tebessa, into Algeria, and cut off the Allied forces from their supply bases.

The two German generals were a study in contrasts. Rommel was a legend, burnished by the Nazi propaganda machine. Arnim was an aristocratic staff officer who eschewed publicity. Their big boss was Luftwaffe Field Marshal Albert "Smiling Al" Kesselring, who told his generals: "After Stalingrad, our nation is badly in need of a triumph."

The only problem for the Germans was Rommel himself—exhausted by three years of hard desert campaigning, he needed to go home. Arnim, regarding Rommel as a rival, was eager to see the "Desert Fox" off to Germany and command the entire assault.

On the Allied side, the top man, Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was rewarded for leading the invasion of North Africa, gaining his fourth star on February 11. He then set off for a tour of II Corps' positions. Thanks to the legendary Ultra decoding of German communications, the British were reading German messages from Berlin to Tunisia. The only problem was—the British were making the wrong assessments. Brigadier Eric Mockler-Ferryman, Ike's intelligence chief, told his boss that the Axis would attack in the north, with a feint to the south.

Eisenhower checked on II Corps anyway and disliked what he found. Fredendall's bunkers…tank units scattered in "penny packets"…complacent officers who had not bothered to place landmines, saying they had two days before the expected attack and would start doing so on the morrow.

"Well, maybe you don't know it," Ike retorted, "but we've found in this war that once the Nazis have taken a position, they organize it for defense within two hours! This includes the scattering of many personnel mines along the front…get your minefields out first thing in the morning!" Before leaving, Eisenhower decorated Combat Command A Lieutenant Colonel Thomas D. Drake with a Distinguished Service Cross. After Ike left, Drake asked his boss, CCA commander Brigadier General Raymond E. McQuillin, "What will we do if the enemy attacks the pass from the east?"

Knowing that Ike might re-enter the command post at any moment, McQuillin answered, "Now, don't bring that up!"

The next morning was Saturday, February 14, St. Valentine's Day. All night, a fierce wind blew in from the Sahara. But just before dawn, the wind was replaced by two battalions of Rommel's 10th Panzer Division, headed for the Faid Pass, led by the slow but powerful Tiger tanks of the 501st Heavy Panzer Battalion. The Tiger tanks packed 88mm guns and massive armor, but their hand-driven turret traverses made them vulnerable to mass flank attacks.

But this morning, they slammed into dug-in infantry of the 1st Armored Division facing them for the first time. The scared GIs fired back, but could not damage the incoming panzers. Colonel John Waters, commanding Combat Command A's 1st Battalion, defending this sector, sent forward 15 M-3 Stuart tanks to stop the advance. The American tanks were armed with 37mm guns—electrically traversed but unable to punch holes in German armor except at point-blank range. In short order, the American tanks were knocked out of action. With typical color, Fredendall said, "The only way to hurt a kraut with the 37 is to try to catch him and give him an enema with it."

Waters found himself surrounded by more than 60 advancing German vehicles. He phoned CCA's command post, told them his position, and said, "Don't worry about me. We'll be all right. You get on with the war." He was soon captured. John Waters' father-in-law was Major General George S. Patton, Jr. Two years later, Patton would mount a raid on a German POW camp to free Waters. The raid would be a disaster.

The Americans tried again with Lieutenant Colonel Louis V. Hightower's 2nd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment's M4 Sherman tanks, which packed 75mm guns, rolling into their

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ABOVE: General Lloyd Fredendall, commander of the U.S. II Corps during the debacle at Kasserine Pass, confers with Free French officers. Fredendall was revealed to be an inept field commander and was later relieved. LEFT: Gen. Erwin Rommel, the Desert Fox, points to a distant location while discussing tactical deployments with subordinates. Rommel was recalled to Berlin in March 1943, and replaced by Gen. Hans-Jürgen von Arnim in command of Axis forces in North Africa. OPPOSITE: U.S. engineers clearing mines in Tunisia in the early weeks of 1943. U.S. II Corps commander Gen. Lloyd Fredendall pulled large numbers of engineers away from digging fortifications at the front to construct a massive underground bunker at Tebessa, 80 miles behind the lines. Fredendall tried to command his corps remotely from his Speedy Valley headquarters—known to the troops as "Lloyd's Very Last Resort."

National Archives

American soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division advance through the Kasserine Pass in February 1943. After marching for 12 hours, the division's 26th Infantry Regiment reinforced U.S. defenses in the vicinity on February 19, but the weight of German attacks compelled the defenders to pull back the following day.

first battle. The Americans soon found themselves outgunned. Worse, a single German shell hitting a Sherman's rear sprocket would immobilize the tank and set it ablaze. Angry American tankers called the Sherman the "Ronson" after the cigarette lighter. Hightower fought on—but his men didn't. Hightower's tank "Texas" was among the casualties. Hit by a shell, it burst into flames. The colonel and his four men sprinted west.

More than 100 GIs from a reconnaissance company abandoned their vehicles and helmets and went in the bag. Others ran to the rear, yelling, "The Krauts! The Krauts are coming!" Officers whipped out their pistols to stop them, but it was futile. Drake called McQuillin and told his boss, "Your men are running away."

"You don't know what you're talking about," McQuillin snapped. "They're only shifting positions."

"Shifting positions, hell!" Drake shouted. "I know panic when I see it!"

"You are the man on the spot," McQuillin said. "Take command and stop it." Drake tried and found his men surrounded. He scribbled out a message begging for help on three sheets of British toilet paper and sent a dispatch rider in a jeep to take it to McQuillin.

Chaos reigned throughout the American lines. A captain drove into CCA's supply area and told the men, "Take off! You are on your own!" They hurried to obey but found that lint from camouflage nets had jammed their fuel filters. A major gunned down the fuel dump with machine-gun bullets, setting the gasoline ablaze, infuriating tankers who needed the gas for their vehicles.

The German attack caught the 2nd Battalion of the 17th Field Artillery unawares and destroyed it. Rommel's men marooned 2,000 GIs on two hills—Djebels Lessouda and Ksaira, annihilated a tank battalion, captured Sidi bou Zid, and destroyed 44 American tanks, 50 halftracks, 26 artillery pieces, and at least 22 trucks. The double envelopment took only 12 hours. It was the worst defeat the Americans would suffer in the entire European theater during the war.

Ike wasted no time. He drove straight down to Speedy Valley and met with Fredendall and Anderson. Neither seemed panicked. But of five battalions commanded by CCA, two were surrounded and three were about to be obliterated. Worse, neither Anderson nor Fredendall had a grip on the situation. Anderson was convinced the Germans would attack in the north. Fredendall was not concentrating his tanks for a counterattack. The only decision made was to refuse the right flank and give up the airfields at Fériana and Thélepte, and the town of Gafsa. That in turn led Madame LaZonga to beg American tankers to allow her and the six women of her bordello to ride out on the back of an M-3 Stuart tank.

Next day, Fredendall ordered a counterattack from Sbeitla. It failed to regain Sidi bou Zid. Once again, the Americans lost a tank battalion. Out of 58 tanks that clanked into battle, only four returned. In two days Ward had lost 98 tanks, 57 halftracks, and 29 artillery pieces. A GI wandered through the battlefield. "The night had a dead silence except for a few howling dogs," he said later.

Ward, however, reported: "We might have walloped them or they might have walloped us."

The besieged American battalions suffered on their hills. Drake's men were hungry and

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ABOVE: An M3 Lee medium tank crew performs maintenance in the field prior to the Battle of Kasserine Pass. Although the M3 Lee was inferior to contemporary German armored fighting vehicles, its 75mm sponson mounted gun was heavy enough to knock out German PzKpfw. III and IV tanks. TOP: An American M3 Stuart light tank kicks up a cloud of dust during desert maneuvers. The Stuart, mounting a 37mm main gun, was no match for the heavier firepower fielded by the German panzers or their anti-tank weapons. The 37mm projectile was incapable of penetrating German armor and was often seen to harmlessly bounce off its target.

thirsty. As February 16 dawned, Drake told the regimental bandleader to form firing squads to keep the lines intact. Drake radioed for help, but McQuillin told him none was forthcoming. That evening, Drake's men wrecked their equipment, left their wounded and the chaplain behind, and struggled off in small groups to return to American lines in the dark. Dawn found them in the open, scattered across five miles of desert west of Sidi bou Zid. They met up with a column of troops on a road. Drake's men thought that rescue was at hand until the trucks disgorged heavily armed men in gray. The Americans tried to fight back, but it was futile as 800 defenders of Garet Hadid and 600 from Garet Hadid went in the bag. A few hundred GIs, surviving on stolen eggs and fried cactus, reached American lines. The 168th Infantry Regiment had been decimated.

The low performance of America's leading elements in North Africa astonished the Germans and left them puzzled about their next move. Arnim and Rommel were anything but a unified command, and it was up to Kesselring to make the critical decision here. Incredibly, the Germans would waste two days bickering over what to do.

Finally, Rommel settled the matter. "I had never gambled," he wrote later, "never had to fear losing everything. But in the position as it was now, a rather greater risk had to be taken." He would hurl his weaker force, the 10th Panzer Division, northeast to Kasserine, while the 21st Panzer Division took over at Sidi bou Zid and drove west to the same place, hitting the Americans from front and behind.

Arnim disagreed, saying in a phone call to Rommel and radio messages to Kesselring: "The terrain would be against us." Beyond Kasserine lay Tebessa and its mountainous terrain. Arnim wanted to attack on a more northern route.

The British Ultra interception team at Bletchley Park intercepted and decoded all these messages, including one from Rommel on February 17 saying that he could hardly attack Tebessa with the 52 German and 17 Italian tanks under his command. Once again, Bletchley got its facts wrong. Berlin and Rome approved Rommel's request to have two panzer divisions attack Kasserine.

The 21st Panzer Division moved on Sbeitla on February 17, forcing the American 77th Evacuation Hospital to load 600 seriously wounded men in trucks. Office of Special Services Captain Carleton Coon was asked to hurl Molotov Cocktails at advancing German tanks. He refused, saying, "It was not OSS work." Instead, they planted explosives that looked like mule defecation.

American panic continued as the II Corps pulled out of Sbeitla. Terrified drivers tore through narrow streets. Vehicles on Route 13 drove three abreast. Officers waved their arms, imploring men to stand and fight. Some troops just fired wildly in the air or in all directions.

American top leadership was even less impressive. Neither Fredendall nor Ward left their command posts, although Fredendall ordered more destruction—blasting a 1st Armored ammunition dump. Instead, Ward phoned Fredendall to say that he was afraid he could not hold. Fredendall called Eisenhower's headquarters in Algiers to say that he was afraid "We have lost 1st Armored Division."

Fredendall promptly abandoned Speedy Valley, moving back to a schoolhouse at El Kouif. That ended the tunneling project for all time.

The same day, Ward and Robinett awaited an attack from the east, but none came. It was the Germans' turn to show lethargy. Kesselring met with Adolf Hitler in East Prussia. Arnim hunted wild geese. Rommel ate couscous. In the words of a GI sergeant, Ward "stood on the skyline smoking a cigar, very calm, which was good on the nerves of a number of very jittery people, including me."

The attack resumed before noon with panzers advancing down Highway 13 and striking Robinett's CCB from the right, forcing his tank destroyers—halftracks mounting 75mm guns—back. Robinett sent his M-3 Lee tanks of the 2nd/13th Armored Regiment forward, under Major Henry Gardiner. Ten feet tall, the tanks' 75mm guns were in belly sponsons with limited traverse. They burrowed into a wadi and faced 35 attacking panzers. "Boys, let them have it!" Gardiner yelled, and the tanks opened up, hitting 15 panzers and destroying five. The volley "stopped the attack cold," Gardiner said later.

The Germans tried again, swinging around the American right five miles south of Sbeitla. Gardiner warned Robinett that his tanks would soon be in serious trouble, and Ward authorized a withdrawal. Gardiner lost nine tanks, including his own—he had to flee west on foot.

That evening, German and Italian troops entered Sbeitla, finding everything destroyed but Roman ruins and massive fires from burning American supply dumps. Again the GIs had been hammered, but one American on the scene had a positive view, legendary war correspondent Ernie Pyle, who wrote of the U.S. soldiery: "You need feel no shame nor concern about their ability…There is nothing wrong with the common American soldier. His fighting spirit is good. His morale is okay. The deeper he gets into a fight, the more of a fighting man he becomes."

Now the Germans menaced the Grand Dorsale and its most important gap, Kasserine Pass, 25 miles west of Sbeitla, just past a village that bore the same name. The pass is barely a mile wide where it is most constricted at 2,000 feet over sea level and is the natural invasion route from Tunisia into Algeria since time immemorial.

dpa picture alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

However, it was not impregnable, and Fredendall knew it. While 1st Armored reassembled in the uplands south of Tebessa to protect the supply dumps, the rest of II Corps was scattered. Fredendall begged his superiors for more infantry and artillery. Ike was shipping 800 soldiers daily from Casablanca in Morocco, but few would reach the front until the end of February. He also asked for 120 Sherman tanks, but was only offered 52—Ike was starting to worry that Fredendall's poor leadership would cost the other 200 being held in reserve. Fredendall also asked for 60,000 mines and 5,000 booby traps, but nobody knew when they would arrive.

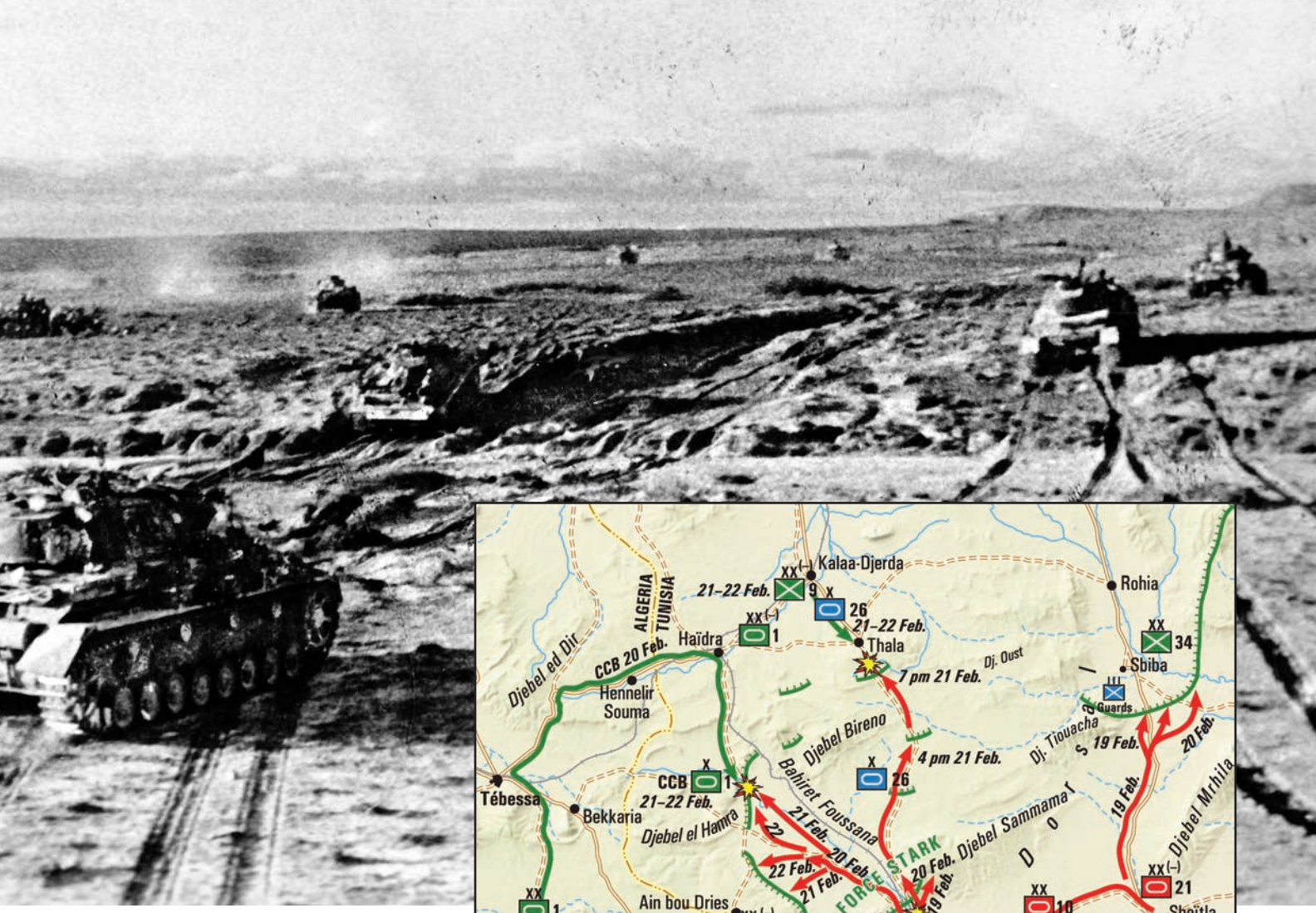
The initial defense of Kasserine fell on the 19th Combat Engineer Regiment, which had been building roads and Speedy Valley's tunnels. The men had failed to complete rifle training before being shipped overseas.

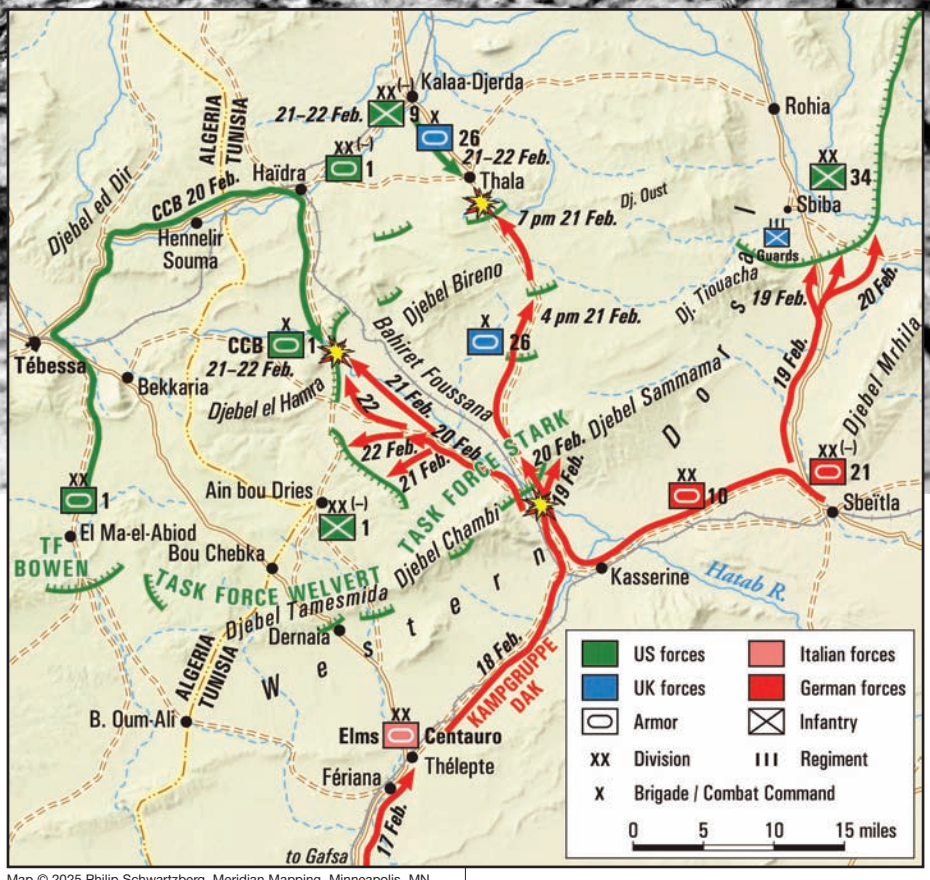
At 9 p.m. on February 17, the 19th Engineers dug in on the floor of the pass, nobody seeming to realize that the adjoining hills had to be garrisoned as well.

For once, Fredendall took a realistic approach—he ordered a battalion of Major General Terry de la Mesa Allen's 1st Infantry Division's 26th Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Alexander Stark, to reinforce the engineers. Fredendall told Stark to "pull a Stonewall Jackson. Take over up there."

It took Stark 12 hours to move his men through the darkness, but he got there, buttressed by some French 75mm artillery pieces. The Americans dumped fresh anti-tank mines on the road but lacked picks and shovels to bury them properly.

It took Rommel's advancing panzers a day to reach Kasserine Pass. At 4:50 a.m. on February 19, he ordered a three-prong thrust: the Afrika Korps would attack Kasserine Pass, the 21st Panzers would head north to take Le Kef, and the 10th Panzers would be the reserve at Sbeitla, ready to attack in whichever direction offered the best opening.





Map © 2025 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

At dawn, the Germans attacked the pass. The French 75s, despite their age, were as useful as in the Great War, repulsing the attack. The Germans brought up their artillery to support the next assault, and by 10 a.m. Nazi shells were detonating in Stark's command post. German troops attacked on Stark's flanks, with machine gunners trading bursts of fire in the Tunisian winter cold. The badly-laid mines accounted for five panzers.

In the early afternoon, Stark received reinforcements: three companies of the 9th Infantry Division's 39th Infantry Regiment and the regimental band, along with a tank platoon. Later British Brigadier Charles A.L. Dunphie, a future general and knight, turned up. He commanded the 26th Armoured Brigade, which Anderson had dispatched to stop the drive on Thala. Dunphie arrived in his staff car and had to avoid bullets from German infiltrators.

The two allies did not get along—Dunphie was unimpressed by Stark's vague idea of where his own troops were and said he had "completely lost control of events…I thought the old boy—gallant but quite out of his depth." Stark was harder on the Briton, calling him "that blockhead."

Nonetheless, Anderson finally took charge. In addition to sending the 26th Armoured's tanks to Thala, he sent the 1st Guards Brigade to Sbiba to halt the 21st Panzer Division and issued a statement telling the entire 1st Army that "there will be no withdrawal from

ABOVE: General Erwin Rommel and his Axis forces of Panzerarmee Afrika fought the British Eighth Army and the Allied forces as they moved forward after landing during Operation Torch in November 1942. While on the defensive, Rommel temporarily turned against the Americans at Kasserine Pass and inflicted a severe defeat on the inexperienced U.S. forces. TOP: German tanks make their way across the desert of Tunisia as they advance toward U.S. defensive positions near the Kasserine Pass. German Gen. Erwin Rommel, fighting Allied armies on two fronts in early 1943, sensed an opportunity—sending armored spearheads against the unprepared Americans.

National Archives

Jeeps of the U.S. 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion roll forward on a dirt road in Tunisia in February 1943. The American tank destroyers were half-tracks with 75mm guns mounted in their cargo beds. These proved inadequate against German panzers early in the fighting in North Africa.

positions now held."

As the sun set at Kasserine, armored attacks were replaced with heavy German artillery fire, including Nebelwerfers—six-barreled rocket launchers known as "Screaming Meemies" by GIs for their sound. They frightened some Americans into fleeing their posts. Some were captured by MPs, others by Germans, while more fell into the hands of Arab brigands, who seized their rifles and gear. The GIs stayed in their foxholes as they had been trained, but German infantry jumped off the passing panzers and bayoneted the Americans.

February 20 dawned foggy, and Rommel was displeased by the situation. The 10th Panzer's attacks had been sluggish. General Karl von Bülowius, head of the Afrika Korps, told Rommel at 10:30 a.m. that the Americans were crumbling but still holding. Rommel retorted that unless the Americans were defeated this day the whole attack would fail. Allied reinforcements would prevent him from exploiting any holes in the line. Just as importantly, he needed to capture the American supplies of fuel, ammunition, rations, and weapons at Tebessa to keep his offensive moving.

Rommel berated Bülowius for not moving briskly and 10th Panzer's commander, Major General Fritz von Broich, for not leading from the front, and ordered the advance resumed.

The American line crumbled definitively at 11:22 a.m. when the Germans hit the 19th Engineers. Their commander, Colonel A.T.W. Moore, told his superiors that his men could not hold any more. "Forget about our equipment and just save your life," a major told his men as they fled.

Colonel Theodore C. Conway, sent by Ike to assess the situation, seeing GIs fleeing to the rear, wished he had a horse and sword, so he could emulate George Washington whacking his fleeing continentals with the sword's flat to turn them around in the 1776 battle of New York. Unfortunately, Conway lacked both and also had to flee.

Stark held on until 5 p.m.. Then grenades detonated in his command post, and he ordered a withdrawal, heading overland to Thala. Italian tanks from the Centauro Armored Division clattered five miles up Highway 13 toward Tebessa without seeing a single GI—only burning wreckage.

The Americans had lost more than 500 dead infantrymen in the engagement.

At 3:35 a.m. on Sunday, February 21, Fredendall warned that Kasserine Pass was lost. Demolition crews laid slabs of guncotton through the vast dumps at Tebessa and waited for orders to blast the stores to prevent Rommel from seizing them. The supply depot was defended by two machine guns and a 37mm cannon. Some 400,000 gallons of fuel were evacuated, but more than a million meals of rations were left behind. Cooks ran through coops, slaughtering rabbits and chickens to deny them to the Germans.

At El Kouif, Fredendall kept despondency away with slugs of bourbon. An officer saw the general sitting on the headquarters steps, "head in hand and giving every evidence of being both bewildered and defeated." Whistling tunelessly at a map, Fredendall said to an aide, "If I were back home, I'd go out and paint the garage doors. There's a lot of pleasure in painting a garage door."

Anderson's headquarters was little better. "Everything was confusion there," an American liaison officer reported. He saw a British officer slap a hysterical comrade across the face and shout, "Get a hold of yourself." Another British officer called the entire situation, "The most

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-788-0018-35A; Photo: Dullin

Heavily armed with rifles and machine guns, veteran Afrika Korps soldiers trek through the Tunisian desert in early 1943. Although they defeated the inexperienced Americans at Kasserine Pass in February, it would be the German expeditionary force in Africa that surrendered three months later.

perfect example of order, counter-order, and disorder that has happened in my experience."

Fredendall did find time to whine and complain. He referred to his adversary as "Professor Rommel." He begged for more troops. He told Eisenhower that Ward should be relieved. Ward called Fredendall a "spherical SOB, and a two-faced one, at that."

On Saturday morning, Fredendall moved to a mansion owned by a Vichy mining executive, where he dined on beef and ice cream, and bypassed Ward, ordering Robinett to take over Stark's force and counterattack with CCB. Then Fredendall changed his mind and ordered him to defend the approaches to Tebessa. "There is no use, Robbie, they have broken through and you can't stop them. If you get away with this one, Robbie, I will make you a field marshal," Fredendall said.

Robinett was to coordinate his defenses with Dunphie's tanks, even though they lacked compatible radios. The overall commander was Terry Allen, who said, "Well, boys, this is our sector and we will fight in place." Robinett had eight battalions, including Senegalese riflemen, 11 artillery batteries, and about 700 stragglers formed into an ad hoc group.

Now the strain of the battle was wearing down Rommel's forces. He hurled what he could at Thala on the morning of February 21 at 11:25. The attack was delayed by fog. From his command post, Robinett could see 20 miles to Kasserine Pass across a foggy plain, dotted with pear orchards and cactus farms. Robinett saw that was the obvious approach route. "It was simply written on the ground."

Sure enough, Bülowius's tanks attacked Robinett's position at 2 p.m. with 40 panzers followed by Italian elite Bersaglieri infantry in trucks and wearing helmets with plumes. This time the Americans had the advantage, shelling the attackers heavily, forcing the Axis troops to disperse for cover. Bülowius lacked the guns to shoot back. The Germans lost 10 tanks, the Americans one. Bülowius tried to make a flanking attack on the left, but darkness and heavy rain helped stop that—his tanks quickly bogged down in the mud.

On the 22nd, Bülowius made one more try at dawn in the fog, and this time managed to take Hill 812 along with five American howitzers and three smaller guns. But at 9 a.m. the fog lifted, and the GIs were able to stiffen their line. American artillery blasted the Germans atop the hill and the advancing tanks on the valley floor. "An artilleryman's dream," said Brig. Gen. Clifton Andrus, 1st Infantry Division's artillery chief. "The valley floor was covered with targets of every description, from tanks and 88 batteries to infantry and trucks."

By 2 p.m., the Afrika Korps soldiers were in milling retreat, leaving dead men behind and POWs for GIs to collect. One filled a helmet with aluminum stars—the rank insignia of an Italian private. He told Robinett he had captured a horde of Italian generals. Robinett took two of the stars for himself, for when he got his promotion to general.

Meanwhile, the battle raged elsewhere. On Highway 17, Rommel joined his attacking troops on the 21st, in a uniform covered with mud. He immediately had to hit the dirt when American shellfire started roaring in.

While Rommel's Afrika Korps veterans were highly skilled at the freewheeling slugfests of Libya's empty deserts, Tunisia was a new battlefield to them with its passes and hills. The Germans could not push back Dunphie's tanks, and Brigadier Cameron Nicholson's 1st Guards Brigade. Rommel complained that his men "did not seem to

realize that they were in a race with the Allied reserves."

The British had their own problems. It took six hours for Nicholson's men to reach their positions at Thala, only getting there at 3:15 a.m. on Sunday. Dunphie's 50 tanks were mostly obsolete Valentines, no match for Rommel's Panzer Mark IIIs, Mark IVs, and Tigers.

The 2nd/5th Leicesters had just arrived from England and "had no conception of what was coming to them," Nicholson later wrote. "I found it difficult to get a sense of urgency into them." British officers yelled at fleeing Americans to turn around and fight. They yelled back, "He's coming! He's right behind us!" Nobody needed to ask who "he" was.

Nicholson ordered Dunphie to keep Rommel away from Thala until 6 p.m. Dunphie did his best, standing "erect in his scout car, calmly conducting the battle over the wireless," losing 15 tanks before retreating. With Rommel in direct command, the Germans surged forward until 6:30 p.m., when darkness and rain covered the battlefield.

Dunphie fell back on Thala, defended by a French battalion quartered in the local brothel. The Allies seemed to be at their last extremity. Juin warned that if Rommel broke through, all of North Africa was doomed.

The Leicesters were digging in and doing a poor job of it—Nicholson berated them for their half-dug foxholes and unlaid minefields, when they saw a Valentine tank clanking up to them. If it had arrived in better light, the Tommies would have seen it was named "Apple Sammy." The Germans had captured the tank at Tebourba. It was the Trojan Horse leading a Nazi column. "Keep away from my bloody trench," a Leicester yelled, "You're knocking it in."

German troops leaped off the Valentine, followed by more German tanks. They chopped up the Leicesters' positions and vehicles, forcing 300 survivors to surrender.

About 2,000 yards to the north, Dunphie's remaining tanks were sheltered in a grassy hollow when German tracers and flares shot up over their heads. "Six German tanks were right upon us, greenish-yellow flame flickering from their machine gun muzzles," a British tanker said.

"Lay roughly on the tanks!" yelled a British troop commander, and a three-hour close-range tank brawl ensued. Determined Leicesters whipped out Mark 74 "Sticky Bomb" grenades with glue tops and slammed them against panzer hulls. Dunphie was down to 21 tanks when Rommel's panzers withdrew. Dunphie ordered every man into the line—even cooks and drivers, awaiting another night attack. However, Rommel was down to 50 tanks, 2,500 infantry, and 30 guns.

At dawn on the 22nd, Dunphie got major help: Brigadier General Stafford Irwin, commander of 9th Infantry Division's artillery, arrived with 48 guns, having completed a 735-mile, four-day motor march across Tunisia's miserable roads. A West Point 1915 classmate of Ike's, Irwin was a highly competent officer who was a skilled watercolorist and poet. He emplaced his guns on a three-mile arc. Both sides' lines were 1,000 yards apart, and Irwin opened fire, raining shells down. Broich phoned Rommel, who had returned to Kasserine, to ask if he should attack further or give up the offensive.

Rommel was forced to agree to a withdrawal. Despite inflicting massive casualties on the Allied forces and seizing vast stocks, his army was down to four days' rations, lacked ammunition, and had only enough fuel to travel 200 miles. Rommel lashed out at Arnim and the Luftwaffe for failing to support his attacks, but then said, more coolly, "It appears futile to

National Archives

ABOVE: During the desperate defense of Kasserine Pass against a German counterattack, American soldiers of the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion fire a 105mm howitzer at a distant target. As the North African campaign progressed, the prowess of American artillery was revealed, altering the outcomes of several battles in favor of the Allies. OPPOSITE: American soldiers inspect the wreckage of a PzKpfw. IV medium tank, knocked out by a direct hit from U.S. artillery that ignited its ammunition stores. General Rommel's counterattack at the Kasserine Pass had begun to slow by February 22, 1943, in the face of stiffening resistance, particularly the fire of American artillery that produced telling results.

Natiional Archives

continue the attack in view of the constant reinforcing of the hostile forces, the unfavorable weather, which renders the terrain impassable off the hard roads, and because of the increasing problems caused by the mountain terrain, which is so unsuited to the employment of armored units. All this adds to the low strength of our organization."

Kesselring authorized a withdrawal, and Rommel began doing so on the 23rd, with the Americans and British following only hesitantly. Fredendall said the Germans had "one more shot in his locker."

The Kasserine battle cost the Germans about 2,000 men, the Allies about 10,000. Of that, 6,500 GIs were dead. The II Corps lost 183 tanks, 194 halftracks, 208 artillery pieces, 512 trucks and jeeps, and vast amounts of fuel, ammunition, and supplies. The Stuart tanks with their 37mm guns could not cope with Rommel's panzers and neither could the halftrack mounted 75mm tank destroyers. Allied intelligence was abysmal—Ike fired Mockler-Ferryman and replaced him with British Major General Sir Kenneth Strong, who performed ably in the role for the rest of the war. Stark and McQuillin were axed, too. Robinett observed that Tunisia was "a professional graveyard, particularly for those in the upper middle part of the chain of command."

As the Germans withdrew, Eisenhower sent Major General Ernest Harmon, one of his sharpest officers, to assess the II Corps' leadership situation and assume command of the corps or 1st Armored.

"Make up your mind, Ike, I can't do both," Harmon said. Eisenhower said he didn't know for sure himself. Then Ike laced Harmon's boots. At 3 a.m., on Tuesday, February 23, Harmon arrived at El Kouif, finding Fredendall drunk and ready to turn the battle over to him.

"He's no damned good," Harmon told Ike on February 28, describing Fredendall as a "physical and moral coward."

Ike did not yet have the ability to harshly fire incompetents. He gave Fredendall a third star, command of a training army in Tennessee, and sent him home to a hero's welcome. In actuality, Fredendall would do little more than give away brides to officers at wedding ceremonies.

However, military historians were brutal on Fredendall. Carlo D'Este described Fredendall as "one of the most inept senior officers to hold a high command during World War II." Combat veteran and historian Charles B. MacDonald called Fredendall a "man of bombast and bravado in speech and manner (who) failed to live up to the image he tried to create."

However, these assessments had no impact on Fredendall when he left El Kouif and the war for all time at 3:30 a.m. on March 7. After distributing his liquor cache to the staff, he left in a civilian Buick, stopping for a picnic lunch en route.

"Glory be," Ward wrote. But the best comment on Fredendall came from Ike's Chief of Staff, General Walter Bedell Smith: "He was a good colonel before the war." □

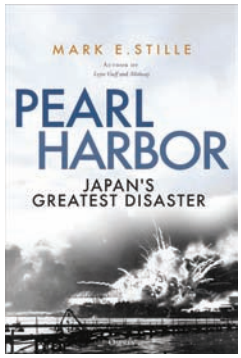
Author and historian David Lippman has written on a variety of subjects for WWII History. *He resides in New Jersey.*

National Archives

Japanese crewmen aboard the aircraft carrier *Shokaku* cheer as a Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" torpedo bomber takes off for the attack on Pearl Harbor at about 7 a.m.

Pride, Politics, and Paranoia Pushed the Japanese Empire Inexorably toward the 'Date Which Will Live in Infamy'

A wave of 177 Japanese aircraft approaching the U.S Naval base at Oahu's Pearl Harbor became visible at 7:48 a.m. on Sunday, December 7, 1941. Their mission was to bomb the hangars and parked aircraft of the island's airfields to prevent a U.S. response and to launch torpedoes at the warships in the harbor.



Within five minutes, four battleships had been hit, including the USS *Oklahoma* and the USS *Arizona*—which exploded and sank after a bomb hit its gunpowder stores, killing 1,177 of its crew.

A second wave of 163 Japanese planes attacked about an hour later. And then, one of the pivotal moments of the 20th century was over. In just an hour and a quarter, 21 Navy ships had been sunk or damaged, 188 planes destroyed and 2,402 service personnel killed.

Many of the ships were repaired and went to battle later in the war. But paramount for the U.S., all three of the Pacific Fleet's aircraft carriers were safely out at sea that Sunday. This was especially important now that the era of battleships was officially over—Japan's use of six carriers for a coordinated attack had altered naval warfare forever.

Being the "sleeping giant" that was awakened on December 7 is something that most Americans with even a passing knowledge of the events can understand—the shock, the outrage, the desire for revenge. But how did that stunning moment in history come about? Why did the Japanese strike Pearl Harbor knowing they could not possibly hope to win a war against the United States?

The overall goal of the Pearl Harbor attack was to damage as much of the U.S. Pacific fleet as possible to prevent it from responding to Japanese operations taking place on the same day against British,

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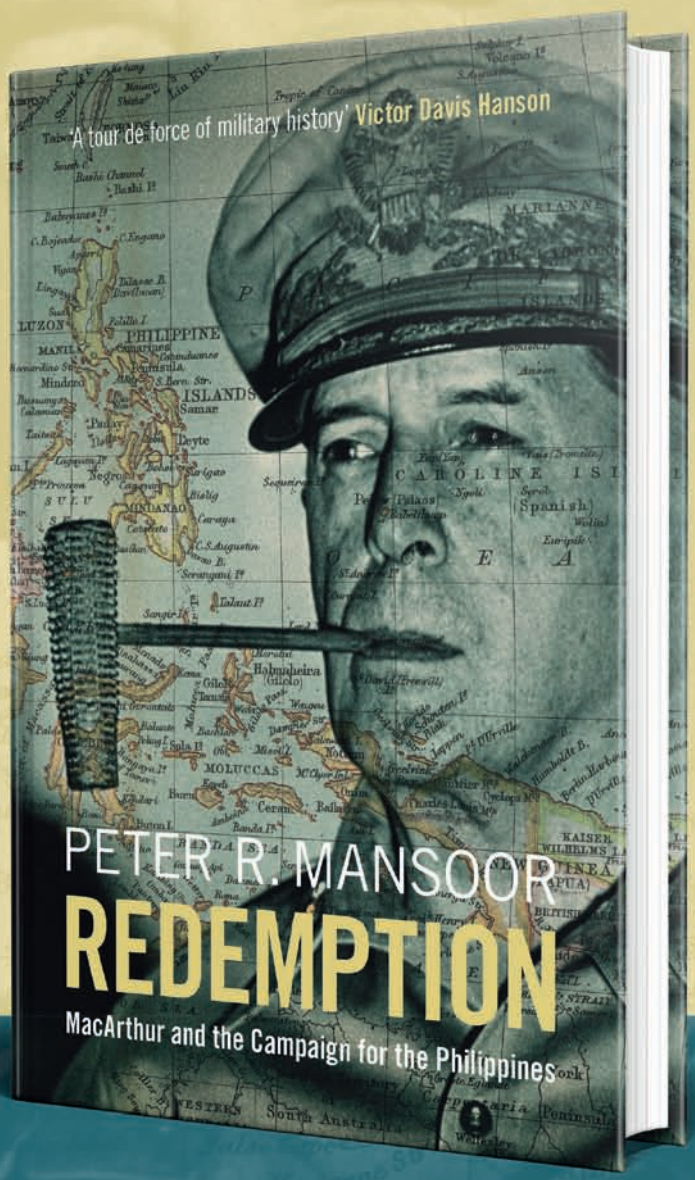

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Dutch and U.S. territories in southeast Asia—mainly in order to access oil production. America had begun a partial embargo of the oil shipments over Japan's refusal to abandon military efforts in China.

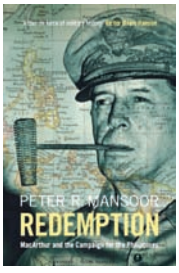
Author Mark Stille bemoans the "continuing flood of Pearl Harbor books [that] focus on the failure to avoid conflict in the months before the attack or on the deeply flawed concept that 'Washington' conspired to let the Japanese take the first shots of the war while not informing the commanders at Pearl Harbor what was coming."

Though Stille admits parts of the Japanese plan had merit, the idea of tactical Japanese brilliance holds such appeal is that "such a narrative is much more palatable than to point out that American unpreparedness allowed a flawed plan, executed in a mediocre manner, to inflict heavy losses"

With ***Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster*** (Mark Stille, Osprey/Bloomsbury Publishing, 368pp., 16-pages b.w photos, appendices, Nov. 4, 2025 $35 HC), Stille has produced a detailed and encyclopedic study of the Japanese mindset in the early part of the 20th century—incorporating seemingly every possible aspect of this epic event militarily, politically, geographically, culturally, psychologically.

Stille has successfully set out to clear out the confusion and mythology that has entrenched itself around the event, producing what will surely be a definitive resource on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Redemption: MacArthur and the Campaign for the Philippines (Peter R. Mansoor, Cambridge University Press, 600 pp., maps, photos, U.S. Division nicknames, notes on sources, index, Aug.14, 2025, $34.95 HC)



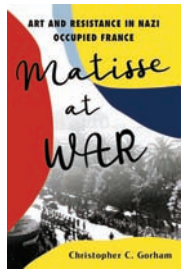
The 1944 Battle of Leyte and the liberation of the Philippines was the largest and costliest campaign of the War in the Pacific. Commanding the campaign, Gen. Douglas MacArthur was able to earn redemption for his earlier defeats at Bataan and Corregidor in the island nation—fulfilling his 1942 promise, "I shall return"—and successfully freeing millions while severing Japanese supply lines.

Mansoor re-evaluates the leadership of MacArthur, who could be both brilliant and egotistical, courageous and self-certain. Mansoor also considers the expertise and competence of the fanatically loyal core of officers MacArthur surrounded himself with, the so-called "Bataan Gang" that would serve with him for the duration.

While some historians have argued that the invasions of Leyte, Mindoro, and Luzon were unnecessary and costly—only meant to boost MacArthur's ego—Monsoor points out that, "the mere fact that MacArthur was vainglorious does not mean that he was wrong."

Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw strategic and political value in liberating not those islands as well as the capital city of Manila, saving millions of Filipinos that would suffer under Japanese occupation, especially if the war had gone on into 1946.

Matisse at War: Art and Resistance in Nazi Occupied France (Christopher C. Gorham, Citadel Press, New York, NY,



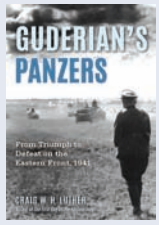
September 30, 2025, 452 pp., $29 HC)

Through intimate letters and many other sources, this book reveals Matisse's journey of reinvention in the face of war and fascism to create some of his greatest art.

One of Matisse's sons, Jean, engaged in sabotage efforts with the Allies. His other son, Pierre, helped Jewish artists escape to New York. His estranged wife of 42 years worked for the Communist underground in Paris. His daughter, Marguerite, was a member of the French Underground. She was arrested and tortured by the Gestapo and sent to Ravensbrück, the women's concentration camp.

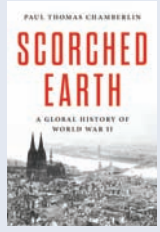
Matisse, his health failing, remained in Nice and became an inspiration to his people. In response to the spectre of Nazism, he invented a new art technique as his ability to paint declined —"drawing with scissors" by cutting shapes from sheets of paper pre-painted with vibrant colors and

New and Noteworthy



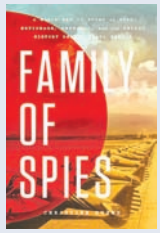
Guderian's Panzers: From Triumph to Defeat on the Eastern Front, 1941 (Craig W.H. Luther, Stackpole Books, $39.95 HC) Op. Barbarossa from the point of view of Gen. Heinz Guderian and his 2nd Panzer Group.

The Light of Battle: Eisenhower, D-Day, and the Birth of the American Superpower (Michel Paradis, Mariner Books, $18.99 SC) New biography of General Dwight Eisenhower focused on the months leading up to one of the defining moments of the 20th century.

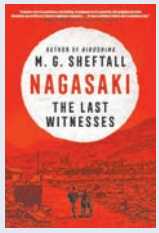


Scorched Earth: A Global History of World War II (Paul Thomas Chamberlin, Basic Books, $35 HC) Argues that WWII was not a "good war," but the result of years of colonial violence and a struggle between imperial powers.

The Sundowners, Pegasus, and Little Butch: Carrier Air Group 11 and the War in the Pacific, 1943-1945 (Brian D. Laslie, Naval Institute Press, $34.95 HC) Narrative of the war for the fighters, bombers and torpedo planes of Carrier Air Groups CVG-11.



Family of Spies: A World War II Story of Nazi Espionage, Betrayal, and the Secret History Behind Pearl Harbor (IChristine Kuehn, Celadon Books, $29.99 HC) A journalist learns Joseph Goebbels sent her father's family to Honolulu in 1935 and that her grandfather was a Nazi spy.



Nagasaki: The Last Witnesses (M.G. Sheftall, Dutton, $35 HC) The second of the two-book Embers series–Hiroshima was the first. For his vivid narrative, Sheftall spent eight years interviewing *hibakusha*—the Japanese word for atomic bomb survivors.

arranging them into compositions.

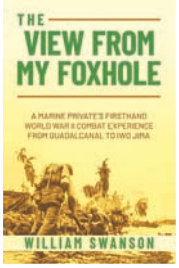
A Black Army: Segregation and the US Military at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, 1941–1945 (Pauline Peretz, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, Sept. 5, 2025, 352 pp., index, 62 photographs, $39.99 HC)

Unlike other African-American military units such as the Tuskegee Airmen, or even the 10th Cavalry Regiment "Buffalo Soldiers" who occupied Fort Huachuca before them, the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions—the only two black units of divisional size in World War II—have received much less coverage in popular media over the past 80 years.

A Black Army thoroughly examines the experiences of African American soldiers stationed at America's only "black post"—built in 1877 in southeastern Arizona near the Mexican border, Huacha was home to the 10th Cavalry from 1913 to 1933. From 1941 to 1945, 30,000 African-American infantrymen were trained there. Peretz focuses on the contradictions between the Army's rhetoric of "fighting for democracy" abroad while maintaining segregation at home and details the harsh realities of segregation—strict confinement and control—and the Army's mistrust of the soldiers' capabilities. Despite the discrimination, the book also highlights the resilience of these soldiers in the face of adversity.

A professor of American History in Paris, Peretz sheds long-overdue light on an important chapter in our nation's history.

The View from My Foxhole: A Marine Private's Firsthand World War II Combat Experience from Guadalcanal to Iwo Jima (William Swanson, Permuted Press, Brentwood, TN, 176 pp., 2022 $26 HC)



An ground-level view of island warfare by a U.S. Marine Corps rifleman who spent 27 months in the Pacific. William Swanson, who joined the Marines in 1942, landed on Guadalcanal as part of the Ninth Marines, Third Marine Division,

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

GRIT & VALOR HITS VR PLATFORMS AND BLITZKRIEG EXPRESS PUZZLES OUT A DIFFERENT TYPE OF WAR GAME

GRIT & VALOR: 1949 (VR)

PUBLISHER Megabit • **GENRE** Strategy • **SYSTEM** PlayStation 5, Xbox Series, Switch, PC • **AVAILABLE** Now

We previously covered developer *Milky Tea's Grit & Valor: 1949*, which recently made its way to PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S, Nintendo Switch and PC. For those who want an even more immersive alternate-history experience, however, publisher Megabit also brought the dieselpunk roguelite real-time strategy game to virtual reality platforms alongside the other releases. At the time of this writing, these include PlayStation VR2, SteamVR and Quest.

The studio behind the virtual reality version is nDreams, and what they've produced seems to have

aligned nicely with Milky Tea's original vision for the game. Upon launch, producer Kevin Campbell said, "What nDreams has helped us achieve is giving players added immersion, bringing the world of the game to life in a virtual setting."

As for how that translates to gameplay, the VR version puts even more emphasis on placing you in the role of commander of the virtual battlefield. You can reach your virtual hands out to pick up units and place them on the map, letting you take control of the battlefield in as direct a manner as possible. If you have a capable setup, this certainly seems like the ideal way to experience an already exciting mech-based WWII strategy outing.

As previously reported, the world of *Grit & Valor* sees World War II continuing in 1949, a time during which the Axis has all but secured victory for its side. Europe is down for the count, and Axis soldiers patrol what's left of the landscape in massive and deadly robots in an attempt to take out any remaining rebels. It's up to you to join the resistance, raise your hopeful flag and dash into enemy territory to unleash an EMP weapon that will turn the tide of war back in your favor.

The mech battles complement the aesthetics and overall strategic stylings of *Grit & Valor* nicely. Maps are full of imposing encounters, from your standard Axis mechs to larger boss characters like General Harmsworth and their even more intimidating spider-like mechanical monstrosity. Region bosses serve as an additional challenge at the end of each run, making players square off against various Axis generals and the cannon fodder surrounding them.

Historical purists may want to stay away from alt-history fiction like *Grit & Valor: 1949*, but don't let its lack of accuracy get you down. Anyone who enjoys a bit of sci-fi "what if" action would do well to check this one out, especially now that VR is an option.

BLITZKRIEG EXPRESS

PUBLISHER Maksym Melnyk • **GENRE** Puzzle **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** Now

Taking a break from intense strategy games, which tend to dominate the World War II gaming landscape, we have something completely different but no less engaging in Blitzkrieg Express. This one still requires plenty of quick thinking, because it's billed as an "arcade achievement-attack puzzle game" that has you attempting to survive and defend your land

against a nigh unstoppable armored train.

To do so, players will need to create combos by finding the right sequences in order to destroy the encroaching wagons. Those wagons all have different abilities, bonuses and disadvantages, so finding the optimal setup is key to success. As you play, you can upgrade your hero for more powerful perks, and upgrading your cannon and equipment can contribute to permanent progress from one run to another.

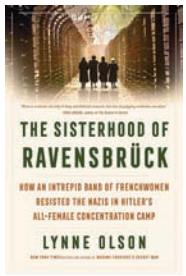
All in all, there are six settings and a total of over 100 puzzling levels to pick through in Blitzkrieg Express. Developer Maksym Melnyk cites minimal use of AI for the project, including the creation of the logo and voicing of the main character. Everything else looks pretty unique for a WWII puzzle game, and you can face down this relentless train yourself right now on PC. ■

in 1943 after most of the fighting was finished. Swanson gets his first taste of real combat at Bougainville in October. After two months, he got a brief respite at Guadalcanal, before being shipped to Guam to take on pillboxes and caves.

At Iwo Jima, Swanson is wounded "I have found that it is relatively easy to resign oneself to death and, on occasion, even welcome the thing. It is really the violence, the pain, the suddenness, and unpredictability of events that tear our insides. We cannot be sure of anything—not the next step or the next second—and that is the real terror."

His convalescence finished, Swanson awaits reassignment for the upcoming invasion of Japan, but is spared of that by the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Sisterhood of Ravensbrück: How an Intrepid Band of Frenchwomen Resisted the Nazis in Hitler's All-Female Concentration Camp (Lynne Olson, Random House, New York, NY, 384 pp., bibliographical references, index, photos, June 3, 2025 $35, HC)

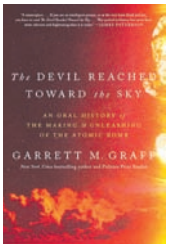


During the liberation of camps like Dachau and Buchenwald, American journalists documented the horrors for the world to see. But Ravensbrück, the only concentration camp designated for women, remains largely unknown. There were no photos, film, or news reports of its liberation because it was in a dense forest some 50 miles north of Berlin in the Soviet zone of post-war Germany and off-limits to westerners. Many of the 130,000 women who passed through Ravensbrück were members of resistance movements in Nazi-occupied countries.

The majority shareholder of the limited company that operated Ravensbrück was SS head Heinrich Himmler, who made huge profits from its slave labor. When the women were worn down by a lack of food, disease and 12-hour work days they were sent to Auschwitz. An estimated 40,000 died in the camp from various causes, including lethal injections and medical experiments.

This is a fascinating story of a tight-knit group of women from the French Resistance who documented the camp's activities and worked against their captors to survive.

The Devil Reached Toward the Sky: An Oral History of the Making and Unleashing of the Atomic Bomb (Garrett M. Graff, Avid Reader Press/Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 608 pp., Aug. 5, 2025 $35 HC)



On the 80th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, Graff, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, has drawn from oral history archives and hundreds of books, reports, letters, diaries, and transcripts from across the U.S., Japan, and Europe, to craft an epic narrative of the atomic bomb's creation and deployment, woven from the voices of hundreds of people involved, including scientists, generals, soldiers, and civilians, including the *Hibakusha*—the survivors of the bombs the U.S. dropped on Japan.

The Wounded Generation: Coming Home After World War II (David Nasaw, Penguin Press, New York, NY, 496 pp., Oct. 14, 2025 $35 HC)

A two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, Nasaw takes an unvarnished look at the real America in the years after World War II—after the parades and celebrations—and how it affected those who fought and their families and how it changed our nation.

The social isolation, recurring nightmares and uncontrollable rages Veterans experienced was attributed to "battle fatigue" before the concept of PTSD was widely understood. Some were given electro-shock treatment or lobotomies. Across the country there was a housing crisis, women who worked during the war were reluctant to go back to being housewives. Alcoholism skyrocketed and divorce rates doubled. The GI Bill helped, but Black veterans were often denied their benefits.

Mining the rich resources of veteran memoirs, oral histories, and government documents, Nasaw reveals the hidden trauma, the true cost of war: the men who returned were not the same as those who left, and the America they had known no longer existed. ■

GUAM

Continued from page 55

alties were 177 killed and 662 wounded. The Marines developed what has been described as a healthy respect for the soldiers of the 77th Division during the fighting on Guam. A battalion commander with the Third Marines said, "There was no doubt in our minds that the 77th were good people to have alongside in a fight, and as a result we referred to them as the 77th Marine Division."

Guam became the Navy's primary base for operations in the central Pacific. Seabees began extending the runways of Guam's two airfields for the B-29 Superfortress bombers of the 20th Air Force. The big, four-engined bombers would soon begin attacking the Japanese home islands from their Guam base. On August 15, Admiral Nimitz announced that Guam would be his headquarters, which meant the rest of the war would be directed from Guam. Admiral Nimitz's announcement also meant that new construction and building improvements had to be implemented as soon as possible. Roads were paved, and facilities at Piti Navy Yard were upgraded. Seabees built everything from office blocks and living quarters to tennis courts for the admiral and his staff.

The end of the war was still a year away. The recapture of Guam, and the construction of its airfields, were major contributions to the ending of the war in the late summer of 1945. One Third Division Marine, who had been stationed on Guam as a private in the late 1930s, tried to put the fighting in perspective from the view of the Marines who had fought their way from the landing beaches to Ritidian Point.

"When I heard about losing Guam to the Japs right after Pearl Harbor, it felt like I had lost part of my own country, part of home," he said. "Recapturing it meant a lot to me, personally I mean. It was like retaking something that belonged to me. It was like going home again." □

David Alan Johnson is a longtime contributor to WWII History *and the author of numerous books, the lastest of which is the story of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, chief of the Abwehr, the Nazi intelligence apparatus.*

MURMANSK HURRICANES

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ber 6 at Rosyth, Scotland, while the iron ore carrier *Harpalion* was the last to arrive, berthing at Leith, Scotland on December 12.

Mission completed, the officers and men of No. 151 Wing prepared for reassignment after a well-deserved leave. No. 81 Squadron assembled at RAF Turnhouse near Edinburgh for conversion to Spitfires. After flying defensive patrols for several months, 81 Squadron moved to southern England to begin offensive sweeps over northwest Europe before moving on to Gibraltar to support Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. It participated in the Tunisia campaign, then moved to India and Ceylon to finish the war fighting the Japanese. Meanwhile, No. 134 Squadron reformed at Catterick, also converting to Spitfires, before reassignment to RAF Eglinton in Northern Ireland. In 1943 it served overseas in Egypt before being reassigned to India and Burma where it flew P-47 Thunderbolts.

On March 31, 1942, in recognition of the unique bond between the RAF airmen and their Russian counterparts, Soviet Ambassador to the United Kingdom Ivan Maisky presented the Order of Lenin to Ramsbottom-Isherwood, Miller, Rook, Haw (the top-scoring pilot in No. 151 Wing)—the first foreigners to receive the Order of Lenin, the highest civil decoration awarded by the Soviet Union during World War II.

While all the RAF airmen and ground crew who served in Murmansk in 1941 are deserving of recognition, the campaign has been largely forgotten in the Western world. Today, the Severomorsk cemetery graves of Sergeant Nudger Smith, Aircraftman 1st Class James Ridley, and Aircraftsman 2nd Class Glanville Thomas (along with those of two other RAF airmen killed later while serving in northern Russia) are mute testimony to the violent conflict that temporarily brought British and Russian airmen together to fight their common foe in one of the most remote and desolate locations to see conflict during World War II. □

Author Neil Taylor has written for WWII History *on varied topics related to the conflict. He resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

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singled out for punishment, that relationships might spring up.

One German officer, Gerhard Heller, fondly recalled liaisons with a French teenage girl and later with a teenage boy. With the girl there were bicycle rides through the country and walks through the city, while his later time with the boy was understandably more covert. That both were willing to risk a homosexual affair speaks to the loneliness many must have felt on both sides during the occupation.

After a while, many forms of what might be called civil disobedience began to appear: the Metro and sewers (and no doubt Paris's famous catacombs) became places to hide and retreat or have a bit of fun away from the German authorities, who seem to have mapped out everything above ground but never got their bearings beneath it. The French also came to the defense of their Jewish neighbors when the latter were forced to wear the yellow star. The young made their own stars with the words SWING, GOI, or INRI; this while, when a Nazi refused to ride in the first-class Metro train until a Jewish woman vacated it, he was left alone in the car when everyone else followed her out.

There must have been thousands of such small gestures, but by the end of the occupation it was not enough to assuage the guilt Paris seemed to feel as a whole for what had gone on. A month before Paris was liberated, a German soldier, Walter Dreizner, wrote, "Paris is increasingly becoming a trap for the Germans," but for months after, perhaps even now, it remained a trap for the French as well. The so-called épuration sauvage (the unofficial purge) saw some 10,000 die as old scores were settled in the general melee, political enemies murdered and thrown in the Seine, while women who had slept with Germans were publicly humiliated, tarred with swastikas, their heads shaved, and led down the street to meet with further abuse. No such punishment seems to have been meted out to men who slept with German women stationed in Paris.

Perhaps some 20,000 women were punished this way, although a woman's fate also depended, as ever, upon her means. The American socialite Florence Gould, whose aging French husband spent the war years in the south, held a famous weekly salon at her apartment, frequented by dozens of people, French and German. During the war years she had a handful of lovers, some German, but after the war she also had the money and influence to evade punishment. The French actress Arletty, who was unapologetic if not proud of having had a German lover, defended herself with the memorable statement, "My heart is French but my ass is international." While she was briefly imprisoned after the war, she quickly resumed her acting career and, following her death in 1992, she was condemned less for having a German lover than "dining at the Ritz while the rest of France was going hungry." If only other French women had been treated the same.

The more official purge ended with the trials and punishments (and sometimes executions) of more notable public figures, beginning with Vichy officials but eventually sweeping writers and cultural figures into the mix. Of the entire affair, Jean Galtier-Boissière said, "The Nazis have left us an imprint of authoritarianism and persecution." Rather than going too far, the authorities rather seem to have realized that such investigations would be endless, and they discovered what most French citizens had known for years. Barring insight into another's soul or conscience, or just of their every movement in June 1940, there were no calculations that could definitively categorize one form of collaboration as understandable and another as criminal.

And even if there were, punishing all those determined to deserve it would only hinder the country's attempt to emerge from the war. As Galtier-Boissière put it, "One forgets that some of [the collaborationist writers] had only their pen with which to feed their family and wrote only anodyne pieces. Does one reproach the workers at Renault for making tanks for the Wehrmacht? Wasn't a tank more useful to the Fritz than an item in Le Petit Parisien?" Indeed, for French industrial life to begin its postwar existence factory managers and workers who had been employed by the Germans couldn't be punished; and in the same way, many police officials, magistrates, and civil servants, who had all served either Germany or Vichy, were needed on the streets and in the courtrooms and offices if life were return to "normal." When Baron de Rothschild returned to his Paris mansion after the war and asked who had come to visit the Germans living there while he had been imprisoned, the unsettling answer was, "The same ones who came when you were here." Normal life would have to go on with the knowledge that it was likely compromised.

But wasn't it always, to some degree or another? Jean Guéhenno justified what happened the only way that he could. "Defeat can prove to be the only way to resurrection, despite its ugliness." A pacifist following the apparently senseless and total slaughter of World War I, it took the occupation to change his mind, if only slightly, in words that appear in his diary only a few days after the Germans marched into Paris: "I will never believe that men are made for war. But I know they are not made for servitude, either."

Four years of day-in, day-out interactions with the occupying Germans had tested everyone's belief in their own dignity, and it was hard not to feel that sometimes servitude is where they had ended up. In the same way, after a time Camus refused to support the purge of French citizens, writing, "The greatness of man lies in his decision to be stronger than his condition." He seemed to understand that even this greatness meant occasional, and distasteful, compromise.

That French people worried over gestures and interactions small and large, and that they still had a conscience that nagged them at all, was actually quite encouraging. They had not become like their enemies after all. Perfect worlds and pure races, ideal conditions and clear lines—leave those to the authoritarians who thought them possible.

Simone de Beauvoir described postwar life as Paris in "the year zero." They could begin again, but no one had the luxury of believing it would be easy. □

Tim Miller, who lives in Pittsburgh, last wrote for WWII History *on the extensive spy network that operated in occupied Paris.*

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