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Cover: Private Bernard Cohen, a scout with the 3rd Armored Division, photographed in November 1944. See story page 36. Photo: National Archives.

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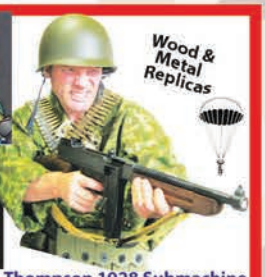

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U.S. M65 Field Jacket w/ Liner New. Olive Drab color with 4 front pockets, cinching waist band, epaulletes, and zippered collar which conceals a hood with drawstring. A true multi season jacket loved by those in the military. This is the reason it has remained in service with the U.S. and Nato members for many decades and appeared in my colors & camouflage schemes. Sizes available: Med.,Large,XL,2XL & 3 XL. $69.95 #JKT 03

U.S. M65 Field Jacket

WW2 U.S. Navy Deck Jacket - w/ a warm pile lining on the inside ,two hip pockets, USN marking on left breast, and zipper/button combination for fastening the front. Sizes: Med., XL, & 2XL. Very Limited. Khaki $85. #JKT04 New

U.S. N1 Deck Jacket

Early WW2 style U.S. Navy & Marine summer flight jacket is great to wear Spring thru Fall. Khaki shell with 2 large hip pockets, knit waist & cuffs, USN marking and leather tag on left breast. Sizes: Med.,Lg, & XL $75. #JKT 05 New

U.S. Navy Pilot's Jacket

The execution of private Eddie Slovik remains a forlorn footnote to the Battle of the Bulge

A single prisoner was bound and blindfolded in the courtyard of a French country house near the village of Ste-Marie-aux-Mines at 10:04 a.m. on January 31, 1945. A detail from the 109th Infantry Regiment, 28th Division, fired a volley, carrying out the death sentence.

He was not a spy, nor a saboteur, but a conscripted former petty criminal from Michigan—a replacement for the ranks of the 28th Division, which had suffered heavy casualties during the fighting in Western Europe in the summer and autumn of 1944.

He was the first American soldier executed for desertion under fire since the Civil War.

Why Slovik? Why then?

Slovik was first classified 4-F due to his prison record, but as the need for men grew his status changed to 1-A and he was drafted in January 1944. By August, he was headed to the front. When the convoy carrying Slovik and other replacements came under German fire, he and another soldier got separated from their company. Eventually, the pair happened upon the camp of the Canadian 13th Provost Corps, where they stayed until October.

The deserter did in fact rejoin his unit, but only briefly. A day after finding Company G of the 109th Regiment, Slovik walked away again. After another day, he turned himself in and penned and signed a confession that would play an important part in his undoing. The tribunal that convicted him voted unanimously three separate times for the death sentence.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander in Europe, was obliged to review Slovik's case because of the sentence. He concurred.

In his landmark 2002 biography *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, acclaimed historian Carlo D'Este notes that during the campaign in Europe in 1944-1945 no less than 49 U.S. soldiers were arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for desertion. Slovik apparently refused at least one offer from the 28th Division judge advocate to return to his unit in exchange for dropping the charges against him. He also wrote a personal letter to Eisenhower asking for mercy.

D'Este wrote, "In the Slovik case, however, the death penalty was imposed on a soldier who had committed no violent act and whose intent to desert was questionable. Eddie Slovik became a cause celebre when journalist William Bradford Huie published *The Execution of Private Slovik* in 1954. When Eisenhower was interviewed in 1963 by historian Bruce Catton, his recollection of the event bore the hallmarks of a faulty memory. Claiming he had sent his judge advocate general to offer Slovik an olive branch if he would express remorse and return to his unit, Eisenhower described Slovik as 'one of those guardhouse lawyers who refused to believe that he'd ever be executed. '

"Slovik had actually written Eisenhower a heartfelt personal plea to spare his life, and would willingly have complied with an offer to return to duty. It has not been established if Eisenhower ever saw Slovik's letter, but what is clear is that no one from SHAEF was ever sent to the 28th Division before Slovik's execution."

Incidences of desertion and self-inflicted wounds had reached alarming levels in the ranks and Eisenhower may well have felt compelled to offer Slovik as an example. The fact that the largest single fight in the history of the U.S. Army, the Battle of the Bulge, was at its height during a critical period in the disposition of Slovik's case cannot be discounted either.

Slovik was buried in the Oise-Aisne Cemetery at Fere-en-Tardenois, France, with 94 Americans executed for the crimes of rape and murder. In 1987, more than 40 years after his death, Slovik's body was exhumed and reburied in Michigan beside his wife.

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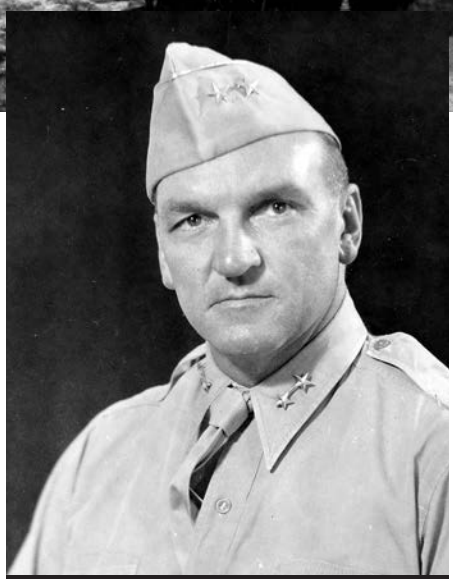
General John 'Tiger Jack' Wood combined precision and speed to rack up armored victories across France in 1944.

When little John Shirley Wood was delivered on January 11, 1888, in Monticello, Arkansas, one of the Free World's greatest defenders greeted his first dawn as eagerly as everything else he confronted and overcame in a lifetime of soldiering. He graduated from the University of Arkansas and worked for a couple years before he was admitted to, and fell eternally in love with, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. As a plebe he refused to submit to the traditional hazing from upperclassmen—firmly and respectfully refusing commands to perform like a circus animal—and was never censured.

When his extreme myopia threatened to end his West Point tenure before it began, he was saved by the chief medical officer, a rabid football fan who knew of Wood's gridiron exploits as an Arkansas Razorback. The Point needed a quarterback and Woods, who was several years older than his fellow cadets, was bigger, stronger, and faster. Classmates such as Dwight David Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, Carl Spaatz, and George S. Patton Jr. held him in highest esteem. While serving in Europe with these same men 30 years later they treated him (for the most part, as it turned out) with deferential respect, despite their higher rank.

In fact, the moniker "Tiger Jack" was bestowed upon Wood because of his extremely rare refusal to be intimidated by Patton. As an aide later recalled, when Blood 'n Guts "roared at Wood, Wood roared right back" at his close friend. It was this utter fearlessness, coupled with his constant, restless pacing led to the frightful-sounding nickname—which caught on quickly even with the Germans. This son of a circuit-riding judge would perform incomparably on the battlefield while following the example of the only soldier who ever struck him as worthy of emulation—Gen. Robert E. Lee.



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ABOVE: Major General John S. "Tiger Jack" Wood. TOP: After their July 11 landing on Utah Beach as part of Operation Cobra, Maj. Gen. John Wood's 4th Armored Division moves through the streets of Countances, France, on July 30, 1944.

Wood never felt any obligation to convention. While the Western Allies construed their victory in World War I as vindication of trenches, border fortifications, barbed wire and strictly defensive tactics, he recog-

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ABOVE: Fourth Armored Division jeeps cross a river in June 1942 during intensive training at Pine Camp (Fort Drum) in upstate New York. Brig. Gen. John Wood was given command of the newly formed division in May 1942 and promoted to major-general on June 21. BELOW: The crew of a 4th Armored Division Sherman tank takes a break near Arracourt in Lorraine, France, in September 1944. The hard-charging division, which had liberated the cities Nantes, Orleans, Loire, St. Calais, Sens and Troyes, as well as countless villages, was finally slowed only by a lack of fuel.

National Archives

nized the tragic weaknesses of static trench warfare in the 1930s. But aside from Wood and an obscure French colonel named Charles de Gaulle, this belief in rapid, profitable movement was unrecognized outside Germany, where an incubating Wehrmacht was feverishly assimilating the concept into its overall way of thinking. The fast-moving armored columns Wood later used to such devastating effect in western Europe did not exist in the Army of depression-era America.

Dismissing the accepted doctrine that infantry would forever rule the battlefield, Lt. Col. Wood tirelessly espoused from his teaching positions at various stateside postings that mobility via close co-operation between aerial and armored forces was the critical, irresistible trend of the future. His beliefs received as little respect in isolationist America as de Gaulle's did in defense-minded France, which was busy constructing the already-outmoded Maginot Line. It would take the new concept's soul-killing vindication early in the Second World War to force the Allied military establishment to recognize the far-sighted brilliance of these two previously overlooked tacticians. Realization came almost too late as the Nazi colossus quickly overran continental Europe. In still-neutral America, Wood worriedly saw the arrival of the future and commenced planning to counter it when his chance came.

Wood was a brigadier-general by the time the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor goaded the United States into the war. Immediately after the declaration of war he arrived in California to serve in an armored division. In May 1942 he was given command of the 3rd Army's newly formed 4th Armored Division, and promoted to major-general on June 21.

Although Wood and his troops were eager for action they realized the Wehrmacht already had years of experience in armored warfare. When they were shipped overseas in January 1944 they readily accepted the continued training in England, knowing it was necessary—to be endured and absorbed, religiously. For the Germans who would eventually face this division it seemed they were fighting men born into and for combat. To their immense displeasure, Wood's tankers were held back from participating in the initial Normandy landings as other units hit the blood-splattered beaches. It was July 12 before the chafing 4th Armored Division was ferried across the English Channel.

At 9:45 a.m. on July 28 the 4th swept through a ragged wound the 3rd Army had chewed in the German perimeter, outdistancing a couple of infantry divisions, and set off eastward. Smashing through roadblocks, rear guards and bypassing minefields they rumbled 18 miles to the town of Coutances. Behind them overrun Nazi forces were left confused and demoralized by the 4th's irresistible onslaught. Mop-up units dealt with the aftermath as Wood's columns sought out the enemy and engaged without hesitation.

National Archives

An M7 Priest with the 4th Armored Division moves through Normandy soon after the Division arrived in France in July 1944. The armored, self-propelled 105mm howitzer was first used in battle in October 1942 by British troops in North Africa who thought its rounded .50-caliber machine-gun compartment resembled a priest's pulpit.

Their general was in the vanguard.

Using any thoroughfares it could find, the 4th resolutely pressed forward. Their arrival in Avranches on July 30 was so sudden that Gen. Paul Hausser, commander of the German 7th Army, had to flee on foot. As the communications hub and central headquarters for defending Wehrmacht forces in the area, Avranches was a lucrative catch. Now the path was clear for Patton's 3rd Army to charge headlong into the wide-open expanses of central France, but the 4th did not hang around to see the sights.

The next day it took Pontaubault and secured a bridgehead over the Selune River. By now they had more than 3,000 prisoners who could hardly comprehend their victimization by the very blitzkrieg tactics they had arrogantly assumed they alone understood.

This rampaging American tank pack had furthermore destroyed three infantry divisions, a paratroop division and part of the 2nd SS Panzer Division. As Wood and his warriors momentarily slowed on the evening of July 31, the Germans they had violently rolled through over the past two weeks were wandering in small groups around them.

"They've got us surrounded again, the poor bastards," Sergeant C.A. Klinga of the 4th's 8th Tank Battalion said.

It was true enough. Since the unleashing of Wood's soldiers, the German tactical situation in France had deteriorated into a veritable panic flight to the east. U.S. forces had completely cleared the Cotentin Peninsula of its Wehrmacht defenders, securing the final natural defense line west of Brittany.

On August 12 the division, guided through minefields by French resistance operatives, quickly expelled its enemy from Nantes, but had pulled so far ahead of the front it had to wait three days for additional 3rd Army units to arrive and garrison the city. The 4th was then relieved of its holding duties and reassigned to XII Corps, commencing a great eastward wheeling movement in tandem with Operation Dragoon, the U.S. landings on France's Mediterranean coast. Coordinating their movements with the newly arrived southern invaders, Wood's tanks set off after retreating Axis forces, trapping them against the Swiss border. Fleeing the numerically superior Allies and their air armadas these German units retreated directly across the path of the onrushing 4th.

Wood quickly convinced Patton to give him free rein to overtake the fleeing Germans before they reached the bristling Siegfried Line on the Franco-German border. Wood's Combat Command A and Combat Command B churned out of Nantes and bore down on Orleans via different routes. Guided by Wood overhead in an observation plane, they chased the enemy from Orleans and threw a pontoon bridge across the Meuse River on August 31. Though they were impatient to continue on to the Moselle River, the U.S. armored cavalrymen were bedevilled by a fuel shortage.

So fast was their advance that Wood's command had lost track of the towns they had liberated and the number of Nazi formations they had destroyed. In many cases the 4th's officers would disarm demoralized Germans and simply order them to the rear unescorted. The major cities these Americans had so far liberated were Nantes, Orleans, Loire, St. Calais, Sens and Troyes.

At Troyes they gave a clinic on modern armored warfare. With air support and forward reconnaissance, the tankers charged the city across a broad plain that sloped gently downward to defenses manned by 2,000-3,000, including the entire 51st SS Brigade. Fanning out at full throttle, the 800 Americans drove in unpredictable patterns that frustrated the German artillerymen as they ate up the 3.5 miles of open ground.

Carrying clusters of armored infantrymen, the Shermans flew over a seven-foot antitank ditch with their main guns blazing, collapsing it on German troops in enfilading positions. After penetrating outer defenses the infantry dismounted and shielded their armor from German anti-tank infantry. Rumbling through Troyes' streets the Americans used white phosphorus and high explosives to knock out artillery positions and other pockets of resistance. At dawn on August 26, they destroyed an ammunition convoy trying to escape the city, and the armored infantry savaged another column that was attempting to relieve the defenders. This brought the engagement to a close.

Troyes had been garrisoned with experienced, well-trained troops and was heavily

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: From left, generals Leven Allen, Omar Bradley, John Wood, George Patton, and Manton Eddy, consult a situation map near Metz, France, in November 1944. Despite his success in France, Wood was relieved of command by Patton on December 3, 1944, never to return to the war—something for which he blamed Eddy, his commander, with whom he'd never had a good relationship. BELOW: A 4th Armored Division M18 tank destroyer moves past a burning American halftrack hit by German artillery in a French village in November 1944. On December 3, Gen. Wood was replaced by Gen. Hugh Gaffey. Always outspoken, Wood's insubordination and lack of respect for his infantryman commander, Gen. Manton E. Eddy, influenced Patton's decision to dismiss him.

fortified. It easily could have become a major headache for the Allies, but instead fell quickly to these fearless, onrushing assailants who killed 533 Germans and captured 557. In fact, virtually all these locations that had been contested so bloodily in the First World War were quickly taken by this new generation of American fighting men whose hurtling advance was now temporarily ended by a lack of gasoline.

Before the week was out the division did scrounge enough fuel to enable some units to ford the Moselle River and its tributaries after the retreating enemy blew the bridges. Wood had his men break down the high river banks by pounding them with 75mm shells. They then heaved logs into the muddy canal beds in order to provide enough support for the tanks to cross without having to wait for engineers to construct pontoon bridges. The city of Nancy was quickly encircled and secured, but not all resistance was coming from the Nazis.

Wood's command had crossed the Moselle on September 15, and he was anxious to push on along the Marne-Rhine channels and take Sarrebourg. He realized the German 1st Army facing him had no reserves and would be unable to withstand his thrust, but XII Corps commander Gen. Manton Eddy ordered Wood to send his tanks to the rear to help the 35th Division "tidy up the battlefield." The ripe chance to immediately take Sarrebourg was lost as the 4th Armored Division's advance was reined in at Arracourt.

By this time Adolf Hitler himself had heard of the rampaging U.S. armored posse slicing through his western defenses, and he personally ordered Gen. Hasso von Manteuffel's 5th Panzer Army to counterattack and "retake Luneville and wipe out the American bridgeheads across the Moselle."

On September 19 von Manteuffel's Panthers rumbled into combat against the smaller and more thinly armored Shermans, expecting to pulverize the audacious Americans. But Wood's well-trained men attacked the tracks and thinner side armor of the Nazi behemoths, while armored infantrymen trained their field pieces on these same spots. There was also ongoing firepower from above as P-47 Thunderbolts dive-bombed and strafed Wehrmacht formations. By September 22, 150 Panzers were destroyed.

All along the front, action was dwindling due to exhaustion, attrition and sundry shortages. On Columbus Day Wood's command, after 87 days in the vanguard, moved to the rear for rest and recuperation.

Wood had been recommending that the Siegfried Line be assaulted by the end of September before it could be fully manned, but the supply crisis stalled this plan. When the offensive finally did resume on Veterans Day, the weather favored the Wehrmacht as a chill rain fell steadily for three weeks, turning the meadows and pastures of Alsace-Lorraine into frigid, impassable swamps while rivers spread far beyond their banks.

With the weather restricting them to paved roads and depriving them of air support, Wood's tanks were picked off with heart-

breaking regularity by veteran German artillerymen firing the dread 88mm flak gun. The downpour precluded the rapid bypassing and encircling maneuvers so brilliantly executed by the 4th Armored Division throughout the summer. These indomitable tankers nevertheless pulverized the left flank of the German 48th Infantry Division and splashed all the way to Viviers, Hannecourt, Chateau-Salins and Rodalbe on the first day of the attack. The next day they rooted the Nazis from Foteny in grisly street fighting, and on November 14, ignoring withering artillery fire, secured Gubling before pushing on to Morhange, taking it two days later. For the series of speedy victories Wood was awarded a Bronze Star, which he never wore.

The division surged eastward again on November 19 into the mine-infested sector of Fenetrange, liberating it on Thanksgiving Day. Blasting a passage through to the Saar River, most of the division had crossed by the 25th. By then the 4th Armored had fought its way beyond XII Corps' boundaries into a different sector, a move that would save the day for XV Corps.

On November 25 the Panzer Lehr Armored Division moved to strike XV Corps' long, exposed flank and retake the vital Sarrebourg-Saverna road. As the Germans commenced their attack the just-arrived 4th Armored Division slammed into them unexpectedly from their position east of the Saar. Forced from offense to defense, Panzer Lehr was stopped cold and driven back to its jumping-off point east of Sarre-Union by November 27.

By December 3, the division had established U.S. control of the region around Domfesel and was preparing to resume its eastward movement when Wood was abruptly relieved of his command and sent back to the States on orders from Allied Supreme Commander General Dwight Eisenhower, who explained he wanted his priceless tank commander to have a break from constant combat. Both Eisenhower and Patton assured Wood he would return and lead his men to final victory, but the call never came. America's premier armored leader would spend the rest of the war languishing behind a desk.

Many suspected the real reason for

Continued on page 97

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The dreaded Stuka rained terror on military and civilian targets during the Blitzkrieg days of World War II.

During World War II the exploits of certain aircraft saw them indelibly associated with the battles in which they fought. One such aircraft was undoubtedly the German Junkers Ju-87 dive bomber.

Known as the "Stuka" (an abbreviation of *Sturzkampfflugzeug* or "dive bomber"), the Ju-87 remains synonymous with the German Blitzkrieg campaigns of 1939-1940 as much for its psychological effect as for the invaluable support it gave to the German armed forces.

With the reemergence of German militarism under Adolf Hitler in the 1930s, the ranks of the Luftwaffe were swelled with aircraft flagged as an integral part of the military's revolutionary doctrine of Blitzkrieg warfare. During this massive rearmament, the development of a dive bomber that could work in close cooperation with ground forces was passionately championed by the Luftwaffe's General Ernst Udet. The former World War I fighter ace recognized that pinpoint bombing accuracy could only be successfully achieved with an aircraft that could make its vertical speed vector coincide with the direction of gravity. The dive bomber that could do this, he argued, would in effect deliver its bomb in a straight line directly to the target instead of the inaccurate curve typical in high altitude straight and level bombing.

Udet's enthusiasm, coupled with his influence among leading military and political figures within the Third Reich, saw the Air Ministry finally issue specifications for the development of a two-seater dive bomber. The demands of an aircraft capable of providing close tactical air support were considerable. Contenders would need to be strong enough to deal with the considerable stresses put on a dive bomber's airframe, rugged enough to cope with hard service close to the battle front, and robust enough to carry a heavy load.

A number of firms were already well advanced in dive bomber development and soon submitted proposals for the lucrative contract, including Junkers with their Ju-87.

Designed by Herman Pohlmann, the first of the Ju-87 V-series prototypes first flew in 1935 featuring twin-tailfins and, ironically, powered by the imported British Rolls Royce 12-cylinder Kestrel engine.

Progressing through trials, flight testing, and mishaps, later prototypes converted to the more familiar single tail fin assembly, and the powerplant was upgraded with the fitting of a Jumo 210Aa 12-cylinder liquid-cooled engine and a three-bladed variable-pitch propeller. Hydraulically hinged dive brakes were also installed. These appeared as long, rectangular slats under the leading edge of each wing and were designed to rotate perpendicular to the air stream to reduce the terminal dive velocity of the aircraft.

The Ju-87's method of operations for a dive bombing attack required the pilot to fly until his target was obscured beneath the left wing root. Shutting the engine cooling vents and setting the propeller to coarse pitch, he would then open the airbrakes, nose over to the left, and dive at about an 85-degree angle. Red lines painted on the side of the canopy at 60, 75, and 80 degrees would help determine the bombing angle. The bomb was carried on a swing-down crutch, which slung the projectile clear of the fuselage when released, the timing of which was left to the judgment of the pilot. Many who flew the Stuka described the motion of diving to be very comfortable and lacking the perception that they were falling past the vertical, which was common in other dive bombers.

The aircraft under consideration for the Luftwaffe contract were to undergo a flight evaluation at the test center at Rechlin in 1936. Of the three hopefuls, the Ju-87 with its inverted gull-wings, oversized "trousered" undercarriage, and high-set greenhouse canopy was not only the most distinctive but

ABOVE: Known as the "Stuka," a contraction of *Sturzkampfflugzeug*, the German word for dive bomber, the Junkers Ju-87 saw its first action in 1937 as part of Germany's Condor Legion supporting Franco's Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War. Spain served as a proving ground for the precision strike tactics that would later be used so devastatingly in World War II as part of the *Blitzkrieg*. OPPOSITE: During the 1943 Battle of Kursk in Russia, specialized antitank versions of the Junkers Ju-87 known as "Gustavs" used tungsten-core shells to knock out Soviet tanks. With its upgraded speed, firepower, and armor, the "Dora" (D-series) version of the Ju-87 proved crucial in supporting ground troops and destroying Soviet antiaircraft batteries.

Walker Art Gallery / Alamy

Polish State Archives

also the ugliest.

Despite the Stuka's appearance, its unique diving ability and incredible accuracy contributed to it being selected over its rivals.

Continuing modifications on the V-series ultimately led to the full production variant, the Ju-87A-1, which featured the bigger Jumo 210Ca engine and larger single tail fin, making the aircraft almost spin proof. With excellent handling and very responsive controls, 10 A-1s, each capable of carrying a 250-kilogram (551-pound) bomb, were supplied to the Luftwaffe early in 1937. A further three underwent field testing with the German Kondor Legion flying missions in support of General Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War. The aircraft proved very effective against republican shipping, bridges, and other ground targets.

It was a prelude of things to come.

The experience in Spain had served as a very encouraging baptism of fire, and many within the Luftwaffe hierarchy were delighted with the aircraft's overall performance—in particular its accuracy.

On the eve of World War II, critics of the Stuka remained unenthused by the aircraft's modest flying attributes. With a maximum speed of only 183 mph at 10,000 feet and a generally unimpressive performance in level flight, many saw the Stuka as already obsolete. Udet ignored the skeptics, predicting the Ju-87 in its role as the "flying artillery" would deliver quicker and better results with less effort than heavy bomber raids. In Poland, Udet's words would prove prophetic.

The nine Stukagruppen committed to the Polish campaign in September 1939 were equipped with the almost completely redesigned Ju-87B series, with its new fuel-injected engine. Fitted with an autopilot to drag the aircraft out of its power dive and boosted by a more powerful Jumo 211Da engine and constant speed propeller, the B variant was the definitive Stuka of the Luftwaffe's glory days.

Extensive modifications also saw the bulging maw of a radiator redesigned and the ugly undercarriage trousers replaced by streamlined wheel spats. Now armed with three 7.9mm machine guns, the B model's bombload was also increased to over 1,500 pounds if the pilot flew solo. Its major drawback was its lack of speed, which was only 242 mph at 13,500 feet.

The Stuka dropped the first bombs of World War II when at 0426 on September 1, 1939, three Ju-87 B-1s led by Oberleutenant Bruno Dilley attacked the approaches to the Dirschau bridges over the Vistula River. The bombs fell at 0434, 11 minutes before Germany formally declared war on Poland.

A Stuka Ju-87B piloted by Unteroffizier Frank Neubert shot down the first aircraft of the war that same morning.

Without a serious fighter threat, the more than 320 Ju-87B-1s in the skies over Poland proved perfectly suited to the role of close cooperative dive bombing. They attacked Polish forces in the rear areas and on the field of battle. Transportation hubs were smashed, headquarters destroyed, and troop concentrations constantly broken up by Ju-87s.

This form of airpower rattled Polish commanders, who were already thrown off balance by the rapid German advance. Massed Stuka attacks could occur at any time at any place, yet their already legendary abilities were not confined to smaller targets such as bridges, strongpoints, and rail centers. Operations on a larger scale saw Stukas sink virtually the entire Polish Navy and almost singlehandedly wipe out the 13th Polish Infantry Division at the Piotrkow railway station.

The Ju-87's notoriety as a Nazi terror bomber probably arose when 240 joined the bombing of the garrison and military facilities in Warsaw. The bombs of the highly visible Stukas not only destroyed large areas of the city but also inflicted heavy civilian casualties. The world was appalled by these seem-

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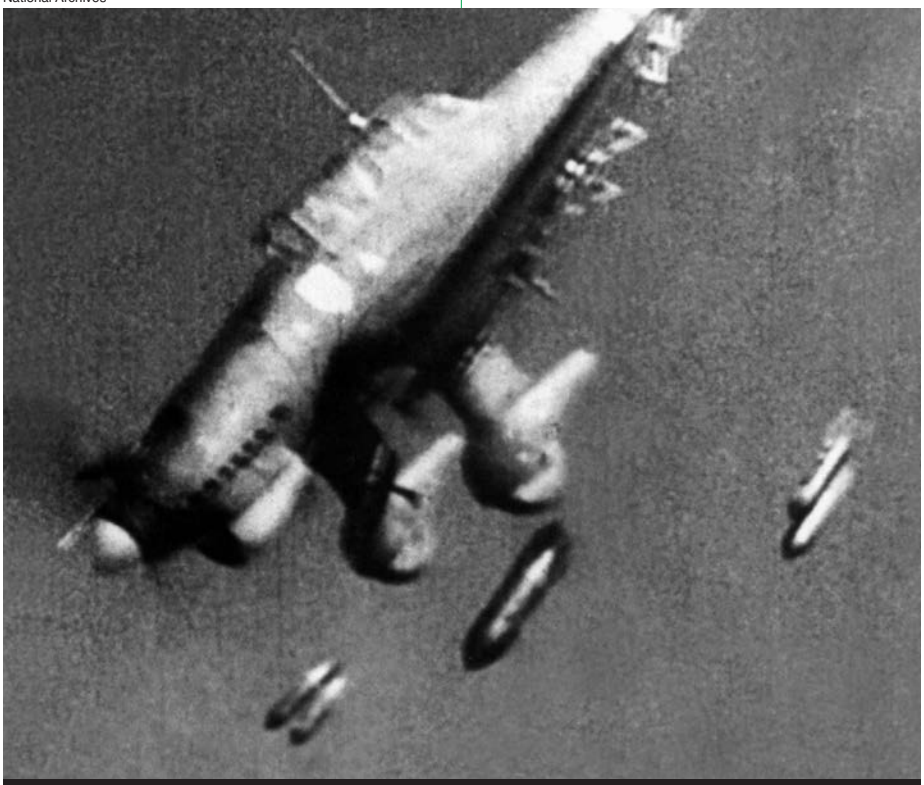


ABOVE: Near the end of its dive, a Junkers Ju-87 "Stuka" releases its devastating payload. The world was appalled by Germany's seemingly indiscriminate raids against Poland and Warsaw in 1939, and much of that outrage was directed at the Ju-87. OPPOSITE: Three Junkers Ju-87D dive bombers in formation on their way to attack Yugoslavian partisan positions in the mountains of Montenegro. The "Dora" or D-series of the "Stuka" was faster, better armed and had more protective armor than previous versions.

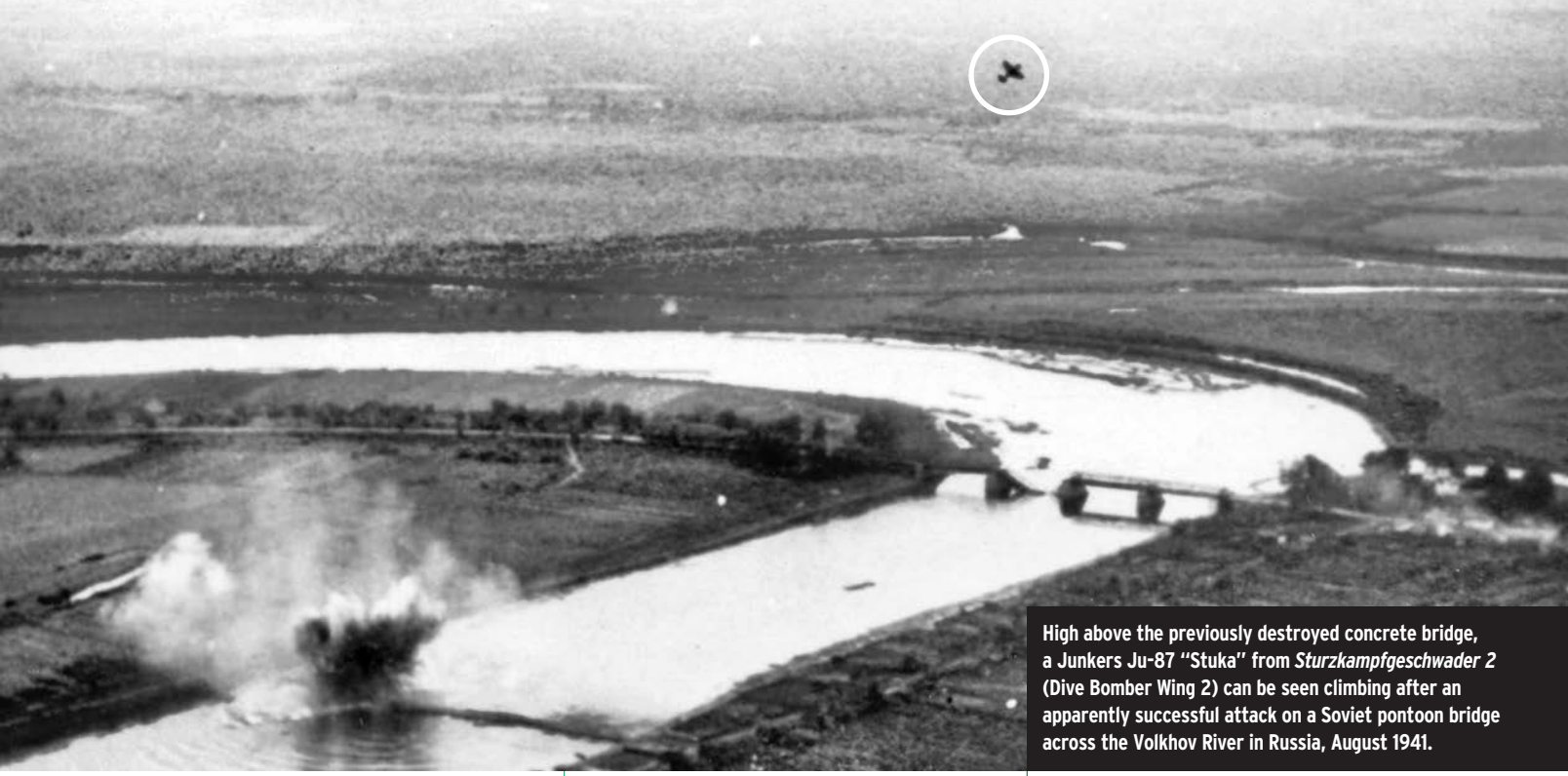
ingly indiscriminate raids against Warsaw, and much of their outrage was directed at the Ju-87. In addition to their bombs, Stukas often dove with loud sirens blaring. From that day forth the image of the diving Stuka came to symbolize Nazi brutality.

The short campaign in Poland had been a great learning experience for the Stuka crews, and not only were they the toast of the nation, but their devastating exploits became the subject of a hugely popular propaganda movie.

Following operations in Scandinavia and Norway, it would be France and the Low Countries' turn to feel the full fury of Blitzkrieg. On May 10, 1940, Hitler unleashed his long-awaited offensive in the West and the French, having learned nothing from the Polish experience, were soon completely overwhelmed and in full retreat.

Due to monumental incompetence, three quarters of the French Air Force was never committed to battle, leaving the Luftwaffe as masters of the sky. Ju-87's were once again at the forefront of operations, inflicting brutal punishment on hapless French and later British forces. With the screeching sirens—nicknamed the "Trumpets of Jericho"—attached to the fixed landing gear (apparently the idea of Ernst Udet), and whistles fitted to the bombs, the sounds generated by a cloud of attacking Stukas had an enormous psychological impact on soldiers and civilians alike. Some French generals complained that the banshee wail of a diving Stuka left their men so traumatized that they were often incapable of even firing their antiaircraft weapons.

To keep up with the scorching pace of the German panzer columns, the Stukagruppen often found themselves operating from primitive makeshift airstrips right behind the front lines. Attacking at will, the massed "flying artillery" made up to 10 unchallenged sorties a day delivering lethal cargo whenever and wherever it was needed. Tactical air-to-ground cooperation was the key, and the concept was pioneered by the Germans with the use of Luftwaffe liaison officers vectoring the Stukas onto specific targets by radio—a



High above the previously destroyed concrete bridge, a Junkers Ju-87 "Stuka" from *Sturzkampfgeschwader 2* (Dive Bomber Wing 2) can be seen climbing after an apparently successful attack on a Soviet pontoon bridge across the Volkhov River in Russia, August 1941.

Wikimedia Commons

tactic that is still in use today. Many raids were, in fact, so minutely timed that German troops were able to advance while clods of dirt thrown up by Stuka bombs were still falling to earth around them.

At Dunkirk the Luftwaffe was tasked with destroying the British rescue mission, but struggled to overcome the problem of thick smoke and poor weather obscuring the battle area. The Stukas were, nonetheless, a familiar sight over the beaches, sinking 10 destroyers, five large passenger ships, and countless small craft ferrying troops to England. Stukas accounted for most of the ships that were sunk, but in spite of the savage pounding, some 330,000 Allied servicemen managed to escape.

Stukas had played an enormous role in the eventual fall of France. In the 43-day French campaign they proved that, within the framework of Blitzkrieg, their importance as a tactical weapon ranked second only to the tank.

The spectacular contribution of the Ju-87 in Poland and Western Europe silenced the skeptics, but in some ways it served to mask many of the aircraft's shortcomings. In the euphoria of victory, plans to phase the Stuka out of production were quickly shelved, and in fact a long-range anti-shipping variant, the Ju-87R, pioneering the use of fuel tanks in the outer wings and two 300-liter external drop tanks, rolled off the production line.

The Stuka's success early in the war created an aura of invincibility that was exploited by German propaganda. However, myth was ruthlessly debunked during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940.

The eager Stuka crews soon found that England was not Poland or France. Facing a determined enemy on equal terms, the Luftwaffe found the going a lot tougher. For the JU-87s that joined the major air assaults against Britain in August, it was a disaster. Within six days, Royal Air Force Supermarine Spitfires and Hawker Hurricanes shot down more than 40 Stukas and severely damaged another 20. Days later, 17 Ju-87s were destroyed in a day. Luftwaffe chief Reichsmarshall Hermann Goering was so appalled he had the shattered Stukagruppen crews withdrawn from the battle.

The Ju-87's vulnerability to fighter attack had been savagely exposed by the RAF, but the dive bomber's operational life was far from over. Limited opportunities in Western Europe resulted in the Stukagruppen being transferred to the Mediterranean and North Africa where they were a primary weapon in the interdiction and destruction of British shipping convoys. With only a few Allied fighters in the region, the 150 Stukas of Fliegerkorps X soon demonstrated their anti-shipping capabilities on the Royal Navy.

On January 10, 1941, Stukas flew from Sicily to intercept a Malta-bound convoy steaming through the Sicilian Narrows between Sicily and Cape Bon. Forty-three Ju-87s in a near-vertical dive plummeted toward their targets; 10 peeled away to attack the convoy, while the remaining 33 singled out the British carrier HMS *Illustrious*. Displaying great airmanship in the face of antiaircraft fire, they split into a clover formation to press home the attack. Six 2,000-pound bombs slammed into the carrier, leaving her badly damaged and out of commission for many months. A few days later, the hard-hitting Stukas sank the cruiser HMS *Southampton*.

In the spring of 1941, the wail of the "Jericho Trumpets" and the vulture-like silhouette of the Ju-87 played a decisive role in the skies above the Balkans, supporting the ill-conceived Italian invasion of the region. Under the clear blue skies and sun-parched landscape of Greece and Crete, the Stukas were once again unleashed with devastating effect on land and over sea in what ultimately proved to be another Blitzkrieg triumph. Their bombs often landing within 30 yards of their target, the Stukas mercilessly pounded Allied ground forces and shipping in and around Crete, sinking the Royal Navy cruiser HMS *Gloucester* and three more destroyers.

Campaigns in the Mediterranean and North Africa provided a string of bold successes for the Stuka crews, which, in many ways, wiped away their bitter memories over England the

previous August. Morale in the Stuka squadrons was once again high, but while momentous days in the east still awaited, few had yet realized that with Allied air power starting to gain momentum the days of easy victories would soon be over. These young men, feted as heroes, would soon begin paying a heavy price for their successes.

Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, was drafted to include massive air support from the Stukas. After initial weather delays, the Stuka squadrons finally entered the fray, and with the Soviet Air Force virtually destroyed on the ground the Stukas were able to attack with impunity. The daring pilots, taking full advantage of their free hand, once again clinically blasted a path for the ground troops and armor during the massive pincer movements of 1941-42. The demoralized Russian forces, like the Poles, French and British before them, were soon to dread the Ju-87 attacks, nicknaming the dive bombers the "musician" or "screecher."

Campaigning in Russia during those early months was rewarding, but with the onset of winter, freezing conditions and primitive maintenance facilities began to take their toll on the aging Ju-87B models. By mid-1942, the rugged Ju-87D series, equipped with the more powerful Jumo 211J-1 engine and VS-11 broad blade propeller, began to appear over the front. The airframe for the D series had been redesigned. While maintaining the same predatory lines as its predecessors, it not only delivered a greatly enhanced flight performance, but increased the bombload to nearly 4,000 pounds. Among other modifications, the leaner looking D models featured a more aerodynamically designed canopy, which now housed twin belt-fed MG-81 guns for the radio operator and heavier armor for its ever increasing role as a Schlachtflugzeug (close support aircraft).

The heavily produced D series, despite being more powerful and aerodynamically streamlined than earlier models, was still easy prey for fighters. By 1943, the growing emergence of radar directed Soviet airpower coupled with diminishing Luftwaffe air superiority resulted in losses in aircraft and their specialized crews at an alarming rate. With the Soviets now enjoying a numerical superiority of five to one, the Stukas found daytime operations almost impossible and were soon restricted to areas of local or temporary German air superiority.

Even the most diehard supporters of the Ju-87 recognized that the days of the Stuka were over. It was too slow and vulnerable to fighters. However, with no viable replacement on the horizon, production of the hopelessly obsolete Stuka continued unabated.

Of the numerous Stuka variants that appeared during the war, the Ju-87G was perhaps the best. Stripped of its dive brakes and wing guns, the heavily armored G series was the final version of the Stuka. It was fitted with two 37mm flak 18 cannons mounted in streamlined fairings under the wings outboard of the undercarriage. Designed solely for tank busting, the Ju-87G was nicknamed the *Kanonvogel* ("cannonbird") or *Panzernacker* ("tank cracker"), but pilots found that the additional armor and drag of the flak cannons severely affected the plane's performance, range and handling.

Continued on page 98

COLONEL SAMUEL J. ROB (RET.)

Vigilante justice among U-boat crewmen in an American POW camp leads to the execution of of seven German sailors.

German U-boat crewman Werner Drechsler arrived at POW Camp Papago Park north of Tempe, Arizona, on March 12, 1944. Built by the Army in 1943 to house *Kriegsmarine* (German Navy) prisoners, the camp had a capacity of 3,000, with four compounds for enlisted men and one for officers. The inmates, most of whom had been captured from U-boats, referred to it as *Schlaraffenland*—the land of milk and honey. The experience in sunny Arizona was a far cry from that of Allied prisoners in Axis POW camps. At Papago Park, prisoners did not have to work or study, but could do so if they chose. There was a theater showing two films a week, a camp choir, and a prisoner-run newspaper called *The Papago Rundschau* (Review). But for Drechsler, Papago Park was a nightmare. Only six hours after his arrival, he was brutally beaten and hanged by his fellow inmates. The prisoners responsible for Drechsler's death felt justified in executing a traitor, but the Army saw it differently and decided to prosecute the men.

The German submarine, *U-118*, was commissioned on December 6, 1941. Its crew consisted of five officers and 47 enlisted men. On its first three patrols, *U-118* sank three merchant ships and a convoy escort, the Canadian corvette HMCS *Weyburn*. On its fourth patrol off the coast of Africa, it was attacked and sunk by aircraft from an American escort carrier, the USS *Bogue*. The destroyer USS *Osmond Ingram* rescued 16 submariners and took them as prisoners of war.

U.S. Navy

From left, German prisoner of war Werner Drechsler, recovering from a bullet to the knee, disembarks from the USS *Osmond Ingram* with the help of Herman Polowzyk at Naval Operating Base Norfolk, Virginia, on June 20, 1943. Drechsler, who cooperated with the U.S. and spied on incoming German prisoners for seven months, was killed by his countrymen when he arrived at POW Camp Papago Park. TOP: German POWs march to their barracks at one of the many POW camps in the United States.

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German prisoners of war are marched to a temporary holding area after arriving in the United States at Hampton Roads, Virginia, prior to being shipped to POW camps all over the country. Submariners Werner Drechsler and the crew of *U-118* were sent to the POW Camp Papago Park in Phoenix, Arizona, specifically designated for Kriegsmarine prisoners.

The German submariners were taken to the United States and interrogated at Fort Meade, Maryland. Drechsler, who had been wounded, was part of the group of prisoners from *U-118*. He cooperated and provided information about the German submarines and their tactics. For seven months, he also acted as a spy for the Americans. Giving him a false name, Navy interrogators would put him in with new German prisoners being held at the interrogation center to befriend them and elicit information. Submariners were a very small percentage of the overall German POW population captured by the Americans, most of whom were sent to Camp Papago Park in Arizona. Navy officials had specifically warned the Army, which oversaw the operation of all POW camps in the U.S. not to send Drechsler to Camp Papago.

But, for reasons never explained and still not clear to this day, Drechsler was sent to Papago Park. His identity and his cooperation with the Americans were known to the camp POW population within two hours of his arrival. He was recognized by one of the POWs who had been his cellmate at Fort Meade, who told the others that Drechsler had gone by another name there. Unsure of how to proceed, the enlisted POWs surreptitiously passed a message to *Fregattenkapitan* (Frigate captain) Jurgen Wattenburg, the ranking German officer in the camp, requesting guidance.

Fearing that Drechsler might be moved to safety before a response was received, a "court" was hurriedly convened by the senior noncommissioned officer (NCO). Based on testimony regarding Drechsler's activities at Fort Meade, the "court" found the evidence so overwhelming that it was deemed unnecessary for Drechsler to appear at his "trial." While Drechsler was found guilty, the senior German NCO thought it was outside his jurisdiction to pass sentence, and thus left it up to the other POWS to decide punishment.

With no sentence having been pronounced, a small group of POWs (possibly as many as 15) decided among themselves that it was their duty as German fighting men to kill a traitor. That night, seven of the group attacked Drechsler, beat him and kicked him until he was unconscious, then hanged him with a rope from the rafters of the shower room in the POW bath house.

Seven men were identified by the Army as having killed Drechsler: Helmut Fischer; Fritz Franke; Bernhard Reyak; Guenther Kuelsen; Otto Stengel; Heinrich Ludwig; and Rolf Wizuy. A little more than six hours after his arrival at Camp Papago Park, the 21-year-old Drechsler was dead.

His body wasn't discovered by the American guards until the next morning. Despite intense questioning that included lie detector tests, the murderers were not initially identified. In all, 20 POWs were targeted as suspects and moved to a secret interrogation camp near Stockton, California, on May 3, 1944. Repeated interrogations (interrogation techniques classified) resulted in confessions.

The investigation was completed June 20, 1944, two weeks after the D-Day invasion, with a recommendation that the seven POWs be tried for murder. A recommendation that two German POW NCOs, Siegfried Elser and Friedrich Murza, should also be charged, as accessories before the fact, never went forward for reasons that were not recorded.

First Lieutenant Harry A. Baldwin, a judge advocate from Camp Douglas (near Salt Lake City, Utah) was assigned to conduct the pretrial investigation. The seven POWS were moved from the secret interrogation camp to separate locations throughout California where they were subsequently interviewed by Baldwin. The prisoners waived their rights against self-incrimination and re-affirmed their prior confessions, believing they had simply carried out their duties as German sailors to kill a traitor.

The court-martial of the seven German prisoners was held August 15-16, 1944, at a POW camp near Florence, Arizona. Col. Cassius Poust was the president/law officer; the 12 court members, all officers, ranged in rank from colonel to captain. Maj. Francis Walsh, the judge advocate who had served as the board recorder for the initial murder investigation conducted at Camp Papago Park, was assigned to prosecute the case, assisted by another judge advocate, Capt. Robert O. Hillis. The seven accused were jointly represented by a judge advocate defense counsel, Maj. William H. Taylor. and his assistant defense counsel, Maj. Harold A. Furst, also a judge advocate. Through the same interpreter used for the interrogations, all pleaded not guilty at the court-martial.

Major Joseph Librande (USA)

The grave of seaman Guenther Kuelsen, who served aboard *U-615*, in a cemetery at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Kuelsen was one of the seven German POWs convicted in a military court and hanged August 25, 1945, for the murder of Werner Drechsler at POW Camp Papago Park in Arizona on March 13, 1944.

The defense theory of the case was that the German POWS did not commit a crime since Germany was at war with the United States and Drechsler had committed treason. Three of the accused (Stengel, Wizuy, Fischer) also testified that the interrogations were coercive, giving as one example having to wear three heavy winter overcoats in hot weather and a gas mask with an onion placed inside it until the prisoner confessed. In closing arguments, the defense counsel asked the court to consider what American POWs would have done in a similar situation if they had found a traitor in their midst. But their argument was not persuasive as the court found all seven guilty of murder and sentenced them to death by hanging—though the latter was not revealed to the accused at the time.

Following the trial, the case was forwarded to the general court-martial convening authority for review. On September 15, 1944, the general court-martial convening authority forwarded his review approving the sentences, but recommended that each sentence be commuted to life imprisonment.

Since presidential approval was required

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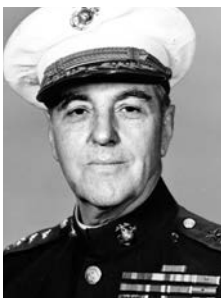
National Archives

ABOVE: A Marine gun crew fires a 75mm pack howitzer on Guadalcanal in October 1942. BELOW: From left, Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift, Col. Gerald C. Thomas, Lt. Col. Merritt A. Edson, and Lt. Col. Merrill B. Twining. Nicknamed the "Guadalcanal Mafia" for the bonds they formed there and their rise as officers in the Marine Corps—all four men would retire as generals. Vandegrift would become Commandant of the Marine Corps; Thomas, an assistant commandant; Edson, served on the Chief of Naval Operations staff and at Marine Corps Headquarters, before resigning from the Marines in opposition to the National Security Act of 1947; Twining became commandant of the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico.

Forged in brutal Pacific combat, the bonds of the 'Guadalcanal Mafia' would shape the future of the Marine Corps.

Undertaken in haste and with slim resources, the Guadalcanal Campaign (Operation Watchtower) was America's first offensive of World War II and it presented a unique set of challenges. Among the Marine commanders who passed that test on Guadalcanal, an enduring bond was formed—one that would help propel some of them, who became known as the "Guadalcanal Mafia," to the highest echelons of the Marine Corps.

Two regiments of the First Marine Division commanded by Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift hit the beaches of Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942. Landing that day were the 1st Marines under Col. Clifton B. Cates and the 5th Marines under Col. LeRoy P. Hunt. Both regimental commanders had compiled distinguished combat records and were highly decorated in World War I.



Of the staff officers on Guadalcanal, the most important would be the head of division operations, Col. Gerald C. Thomas, who had risen from an enlisted leatherneck in World War I to earn a Silver Star and a battlefield commission. Thomas' energetic and outspoken deputy, Lt. Col. Merrill B. Twining, was another who emerged on Guadalcanal.

When Vandegrift assumed command of the division, he attempted to energize the weakly led 5th Marines by installing Hunt as regimental commander. A charismatic figure known and admired throughout the Marine

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ABOVE: The U.S. Marine 2nd Raider Battalion hits the beach behind Japanese lines on Guadalcanal during Operation Watchtower on August 7, 1942. America's first offensive of World War II had its issues, among them Maj. Gen. Alexander Vandegrift's complaint that some of his battalion commanders moved too slowly. RIGHT: Commanders and staff survey the Guadalcanal battlefront in 1942 during a visit from the Commandant of the Marine Corps. From left, Commandant Lt. Gen. Thomas Holcomb, Col. Clifton Cates, and Maj. Gen. Alexander Vandegrift.

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command

Corps, Hunt was also Vandegrift's good friend. To fill the slot vacated by Hunt, Col. William C. James was appointed chief of staff. Neither move would prove successful.

Difficulties with Hunt's regiment quickly surfaced. To secure the beachhead, it was essential that the 5th Marines promptly advance to anchor the western flank at the Tenaru River. Vandegrift wrote in his war memoirs that, "after going ashore, I found the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, moving as if it were about to encounter the entire imperial army. I gave the battalion commander [Lt. Col. William E. Maxwell] hell. In Hunt's command post I asked him to go down there personally and get the troops moving."

Part of the problem was that many experienced division officers had left—some to form raider and parachute units and others were sent with the 7th Marines to defend Samoa. According to Twining, except for the 2nd Battalion, "we never could get the 5th Marines off in time. To my mind this outfit never functioned adequately." What particularly irked him was that the problem was not handled by Hunt before the regiment went overseas. Regarding the outset of the campaign, Twining observed that "I don't know what we would have done if we had run into serious resistance on Guadalcanal."

Weeks later, Vandegrift ordered Hunt to conduct a reconnaissance in force. Landing from boats beyond the perimeter, Maxwell's battalion was to sweep the coast and return before nightfall. After a late start and with little accomplished, Maxwell radioed in the early afternoon for boats to retrieve the battalion. Infuriated, Vandegrift turned on Hunt, who relieved Maxwell by radio and went forward to lead the battalion himself.

Twining observed, "[Hunt] could not enforce his will and get anything out of Maxwell. He was never able to get any satisfaction out of the other battalion commanders either." But, "Vandegrift was a very indulgent man. He didn't want to lower the boom on Hunt, but he did eventually. He had to, to protect himself."

Meanwhile, Marine raiders and parachutists had captured Tulagi and nearby islets and were brought to Guadalcanal to bolster the defense. Placed in command of the composite battalion was Col. Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson, who had shown great courage and initiative in heavy fighting on Tulagi. Edson and Thomas formed an enduring professional and personal relationship.

As evidence mounted that the Japanese were planning a major attack, it was uncertain where the blow would fall. Thomas and Edson surveyed the position and convinced Vandegrift to place Edson's troops on a feature later known as Bloody Ridge or Edson's Ridge. When the Japanese struck, Edson conducted an epic defense that earned him the Medal of Honor and wide renown.

Though he was unhappy that certain officers were not measuring up, Vandegrift left them in place because he disliked confronta-

tion. Fortunately, Marine commandant Lt. Gen. Thomas Holcomb asked for the release of excess senior officers to form new units—offering Vandegrift a golden opportunity to clean house with minimal pain.

"I've got to relieve the commander of the 5th Marines. He's not producing," Vandegrift told Thomas, who immediately proposed that Edson take over Hunt's regiment. Chief of Staff William James was also released. Having by necessity already assumed many responsibilities normally performed by a division chief of staff, Thomas was the logical replacement for James. That situation was sensitive, as Thomas and James were close friends married to first cousins. In his war memoirs, Vandegrift wrote out Hunt and James so deftly that a casual reader would not have noticed their disappearance.

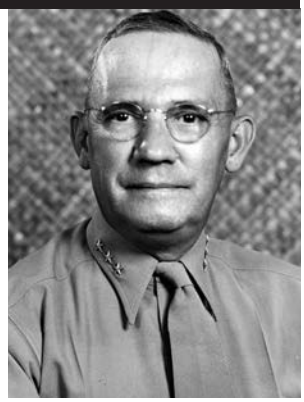
Suppressing his true opinions, Vandegrift praised both officers he was sending home, recommending that they be promoted to brigadier general. Edson's biographer criticized how officers with such "spotty records would make the grade, to the detriment of men such as Thomas and Edson, who assumed increased authority but found little room for advancement in rank." Hunt deeply resented Thomas' part in his removal, creating, according to Twining, "an enmity that lasted a lifetime."

Having acquitted himself very ably as Thomas' assistant, Twining took over the operations section and planned many subsequent operations. Command had finally fallen into the shape Vandegrift wanted and needed.

Though the rank and file of the 1st Marines had, for the most part, less experience and training than the 5th Marines, Cates' regiment was led by first-rate battalion commanders and generally performed well. But even Cates earned criticism from Twining. The 1st Marines barely advanced a mile groping for their Mount Austin target on invasion day, believing it was much closer than it actually was. In the process, Cates lost touch with his battalions, which he tried to conceal from Twining's watchful eye. Recalling how he had once treated someone who would one day be his superior as Marine commandant, Twining reflected, "Nobody but me would bring that thing up. I should have kept my mouth shut."

National Archives

ABOVE: Evacuating wounded from the 5th Marine Regiment during the U.S. offensive against Japanese forces near the Matanikau River on Guadalcanal in November 1942. BELOW: From left, Col. Leroy Hunt; Col. William C. James; Gen. Thomas Watson.



Regarding Edson's transfer to the 5th Marines, his biographer observed that "many raiders were glad to see him go, because they believed they could not survive many more fights like the ones of the past few weeks. … Sometimes, Edson's desire to fight seemed to border on callous disregard for the lives of his men." Though he found that the 5th Marines improved under Edson, Twining still complained, "Edson was egotistical. The very fact that he took over this poor beat-up outfit immediately made it the finest regiment in the Marine Corps. But it couldn't happen overnight. He didn't have any [good] battalion commanders. He put the wrong people in."

For his part, Edson found fault with Twining. Without Thomas' concurrence, Twining convinced Vandegrift to undertake an offensive known as Second Matanikau, which Edson was assigned to lead. That operation, described as "a poorly supported, ill-organized force of unrelated battalions attempt[ing] a river crossing in the teeth of strong Japanese defenses," resulted in substantial losses without gain—the greatest Marine defeat suffered at Guadalcanal. The fiasco soured Edson's relations with Twining.

Summing up the epic campaign, Thomas modestly observed, "We went to Guadalcanal for the sole purpose of capturing and defending an airfield. That was our simple mission and we continued on it for four months." In the view of Thomas' biographer, Vandegrift and Thomas "stood out … as the architects of victory."

Recognizing his "quiet resolve, dogged determination, and stubborn persistence," Vandegrift succeeded Holcomb as Marine Corps commandant in January 1944. Having become indispensable to Vandegrift, Thomas accompanied him to Washington as Director of Plans and Policies, essentially, chief of staff at Marine headquarters.

After Guadalcanal, Cates headed the Marine Corps schools, followed by command of the newly formed 4th Marine Division at Tinian, considered by many as the war's model amphibious operation. Afterwards, Cates led the division during the bloody fighting on Iwo Jima.

During 1943, Edson moved to the Second Marine Division. Gaining a brigadier general's star, he served as division chief of staff at Tarawa and afterwards as assistant division commander. Edson's great hope was to succeed Maj. Gen. Julian Smith as division commander. However, when Smith moved on, that position went to Maj. Gen. Thomas E. "Terrible Tommy" Watson, who came with "a well-deserved reputation of being the hardest officer in the Corps to work under or with."

Stifled by a commander who seldom listened to him, and able to play only a secondary role during the Marianas fighting, Edson accepted an offer from Lt. Gen. Holland M. Smith to join him as chief of staff of the newly formed Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPAC). Equivalent to an Army headquarters, FMFPAC exercised administrative command over all six Marine divisions, with the potential to eventually function as headquarters for a Marine field army. That attractive possibility ended when Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, strongly influenced by the inter-service row created after Holland Smith removed the Army commander on Saipan, chose the Tenth Army to lead the invasion of Okinawa.

Unable to get into the forefront of the battle, Edson was positioned to gain a full appreciation of problems throughout the Pacific and propose solutions to Thomas, his powerful friend in Washington. According to Edson's biographer, "the Thomas-Edison duo…wielded enormous influence on the organizational, logistical, and administrative direction of the Corps for the rest of the war. …Thomas did his best to shape headquarters policy to meet the needs that Edson identified

in the field. Red Mike, in his turn, saw to it that Thomas's directives and ideas did not drift off course in the long passage from Washington to the far reaches of the Pacific."

When Edson departed the Second Marine Division, he was replaced as assistant division commander by Hunt, a close friend of Watson. Hunt's nearest opportunity to command on a battlefield after Guadalcanal would be leading a feint at Okinawa during which the marines never left their landing craft. At war's end, Hunt gained a second star when he assumed command of the division for occupation duty in Japan.

Watson left the Second Marine division to become the Marine Corps' director of personnel. From that perch, he conducted open warfare with Thomas, who unsuccessfully endeavored to implement a general staff arrangement at Marine Corps headquarters. That dispute was exacerbated by Watson's animosity toward Thomas for the treatment of his friend Hunt on Guadalcanal.

After logistics emerged as one of Thomas' greatest problems, he turned to Edson who had gained in-depth knowledge at FMFPAC. In June 1945, Edson took over Service Command, the top Marine logistics post in the Pacific. Though the position was challenging, Edson complained, "I little expected three years ago that I would probably finish the war pushing bullets up to the boys." Japan surrendered two months later, ending his hopes for a combat command and near-term promotion in a military organization that would inevitably downsize.

Despite his frustrations, at least life at Pearl Harbor was pleasant for Edson. A spirited man trapped in a loveless marriage, he enjoyed living far from home with ready access to female company. That compensation disappeared in December 1945 when Edson was ordered to report for duty to Nimitz in Washington at the office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

The new billet involved coordination with the Navy to safeguard Marine Corps interests while unification of the armed forces was considered. Edson was particularly valuable there, as "he possessed the seniority, intellect, and presence to represent the Corps in the public arena, and his wartime reputation could be expected to carry considerable weight with Congress and the voters."

At the center of power, Vandegrift, Thomas, Edson, and Twining were dubbed the "Guadalcanal Mafia." Thomas headed the effort to combat threats to the Corps posed by unification, ably supported by Twining billeted nearby in Quantico at the Marine Corps schools.

It seemed clear that the surest means of protecting Marine Corps prerogatives would be to have the functions reserved to the Corps written into the unification law. As matters reached a showdown in Congress, Vandegrift succumbed to pressure from the administration to settle for a relatively weak guarantee, but the others persisted in seeking something stronger.

According to Thomas' biographer, he "believed Vandegrift had lost his moral courage to see the battle for legislative protection to its conclusion." Now finding his trusted advisor inconvenient, Vandegrift assigned Thomas to command a brigade in China. Edson, unhappy over his assignments and doubtful of advancement prospects in the peacetime Corps, resigned his commission. Before departing, the esteemed war hero delivered a stirring oration warning Congress about the dangers of military centralization. The end result was victory for the Marines in having their role in national defense firmly embodied in the National Security Act of 1947.

After returning from China, Thomas' bid for a second star was rejected by a board that included his two great foes, Watson and Hunt. Seething over this "injustice and insult" and considering resignation, Thomas vented to Edson, "They do not pay off on a scale of values in D.C. today that you or I understand." However, with the outbreak of the Korean War and expansion of the Corps, Thomas gained promotion to major general and command of the First Marine Division. That command lasted only months, as Thomas was then promoted to lieutenant general and appointed assistant commandant under a new marine commandant, Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. The general staff organization, which was then adopted at Marine Corps headquarters, represented a triumph for Thomas who had urged for that arrangement since his first days in Washington.

After retirement, Edson found many outlets for his energies, including loud and per-

sistent denunciation of attempts to give increased power to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the expense of the Marines. When the Korean War broke out, Edson sought a return to service in a combat command, but was rejected. Though seemingly reconciled to life outside the Corps, and having adopted a settled domestic life, Edson remained profoundly unhappy until he died by suicide in 1955.

Whether Edson might have realized his fullest potential as a battlefield commander is uncertain. Certainly, his considerable intelligence and battlefield knowledge would have been valuable assets. However, the seeming disdain for death that concerned his raiders might have easily led him astray, as happened with fellow legend Colonel Louis "Chesty" Puller at Peleliu.

After post-war commands at Washington and Quantico, Cates succeeded Vandegrift as Marine Corps commandant in 1948. Facing a continued battle to preserve the Corps' position without the strong forces mustered during the unification fight, Cates, in Thomas' opinion, "had perhaps the roughest time of any Commandant of the Marine Corps"

During these years, Twining emerged as a leading thinker in the Corps, including promotion of helicopters for assault operations in the atomic age. In the late 1950s, Twining provided much needed support for commandant Gen. Randolph M. Pate, a Guadalcanal veteran considered by a leading study "the most controversial commandant of the century." Particularly noteworthy, after Pate's initial missteps, was Twining's devising of an effective response to the Ribbon Creek tragedy. Though widely expected to succeed Pate as commandant, Twining was passed over because many worried that power would pass to his clique, jocularly labeled the "Twining Task Force."

Writing about the Marine Corps during its perilous post-war years, historians Millett and Shulimson observed, "Thomas, Edson, Twining, and their handful of assistants carried the future of the Corps on their shoulders." They deserve to be better remembered and hailed as Marines who demonstrated their dedication and abilities as effectively off the battlefield as on the testing ground of Guadalcanal. □

Hundreds of American professional baseball players gave pause to their promising careers to step up to the plate for their country during World War II.

Whether they made the ultimate sacrifice or received career-ending wounds, many of those men would never step up to the plate again. George Tweedy Stallings Jr., son of the famous baseball manager, was one of them. He had embarked on a promising baseball career before serving his country in a tank unit of the 3rd Armored Division (Spearhead) in the war. In the European Theater of Operations

'Many brave and great men served in the 3rd Armored Division—George Stallings was one of the bravest, indeed, one of the greatest.'

BY DARREN NEELY

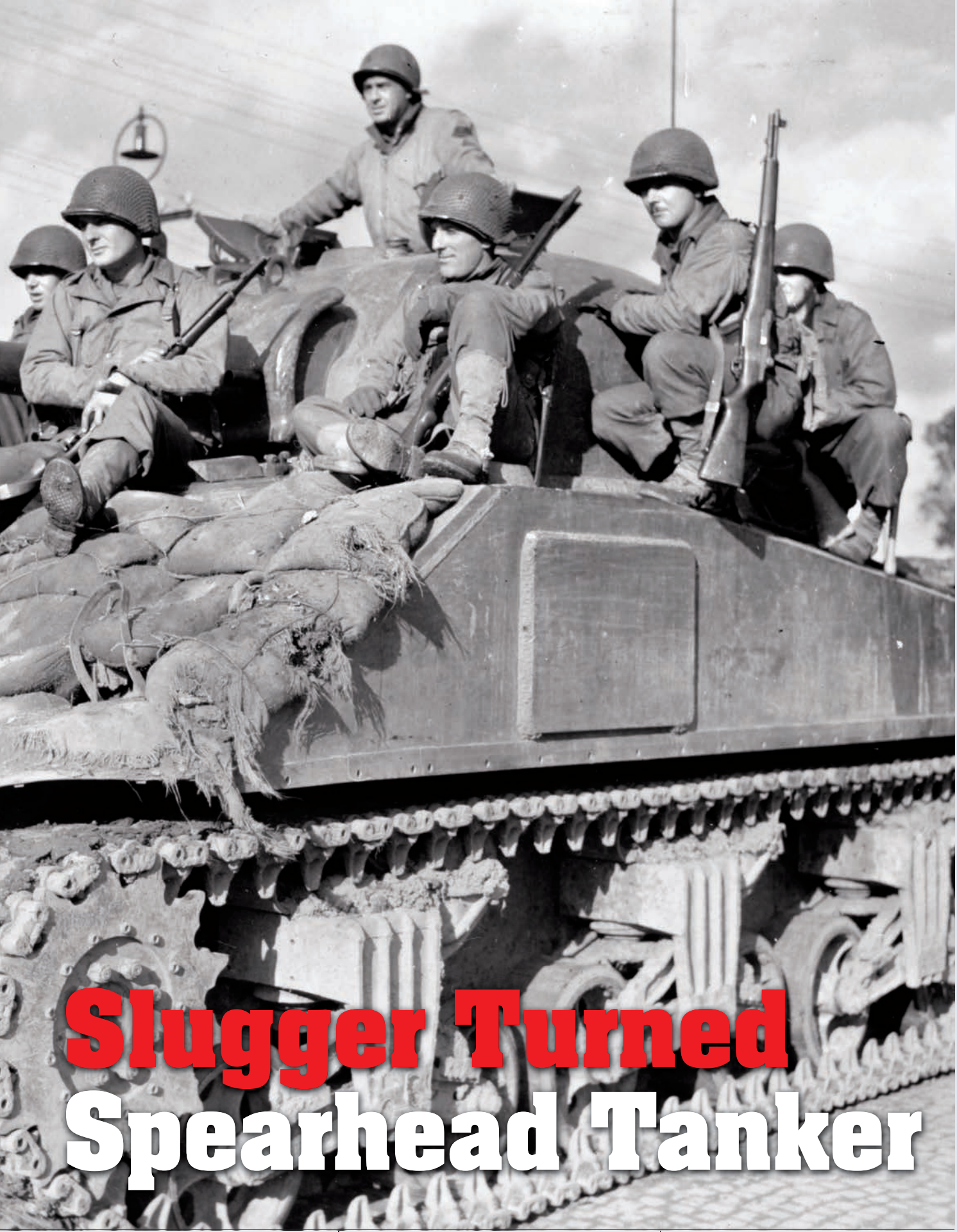
(ETO) during World War II, the 3rd Armored Division was one of, if not the finest, fighting units of the U.S. Army.

The 3rd Armored fought in almost every major engagement in the ETO—except the Normandy invasion. But they were constantly at the forefront of the advance of the Allied armies as they made their way from France to the Elbe River in Germany in 1945. Stallings was wounded several times during and received some of the highest military awards for his meritorious service.

Stallings Jr. was born on February 4, 1918, in Haddock, Georgia, roughly halfway between Macon and the old state

Soldiers of the U.S. 36th Infantry Division riding an M4A3 (75) "Sherman" tank of the 3rd Armored Division on October 14, 1944, near the town of Stolberg, Germany, just three miles east of Aachen.

U.S. Army



Slugger Turned Spearhead Tanker

National Archives

ABOVE: Shermans from the 33rd Armored Regiment—one of the original "spearhead" units—carry infantry from the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment across open ground in Normandy during an attack on Reffuveille in early August 1944. Then-Captain George T. Stallings Jr. and Company D (2Bn, 33rd Armored Reg.) had landed in Normandy on June 23. Stallings and Task Force Lovelady crossed the Siegfried Line and became the first Allied unit to capture a German village (Roetgen) on September 12. OPPOSITE: Tank co-driver Private Jerry Coleman of the 3rd Armored Division eats his "K" rations somewhere in France in 1944.

capital of Milledgeville. Before he became famous as the manager of the "Miracle Boston Braves"—5th place in 1913 to World Series winners in 1914—the elder Stallings had been a pro baseball player in the 1890s. He had a 34-year career as a manager, including 13 in the majors. His son grew up around baseball. The Braves, and later the minor league Rochester Tribe, came down to Haddock for the spring training on his father's peach farm.

The athletic 6'3" younger Stallings played first base for the University of Georgia and signed with the Chattanooga Lookouts of the Class A1 Southern Association after graduating in 1939. After only four games with the Lookouts, he was optioned to the Class B South Atlantic League's Spartanburg Spartans, where he batted .211 in 43 games. He would play in 28 games in the Class B Southeastern League, batting .244 for the Selma Cloverleafs.

Stallings, who had served in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at UGA, entered active military service as a 2nd Lieutenant on February 4, 1941, joining the 3rd Armored Division when it officially formed that year. At Camp Polk, Louisiana, in 1942, 2nd Lieutenant Stallings was placed in command of Company D, 33rd Armored Regiment, which he held until September 1944. The division then went to California's Mojave Desert for training and on to Camp Pickett, Virginia, in October 1942. The division was stationed at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, in January 1943, where Stallings, now a captain, was placed in charge of the baseball program because of his playing background.

In September 1943, Stallings arrived in England with D Company, 33rd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division. Company D was part of the 2nd Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment under the command of Lt. Col. William Lovelady, whose name a subsequent task force would bear later in the war. In England the unit would continue to master its craft through constant field training, combined tank and infantry exercises on the firing range, and the maintenance and upkeep of their vehicles in preparation for the invasion of Nazi-occupied France.

The 3rd Armored Division was ready and eager to join the fight in Europe after the Normandy invasion of June 6, 1944. On June 22, Stallings and Company D departed Portland Naval base, Dorset, aboard LCTs for Omaha Beach and anchored until low tide to disembark vehicles around 2205 hours on June 23. The 2nd Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment was

Panzer Lehr Divisions.

Launching their attack on July 8, Company D met a German tank thrust of the 2nd SS Panzer Division near Saint Fromond. In this initial action Stallings showed his unit the type of leader he was, and he received the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for his actions on July 8-11, 1944. The citation reads in part: "Major Stallings' tank company was spearheading a drive upon a major objective near Les Hauts Vents in Normandy. Time after time, in the confusion of the intense fighting and under heavy enemy fire, he left his tank to make a personal reconnaissance on foot to employ his tanks more effectively. On July 8 near St. Fromond because of his superior knowledge of the situation and skillful direction of his tanks, Major Stallings succeeded in destroying five Mark IV tanks and reducing a pillbox, thereby permitting his task force to continue its advance."

Further, the forward observer from the accompanying 391st Armored Field Artillery made up of two companies of M4 Sherman medium tanks (D and E) one light tank company of M5A1 Stuart light tanks (B) in addition to battalion headquarters and support units for a total task force strength of 27 officers and 517 enlisted men.

On July 7, the 2nd Battalion was given orders as part of the 33rd Armored Regiment, Combat Command B to cross the Vire River at Ariel and pass through the 30th Infantry Division bridgehead to seize ground near St Gilles. Intelligence reports showed that German forces in the area consisted of a battlegroup from the 275th Infantry Division along with elements of the 2nd SS Panzer and Battalion was wounded on July 10. Stallings unhesitatingly assumed his place and succeeded in directing intense artillery fire which destroyed another tank and two antitank guns and inflicted heavy losses upon enemy infantrymen. But Stallings wasn't finished with his heroics.

During the night of July 11, while he and his tank were returning to the front lines, they were attacked by a German tank hunting party supported by a halftrack with a mounted flamethrower. Stallings and his crew were forced to abandon their tank as it and part of the crew were on fire. Sgt. Charles Lewis and Technician 4th Grade

National Archives

Both: National Archives

GIs from the 9th Infantry Division gather around Panther Ausf A knocked out during combat in Normandy. On July 7, Captain George Stallings Jr. and the 2nd Battalion (33rd Armored Reg.) were ordered to St Gilles to take on a battlegroup from the 275th Infantry Division along with elements of the 2nd SS Panzer and Panzer Lehr Divisions. This latter had been a training unit in Germany before being sent to Normandy against the expected Allied landings.

Mac Humphrey were killed. Stallings jumped from the tank, rolled on the ground, put out flames, and then played dead for about an hour before he escaped to friendly lines. Two other crewmen, Technician 4th Grade William MacLain and Corp. Herbert Miracle, also made their way to friendly forces. Stallings earned his first of three Purple Hearts for his wounds.

The eulogy for Stallings written in 1970 after he died summarized these actions best. "This was the first of a long series of examples of his leadership, devotion to duty, courage, and cool-headedness. Rightfully he was awarded the DSC for his bold action. The night was dark as his tank returned alone towards the front lines following an officers meeting. Without warning a mass of fire belched down the hatch and all its occupants scrambled out looking like human torches. The acrid fumes of asphalt filled the air and they realized that they had been attacked by flame throwers. Stallings threshed the flames from his burning clothes and body ending up head downwards in a deep wet ditch. Guttural voices of the German tank hunting patrol warned him to simulate death. Not daring to move, scarcely breathing and with the pain of second degree burns on his forehead and arms, he lay motionless. The intruders gathered around talking and examining their prize. After approaching Stallings and deciding he must be dead, their voices eventually dissolved in the chill night air. The captain alternately ran, crawled, and walked back to the vicinity of the command post. He arrived at dawn, covered with black asphalt spots in his hair, face and uniform. He refused to be evacuated even though his eyes burned like fire. He remained on duty and retained his suggestion of cool dignity which was to hold the respect and admiration of all who fought with him during the bitter months which followed."

On July 14, Ted Malone, a famous reporter for NBC Westinghouse, came upon the men of Task Force Lovelady. Malone noted that Stallings recounted his story to him with calm and a sense of ease that would typify his leadership. Malone noted, "It all sounded so easy there the other afternoon as Captain Stallings perfectly okay now sat peeling an orange and telling what happened. It was just a job. He had done his like the rest of the fellows did theirs." It was this type of action by Stallings that quickly endeared him to his men. Tanker Louis Baczewski noted, "Men held the highest regard for officers like Stallings, he led from the front, faced the same dangers as their men, day in and day out. He weighed his decisions on the real costs in lives as he was always with his men and trying to survive the same elements."

An unfortunate event on August 17 changed the course of Stallings' future with Task Force Lovelady. Maj. John Crosby, the executive officer for the 2nd Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment/Task Force Lovelady was killed with a platoon leader from Company E near Fromental while performing a reconnaissance mission. In just a few weeks Stallings was moved from his company command to serve as the executive officer for the 2nd battalion. However, before moving to the battalion, Stallings earned yet another distinguished award.

For his actions around Le Fresnay, France, Stallings was awarded the French Croix de Guerre. On August 18, Task Force Lovelady had the mission of securing the surrounding

high ground. Shortly after jumping off, the attack bogged down within sight of the objective due to heavy enemy opposition consisting of tanks, machine-gun nests and snipers. The terrain was difficult for tanks, and the route to the objective was analyzed. Stallings, still commanding Company D, went forward on foot, contacted the leading elements of infantry and tanks, and formulated a plan of attack. He then personally led the attack on foot in the face of enemy fire until the objective was taken. A number of tanks became mired down in the boggy terrain, and when the objective was reached Stallings only had one tank left along with roughly two platoons of infantry. His personal bravery and fearless leadership were an inspiration not only to the men of his command but also the supporting infantry. At least seven German tanks were knocked out by his company from August 16-18.

Stallings officially became the executive officer of the 2nd Battalion (Task Force Lovelady) on September 6, 1944. Even in this role, Stallings still took care of his men from Company D and led them from the front. Sergeant Cady from his old company got in trouble with a new platoon leader in the fall of 1944, and Stallings had to intervene. He admitted to Cady, "The new officers didn't know anything but you can't talk to them like that."

Task Force Lovelady and Stallings' previous company faced tough action once they crossed the German border near Roetgen after speeding through France and Belgium amid the closing of the Falaise Gap. Once they crossed the Siegfried Line on September 11, they faced stubborn and prepared Germans entrenched and defending their homeland from bunkers, well positioned antitank guns emplacements, and artillery positions. They became the first Allied unit to capture a German town two days later at Roetgen. For the rest of September, American advances were measured in yards versus the miles they had covered in the late summer as they raced across France into Belgium. The two-week period until they were pulled off the line at the end of the month saw extremely high losses in tanks and men, especially the valuable veteran tank commanders and platoon leaders that had formed the cadre of the tank companies.

The U.S. First Army—including the men of Task Force Lovelady—launched an offensive on November 16, 1944, to take the towns of Werth, Hastenrath, and Scherpenseel east of Aachen, Germany. A stubborn German defense and extensive minefields caused horrific losses in tanks for both Task Force Lovelady and Task Force Welborn, its sister unit on its left. Stallings escaped unscathed, but the tank companies lost 26 tanks out of 48 that started the operation. The men of the task force tried to rest for the next four weeks and prepare for the holidays, but Hitler's winter Ardennes offensive rudely changed their plans.

In response to the German attack in the Ardennes, the 3rd Armored Division was

A German Panther moves to the front during fighting in Normandy in early July. Captain George Stallings' Company D and the 2nd Battalion (33rd Armored Reg.) launched an attack on July 7, 1944, that quickly ran into elements of the 2nd SS Panzer Division, where his leadership and actions earned Stallings a Distinguished Service Cross. He was wounded less than a week after the honor was approved in January 1945 and had been promoted to major by the time he received the DSC on April 30.

National Archives

With the smoke of battle all around, Private Thomas Amenta hikes back to the rear area after his tank was knocked out by a road mine in the fighting beyond Langlire, Belgium, during the First Army drive into the Ardennes salient on January 11, 1945. Obstacles faced by newly promoted Major George Stallings Jr. and Company D (2nd Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment) as they pushed into Belgium and, eventually, Germany, included ice, snow, mines, knocked out bridges and, occasionally, no roads at all.

alerted to move to the forest and blunt the attack and then prepare for a counterattack to push the Germans back. On December 19, Task Force Lovelady left Eschweiller and went to an assembly area just outside Spa, which had been the headquarters of the First Army. Task Force Lovelady was ordered to clear the highway between La Gleize and Stavelot. On December 20, they jumped off and passed through the 30th Division with the objective of capturing Stavelot to the south. When they had advanced about half a mile, the leading vehicles met a column of German artillery along the road. It was the tail end of a unit of the 1st SS Panzer Division. The Germans did not fire a single shot at the Americans, and the task force was able to capture a couple of artillery pieces and some vehicles.

The task force started out again for Trois-Ponts, where they turned at the town to make their way to Stavelot, but about a mile after passing Trois-Ponts they encountered a German column crossing the river in front of them. The Germans had six or eight tanks and antitank guns guarding the bridge. The first and last tanks in the American column from Company E were knocked out, trapping the others. After the smoke cleared, four M4 tanks were knocked out. The Company E commander, Lt. Albert Hope, was killed and two other lieutenants were wounded.

Lieutenant Colonel Lovelady then ordered the task force to retire to Trois-Ponts and set up roadblocks from there up past the town of Petit-Coo. The task force was then split with Company E, which had been leading, was pulled out with elements of Company E of the 36th Armored Infantry, to man the roadblocks with Stallings in command. Meanwhile, D company and other task force units would attempt to make their way east toward Stavelot. Task Force Lovelady's job was now to cut the Stavelot-Stoumont road, forming the left side of a vise to squeeze Kampfgruppe Peiper which had been cut off in La Gleize. In addition, the light tanks of Company B and the aid station were placed at Petit-Coo. Radio communications were located at the Grand Coo railway station to relay messages to Stallings since the hills were blocking radio transmissions between him and Lovelady.

On December 21, Stallings' old Company D made its way toward Stavelot with attached infantry from the 30th Division along with elements of the 391st Armored Field Artillery. The force could only get as far as the small village of Parfondruy before it was quickly discovered that elements of the 1st SS Panzer Division's Kampfgruppe Knittel had recently passed through the town, executing over 20 Belgian civilians in cold blood, then burning several barns where the civilians had been forced to gather. [The exact number of civilians executed by Peiper's troops in Parfondruy, and other nearby areas, is unknown.]

The Germans were desperate to break through the vise that Task Force Lovelady held north of the Ambleve River, keeping them from reaching Kampfgruppe Peiper at La Gleize where Task Forces Jordan and McGeorge of the 1st Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment were battling Peiper. The Germans cut the road linking to Company D and the units under Stallings' command on December 22. Elements of the 1st SS Panzer had crossed the Ambleve River on a footbridge, bypassed Stallings' tanks and attacked the American troops at Petit

Wikimedia Commons

LEFT: A Bailey Bridge spans the Ambleve River in Trois Ponts, Belgium, a village that elements of Task Force Lovelady held as others sought to squeeze Kampfgruppe Pieper, cut off in nearby La Gleize. BELOW: Major George T. Stallings Jr. receives the Distinguished Service Cross from Lt. Gen. J. Lawton Collins, commander of VII Corps on April 30, 1945.

National Archives

Coo. The two battle groups of Lovelady were completely cut off, and only the river prevented them from being surrounded. By utilizing every bit of their own firepower along with the close artillery support offered by an 82nd Airborne unit, the main fighting elements of the task force held their ground.

With a unit of the 30th Infantry joining the light tanks and what few medium tanks were available, TF Lovelady was able to retake Petit Coo, establish contact with the battle groups, and send the remnants of the Germans back over the hills and across the Spa River on December 23. Stallings reported that they had a good time fighting the counterattack and felt that they could kill more Germans when they were attacked on three sides than when they could fire in only one direction. Stallings and TF Lovelady would pull out of that area and move to Melreux and Ny where they established defensive positions, celebrated Christmas, and prepared for the American counterattack that would come after New Year's Day.

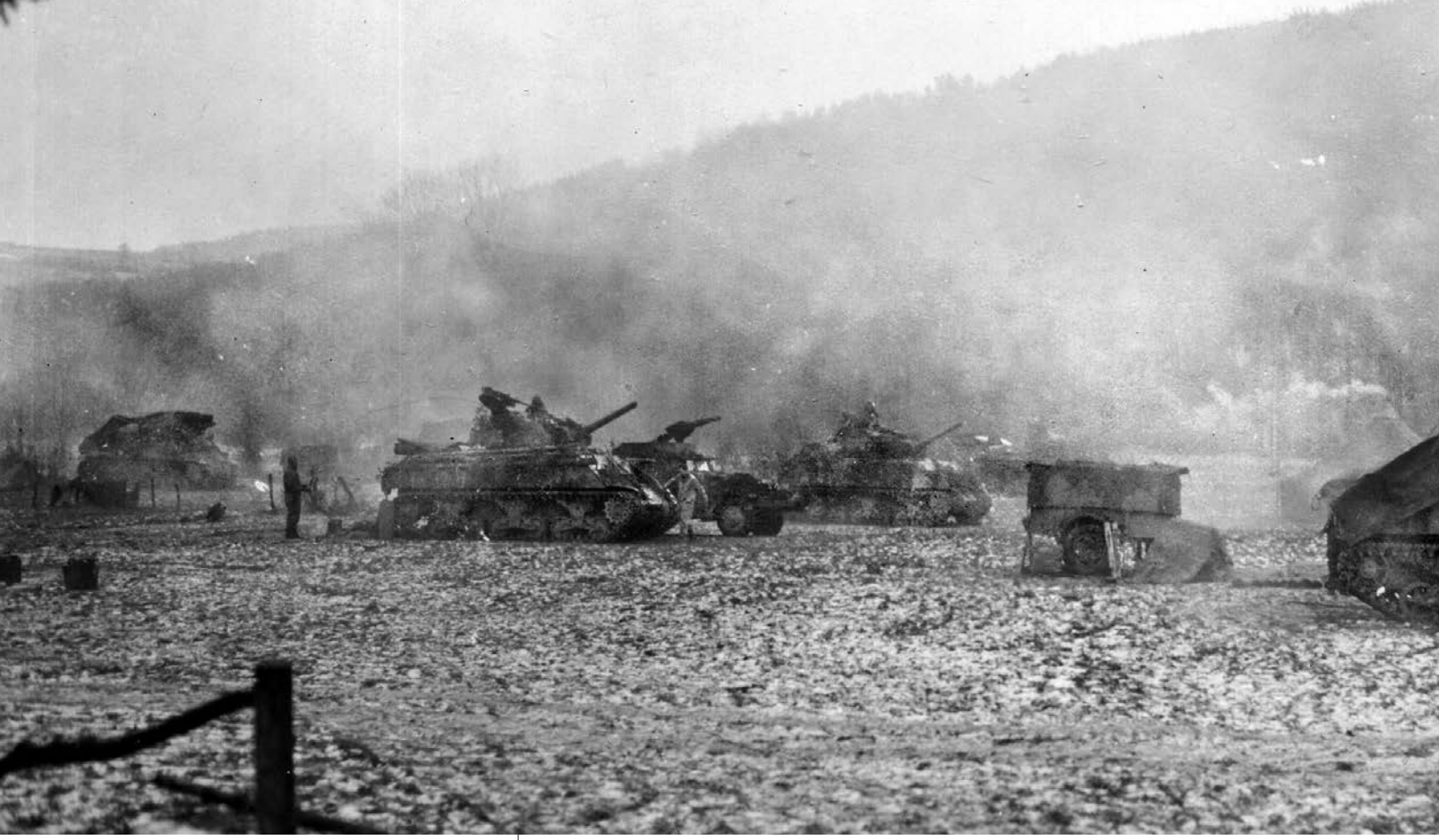
At the onset of the planned 3rd Armored Division counterattack on January 3, 1945, TF Lovelady was equipped with 27 medium tanks and 12 light tanks. A battalion from the 330th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Infantry Division was attached for infantry support. Lieutenant Colonel Lovelady was relegated to Combat Command B headquarters with pneumonia, leaving Stallings in command of the task force. Malempré was their first objective and, as there were no real roads in this area, the tanks were forced to maneuver through fire break trails. The task force would be facing elements of the 2nd SS Panzer Division and the 12th Volksgrenadier Division.

After reaching Malempré the night of January 3, the task force continued in the harsh conditions the next day. The advance out of Malempré was uphill, and the enemy had excellent observation of the American tanks as they attacked uphill on slippery ground. The task force quickly lost a tank in a minefield and then another to an anti-tank gun.

In an interview at the 112th General Hospital later in the month, Stallings noted that the route was so slippery and the tanks were having such great difficulty that he sent the infantry to flank the road and eliminate the opposition. They cleared the minefield at night to a width of 30 feet, and it was the thickest minefield he had yet seen. It took them a day and a half to get across that point of resistance.

The next objective was the town of Fraiture. Due to the icy road conditions, the tankers put "grousers" (steel track extenders added for better traction) and waited for the 391st Armored Field Artillery's targeted artillery barrage on the village. After an hour with no artillery, Stallings called the tanks and said they couldn't wait any longer and to advance. It was then that the shells began falling—1,000 yards short of their target. Frantic radio calls to the 391st to cease the fire prevented a disaster. The task force had good observation, so they decided to use the artillery and make a dash for the town. They did so, and not a shot was fired while they occupied the town. There were only about 25 houses, but they captured more than 400 prisoners who were packed in like sausages. The tankers also captured a battery of 75mm artillery, 4 120mm mortars, and 4 assault guns and killed 57 Germans.

As the task force settled in on January 6, they were joined by the NBC correspondent Gordon Fraser, whose typed draft for his radio show painted a very dramatic and "you are there" account of Stallings and his command post during these days. Riding in a medical halftrack before the break of dawn,



ABOVE: M7 Priest self-propelled guns, Sherman tanks, an M3 halftrack and other armored vehicles of the 3rd Armored Division fire on German positions in Belgium in early January 1945. OPPOSITE: The 99th Field Artillery, attached to the 3rd Armored Division, processes German POWs taken during the fighting in the Ardennes.

he went to the most forward positions to talk with the men who were killing Germans and to watch the evacuation of wounded from the places where they first fell.

A supply sergeant had just come back from the front with Stallings at Fraiture and noted that the tankers needed supplies but the only way to get there was by halftrack, so Fraser joined him on the next trip and they stopped at the task force aid station. While there, a call came over the radio that a tank and tank destroyer had been knocked out and the medics were called for aid. Fraser joined them. The driver of the medical halftrack arrived and said things were getting pretty hot up at the front as Stallings and the task force were beginning to move toward Regne on January 7. Fraser overheard the Combat Command B commander, General Boudinot, tell Stallings on the radio, "You have to take the high ground tonight!"

As Fraser arrived at the task force command post, he wasn't surprised to find that Stallings was at the front with his troops and he had just missed the officer by five minutes. Stallings called on the radio to the CP and said, "I'm going to send little babies, others are not in good shape." It was explained that four medium tanks had just been knocked out and Stallings was calling for the light tanks. Lieutenant Columella, the reconnaissance leader for the task force, arrived at the command post followed by a Sergeant Policy who now had three halftracks full of supplies for the tanks. He lamented that the roads were covered with mines everywhere, but luckily the engineers had built log roads to bypass the mined areas. A tank driver let Fraser know that it would take about 45 minutes to drive a couple of miles to where Stallings was currently leading the tanks into battle. Fraser made his way back to the task force aid station and when he got there he was surprised to be asked if he had Stallings with him because he had been hurt. Minutes later a jeep driven by Lieutenant Columella showed up with Stallings slumped over the seat badly wounded.

Stallings recalled the instant he was wounded near Regne on January 7 and earned his first oak leaf cluster to the Purple Heart. In a hospital interview, Stallings recalled that, "at 10 o'clock we arrived in Regne and established communications with the other task force coming up. I was standing beside my jeep, talking with the commander of the other task force by radio, when a sniper picked me off from a house. A bullet went through my chest and came out my back. It knocked me down but I was not unconscious. It was a very strange feeling when I found that I was breathing through a hole in my back rather than through my nose or mouth. I was very scared and did not take part in any activity. I was given attention very quickly as my medics were nearby. Then I was put on a jeep in a litter and taken to the rear. Due to the poor condition of the trail over which we had advanced, it was several hours before I reached the aid station, but I was more scared than uncomfortable on the way. When I reached the aid station, I was given a drug to induce sleep and I remember nothing further."

Stallings' Distinguished Service Cross had been formally approved on January 2, 1945, and on the morning of January 7, General Boudinot had radioed him a congratulatory mes-

Both: National Archives

sage, noting a ceremony would be held once things cooled down. The serious wound would force Stallings to wait until April 30 to receive the medal from VII Corps commander Lt. Gen. J. Lawton Collins. However, true to his fighting spirit and wanting to be there for his men, Stallings would return to the division and not take advantage of lighter duty offered because of his wounding.

Stallings was no longer with TF Lovelady, but on April 6 took command of the 1st Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment of TF Welborn. He wasn't far away from his old unit for these last few weeks of the war. On April 11, while Lovelady attacked the southern half of Nordhausen concentration camp, Stallings and his force attacked to the north against minimal opposition, and the area was secured. Stallings and his men were appalled at the camp and the condition of the Jewish prisoners they found in the Nordhausen area. On April 20, after receiving minor wounds to his face and thigh from an artillery shell, Stallings would receive his second oak leaf cluster to his Purple Heart, ending his tally for the war at a Distinguished Service Cross, Croix de Guerre, and three Purple Hearts.

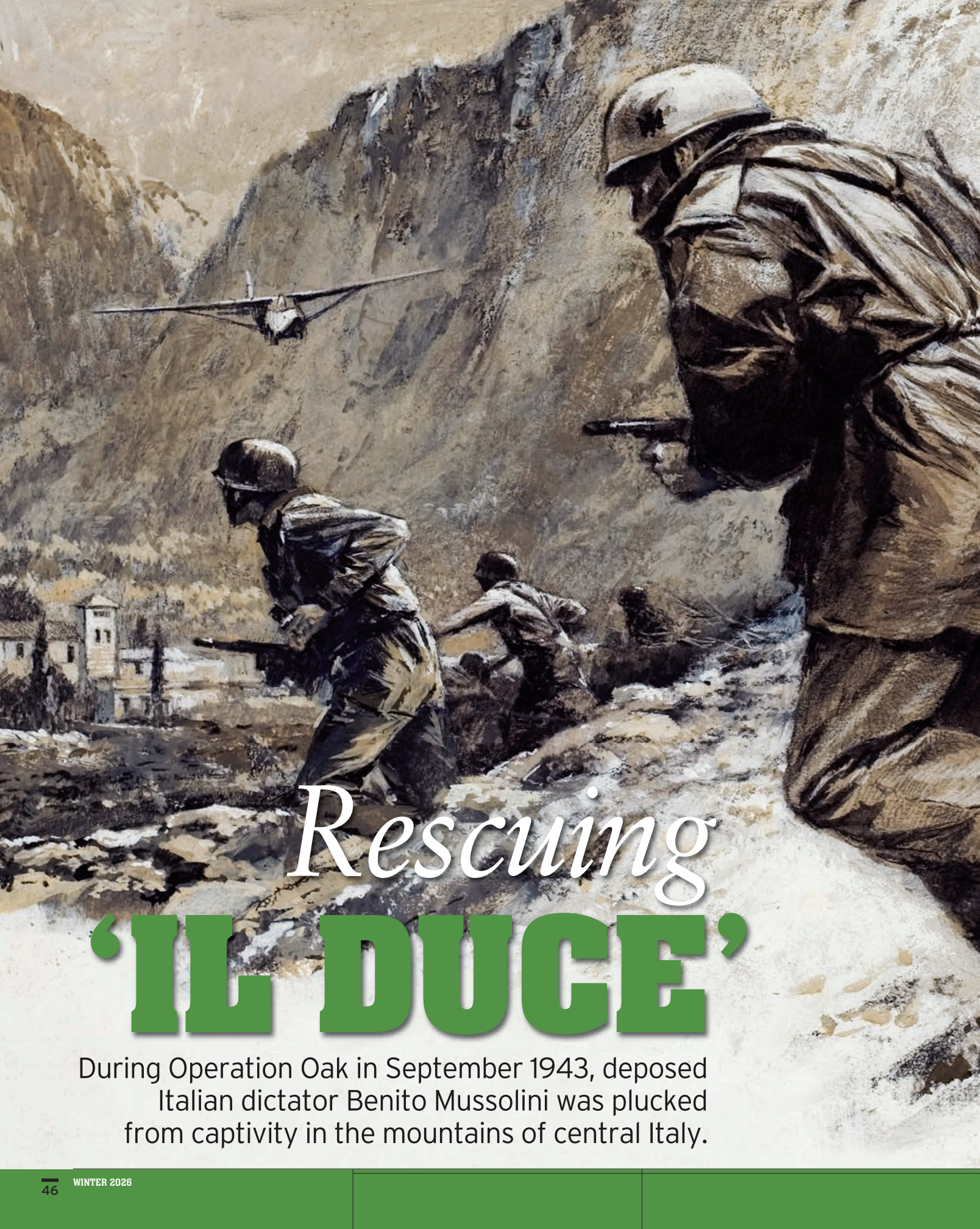
In the late summer of 1945, Stallings was promoted to lieutenant colonel and became executive officer of Combat Command B. In just a year, Stallings had gone from a tank company commander to the second in command of an entire combat command. The wounds he suffered would prevent him playing professional baseball ever again, but his legacy was not to be made on the baseball diamond. Rather, it was gained on the battlefields of Europe.

Lieutenant Colonel Stallings returned home to Haddock in late September 1945, and married Evelyn Juhan Neel, a captain in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) who had earned a Bronze Star in April 1946. They had two daughters and a son. In keeping with the military tradition of his father, George Stallings III served as a helicopter door gunner in Vietnam and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. "It's another war and another part of the world, and another George T. Stallings has been decorated for heroism above the call of duty," a local newspaper noted.

After the war, Stallings served in the Army Reserve in Macon, reaching the rank of colonel by his retirement in 1969. He died from congenital heart failure in 1970. Shortly after his passing his wife received a letter from one of his former sergeants, Frank Spinali, who said, "George and I were in many battles, and I mean real tough ones, but George made me feel like we were strolling through a nice quiet park on a Sunday afternoon. He was one great guy and a great commander."

Colonel Dorrance Roysdon, commander of Combat Command B when Stallings was nominated for the Distinguished Service Cross, wrote at the time of Stalling's passing, "He was one of the finest men I have ever known. He was the best and most reliable company commander that served in my command during the war. When the going was tough, I knew that George could be depended on to do a superb job." □

Darren Neely is a military historian and author of The Forgotten Archives: The Lost Signal Corps Photos series, Photo Studies of Operation Nordwind, Battle of the Bulge Weapons, and The Pictorial History of the 3rd Armored Division. *He is currently working on a complete history of Task Force Lovelady of the 3rd Armored Division in World War II. He is employed by the federal government and resides in Annapolis, Maryland.*



Rescuing 'IL DUCE'

During Operation Oak in September 1943, deposed Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was plucked from captivity in the mountains of central Italy.

German Fallschirmjägers in 10 gliders crash-landed on a 6,990-foot plateau near the Hotel Campo Imperatore on Gran Sasso in the central Apennine Mountains on September 12, 1943. The mission objective of Operation Oak was to rescue deposed dictator Benito Mussolini from house arrest and bring him to Munich.

BY COLONEL BERND HORN, CANADIAN ARMY (RET.)

The flimsy canvas flapped loudly as it buckled in the wind. More bothersome for the nine German commandos crammed inside the narrow fuselage was the constant motion—sinking, then sharply rising, as the DFS-230 glider ploughed and pitched through the towing aircraft's turbulent wake. That flight in those 10 gliders in September 1943 must have seemed an eternity to the 73 *Fallschirmjäger* and 17 *Waffen-SS*, who could only pray the pilots could deliver them on target, hopefully in one piece.

As the tow planes and their charges emerged from the clouds to find mountain peaks rising before them, the first glider detached and began a tight, spiralling circle downward toward what appeared to be a small patch of meadow beside the impressive Hotel Campo Imperatore nestled on a plateau between the peaks of the *Gran Sasso* ("Great Rock") massif. As they descended, the meadow revealed itself to be a boulder-strewn field. The glider slammed into the ground, jumbling its passengers before careening toward a number of imposing boulders and the edge of a cliff. The approach to the objective had been risky, but the success of the mission was now in dire jeopardy as nine more gliders touched down in the deadly boulder field.

By the summer of 1943, the ultimate outcome of the war was no longer in doubt. For the Italians the situation seemed calamitous. The Allies had ejected Axis forces from North Africa, stormed across Sicily and were about to gain a toehold on the Italian peninsula. Not surprisingly, many senior Italian leaders clamoured to make peace with the Allies before more destruction was wrought on their country. A cabal of members of the

Imperial War Museum

***Fallschirmjäger* photographed on September 12, 1943, shortly after freeing Italian dictator Benito Mussolini from a mountain hotel on Gran Sasso in central Italy. Operation Oak was originally meant to be an airborne mission, but soon other Nazi organizations were assigned to the operation, including German intelligence (*Abwehr*) and Waffen-SS units—who presumably brought the camera. SS Capt. Otto Skorzeny, photographed with the Fascist leader multiple times, was given credit for the success of the Gran Sasso raid.**

Italian High Command and senior politicians plotted against dictator Benito Mussolini. On July 24, 1943, when "*Il Duce*"went to see King Victor Emmanuelle III at his residence in Rome to gain his support, the King revealed, "My dear Duce, there's no point going on. Italy is on her knees; the army has been completely defeated and the soldiers no longer want to fight for you. At this moment, you are the most hated man in Italy." When Mussolini attempted to leave, he was arrested, bundled into an ambulance, and spirited away. Most importantly, he was kept isolated so that he could not communicate with his supporters and former allies.

As the coup quickly moved forward, the *carabinieri* and *polizia* swiftly moved to arrest Mussolini's Fascist supporters and seize command centers and key communications. Although the new government assured the Germans that they were still aligned with the Axis power, they secretly began peace negotiations with the Allies.

Predictably, Adolf Hitler was enraged when he heard of the overthrow of his close ally and his immediate instinct was to swiftly occupy Rome and arrest the coup leaders. His General Staff were able to convince him that delay was necessary in order to deploy additional troops to Italy. Although the Führer agreed, on July 26, 1943, he directed that a special task force was necessary to find and rescue Mussolini.

It took little coaxing to get Hitler to agree that *General der Fallschirmtruppe* (parachute corps) Kurt Student should undertake the task. On Student's arrival at the Wolf's Lair near Rastenberg, the Führer declared, "one of your special assignments will be to find and free my friend Mussolini." Hitler also tasked Student, when the moment was right, to arrest key conspirators, including the King and top government officials. The mission was designated Operation *Eiche* ("Oak").

The German high command also tasked officers from the *Abwehr*'s (German intelligence) Brandenburg Battalion, as well as elements of the Luftwaffe special units to also report to

Rastenburg to assist in the mission. Not to be outdone by his rivals, *SS-Reichsführer* (Reich Leader) Heinrich Himmler decided to include elements of his *Schutzstaffel* (SS) as well. As such, he convinced Hitler to assign Capt. Otto Skorzeny, commander of SS-Jäger-Battalion 502, to lead the mission over the more qualified Brandenburger officers. Subsequently, Hitler assigned Skorzeny to General Student to conduct a covert search for the missing Italian dictator. Hitler explained:

I have a very important commission for you. Mussolini, my friend and our loyal comrade in arms, was betrayed yesterday by his king and arrested by his own countrymen. I cannot and will not leave Italy's greatest son in the lurch. Italy under the new government will desert us! I will keep faith with my old ally and dear friend; he must be rescued promptly or he will be handed over to the Allies. I'm entrusting to you the execution of an undertaking which is of great importance to the future course of the war.

Having established a task force that included both SS troops and Fallschirmjäger, the next step was to actually locate Il Duce. Skorzeny's instruction explicitly stated that he not coordinate his search with any other agencies, and he was specifically directed not to inform Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, Commander-in-Chief South, responsible for Italy. Kesselring later wrote, "Even though this hare-brained scheme was kept secret from me, naturally I could not fail to get wind of it as all the threads ran together through my hands."

Despite the sensitive nature of the mission, a veritable circus erupted. The stakes were simply too high, in the form of currying favor with Hitler, for other agencies such as the Gestapo and Abwehr not to become involved.

Skorzeny sent small teams in civilian clothing to scour Rome looking for clues and information on Mussolini's whereabouts. The Abwehr utilized its agents stationed in Italy who up to this point had no idea of the dictator's location. Student employed his military intelligence apparatus and Himmler dispatched two experienced SS officers to Rome to assist with the search. With so many pokers in the fire, the Italians quickly realized the Germans were actively looking for Mussolini and fed volumes of disinformation to their erstwhile allies.

Despite the ungainly search effort, eventually, after a number of false starts, the Germans traced Mussolini to La Maddalena Island. Skorzeny attempted to fly a reconnaissance mission over the objective but his aircraft ended up in the Mediterranean Sea. Subsequently, Skorzeny convinced Student that Il Duce was on the island and the airborne general began planning for a daring naval raid using his Fallschirmjäger and a flotilla of torpedo boats or *Schnellboot* (S-Boats).

However, the German activity did not fail to arouse Italian suspicions and they quickly moved the deposed dictator. On August 28, 1943, Mussolini was flown by seaplane to Lake Bracciano, northwest of Rome. Days later, he was taken by vehicle, then cable car, to Hotel

National Archives

ABOVE: SS-*Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant Colonel) Otto Skorzeny in a cell before testifying at the Nuremberg trials in 1945. Acquitted by the Allies in his own trial in 1947, Skorzeny was wanted by other countries and remained in a prison camp. The next year he escaped to Spain, where he died of lung cancer in 1975. BELOW: Undated photo of Benito Mussolini, considered by many to be the father of Fascism. The Italian Fascist Party leader was head of the government from 1922 until 1943, when Italy's King Victor Emmanuel III had him arrested in July. Rescued by the Germans two months later, he was caught by Italian Partisans and shot in 1945.

Library of Congress

Campo Imperatore on Gran Sasso mountain. The change in location once again left the Germans blind to his whereabouts.

Fortuitously for Student and Skorzeny, one of Himmler's men, *SS-Sturmbannführer* (Major) Herbert Kappler, who had been assigned to the German embassy in Rome

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-567-1503c-24; Photo: Toni Schneiders

The lead officer and planner of Operation Oak, Major Harald Mors, arrives at the base of the Gran Sasso massif with 250 *Fallschirmjägers* after a 10-hour drive. After a brief firefight that killed two Italian guards and wounded two others, the cable car station was secured and Mors rode up to the Hotel Campo Imperatore to meet Benito Mussolini.

since 1939, had from the start installed a number of wiretaps on important communication nodes. This foresight now paid dividends. Having heard reference to Gran Sasso in a call, Kappler passed on the clue to Student. This lead was followed up with confirmation that a seaplane had flown from La Maddalena Island to Lake Bracciano. Moreover, a Luftwaffe officer reported seeing the arrival of a seaplane surrounded by exceptionally heavy security. Further digging indicated that something out of the ordinary was occurring at the mountaintop hotel. Student now decided to plan a new rescue operation based on the new location.

Concurrent with the hunt for Mussolini was the issue of the Italian defection. Hitler directed Kesselring to commence planning "Operation Axis," the mission to seize Rome and disarm defecting Italian military forces. The German High Command immediately ordered the deployment of four German infantry divisions into Northern Italy, with additional troops to follow. The Italians, for their part, attempted to delay the Germans as much as possible while desperately trying to attain an armistice with the Allies.

On September 8, 1943, the anticipated defection took place. The Italians formally surrendered to the Allied powers. This agreement now complicated Operation Oak. The Germans quickly moved on Rome and began to disarm all Italian units. The Italian leadership, both political and military, swiftly fled the capital leaving their troops to fight without higher direction. Most Italian forces surrendered without a fight, but there were scattered instances of stiff resistance. By September 10, the senior Italian officer remaining in Rome negotiated the surrender of all Italian forces around the capital.

Despite the Italian capitulation and apparent German control, the new political situation created additional risk for Operation Oak. The status of Italian military and police forces in the area was still in question. In addition, Italians also began to engage in partisan activity.

Student, who was deeply involved with the fighting to regain control of Rome, now refocused on the rescue of Mussolini. With the defection, as well as the Allied landings at Salerno, he assessed that Il Duce would soon be executed or handed over to the Allies.

Based on available information, Student decided to risk a mission centred on the objective of the 70-room Campo Imperatore Hotel located on a 6,990-foot plateau on the Gran Sasso massif in the central Apennines. Realizing that time was of the essence, Student assigned the mission of planning the rescue to one of his Fallschirmjäger officers, Major Harald Mors. Due to time constraints he gave Mors less than 24 hours to plan and execute the task.

The challenge for Mors was considerable. There were only three options: ground assault, airborne attack or glider raid. The airborne option was quickly ruled out because there was

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Waffen-SS Captain Otto Skorzeny and some of his men were in the first glider to land on Gran Sasso, less than 40 meters from the Hotel Campo Imperatore. Skorzeny and his 16 SS troops—only part of the operation at Heinrich Himmler's insistence—spoiled the element of surprise, but still managed to get Italian dictator Benito Mussolini out of the hotel without any shots being fired and to take credit for the whole mission.

little space for a drop zone (DZ). Moreover, mountain winds could scatter the drop causing massive casualties or a delay in assaulting the hotel, which could give the Italians time to kill Mussolini. Skorzeny privately assessed that they would have about three minutes to reach the dictator before he was killed by his guards.

A ground assault was also problematic, because there were no roads leading up to the hotel and a dismounted assault up the mountain would allow the guards ample time to remove or kill Mussolini. Furthermore, an Italian infantry division located just 7.5 miles away from the hotel represented a huge risk should they decide to intervene.

The only remaining option, though not necessarily a good one, was a glider assault. Experts calculated that due to the "rarefied air," only 20 percent of the DF-230 gliders would actually survive the flight—even with rocket-assisted brakes that would allow them to land in as little as 66 feet on the small plateau. Moreover, the experts predicted 80 percent casualties for the assault force.

"There are some things you can't work out with a slide rule," Skorzeny scoffed. "That's just where our experts may be wrong; and the Italians too. The safer the enemy feel, the better our chances of catching them unawares."

Accepting the inherent risk of the glider assault, Student ordered 12 gliders to be brought to the Pratica di Mare airfield immediately. Based on 10 passengers per glider (including the pilot) the glider assault force would consist of 108 combat troops. They would face an estimated 100 carabinieri at the hotel, with approximately the same number at the lower cable car station.

Mors also planned to use a ground component made up of two of his companies (approximately 260 troops) loaded in 20 Italian Fiat trucks—taken from a disarmed Italian infantry division two days before—to seize the lower cable car station in Assergi to prevent outside Italian forces from intervening. Mors initially planned to bring Mussolini down by cable car, but after the cable station was damaged in the fighting, two Fi-156 Fieseler Storch light aircraft were sent up.

During the planning phase, Skorzeny approached Student and insisted, based on direction from Hitler and Himmler, that he and his troops have a role in the actual raid and rescue of Mussolini. As a result, Student allowed Skorzeny and 16 of his men to participate in the glider assault. Student saw the role of Skorzeny and his SS troops as acting as bodyguards for the dictator, while his Fallschirmjäger were responsible for fighting the Italians.

With the plan now in place, Oberleutnant Georg Freiherr von Berlepsch would lead his company in the first chalk of three gliders with 30 troops. Their objective was to assault the hotel. The second chalk consisted of Sko-

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ABOVE: Waffen-SS Captain Otto Skorzeny, center left, escorts Benito Mussolini out of the Hotel Campo Imperatore only minutes after the first gliders landed on Gran Sasso. Although planned as a Fallschirmjäger operation, Skorzeny and 16 of his SS troops were added to the mission at the insistence of *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler. With photographs of Skorzeny shepherding the rescued dictator, Himmler and propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels made sure Skorzeny and his special forces got full credit for the Operation Oak rescue. OPPOSITE: The Hotel Campo Imperatore where deposed Fascist leader Benito Mussolini was held under house arrest from August 28 to September 12, 1943, when he was liberated by German paratroopers landing gliders on the 6,990-foot plateau of Gran Sasso during Operation Oak. Built in the 1930s to serve a ski resort of the same name, the hotel fell into disrepair and has been closed since 2018.

rzeny and his SS troops. Their assigned task was to secure the LZ and guard any Italian prisoners. The third chalk was responsible for securing the upper section of the cable car station and the fourth chalk, which consisted of the heavy weapons and support troops (e.g., medics, signalers), had the task of providing support near the hotel in the case of a prolonged fight.

Berlepsch's plan was for his first three gliders to land simultaneously to provide maximum strength to the assault force. However, after the landing of the assault wave, the following gliders were to land one minute apart.

The first component of the rescue was the ground assault force tasked with securing the cable station in the valley below the Gran Sasso plateau. Mors decided on a circuitous route to serve as a deception and to steer clear of active partisan areas. The long column of vehicles was preceded by a motorcycle scouting party. During the drive of more than 10 hours, Italian police checkpoints reported on the progress of the German convoy, but were unsure of their intent until Mors and his troops neared Assergi.

This uncertainty changed very quickly. As the ground assault force approached Assergi they noticed a number of carabinieri check points that were established to provide an early warning buffer, which now attempted to warn their compatriots at the cable car station. The motorcycle scouts engaged one checkpoint and then pushed through to the town where they came under fire. The German advance party returned fire and resistance dissipated. The motorcycle party then drove to the lower cable car station where they accepted the surrender of the remaining Italian forces stationed there.

As opposed to the ground attack, the aerial assault plan began to fray almost immediately. Originally, the plan was for the gliders to arrive at approximately 0500 hours, September 12, 1943. However, due to allied bombing, as well as operational security constraints that failed to ensure the necessary details were passed on to the transport organization, the gliders did not show up until 1100. Moreover, only 10, not 12 gliders arrived. The supporting unit, again, not knowing the specific timings, assumed the remaining two gliders could be delivered later in the day. Therefore, before the mission even commenced, they were down 2 gliders or 18 fighting men. The delay also meant that the gliders would have to fly in the heat of the day when the air was thinner making flight more difficult and the ground assault party was required to delay their H-Hour and potentially attack in broad daylight.

The arrival of Skorzeny only added to the disruption. Not one to miss an opportunity, he had brought along a war correspondent and a photographer to capture the dramatic rescue for posterity.He also brought along Italian Generale di brigata Fernando Soleti, largely against his will, to mitigate the risk of a firefight. To provide Soleti with encouragement, Skorzeny apparently explained, "You will ride in the third glider with me, General, or the Italian army will be short one general." Skorzeny deemed Soleti's presence important because he was known to the carabinieri. As a result, Skorzeny believed his appearance would cause some confusion and could create enough doubt that the Italian forces guarding Mussolini would hesitate to open fire. Although the addition of the extra passengers had some merit, it also meant that another three Fallschirmjäger were bumped from the flight.

At 1305, the first chalk of three tow planes and gliders launched from the airfield. Subsequently, the remainder of the aircraft departed at two-minute intervals. The distance to the objective was 78 miles. One major challenge the tow pilots faced was gaining enough altitude to clear the nearly 4,000-foot ridgelines near Tivoli. As a result, the lead chalk of three aircraft executed a loop to gain more altitude before proceeding to cross the mountain range. The following chalks, which were about seven kilometres behind, not realizing why the first chalk had detoured, continued flying towards the objective. Skorzeny, who was lead aircraft in the second chalk, was now the lead aircraft for the assault.

As the planes approached the objective, heavy winds and cloud cover obscured visibility. As a result, the tow planes stayed beneath the clouds at 9,000 feet instead of the planned altitude of 10,500. At 1403, the gliders began to cut loose to begin their two-minute silent approach. Lieutenant Meyer, the pilot of the lead aircraft carrying Skorzeny, recounted:

Despite extending the air brakes, the strong updrafts from the mountaintop pushed against the aircraft and it was difficult to keep on the glide path toward the target…I could also see that the intended landing zone—in contrast to the aerial photograph [taken before the raid] – had steep slopes that dropped off into an abyss. Looking left and right, I could see that I was far ahead of the remaining gliders in my kette *[literal translation "chain," or chalk]. Therefore, I seized upon a quick resolution. I put the glider into a steep left circle, which pressed the passengers hard. I deployed the braking parachute as we approached the windy slope, heading straight toward the hotel. A jolt went through the glider when it first hit the hard, stony ground, tearing up the barbed wire wrapped under the skid like string. When the glider stopped, it stood only 40 metres from the hotel.*

Skorzeny wrote a dramatically different account of the approach to the hotel on the Gran Sasso plateau in his memoirs:

I got out my knife and slashed right and left in the fabric to make a hole big enough to give us something of a view… My peephole was enough to let us get our bearings when the cloud permitted…The pilot turned

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Bundesarchiv Bild

in a wide circle, searching the ground—as I was doing—for the flat meadow appointed as our landing-ground. But a further, and ghastly, surprise was in store for us. It was triangular all right, but so far from being flat it was a steep, a very steep hillside! It could even have been a ski-jump. It was easy to see that a landing on this "meadow" was out of the question. I called out: "Crash landing! As near to the hotel as you can get!...We were within 15 metres of the hotel!

The time now was 1405. The occupants of Meyer's glider and those that landed immediately after were dazed by airsickness and the hard landing. In addition, they had not planned to be the first assault wave, therefore, there was a degree of uncertainty of what to do. Fortuitously, the Italian defensive response was equally indecisive. The Italian guards on duty milled around unsure of what to do. Those off-duty in their rooms chose to hide and ignored the order to "stand-to." The leadership was equally befuddled. The guard commander was asleep at the time of the raid. Awoken by his subordinate, he glanced out the window and witnessed more gliders landing, as well as five heavily armed Fallschirmjäger approaching the hotel. "Don't shoot!" he quickly yelled down to the guards outside watching the German assault in progress.

His immediate subordinates ran to Mussolini's room unsure whether to execute him as ordered, or to try to sneak him down the back of the mountain. On arrival they found the dictator looking out the window. An argument soon commenced as Mussolini, sensing he was about to be killed, warned his captors that if he was harmed the Germans would slay the entire guard force. This seemed to make the Italian officers hesitate.

Skorzeny had perceptively ordered his men prior to the raid not to shoot unless required to do so in self-defense. He and a subordinate now made their way to the hotel. After a few false starts he found the front entrance to the hotel. However, the Italians had piled up furniture to barricade the front door and they were unable to force it open. Armed only with a pistol, Skorzeny decided to await reinforcements. As more German troops arrived the Italians defending the front entrance decided that discretion was the better part of valor—most guards either stood by impassively or ran to their rooms and hid. Overall, the Italian guard force evinced no organized resistance.

Once the entrance was open, Skorzeny ran up the stairs to find Mussolini in Room 201 standing between two Italian officers who had not drawn their weapons. He immediately drew his pistol and ordered them to stand against the wall. Once they were ushered out, he declared to a surprised Mussolini, "Duce, the Führer has sent me! You are free!" Upon which the dictator replied, "I knew that my friend Adolf Hitler would not leave me in the lurch!"

Berlepsch's assault force of three gliders arrived at 1410 and all executed perfect landings close to the hotel. Taking stock of the situation, he secured the upper cable station and the hotel, then radioed the "mission complete" signal to operational headquarters at 1417. In total, the raid had taken 12 minutes with no shots fired.

Concurrent with both the ground and glider assault, a component of Skorzeny's SS unit under *Untersturmführer* (Second-Lieutenant) Hans Mändel arrived at Mussolini's home at Rocca delle Caminate. The Italian polizia guarding the dictator's family quickly surrendered

to the German force. Mussolini's wife Rachele and their two youngest children were quickly bundled up and taken to the airfield at Rimini from where they were flown by the Luftwaffe to Vienna.

The drama, however, did not end there. The rescue force now had to evacuate Mussolini. The initial ground evacuation plan was scrubbed due to an inability to contact higher headquarters to arrange an airlift at the Pratica di Mare airfield and the threat of Italian military or partisan interference. Therefore, Mors and Skorzeny opted to use the Storch light aircraft. The first plane damaged its undercarriage on landing because of the uneven ground. As a result, the second Storch, piloted by Student's personal pilot Capt. Heinrich Gerlach, landed on a short patch of even ground in front of the hotel.

After a brief discussion with Mors and Skorzeny, Gerlach agreed to fly the dictator out from his mountaintop prison. However, when Skorzeny insisted that he accompany Mussolini, Gerlach flatly refused, explaining that Skorzeny would overload the aircraft, particularly on such a short runway in the thin mountain air. After a heated discussion involving apparent threats, Gerlach relented. Although Mussolini, also a pilot, objected, he was outrightly ignored.

Gerlach now revved his engines as a number of Fallschirmjäger held the wings to allow the engine to reach maximum power. Although the Storch normally only required 263 feet to take off, the overloaded aircraft in the high thin altitude needed every bit of his 660 foot long improvised runway. Skorzeny described the risky take-off:

Although our speed increased and we were rapidly approaching the end of the strip, we failed to rise. I swayed about madly and we had hopped over many a boulder when a yawning gully appeared right in our path. I was just thinking that this really was the end when our bird suddenly rose into the air. I breathed a silent prayer of thanksgiving! Then the left landing-wheel hit the ground again, the machine tipped downwards and we made straight for the gully. Veering left, we shot over the edge. I closed my eyes, held my breath and again awaited the inevitable end. The wind roared in our ears. It must have been all over in a matter of seconds, for when I looked round again Gerlach had the machine out of its dive and almost on a level keel. Now we had sufficient air speed, even in this thin air. Flying barely 30 metres above the ground, we emerged in the Arezzano valley.

The overburdened aircraft arrived at the Practica di Mare airfield at 1615, and Skorzeny and Mussolini transferred to a Heinkel-111 bomber and flew to Vienna. Hitler congratulated Skorzeny on the rescue and awarded him the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, as well as a promotion to major. He also authorized leave so that Skorzeny could see his wife.

In the aftermath of the raid, even Germany's enemies took note. Prime Minister Winston Churchill conceded in Parliament, "The stroke was one of great daring and conducted with heavy force." He added, "It certainly shows there are many possibilities of this kind open in modern war."

Both Himmler and the Reich's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, quickly seized on the successful rescue. The official narrative, however, credited Skorzeny and his SS troops with the planning and execution of the raid and completely down-played, if not outright ignored, the role played by Student's Fallschirmjäger. The controversy was never fully settled, as the official account crediting Skorzeny's role continues to be the dominant narrative even today. □

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-567-1503-10; Photo: Bruno von Kayser

ABOVE: Several Fallschirmjägers were injured when their glider crashed on the rocky plateau of the Gran Sasso massif. Ten gliders landed 90 troopers (73 Fallschirmjäger and 17 Waffen-SS) in the Apennine Mountains to rescue deposed dictator Benito Mussolini, who was held in the Campo Imperatore Hotel. Two Italian guards were killed and two others injured in the firefight at the cable car station down in the valley. OPPOSITE: Italian dictator Benito Mussolini is helped into a single-seat Fi-156 Fieseler Storch light aircraft on September 12, 1943, near the Campo Imperatore Hotel atop a 6,990-foot plateau of the Gran Sasso massif in the central Apennines. After fighting at the bottom of the mountain damaged the cable cars they had planned to use for escape, Il Duce was evacuated by the light reconnaissance plane known for its short take off and landing capabilities. Though the pilot strongly objected, Waffen-SS Capt. Otto Skorzeny insisted on accompanying Mussolini and the plane was barely able to take off.

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A RIFLEMAN *at the* Battle of the Bulge

Rocky Moretto survived days of close combat with enemy units fighting across Western Europe with the 1st Infantry Division.

BY ROBERT F. DORR

Authors Collection

From left, Big Red One (1st Infantry Division) staff sergeants Rocky Moretto and John Banyak, with Tech.Sgt. Bob Wright, pose for the camera in December 1944 during a lull in the action. Wright was killed during the Battle of the Bulge. OPPOSITE: Hitler's Ardennes offensive caught the Allies off guard during one of the coldest winters on record. Without proper gear, GIs wore layers of whatever they could find to stave off temperatures that averaged 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

To American infantryman Rocky Moretto, war on the European continent in the winter of 1944-1945 was mostly about never getting enough sleep, warmth, respite, or relief.

"They told us it was the coldest winter in a hundred years," Moretto remembered, reiterating a legend that was widely heard among GIs during the Battle of the Bulge. "It was cold, it was snowing, we were moving constantly, and we never seemed to get a break." When it was over, Moretto was one of only two soldiers in his rifle company who were not killed or wounded during the 11 months between Omaha Beach and VE-Day.

Moretto was a rifleman in Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, the "Big Red One."

An official Army history of the division says that beginning on December 16, 1945, some 24 German divisions, 10 of them armored, launched a massive counterattack in the Ardennes sector and that the Big Red One held the critical shoulder of the "Bulge" at Bullingen, Belgium, "destroying hundreds of German tanks in the process." From Moretto's perspective, the scale of the fighting was smaller and more personal.

"The battle began for me with German tanks emerging from snow and fog," Moretto said. "There would have to be something wrong with you if you weren't frightened. That first morning when all those German tanks came over the rise with machine guns firing, they ran right over our outpost, and broke through our line, but our artillery slaughtered the infantry who were accompanying them. The German infantry never did break through our lines, but two tanks did."

Amid heavy fighting, Moretto and his fellow riflemen heard many rumors—Germans were infiltrating U.S. lines wearing American uniforms (true); Germans were dropping tanks by parachute behind the lines (not true). Already a seasoned veteran when the fight began, Moretto got caught up in a battle he probably never could have imagined when growing up.

Born in 1924 in New York City, Moretto grew up in Hell's Kitchen and was active in sports, including baseball and boxing.

"Soon after Pearl Harbor, which happened when I was age 17, they lowered the draft age," Moretto said. "I was in the first group

of 18-year-olds to be drafted, on February 12, 1943. The induction center was Fort Dix, New Jersey. I went to Camp Wheeler, Georgia, for 13 weeks basic training."

After basic, the Army wanted Moretto to become a noncommissioned officer and kept him at Wheeler for further training. But the sergeant's stripes were not to come immediately.

"I screwed up," Moretto said. "We were on guard duty one night, and I tossed a firecracker under one of the sentry's beds while he was sleeping.

"So they shipped me out of NCO School. I went from there to Camp Swift, Texas, and joined the 97th Infantry Division. I stayed with them a few months, and then they decided to thin out their ranks for reasons unknown to me. A group of us was shipped east to Fort Meade, Maryland. But that didn't turn out to be our port of embarkation. We were given clothing and equipment and sent to Massachusetts. We were just replacement troops, not in a specific unit. We were in Massachusetts 10 days or two weeks and were shipped by train to Canada. There, we boarded the *Mauritania*, a former ocean liner that was now a troop ship, and sailed for Liverpool. There were 10 or 12 thousand troops on that ship."

Moretto arrived in Liverpool during the first week of November 1943. He was taken to a replacement depot and then sent to Swanage, England, to join the 1st Infantry Division as a replacement. "They had just gotten back from the campaign in Sicily where they had made the invasion there," Moretto said. "They had invaded North Africa before that. They came to England to prepare for D-day. It was widely known that we were preparing for an invasion of Europe, but no one knew where the invasion would take place. I made private first class a week or two before the invasion."

Moretto landed on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, in the second wave. "If you've ever been on Omaha Beach, there's a plaque to mark where we landed. We had to go up an incline and take some high ground while under fire. You can't believe how chaotic everything was.

"We lost track of the time. My impression was, we landed in the afternoon some time. Even aboard the landing boat itself, there was pandemonium: the pilot kept running into prefabricated obstacles and sand bars, saying, 'I'm going to get you in as close as I can.' We were having a difficult time getting in and German artillery was falling on us. The pilot said, 'I'm sorry, fellas, I've got to drop you off.'

"He dropped the ramp. Some of us were in very deep water with all our equipment. The currents were swift. And the German artillery had zeroed in on us. When we finally made it on land, there were at least a dozen guys hit by artillery. Somebody was yelling in the loudest

BELOW: American troops land on Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944, as others before them make their way inland. Rocky Moretto said he landed in the second wave with the 26th Infantry Regiment, which was likely between 7 and 7:30 a.m., 30 minutes or more after the first wave. OPPOSITE: On December 18, 1944, a patrol from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division (Company F, 3rd Bn., 18th IR) searches for Fallschirmjäger that were dropped between Eupen and Bütgenbach, Belgium. The "Big Red One" held out against the German 6th Panzer Army on the shoulder of the "Bulge" from December 17 until January 28, 1945.

National Archives

voice I've ever heard: 'Get off this beach!' We were through a minefield. There were four of us trying to get uphill. Three of us made it and one was blown up by a mine."

Moretto credited his survival in the early fighting to the fact that he was part of the Big Red One, a "battle-seasoned unit"that was well-trained and disciplined.

"We fought without stopping, with very little sleep, until around June 13," Moretto recalled. "Then, we finally stopped at Caumont and got some rest. We were sticking out like a sore thumb: the British on our left flank were having difficulty keeping up with us. Their objective was to take Caen, and they were having a difficult time. The unit on our right was lagging, too, so we were kind of exposed. So we were stalled there until maybe mid-July. The 5th U.S. Division relieved us and that's when we got a respite—but not for long."

Moretto and his fellow soldiers were designated to make the breakthrough at St. Lo on July 25, 1944. "That's when we broke out of Normandy," he said. "We helped close the Falaise Gap in early August. In late August, the campaign in Normandy came to a close. We had a couple of days' rest and then fought on through northern France and to the Belgian border. We had a very big fight in the Mons area where we ran into a very large German contingent who were trying to get back to command the Siegfried Line. We had a heck of a fight. We were badly, badly outnumbered. But we were lucky. We were in the right place at the right time. We killed a lot of Germans and captured thousands."

Having frequent, close-quarters contact with the enemy affected soldiers in different ways. In Moretto's case, surviving each new firefight gave him a deceptive sense of security. "Guys were getting killed within arm's length, and I was not being touched," he remembered. "For a time, I started thinking that I could do no wrong."

Company C was in heavy fighting in the Hürtgen Forest as summer became autumn, then winter. Moretto and his buddies were slogging through cold, wet weather with snow on the ground and fog frequently in the air.

The abrupt, front-wide counterattack by German armies on December 16, 1944, surprised Allied commanders in the Ardennes, a forested plateau in northern France that had been the scene of earlier fighting in both world wars. At various points along the front, German troops and tanks broke through American defenses. As viewed on the map, the assault created a "bulge" which, if it grew large enough, might divide the Allied armies and enable the Germans to drive for, and recapture, the major supply port of Antwerp in Belgium.

The Battle of the Bulge was the largest battle ever fought by the U.S. Army. "It was a massive attack and it was a kind of last gasp for Adolf Hitler," according to military historian Thomas D. Jones. "The Germans opened the assault along a 50-mile front, initially with 21 infantry and armored divisions." One German unit used captured U.S. tanks and vehicles to confuse the American defenders. Along the front, German saboteurs appeared in American uniforms, many of them speaking English and spreading inac-

Both photos National Archives

curate information.

The battle swept across parts of Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg in addition to France—all in the midst of a temporary warming that produced heavy fog without providing much relief from the bitter cold.

"Of the 600,000 GIs involved," wrote historian Stephen E. Ambrose, "almost 20,000 were killed, another 20,000 were captured, and 40,000 were wounded." In one incident, wrote Ambrose, "7,500 men surrendered, the largest mass surrender in the war against Germany."

Company C was transferred to a different battalion, the 2nd, just in time for the Bulge. At Dom Bütgenbach, Belgium, Moretto and his buddies came under attack from German troops and tanks.

Moretto's battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Derrill M. Daniel, drew the task of relieving engineers who were defending Bullingen by holding the line at Dom Bütgenbach. Not far from Moretto, the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion dug in with 105mm howitzers. As the Germans came at Moretto and his buddies late in the day on December 17, their assault began a battle in which

ABOVE: Medical attention is given to a GI who was wounded after stepping on a landmine. TOP: Alone in the snow with an M1919 Browning .30-caliber machine gun, a soldier from the 1st Division's 26th Infantry Regiment secures a road in a recently captured sector during the final winter of the war in Europe. OPPOSITE: Members of the 1st Infantry Division search captured Germans at a battalion headquarters near Bütgenbach. The captive appears to be but a boy, evidence of the Wehrmacht's manpower shortage during the last days of the war.

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artillery would play a key role. Most of the casualties on both sides would be claimed by howitzer and mortar shells.

Still, Moretto has vivid memories of constantly using his M-1 Garand rifle during three days of fighting between December 17 and 19. At one juncture, he sighted on a pair of German soldiers charging up a snow-covered rise about 40 feet away and pumped bullets into them. "It's very rare when you get a clean shot at an enemy soldier with your rifle. You're usually not closing with the enemy. The longer you go, the more you start to lose the feeling that you can do no wrong. That didn't happen to me until after the Bulge, in April or May. Psychologically, you're always afraid, but the longer you stay at it, the less sharp you feel. Everybody knew that you were there for the duration plus maybe six months beyond. Everybody talked about the 'million-dollar wound,' which was the only way to get home."

Between point-blank fire fights, Moretto and his fellow infantrymen found themselves caught up in fierce artillery barrages. Moretto's best friend, Sergeant Bob Wright, was killed by an exploding German artillery shell only feet in front of Moretto's foxhole.

While U.S. soldiers fought in snow, fog, and muck, Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered in reinforcements and struggled to settle disputes among his subordinates. By December 19, American troops were surrounded at the crossroads village of Bastogne, Belgium, but when faced with a German demand for surrender, Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe delivered the memorable reply, "Nuts!"

Although Moretto's outfit stood its ground, the Germans appeared to be winning elsewhere on the front and on the verge of a breakthrough. "The rumors were flying everywhere," Moretto recalled. "Everything changed on Christmas Day when improving weather and clearing skies enabled Allied planes to attack German troops and to parachute supplies to our troops."

Britain's Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who was nominally Eisenhower's subordinate but feuded constantly with him, announced the end of the Battle of the Bulge in a January 7, 1945, press conference. "We Americans didn't like that one bit," recalled Moretto. "U.S. soldiers had carried out the bulk of the fighting."

The German offensive in the Ardennes ended up being a significant American victory. Some 30,000 Germans were killed, 40,000 were wounded, and 30,000 became prisoners of war. Today, some view the Battle of the Bulge as prolonging the war in Europe unnecessarily. Others see the battle as signaling the end of Hitler's Third Reich, which came in May 1945. To Rocky Moretto, it was the beginning of the end. "When the war concluded, Private Bennie Zuskin and I were the only two in my company who went through the whole thing without being killed, captured, or wounded."

Moretto returned home after the war, worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company for 40 years, and was active with the American Legion and VFW. He passed away on August 26th, 2018 at the age of 94. □

Robert F. Dorr was an Air Force veteran, a retired U.S. diplomat, and author of the book Air Force One, *a look at presidential aircraft and air travel.*

Lieutenant General George S. Patton personally gave U.S. Ambassador Averell Harriman a tour of his battlefields, while he was still fighting.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

Averell Harriman, the ambassador to the Soviet Union, visited the American battlefront lines near the German border in the fall of 1944. Harriman was on his way back to Moscow when he met with Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander of all forces in Western Europe, at his headquarters in Reims, France, to learn about the conditions under which the American soldier fought.

After successfully assaulting on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, fighting in hedgerows, and racing across France, Eisenhower's forces had bogged down along the German border. His armies had been stalled by supply problems, revitalized German resistance, incessant rains, and swollen rivers. Eisenhower wanted Harriman to report what he witnessed to Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. And Eisenhower knew just where to send him.

Eisenhower called Lieutenant General George S. Patton, his Third Army commander, and told him to expect an important guest. Patton's Third Army had just liberated the French city of Metz, and now, on November 27, 1944, had captured parts of the Saar River, despite heavy rains and mud. Eisenhower wanted Harriman to see the worst of the flooding.

As the U.S. Third Army fights its way from the Saar River to the German border, Lt. Gen. George Patton takes ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman on a tour of the front in his personal modified M20 armored scout car. From left are British Lt. Col. James Gault (Eisenhower's aide-de-camp), Harriman, and Patton.

All photos from National Archives

PATTON'S DIPLOMATIC TOUR OF THE FRONT

ABOVE: From left, British Lt. Col. James Gault, Ambassador Harriman, and Patton tour the front in Patton's modified M20 scout car—the .50-caliber machine gun ring mount was replaced by a centered post mount—decked out with plexiglass windshield, air horns, and metal flags depicting Patton's rank and the symbol for his Third Army. OPPOSITE: Maj. Gen. Jack "P" Wood, the commander of the 4th Armored Division, escorts General Gault, Ambassador Harriman, and General Patton across a Bailey Bridge over the Saar River. Wood, suffering from a cold, still took the trio on a tour of his facilities.

Harriman arrived at Patton's Nancy headquarters around 10 a.m., accompanied by British Lieutenant Colonel James Gault, Eisenhower's British aide-de-camp. The three men climbed into a specially modified M20 armored scout car, complete with a windshield, a metal flag adorned with Patton's three-star rank, and air horns—Patton's favorite tool for announcing his presence—and headed to the front, passing through empty German defenses.

They visited Major General Jack "P" Wood, the commander of the 4th Armored Division, at Mittersheim, 36 miles south of Sarreguemines, where Patton asked one of Wood's officers, "how many tanks are you short?" When the officer said 13 medium tanks, Patton snapped back, "we're not short thirteen medium tanks in the whole United States Army."

Patton's chief of staff General Hugh Gaffey quickly explained that the number was including tanks undergoing major overhauls. Wood, who was suffering from a cold, arrived and gave Patton a tour of the facilities as clouds rolled in and the rain poured. Patton also chatted with the troops. When he came across men in a chow line, he asked them about the quality

of their food. The men, standing in the open with rain splashing into their mess kits, responded, "fine, sir, fine."

Escorted by Wood, they then took the M20 armored scout car over the Saar River, while Patton pointed out that every field seemed to be a lake. They passed by an enemy tank ditch so poorly prepared that Patton told Harriman it was not worth a damn and, instead, stopped by some artillery firing on the enemy. Then it was off to Maj. Gen. Willard Paul's 26th Infantry Division, where Harriman witnessed Patton give Paul and his staff "unshirted hell for not driving ahead faster." Closer to the front, Harriman watched as Patton addressed a group of exhausted soldiers who were waiting to be relieved. "If you can make it to the top of that hill," Patton told the men as he pointed to a nearby rise, "it will make a hell of a difference to the unit that takes over from you." He acknowledged the tough fighting they had already done, and admitted it was a lot to ask, but encouraged them to attack nonetheless. The men rose and charged the hill. The scene amazed Harriman, who saw Patton put the fighting spirit back into these men, "knowing exactly when to give them hell and when to encourage them."

They drove on to a village where Patton presented the Distinguished Service Cross to a lieutenant who had forced a crossing of the Saar. After presenting the medal, Patton turned to the gathered men and told them, "You have all done a great job. A lot of you sons of bitches may have deserved this medal," but, he assured them, "don't grouse about the fact that he got it and you didn't, do the same job again and another one of you will get it." Then he revealed why the medal was important to him. "It is the greatest honor anybody can get. I'd rather have it than eternal life."

ABOVE: U.S. Army vehicles, one towing an artillery piece, pass an antiaircraft weapon manned by Black soldiers along the muddy roads of the Saar region in eastern France. Gen. Eisenhower wanted Ambassador Harriman to see the muddy conditions with which his armies had to contend so that when he got to Moscow, he could describe it to Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. RIGHT: From left, U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman and generals Gault, Patton, and Wood are shown a map of the 4th Armored Division's progress by an operations officer. The division was already famous for its race west across France's Brittany Peninsula and east to the German border. OPPOSITE: Jeeps with the 4th Armored Division rumble through the muddy streets of bombed-out Dieuze, France, west of Mittersheim. Despite the cold, inhospitable conditions, American forces continued to drive towards Germany. In Moscow, Ambassador Harriman would report to Joseph Stalin that the Americans were working hard to win the war.

Patton then turned to Harriman and told him he wanted to get his feet wet. With that he walked down to the Saar and waded into the freezing water. Throughout the day, Patton impressed Harriman by telling almost every soldier they came across that they were doing a great job or telling engineers the importance of their bridge-building operations. He also asked soldiers if they had gotten the blankets he had sent to the front, and if they were getting enough sleep.

After visiting Paul's 26th Infantry, they headed back to Patton's headquarters through Wood's 4th Armored, coming across a Sherman tank that had knocked out five German Mark IV medium tanks. Fascinated, Patton got out of his vehicle and took several pictures of the tank and the disabled German tanks. Wood was there and asked him to award a Distinguished Service Cross to the tank's commander, a lieutenant, who was also the tank's only survivor. Patton was happy to oblige. He then listened as the lieutenant told him how he knocked out two tanks at a range of more than 100 yards, then charged into the middle of three enemy tanks, destroying them at ranges less than 50 yards. "It was a very great piece of fighting," Patton later wrote. Thanks to Patton, Harriman got an important appreciation of what American soldiers were doing to win the war, something he could later speak of with authority to his Russian counterparts.

Back at his headquarters, Harriman told Patton about his dealings with Stalin, whom he described as a strong and ruthless revolutionary who could threaten the postwar peace. On the positive side, Stalin had praised Patton's race across France, declaring the Red Army could not have conceived or executed such a maneuver. The comment stayed with Patton the rest of the day and he penned it in his diary that night. "I may get a Red Star yet," he wrote Beatrice.

The tour was also important to Harriman. Thanks to Patton, he got an important appreciation of what American soldiers were doing to win the war, something he could later speak of with authority to his Russian counterpart. □

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is a contract historian for the U.S. Army. This article is an adaptation from Hymel's latest book, Patton's War: An American General's Combat Leadership, Volume 1: November 1942—July 1944, *published by University of Missouri Press. He also leads tours of Patton's European battlefields for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours and is the co-host, with John C. McManus, of the podcast "World War II Live."*

The Japanese *Gyokusai* (smashing the jewel) attack on U.S. Marines and Soldiers on Saipan was the only true mass suicide charge of World War II.

BY RICHARD M. INGLEBY

Captain Lawrence Rulison, the commander of K Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, listened as his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Justice Chambers, briefed his company on the plan for what was ahead. It was June, 1944, and the 4th Marine Division was now sailing from Hawaii as part of the Northern Troops and Landing Force, one of two task force groups under the command of the V Amphibious Corps that was underway for *Operation Forager*—the seizure of the Pacific island of Saipan in the Marianas.

Alongside them was the 2nd Marine Division (now recovered from Tarawa), additional Army and Marine artillery battalions, the Army's 27th Infantry Division, as well as a National Guard unit from New York designated as the overall operation's reserve. Rulison's "Kings of K" Company were part of more than 165,000 ground troops underway for the task, with D-Day set for June 15, 1944.

The overall goal of this operation was to seize Saipan, along with Tinian and Guam to its south, and build air bases for the Army Air Corps' latest long-range bomber: the B-29 Superfortress. Once they had accomplished this critical mission, a strategic bombing offensive like the one over Europe would commence against Japan. It was hoped that the captured prizes could also serve as an advanced submarine base, allowing America's undersea wolves to strengthen their stranglehold on Japan's island homeland from the sea as well.

On June 11, Navy F6F Hellcats made surprise attacks on the airfields on Saipan and Tinian, destroying Japanese aircraft and providing the Americans with air superiority. Air attacks continued, joined on June 13 by a naval bombardment, but both proved ineffective against Japanese defenses.

At 8:40 a.m., June 15, elements of the 2nd Marine Division landed on Red and Green beaches, while the 4th Marine Division landed on Blue and Yellow beaches. The landings were made under intense artillery and mortar fire, resulting in more than 2,000 casualties. But by the end of the day, the Marines had established a bridgehead and unloaded artillery and tanks. That night the Japanese began a series of attacks, but were unable to push the Marines off the beach.

Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Division move forward on Saipan in the summer of 1944. The U.S. forces tasked with capturing the Japanese island and its airfields would be the first to face a gyokusai ("smash the jewel") suicide attack—not just the frenzied charge that accompanied the Japanese battle cry "Tennōheika banzai!" (long live His Majesty the Emperor). In a July 7 attack seeking to fight until their own forces were annihilated, as many as 4,000 Japanese soldiers died, while American forces suffered 1,000 casualties, including some 400 killed.

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'Annihilation Att

ack' on Saipan

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The following day the Marines were joined by the 27th Infantry Division, as the Marines began to expand their bridgehead. The three divisions continued to push the Japanese defenders, capturing Aslito airfield, and by June 19th had reduced the Japanese fighting force to half its original strength.

On June 19 the Japanese Combined Fleet had sortied out to take on the U.S. Navy and suffer one of the worst defeats in the history of naval warfare. Dubbed the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot" by the Americans, the affair had been so one-sided in loss of ships and aircraft that the irreplaceable Japanese fleet had, in essence, ceased to exist. For their part, the Americans had only lost 123 planes, with two-thirds of those ditched after running out of fuel, and had only one ship seriously damaged. Not a single American vessel had been sunk. The Japanese could never hope to recover.

On July 6, 1944, three weeks after landing on Saipan (D+21), a heavy downpour drenched the exposed Americans across the island, masking any sounds nearby and screening all but the closest of movement from view. The landing and fighting across the rough terrain had been some of the worst yet experienced in the Pacific, but the three divisions still had roughly a third of the island left to secure.

By now, word of the Japanese Navy's defeat had reached Saipan's defenders, and they were just beginning to counter. Taking advantage of the heavy rain, the Japanese attacked at several points across the line. When the sky cleared, hundreds of Japanese dead lay out in the open, many of them armed only with crudely-made bamboo spears. Taking in the devastation, the Marines and Soldiers were unaware that this attack had only been a diversion.

The previous day, the 105th Infantry Regiment, part of the 27th Infantry Division now responsible for the western portion of the front line, had captured a prisoner. Like many Japanese captured during the war, he spoke freely to the American intelligence officers who interrogated him. The prisoner's report of a large attack coming in the immediate days ahead was taken down, analyzed, and then disseminated out to the divisions.

Later that afternoon, Marine Lieutenant General Holland Smith had visited the 27th Infantry Division's headquarters, relaying to Maj. Gen. George Griner that they expected the attack to head towards him down the Tanapag Plain along Saipan's northwestern shore. They estimated it would occur either that night or the early next morning, on July 7. Such attacks were not at all out of the ordinary to the Soldiers or Marines by this point, and Griner replied that his troops were ready.

Not far away, another commander had also readied his troops. Trapped and cornered, with no hope of victory in the air or sea, Lieutenant General Yoshitsugu Saitō decided it was time to violently lash out rather than continue their slow death by attrition. After issuing his final orders, Saitō told his men that, "Whether we attack or whether we stay where we are, there is only death. However, in death there is life. We must utilize this opportunity to exalt true Japanese manhood. I will advance with those who remain to deliver still another blow to the American devils, and leave my bones on Saipan as a bulwark of the Pacific.

"As it says in the *Senjinkun* [Battle Ethics], 'I will never suffer the disgrace of being taken

alive' and 'I will offer up the courage of my soul and calmly rejoice in the living by the eternal principle.'

"Here I pray with you for the eternal life of the Emperor and the welfare of the country and I advance to see out the enemy. Follow me."

Saitō then committed *seppuku* (ritualistic suicide by disembowelment) with his call to advance and deliver a final blow in defense of the emperor's honor left to his subordinates to carry out. Hundreds of Japanese dutifully followed his orders and began emerging from caves and assembling around Makunsha village in the days since it had been distributed. It was some of these men who had attacked the American lines in the rain the previous night.

While most of the Americans assumed the intelligence reports were just yet one more of similar such reports, one small team attached to the 27th Infantry Division's intelligence section knew what was coming was far more than the typical "banzai" attack. At the head of this section was 2nd Lt. Benjamin H. Hazard, an intelligence officer who had grown up in Massachusetts with friends of Japanese descent. He had developed an interest in their language and culture early on and it followed him to U.C.L.A., where he took local adult education classes in Japanese until the university began to offer its own courses.

After Pearl Harbor, two Army majors had come through campus looking for "Americans of non-Japanese ancestry," recruiting intelligence officers for the war in the Pacific. Intrigued, Hazard volunteered, dropping out of school two weeks shy of graduation. On Saipan, Hazard led a small language detachment of seven Nisei Soldiers, and something about the recent intelligence reports coming in had caught his team's attention.

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ABOVE: One of seven Nisei translators attached to the 27th Infantry Division interrogates a Japanese POW on Saipan. The head of the language unit, 2nd Lt. Benjamin H. Hazard, was unsuccessful in convincing his superiors that the coming attack, a *gyokusai*, would be unlike any they'd seen before. This "is not just yelling and screaming and coming in," Hazard explained. The singing that could be heard meant "they know they're going to die." OPPOSITE: Troops from the 27th Infantry Division, a National Guard unit before the war, wade ashore on June 16, the second day of the invasion of Saipan. Launched just nine days after the Allied invasion of Europe, Operation Forager (June 15-July 9, 1944) was the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific Theater before Okinawa in 1945. Capturing Saipan, Tinian and Guam, would allow the U.S. to build air bases for the Army Air Corps' long range B-29 Superfortress bombers to reach the Japanese home islands, including Tokyo.

A few days before, his section had interrogated a civilian working for the Japanese army that had just surrendered. Like the others, the man spoke freely, saying that the Japanese were preparing for an attack on July 7. But in this case, the prisoner had used a particular word to describe these plans, something missed by the traditional intelligence officers that immediately caught the attention of the Nisei—*gyokusai*.

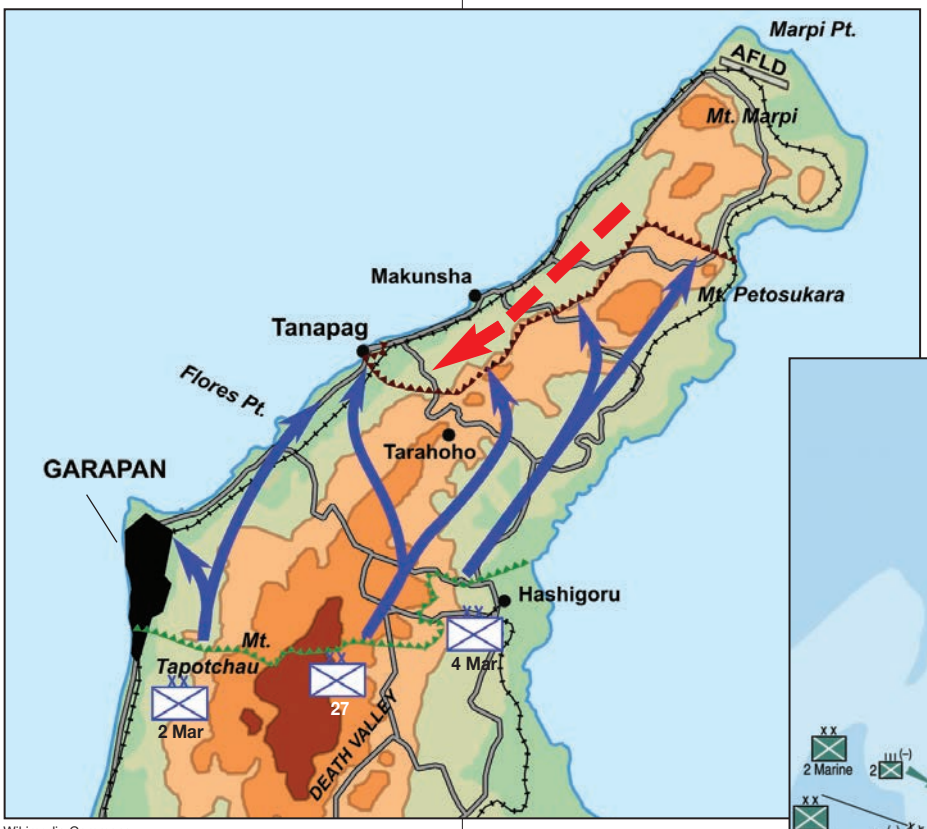
Hazard understood that a gyokusai can only be ordered by Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo.

"This was not the same as a banzai attack," Hazard recalled. "This is to attack until annihilation. That is, to keep fighting. [To] destroy as many as possible, and nobody is to survive. To die in honor. And literally, it means… 'gyoku' is 'jade' and 'sai' is 'to smash—smash the jewel… [The] jewel being the army, and destroy it."

The Nisei also noted that July 7 was the traditional Japanese festival of Tanabata, an adopted Chinese holiday that was celebrated in Japan for when "the spirits of the dead are supposed to return to Earth," Hazard remembered, adding, "which is also a good time to die—you join your brothers." Something the Americans had never seen before was coming, yet only this small handful of mostly Japanese Americans even realized it.

Another prisoner had been captured and was interrogated on July 6, who again eerily used that specific term, setting off further alarm bells among the Nisei. This prisoner also told them that it was to commence at around midnight. Alerted, Hazard frantically tried to convince his superiors of what was coming, "but they didn't give it the same weight that… the Nisei felt. They [the Nisei] knew." Realizing the gravity of the situation—one in which they were also trapped—this small group of disregarded Japanese American intelligence specialists were helpless to do anything about it.

The Nisei also knew that there was one



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LEFT: Some 3,000-4,000 Japanese combatants from various units initiated a ritual *gyokusai* suicide attack on July 7, 1944 (red arrow). Cut off from outside ammunition and supplies, some troops were only armed with sharpened sticks, knives or bayonets. The goal of the attack was to die honorably in battle while killing as many of the enemy as possible. BELOW: Some 30,000 Japanese military personnel died defending Saipan, part of its Absolute National Defense Zone. The loss forced Japan's government to admit to its people for the first time that the war was not going well.

Map © 2026 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

word the Japanese never used to describe or order an attack: banzai. Aggressive Japanese human wave attacks were no different than what their grandfathers had done at Port Arthur decades before, but counter to beliefs that persist even today, such attacks were not specifically intended for every one of those involved to sacrifice their lives in its effort.

Not unlike the aggressive and daring Marine amphibious assaults in the recent years, with potential for death or injury high, where most were willing to lay down their lives if need be, death for a Marine was never mandated. Neither was it for the Japanese.

While daring, the Japanese did hope to survive and continue fighting after their attacks, with survivors often retreating to regroup when unsuccessful. Seemingly suicidal to those on the receiving end, the Americans assumed that it was—the exact effect the Japanese were hoping to achieve. And when every one of the Japanese attacks included the screaming of "banzai!" as they charged forward, the term quickly became associated in American lexicon with suicide attacks. The battle cry, *Tennōheika banzai*, translates as "Long live His Majesty the Emperor."

This misunderstanding was to have dire consequences on Saipan, because Gyokusai, "is something different," Hazard said. "This is not just yelling and screaming and coming in. This is—they know they're going to die. They come in singing. You could hear them in the distance, singing."

But with banzai now so engrained, and because "that word gyokusai had not entered the vocabulary at all," Hazard's superiors could not—or would not—comprehend the difference. They continued to brush off Hazard's concerns, even as the singing of suicidal men could now even be heard outside.

Throughout the early morning hours, the Japanese probed the hastily set American lines, discovering a sizable gap between 1st Bn./105th IR and 3rd Bn./105th IR near the beach road. At around 0445 they struck there in force; many were again only armed with handmade spears, some with nothing at all. The Soldiers fired into these hordes as fast as they could, and bodies soon piled up so high in front of their positions that many had to move before they could continue firing. And they kept coming.

The commander of 2nd Bn./105th IR, Major Edward McCarthy, vividly remembered seeing the masses coming forward.

"It reminded me of one of those old cattle stampede scenes of the movies," McCarthy recalled. "The camera is in a hole in the ground and you see the herd coming and then they leap up and over you and are gone. Only the Japs just kept coming and coming. I didn't think they'd ever stop."

McCarthy's battalion was soon overrun and he ordered a withdrawal, but heavy enemy fire all around quickly disorganized the attempt, nearly turning it into a complete rout. To

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An aerial view of the area on the island of Saipan where theJapanese suicide attack (*gyokusai*) took place July 7, 1944. Many of the American survivors of the attack can be seen on the high ground near the top of the photo. Others are walking or standing around, with dead and possibly wounded men lying on the ground.

prevent that from happening, McCarthy moved into the open where he could be seen by his men and rallied them to him. Eventually they had enough to set up a hasty defense as wave after wave of Japanese attackers crashed against their new position throughout the early morning.

McCarthy knew many others from his battalion had been unable to see or get to him, left to fend for themselves most likely to their peril. There was nothing he could do about it. Before long, both his battalion and 1st Bn./105th IR nearby were completely overrun and cut off, the front line evaporating. The scattered few still alive were left in a desperate fight for their lives against a seemingly unending flood of crazed Japanese attackers.

One of McCarthy's Soldiers caught in these initial waves was First Lieutenant Morris Seretan, the heavy weapons platoon leader of D Company (2nd Bn./105th IR). He remembered his machine guns had devastated the first wave of Japanese soldiers, but soon their numbers overwhelmed even the thousands of rounds per minute his guns were firing. He also remembered the battle as something like out of the old American West, where groups of survivors could only circle into small pockets and try to hold out against swirling hordes of furious attackers. "It was just chaos that is unable to describe," he later recalled.

Close to his company command post, Seretan and the survivors near him tried to make their way towards it in hopes of finding others there. "As I was moving toward it," he continued, "a grenade was hurled and shattered my left elbow." Bleeding profusely, he had no choice but to keep going, but was soon hit again, this time in the groin from what was likely a bullet. This projectile was even more debilitating, penetrating through his hip and "leaving a gaping hole" in his buttocks on the other side.

Within seconds he was hit yet again, this time in his opposite leg, and he collapsed to the ground, unable to walk. Despite the pain of his injuries, he knew that to stay there in the open almost surely meant a Japanese bayonet, and he knew his only hope for survival was to hide. "I tried to push myself and crawl to get into something where I could get some cover," he remembered.

Seretan began pulling himself along the ground with one arm toward a nearby disabled halftrack. Though it felt like an eternity, he managed to reach it, but had nothing left. "With my last bit of strength, I crawled underneath," he recalled. He did not regain consciousness for almost an entire day. His wounds were so severe that any passing Japanese Soldier must have assumed him dead.

Another caught in the gyokusai was Sergeant Thomas Baker, a member of A Company, (1st Bn./105th IR). Severely wounded

early on in the fighting, he refused evacuation, staying on the line until his ammunition was gone. He began using his rifle as a club, until it became so damaged from use that it could no longer even serve that purpose. Now fading from loss of blood, a friend began to pull Baker to safety, but his rescuer was himself wounded before the two had made it more than 50 yards. Another Soldier then attempted to come to their rescue, but knowing his condition, Baker waved him off, not wanting anyone else hurt on his account.

He instead asked to be leaned up against a nearby tree and given a pistol. This was done and he was handed a .45 with only a single magazine. His comrades then departed, looking back to see him calmly facing hundreds of oncoming Japanese.

Baker's body was still propped up against that tree the next day with the pistol's slide now locked back, empty. Immediately around him were eight Japanese bodies, one for each of his rounds. For this and two other actions earlier in the battle, Baker was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Lieutenant Colonel William O'Brien, Baker's battalion commander, had been nearby during the fighting and had refused to allow the men around him to retreat, even though most of his units had been overrun and were just fighting for survival in isolated pockets. Keeping the men nearby engaged, O'Brien personally walked up and down what remained of his lines, firing at the Japanese from a pistol in each hand. He was hit in the shoulder, but refused to be evacuated, continuing to fire his pistols while a medic bandaged up the wound. Then, running out of ammunition, he grabbed a rifle from one of the wounded nearby, then yelled to the others around him to form a new defensive line, concluding his orders with, "don't give a damn inch."

As they moved to set this up, O'Brien saw an abandoned jeep with a .50 caliber machine gun silent as a battle went on around it. A single round from the gun could easily tear through several men, and with the Japanese coming towards them in such densely-packed waves, the fire it could bring to bear was invaluable in such a moment. He ran over and jumped into the jeep's rear area, stood behind the gun and began firing the weapon into the masses charging towards him.

"When last seen alive he was standing upright," the citation for his Medal of Honor reads, "firing into the Japanese hordes that were then enveloping him." Thanks to his leadership, 1st Bn./105th IR held. "Obie was one of the boys that day," Sgt. John Breen remembered, "he died right on the frontline with us."

Not far behind them was Captain Benjamin Salomon. Originally the 105th Infantry Regiment's dentist, he had realized that there was far less demand for dental work in their present circumstances on Saipan, so he volunteered to serve as the battalion surgeon for 2nd Bn./105th IR after theirs had been wounded by a mortar round the week before.

In the early morning of July 7, Salomon was busy treating the dozens of wounded that were increasingly starting to arrive at his aid station. At one point he looked up to see a Japanese Soldier bayoneting one of the wounded that was lying on the ground just outside his tent. Salomon took up his rifle, shot the assailant, then set the gun down and resumed treating his patient.

Two more Japanese appeared at the entrance of the tent, but his medical staff were able to dispatch them without too much trouble. Moments later however, four more began crawling in under the tent's canvas walls. Salomon ran over, kicked a knife away from one, grabbed a rifle and shot another, then rushed over and bayoneted a third. Turning to the fourth, he hit the assailant in the stomach with the butt of his rifle, then a wounded man nearby shot

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ABOVE: According to his posthumous Medal of Honor citation, 105th Infantry Regiment commander Lt. Col. William O'Brien, center, was last seen alive on July 7 manning a jeep-mounted .50-caliber machine gun "firing into the Japanese hordes that were then enveloping him." OPPOSITE: Trapped on the north end of Saipan, the Japanese launched a suicide attack (gyokusai) on July 7, 1944. Marine 105mm howitzer batteries such as this one leveled their guns, firing directly into the oncoming waves of attackers, before being forced to abandon them. INSET: PFC Harold C. Agerholm, 19, evacuated 45 wounded men over three hours before he was killed by a sniper. Agerholm was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

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and killed the Japanese before the dentist-turned-rifleman could attempt another blow.

Clear now that the aid station was just seconds from being overrun, Salomon ordered the wounded to make their escape the best they could, then headed outside to try and buy them some time. He found a machine gun with four dead Soldiers around it and put it back into operation, sending streams of bullets tearing into the oncoming attackers. That was the last Salomon was seen alive, but his efforts ensured a good number of wounded and aid station personnel were able to escape.

When the aid station was cleared the next day, Salomon's body—with 24 bullet holes in it—was found still at the machine gun. There were 98 dead Japanese soldiers strewn about in front of his position.

One large Japanese group had found a gap and advanced more than 1,000 yards before running into the artillerymen of 3rd Bn./10th Marines just to the southwest of the village of Tanapag. There they hit H Battery the hardest, forcing the Marine gunners to set timed fuzes so short that they burst almost as soon as they left their howitzers' tubes, converting the cannons into large shotguns. Still the Japanese came on, forcing them to do the one act no artilleryman wants to even contemplate: abandoning their guns. One of these was 1st Lt. Arnold Hofstetter, who remembered having no choice but to do so, as the sound of gunfire got closer and closer. When it appeared their position would be attacked, Hofstetter said the gunners were told to shorten their fuzes to 4/10ths of a second.

As dawn approached, the battery held its fire until the group of soldiers approaching them could be positively identified. At 400 yards, it was determined that they were Japanese.

"After the howitzers started firing, it sounded to me like [howitzer] Numbers 3 and 4 were not firing enough, so I went to these pieces to get them firing more," Hofstetter recalled. "I got them squared away and stayed with Number 4 until Japs broke through [a] wooded ravine to the left, and I heard that word had been passed to withdraw. The firing battery fired time fuze and percussion fuze so as to get a close ricochet. Some smoke shell was fired. Cannoneers

National Archives

ABOVE: Marines survey a group of dead Japanese soldiers on Siapan, following what many believe to be the only true mass suicide attack (*gyokusai*) of the war on July 7, 1944. During the final days of the battle for Saipan, U.S. forces witnessed an estimated several thousand Japanese soldiers and civilians jump from two prominent cliffs at the northern end of the island rather than surrender. OPPOSITE: Marines, accompanied by tanks begin mopping up shortly after the *gyokusai* (Japanese suicide attack) attack finally ended on July 7, 1944. Many Japanese soldiers and civilians who did not die in the attack hurled themselves off of cliffs on the north end of Saipan to avoid capture.

were shot from their posts by machine guns and small arms… which interrupted the howitzer fire and finally made it impossible to service the piece. "

At about 0700, the surviving members of the battery fell back across a road and set up a perimeter defense in a Japanese machinery dump about 150 yards from the howitzers.

"We held out there with carbines, one BAR, one pistol, and eight captured Jap rifles. Japs got behind us and around us in considerable strength. They set up a strong point in woods to our rear," Hofstetter said. "About 1500, an Army tank came in from the right and got to the strong point and Army troops relieved us. I estimate that 400-500 Japs attacked the position. They used machine guns, rifles, grenades, and tanks."

Three Japanese tanks had appeared in the attack, one a Type 97 medium tank, another a light Type 95, and the last an odd Type 2 Ka-Mi, an amphibious tank developed by the Imperial Japanese Navy. Before the Marines had fallen back from their guns, the tanks made the error of bypassing the artillery positions, trying to keep driving further into the American rear. Despite being completely unprotected as bullets flew all around, the crew of one the howitzers bravely turned its gun completely around, depressed their tube to level, and sent a 105mm howitzer shell into the rear of the Type 97 from no more than 50 yards. The impact of the high-velocity shell and its explosion tore the tank into pieces, leaving it a burning wreck.

Even this failed to stop the onrushing Japanese, and the Marines were forced to abandon their guns, including the one that now had a direct tank kill to its credit. In their haste, the Marines failed to disable their guns as they should have. But bent on death, capture of the American guns was of little interest to the Japanese, who never bothered to use or destroy them. As a result, the Marine howitzers were quickly put back into action as soon as they were recaptured.

I Battery was hard hit as well, but slightly off to the side of the main Japanese avenue of attack, they were able to defend their positions until running out of ammunition. They then retreated further back to G Battery nearby, augmenting the defense there. Their battalion headquarters was not quite so fortunate. Located right behind H Battery, when the latter withdrew, the staff—all primarily logisticians and mechanics—took the brunt of the attack, mostly in hand-to-hand combat. Maj. William Crouch, the commander of 3rd Bn./10th Marines was killed in the ensuing struggle, along with 135 additional casualties suffered. Later they counted more than twice that number of Japanese dead around the command post area.

Not far away were the gun positions of 4th Bn./10th Marines. Similarly off to the side of the Japanese attack, they were able to hold without issue, killing roughly 85 attackers as they attempted to pass by. But Marine gunner Pfc. Harold Agerholm, a Tarawa veteran, knew that much of the other battalion had been overrun, and any survivors out there were now in desperate shape. He volunteered to go and help, leaving his relative safety and running out into the fray before him.

Finding an ambulance jeep, he drove it through where the Japanese had attacked to find and rescue any American he could. Despite the enemy still all around, for over three hours Agerholm made the trip back and forth through the Japanese to where 3rd Bn./10th Marines had been, driving as fast as he possibly could as bullets snapped all around him. Each time he did, he came across desperate and wounded men that had been left behind in the chaos, loading each of them up and driving them back to safety.

Agerholm's luck could only hold out for so long, but he managed to safely evacuate 45 wounded men—all likely strangers, but all still fellow Marines—before he was killed. Agerholm, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the third awarded for heroism above

and beyond the call of duty during the gyokusai.

The surviving Japanese then reached the headquarters of the 105th Infantry Regiment, roughly another 500 yards further. Here the gyokusai finally ran out of steam, as the Army headquarters personnel defended their position fiercely from previously-taken Japanese positions. It took several hours of close fighting in the dark, often hand-to-hand, but eventually the few surviving Japanese withdrew. Two other smaller attacks occurred that morning, including one against the Soldiers occupying Harakiri Gulch nearby, but each of these were quickly dealt with.

As daybreak finally appeared, bringing with it an immense sense of relief, the two cut off Army battalions were exhausted, out of ammunition, and down to about a quarter of their strength. Many more were missing somewhere out in the plain. Realizing that the attack had carried long past them, these various pockets instinctively began to move back to find other American units, carrying and dragging wounded comrades that they refused to leave behind.

At the same time, many of the Japanese survivors were attempting to move back towards Makunsha, resulting in running surprise clashes between them throughout the morning, but eventually the surviving Soldiers were able to coalesce into one large group. Realizing there was no hope for escape in their condition, they set up a defense around Tanapag, fighting off additional attacks long into the afternoon.

Corporal Wilfred "Spike" Mailloux was a rifleman in B Company (1st Bn./105th IR) and was one of the fortunate ones to have survived until they withdrew to Tanapag. "I was scared as hell," he recalled of the initial attacks, "when you hear that screaming—'banzai!'—who wouldn't be?" His company had fired their machine guns so frantically that before long all of their barrels had overheated. All of their rifle ammunition was exhausted soon after as well. After that he remembered, everything just "became a running street brawl."

Eventually Mailloux made it back to the Tanapag perimeter and joined the growing mixed group. Put out onto the line, at one point a Japanese Soldier ambushed him, stabbing him in the thigh with his long bayonet. "I got hurt real bad," he recalled of the encounter, but for some unknown reason the Japanese Soldier did not continue his assault and finish the helpless American off.

Mailloux then collapsed into a muddy ditch, where he soon passed out from loss of blood. Sometime later, Sgt. John Sidur, also of B Company, happened by and saw someone lying there in the mud. "I didn't know who it was," he remembered, "I just thought, boy, he looks familiar." Eventually he recognized the face as someone from his hometown back in New York. Sidur quickly

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***The Morning After the Saki Run (The Beach at Tanapag Harbor, Saipan, 07 July 1944)*, by combat artist Robert Benny shows the bodies of Japanese soldiers and their discarded weapons lying in heaps following a failed suicide charge on the island of Saipan. "This is the scene that greeted the survivors of the 27th Division after the famous big Banzai," Benny recalled. "That night the cries of American wounded were heard when the saki-mad Japanese over-ran our perimeter aid stations and showed no mercy to the defenseless wounded."**

hauled Mailloux off to safety and medical aid. Living close to one another for the rest of their lives, Mailloux and Sidur remained lifelong friends to the very end.

Nearby was a 37 mm antitank gun, manned by Soldiers from 2nd Bn./105th IR. They had been firing canister shot repeatedly into the hordes of Japanese out ahead of them, tearing gaping holes into the onrushing throngs. Throughout the course of the day however, the gun's crew had steadily been picked off, making its operation much more difficult. Yet each time it happened another man stepped in and took his place, keeping the gun in action. "As they were killed, they were rolled aside by others who continued to man the piece until they were killed and they were rolled aside," Hazard remembered after walking by. He counted 11 American bodies next to the gun, but as he moved about 100 yards further, he spotted a dike piled full of Japanese bodies.

At around noon, an American artillery barrage mistook the remnants of the two Army battalions that were clinging on for survival around Tanapag. Friendly rounds now impacting around them, many of the already battered men could take no more and began running out into the water in hopes of escape. American destroyers thankfully sent boats in to pick them up before they drifted out to sea, the Sailors onboard learning firsthand the plight of the clearly shaken men.

At about the same time, two battalions from the 106th Infantry were ordered to counterattack into the area and rescue any they could while clearing out the Japanese that were still active in the area, but the going proved slower than had been hoped. Facing tough resistance, the 106th Infantry was only able to move far enough to relieve the gun positions of the still-beleaguered 10th Marines by day's end, but could not make it all the way to the beleaguered men at Tanapag. Amtracs and DUKWs were then sent in to evacuate these survivors, finally getting them all out at around 2200.

Although unable to hold against such a massive attack, the two greatly outnumbered battalions had heroically continued to resist in their various pockets against thousands of Japanese that had surrounded them, exacting a heavy toll and leaving hundreds of their dead scattered across the Tanapag flood plain. By the time it was over, both the Army battalions had been completely decimated, suffering nearly 1,000 casualties between them, including just over 400 killed. As the day drew to a close, both effectively ceased to exist as a combat force.

The 27th Infantry Division's artillery alone had fired 2,666 rounds in just the first hour, their crews desperately feeding their guns as fast as they could without pause in an attempt to save their comrades. The Marine artillery added hundreds more shells of their own, firing just as earnestly even while at times having to simultaneously defend themselves. Both guns

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Marines take cover from sniper fire during mopping up operations after the *Gyokusai* (suicide) attack, likely looking for casualities, or pockets of the enemy. This activity continued until the 4th Marine Division reached the northern end of the Saipan on the evening of July 9, 1944, and the island was declared secure. Expected to take a week, the battle lasted 24 days. The body of the Japanese commander Lt. Gen. Yoshitsugu Saitō was found on July 11. He was buried with full military honors two days later, draped in his nation's flag.

and gunners had given all the strength they had, loading the 65-lb. or 96-lb. shells into cannon breaches unceasingly until things finally quieted down. In doing so, they had played a major role in stopping the gyokusai. Between their firing and the desperate, yet truly heroic defense of the Soldiers and Marines caught in its path, somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 Japanese dead were counted where their attack had occurred.

Japan's final act to maintain Zettai Kokubōken, its Absolute National Defense Zone, had been horrific; carried only as far as it had by the weight of human numbers. Although only succeeding in a brief disruption to American operations, all at a massively disproportionate cost compared to the ultimately inconsequential losses suffered by the Americans that morning, the gyokusai of July 7 marked, in essence, the end for the battle for Saipan.

More importantly, it signified the end for the Japanese nation as a whole; for in their own words, it marked a major strategic reversal in the overall war. Really it marked the beginning of the end. In both the air and now on land, the jewel had indeed been smashed. And doing so had accomplished virtually nothing.

Starting out as normal that morning, word of what had happened only reached the Kings (3rd Bn./25th Marines) on the opposite side of the island at around 1400. When it did, the 25th Marine Regiment ordered all units to hold their present position, wanting to see if assistance was going to be needed for what was still an unclear and tenuous situation. Accordingly, the battalions straightened up their lines and organized for defense.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Justice Chambers was curiously summoned back to regiment. "Batch [Col. Merton Batchelder] said that division had called and wanted to know where the third battalion was," Chambers remembered being told when he arrived. Even the division clearly knew who to call on when most needed.

The regimental commander had told his superiors that Chambers' Raiders were then committed and were in pretty rough shape, so could not be used to assist. Still, they told him to have Chambers hop in a jeep and conduct a reconnaissance of the area, just in case. Doing as ordered, Chambers soon found himself on the opposite side of the island, driving along the coastal plain where the gyokusai recently occurred. As he did, he took in the gruesome sight all around him. "I never saw so many Jap bodies in one restricted area."□

An active duty artillery officer, Richard M. Ingleby, has served nearly 20 years in the U.S. Army, including three combat tours in Afghanistan. He is the author of the upcoming book, Giants Among Kings: The Untold Story of one of the Most Distinguished Marine Combat Units of World War II. *Visit richingleby.com/giants-among-kings/ for more information.*

ABOVE: Kazimiera Kostewicz kneels over the body of her older sister, Andzia, killed by strafing German aircraft in Warsaw on September 13, 1939. American photographer Julien Bryan's photo, smuggled out of Nazi-occupied Poland, shocked the world. OPPOSITE TOP: The Junkers Ju-87 *Sturzkampfflugzeug* (dive bomber) was a crucial element of the Nazi Blitzkrieg, primarily in the early part of World War II in Poland, France and other European countries. Though the "Stuka" was especially effective against civilian targets, it was no match for Allied fighters. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: American photographer and documentary film maker Julien Bryan captured the first non-propaganda images of the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939.

Warsaw Witness

BY PETER ZABLOCKI

American photojournalist Julien Bryan documented Nazi Germany's new style of war and its atrocities in the invasion of Poland.

The large lamp shone down at him from the top of the ladder, the only light in the room of this bombed-out building. After a nod from the man sitting near him, Julien grasped the microphone stand sitting on the table before him, pressed the button, and said, "President Roosevelt and the people of America, listen to my story. I speak from the besieged city of Warsaw, Poland. My name is Bryan; Julien Bryan, American photographer." It was now Friday, September 15, 1939—two full weeks after Germany invaded Poland—a time when the true evil of Nazi Germany remained unknown. The American, trapped in Warsaw, would soon ensure that it was known to the entire world.

On the train headed for Warsaw in early September, Bryan had at first thought it odd that the conductor was no longer checking for train tickets. But as he would later write in his 1940 memoir, *Siege*, "with so many bombs to think about, why bother about railroad tickets?"

In the beginning the train had stopped at every sighting of overhead aircraft and asked the passengers to evacuate, before reboarding and proceeding, but it had since ceased even to mention the German Luftwaffe Stuka bombers whistling above. It had been a week since the German armies crossed the Polish border on September 1, and four days since France and Britain had declared war on Hitler's Reich—the Second World War had begun.

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ABOVE: Residents of Warsaw search for the bodies of their neighbors in the rubble of an apartment building destroyed by a German bombing raid in September 1939. LEFT: Filmmaker Julien Bryan comforts Kazimiera Kostewicz, 12, who has just seen her older sister machine-gunned to death in a potato field in Warsaw in September 1939. When Bryan returned to Poland in 1958, the pair posed for a similar photo. OPPOSITE: Zygmunt Aksienow sitting outside the ruins of his apartment building with his canary, the one possession he could save. American photographer Julien Bryan documented the devastating results of the Nazi attack on Warsaw in September 1939.

Just days earlier, Bryan had found himself without an assignment in the Swiss mountains after filming his latest travel documentary about peasant life in Holland. The 40-year-old photojournalist, lean and wiry from years of travel and fieldwork, now headed into the capital of a besieged nation through Romania in hopes of capturing some early war images and moving pictures. While still in Bucharest, Bryan unsuccessfully attempted to reach the American minister or military attaché in Poland. He tried to gauge the level of danger for a potential brief stint in the country, all while simultaneously planning his departure just a few days after arrival. When he finally got through to the American Embassy and the American Consulate in Warsaw, the woman explained to him in perfect Polish-accented English that the staff was away for the week, resting after a whirlwind few days. In retrospect, had he managed to reach the American minister, himself preparing to evacuate with his entire staff, Bryan would likely have been on a train in the opposite direction. Instead, he was traveling through the crater-ridden Polish countryside on a slow train, delayed by frequent attacks from the air.

Europe had been teetering on the brink of catastrophic conflict since the late spring of 1939. While the American freelance journalist was documenting Holland, Hitler's Germany had already absorbed Austria in March of 1938 and seized the Sudetenland later that same year. Emboldened by the Western powers' appeasement, Germany's aggression eastward continued unopposed. Poland, situated between Germany and the Soviet Union, refused

Hitler's demands for territorial concessions and attempted a hurried mobilization in opposition to France and Britain's wishes to avoid provoking the Nazi leader. Following the signing of the German and Russian Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact on August 24, 1939—which secretly divided Poland into spheres of influence—the vulnerable Poles saw no other choice but to prepare for the worst. With Polish spy networks reporting German concentration of armored divisions and Luftwaffe units along the Polish border, the sense of inevitability was unmistakable. When he first embarked on his journey into Poland in late August, Julian knew he was likely heading into a war zone, but he never imagined that it would erupt around him just hours after he crossed the country's border.

The train lurched to a stop around 1 a.m. Bryan looked out the window into complete darkness in every direction—this was no Warsaw. "Last stop! All out for Warsaw!" shouted the conductor. It was September 7, 1939, and Bryan soon learned from the driver of a horse-drawn wagon, whom he had paid five dollars, that the capital's station lay in ruins from recent bombing. After a quiet ride through the night, Bryan thanked his driver, got his room key from the concierge at the front desk, and made his way through the dark hallways of Hotel Europejski searching for the correct number on the door. With electricity cut off, candles burning within mason jars illuminated the staircases with a lone lit-up candle inside a bottle sitting on the ground, indicating his room. Bryan gave up sleep after an air-raid signal forced him and the remaining guests into the basement for hours, where they heard a crash of a bomb right in the hotel's courtyard.

After a cold-water bath and a shave, Bryan set off on foot toward the American Embassy building a mile away at 29 Ujazdowska Street, "the Fifth Avenue of Warsaw." Sandbags covered storefronts, their windows taped over with paper. Soldiers and citizens alike hurried nervously from neither here nor there—waiting for the next air-raid siren. It was a state of existence Bryan would soon know all too well. He pounded on the embassy door at 9 a.m., American passport in hand. Squeezing past refugee Americans standing in the cramped hallway, Bryan made it to the clerk's desk and asked to see the American Ambassador. The blond woman looked up and informed him that Anthony Biddle and the entire embassy staff had left two days before, along with the Polish President, the government, the entire general staff, most of the foreign diplomats, and the foreign press. The Polish government would go on to represent their nation from exile, first in France and later in Britain.

Bryan learned that only eight consular officers, a commercial attaché, and a doctor from the U.S. Public Health Service remained to help look after American property and assist American refugees. By now, the thought that coming to Warsaw was a mistake had crossed his mind multiple times. Still, the allure of being seemingly the only photographer in a besieged city, where all other correspondents, motion-picture reporters, and press photographers had fled, looked like a perfect opportunity. Although he had his press credentials to show to the Foreign Office, its staff had long left Warsaw. If he were to stay, it would be up to him to secure permission to travel freely throughout the Polish capital. Openly carrying a camera as a foreigner, where most Poles suspected anyone who did not speak their language, would be dangerous enough, and taking pictures or filming was out of the question.

Bryan turned to the only authority he could find, Mayor Stefan Starzynskiand, the hero of the besieged city. Overjoyed that there was still a representative of the West in Warsaw who could document the Polish struggle for the outside world to see, the stoic Pole not only granted him a press pass but also saw to it that Bryan had a car and a driver who would serve as his interpreter. "The rest of us must stay, but you—you must finally get out with your pictures," the heavy-set Starzynski exclaimed. "Your pictures may prove to be of real importance—so that the world may know what has happened here." As Bryan stood listening to Starzynski, air sirens bellowed outside, followed by distant explosion sounds. Unflinching, the Mayor just kept on talking.

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Walking toward the garage to meet his new driver Bryan counted 42 German planes flying in formation overhead. To 31-year-old Thaddeus Pawlowski, an Oxford-educated captain of the Polish Army and son of a well-known Warsaw surgeon, who greeted him from behind the wheel of a German-made car, none of that seemed to matter. Like his boss upstairs, Pawlowski remained calm, resourceful, and presumably fearless. With

carte blanche credentials to go anywhere and photograph anything, the two men set off immediately to document a city besieged by a new evil—one whose horrors the world was not yet ready to face.

The German attack on Poland in 1939 was not just the start of a second world war, it was the first strike in a new era of war. Unlike the static trench warfare, artillery barrages, and slow, attritional battles of the Great War, *Blitzkrieg* ("lightning war") relied on fast-moving armored divisions, closer air support from the Luftwaffe, and coordinated infantry advances. The mechanized Nazi armies swept through the Polish countryside with overwhelming speed.

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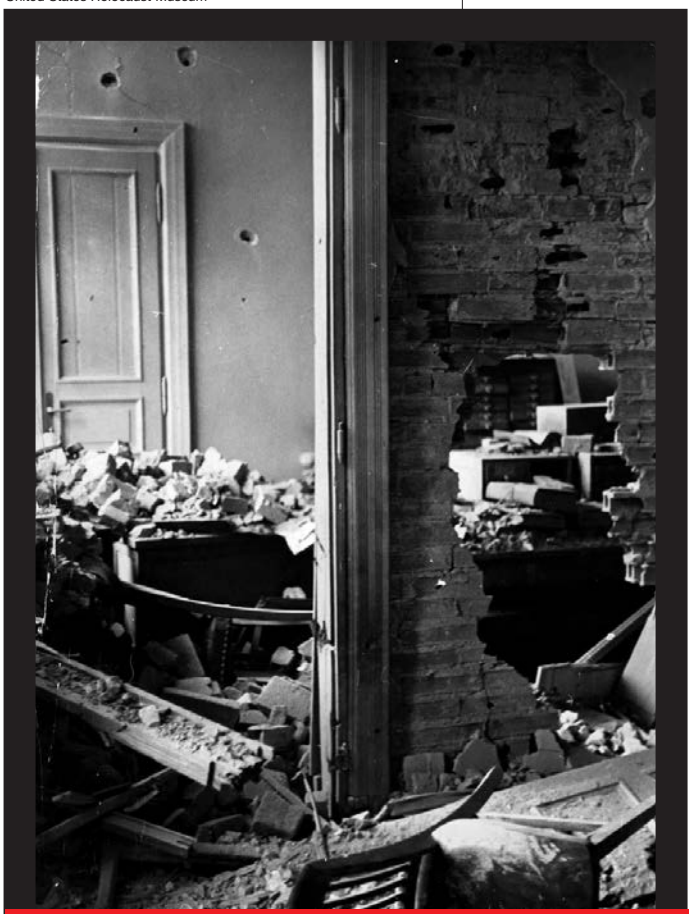

ABOVE: The U.S. Consulate was damaged during the German bombing of Warsaw in September 1939. OPPOSITE-TOP: More destruction in Warsaw—a streetcar hit by a bomb—documented by American Julien Bryan in September of 1939. OPPOSITE-BOTTOM: When news came of the first German troops entering Warsaw, consular staff hung American flags from every window of the American Embassy, spreading the largest on the roof to warn off German pilots acting as artillery spotters.

Equally crucial to the ultimate victory was the psychological impact of aerial bombardment, one that the world had not yet experienced, but which would become a staple of the conflict. The Luftwaffe dominated the skies over Poland, carrying out intensive bombing raids on major city centers in addition to the traditional military targets and transportation hubs. In Warsaw, the air campaign was especially relentless as its railroads, bridges, and communication centres were ripe for destruction and the cutting off of reinforcements and supplies.

Bryan's lens witnessed widespread panic, mass evacuations, and the destruction of homes and public buildings. The relentless aerial assaults mentally and physically wore down even the most motivated defenders, scurrying to build improvised defenses. The Poles believed that if Warsaw could hold out, reinforcements would arrive—even as the speed and coordination of the German Blitzkrieg was rapidly making that reality impossible. Still, the people held on to hope.

Bryan and Pawlowski drove past civilians and soldiers as they worked together to block key streets with rubble, carts, furniture, and even vehicles to slow down the inevitable German advance. As they sought out key areas for Bryan to document, Pawlowski was forced to take circuitous routes as they continued to encounter trenches dug up along streets and open areas. The Poles could not know that the bombing of Warsaw and all rail lines and roads leading up to it in just the first week, had already made a prolonged siege unnecessary. Reinforcement, food, and supplies were not coming.

The car stopped across the street from a maternity hospital building, all of its windows broken by a 500-pound bomb that tore into the apartment building directly across it. The blast, like an ice cream scoop, took out a large portion of the residential building before reverberating to the nearby structures. Bodies of men, women, and children lay sprawled on the ground before it, "torn to pieces by bombs and sometimes without heads or arms or legs." Bryan set up his camera and began recording the carnage. He took no pleasure in his task. "I was in Warsaw, whether I liked it or not, making a historical record on film of what happens in modern war," he would later write. "People might not believe my story if I told it in words when I return to America, but everyone would believe my pictures."

The women and newborns, some just days old, already bandaged from shrapnel injuries, were all moved into the hospital's cellar hallways. After recording the young mothers' plight and taking pictures, Pawlowski drove Bryan to a Kodak laboratory in town to develop the film. On the way, they passed a cemetery where a bomb had recently left a large crater, scattering bodies, bones, and skulls across the adjacent streets.

From there, Bryan walked to a bombed-out church, but not before he spoke with and recorded a family preparing a meal in the ruins of what had once been a home, now reduced to only four walls, with the sky and clouds serving as its ceiling. A little girl, thinking the American was hungry, offered him her share. Bryan could not help thinking of his wife and infant son safely back home across the ocean and out of harm's way.

As Bryan and Pawlowski made their way toward their next stop, Bryan noticed bullet holes on the building walls made by strafing German airplanes, hunting from just above treetops. Rubble and blown-out buildings greeted them on every corner. An old woman held two silver spoons and a pair of scissors she managed to dig out of the pile of rubble that had been her home. Countless dead horses lay decaying on the streets; nobody was available to remove them.

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The church was an old wooden building, or what was left of it. High above on the tower, the clock's hands frozen permanently in time, pointed to 11:15 a.m. when the German bomber struck the unsuspecting patrons during Sunday morning mass, killing all inside. "Each night at five-thirty, the Nazis sent over more bombers, and each morning a whole new section of the city was destroyed," Bryan remembered. The people moved to another part of the city in hopes of family members taking them in. "Poor and rich mixed together, but money no longer had any meaning," he continued. "Always the goods they tried to save were the same—food and bedclothes… blankets, mattresses, and bread were the most precious possessions."

Pawlowski next drove by a small field at the edge of town where they had heard the loud rattle of machine guns, though it was quiet by the time the two men stopped. Seven women had been digging potatoes in the field when two German planes swooped down from the sky and dropped two bombs on a nearby home. Then the Nazi pilots turned around and strafed the field, killing two of the women. While Bryan was photographing the bodies, a blond girl about 10 years old ran up and stood transfixed by one of the dead women that his camera had just immortalized. The body was that of the little girl's sister, who, having never seen death, could not understand why her sister would not speak to her.

"What happened?" she cried. Then she knelt down and touched her dead sister's bloody face and drew back in horror. "Oh my beautiful sister," she screamed through tears. "What have they done to you?!" Bryan stood motionless as he captured a moment that would become one of the most infamous photographs from World War II. The girl continued speaking to the dead body. "Please talk to me! Please, oh, please! What will become of me without you?!" The child finally noticed the American standing close by. She looked at him and the two accompanying Polish officers who had arrived at the scene. "I threw my arm about her and held her tightly, trying to comfort her. She cried. So did I," Bryan later recalled. "What could we, or anyone else, say to this child?"

Nurses and doctors examine their hospital after one of the many German air raids on Warsaw during the September 1939 Siege of Poland.

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By September 13 the German artillery was within range of Warsaw and Bryan's travel, like that of all the city's inhabitants, was severely hampered. He had spent nearly a week documenting the destruction. "The idea was apparently not to destroy buildings with artillery, but to kill as many pedestrians as possible," Bryan later recalled. He'd had a chance on Tuesday, September 12, to escape when the American military attaché, who had been away from the city, snuck back into Warsaw to collect his uniform and U.S. credentials, believing it was no longer safe to travel in Poland without them. The man offered Bryan a space inside the already cramped car full of other dignitaries, but he chose to remain. Within four days, Warsaw would be surrounded and all roads to and from it would be closed. Poland's temporary capital of Lublin would also be captured, and Bryan's fate would no longer be in his own hands.

When Bryan moved into the American embassy building from his hotel that same Tuesday, it was already occupied by 50 other refugees, with more arriving each day. The consular staff still numbered 10 men, including the man in charge, John Kerr Davis. The U.S. Foreign Office diplomat who once helped coordinate the evacuation of American staff and personnel during the 1927 Nationalist Revolution in China had transferred to Warsaw during the early summer, unaware that just a couple of months later, he would be tasked with performing the same miracle for the American citizens of Poland. Bryan highlighted Davis' bravery and that of the other consul members. "While all others hurried away to safety, these men stayed behind to protect American lives," he wrote, "they would have liked to have left Warsaw, but they stayed."

Because the American embassy was never meant to be used as a hotel, Bryan and the initial refugees slept on the basement floor as all new stragglers were directed to the dugout shelter out back. Consular staff member Douglas Jenkins Jr., became the commissary of food, which mainly consisted of canned fruit, flour, rice, and butter—not much, but more than the Poles outside the building's walls could hope to secure. "Bacon and eggs and orange juice we had to do without," recalled Bryan. "But, hot coffee and a thin slice of bread apiece made a breakfast that saved the day."

When it became evident that Germans would soon be entering the city, Bryan assisted the other staff in burning classified documents and blank passport booklets. The latter were especially difficult to burn, so the men had to labor at mutilating and tearing them to pieces before throwing them in the fire. Then came the news of the first German troops entering the city's outskirts. The men within the embassy building collected all available American flags, the largest of which was 10 by 15 feet, and hung them around the outside of the building from the windows, with the biggest stretched out on the roof to warn off German pilots acting as artillery spotters. Volunteers, Bryan included, spent hours digging large trenches in the backyard, not for protection, but to fill sandbags to barricade the 20 or so basement windows.

The Americans were not the only people who called the embassy home. "The bravest

women I knew in Warsaw were five Polish girl secretaries who had worked for the American consular officials," Bryan recalled. The refugee Americans called them the "Five Generals." They were always the last ones to leave their posts during the air raids and the first ones back at their desk, near the miraculously working telephone, and transcribing radio reports. The five also volunteered to go outside the embassy gates each day to barter for food, vegetables, and much-needed supplies. Bryan never forgot the day he and the others hung up flags all over the building, with the help of the "Five Generals," who uttered not a word. "They knew our flags were signals to the Germans, asking for special privileges, for which they as Poles could not or would not ask."

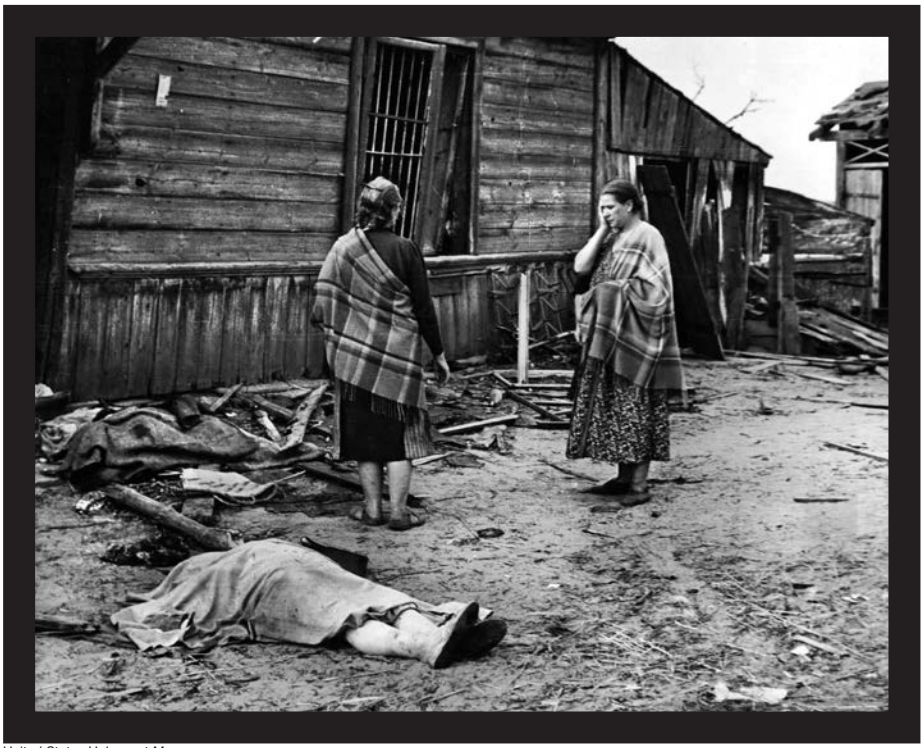
As hours stretched into days, the food rations declined, and so did the supply of drinkable water, the last of which now filled wash tubs and buckets, mostly locked behind a door and distributed accordingly. The shelling continued day and night, with the latter being especially frightening to the young children huddled in the embassy's pitch-dark cellar. During his last seven days in Warsaw, Bryan never bathed, nor did he undress, for that matter. Luckily, the radio transmitter still worked, and the Americans could follow the BBC's reports of German movements.

Other information came from Bryan himself, who continued to go out with Pawlowski to photograph and capture moving images of war-torn Warsaw. During one of these forays into the city center, Bryan came across a husband and wife with their two children who happened to own a cow. Although the American would much rather bring the family with the endless supply of milk into the embassy compound, diplomat Davis refused to allow them in. Bryan had to settle for purchasing milk and bringing it back with him to the embassy building to share with others.

On September 15, Mayor Starzynski asked Bryan to broadcast on the Warsaw station and try to get word of the situation directly to the President of the United States. When given the opportunity, Bryan made sure his 10-minute talk mentioned the names of the 10 American officials so that if the State Department heard his transmission, they could notify their families of their relative safety. Throughout the entirety of the recording, the broadcasting building shook from nearby artillery shelling, with one finally finding its mark. The American barely made it out of the crumbling building, cutting his transmission short. Outside of Poland, nobody had heard the broadcast. Still, it made Bryan a celebrity in Warsaw. For the remaining six days in the capital, he was known and often greeted by all who saw him with his camera as "the American in Warsaw."

During these last days, taking pictures was the only thing that kept Bryan's mind occupied and away from the dread of the inevitable capture or death at the hands of the Germans. The streets of Warsaw became less frightening than sitting idly in a dark basement of the embassy. The city by now was a fortress, ready for the Nazis' last push into its center. Nobody deluded themselves that reinforcements were coming, especially after the news of the Soviet invasion of Poland from the east on September 17. Warsaw had become one of the last bastions of free Poland, but time was running out.

Bryan had a chance to photograph and speak with 20 German military prisoners whose tanks and cars had plunged blindly into the Polish capital, having heard that it had



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LEFT: Misery, death and destruction during the German Siege of Warsaw in September 1939. Two women stand near the corpse of a neighbor and what is left of their homes after another Nazi air raid. BELOW: A woman killed in the bombing of her apartment building during the German Siege of Warsaw in September 1939. Known to many as, "The face of suffering Poland," this photo was taken by American Julien Bryan.

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already fallen, only to find themselves taken into custody. There were no longer defined battlelines. When asked why they were in Poland, the young Germans, all between 19 and 24, answered, "Wir Mussen (Because we must)." One German, who towered over the American, just looked at him, burst out crying, and said, "I want only to go home."

Mayor Starzynski kept up the city's morale with his daily radio broadcast. His words were always calm and brave, the message the same: Warsaw would not surrender. Because he implored the bakers, farmers, and store owners to keep their operations going for the people. Not until the city's water supply was utterly destroyed and electric power and telephones disabled, was there any official talk of surrender. Yet, even Starzynski knew that with most of Poland in Nazi and Soviet

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hands, his city stood no chance of survival.

Bryan was not surprised to receive a summons from Warsaw's mayor on Thursday, September 19. An exhausted-looking Starzynski told him, "It's time for you to get out. It is tremendously important that you escape with these films and let the world know what the Nazis did to Warsaw."

Bryan knew he should leave Warsaw, but the problem lay in the fact that nobody really knew how. He had spent the last couple of days laboring to carry all the camera equipment with Pawlowski, after an artillery shell had destroyed their car one evening. But that was not the only thing that made his task more difficult. The streets were becoming too dangerous, especially later in the day. Night sniping from spies, Nazi sympathizers, or Wehrmacht snipers made travel impossible. The shellfire had become so intense that it

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ABOVE: Cut off from the countryside as well as the outside world during the Siege of Warsaw, women line up for bread rations during the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939. LEFT: Acting as driver, guide and translator,Thaddeus Pawlowski, explains to a Warsaw policeman that Julien Bryan is an American photographer, not a German spy. OPPOSITE: This image captured by American photographer Julien Bryan showed the outside world the true devastation inflicted on Warsaw during the 1939 invasion bolstered by German propaganda accusing Poland as the aggressor.

was difficult to find a building in Warsaw with its windows intact.

Now, another day and a gloomy morning, a tired Bryan forged on behind Pawlowski through one of Warsaw's neighborhoods, both men weighted down by the cameras and tripods. A boy walked dazedly back and forth on top of a pile of rubble that had come off his apartment building, exposing three full floors. While the adults around him were busy pulling out dead bodies from among the bricks, he held on dearly to the one possession he was able to save—a canary in its cage.

They passed near the charred buildings of the Jewish quarter of the city. The Germans had dropped incendiary bombs on the district the evening of September 16, the Jewish New Year. The Nazi pilots' precision resulted in razing 20 city blocks and leaving thousands of Jews homeless. Bryan came across a young woman sitting and staring blankly at the black remains of what had been a three-family home. There was no trace of her apartment, nor of the eight members of her family. Bryan looked at the woman, lifting the camera to his eye. It was an action that weighed on him more and more, but he felt compelled to continue. He felt a raindrop and then saw one slide down his lens. The rain would have been a blessing had it come a few days sooner.

With the Poles unwilling to surrender Warsaw, the Americans holed up in the embassy knew that it meant the destruction of the city. Bryan carried a typewriter from one of the embassy offices to the cellar, where he sat down and typed out a farewell letter to his family—it seemed silly to apologize for getting killed, and yet, his fingers kept hitting the keys.

At 1:30 in the afternoon of September 21, came the word over the local radio—the German army would cease all hostilities for three hours, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., during which all foreigners with passports from neutral countries would be evacuated. Bryan, who was luckily still at the embassy when the news came through, now watched as the Five Generals frantically made more than 100 phone calls to get the word out to every American still in Warsaw not sheltering in their building. The women rounded up and helped everyone organize though

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they, as Poles, could not go.

While some of the embassy workers chose to remain behind, Bryan, with three small rolls of film tucked away in his small briefcase, made his way among more than 100 other Americans toward the designated meeting point in front of Hotel Bristol. He left all of his cameras and equipment behind to draw less attention to himself. If caught, all of his work would have been for nothing. Above him, German planes dropped leaflets instead of bombs. Picking one up, he read "Poles, give up. Your government has deserted you. Surrender your arms. If you do not do this at once, we will be obliged to bomb you from the air and to shell you with our artillery." It all seemed like a moot point.

By the time Polish army trucks arrived to transport the foreigners toward the German lines, the group numbered more than 1,000 from some 30 nations, including Americans, Swiss, Italians, French, and as well as individuals from various other nationalities.

Seeing a woman struggling to get onto the back of the truck with her baby, Bryan set his suitcase down to help her. To his dismay, when he looked down again, his briefcase was missing. Without drawing attention to the misplaced bag, lest anyone become suspicious of what it contained, he reluctantly found a seat on the truck. They reached the German lines just as the clock struck 5 p.m., marking the end of the temporary truce. Bryan did not need to look at his watch; he could hear the artillery shells whistling in the distance. The German soldiers, on the other hand, helped hold babies, transfer women from the Polish trucks to their own motor pool, which would bring them all to a nearby train station. They picked up suitcases, offered their coats to women who appeared cold, and showed courtesy and chivalry to all. "Having shelled and bombed us for weeks, now they carried our grips and patted babies," Bryan thought to himself. The Nazi press stood off to the side, joyfully recording the benevolent Germans for all the world to see.

At the train station, Bryan searched for his suitcase, all the while worrying that the German authorities, checking passports and separating the men and women into their respective nationalities, would recognize his name from the broadcast he had given days before. The anxiety was not without warrant. When Bryan preemptively asked another American to hold on to a note he had written to his wife, stating that the Germans might detain him in Warsaw, and to mail it once the man arrived in the States, he refused. "I can't do it," he said. "You're a marked man and will doubtless be sent to a camp. It's too big a risk. If they find a letter from you on me, they might suspect me." Everything seemed lost. Not only had he no pictures and film to show for all his efforts, but he might never make it back to his wife.

Luckily, the German authorities did not flag his passport. Instead, they let him proceed toward the city of Königsberg, in East Prussia, where a meal and a hotel awaited the foreigners. The refugees would stay in their respective quarters and await extradition by their governments, with the Italians receiving preferential and fast-tracked treatment due their alliance with Germany.

The American designated hotel was across the street from a motion-picture theatre, and Bryan could not stop himself from going in. All the city businesses were open, all the street lamps on—it was as if the war with Poland

was already over. He got his ticket and sat down to watch a newsreel. It depicted the devastation of Poland, but was careful to show no human cost, as if the Germans were proud of leveling buildings and blowing up bridges. Bryan noted that throughout the entire 30-minute film, and even at its end, which showed Hitler fraternizing with soldiers, there was not once a sound of applause. Nobody would convince him that the ordinary Germans wanted this war.

After sending his wife a cable that he was "Safe and well," the American returned to his hotel and to a lobby full of bags and suitcases that had arrived a day late from the train station. To his surprise and suppressed joy, his briefcase was right among the others.

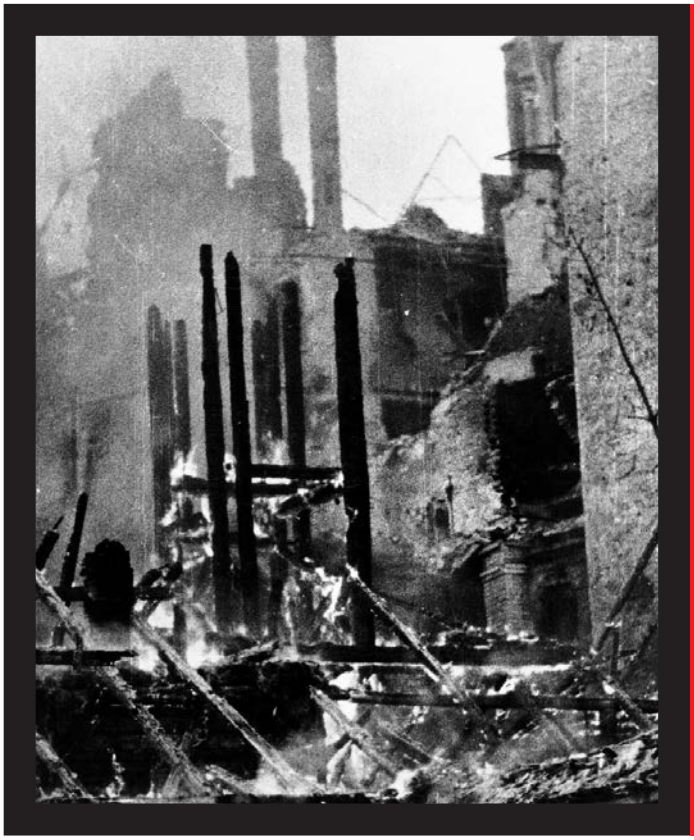
With news that there would be room on the Swedish delegation's designed train to neutral Lithuania, early the next day, Bryan once more tried his luck in soliciting help. This time, he turned to a couple of refugees he knew well from their time at the embassy. One of them, an older man who had managed to get his hands on a gas mask that he was bringing back to the United States as a souvenir, agreed to lend it to a young teenage girl, who would claim it as her own keepsake while hiding inside it the three rolls of film. Bryan would meet her six weeks later in New York, where, smiling and finally safe from danger, the American youth handed him the work that would make him famous.

Despite Bryan's worries, the rest of the trip Stateside proved uneventful. From Lithuania, he and others traveled to Latvia. Using his connections at the American Embassy in Riga, Bryan managed to secure a place on a plane to Stockholm and then a Norwegian boat sailing from Oslo to New York. But not before the American consulate in Latvia provided him with an English-speaking stenographer who, for eight hours, took down the notes of the photojournalist's experiences in Warsaw. His press dispatches were sent and would arrive stateside before their author, who would spend another week on a ship bound to America.

When the ship finally docked in New York on October 7, 1939, a business associate, with whom Bryan had given lectures on his travels at schools, universities, and civic organizations before the war, was waiting with his family members. While Bryan's wife hugged him with tears in her eyes, relieved to have him home, the business partner, with a stern and serious face, remarked, "Do you realize that you're five days late for your lecture?" Bryan looked at him, dumbfounded. "I was back in America," he thought to himself.

The world first saw Julien Bryan's monumental work through the full-page spreads of American newspapers, with headlines similar to those of *The Bangor Daily News* of Maine, which proudly proclaimed, "News Presents FIRST UNCENSORED Pictures of Doomed Warsaw." *LIFE* magazine soon published a multi-page feature in late 1939 for the national

Both photos: United States Holocaust Museum



LEFT: Burning, bombed-out buildings were a daily sight for American photographer Julien Bryan as he documented the suffering of Poland's capital city during the German invasion of 1939. ABOVE: The constant bombing and shelling of Warsaw in September 1939 resulted in damaged and overcrowded hospitals. OPPOSITE: Overseen by a Polish soldier, civilians dig antitank trenches in a Warsaw street in September 1939. Workers were enlisted to help as they walked by during the Siege of Warsaw as the Nazi tanks and ground troops closed in.

United States Holocaust Museum

and international audience.

Because of strict controls placed on foreign journalists in occupied Poland, his 6,000 feet of 16mm films and 500 images were the only ones worldwide to show the human cost of modern warfare. By the time the Hollywood production company, RKO Pictures, agreed to distribute his documentary film, *Siege*, in early 1940, Bryan had already become known as the man who provided the world with the first visual proof of Nazi atrocities, many of which had previously been shielded from the reality of European conflict.

Bryan's contributions transcended popularity in the press, leading the photojournalist to travel the country on speaking tours, sharing his story and that of the brave Polish people of Warsaw to packed halls and auditoriums. The most important of these talks, however, took place in a more intimate setting, just weeks after his return to the U.S., in the Oval Office of the White House. It was not a formal visit, nor did the press report on it. President Franklin D. Roosevelt listened attentively as Bryan narrated his film and described his pictures. Roosevelt asked a lot of questions about the plight of the Poles, expressing his admiration for the young reporter. Bryan finally felt he had completed the mission assigned to him, months earlier, in a bombed-out office of the Warsaw Mayor—he had told the world what the Nazis had done to Poland, and if not stopped, would continue doing to all free people of the world.

After weeks of fighting, and total casualties reaching 30,000 within the city, the Polish command in Warsaw finally surrendered to the Nazis on September 27, 1939. By the end of that month, with Soviet Armies occupying its eastern lands, and the Germans taking the west, Poland had been completely overrun and no longer existed as an independent state. In total, the September campaign had cost nearly 130,000 Polish lives. By the time of the war's end, the nation would suffer six million deaths, including three million Polish Jews.

Bryan thanked Roosevelt, collected his materials, and walked out into the brisk early winter air of Washington, D.C. He thought back to the windowless buildings in Warsaw and the scarcity of coal, electricity, and food… and to his friend, Mayor Stefan Starzynski, whom he would dedicate his book, also titled *Siege*, the following year. Viewed as a symbol of national resilience and a potential rallying point for resistance, the Gestapo detained Starzynski the day of Warsaw's capitulation when Bryan was still awaiting transport from Oslo to New York. The exact circumstances of his death are unknown, but he is believed to have been killed when the Nazis carried out mass executions of Polish intelligentsia, officials, and resistance figures in late 1939 and early 1940.

Undoubtedly, the question on his mind that early winter of 1939 as he walked toward his automobile parked in the shadow of the White House, the nearby Capitol building, and the towering Washington Monument, was whether the world was ready for what was coming, and when it was all said and done, whether freedom and liberty would prevail. □

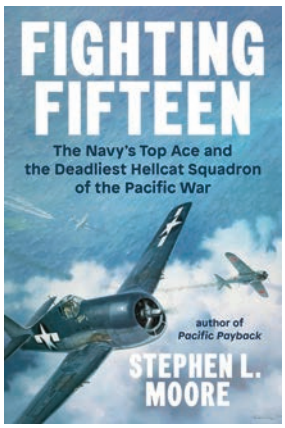
Peter Zablocki is the host of the History Shorts *podcast. He is currently working on writing a book about Poland during World War II, which, among others, tells the story of Julien Bryan.*

Official U.S. Navy Photograph/National Archives

Squadron 15 Commander David McCampbell's Grumman Hellcat *Minsi II* undergoes maintenance on the deck of the USS *Essex* at anchor off Saipan in July 1944. McCampbell was the Navy's top ace, credited with shooting down 34 enemy aircraft.

Flying Grumman Hellcats, the 'Fighting Aces' of Squadron 15 were the deadliest weapons in the U.S. Navy's arsenal.

Many of the men in the new VF-15 Fighter Squadron had three things in common: a love of flying and the desperate desire to fly fighters in combat. That's where the third and most frustrating similarity came in–they were assigned to non-flying duties. Some were so desperate to fly fighters that they went north and joined the Royal Canadian Air Force.



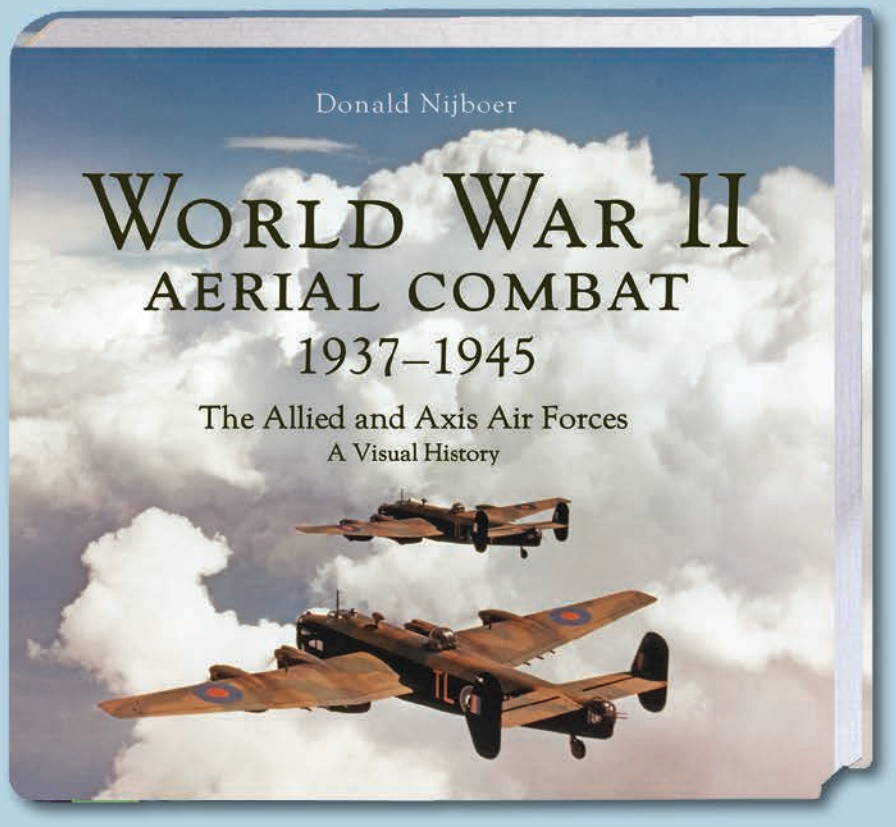
Dave McCampbell knew their frustration well. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1933 and was honorably discharged because congress had limited commissions that year. He tried the Army Air Corps, but was denied for hyperphoria, which made the vision in his right eye slant upward. He was four years out of Annapolis before he managed to get into flight school, then served two years with VF-4 on Ranger before transferring to the newly commissioned USS Wasp in 1940. By 1942, McCampbell was senior landing signal officer (LSO) on Wasp.

He kept making requests to return to fleet aviation. Finally at 33, nearing the upper age limit for a Navy fighter pilot during the war, McCampbell's persistence paid off and he was sent to New Jersey to form and command VF-15.

The Fighting Fifteenth, also known as "Satan's Playmates" and the "Fighting Aces," had a rough start in training and with their first carrier assignment, but they would go on to be responsible for taking down more enemy aircraft—310 in the air and 348 on the ground—during WWII than any other squadron in the U.S. Military.

Flying Grumman F6F Hellcats off of the carrier USS *Essex*, more than 26 pilots from the Fifteenth became aces and McCampbell led them all, becoming Navy's "ace of aces" with 34 kills, third among all Americans during the war.

A new book, showing the forgotten air forces of WWII



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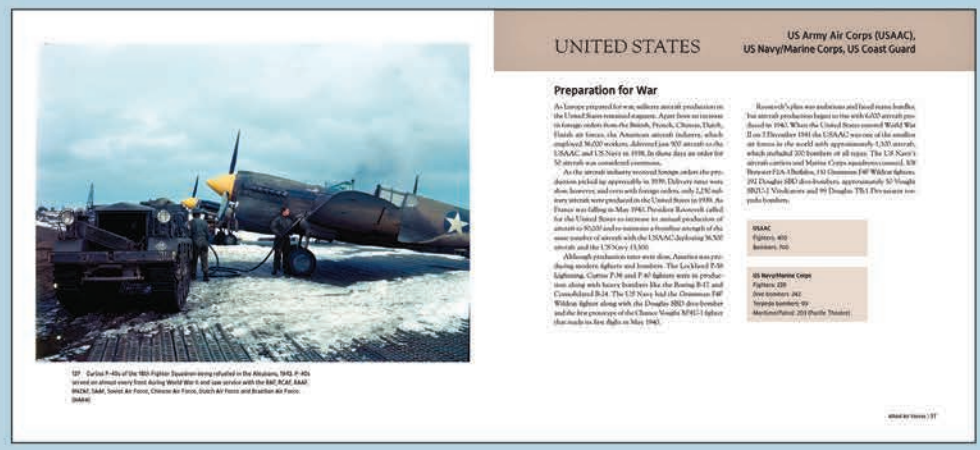
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Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

GROUND OF ACES TAKES FLIGHT WITH ITS FIRST MAJOR UPDATE, AND WOLFHOUND GOES GRUESOMELY RETRO

GROUND OF ACES

PUBLISHER BLINDFLUG STUDIOS AG • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW

The Swiss-Polish indie devs behind World War II base-building strategy game *Ground of Aces* recently gave players even more to play around with in the first major update. Following its Early Access launch in July 2025, the folks at Blindflug Studios AG celebrated with the *Scramble!!* update, which adds some significant gameplay systems and expands the overall depth of the experience.

Featuring an art style that takes inspiration from Franco-Belgian comics such as *Biggles, Buck Danny* and *Tintin, Ground of Aces* aims for a seamless mix of base-building and WWII aviation theming. In the *Scramble!!* update, players

can choose which aircraft to send off at the sound of the alarm. The update also throws aircraft auto management into the mix, forcing players to take ammo logistics and storage into consideration before, after, and during each sortie.

Beyond that, pilots and crew members can now improve six stat skills with each mission, and crews can be trained further outside of combat with the construction of training facilities. Personnel and resources can be further protected during bombing raids thanks to the ability to build durable concrete bunkers. These crew members all have their own personal stories to tell, too, making them more than a set of numbers to keep track of on a strategic spreadsheet.

All of the new additions were created to further deepen the overall strategy involved in any given game of *Ground of Aces*, which found its initial gameplay inspiration in everything from historical strategy classics like *Hearts of Iron IV* to base-building staples like *RimWorld* and *Going Medieval*.

Since its launch in July, *Ground of Aces* has received a "Very Positive" distinction across all of its reviews at the time of this writing. Being in Early Access comes with its own share of caveats, of course, so just know before diving in that you're essentially paying for a work in progress. That work has a ton of promise in it, though, and player feedback should do well to shape it further on the sometimes lengthy road to a full 1.0 launch..

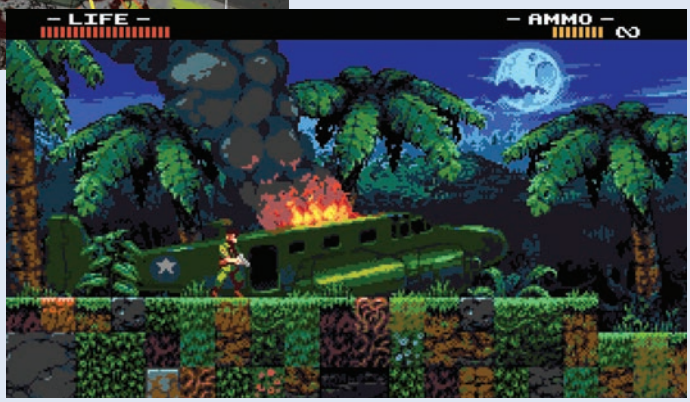
WOLFHOUND

PUBLISHER BIT KID • **GENRE** PLATFORMER • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** 2026

There are plenty of alt-history World War II games to choose from out there, but few hit quite as hard as *WOLFHOUND*, the latest from *Chasm* developer Bit Kid. This sci-fi Metroidvania is heavy on both exploration and action, and it's bringing its unique pixel art style to Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 5, and PC via Steam sometime in 2026.

While we don't have a more firm release date at the time of this writing, what we do have is a heaping helping of high hopes for what looks to be a beautifully crafted side-scroller. The story, for those who value such a thing in their '80s-style throwbacks, follows Captain Chuck "WOLFHOUND" Rossetti as he infiltrates an uncharted island to eliminate enemies and rescue the crew of a vessel that succumbed to the notorious Bermuda Triangle.

After a crash landing, Captain Chuck quickly finds himself face to face with the grotesque realities of the island. Strange creatures run rampant, all courtesy of mad Nazi scientist Dr. Steiner and his hideous experiments. As you venture forth to put an end to his vile work you'll have to scav-



enge for ammo and supplies and deal with plenty of Dr. Steiner's experimental weaponry by using his own tactics against him.

True to the Metroidvania genre—the games of which tend to put an emphasis on discovery and exploring each area with a fine-toothed comb—*WOLFHOUND* tasks players with making it through, and ultimately out of, labyrinthine environments. Steiner's fortress is riddled with secrets, surprises, and shocking mutations, and we can't wait to see what the full game has to offer. ■

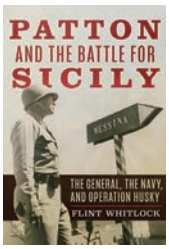
They participated in the Battle of the Philippine Sea and Battle of Leyte Gulf, and conducted strikes on the Marianas, Iwo Jima, Taiwan, and Okinawa. On October 24, 1944, in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, McCampbell would shoot down nine enemy aircraft.

Fighting Fifteen: The Navy's Top Ace and the Deadliest Hellcat Squadron of the Pacific War (Stephen L. Moore, Dutton Caliber (PenguinRandomHouse), New York, NY, 432 pp., Nov. 18, 2025 $35 HC) includes a roster of all the Fighting Fifteen pilots deployed on the USS *Essex*, a list of the top-scoring pilots, a glossary, notes, bibliography and index.

This is a must-read for military buffs and anyone who wants to know what these young men went through to get into the cockpit and finally make their way across the far Pacific to put their lives on the line for their country.

Based on numerous first-hand accounts and interviews, Moore's narrative of the tragedy and triumph of these fliers proves him to be a masterful storyteller.

Patton and the Battle for Sicily: The General, The Navy, and Operation Husky (Flint Whitlock, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 320 pp., 5 Maps, 12 b/w photos, Nov. 18, 2025 $29.95 HC)



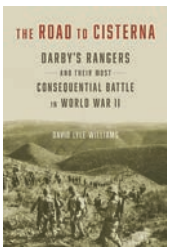
Launched on the night of July 9-10, 1943, the amphibious assault of Operation Husky was the largest the world had ever seen—more than 3,200 vessels and half a million Allied soldiers, sailors, and airmen attacked the island of Sicily, Adolf Hitler's "Fortress Europe."

In the middle of it all was George S. Patton, America's larger-than-life general and one of the most gritty, aggressive, and controversial commanders of World War II. Patton was almost pathological in his need to best his rival, Eighth Army commander Gen. Bernard Montgomery, by beating him to the key port of Messina and proving that American GIs were just as good as, if not better, than the Brits.

In chronicling the events of one of the most critical campaigns of the war, author Flint Whitlock makes use of Patton's letters and diaries to reveal his unvarnished opinions of all those around him. In addition to Montgomery, Patton held low opinions of most of the Allied command, including Eisenhower, Marshall, Clark, Bradley, Alexander.

Criticized as "wasteful," Whitlock argues that Husky began the ultimate take-down of Mussolini's fascist regime and drained Axis resources from the Russian front, which benefitted Joseph Stalin. The land-sea logistics learned in Italy would also pay huge dividends on France's Normandy coast in June 1944.

The Road to Cisterna: Darby's Rangers and Their Most Consequential Battle in World War II (David Lyle Williams, LSU Press, Baton Rouge, LA, 401 pp., 22 illustrations, 12 maps, Sept. 26, 2025, $44.95 HC)

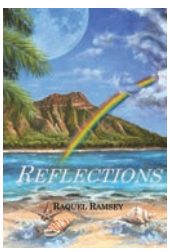


The Battle of Anzio (January 22-May 25, 1944) was aimed at bypassing the German's daunting Gustav Line in an effort to capture Rome. The amphibious forces under Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas the amphibious landing some 30 miles south of Rome was unopposed. A cautious Lucas chose to consolidate the beachhead instead of advancing. It was a costly decision, for by the time an attack was launched on January 29, the 69,000 Allies were facing 71,500 German troops.

Three Ranger battalions, some 767 men, were tasked with a night infiltration of Cisterna to secure the Conca-Cisterna Road for an attack of German supply lines the following morning. Unknown to Allied command, Cisterna was being used as a Wehrmacht staging area for relief divisions. Darby's Rangers were ambushed, with 311 killed and 450 captured, and the units were disbanded.

A former U.S. Army officer, Williams spent more than 20 years collecting the combat experiences of 160 Rangers, compiling a comprehensive history of the unit. This book allows 46 of those who fought at Cisterna to tell their story in their own words.

Reflections (Raquel Ramsey, Independent, 198 pp., 2025, $19.95 SC)



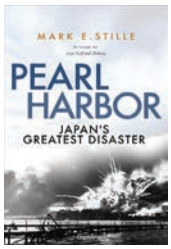
During the Japanese invasion of the islands in December 1941, 2nd Lt. Edwin Ramsey commanded the U.S. Army's 26th Cavalry Regiment (Philippine Scouts) in rearguard action that allowed Allied forces to fall back to the Bataan Peninsula. On January 16, 1942, Ramsey led what would become the last mounted charge by the U.S. Army Cavalry in history, an action that earned him a Silver Star.

Ramsey managed to avoid capture and joined Lt. Col. Claude Thorp in establishing a Philippine resistance force.

A true hero whose exploits in the Pacific are not as well known as other figures from the war, Ramsey's many awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, two Philippine Distinguished Conduct Stars, Gold Cross and Legion of Honor

Using short stories, poems, letters, and photographs, Dr. Raquel Ramsey has created a very personal portrait of her war-hero husband, to whom she was married for 34 years, until his death in 2013 at the age of 95.

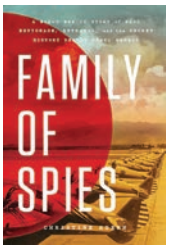
Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster (Mark Stille, Osprey/Bloomsbury Publishing, 368pp., 16-pages b.w photos, appendices, Nov. 4, 2025 $35 HC)



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"

Successfully clearing out the confusion and mythology that has entrenched itself around the event and producing what will surely be a definitive resource on the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 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.



Family of Spies: A World War II Story of Nazi Espionage, Betrayal, and the Secret History Behind Pearl Harbor (Christine Kuehn, Celadon Books, New York, NY, 272 pp., Nov. 25, 2025 $29.99 HC)

A screenwriter's letter asking what her father, 70-year-old Eberhard Kuehn, remembered about his own father's life as a spy in WWII turned journalist Christine Kuehn's world upside down.

Her grandparents, Berliners Otto and Friedel, along with their children Ruth, Eberhard and Hans, had arrived in Hawaii aboard the *Tatsuta Maru* in the spring of 1935 on their way to Japan. According to a release by the publisher, Otto's daughter Ruth met Ruth, met Nazi leader Joseph Goebbels at a party, and had an affair. When Goebbels found out she was half Jewish, he sent the family to Hawaii to spy instead of having Ruth killed.

The Kuehns were arrested the day after Pearl Harbor. Otto was sentenced to death, then sent to Leavenworth, before he was released and returned to Germany. Friedel and the children spent time at Hawaii's internment camp at Sand Island. When the rest of the family went back to Germany, Eberhard remained in the U.S. in foster care—keeping his shocking secret for decades.

World War II Aerial Combat 1937-1945: The Allied and Axis Air Forces A Visual History

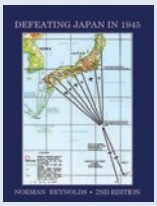
(Donald Nijboer, Firefly Books, Richmond Hill, Ont., Can., 368 pp., 300+ color and b/w photographs, index, aircraft schematics and cockpit diagrams, 2025 $39.95 HC)

Beginning with the Battle of Britain and going forward, it was clear that military aviation would become a critical component of modern warfare. The accelerated pace of aircraft development would lead to innovations reaching far into the future.

While most books on WWII aviation have focused, rightly so, on the main Axis and Allied nations, this book includes many lesser-known air forces that have been forgotten or ignored. There is plenty of coverage of the planes of the U.S., Britain, the Soviet Union, Germany and Japan. But here also is a visual history of those of Poland, Belgium, Norway, Netherlands, France, Greece, India, China, Yugoslavia, Italy, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovakia and Finland.

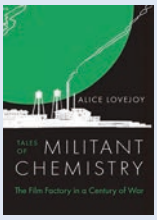
New and Noteworthy

Preserving the Legacy: Creating The National WWII Museum (Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller, with forward by Tom Brokaw, LSU Press, Baton Rouge, LA, 400 pp., June 6, 2025 $34.95 HC) The story of the official National WWII Museum dedicated to the greatest generation and those who have dedicated themselves to preserving their legacy.



Defeating Japan in 1945 (Norman Reynolds, Independent, 116 pp., $20 SC) A revised 2nd edition of the meticulously researched overview of the pivotal event of the 20th century, defeat of the Japan, with extensive maps, photographs and diagrams.

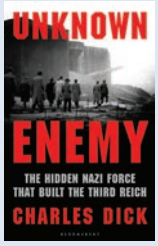
Japanese Aircraft Carriers, 1920-1945 (Ermanno Martino, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 128 pp., Nov. 11, 2025 $65 HC) In 1922, the Imperial Japanese Navy's Hosho was the first purpose-designed aircraft carrier. This book features a chapter each on 29 ships, with more than 200 photos, plans, line drawings, and color camouflage schemes.



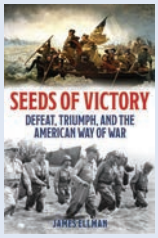
Tales of Militant Chemistry: The Film Factory in a Century of War (Alice Lovejoy, University of California Press, Oakland, CA, 256 pp., Aug. 26, 2025 $27.95 HC) Kodak's Tennessee factory refined uranium for the Manhattan Project; Germany's Agfa made rayon with camp labor in WWII and chemical weapons in the Great War.

The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz: A Story of Survival Hardcover (Anne Sebba, St. Martin's Press, New York, NY, 400 pp., Sept. 16, 2025 $32 HC) Fifty female prisoners from 11 different nations at Auschwitz-Birkenau were forced to form an orchestra by German SS officers in 1943—playing marches for the forced laborers.

World Enemy No. 1: Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and the Fate of the Jews (Jochen Hellbeck, Penguin Press, New York, NY, Oct. 21, 2025 $35) The "Jewish-Bolshevik" theory–that the Jewish revolutionaries were preparing the Soviet Union to destroy Germany—was the primary motive behind the Final Solution and the Holocaust.



Unknown Enemy: The Hidden Nazi Force That Built the Third Reich (Charles Dick, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, NY, 368 pp., Nov. 11, 2025 $29.99 HC) "Organisation Todt" (OT) was named for Hitler's favorite engineer, Fritz Todt, who built the Siegfried Line, and ran a paramilitary engineering organization on slave labor for the German war effort.



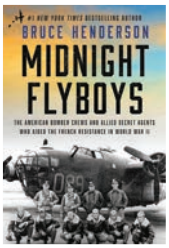
Seeds of Victory: Defeat, Triumph, and the American Way of War (James Ellman, Stackpole Books, Essex, CT (Dist. by Simon & Schuster), 336 pp., notes, bibliography, index, July 2025 $29.95 HC) From the Revolutionary War to the Korea, Ellman examines eight "pivot point" land, sea and air battles that shaped the American way of war and then uses them as a benchmark to examine more recent conflicts such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

The Girl Bandits of the Warsaw Ghetto: The True Story of Five Courageous Young Women Who Sparked an Uprising (Elizabeth R. Hyman, Harper Perennial, New York, NY, 352 pp., Oct. 14, 2025 $19.99 SC)

Led by the *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (ŻOB) (Jewish Combat Organization), the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April/May 1943 against the German SS remains one of the most famous struggles in the annals of the Holocaust. It is a history largely dominated by the story of men, but Holocaust historian and archivist Elizabeth Hyman's new book highlighting the

stories of the five Polish Jewish women such as Zivia Lubetkin, Vladka Meed, Dr. Idina "Inka" Blady-Schweiger, Tema Schneiderman and Tossia Altman, should go a long way toward restoring balance and expanding the understanding of what these women, and many others, went through as they risked their lives to become operatives in the Jewish underground and the Jewish Fighting Organization.

To the resistance, they were known as "the girls." The Nazis trying to kill them called them "bandits" as they worked in the Jewish resistance as fighters, commanders, couriers, and smugglers.



Midnight Flyboys: The American Bomber Crews and Allied Secret Agents Who Aided the French Resistance in World War II (Bruce Henderson, Gallery Books (Simon & Schuster), 336 pp. Nov. 11, 2025 $30 HC)

Flying classified missions under the cover of darkness to support underground resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied Europe is not the kind of volunteer work that garners much contemporary press. It's not uncommon for those who volunteer for secret missions to remain out of the public consciousness and popular history for decades. For 50 years their exploits were classified. Not until 2018, 75 years after they started, were the "Carpetbaggers" of the 801st/492nd Bombardment Group of Eighth Air Force publicly recognized with the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Five years before the CIA, there was the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), who in 1943 began recruiting American bomber pilot volunteers to make low-level night drops of supplies and weapons to French resistance fighters. These Carpetbaggers were recruited from two squadrons that flew B-24 Liberators on sub-hunting missions. The OSS command reasoned that this kind of pilot was perfect for the mission they had in mind. Rather than flying in large formations to drop bombs, these men flew "solitary planes on long patrols with crews that did their own navigation and then dropped to very low altitudes to attack their targets."

A #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, Bruce Henderson has synthesized voluminous declassified records and interviews into a tale that reads like an adventure novel. □

PROFILE

Continued from page 17

Wood's removal was the well-known animosity between him and Eddy. There had been a sharp exchange between the two in a railroad station outside the town of Macwiler on December 1 in which Eddy had absurdly charged that the 4th AD was not fighting as hard as it should and was not achieving its potential. Eddy even accused the outfit that had outdistanced every Allied division in Europe of moving too slowly.

Furthermore, Eddy was incensed at how Wood had kept his command so long in the 7th Army's zone during the fighting with Panzer Lehr. Leaving a battle before it was finished was incomprehensible to Wood, so he lingered long enough to complete the total rout of this crack outfit. Eddy and Wood had never worked well together, and the blow-up might have been worse had Wood not walked out in the middle of it. One of his officers, Brig.-Gen. Hal C. Pattison, believed Eisenhower and Patton caved to Eddy's pressure and essentially fired Wood.

The 4th Armored Division's new boss was former 3rd Army chief-of-staff Maj.-Gen. Hugh H. Gaffey. Wood was assigned to a clerical position in Fort Knox. Had Wood had been there, he might have been able to stem the avalanche of German troops and armor stampeding out of the frigid, fog-shrouded Ardennes Forest on December 16. He might have ended the Battle of the Bulge almost as soon as it started by hamstringing the Nazi counter-thrust with his own brand of blitzkrieg into its flanks—but by the time this sprawling engagement started, Tiger Jack was an ocean away.

General John Shirley Wood's postwar years were quiet and anticlimactic. He died July 2, 1966, in an era when the honoring of American war heroes was not in vogue. The burial at his cherished West Point was accordingly muted.

In four fleeting months of crucial combat he had demonstrated how to fight in a rapid, total fashion that might have ended the war in Europe markedly sooner had he been given an earlier start and leave to finish the job. Instead he was spirited away when (as it turned out) he was most needed, and never given the chance to lead the crushing of the bestial Nazi state, perhaps by year's end. □

ORDNANCE

Continued from page 23

The G series, however, proved very successful at destroying Soviet armor, leading to the formation of a dedicated Panzerjagerstaffel (tank destroyer squadron).

Oberleutnant Hans-Ulrich Rudel was the top tank-busting ace. Rudel flew more than 2,500 missions in his Ju-87G and was credited with destroying over 500 Soviet tanks. He received the highest decoration ever awarded to a German serviceman, the Knights Cross of the Iron Cross with oak leaves, swords, and diamonds, in gold.

By 1944, the role of the Stuka was relegated to second-line duties such as utility transport, anti-partisan attacks, or night operations for which two forward firing 20mm Mg 151/20 cannons, night flying instrumentation, and large flame-dampening exhaust pipes were fitted. Others were fitted out as trainers for the conversion of bomber pilots to fighter bombing duty.

It had been a slow and jolting fall from grace for an aircraft that, in its heyday, had boasted such an outstanding record. It was in service until a successful ground attack variant of the Focke-Wulf Fw-190 fighter was developed and production ceased in October 1944.

Incredibly, of the more than 5,700 Ju-87s that were built, only about 360 were ever in operational service at one time, and as losses outstripped replacements this figure dropped to less than 200 by early 1943. Most of the few hundred that survived the war were destroyed and now, regrettably, only two remain in existence as static museum displays in London and the United States. By today's technological standards, it is perhaps difficult for casual observers filing through these museums to fathom that over 60 years ago this ungainly, awkward looking dive bomber had once terrorized an entire continent.

Though often deprecated as a Nazi terror weapon, the Ju-87 Stuka was, in reality, an excellent ground support weapon rather than an outstanding aircraft. Its bold design and aerodynamic capabilities revolutionized dive bombing to such an extent that it changed the face of warfare forever, an achievement to which, in the final analysis, precious few combat aircraft can ever lay claim. □

TOP SECRET

Continued from page 27

to carry out the executions, the case was forwarded to the Office of The Judge Advocate General who, pursuant to Article of War 501/2, appointed a three-member board of review composed of judge advocates. On November 17, 1944, the three-member reviewing authority found the record of trial legally sufficient to support the findings of guilt, as well as the death sentences. The case was thereafter forwarded to the Secretary of War for review and presentation to the President of the United States.

On January 27-29, 1945, the seven German submariners were transferred to the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where they joined eight other German POWs awaiting execution for the murder of other German POWs.

Article 66 of Geneva Conventions required the United States to send notice of the POW death sentences to the German Government. By note, dated January1945, the German Government responded that it held American POWs under death sentences, too, and would execute an equal number of American POWs. On April 12, 1945, the U.S. Government received notice of the German Government's willingness to exchange the POWs in question in lieu of executions and the executions were accordingly delayed pending discussions between the two governments.

Unfortunately for the German POWs, these communications broke down on April 24, 1945, with the collapse of the German Government and its surrender on May 8, 1945. Once it was determined that all American prisoners were safely back under the control of the victorious Allies, the U.S. dropped the idea of a prisoner exchange. To add further misfortune for the German POWs, the Allies' discovery of the Nazi concentration camps also hardened resolve against the Germans for their brutal conduct of the war.

In July 1945, President Truman, while grappling with the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb against Japan in order to bring the war to an end, confirmed, with one exception, the death sentences of the 15 German POWs awaiting execution.

On March 22, 1945, at the Camp Chaffee Prisoner of War Camp in Arkansas, Edgar Menschner beat fellow prisoner Hans Geller so badly that he died the following day. Menschner was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. No official explanation has ever been offered for Truman's July 6th, 1945, decision to commute this one death sentence to 20 years of hard labor. Menschner later returned to Germany and was lost to history.

On July 10, 1945, five German POWs sentenced to death for the murder of fellow German POW Johannes Kunze were hanged at Fort Leavenworth. Suspected of giving information to the Americans, Kunze was beaten to death in Oklahoma's POW Camp Tonkawa.

Two other German POWs were tried at Fort McPherson, Georgia, and sentenced to death for the murder of fellow German POW Horst Gunther. Rudolf Straub and Erich Gauss were hanged at Fort Leavenworth on July 14, 1945. Gunther had been strangled to death at POW Camp Aiken in South Carolina and his body hung to disguise it as suicide.

On August 15, 1945, Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced the surrender of Japan after atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, killing anywhere from an estimated 110,000 to 210,000 Japanese civilians. The German POWs thought that the end of war meant they would not be executed, but returned to Germany instead, but they were mistaken.

The executions for the Drechsler case took place on August, 25 1945, beginning at one minute past midnight. Hanged one at a time in an elevator shaft in an abandoned warehouse within Fort Leavenworth's United States Disciplinary Barracks (USDB), the prison personnel, applying lessons learned from the prior executions in July, completed all seven executions in less than three hours. The graves of all seven can be found today on a secluded hillside on Fort Leavenworth in the USDB inmate cemetery. Their victim, Werner Drechsler, is buried at the Fort Bliss National Cemetery.

In addition to the 14 German prisoners executed by the U.S. military, 129 people were executed in the United States in 1945—71 by electrocution, 34 by gas chamber, 23 by hanging, and one by firing squad. □

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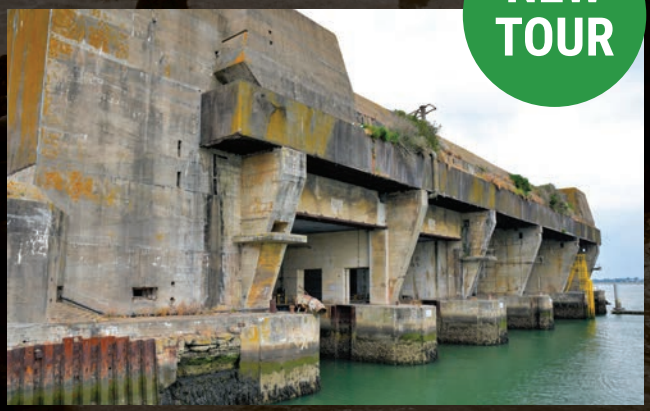

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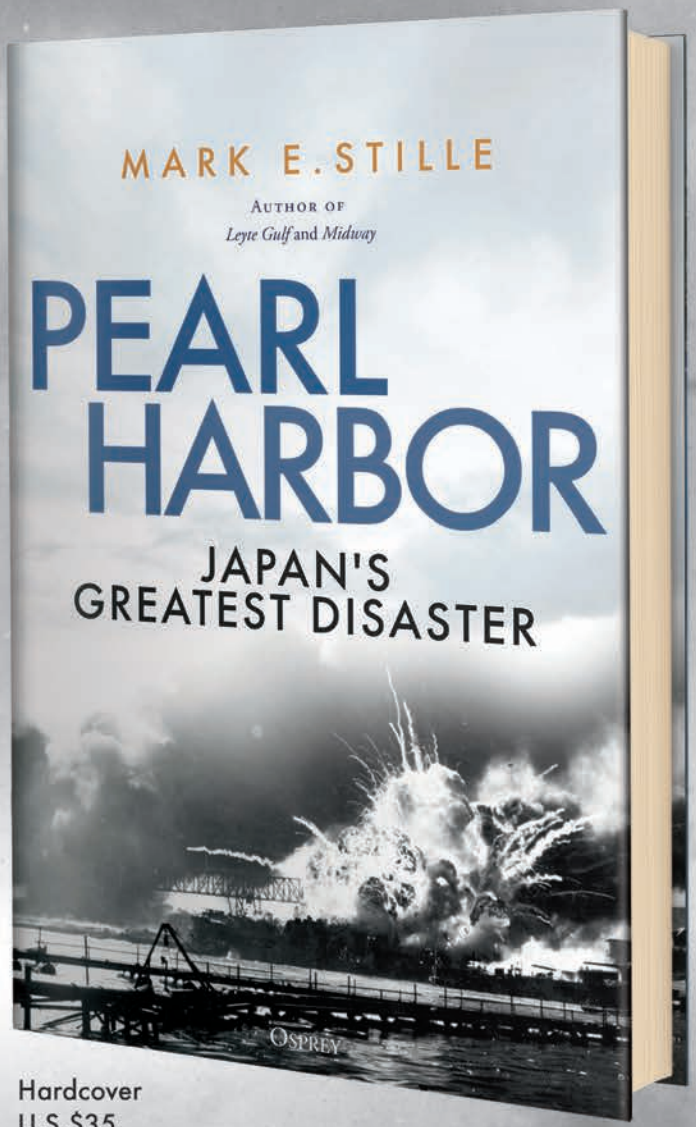
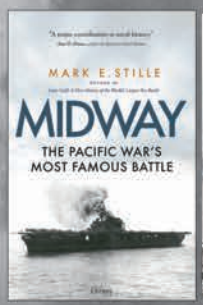


Hardcover
U.S.$35
ISBN: 978-1-4728-6531-1

In this the first comprehensive treatment of Pearl Harbor since the early 1990s, respected Pacific War naval historian Mark E. Stille traces the road to war and the Japanese attack itself. He examines the role of the man behind the operation, Japanese Admiral Yamamoto, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the plan. The American preparations for an attack are also carefully reviewed. The heart of the book is a comprehensive narrative of Pearl Harbor along with an appreciation of its results placed in proper perspective.

Also by Mark E. Stille



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