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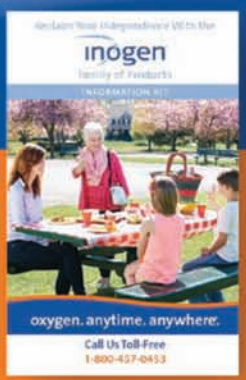

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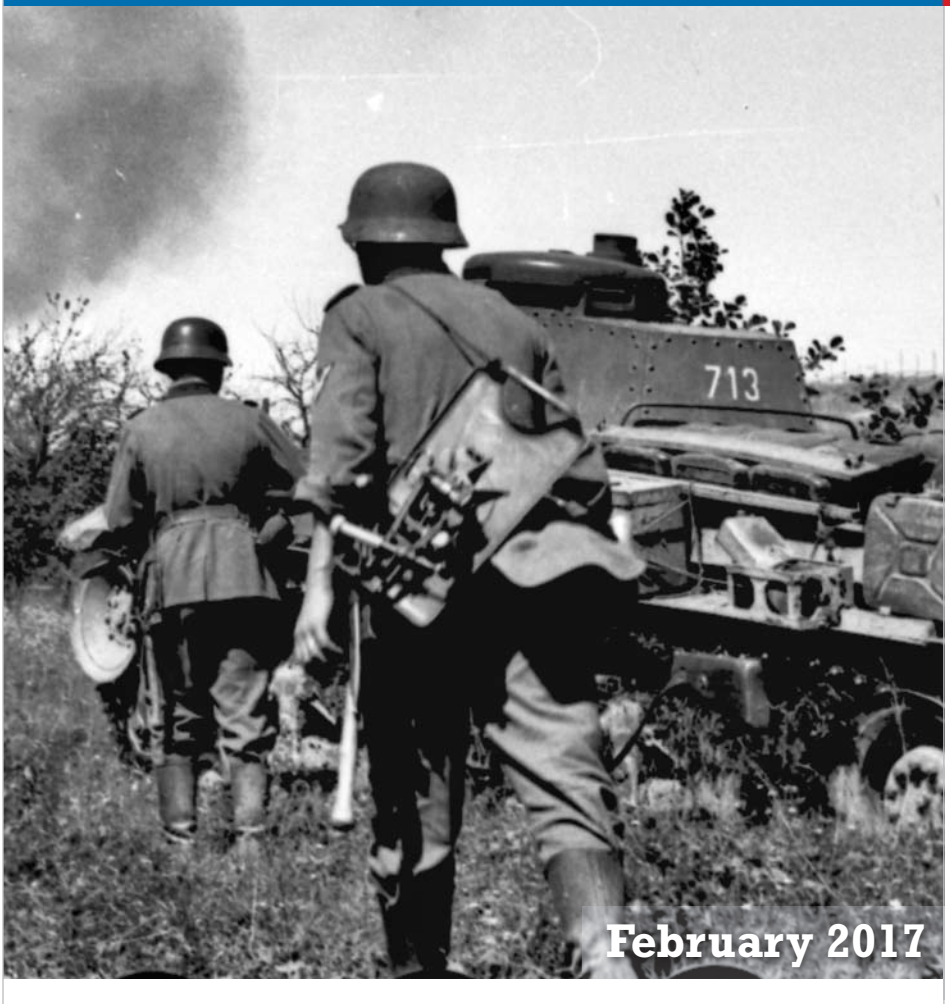

Features

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Cover: An American M4 Sherman tank moves through the Ardennes Forest during the Battle of the Bulge.

See story page 30.

Photo: George Silk / Time Life Pictures / Getty Images

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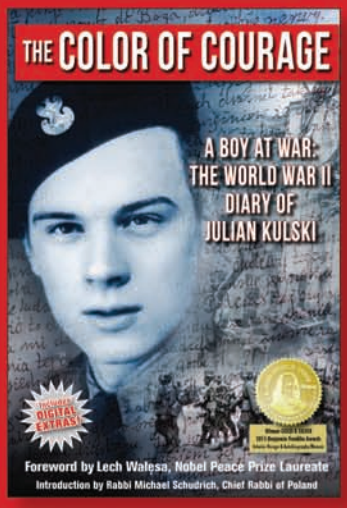

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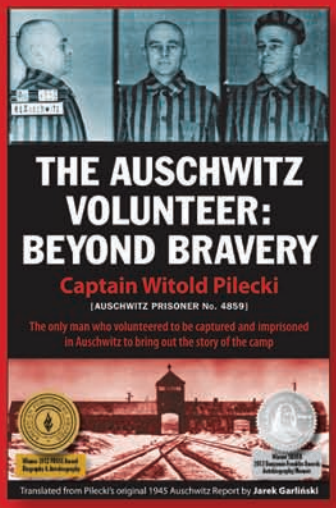

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One of the last *Arizona* survivors passed away recently.

WHEN RAYMOND HAERRY PASSED AWAY LAST SEPTEMBER THE QUITE exclusive club to which he belonged dwindled to five remaining members. Haerry was one of the few men who had served aboard the battleship USS *Arizona* in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and survived the Japanese attack and subsequent explosion that devastated the warship and killed 1,177 U.S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

Haerry, a resident of West Warwick, Rhode Island, who lived to be 94, had never returned to Pearl Harbor in his lifetime, carrying the horrific memories of that tragic day with him throughout his life. He spent 25 years in the Navy and retired as a master chief petty officer. A 19-year-old sailor on the day Pearl Harbor was attacked, Haerry tried to open an ammunition locker for one of the battleship's antiaircraft guns, but the detonation of the Japanese bomb that doomed the *Arizona,* actually a modified 14-inch naval shell, touched off forward powder magazines, and soon the young sailor was in the water surrounded by burning fuel oil.

Raymond Haerry, Jr., told the Associated Press that his father reached the shore by swimming through the surface flames, pushing them aside with his arm. He actually got some shots off at Japanese aircraft from a position ashore, and when it was over he helped retrieve the bodies of several of his shipmates. Still, the remains of hundreds of those killed on December 7, 1941, remain entombed in the wreckage of the *Arizona,* now a national memorial that is recognized by the distinctive architecture of the edifice that straddles the sunken hull, a gleaming white bridge covered by a central depression with upswept outer edges symbolic of the ultimate victory in World War II.

The elder Haerry, interviewed for a film titled *Remember Pearl Harbor* to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the attack in 2016, had planned a final return to Pearl Harbor, to be laid to rest with his shipmates who died in the attack and others who have since been laid to rest inside the hull of the battleship they once called home.

"As he was getting closer to the end, I think he felt that if there's any place that he'd like to be at rest, it would be with his crewmates, the people who suffered and died on that day," his son explained to the AP. Since 1982, the U.S. Navy has allowed former crewmen of the *Arizona* to have their ashes interred within the hull. The privilege is restricted only to those who served aboard the battleship, and since then more than 40 of the original 334 survivors have elected to do so.

Strict protocol is followed during the interment service, and with its conclusion a Navy diver carries the urn to the place of interment in the well of barbette No. 4, which 75 years ago mounted the turret of one of the *Arizona*'s 14-inch main batteries. In 2011, there were 18 remaining survivors. Soon enough, there will be none. The Navy's gesture is a fitting tribute to those who braved the surprise attack so long ago and responded to the treachery with heroism and sacrifice.

Survivors of the old battleship *Utah,* used as a target ship in 1941 and sunk by Japanese torpedoes on the other side of Ford Island, also have the option to be interred within the hull of their former ship. Others who were serving at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, have the option of having their ashes scattered within the harbor.

Michael E. Haskew

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By Michael D. Hull

The Workhorse Gooney Bird

The Douglas C-47 transport aircraft played an integral role in the Allied victory in World War II.

OF ALL THE WORKHORSE WEAPONS IN THE ALLIES' WORLD WAR II ARSENAL, from the American M-4 Sherman medium tank and jeep to the British Handley Page Halifax bomber and 25-pounder field gun, none was more widely and effectively deployed than the Douglas C-47 transport plane.

Dubbed the Skytrain by the U.S. armed forces and the Dakota by the British, the C-47 was the most ubiquitous airplane of the war, performing a variety of services in all theaters of operation, from North Africa to Burma, from New Guinea to Normandy, and from Sicily to Holland.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower believed that the rugged, dependable aircraft was one of the five pieces of equipment—along with the jeep, bulldozer, 2½-ton truck, and DUKW amphibious vehicle—that were "among the most vital to our success in Africa and Europe," while the official U.S. Army Air Forces history noted, "A steady and proven aircraft, the C-47 earned for itself a reputation hardly eclipsed even by the more glamorous combat planes." Nicknamed the "Gooney Bird" by its American crews and passengers, the C-47 was regarded by some as the most remarkable plane in the history of aviation.

A Douglas C-47 Skytrain transport plane emblazoned with U.S. markings flies over the Pyramids at Giza, Egypt, in 1943.

The design of the C-47 originated from the Douglas DC-2 and DC-3 family of commercial transports that followed in the wake of the DC-1 prototype that flew for the first time on July 1, 1933. The DC-3 airliner made its maiden flight on December 17, 1935, the 32nd anniversary of the Wright brothers' historic first powered flight. A military role for their plane was the last thing on the minds of Douglas Aircraft officials observing the maiden flight at Santa Monica, California.

Yet the U.S. Army Air Corps gained early experience with the basic aircraft after acquiring production DC-2s in 1936, followed by more specialized variants for use as cargo and personnel transports. In August of that year, an improved DC-3 entered service with domestic airlines and revolutionized air travel. Its larger capacity and upgraded performance made it an even more attractive proposition to the Air Corps, which quickly advised Douglas on changes in configuration considered desirable to make it suitable for a variety of military roles.

The modifications included more powerful engines, a strengthened rear fuselage to allow for the inclusion of large cargo doors, and a reinforced cabin floor to make it suitable for heavy loads. Much of the basic design work had been completed by Douglas engineers, with a C-41 cargo prototype mounting 1,200-horsepower Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp engines in a DC-2 fuselage. It reached Wright-Patterson Field in Dayton, Ohio, in late 1939. So, when the Army Air Corps started issuing contracts in 1940 for the new transport planes designated C-47, the company was well prepared to meet the requirements and get production underway.

The only serious problem was the limited production capacity at Douglas's Santa Monica plant, where European war demands for the DB-7 light bomber—forerunner of the famous A-20 Havoc—had filled the factory floor. Therefore, C-47s were built in a new plant erected in Long Beach, California. The basic structural design remained virtually unchanged through the entire production run.

Powered by the Twin Wasp engines, the low-wing, all-purpose transport had a maximum speed of 230 miles per hour, a range of 1,350 miles, a ceiling of 24,100 feet, and a load capacity of 12,000 pounds. Its crew comprised a pilot, copilot-navigator, and radio operator. A total of 10,123 C-47s were built before produc-

DOCTOR'S MEMORY BREAKTHROUGH

One Simple Trick to Reversing Memory Loss

World's Leading Brain Expert and Winner of the Prestigious Kennedy Award, Unveils Exciting News For the Scattered, Unfocused and Forgetful

By Steven Wuzubia
Health Correspondent;

Clearwater, Florida: Dr. Meir Shinitzky, Ph.D., is a former visiting professor at Duke University, recipient of the prestigious J.F. Kennedy Prize and author of more than 200 international scientific papers on human body cells. But now he's come up with what the medical world considers his greatest accomplishment — A vital compound. so powerful, it's reported to repair… even regrow damaged brain cells. In layman's terms — Bring back your memory power. And leave you feeling more focused and clear-headed than you have in years!

Dr. Shinitsky explains this phenomenon in simple terms; "Science has shown when your brain nutrient levels drop, you can start to experience memory problems and overall mental fatigue. Your ability to concentrate and stay focused becomes compromised. And gradually, a "mental fog" sets in. It can damage every aspect of your life". Not only do brain cells die but they become dysfunctional as if they begin to fade away as we age. This affects our ability to have mental clarity and focus and impacts our ability to remember things that were easy for us to do in our 20's and 30's.

Scientists think the biggest cause of brain deterioration in older people is the decreased functioning of membranes and molecules that surround the brain cells. These really are the transmitters that connect the tissues or the brain cells to one another that help us with our sharp memory, clear thinking and mental focus, even our powers to reason well. "When we are in our 20's" according to Dr. Shinitzky "our body produces key substances like phosphatidylserine and phosphatidic acid"…unfortunately they are believed to be critical essential nutrients that just fade away with age, much like our memories often do leading to further mental deterioration.

As we get older it becomes more frustrating as there is little comfort when you forget names… misplace your keys…or just feel "a little confused". And even though your foggy memory gets laughed off as just another "senior moment," it's not very funny when it keeps happening to you.

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- Ethel Macagnoney

Dr. Meir Shinitzky, Ph.D. a former visiting professor at Duke University and a recipient of the prestigious J.F. Kennedy Prize

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The C-47 served as a cargo plane and troop transport throughout the war, and large numbers of the aircraft, the military conversion of the Douglas DC-3 civilian airliner, were constructed. In this photo, a wounded soldier on a stretcher is being lifted aboard a C-47 for evacuation from France to England.

tion ceased in 1945.

Besides supplies, the Skytrain could be modified to transport 28 fully armed troops or 18 to 24 stretchers and a three-man medical team. The plane was a favorite with pilots, who eventually gave it a host of affectionate nicknames, including "Douglas Racer," "Dowager Duchess," "Grand Old Lady," "Old Methuselah," and "Placid Plodder."

The first C-47s were delivered in 1941 to the Army Air Corps (renamed the Army Air Forces that June), but the flow was small and slow because the production line at Long Beach still needed time to settle down. When the Pearl Harbor attack thrust America into World War II, attempts were made to boost production, so to meet the military demand DC-3s operating with airlines or well advanced in construction were impressed into USAAF service.

When Douglas began to draw contracts for thousands of C-47s, it became obvious that the Long Beach plant could not cope, so a second production line was set up in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The first model built at Tulsa was the second production version, the C-47A. Tulsa built 2,099 of the planes, and Long Beach 2,832, and 962 of them were delivered to the hard-pressed Royal Air Force, which designated them Dakota IIIs.

The formation of the USAAF's Air Transport Command on July 1, 1942, brought about the wide-scale deployment of C-47s as haulers of an incredible range of supplies, from weapons to rations to small vehicles; for carrying troops into combat; for dropping paratroops; for towing Waco and Horsa gliders; and for evacuating wounded. The C-47 became the workhorse airlifter of the ATC fleet, and after being incorporated into the Troop Carrier Command that year it took part in all major airborne operations of the war.

Skytrains were among the first types of aircraft delivered by the Air Corps Ferrying Command across the North Atlantic to Great Britain in 1942. In the war zones, the Douglas transports were initially used extensively by the U.S. Navy and the RAF. Six hundred of them were in U.S. Navy service, and a number of them were operated initially by the Naval Air Transport Service, which was established within five days of the Pearl Harbor attack. C-47s were later kept busy supplying U.S. Marine Corps and Army units when they invaded Japanese-held islands across the Pacific.

The Lend-Lease Dakotas began to arrive in England in February 1943, and several—wearing RAF camouflage—were immediately put to use by British Overseas Airways Corporation on its routes to Gibraltar and Africa. Another early user of Dakotas was No. 216 Squadron of the RAF, based in Cairo, for its regular supply runs between Egypt and West Africa and for evacuating casualties from the Western Desert. More Dakotas were sent to British bases in India.

American Skytrains and British Dakotas saw plenty of action when the Allies launched Operation Torch, the three-pronged invasion of North Africa, on November 8-11, 1942, and a number of the C-47s made military history. Late in the evening of November 7, the 556 men of Lt. Col. Edson D. Raff's 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion clambered aboard 39 C-47s of the 60th Troop Carrier Group at two airfields in southern England and took off. Their mission to capture two airfields near the Algerian port of Oran after flying nonstop for 1,500 miles set a distance record for an airborne operation.

The planes ran into foul weather, and most got lost over the Mediterranean. Widely scattered, they landed in Gibraltar and Spanish and French Morocco, and only six of the C-47s managed to fly directly to Oran. Some of the troopers, including the fearless, egotistical Raff, jumped in daylight, but they were attacked by Vichy French planes and troops in a confused action. The French killed eight paratroopers and two C-47 crewmen, and none of the survivors were able to play a decisive role in the battle for Oran or seize the airfields.

Major General Frederick "Boy" Browning's British 1st Parachute Brigade left England on November 10, landed at the Maison Blanche airfield near Algiers the following day, and dropped from Dakotas onto the airfield at Bone, a seaport on the Tunisian border, on the 12th. They seized the field and helped to capture the port.

Raff's battalion, meanwhile, was soon in action again. On the night of November 14, a few hours after moving to Maison Blanche, he was ordered to carry out an operation at dawn the next day. The objective was the capture of a French airfield and large stocks of fuel at Youks-les-Bains, near Tebessa on the Tunisian border. Raff and about 350 of his men jumped in daylight from 33 C-47s. Troops of the 3rd Zouave Regiment zeroed in on the Americans, but neither side fired, and Raff was able to persuade the defenders to surrender the airfield. The troopers hastily dug in, secured the airfield, and shot down a German plane attempting to land.

One night in late December, "Little Caesar" Raff led a smaller airborne mission 110 miles inside the German lines in Tunisia. Two C-47s airlifted 30 of his troopers to blow up a bridge near El Djem. Dropped in the wrong place, they were unable to locate the bridge and were discovered by a German patrol the next day. Twenty-two of the paratroopers were killed or captured, but eight escaped and hid for a month before reaching the Allied lines. The operations of Raff's battalion earned high praise from

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These C-47A aircraft are pictured towing gliders in the skies above Normandy in June 1944. The C-47 was widely used for this purpose and to deliver paratroopers during airborne operations in Europe and the Pacific.

General Eisenhower, the Allied commander in North Africa, and his deputy, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark.

Two months later, far to the east, Douglas Dakotas started performing a vital support role for General William J. Slim's British 14th Army in its three-year struggle to defeat Japanese forces in the jungles of Burma. In February 1943, the first of a series of long-range penetration raids behind Japanese lines was launched by 3,000 specially trained British, Gurkha, and Burmese troops of eccentric, colorful Brigadier Orde C. Wingate's 77th Indian Infantry Brigade. The "Chindits" blew up railway bridges and ambushed enemy outposts, and 2,182 men made it back to the British lines. While hacking their way through the dense jungles, Wingate's men were sustained by supply drops from Dakotas of RAF Squadron Nos. 194 and 31.

By the end of the year, Wingate's force had grown to three brigades supplied by Dakotas towing Waco gliders. The Chindits and other units of the 14th Army also received valiant support from Colonel Philip G. Cochran's U.S. 1st Air Commando Group. Besides Wingate's columns, the robust Douglas transports continued to give valuable logistical aid to other 14th Army units, Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell's Chinese divisions, and Brig. Gen. Frank D. Merrill's 5307th Composite (Marauders) Unit. On occasions, Cochran's Dakotas towed two gliders each.

C-47s led the way, meanwhile, in hauling supplies across the hazardous "Hump," the 500-mile air route over the rugged Himalaya Mountains from Assam, India, to Kunming, China. They carried everything from gasoline and shoes to medicine and bulldozers as part of the Allied effort to keep China in the war. In July 1942, the first month of operation, C-47s of the U.S. Tenth Air Force delivered 85 tons of cargo. Flying to and from primitive airfields, at altitudes of 18,000 to 22,000 feet in bad weather and turbulence, the C-47s soon were delivering 700 tons a month.

The first major use of C-47s came with Operation Husky, the massive, hastily planned Allied invasion of Sicily on Saturday, July 10, 1943. It was the largest amphibious operation to date, with about 2,500 ships and landing craft escorting or carrying 16,000 troops, 600 tanks, 1,800 field guns, and 14,000 vehicles. The dawn landings by General Bernard L. Montgomery's British Eighth Army and Lt. Gen. George S. Patton Jr.'s U.S. Seventh Army were preceded by an airborne assault that almost became disastrous. Planned by General Browning, an impeccable guardsman who had laid the groundwork for the British "Red Beret" paratroop force, it was the first large Allied airborne operation and the first at night for any army.

On crowded airfields in Tunisia, the engines of 109 Dakotas and 35 Armstrong Whitworth Albemarle medium bombers of the RAF's No. 38 Wing warmed up on the evening of July 9. Linked to the planes were Waco and Horsa gliders crammed with 1,500 tense officers and men of the British 1st Airlanding Brigade. The crews climbed aboard, and the planes began to take off into a clear sky just before 7 PM. By the time they were approaching Malta for their assembly and turning point, the weather worsened. Gale winds drove the planes off course and buffeted the gliders.

Two hours after Browning's Red Berets had taken off, another 222 C-47s carrying 3,400 men of Maj. Gen. James M. Gavin's 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division took off from Tunisian air-

fields, soon to find themselves struggling through the gale that had assaulted the British planes. Almost 40 of the tows of the combined force wisely turned back, but others were driven into the sea by the high winds. Because of inadequately trained pilots, a number of British gliders were cut loose too far from their targets, others were scattered over a wide area, and still others were shot down by trigger-happy ships' gunners.

Fifty-four of the British gliders landed in Sicily, and only a dozen of them were on or near their objectives. Of "Jumping Jim" Gavin's paratroops who reached the island, only about 200 were anywhere near their objectives. Gavin's C-47, the lead plane of the 316th Troop Carrier Group, became hopelessly lost before reaching Sicily, and he eventually landed 30 miles from his scheduled drop zone.

Towing gliders and carrying men and supplies, RAF Dakotas and Colonel Cochran's C-47s operated conspicuously during the first airborne invasion of Burma on March 5, 1944, as General Slim's 14th Army, Wingate's Chindits, General Stilwell's Chinese divisions, and Merrill's Marauders finally outwitted and outfought the Japanese. On English airfields, meanwhile, hundreds of Douglas transports were being lined up and readied for four more major operations, starting with the airborne prelude to Operation Overlord, the massive, long-awaited Allied invasion of Normandy three months later.

On the night of Monday, June 5, an armada of 5,000 ships and landing craft moved across the choppy English Channel toward five assigned beaches where 154,000 British, American, and Canadian troops were to land in the early hours of the next morning. Thundering overhead that night was another great armada – 1,432 Halifax, B-17 Flying Fortress, B-24 Liberator, and B-26 Marauder bombers, C-47s, and Waco, Horsa, and Hamilcar gliders carrying 17,262 men of the U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions and 7,162 men of Maj. Gen. Richard "Windy" Gale's British 6th Airborne Division. The paratroopers were to capture strategic bridges and road junctions, disrupt German communications, and pave the way for the seaborne assault troops.

In the greatest airborne assault up to that time, flying as low as 500 feet altitude, more than 1,000 C-47s and Dakotas took part, playing a crucial role in securing the first Allied foothold on occupied European soil. In less than 60 hours, C-47s alone hauled more than 60,000 paratroops and their equipment to Normandy.

Carried in gliders or dropped from 822 C-

47s, the American paratroops began to land shortly after midnight behind the western flank beach, Utah. Deposited into marshy ground, Maj. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor's Screaming Eagles had to seize exits on the causeways behind Utah Beach, while the men of Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway's 82nd Division landed farther inland and were able to clear ground on both sides of the Merderet River. Largely because of inexperienced pilots, the men of both divisions were dropped in widely scattered groups, and at dawn Taylor's division had only 1,100 men under command out of 6,600. But the scattering caused confusion among the German defenders, and small groups of Americans fought a series of gallant actions, including the capture of Ste.-Mere-Eglise.

On the eastern flank of the invasion beaches, although many men were also dropped in the wrong places, the airborne landings were more successful and some were right on target. The objectives were to seize crossings of the River Orne and the Caen Canal between that town and Ouistreham, blow up bridges on the River Dives, and storm a large battery at Merville. Gale's Red Berets and Major John Howard's D Company of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Regiment—the first Allied unit in action on D-Day—achieved the objectives swiftly and held them until reinforcements fought their way off the beaches.

As the Allied assault units were steadily reinforced and began to extend their bridgeheads and move inland, the American C-47s and British Dakotas played a vital part. Streams of them lumbered daily across the English Channel, ferrying more troops and equipment to France and then carrying the wounded back to hospitals in England. One hundred of the planes landed daily in France during the first six weeks of the Normandy campaign. General Montgomery, the Overlord ground forces commander, had a Dakota at his disposal.

Just over five weeks after D-Day, several hundred C-47s and gliders were again in the forefront when Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch's U.S. Seventh Army spearheaded Operation Anvil-Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France, on August 15, 1944. A total of 94,000 men—including American and Free French infantry divisions, British and U.S. paratroops, and British and French Commandos—and 11,000 vehicles were landed between Toulon and Cannes on the Mediterranean coast that day, and within 24 hours they had pushed almost 20 miles inland.

A month later, on the sunny morning of Sunday, September 17, an armada of 1,550 Allied planes took off from 22 airfields in England for the launch of Operation Market-Garden, Montgomery's bold but ill-fated plan to seize five bridges and open a direct advance route across the River Rhine into Germany. Led by RAF pathfinder teams and towing Horsa, Waco, and Hamilcar gliders, British Short Stirling heavy bombers and C-47s streamed across the English Channel above occupied Holland, where joyous citizens watched men of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions and Maj. Gen. Roy Urquhart's 1st Airborne Division drop from the sky.

The American divisions largely accomplished their goals, securing canal crossings between Eindhoven and Veghel and bridges over the Maas and Waal Rivers, while the British Red Berets made for the big northernmost span at Arnhem. But everything soon went wrong.

Surprised German troops in the area recovered swiftly and deployed panzer units which had been underestimated by Allied intelligence; the air support was inadequate, and the Red Berets were dropped too short of "the bridge too far" at Arnhem, and were able to seize only the northern end of it.

RAF Dakota pilots tried valiantly but without much success to supply the Red Berets. On the afternoon of September 19, in the first

phase of the support "lift," 30-year-old, Irish-born Flight Lt. David S.A. Lord of No. 271 Squadron was making a run over Arnhem when his Dakota was hit twice by German anti-aircraft fire. He kept a level course, dropped his supplies accurately, and then ordered his crew to abandon the plane. The fiercely burning Dakota crashed, and Lord was eventually awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. Despite great heroism displayed by the British and American paratroops, Operation Market-Garden was a costly failure. .

Almost three months later, when German forces pushed through the snow-clad Ardennes Forest on Saturday, December 16, 1944, and carved a 50-mile bulge in the thinly held American lines, C-47s played a critical role in the counteroffensive. In the Belgian town of Bastogne, a major road-rail junction and key enemy objective, the 101st Airborne Division, led by deputy commander Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, and Combat Command B of the 10th Armored Division fought desperately for a week while surrounded. Food, ammunition, and medical supplies dwindled, and bad weather kept Allied air support grounded.

Finally, on December 23, the skies cleared. British and American fighters and bombers went into action over the Ardennes, and 241 C-47s and gliders of the Fourth Troop Carrier Command began dropping containers to the weary Bastogne defenders. Two days later, they were relieved by the 37th Tank Battalion of the U.S. 4th Armored Division.

This restored C-47A of the U.S. Army Air Forces, complete with distinctive D-Day recognition stripes, flew from a base in Devon, England, on D-Day, taking part in the invasion of Normandy.

The last major action involving C-47s came with the launch of Operation Plunder on the night of Friday, March 23, 1945, as Field Marshal Montgomery's British 21st Army Group advanced across the Rhine between the German towns of Emmerich and Wesel. Prime

Continued on page 74

By Jon Diamond

All: Imperial War Museum

This painting by Denis A. Barham titled *Battle Over Malta* reveals a Spitfire pilot's view of air combat. INSET: Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie served as governor-general of Malta during the island's siege.

Fighting with Sword and Prayer

Malta's Lt. Gen. Sir William G.S. Dobbie led the embattled Mediterranean island during some of its darkest days.

THE BRITISH ARMY HAS HAD ITS SHARE OF RELIGIOUS ZEALOTS SERVING IN THE upper echelons of command. These typically independent-minded soldiers, motivated largely by their spiritual belief, were in sharp contrast to those, as characterized by J.F.C. Fuller, who comprised a "strictly hierarchical army headed by largely unimaginative leaders that feared initiative, were terrified of originality and afraid of criticism."

The list of those generals imbued by the Almighty, to name but a few, includes Oliver Cromwell, first as commander in chief of the Army and then as the Protector, in the mid-17th century, after emerging as the victor of the English Civil War against Royalist forces. Another was Maj. Gen. Charles George "Chinese" Gordon, who perished at Khartoum in 1885 and believed himself an agent of providence answerable only to God. Against the Mahdi and his dervishes, he disobeyed his orders by electing to defend Khartoum in the name of Christianity rather than facilitate its evacuation.

More recently, the British Army possessed a very opinionated general, Orde Wingate, who relied heavily on quotations from the Old Testament in formulating his ideological credo. Wingate, who was the nephew of Lt. Gen. William Dobbie, applied his biblical zeal to his military mind-sets, which culminated in victories over revolting Arab gangs in pre-World War II Palestine and the Italians in Ethiopia during the early phase of World War II. However, Wingate is most renowned for the inception, development, and deployment of the Chindits, a long-range penetration unit in Burma in 1943-1944.

Other British military leaders also had strong spiritual beliefs, such as Air Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, who publicly referred to his communication with deceased spirits at the height of the Battle of Britain.

Lieutenant General Sir William George Shedden Dobbie served as general office commanding (GOC) and governor-general of Malta during the height of that island's siege by both Nazi and Italian fascist forces during World War II. Governor-General Dobbie was a deeply religious Army officer who made the defense of Christendom's old fortress of Malta a crusade as he fought against the Axis "with sword and prayer." He hated to fight on Sundays, but he did it. "Malta will triumph over the powers of darkness," he declared firmly.

William Dobbie was born in Madras to a civil servant father and into a family with a long military heritage. After the Charterhouse School, he qualified for the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, after which he went to the Royal School of Military Engineering at Chatham. Viewed as a dour Scot, Dobbie was fortified by an abiding faith as a member of the Plymouth Brethren. Throughout his military service, Dobbie remained convinced that he enjoyed direct communication with the Almighty.

Dobbie had served as commandant of the Royal School of Military Engineering, and from August 1936 through July 1939, he served as GOC, Malaya. Dobbie, then holding the rank

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of major general, was informed that after Malaya he would be retired because new War Office regulations deemed him too old for another position. After the onset of hostilities against Germany in September 1939, Dobbie was frustrated in his attempts to return to active service until he was offered the position of governor-general and GOC of Malta by the chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Edmund Ironside, in April 1940. In May 1940, he succeeded the ailing Sir Charles Bonham-Carter.

Dobbie had previous experience in analyzing and fortifying island defenses and was not a novice when it came to relaying his views to his superiors in the War Office. While serving as GOC, Malaya, stationed in Singapore in 1936, Dobbie and his subordinate, Arthur Percival, made a study to ascertain if more British and Imperial troops were needed on mainland Malaya to prevent the Japanese from capturing forward bases along the Malay Peninsula and launching an attack against Singapore from the northern landward side.

The analysis made it clear that Singapore could no longer be seen as a self-contained naval base and that its survival rested on the defense of mainland Malaya. In 1938, Dobbie wrote the chief of the Imperial General Staff, "It is an attack from the northward that I regard as the greatest potential danger to the Fortress (Singapore).... The jungle is not in most places impassable to infantry."

If Dobbie's analysis were accepted, he urged, large reinforcements should be sent to Singapore without delay. His warning was ignored. By 1939, all Dobbie had been able to obtain from the Home Government was a meager 60,000 pounds, most of which was spent on building machine-gun emplacements along the southern shore of Singapore island, which was not the site of the coming Japanese attacks early in World War II. The magnitude of the British Army's later surrender at Singapore was legendary.

In the spring of 1940, shortly after assuming command on Malta, Dobbie began writing the War Office about the island's military deficiencies. The response was predictable, reading in part, "Owing to the urgent commitments at home and the threat of invasion it would not be possible to meet any of the requests for additional defenses of Malta."

The strategic importance of Malta was obvious to Dobbie since the island has a critical location in the Mediterranean between Sicily and North Africa. However, when Hitler and Mussolini declared war on Great Britain, there were only 68 antiaircraft guns on the island instead of the recommended 156 to protect the naval base at Valetta and its three airfields. The air defenses were also inadequate, comprising nine obsolescent biplanes, four of which were Gloster Gladiator fighters destined to become storied in the tenacious air defense until modern Hawker Hurricane fighters arrived within weeks of the air battle's onset. Thus, it became clear to Dobbie that the ability of the Maltese to withstand air attack might determine whether the island could remain an operational base.

Explosions raise billowing clouds of smoke and flame as Malta endures one of many air raids conducted by German and Italian bombers.

As late as November 1940, Dobbie still harbored reservations about Malta's new offensive role. Only one month previously, Dobbie urged the London government to refrain from using Malta as an offensive base. Dobbie feared that the enemy would be provoked into retaliatory raids or even invasion. Dobbie argued for waiting until the spring of 1941, when he reasoned the island's military capabilities would be more formidable. As matters turned out, London would have done well to pay heed to Dobbie's advice.

It is hard to imagine a better choice than Dobbie to take over as governor-general and GOC on Malta in the spring of 1940. Not that he was an especially gifted administrator or military leader. He was, according to some, mediocre in both respects. However, there was an intangible quality of greatness there. This attribute was rooted not in what he did but in what he stood for. He was referred to as "God's original honest man." Dobbie embodied a serenity that enabled him to maintain clarity of vision even under desperate circumstances. The Maltese revered him with an instinctive faith in "the strength and integrity of his leadership."

Dobbie did not get along with everyone on Malta. Maj. Gen. D.M.W. Beak arrived to take over as GOC from Dobbie in the winter of 1942, when an invasion of the island seemed imminent. His coming was something of a slap at Dobbie, for although he remained as governor-general and therefore in nominal charge of the island's garrison, most major decisions would now be made by Beak, who would be answerable not to the governor-general but to British officials in Cairo.

Beak has been described as a blustering man, entirely deserving of his reputation as a small-minded, stiff-necked martinet. In London, the Chiefs of Staff officially explained the move as one designed to establish a closer working relationship between Malta and General Claude Auchinleck's desert command in North Africa, but it was no secret in military circles that Beak was being sent in for a sterner purpose. There had been reports that morale among the troops on Malta had been sagging, and the taskmaster nature of the new GOC was the correct remedy for the garrison's lassitude. General Beak remained on the island until August, almost seven months, during the most critical part of the relentless Axis aerial siege that soon developed.

Reluctantly, Dobbie was replaced as governor-general of Malta by Lord Gort in early May 1942. Among the many posed reasons for Dobbie's sacking, four specific events in March and April 1942 have retained the most credibility. Field Marshal Alan Brooke, as chief of the Imperial General Staff, had recommended that Dobbie be replaced because "the stress was beginning to tell on him." Actually, however, although the Governor-General's health had obviously suffered during his long ordeal on Malta, it seems unlikely that this was the real cause of his removal.

One reason offered is that there was a terrible feud between Dobbie and Beak during that spring. It began with Dobbie's objecting to having the troops work or train on Sunday. But Beak went ahead anyway. Dobbie was furious.

New Male Potency Formula Makes "The Little Blue Pill" Obsolete

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By Harlan S. Waxman
Health News Syndicate

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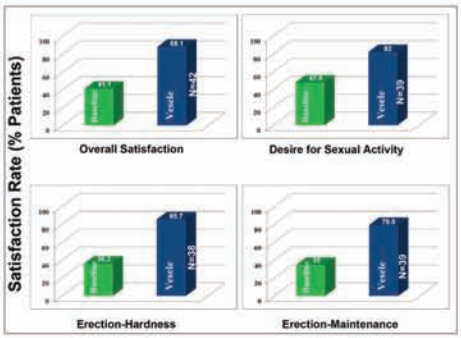

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Civilians and military personnel walk through the devastated streets of a Maltese town. At times, the capabilities of British forces to defend the island were nearly decimated.

The feud became public knowledge and had an adverse effect on morale. Finally, it reached a point where either Dobbie or Beak had to go, and General Brooke chose Dobbie.

Another event occurred at the end of March 1942, when two merchant ships, the *Pampas* and the Norwegian freighter *Talabot* had finally sailed into the Grand Harbour. For over 72 hours, Maltese stevedores made very little effort to unload the vessels. Under relentless air attack the ships were gutted. As one British officer noted, it seemed that there was a "certain amount of lethargy and lack of urgency in getting the cargoes out. It was as though the 16,418 tons tightly packed in two merchantmen in Grand Harbour were considered to be in the larder and entirely safe."

Ultimately, Dobbie, who as governor-general of the island was in overall charge of the operation, was blamed for the debacle. An officer of the West Kents criticized, "He should have sent the troops in right away. The governor-general was dead to blame for the loss of those cargoes. Everyone said what a wonderful man he was. An inspiration, they called him. Well, I say he was a bloody fool. He spent so much time on his knees praying that he couldn't see what was going on all around him."

Prime Minister Winston Churchill received a long telegram from Air Vice Marshal Hugh Lloyd: "I have no doubt that Dobbie should be replaced by Gort as soon as possible.... The team here is not working together and the main reason is that Dobbie is no longer capable of vigorous leadership. He has little grasp of the situation or power of decision and lacks the knowledge and drive which would enable him to guide, and where necessary, impose his will on the forceful commanders under him."

Air Vice Marshal Lloyd, commanding the Royal Air Force contingent on Malta, worked, lived, and slept on the island's airfields and was idolized by his men. His opinion was well regarded and strongly based on his performance in expanding the airfields' defenses and increasing the dispersal area of aircraft ninefold, enabling him to combat the fascist aerial onslaught.

Admiral Kenneth Mackenzie, who had been in charge of the dockyards in Grand Harbour, stated that smoke would have been of immeasurable value in the safer unloading of both cargo ships. At the same time he was careful to explain that Governor-General Dobbie was not to blame for failing to use it because there were no smoke pots available on the island. A consensus opinion was that it was the governor-general's responsibility to defend Malta as best he could, and in the case of those lost cargoes, his best did not suffice.

An earlier February convoy had been beaten back in the Mediterranean, and now the March one was destroyed in Grand Harbour.

In April 1942, the chiefs of staff in London notified Governor-General Dobbie that plans for a simultaneous double convoy from Gibraltar and Alexandria, respectively, were to be abandoned. Instead, a single Alexandria-to-Malta convoy would be sent. However, five days later, the chiefs informed Dobbie that this convoy, too, would have to be canceled. The Admiralty believed that Malta's reprovisioning would not occur until mid-June at the earliest. How the island was to hold up to the dual menace of starvation and incessant air onslaught was unknown.

After the war Churchill wrote, "Disturbing news in April arrived about General Dobbie. Up to this moment his had been magnificent and from all parts of the Empire eyes turned on him." Some type of communication broke Churchill's faith in Dobbie, and, according to

the date of Brooke's recommendation to replace Dobbie, it must have occurred in late April. Churchill concluded, "I have received this news with very deep regret, and I did not at first accept what I was told. However, a successor had to be chosen."

The timing of Churchill's removal of Dobbie lends credibility to the following account by Melita Strickland, whose husband, Roger, was head of the elected majority in the Maltese Council of Government. "I can tell you for certain that it was Roger who was responsible for Dobbie's being replaced. He was convinced that Dobbie was about to run up the white flag. One day—it was toward the middle of April after several weeks of almost constant bombing, and we wondered if there would ever be an end to it—he approached Roger and told him of his concern for the people. Despite his stiffness, Dobbie was a very compassionate man, you see. 'Strickland, I cannot ask them to suffer any more than they have.' Well, it was so clear to Roger that Dobbie was on the verge of surrender that he went to the lieutenant governor, Andrew Cohen, and persuaded him to join him in forwarding this information to the Home Government, which essentially recommended Dobbie's removal."

Could this "Strickland incident," which purported that Dobbie intended to surrender Malta, have been the "disturbing news" that Churchill referred to? The communication to London was all done secretly, suggesting that Dobbie himself never knew the real story behind his being relieved. However, in Dobbie's defense, the telegrams that he sent to London and Cairo show a determination to hold out, even after the decision on April 23 to cancel the May convoys. Moreover, as a purely practical matter, any unauthorized attempt by Dobbie to surrender the island would have been immediately disowned by the War Cabinet and by the service commanders in Malta.

Another event may have been more important than the Strickland incident in giving a reluctant prime minister no choice but to order Dobbie's relief. As recorded in John Connell's biography, *Auchinleck*, in April the attention of the prime minister and of the Chiefs of Staff was directed dramatically to the plight of Malta. Newly appointed Minister of State in the Middle East Richard Casey, passed through Malta to take up his new post in Cairo. He reported to London that "the gallant governor of the island, Sir William Dobbie, V.C., was now worn out by his exertions and recommended his immediate replacement." It may have been this notification that swayed Churchill to act on

Continued on page 74

By John W. Osborn, Jr.

National Archives

Malayan Melange

From 1941-1945, British and communist forces fought a common enemy, the Japanese. Then the situation changed.

ONE OF WORLD WAR II'S LONGEST, LEAST KNOWN GUERRILLA RESISTANCE campaigns was fought in the depths of the jungle covering 80 percent of Malaya's 50,850 square miles; in it the most unlikely of friendships would develop, leading to a remarkable meeting, then parting, a decade later.

In 1941, rubber and tin made Malaya the richest colony of the British Empire. Some 30,000 colonials lived and lorded over five million people, half native Malay, almost 40 percent Chinese, the remainder Indian. That white-suit world author W. Somerset Maugham depicted and dissected in *The Letter* was to be obliterated by the Japanese invasion the day after Pearl Harbor, and the British were forced to turn to a specialized brand of warfare they were preparing to export, never expecting to employ it on their own doorstep.

Four months earlier, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) had established Number 101 Special Training School in Singapore to train agents to lead guerrilla warfare throughout Southeast Asia; among its staff was Fredrick Spencer Chapman, a well-known explorer and author. At the start of 1942, he was sent into the interior for what was intended to be a quick reconnaissance. It would instead become one of the longest personal ordeals and adventures of World War II.

Neither the Arctic nor the Himalayas could prepare Spencer Chapman for what he would face. "I was now to learn that navigation in the thick mountainous jungle is the most difficult in the world," he would later write. "For the first time I realized the terrifying vastness of the Malayan jungle."

In the years to come, he would be repeatedly hunted and evade capture, lose 60 pounds, need 12 days to cover all of 10 miles, was wounded twice, suffered chronic malaria, pneumonia, and other diseases, and once suddenly remembered he had forgotten his daily diary entry only to be told he had been in a coma for 17 days!

In the end, in the words, which became the title of the classic memoir he published in 1952, Spencer Chapman realized, "The truth is that the jungle is neutral. It provides any amount of fresh water, and unlimited cover for friend and foe alike—an armed neutrality, if you like, but neutrality nevertheless. It is the attitude of mind which determines whether you go under or survive."

Instead of reconnoitering, Spencer Chapman, like a tropical Lawrence of Arabia, rampaged through the jungle blowing bridges, ambushing, derailing trains. "What boy has not longed to blow up trains? What man too; especially if he had read *Seven Pillars of Wisdom?*" he would jauntily comment years later.

The Japanese became convinced that 300 Australians were involved and sent out 2,000 soldiers to search for the enemy troops; in another Lawrence-esque touch, Spencer Chapman, dressed and skin darkened like an Indian laborer, met one. "As I bowed low," he would write, "I pressed my elbow reassuringly against the butt of my .38 which I could have drawn at the least sign of danger."

But soon the fall of Singapore would leave him alone and presumed dead by the outside world, so he quickly had to turn for survival to the most improbable ally that a colonialist could possibly have.

Ten days after Pearl Harbor Spencer Chapman and another British officer had met in a dark back-alley room in Singapore with the mysterious head of the 40,000-member Malayan Communist Party, Loi Tek, who added to the secrecy of the affair by wearing a hood.

Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita mounted a brilliant campaign in Malaya, defeating the British defenders in a mere seven weeks. A guerrilla war ensued, and the British worked with communist insurgents to battle the common enemy.

They agreed to prepare the communists to help resist the Japanese, and so 200 were given quick training at 101 School, then sent into the jungle. They formed the nucleus of what eventually became the 10,000-strong Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese

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Army (MPAJA), supported by a civilian branch, the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Union (MPAJU), sending in food, medicine, arms, and intelligence.

Spencer Chapman reached the MJAJA in March 1942 and spent the next three years with them. "This was a very happy Robinson-Crusoe-like existence," he remembered, though admitting, "Once I had thrown in my lot with the guerrillas, I was virtually their prisoner and lost all freedom of movement."

Divided into eight regional commands across Malaya, the MPAJA launched hit-and-run raids and sabotage with indiscriminate Japanese reprisals killing thousands. A Chinese communist, Ong Bonn Hua, who had joined the party at only age 15 in 1940 and soon became known as Chin Peng, undertook dangerous clandestine missions to organize resistance cells, deliver orders, and gather information; he would one day be the most hunted man in Malaya, but not by the Japanese.

The communists, however, suffered from a shortage of arms, inadequate training that Spencer Chapman struggled to improve, preoccupation with indoctrination, little support from the Malayan and Indian communities (despite the inclusive-sounding names the MCP, MPAJA, and MPAJU were all over 90 percent Chinese), and a command structure so centralized that units waited weeks, even months, for authorization to launch an attack.

The resistance suffered a further blow when a meeting of top party and guerrilla leaders at the Batu Caves in September 1942 was raided by the Japanese, with all of them captured and later beheaded. Fortunately for him, suspiciously to others, Loi Tek had been absent—a flat tire, so he said.

In Ceylon the SOE's local branch, Force 136, was preparing to make common cause with the MPAJA. Concerns had been expressed regarding the group's communist bent, but the Supreme Allied Commander, Lord Louis Mountbatten, brushed them aside saying, "I confidently believe that coordinated action by the MAAJA, accompanied by British liaison officers, will be the instrument of saving the lives of many of our men and hastening the eviction of the Japanese."

Major John Davis of Force 136 had been a policeman in Malaya who sailed a Chinese junk to Ceylon after the surrender of Singapore. "The only way to get back to Malaya was by submarine," he recalled decades later in an interview. "So I found myself with five stalwart Chinese preparing to land on the Malayan coast. The submarine dropped us about five miles from shore and we went off in canoes. We had one slight alarm on the way when we were surrounded by motor boats and I thought, 'My God, the Jap patrol boats,' but then the penny dropped: of course they were the local fishing boats going out. And as we neared the shore after an hour or so, the lovely warm spicy smell of the Malayan coast and the swishing of the jungle trees almost overwhelmed one and we didn't think anymore of being 2,000 miles from our friends, we were just coming home."

TOP: Major John Davis, a member of the Special Operations Executive's Force 136, played an integral role in establishing cooperation between the diverse forces that fought the Japanese in Malaya. ABOVE: Chin Peng, left, led communist forces against the Japanese in Malaya while Freddie Spencer Chapman, right, endured a lengthy ordeal leading elements of the British covert resistance on the peninsula.

Davis landed along Malaya's west coast on August 4, 1943, and then was led to the communist headquarters in the interior. He met Chin Peng, was as impressed with him as Spencer Chapman had been, and a genuine friendship grew between the colonial cop and the communist. "Quiet character with incisive brain and unusual ability. Very likeable ... in fact almost like a British officer," Davis would say.

Loi Tek and Davis wrote out an alliance on a page torn from a school exercise book. "The deal was that the communists would obey Allied instruction in fighting the Japanese and on the British side we should supply arms, medicines, and personnel for training and liaison," Davis described it.

Following through on the agreement was difficult. The radio Davis had brought was too weak, and he was unable to make contact with Ceylon. Spencer Chapman was also isolated from the war—in far more dangerous circumstances.

On a trek to other guerrilla camps he ran into a Japanese sentry and was at last taken prisoner. He was marched into camp and then put into a tent with a Japanese sergeant. "I waited until one sentry was out of sight, the other at the far end of his beat, and the N.C.O. not actually looking at me," he recalled later. "Then in one movement I thrust myself violently through the opening at the bottom of the canvas. I heard a 'ping' as a peg gave way or a rope broke, and a sudden guttural gasp from the N.C.O.—and I was out in the jungle."

Spencer Chapman managed to evade his pursuers, then made his way back, hidden by villagers, down once more with malaria. He finally reached safety 103 days, on July 25, 1944.

Parts for a new radio for Davis and a generator to run it had to be slowly smuggled in one at a time, then painstakingly assembled and reassembled. Finally, powered by pedal, radio contact between Davis and Force 136 in Ceylon was made on February 1, 1945.

The British went on to airdrop almost 100 tons of arms and supplies, but the communists could not find all of it—or so they said. In addition, 88 British officers were parachuted in or landed by sea. Going the other way at the end of his long ordeal was Fredrick Spencer Chapman. "As I trudged silently in my rubber shoes along the hard-beaten track, I felt an almost breathless excitement at the prospect of what lay ahead—a prospect I hardly dared to contemplate in the last three years," he would write. "As my thoughts went forward to the submarine, to Ceylon, to India, and perhaps to England, I realized that I had sometimes been very, very homesick."

Spencer Chapman departed on the night of May 13, 1945. He had planned to return to help the British landing scheduled for November 1945, but Hiroshima happened instead. Determined to still be at the finish he ignored the advice of a pretty intelligence officer to make his first-ever parachute jump to assist in disarming the Japanese.

Later Spencer Chapman married the intelligence officer. Yet for months back in England he admitted, "If there were any loud noise in the night, such as a car backfiring, before I was even awake I would be out of bed and fumbling for my bundle of possessions, ready to rush away into the jungle." His adventurous, action-filled

Men of the British Special Operations Executive Force 136 stand with guerrilla troops of the Army of the Malay People on the edge of a tiny village deep in the Malayan jungle.

life would become the restricted one of a schoolmaster, and in 1973 he committed suicide.

The communists used the vacuum of authority between the Japanese collapse and the British return to Malaya to murder hundreds of potential opponents as alleged collaborators, seize arms from the Japanese, and set up local Red regimes. Hardliners wanted to fight the British immediately, but Loi Tek vetoed that, and in December 1945, the MPAJA was disbanded, its fighters paid off with cash.

In the end the communists had killed only a few hundred Japanese and caused at most minor damage to the occupation. Still, the British honored the communists, with Chin Peng decorated and marching in the 1945 victory parade in London.

However, Chin Peng had warned a British officer, "You must realize that our ultimate aims are very different from yours."

He and other communists were soon working to undermine Malaya's recovery, leading hundreds of strikes by the tin and rubber workers. In response to suggestions the communists be arrested, a colonial official expressed the common view: "They had fought on our side.... It would not be public school."

The British were going to be taught very differently. In March 1947, Loi Tek vanished with the party's entire treasury. It turned out he had been a British agent all along and had betrayed the party at the Batu Caves to the Japanese. Chin Peng took over, and in June 1948 made the fateful move from subversion to open rebellion, telling the party, "We are not afraid of a protracted war. We seek the strategy of protracted war."

It turned out to be longer than even he expected. The Emergency, as it came to be known, was declared over and won by a newly independent Malaya in 1960, but Chin Peng held out deep in the jungle all the way to 1989, when he finally signed a peace agreement, then headed to exile in China. Trying to excuse and justify himself, he argued, "I was young, in a very different age that demanded very different approaches.... You only became a terrorist when you killed against British interests."

By the end of 1955, though, Chin Peng knew that he had lost and moved for peace talks. So on a December morning an old wartime comrade waited on a hilltop near the Thai border to guide him to the talks and guarantee his safety.

He was John Davis. "The thoughts of the past—of the good times Chin Peng and I had together—kept racing through my mind," Davis recalled.

When Chin Peng appeared, he and Davis met with smiles and a happy handshake. At the truce site separate tents had been put up for them, but without a second's hesitation they shared one—just like the old days.

Scheduled to last three days, the talks collapsed after two, with Chin Peng defiantly vowing to fight on; then he and Davis talked in their tent until dawn. "We got a considerable amount of our old companionship coming back," said Davis. Despite everything, they still considered themselves friends.

A few hours later John Davis walked Chin Peng back into the jungle for what each knew would be their last time together. "Rather nice," Davis remembered fondly in an interview three decades later, "rather like the old days with him.

"He stopped and said, 'Well, thank you very much, that's enough, we'll go on now.... I'll send a couple of my men to see you safe back.'

"I was able then to say to him: 'You don't think that I need to be escorted in our jungle, do you?'

"He laughed and said, 'No, not really, I don't think so.' We shook hands, quite friendly.

"I turned back, wandered back to camp.

"And that," Davis concluded with genuine regret in his voice, "was the last I've ever seen of him." □

By Jerome Baldwin

National Archives

The General Who Failed

Lloyd Fredendall lost his command after the debacle at the Battle of the Kasserine Pass.

HE CAME HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, PRAISED BY GENERAL GEORGE C. Marshall as "one of the best." But ultimately from these high hopes and expectations would come disastrous failure. Maj. Gen. Lloyd R. Fredendall would go down in history as one of the most unsuccessful American generals of World War II. Up against the German Army in North Africa, he would all but collapse. Out of humiliating defeat one of America's most successful generals, George S. Patton, came to the fore.

After flunking out of West Point and then dropping out after a readmission, Fredendall received his commission as a second lieutenant of infantry in 1907. Among other stateside and overseas assignments, he served in the Philippines and eventually in France during World War I. He earned a reputation as an excellent trainer and administrator but did not serve in combat during the Great War.

By the time of Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa on November 8, 1942, Fredendall was a major general in command of the Central Task Force landings at Oran. In a letter to Marshall on November 12, 1942, Eisenhower stated, "I bless the day you urged Fredendall upon me and cheerfully acknowledge that my earlier doubts of him were completely unfounded." It would prove to be an ironic statement. There were already real potential problems looming. Fredendall did not like the British or the French. Considering those were the nationalities he would be fighting alongside, it did not bode well for the campaign ahead.

It was in Tunisia that Fredendall would fail. The German and Italian troops of Panzerarmee Afrika, under General Erwin Rommel, had been routed at El Alamein in Egypt, retreating 1,400 miles westward into Tunisia by January 1943. Following the Torch landings, Hitler had ordered reinforcements sent to North Africa, and soon

Getty Images

German and Italian troops were being ferried from Sicily into Tunisia. Notable among these was Hans-Jurgen von Armin's Fifth Panzer Army. After suffering ignominious defeat and the retreat that followed, Rommel was eager to achieve a victory and, always looking for the enemy's weak point, he found it—the inexperienced and untested American II Corps.

The Allies had advanced from the African coast into Tunisia, reaching the edge of the Eastern Dorsal Mountains. The British First Army under Lt. Gen. Sir Kenneth Andersen held the northern sector, with the Free French of 19th Corps D'Armee in the center, and Fredendall's U.S. II Corps at the southern end of the line.

There were signs of trouble ahead. In the early morning hours of January 30, a force of 30 panzers broke through the Faid Pass and struck the French positions there, with another force of tanks and infantry circling south and coming up behind the defenders. The French plea to the Americans

A German artillery shell shocks an American soldier on the battlefield in North Africa. Early encounters with the Germans resulted in stinging defeats for the U.S. Army. RIGHT: Major General Lloyd Fredendall converses with French officers in North Africa during a briefing.

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for help resulted in a shambles.

A force too small for the task under U.S. Brig. Gen. Raymond McQuillin moved slowly forward before halting for the night. The next day 17 American Sherman medium tanks rolled directly into a trap and were devastated by German 88mm guns. An infantry counterattack the next day also failed, and the pass remained in German hands.

The French, suffering losses of 900 men killed or missing, were furious at the Americans. The entire ordeal revealed problems in American command and tactics, but the disastrous rude awakening that would spark the sweeping changes desperately needed was yet to come.

In early February, General Eisenhower managed to get away from Casablanca and visit II Corps. What he found shocked and appalled him. Fredendall had located his headquarters an incredible 70 miles behind the front line (some have said even farther back). Seemingly obsessed with an air attack, Fredendall had a battalion of engineers working to blast out underground bunkers in the side of a ravine for his staff, while having the headquarters ringed with antiaircraft guns.

"It was the only time during the war that I ever saw a higher headquarters so concerned over its own safety that it dug itself underground shelters," Eisenhower remarked later.

At the front the situation was also alarming. Eisenhower arrived at the crossroads village of Sidi Bou Zid, where the 1st Armored Division and the 34th Infantry Division were positioned because of the enemy capture of Faid Pass on January 30. He found no defensive minefields laid down, only excuses as to why not, and assurances the job would be done tomorrow. It was an example of a troubling lackadaisical attitude among the American troops there.

Fredendall did not go up to the front line, instead relying on maps at his headquarters and issuing orders over the radio. That was undoubtedly a factor in the woeful unpreparedness at the front line in the American sector. Moreover, the fact that he was always in the rear was noted by his men, who called his headquarters "Speedy Valley," "Lloyd's very last resort," and "Shangri-la, a million miles from nowhere." Inevitably, the situation affected morale and severely eroded the confidence of Fredendall's men in their leader.

General Lucian Truscott had this to say about Fredendall: "Small in stature, loud and rough in speech, he was outspoken in his opinions and critical of superiors and subordinates alike. He was inclined to jump to conclusions which were not always well founded. Fredendall rarely left his command post for personal visits and reconnaissance, yet he was impatient with the recommendations of subordinates more familiar with the terrain and other conditions than he." Fredendall routinely ignored intelligence reports, bypassed subordinate commanders, and micromanaged troop dispositions down to company level.

National Archives

A column of German PzKpfw. III tanks rolls along a dirt road in North Africa. When American troops of the II Corps came up against the German veterans, the initial results were disastrous. The American commander, Maj. Gen. Lloyd Fredendall, was also found unequal to the task of leading troops in combat.

He often used blowhard, tough-guy sounding language in an attempt to cover up his inability and indecisiveness. Phrases such as "Go smash 'em," "Pull a Stonewall Jackson," "Go get 'em at once," or "Use your tanks and shove" were common.

He also issued orders using wording that no one understood. His intention was to confuse the enemy if he was listening in, but orders such as "Move your command, i.e., the walking boys, pop guns, Baker's outfit and the outfit which is the reverse of Baker's outfit and the big fellows to M, which is due north of where you are now, as soon as possible. Have your boys report to the French gentleman whose name begins with J at a place which begins with D which is five grid squares to the left of M," only managed to baffle his own people.

When Ike visited the II Corps units near Sidi Bou Zid on the night of February 13, he had no idea that within hours the Germans would launch an offensive under Rommel and von Armin that would unleash a disaster for the Americans. Fredendall, against the advice of his 1st Armored Division commander, Maj. Gen. Orlando Ward (whom Fredendall disliked and so deliberately ignored) and others, had kept American forces spread thinly along the front instead of maintaining a strong mobile force to counter any German attack—wherever it might happen—or take swift advantage of an opportunity. Time had run out to organize such a mobile force. The next day, February 14, the Germans attacked, and all hell broke loose.

Things rapidly fell apart for the Americans. Everything seemed to go wrong. The lack of discipline under Fredendall's command came to a head with the German onslaught, and Fredendall's actions in the battle speak for themselves.

At his headquarters, well back from the fighting, Fredendall was unable to control the situation. From Djebel Lessouda and Djebel Ksaira, two hilltop defensive positions Fredendall had ordered set up which flanked Sid Bou Zid and were too far away from each other to offer any mutual support, American soldiers could only watch helplessly as the Germans rolled over their comrades below while panic spread rapidly amid the savage mauling. An understrength counterattack by the Americans on February 15 failed, Sidi Bou Zid had to be abandoned, and the Americans on Djebel Lessouda and Djebel Ksiara were cut off.

By the time Fredendall issued orders for the hilltop defenders to break out it was too late. Although they tried to make it back to Allied lines, only 300 of the original 900 men made it. One of those taken prisoner was Lt. Col. John Waters, General Patton's son-in-law.

The attack quickly turned into a rout. Panicked American troops, only wanting to escape the maelstrom, fled in chaotic pandemonium rearward under terrifying attacks by Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bombers. Forced back 50 miles, disorganized and demoralized by the stinging defeat, the Americans fell back to the

Kassarine Pass, which pierced the Western Dorsal Mountains and provided a gateway for the Germans to slice into the Allied rear areas.

With the situation extremely desperate, Eisenhower sent 2nd Armored Division commander Maj. Gen. Ernest Harmon out to Fredendall. He was identified as a "useful senior assistant" sent to help Fredendall in "the unusual conditions of the present battle," although in reality he was there to assess the situation at II Corps for Eisenhower. Arriving at 3 AM, Harmon found Fredendall groggy from lack of sleep. Obviously broken by circumstances and a defeated man, Fredendall simply said, "The party is yours," and went to bed. Taking control, Harmon managed to stabilize things. Harmon reported back to Eisenhower that Fredendall was "no damn good."

After more heavy fighting, the Germans did manage to get through Kasserine Pass. The arrival of Allied reinforcements combined with the Germans' own command problems to grind the offensive to a halt. In just 10 days the Americans had lost 183 tanks and 7,000 men, including 300 killed and 3,000 missing.

Time was running out for Fredendall. In early March, Eisenhower pulled General Omar Bradley aside at Tebessa. Bradley had recently finished an inspection of II Corps, and Ike asked him about the situation there. "It's pretty bad," replied Bradley. "I've talked to all the division commanders. To a man they've lost confidence in Fredendall as the corps commander."

On March 4, Patton was given command of II Corps, writing in his diary, "Well it is taking over rather a mess but I will make a go of it."

Patton reached II Corps headquarters on March 6, finding Fredendall at breakfast. Initially, his impression of Fredendall personally was positive, but when he discovered how bad things were with the lack of discipline, no saluting, and the slovenly appearance of so many officers and men, he wrote in his diary on March 13, "I cannot see what Fredendall did to justify his existence. Have never seen such little order or discipline."

Under the leadership of "Blood and Guts" Patton, however, duty in II Corps was transformed. Rigorous training regimens were imposed; all officers were required to wear neckties and helmets. Decades later, one of the officers who was there when Patton took over remembered his initial encounter with the legendary general: "General Patton said, 'Every man old enough will shave every day. Officers will wear ties in combat.' And then he came up to about a foot in front of my face and said, 'And anyone wearing a wool-knit cap without a steel helmet will be shot!'"

Bradley, now Patton's deputy commander, observed, "Each time a soldier knotted his necktie, threaded his leggings, and buckled on his heavy steel helmet, he was forcibly reminded ... that the pre-Kasserine days had ended, and that a tough new era had begun."

It was the start of a turnaround that resulted in victory at El Guettar in the eight-day Allied offensive that began just 10 days after Patton took command. The Americans had learned a hard lesson well, and the painful but eye-opening experience of February 1943 ultimately paid off for them for the rest of the war.

For Lloyd Fredendall, however, the fighting was over. He was sent back to the States, where he remained for the duration, training men. He retired in 1946 and passed away in 1962, at the age of 79.

The fighting in February 1943 became known as the Battle of Kasserine Pass, a humiliating experience for the Americans although it must be remembered that many U.S. soldiers fought bravely and tenaciously in the chaos and confusion.

Not all of the blame for the disaster of Kasserine can be laid on Fredendall's shoulders; there were other factors behind what happened. One was the reality that the American soldiers at that point were inexperienced—something beyond anyone's control. There was also a widespread overconfidence among them. Anything Fredendall or anyone else could have done to alter their unrealistic mind-set that a quick and easy victory lay ahead likely would not have had much effect.

Still, Fredendall was largely culpable in what happened. He violated command structure and kept commanders in the dark by withholding vital information, bypassing them, and causing confusion. He was more interested in his own safety than in being constantly aware of what was happening at the front.

The fact that he issued orders worded in incomprehensible nonsense was bizarre without question. How could a U.S. Army general act in such a way? He isolated himself from his men and was responsible for an appalling lack of discipline.

Fredendall sounded like a fighting general, and with his exemplary service record prior to World War II he seemed a likely success. But battle makes short work of hype or false bravado, and it made short work of Lloyd Fredendall.

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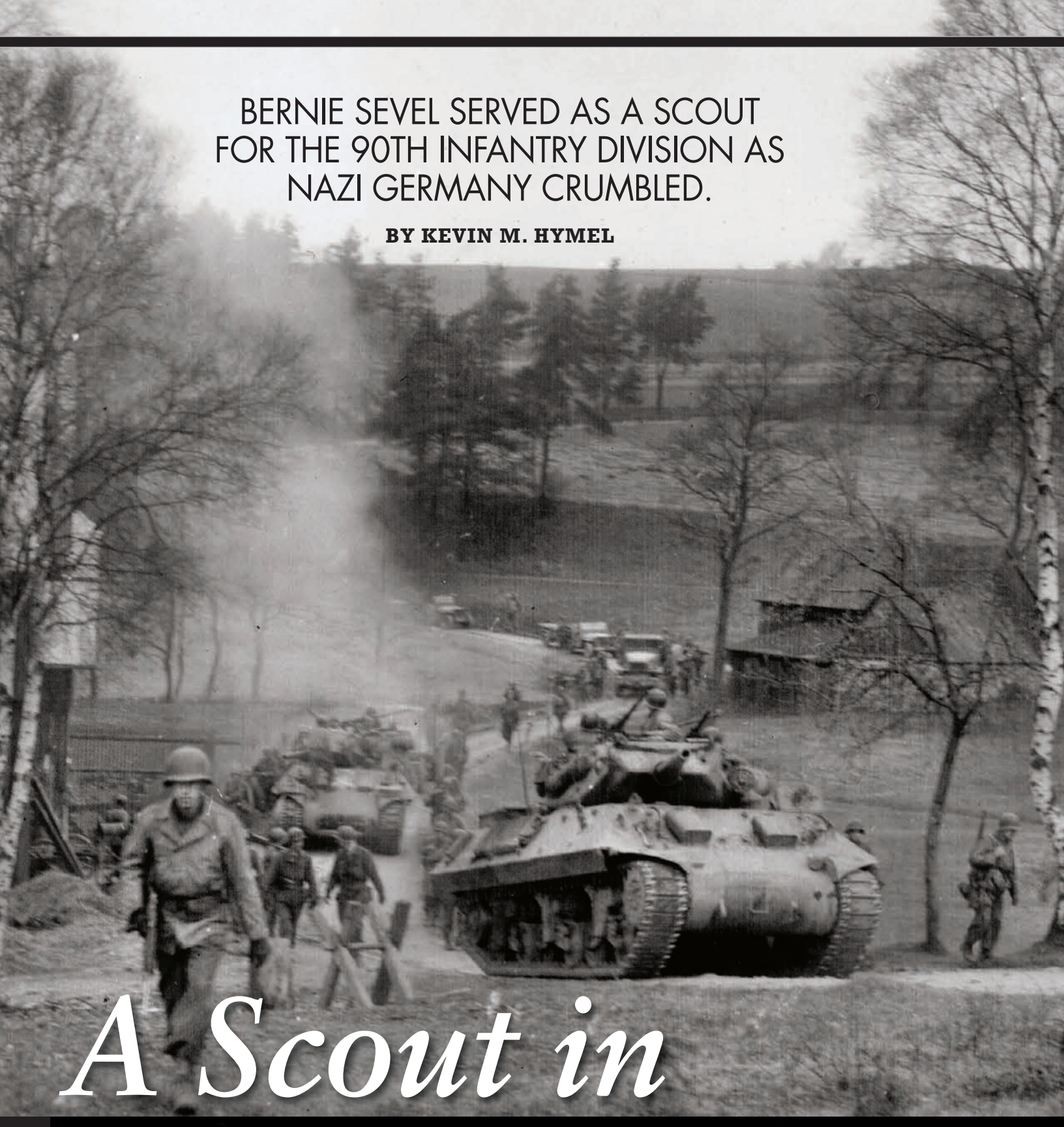


BERNIE SEVEL SERVED AS A SCOUT FOR THE 90TH INFANTRY DIVISION AS NAZI GERMANY CRUMBLED.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

A Scout in PATTON'S THIR

D ARMY

Soldiers and tanker of the 90th Infantry Division enter Czechoslovakia on April 18, 1945. Private Bernie Sevel led one of the division's companies as a scout into the enemy country in the waning days of World War II in Europe. INSET: Private Bernie Sevel in England before heading across the Channel to the battle front.

THE MESSERSCHMITT BF-109 FIGHTER plane dove out of the sky with machine guns firing. The pilot's target—a pontoon bridge being stretched across Germany's Werra River by American engineers. He closed in on his stationary prey and dropped a bomb, scoring a direct hit. The bridge erupted in a plume of metal, wood, and water. Then he circled for another pass.

As the plane leveled off for its second run, a lone soldier standing on the east

Both: National Archives

bank raised his rifle and fired. Private Bernie Sevel, a scout for C Company, 359th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division—the Tough Ombres—shot round after round as the plane closed the range. The date was April 2, 1945, and Sevel and another scout had just paddled across the Werra, approximately 100 miles northeast of Frankfurt in the heart of Germany. They were there to secure the east side while engineers built the bridge to deliver tanks, artillery, and other equipment from the west side.

With the bridge blown to smithereens, the two scouts were alone on the wrong side of the river.

Sevel's shots got the pilot's attention, shifting the German's line of attack toward the two Americans. He opened fire. As 20mm rounds pounded the ground, Sevel and the other scout dove into a shell hole. The pilot zeroed in on his new target, but as his tracers reached the hole he was suddenly surprised by heavy fire coming from his left. Engineers, soldiers, and tankers on the west bank, angry at the loss of the bridge, fired wildly at the enemy plane. With his mission accomplished and not willing to risk wounds or death by attacking an unimportant target, the pilot sped away.

The two scouts were now stuck on the east bank. Sevel traded shots with a few German soldiers, but tanks firing from across the river kept them at bay. Even so, it would take days to bring up more bridging materials and rebuild the link. In the meantime, Sevel and his comrade would have to wait and see who would reach them first, Americans or the remnants of the once vaunted German Army.

National Archives

ABOVE: U.S. Army engineers attached to the 90th Infantry Division piece together a Treadway bridge across a German River. When a Messerschmitt fighter plane destroyed a bridge across the Werra River, Private Bernie Sevel found himself stranded on the far side. OPPOSITE: Two American soldiers scout past two German Hetzer tank destroyers. Much of Germany had been blasted to rubble by American air forces.

The east bank of the Werra River in central Germany was far from Sevel's home. Four years earlier, he had stood in his parent's Baltimore, Maryland, living room listening to a radio report about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He grew up in a Jewish household and could speak a combination of Yiddish and German. He graduated from high school in 1942 and studied engineering at Johns Hopkins University until the Army drafted him in February 1943. Sent initially to nearby Fort Meade, he soon transferred to Keesler Army Airfield in Biloxi, Mississippi, for Army Air Forces military police training. He continued his Army training at air bases in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Sauk Rapids, Minnesota, before transferring to Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts, for the journey across the Atlantic.

In Boston he and thousands of other men boarded the British passenger liner *Queen Elizabeth* for the trip across the U-boat-infested waters. The ship crossed the Atlantic without escort, zigzagging the whole way, changing course every seven minutes. The uneventful trip ended when the ship docked at Greenock, Scotland, in early 1944, and the men transferred to Base Air Depot 2 at Warton, near Norwich, on England's east coast.

Sevel took up MP duties, guarding the Eighth Air Force's critical repair facilities. He found night guard duty had a perk: "I got to ride a motorcycle." But he soon grew bored and felt the war passing him by. "I was young and stupid," he admitted, so he decided to become a fighter pilot, a job that would send him back to the United States for training. He passed the physical and was preparing to depart when, on December 16, 1944, the Germans attacked through the Ardennes Forest of Belgium and Luxembourg—the Battle of the Bulge. All transfers were cancelled. No one was going back to the States.

Instead, Sevel spent a few weeks at Tidworth Camp in southern England retraining to become an infantryman. Upon reaching the continent, he and other replacements boarded trucks for a trip to the German border, traveling mostly at night. When his truck dropped him off in a wood, a sergeant greeted him with, "Here you are." With that, Sevel became a member of C Company, 359th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division, VIII Corps in Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.'s Third Army. It was the end of February 1945. The Battle of the Bulge was over. The Siegfried Line had been penetrated, but the Army still needed infantrymen to crush the Third Reich.

The 90th Division soldiers wore a green and red patch on their shoulder embroidered with a T and O, representing Texas and Oklahoma, the two states that provided the men who made up the division in World War I. Their World War II successors, having come from states throughout the country, preferred to think the letters stood for "Tough Ombres." Originally considered a hard-luck division under Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley's First Army during the first three months of the Normandy campaign, the 90th soon became a well-honed killing machine after Patton's Third Army became operational on August 1, 1944. The 90th raced across France, helped close the Falaise Pocket, assaulted the Moselle River, and took part in turning back the German tide in the Battle of the Bulge. As a novice infantryman with no combat experience, Sevel was in good company.

One of the platoon sergeants, a Texan named Roker, handed Sevel a bandolier of ammunition and asked him if he knew how to load an M1 rifle. Sevel told him he did. Roker then took Sevel's web gear and, using a knife, cut off everything from his pack, leaving an empty pair of suspenders to hold Sevel's ammunition belt. Finally, Roker took Sevel's blanket. He would get it back each night. "It was a smart move," recalled Sevel, who needed to move around on the battlefield unhindered. He did keep one personal item in his mess kit pouch, a small prayer book his mother had given him.

His work done, Roker stepped back and looked over his new recruit. "You look like you could move pretty well if you had to," he told Sevel, who said that he had played sports in high school. "How would you like to be our scout?" Sevel knew the infantry scout's job from an ROTC class he took before he was drafted. The scout advanced ahead of a platoon, probing alone for the enemy. By their stealthy advance, scouts prevented platoons from being ambushed. Roker made the job sound important, so Sevel agreed to do it. Later, he realized that Roker had given it to him because he was the most expendable person in the platoon. Roker did not want to risk the lives

of his veterans.

It was a rough introduction to war. Sevel bedded down in a foxhole for the night. When he awoke his blanket had frozen in his body shape. To keep warm he wore a heavy winter overcoat (which he would lose at the first place he stopped), a field jacket, and sweater. He also wore regular Army boots without the rubber overshoes issued to many infantrymen. "You can't move too well with galoshes," he explained.

Sevel was one of two scouts in the platoon, but the other scout was constantly disappearing. Because of his reliability, the platoon's veterans taught Sevel the finer points of scouting and being an infantryman. They taught him to use hand signals when advancing in front of the unit, though they boiled down to two: stay down or come on. One of the most important tips they passed on involved avoiding booby traps. The retreating Germans often planted bombs inside private homes behind paintings, which they deliberately hung off balance, counting on Americans to straighten them. Sevel vowed to never fix a painting hanging askew.

As Sevel started performing ahead of his platoon, he learned to keep a sharp eye out for the enemy and react quickly if the enemy detected him. "If the first shot don't get me," he explained, "I don't want to be around for the second."

Modern combat became Sevel's world. Bombers filled the sky, American artillery screeched overhead, tanks rumbled past, and enemy small-arms fire zipped past him. He could soon differentiate the sounds made by American and German weapons. He quickly discerned the distinct sound of the German MG-42 machine gun, which fired 1,200 rounds a minute. "It fired at a much more rapid rate than an American machine gun," he recalled. "It sounded like tearing something apart, more like a ripping fabric." He held a great deal of faith in American artillery and never worried about short rounds. "There was enough enemy fire, [we didn't] worry about friendly fire."

Sevel's platoon usually had one or two tanks assigned to it. Often, when the Germans pinned down Sevel and his comrades, the tanks rolled to the front and opened fire. If there was no enemy resistance, the men climbed on the tanks, which could hold five or six soldiers. "You're hanging on," he said about the ride, "and it was noisy, but it was a little better than walking." When the tank came under fire, Sevel and the others would jump off and take cover.

Like most GIs, Sevel's diet consisted of C-rations and K-rations. He preferred C-ration

Bernie Sevel

canned beans over anything else. "That was the best," he recalled, "because you could eat them cold or hot." K-rations, consisting of crackers, canned meat, a hard chocolate bar, other dry foods, and cigarettes, were on the other end of the spectrum. "They were terrible," he said, "but they kept you alive." A nonsmoker, Sevel gave away his cigarettes. If the men were lucky, at night a jeep filled with hot food and blankets would pull up. The men would take turns leaving the front lines to retrieve the precious supplies.

At night, when the fighting had stopped, the men dug foxholes. Nights could be rough, as the soldiers reflected on the close calls of the day. "I would think, 'Am I going to be alive tomorrow?'" said Sevel. "When the shooting started you were too busy to be scared." Whenever the men captured a town, they slept in houses or other structures. Despite his newness to the unit, Sevel pulled rank on his platoon. "I'm the guy out there in front," he told them. "When we take a town I want the first choice of where to sleep." To him, any floor beat a foxhole.

Over time, Sevel grew into a grizzled veteran. He shaved only when he felt too grungy. "Bathing was not a frequent thing," he said. He lost his prayer book when it accidentally got soaked with shaving cream. He wore out his underwear so quickly that he eventually wore it around his waist like a skirt under his trousers. Very rarely did supplies of undergarments reach the front. "We were all pretty ripe and smelled the same."

Since Sevel was out front, he often laid claim on any alcohol he found. He often came across houses with wine, but his favorite beverage became Armagnac brandy, produced in southwest France, which was hard to find. "There was never enough of it to get that plastered," he said. One day, he found a bottle of what he thought was brandy in a German house. He took a chug, only to find himself gagging on salad oil.

Even though the end of the war was in sight, it was still dangerous. Sevel recalled a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) man named Rosa, who everyone called Rosie, who got killed. "I didn't see it," he said. "Another one named Peterson got killed, and one lieutenant lasted about a week." Despite the deaths, Sevel never saw anyone break down from the stress of combat. They could see the end was near.

On one scouting patrol, Sevel and his friend Freddy Dembaum from Brooklyn, New York, were leading the way down a road more than 300 yards ahead of the platoon when they found a house they suspected might be an enemy ambush. Sevel kicked the door in and entered first to find only civilians. Using his ability to speak German, he asked them, "Wo sind die Deutschen? (Where are the Germans?)" When a woman asked him: "Bist du Deutscher? (Are you German?)" Sevel responded, "Juden. (Jew.)" Everyone dropped to their knees and begged Sevel not to kill them. When the two Americans asked if they had seen either mortars or artillery pieces, they said, "Nicht artillerie. (No artillery.)"

The two Americans continued their advance. Suddenly, they came under heavy fire. A German

tank, possibly a Tiger, opened up with its 88mm cannon. "You could tell it was one of theirs," recalled Sevel. "It had a boom-crack that was different from ours." The two men dropped to the frozen ground and ducked into some shelter. As rounds zoomed over their heads, Denbaum turned to a scared Sevel and said, "Nicht artillerie!" The two eventually extricated themselves and made it back to the platoon.

Sevel's company commander, Captain Donald Davis, impressed him. During fire fights, Davis often stood up to see what was going on. "He was one of the bravest men I ever saw," said Sevel. One day soon after Sevel's arrival in C Company, he came off the line to retrieve food when Davis spotted him. "Scout," Davis called out, using Sevel's nickname, "are you still alive?" Sevel assured him he was. He then asked, "Captain, how long do I have to be in combat before I get the Combat (Infantryman's) Badge?" The badge was issued only to infantrymen who had fought for a sustained period. It was cherished as a badge of honor among veterans and, more practically, it also meant an extra $20 a month. Without a word, Davis took off his own badge and gave it to Sevel. He was now truly a veteran of the unit.

A few days after crossing the Rhine on March 24, Sevel's company occupied a row of large townhouses along the Main River. Sevel had guard duty, watching out a window overlooking the river on a cold, moonlit night. Not realizing it bent nearby and that German soldiers occupied the other bank, he leaned out the window to look at the river. A string of tracer bullets zipped past his nose. He quickly pulled back. "When those bullets passed," he recalled, "they make a certain noise you can't forget."

Sevel's next action came on April 2, when he and another scout paddled across the Werra River while engineers built the pontoon bridge. After the Messerschmitt pilot destroyed the bridge, Sevel and the other soldier occupied a house basement. All of the houses on the east bank were deserted. "They [the German residents] must have seen the battle starting and got out of there," he figured.

The two scouts survived on canned fruit and black bread while waiting and hoping the Americans would complete the bridge before German soldiers reoccupied the village. One day Sevel heard noises upstairs from the basement. The voices sounded American, so he shouted out, "We are Americans down here! Don't throw any grenades down here!" Then he spotted a pair of brown boots at the top of the stairs and knew he was safe. The bridge had been completed, and the Americans had beaten the Germans. He was relieved to be back with his buddies.

As Sevel and the Tough Ombres pushed deeper into Germany, he learned one of Patton's favorite tactics, "walking fire" or "marching fire." A platoon, and sometimes a company, would advance in a line, firing their weapons as

WHEN SEVEL AND HIS COMRADES REACHED THE TOWN'S OUTSKIRTS THEY COMMENCED DIGGING FOXHOLES. AS SEVEL SHOVELED AWAY, A SERGEANT CALLED OUT, **"SCOUT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU DIG ANY MORE, AND I'LL PUT YOU IN FOR DESERTION!"** HE STILL LAUGHS AT THE REMARK TODAY.

they went. The constant fire forced the enemy to keep their heads down while the Americans closed the gap. Random shots would sometimes kill any enemy who stood up or peeked from cover. If a tank was in the line, it would add its machine-gun fire to the volume. The tactic was more effective with mortar support, 81mm mortars in a stationary position while 60mm mortar teams leapfrogged with the infantry. Patton liked that it gave troops confidence, writing about it after the war, "You feel that you are doing something and are not sitting like a duck in a bathtub being shot at."

Sevel's unit used the tactic several times. In one instance as the men prepared to advance on an enemy-held tree line, Sevel loaded his M1 Garand rifle with a clip of newly issued armor-piercing bullets. He thought he could use them to shoot through a tree and hit any German on the other side. The Americans charged, firing from the hip with their rifles. Sevel fired at a tree. The round hit, but his rifle immediately jammed. He was now defenseless and could see the enemy in the distance, putting down their own fire. He quickly pried out the stuck shell, popped out the clip, and reloaded with regular bullets. The Americans took the position with no enemy counterattack. That was the last time Sevel used armor-piercing bullets.

The 90th's next target was the town of Furth-im-Wald on Germany's border with Czechoslovakia. When Sevel and his comrades reached the town's outskirts they commenced digging foxholes. As Sevel shoveled away, a sergeant called out, "Scout, what are you doing? You dig any more, and I'll put you in for desertion!" He still laughs at the remark today.

Sevel's regiment attacked, but the Germans pushed them back. They attacked again without success. On the third attack they finally took the town. Engineers then showed up and dug foxholes for the Tough Ombres. "The holes were useless," recalled Sevel. They were too deep—even deeper than the foxhole Sevel dug for himself. "If you sat down, you couldn't see over the top. If you stood up, you were too high, and they were not wide enough," he said. To lie down in his hole, he had to tunnel out more room. The men kidded the engineers endlessly for poor foxholes.

On April 18, the 90th Infantry Division crossed into Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, a pro-Nazi region of the country. Sevel and his comrades found the civilians more hostile than the Germans. When the Czechs learned that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died six day earlier, they asked, "Since Roosevelt died are you going to surrender?" The Americans, who had fought across Europe, were incredulous. "What are you talking about?" Sevel retorted.

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: As German civilians look on, soldiers of the 90th Infantry Division's 359th Infantry Regiment discuss their battle plans in the German city of Mainz. OPPOSITE: An American soldier cautiously approaches two burning vehicles that had been destroyed by a German ambush. As a scout, Private Sevel never wore equipment or heavy clothing in order to stay mobile on the battlefield.

German soldiers knew the war was coming to an end. Whenever they spotted American soldiers they immediately surrendered. By then the Germans understood that it was better to surrender to the humane Americans than the vengeful Russians. They would emerge from their hiding places holding their rifles above their heads and shouting "Kamerad!" Sevel would tell them to drop their weapons and curse at them in English. "I didn't try to speak to them in their language." He recalled seeing numerous piles of German rifles and small arms. He became a souvenir hunter, sending home a sword, a Walther PP pistol, a Czech vz. 38 pistol, and a Prussian uniform. Only the sword reached home.

Almost all of the surrendering Germans were from the regular army, but in one town his platoon captured an SS soldier. The Americans hated the SS, who fought so fanatically, killed prisoners, and ran concentration camps. A sergeant with Sevel's platoon offered to take the SS soldier for a walk to a POW camp, and the two headed off. Not long after, Sevel heard a shot. "He didn't make it back to the POW camp," he recalled.

One day Sevel's platoon bedded down in a farmhouse encircled by a stone wall with a gated entrance. The next morning the men headed out across the plowed fields with Sevel leading the way. A shot rang out, and Sevel ducked behind a large metal roller as bullets zinged past, tearing into the roller. Knowing the roller would not protect him, he ran and dove into a ditch filled with ice water. Freezing in the ditch, he realized he could either freeze to death or run for the farmhouse.

Sevel took off for the house. Rifle and machine-gun fire kicked up dust around his feet. "I could hear the 'ping' of shots hitting the ground," he recalled. As he charged the stone wall's entrance, he thought of all the war movies where soldiers were killed just as they reached the safety of a doorway. Fearing a random shot would catch him at the crucial moment, he dove through the open gate, bouncing and rolling until he came to a stop. Sergeant Roker looked at him and declared, "Scout, if there's ever going to be an Olympic event of running across a plowed field, you're going to get the gold." Later, Sevel found a bullet hole in his jacket.

With only weeks left in the war, Sevel and his men came across a POW camp filled with British and Australian prisoners and opened the gate. The POWs looked gaunt but happy. Another American platoon disarmed the German guards, herded them together, and marched them through the town. An Australian POW asked one of Sevel's friends, "Give me your gun," and, once armed, took off running after one of the Germans. Sevel did not know what happened.

Bernie Sevel

ABOVE: Private Sevel rides a horse after hostilities ended in Europe. He was put in charge of a horse stable to keep him busy during the occupation of Germany. BELOW: American GIs and Soviet soldiers toast the defeat of Germany. Private Sevel thought the Russians looked young but rough, and he felt that the Americans and Russians shared a camaraderie borne of combat.

National Archives

U.S. Army MPs later arrived and took over the camp while another company brought food to their newly liberated Allies.

A few days later, Sevel was out ahead of his platoon when word reached him that the war was over. He turned around and joined his unit. "It was sort of anticlimactic," he said, "after going from combat one day to the war being over the next." Later, he and some of his comrades met up with Russian soldiers in some beer houses between the Allied lines. Sevel thought the Russians, in their heavy clothes and boots, looked young but rough. "They were youngsters," he recalled, "They were all kids, about 15 or 16 years old." Despite their age differences, the soldiers shared a camaraderie borne of combat.

Despite the peace, the men still hated Czechoslovakia and its hostile citizens. The men begged to be transferred. When they were given a Rest and Relaxation (R&R) break, according to Sevel, they said, "Send us anywhere, just get us out of Czechoslovakia!" Sent back to Germany, he found that his ability to speak German was now more important than ever. It had served him well during the war, speaking to civilians and translating anything he came across, but now it took on a new importance and made him popular. "I could talk to the girls." Sevel also became a horse whisperer. In an effort to keep soldiers busy, the division assigned him to look after some horse stables and take care of the horses. He enjoyed the work.

One day the men were standing around in a town when a jeep rolled up and General Patton stood up in the passenger seat. He was decked out in a high-gloss, four-starred helmet with an ivory-handled pistol on his waist. "Men," the general shouted out in his raspy voice, "the 359th is the best regiment in the whole damn division!" With that, Patton's jeep roared off. Sevel was sure Patton went to the 358th Infantry Regiment and said the same thing.

Sevel had entered combat too late in the war to have the magical 85 points to go home. Soldiers earned points for time overseas, medals earned, and dependents. It took seven long months before he finally boarded the SS Fayetteville Victory in Marseilles, France, for the journey back across the Atlantic. And what a journey it was. The ship had few amenities. "It was not exactly the *Queen Elizabeth*," he said. Rough seas made the trip perilous, and the freezing winter winds did not help. Many of the men succumbed to sea sickness. Sevel overheard a soldier say to a man heaving his guts over the railing, "Land is only two miles away." The sick man looked up hopefully and asked, "Where?" To which the other man said "Straight down!"

Finally, the ship approached New York harbor. Sevel remembered passing the Statue of Liberty. After disembarking, he and a fellow soldier named Stewart traveled to Camp Meade, between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. After demobilization, the two men arrived at Sevel's Baltimore home where his parents were happy to see their boy. His mother put together a dinner for everyone.

Like most returning veterans, Sevel did not talk about the war, but the war stayed with him. "I was a little jumpy," he confessed. If an airplane flew low he ducked; if a car backfired he flinched; and if a picture seemed askew on a wall, he left it alone. He completed his degree in engineering at Johns Hopkins and married Lucille Goldblaght, a girl he met through his family. At Hopkins, he took the advanced Reserve Officer Training Course (ROTC), which put money in his pocket and gave him a Regular Army commission. When he graduated in 1949, there were not many engineering jobs available, so he returned to the Army.

Sevel was commissioned a second lieutenant

in September 1949 and joined an amphibious unit. Seven months later, North Korea invaded South Korea, beckoning Sevel to another war. A year after rejoining, he found himself standing on the deck of a Landing Ship, Tank (LST) headed for Inchon, South Korea. It was September 15, 1950, and American Marines and soldiers under General Douglas MacArthur were hitting the North Koreans in their vulnerable flank with an amphibious assault.

Watching the assault from his LST, Lieutenant Sevel thought to himself, "You idiot, you made it all the way through World War II and now you're here." In the distance, he could see the battleship USS *Missouri* firing its big guns at targets 20 miles inland. Sevel's ship landed at Wolmido Island, which the Marines had already cleared. He and a few other soldiers and a large unit of Marines disembarked and began unloading equipment. Not long afterward, they took control of landing operations for the port.

Sevel spent the next few months cruising the Inchon harbor in a crash boat, a craft slightly smaller than a World War II-era patrol boat. Running on airplane fuel, crash boats could zip around the harbor. "That thing could fly!" he recalled. He directed ships where to land to avoid being stranded by Inchon's extreme tidal change—30 feet between high tide and low. When a ship arrived, Sevel cruised up to it and boarded. He introduced himself to the captain, and the captain would salute and turn the ship over to him. The first time this happened Sevel thought, "What the hell do I do here?" He had never driven a ship before, but he eventually got used to it. "I was like a harbor pilot," he said. Ship captains who did not listen to Sevel or his comrades could find themselves stuck in the mud or sliding back out to sea at low tide.

As United Nations troops pressed north, Sevel boarded the merchant ship *Robin Trent* and set sail south. "I was the only officer on board," he recalled. He stayed in the rather luxurious owner's cabin and ate his meals with the captain. The ship sailed entirely around South Korea and eventually dropped Sevel off on a beach at the North Korean port of Riwon to support the Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

"We didn't expect to be there that long," he said, and he was right, but not for the reasons he thought. Communist China entered the war and pushed the UN forces south, through Korea's snow-covered mountains. The Chinese overran the area, but before they arrived Sevel and his fellow officers ordered extra equipment from Japan. The had packed up most of their equipment, including their officers' bar, before

Both: Bernie Sevel

ABOVE: Bernie Sevel and his wife Deane visited Europe together in 2007. This time most of the houses and roofs and the bridges were intact. TOP: Lieutenant Sevel stands on Inchon beach where he commanded landing operations in September 1950. Sevel commanded a crash boat in the port city.

sailing for Korea. Despite the chaos, crates of equipment arrived, complete with the bar.

As the Chinese onslaught continued, Sevel and his comrades boarded a train headed south through the Chinese lines to the port of Hungnam. Once there, they ran the evacuation of the port in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Approximately 100,000 troops and 100,000 civilians escaped before demolition teams destroyed the port facilities on Christmas Eve, just before the Chinese entered. Sevel departed in a Landing Craft, Mechanized (LCM), which took him to Pusan at the southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula.

In the summer of 1952, after more than two years in a combat zone, Sevel departed Korea. Figuring he had been lucky up to then but that his luck would not hold forever, he returned home and resigned his commission. He divorced his wife and found work as an engineer in New Jersey and then in Baltimore, where he helped design fighter and bomber planes.

In October 1958, Sevel traveled to a dude ranch in New York. He had enjoyed his time with horses in Germany and wanted to spend more time with them. He set up a few dates and attended a dance with a girl, but when he got to the dance hall he spotted a "real good looking dark-haired girl." He walked over to her and asked if she knew she was wearing her dress backward. "I was the tenth guy who asked her that." Her name was Deane Siskind, and she held a drink that someone else had given her. When other guys saw the drink they came over, but Sevel told them to get lost.

Later, Sevel sent her an orchid for her birthday. "It was a bad move," he recalled. A friend of hers had recently died, and someone had put an orchid in her coffin. She forgave him, and six months later, on March 29, 1959, they married. They had two boys, Adam and Johnathan. Two years after their marriage, Sevel changed careers. He entered law school, earned his degree, and went into private practice.

Sevel never attended any 90th Infantry Division reunions or joined the American Legion. "I didn't want to get together with old war buddies and just sit around telling stories of the past," he explained. Soon after he returned home from Europe, a Bronze Star with a "V" for valor arrived in the mail. The attached citation read that he had earned it on April 2, 1945, for crossing the Werra River, which the Army considered a "meritorious achievement in the face of the enemy." Sevel was not impressed. "I didn't think I was entitled to it."

As of 2016, Sevel still goes to his law office three times a week and is a grandfather twice over. He looks back fondly on his time in the service. While he has trouble recalling all his experiences from the European war, there is one lesson he learned that he still carries with him. He hesitates when he sees crooked picture on a wall. "I don't straighten pictures."

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is a historian for the U.S. Air Force Chaplain Corps and author of Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It. *He is also a tour guide for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours and leads a tour of General George S. Patton's battlefields, including battle sites of the 90th Infantry Division.*

Flight Out of Hell

In the predawn darkness of Dobodura, New Guinea, 2nd Lt. William J. Smith of the U.S. Army Air Corps was roughly awakened by a noncom announcing that it was time to get dressed and get to the mess tent for breakfast.

Smith had not slept well, having spent most of the night fighting mosquitoes that had managed to get inside his cot's netting. The nervous anticipation of flying another combat mission in the morning did not exactly make for peaceful slumber either. Five days earlier, eight North American B-25D Mitchell medium bombers of the 71st Bomb Squadron, 38th Bomb Group, Fifth Army Air Force had flown north over the Owen Stanley Mountains from their permanent base near Port Moresby to Dobodura, their temporary base of operations. The 38th Bomb Group, known as the "Sun Setters," was composed of the 71st, 405th, 822nd, and 823rd Squadrons, and 16 other Mitchells from the 38th would join today's mission. Their target on February, 15, 1944, was Kavieng Township on the northern tip of New Ireland, deep in Japanese-held territory. A long flight lay ahead of the Army aviators, even from this forward airstrip.

At the mess tent Lieutenant Smith sawed into his pancakes and hit a pocket of unmixed batter. As he watched the powder spill down into the syrup, he daydreamed of biscuits with red eye gravy, eggs, bacon, sweet cream, homemade preserves, and all the other delights of his mother's breakfasts back in Kentucky. As he came back to harsh reality, Smith put sugar in his coffee and then with experienced precision

HEROISM WAS EXTRAORDINARY DURING A HARROWING BOMBING MISSION TO KAVIENG AND THE VALIANT SERIES OF RESCUES THAT FOLLOWED. BY STEVEN D. SMITH

Their noses packed with blazing .50-caliber machine guns and their bomb bay doors open, North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers streak toward a Japanese target in the South Pacific in this painting by Jack Fellows. Aircraft of the 38th Bomb Group participated in numerous raids such as this, including an attack on Kavieng, New Ireland, on February 15, 1944.

skimmed off the floating ants. Soldiers in South Pacific territories learned that you could not keep ants out of the sugar, and it was just easier to strain them out of your coffee. It was not a great breakfast by stateside standards, but about the best the Army Air Corps personnel could expect in primitive New Guinea.

"Smitty," as Smith was known to his buddies, made the short walk to the briefing tent with the other pilots and crew members, all of whom keenly appreciated the danger of today's mission. The briefing officer reminded all that Kavieng would be "target rich" as an extremely important logistical staging base for Japanese installations in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago. It served as a major supply depot and boasted an excellent harbor, an airfield, and an aircraft assembly facility. Japanese planners knew that if the empire was to maintain any offensive capability in the Southwest Pacific its outposts had to be supplied with replacement fighters and bombers. These aircraft were being assembled at Kavieng to be flown south to Rabaul.

Equally essential supplies, replacement parts, and flight personnel were transported from Kavieng by barges, freighters, and even cargo sub-

National Archives

Flying at virtually its lowest possible altitude, a B-25 Mitchell medium bomber of the 38th Bomb Group attacks Japanese shipping in New Guinea in May 1944.

marines. General Douglas McArthur and the commander of the Fifth Army Air Force, Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney, were determined to cut off armaments and supplies by executing several intense air raids on Kavieng. This day's mission would not be the first raid on Kavieng by the Fifth. Consolidated B-24 Liberator high-altitude bomber attacks had been moderately successful in recent days, both in making the Kavieng airstrip a useless patch of bomb craters and in smashing local air power. But Kenney, a superb strategist and leader, knew the need for total neutralization of the target would demand the Fifth Air Force's signature low-altitude bombing and strafing. The Japanese anticipated these additional low-level raids and meant to employ antiaircraft batteries directed by newly installed radar to defend all approaches to the base. Kavieng's gunners felt confident that the murderous volume of flak they could deliver in the relatively confined areas of their base would exact a deadly toll in U.S. bombers and flyers.

The crews were informed that if missions like today's were successful, many of the Japanese bases in New Guinea could then be bypassed without threat of attack from the rear. Rabaul's huge garrison, over 80,000 men, would be further reduced to an ineffectual corps of castaways, and any shipping in its harbor, absent air cover, would be trapped in port. The once mighty Rabaul military complex would "wither on the vine" and be reduced to a de facto POW camp. The briefing ended with the officer reminding the pilots that fuel preservation was important as the distance to the northern tip of New Ireland would stretch the limits of the range of the bombers. Smith had to admit that the marathon mission today would probably be much more difficult than the 24 previous missions he had survived since arriving in New Guinea the previous year.

Lieutenant Smith walked around the Mitchell B-25D medium bomber to which he had been assigned, number J33F, plane 306 of the 71st Squadron, and closely checked it over before takeoff. He had never flown in this particular plane and wondered whether its nickname, *Pissonit,* which was emblazoned on the nose, referred to what the bomber was going to do to the enemy or the frustration it had previously given other crews.

Smith admired the firepower the bomber boasted as a result of the now standard modifications made in theater at Brisbane, Australia. The Plexiglas nose of the aircraft had been refitted with four additional forward-firing .50-caliber machine guns. With the two blister pack .50s on each side of the cockpit and the top twin turret facing forward, the B-25D could lay down withering fire on a strafing run. The aircraft could deliver two tons of ordnance and on this mission would carry four 500-pound high explosive bombs. Smith glanced around the airfield and saw it swarming with activity as the other crews made their final preparations. At 7:45 AM, the pilots, 1st Lt. Eugene Benson and Smith, taxied to their place in the flight line for takeoff. The airmen heard the R2600-13 Wright radial engines roar and felt their power as the twin engine Mitchell gathered speed and lifted into the brightening Pacific sky.

At Langemak Bay, Finschafen, New Guinea, Navy Lieutenant Nathan Green Gordon of Patrol Squadron 34, Fleet Air Wing 17 was busy making flight preparations for today's mission. Gordon, who hailed from Morrilton, Arkansas, had flown many missions with the "Black Cats," a squadron of Consolidated PBY-5 Catalina flying boats painted flat black for stealth purposes in night action. The Dumbo, as the PBY was lovingly called, was a large aircraft: 21 feet high, 63 feet long, with a wingspan of 104 feet. The plane had an incredible range of over 2,500 miles and was employed in multiple roles—executing reconnaissance flights, flying patrol duties, and making nocturnal bombing raids.

Today, however, Gordon was assigned to carry out another facet of the wing's mission statement. He would fly his PBY, *Arkansas Traveler,* and orbit off Kavieng, New Ireland, to provide search and rescue cover for a major Army Air Corps bombing mission. Gordon had been briefed that several squadrons of B-25 Mitchell and Douglas A-20 Havoc light bombers would make a strike on the heavily defended base and that planes could go down in surrounding waters.

Gordon ordered the crew to cast off the Cat's moorings, and he taxied into the bay for takeoff. The PBY was not a particularly handsome aircraft and was slow, with a cruising speed of only 125 miles per hour. Gordon was not concerned about her speed, as he knew she was extremely tough and could reliably perform rescue work even in rough seas. From past patrol and bombing missions, he knew she could absorb a lot of punishment and still make it home. He had all the confidence in the world in the big Cat and in his experienced and close-knit crew of eight: two pilots, a navigator, a radioman, three gunners, and a flight mechanic.

Gordon's trip to New Ireland was uneventful, but he was grateful for the four Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighters covering him. Japanese fighters, although seen less frequently in recent months, could appear at the most inopportune

time. After a long flight to the predetermined position, the *Traveler* took station well out to sea off the tip of New Ireland and idled at 2,000 feet. Gordon cast a glance down at the ocean, and the reports of 12 to 16 foot seas, trough to crest, were verified. Although the weather was clear and visibility unlimited, he sincerely hoped he would not have to force a landing in those swells.

Eight planes of the 71st Bomb Squadron, nicknamed the Wolf Pack, along with eight other B-25's of the 405th Green Dragons Squadron and eight Mitchells from the 823rd Terrible Tigers Squadron passed over Sand Island, the rendezvous point for this mission. There they joined elements of all four B-25 squadrons of the 345th Bomb Group, called the Air Apaches, and several squadrons of A-20 Havocs from the 3rd Bomb Group. The formation, designated mission number 46D-1, circled and picked up its fighter escort of Lockheed P-38 Lightings. As *Pissonit* continued to climb in formation, Benson manned the controls and Smith conversed with Hollie Rushing, the navigator. Farther back in the plane, behind the bomb bay, the radioman, Claude Healan, and the tail gunner, Albert Gross, made ready their stations as the planes cruised toward the target.

As they flew northeast toward Kavieng, Smith mentally reviewed the order of battle for this particular low-altitude raid. The planes of the 71st would come across first, wingtip to wingtip, four at a time, strafing with their machine guns and releasing their explosives. The 500-pound bombs had eight- to 12-second fuses so that the explosions of their own bombs would not damage the B-25s.

The other 38th Bomb Group squadrons would follow the two groups of planes from the Wolf Pack, and the 498th, 499th, 500th, and 501st Squadrons from the Air Apaches would then roar in to continue the pounding. The plane groups would come across in 30-second intervals, and *Pissonit* was to be in the second foursome of the raid. The formation would approach from the south, and the planes would fly up the New Ireland chain, making a northwesterly run at the base.

The bombers initiated their descent to 100 feet, flying over the township's coconut palm grove at 270 miles per hour. Benson opened the bomb bay doors, and Smith, adrenaline pumping, checked the readiness of the .50-caliber guns. The pilots of the B-25 would not only fire its guns but also served as the bombardiers, a must on a bombing run at treetop altitude.

At 11:15 AM, Smith's four-plane group started its bombing and strafing attack, and the big .50s let loose a blistering barrage in unison. With four planes abreast a wide bombing swath was assured, and the selection of individual targets was not a necessity. Smith released *Pissonit*'s payload. The first flight of Mitchells had struck the mark, and dense black smoke already rose from the warehouses at the main wharf. The Japanese return fire was heavy with everything from small arms to 5-inch artillery shells being thrown skyward.

As Benson passed over the target, Smith heard a sharp clap to his left and a simultaneous jolt. Immediately, the left engine burst into flames. Rushing quickly pulled the Lux fire extinguisher, and the fire was chemically suffocated. But then another louder explosion shook the plane as flak hit the fuselage, just forward of where the radioman would be located. The 200-gallon auxiliary gas tank, called a Tokyo tank, which had been installed for extra range, had been ignited and now was a blowtorch with a six-foot plume of flame.

This second explosion had also ruptured the hydraulic lines, causing the landing gear to drop and creating a sudden drop in airspeed. The left landing wheels caught on fire and in turn reignited the left engine. Captain Fred Corning of Seattle, Washington, flying the B-25 immediately to *Pissonit*'s left, saw the mortally wounded plane streaming flames and thick smoke and gravely mumbled to nobody in particular, "I'll never see those guys again."

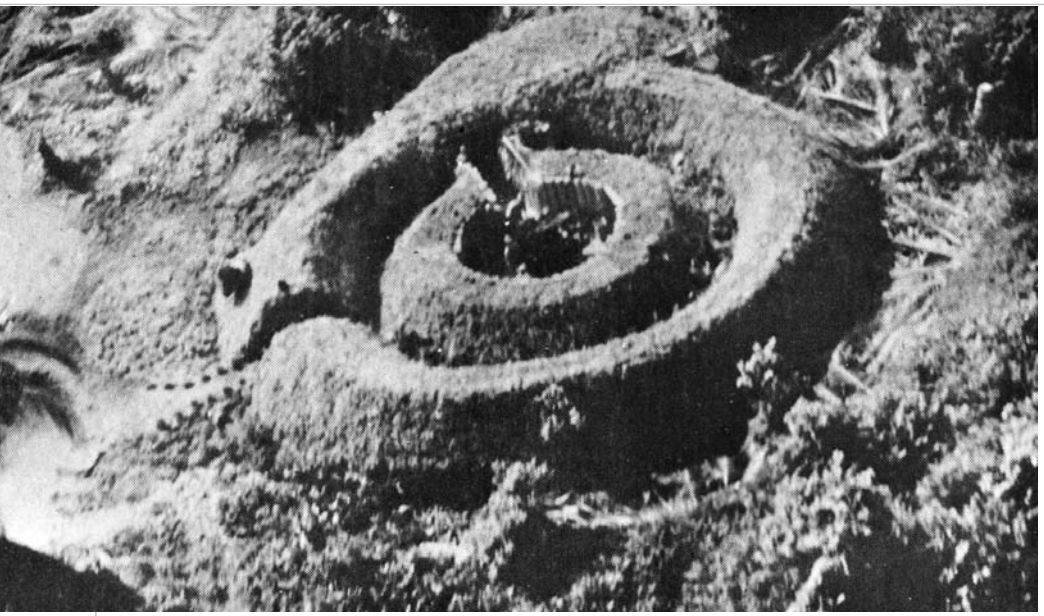
It was obvious to Smith that the only option now was to ditch the plane in the ocean. But Benson, much to Smith's amazement, pulled the yoke back and tersely shouted, "We have to gain altitude!" Apparently it was the senior pilot's desire to put as much distance between them and potential Japanese captors as possible. It was well known to Allied aviators that capture certainly meant brutal interrogation

National Archives

Steven D. Smith

ABOVE: Lieutenant Nathan Gordon, whose heroic acts saved several lives on February 15, 1944, stands at front with the crew of his Consolidated PBY-5 Catalina flying boat nicknamed *Arkansas Traveler.* Gordon received the Medal of Honor for his valor. RIGHT: After their narrow escape from death in the Kavieng raid of February 15, 1944, survivors from the B-25 medium bomber nicknamed *Pissonit* pose for a photographer. The trio includes, left to right, Lieutenant Eugene Benson, Lieutenant Hollie Rushing, and Lieutenant William J. Smith.

Both: National Archives



This riveting aerial photograph taken during the raid on Kavieng on February 15, 1944, depicts a newly completed earthen revetment protecting a Japanese dual-barrel 25mm antiaircraft gun emplacement. These weapons posed a significant threat to low-flying B-25s on bombing and strafing runs.

and the horrors of a POW camp, while immediate execution was an equally likely probability. Gaining altitude would perhaps provide a longer glide path for the plane, but Smith realized that the engine fire would soon burn the left wing in two, making *Pissonit* a spiraling death trap. He barked at Benson that they had to put the aircraft down right away. When Benson ignored him, a struggle ensued as the two pilots briefly wrestled at their respective dual controls for command of the plane. No words were exchanged, and Benson soon relinquished the flying to the junior officer.

Smith's immediate worry was to ditch safely in the ocean and hopefully get far enough away from the coastline to escape Japanese fire or immediate capture. He gave full power to his right engine and banked to the left, going past Nusa Island just beyond Kavieng harbor. Smith told the crew to brace for a ditched landing and silently wondered if the two men in the rear of the plane were even alive to hear him. Only seconds to touchdown, Smith felt a presence behind him and glanced back quickly toward the bomb bay. He saw tail gunner Gross crawling toward the cockpit over the flaming gas tank. He had been hideously burned.

Smith forced himself to focus on the approaching waves as he cut the right engine and struggled to hold up the nose of the plane. With no hydraulics Smith had no control of the flaps, but providence smiled upon them as the plane slid into a trough instead of slamming into a wall of pitching ocean. The jolt was still tremendous, but the plane stopped upright and for the moment was floating. Burning aviation fuel quickly spread across the water around the wreck.

The most direct avenue of escape from the cockpit was a hatch located over the copilot's seat, and Benson quickly removed his seat harnesses and leapt up to push open the hatch. He and Rushing hurriedly began to scramble for the exit, literally stepping on Smith as they climbed up and out. Smith looked back again to where he had last seen Gross, but he was nowhere in sight. The Mitchell was quickly flooding, and Smith spun out of his seat to search for Gross. He saw that the entry hatch located on the bottom of the fuselage, just behind the cockpit, had been forced open by the crash. Gross had apparently been thrown forward and down and then was swept or suctioned out into the ocean. Smith could see no sign of him, or Healan, but knew he had but seconds until the plane sank. Only later would he discover that radioman Healan had tried to parachute from the B-25—a fatal attempt at an altitude of 75 feet.

Smith grabbed his parachute and forced it through the escape hatch. He followed it out and stood up on the nose of the plane ready to jump away from it, but burning aviation fuel surrounded the plane. He knew he could dive underwater, but could he stay under until he reached open water? He instinctively looked back at the cockpit as the air forced from the its interior made an eerie moaning sound. Suddenly, an explosion within the plane blew out the Plexiglas nose and lifted him up and fortuitously out over the fiery surface.

Dazed, the 21-year-old aviator came to the surface and winced as his face began stinging in the salty water. Smith angrily noted that his mustache and eyebrows were no longer on his face, singed off by the explosion. Benson and Rushing swam toward him. The three survivors then kicked and paddled away from the plane, fearing further explosions were imminent. *Pissonit* sank with a bubbly hiss and steamy sizzle as burning metal met the water.

Smith's parachute provided the group some extra buoyancy and served as something to which the bedraggled aviators could cling to stay together. They all had on their Mae West life jackets, so drowning was not an immediate concern. Taking personal inventory, Smith realized that the front of his left leg from ankle to knee had been raked open by the crash impact. Smith found a tube of lip balm in a pocket and, forcing its entire contents into his hands, made a salve of sorts to spread on his face. Benson was unhurt, and Rushing had minor burns, but like Smith they were understandably shaken. Smith began to assess their situation. They were approximately one mile out from Kavieng without a raft, food, or water and were aimlessly drifting in the shark-infested waters of the Bismarck Sea, and his leg was bleeding. If the tide or currents took them to shore they would be captured, and if they were taken out to sea their prospects of survival were equally bleak.

They could already see that their raid was a major success. Fires raged, and five columns of smoke rose from Kavieng as explosions continued to rock the harbor. Japanese naval and merchant vessels dotted the waters of the harbor, all partially submerged from this and previous raids. The crew could see more U.S. bombers raining additional destruction on the target, but that was little solace as they cast nervous glances toward the beach and made squinting searches skyward for some form of rescue. In a matter of minutes B-25's flew over the downed U.S. fliers, leading them to wave and shout wildly at possible salvation. Instead of delivering hope, the planes brought them horror when anxious gunners fired on them, apparently thinking they were Japanese sailors who had abandoned one of the ships in the harbor. Efforts to dive below the waves to escape the friendly fire were thwarted by their life jackets, but the gunners' aim was off, and the .50-caliber rounds fortunately missed. Smith tried hard not to let his rising fear show on his already blistered face.

Unknown to the downed flyers of the Wolf Pack, other U.S. bombers were experiencing life and death struggles of their own. The B-25s of the 345th were in the process of bombing the area of Kavieng called Chinatown, which

included the main warehouse facilities and fuel storage areas. The 38th had left these supply dumps a blazing inferno that created billowing clouds of blinding smoke, as *Pissonit*'s surviving crew could testify. Scores of tires, 55-gallon drums of gasoline, and other Japanese military goods exploded upward among the planes of the 500th Squadron as they roared overhead. These missiles, or perhaps bursting flak, hit the right engine of *Jack Rabbit Express* flown by Lieutenant Thane Hecox. The plane suddenly veered to the right and downward, crashing in a fireball at the edge of Chinatown. All aboard were killed, including Captain Sylvester A. Hoffman, who was on his last mission before returning to the States.

The operations officer for the 500th, Captain William J. Cavoli, led a group of three B-25s just to the right of Hecox's flight. He and co-pilot 2nd Lt. George H. Braun flew a B-25 that bore no nickname, identified only by the serial number 41-30531. As they flew into the maelstrom, Cavoli was forced to rely on his instruments because of the dense smoke. As his plane was enveloped by the blackness, it was rocked by a direct hit to the right engine. The engine exploded in flames, and aviation fuel spread the fire over the wing and down the length of the right side of the fuselage.

As the B-25 returned to daylight the crew was slammed by suffocating heat as pieces of the engine nacelle and wing melted and fell away. As the ground rushed up toward them, Cavoli and Braun struggled at the controls to keep the dying plane airborne until they could reach the ocean. They managed to dodge palms, cleared the beach, and only 600 yards from the shoreline they ditched, nose up. The Mitchell initially skipped lightly off the water, but on the next contact the aircraft gouged to a grinding halt in a huge column of spray. The B-25's nose was partially torn away, and the incoming sea rushed in with such force that the material was torn from the navigator's pants legs. Braun jettisoned the life raft, and the two pilots gathered and rescued the other crew from the wreckage. Incredibly, all six men aboard had survived, although some suffered deep cuts and one a severely broken arm. After the emergency kits were retrieved, they paddled furiously to escape the sinking plane.

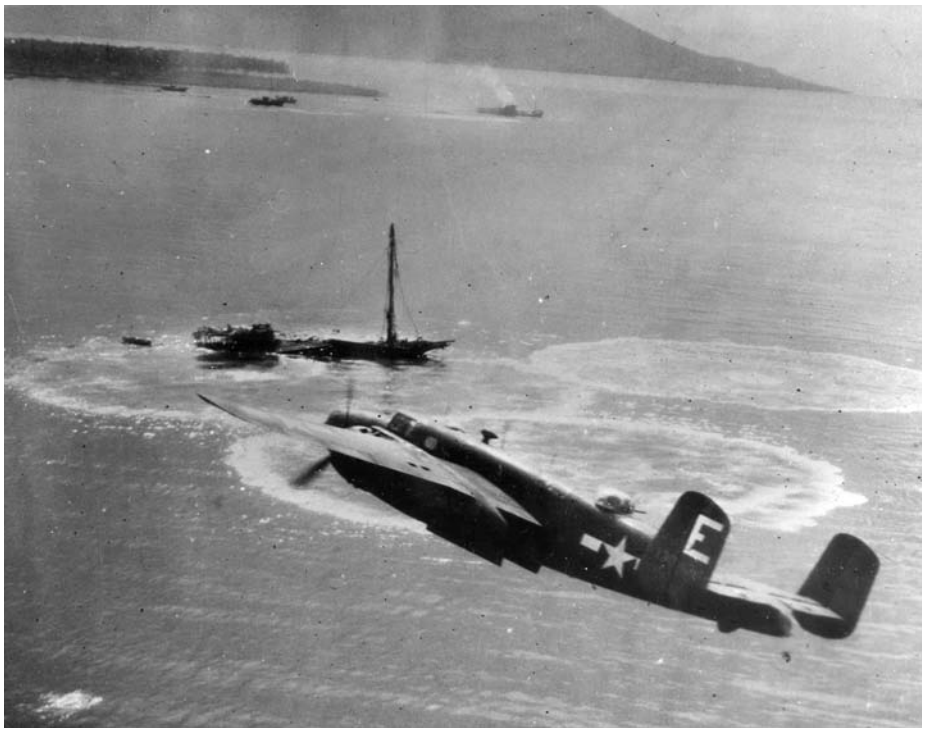
At Chinatown the fires burned ever higher, but the punishment by the Fifth Air Force continued. Major Chester Coltharp, squadron commander, led the 498th over the target in *Princess Pat,* a B-25 sporting the falcon head nose art adopted by the squadron. The planes dropped 59 additional 500-pound bombs. More than a dozen Japanese floatplanes anchored at the shore were shredded, a large wharf was destroyed, and a 2,000-ton freighter was sunk. Debris continued to be launched by the surface explosions, and some U.S. planes, in an effort to avoid this danger, pulled up, slowing their B-25's and presenting easy targets to the angry Japanese gunners below.

Gremlin's Holiday, flown by 1st Lt. Edgar R. Cavin, was one such plane. Inside the top turret of the plane sat Staff Sergeant David B. McCready, who fired away with his twin .50s at Japanese sailors on the deck of a submarine below. Japanese incendiary shells suddenly opened up the bottom of the fuselage and ignited the auxiliary gas tank. The resulting explosion shot the turret dome up and away, and McCready instantly lost his helmet, headset, and goggles in the slipstream. The force of the wind scoured the sergeant's head and face while simultaneously the fire below threatened to burn his lower body. The gunner desperately backed down out of his compromised position and painfully scrambled forward toward the radio compartment.

Captain Robert G. Huff, the squadron adjutant and tent mate of Major Coltharp, was an unauthorized passenger on *Gremlin's Holiday.* As a ground officer he had always wanted to witness combat and had convinced Cavin to let him come along. After feeling the concussion of the explosion, he instantly wished he had stayed at Dobodura. Cavin realized the fire that McCready had sought to escape was spreading and intensifying. Huff and Staff Sergeant Lawrence Herbst tried in vain to extinguish the blaze. After observing the advancing fire himself, 2nd Lt. Elmer "Jeb" Kirkland, the co-pilot, warned Cavin they had to immediately ditch *Gremlin's Holiday*.

In the radio compartment Technical Sergeant Fred Arnett gently held the burned McCready in his arms and braced for the impact of the imminent crash. The plane stalled and went in nose first, going under the waves and then surging back to the surface like a porpoise. The pilots and Herbst escaped via the cockpit hatch, while Huff had to swim underwater to use the same exit. McCready and Arnett had been knocked briefly unconscious by the crash but regained their senses quickly with the horrible realization they were underwater. After some desperate struggles with straps, belts, and underwater wreckage they exited the hole ripped out of the bottom of the aircraft and with lungs bursting popped to the surface.

The crew had all survived the crash, but not without serious injuries. Huff was wounded with three broken lumbar bones and a deep gash to his leg, while Arnett had suffered a broken shoulder and a slash down his face that exposed teeth and bare cheekbone. McCready was in terrible pain with a compound fracture



A B-25 Mitchell medium bomber banks toward a stricken Japanese vessel that is already sinking as lifeboats are visible pulling away. B-25s conducted numerous raids on Japanese shipping and shore installations in the South Pacific, often with spectacular results.

Both: Steven D. Smith

ABOVE LEFT: This photo taken during the attack on Kavieng, New Ireland, by B-25 Mitchell medium bombers shows the devastating effect of such air raids. A Japanese freighter has already been hit and sunk in the shallow waters of Kavieng harbor. ABOVE RIGHT: Smoke rises from the heavy jungle of New Ireland and from just offshore in this image of Japanese installations under attack by American B-25 medium bombers at Kavieng harbor on February 15.

of the right ankle, a deep gash to his hipbone, and severely burned arms and hands. Soon other planes of the squadron circled and dropped survival kits and bright yellow rafts to their brethren swimming below.

At 11 AM, 24-year-old Nathan Gordon received the first confirmation that his day was indeed going to be very busy. Even from his distant vantage point the rising columns of smoke over Kavieng were easily seen. The radio traffic provided the news of crashed planes, ditched aircraft, and crews in the water. The first call for Gardenia Six, his call sign, came from an Army-based radio at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, that relayed a message from a returning B-25 that multiple aircraft were down. But by that time Lieutenant Gordon was already approaching the township looking for rafts, wreckage, or any sign of survivors in the water.

Gordon suddenly noticed the telltale yellow-orange dye that downed aviators used to mark their positions. As he took the big Catalina down for a closer look he spotted oil on the water and decided to pick up anybody he might locate. He realized that the ocean landing he was about to make would be more difficult than any he had ever attempted. If anything, the wind had picked up and the height of the waves had grown.

It was essential that Gordon set *Arkansas Traveler* down with the bow high and the stern touching the surface first. This method of landing employed water resistance to slow the speed of the Cat and improve the accuracy and safety of the touchdown. But successfully pulling off this maneuver would be much more difficult because of the necessity of landing on the down slope of the big swells to avoid plowing into a wall of seawater. Regardless of Gordon's training and actual experience, the first landing was rough. Upon the hard impact the 16-year-old Catalina popped several rivets in the hull. The plane started taking on water through the rivet holes. Fortunately, the damage was not serious, and *Arkansas Traveler* taxied quickly toward the dye. As they slowly moved through the debris field of a crash they saw an object and believed it was an aviator, but as they drew near they saw it was a partially deflated Army Air Corps raft. There were no survivors to be found. Gordon sadly shook his head and opened the throttle, running through the dye still in the water. It was frustrating to know that this was one crew he could not rescue.

As the *Traveler* gained altitude it was spotted by Captain Tony Chiappe, the operations officer of the 498th, flying above in his Mitchell, *Old Baldy.* Chiappe had left Major Coltharp to circle Cavin's crew and discourage Japanese attempts at capture while he searched for the PBY. Although radio problems kept Chiappe and Gordon from directly talking, hand signals and relays through the P-47s got the message across that the Catalina should follow his B-25. Gordon quickly flew the short distance and dropped two smoke flares to mark the location of *Gremlin Holiday*'s survivors: five crew members and one stowaway.

Gordon made a much better landing this time and taxied toward two rafts that had been tied together. Standard rescue procedure called for the plane to be stationary and let the lighter object, in this case the rafts, come to the plane. However, this was certainly not a standard rescue as the shells falling from the Japanese shore batteries reminded everyone. The crew threw a heaving line to the water-soaked aviators, which they caught on the first attempt. But the forward motion of the plane with its props still turning was too great. It might actually drown the men clinging to the rope. Gordon ordered the line cut and realized that he would have to kill the engines. He did not want to drown the people he was seeking to save; nor did he want the heavy seas to lift weakened men into the still turning props. As Japanese fire bracketed the big Cat, Gordon's mind raced ahead, imagining their horrible condition if the engines did not start.

Gordon taxied back to the wide-eyed men in the water. Ensign Jack Kelley was sent to the port blister, where the waterlogged survivors would be taken aboard. Paul Germeau, the strongest man on board, was waiting there to pull them into the Catalina. Cavin's men caught another line, and Gordon's props slowed and then stopped altogether. Japanese machine-gun fire sprayed the water nearby. Only the lifting and pitching of the plane in the high seas confounded the aim of the Japanese gunners. The crew of *Gremlin's Holiday* was hard to wrestle aboard. The men were helpless dead weight and were difficult to grip as they were coated in the oil from their downed aircraft. Huff and McCready were especially tough to handle with their severe injuries. One by one, they wriggled, rolled, and were manhandled aboard. Cavin, the last of his group, fell through the blister window, and the rafts were cast off.

The shells fell closer now, and Gordon knew that the Japanese artillery would soon zero in if

they did not quickly get back in the air. The pilot pushed the starter buttons, and with a belch of black smoke the engines came to life. Slapping the waves as she gathered speed, the plane rose off into the smoke-filled skies of Kavieng.

It had now been over two hours since Smith, Benson, and Rushing had gone into the water. The yellow-orange dye from the stain canisters rigged to their Mae West's had long since dissipated. The dye was designed not only to give visibility to rescuers, but also was thought to serve as a shark repellent. The high swells provided a good vantage point when the survivors were carried to the crest, but upon sliding down into a trough there was no visibility at all. From time to time they had cast anxious glances down in the clear water, mistaking shadows for sharks.

Suddenly, the three heard planes approaching. Were they friend or foe, and if they were friends would they fire on them again? Straining their eyes as they looked into the mid-day tropical sun, Smith realized that they were indeed good guys, huge P-47 Thunderbolt fighters. Quickly they took the chrome mirrors attached to their life vests and flashed them toward the fighter planes overhead. Their hearts leaped as the P-47s dove toward them and began to run a tight circle around their position, this time with no ill intent. It was obvious they were now found, but their rescue still seemed highly improbable.

The *Traveler* followed the P-47s' directions to the three bobbing figures on the water. Gordon was too close to Kavieng, and the enemy had duly noted his presence. As he moved toward the water and a third landing, he did so through a hail of tracers. The crew had taken pencils and inserted them into the sprung rivet holes, intentionally breaking them off in an effort to plug the leaks. The old Cat certainly did not need any new holes caused by enemy munitions. *Traveler*'s buoyant bow eased down a mound of seawater, and the plane settled on a surface whipped into froth by wind, waves, and Japanese shells.

Once again the props were killed, and the crew watched as Germeau coaxed the heaving line under the wing toward the men in the water. The rocking ocean banged the three against the side of the hull, but they came in quickly, sliding roughly over the blister window's coating. Smith joined the increasingly cramped group inside. Again, the PBY's engines reliably sprang to life.

Traveler lurched forward, and in her wake geysers rose from Japanese gunfire. Gordon knew that a few more seconds on the rescue scene would have spelled disaster for the plane and its occupants. The tough old bird groaned with all the extra weight but proudly left the sea again. As he lay back against the plane's bulkhead, Smith allowed the desperate hope of survival to transform into a sweet reality.

The P-47s had to depart, as their remaining fuel would barely get them home. Gordon followed their path and had already put 10 miles between burning Kavieng and *Traveler.* Once again the now familiar voice of Major Coltharp crackled over the PBY's radio and announced that the major had spotted another ditched B-25 only 600 yards off the beach. Gordon did not want to accept what he was hearing, and he began to calculate the mounting odds against surviving another rescue attempt. Nathan Gordon's character did not, however, allow the option to cut and run become viable. He realized he could not leave any Americans to the mercy of the Japanese.

Painting by Jack Fellows, www.jackfellows.com

In this painting by Jack Fellows created for this story, Lieutenant Gordon prepares to land his PBY in the ocean off Kavieng to rescue downed B-25 crew members as Japanese shells splash in the water below.

In the rear of the PBY, Smith immediately noticed *Traveler* was executing a gradual wide turn back toward Kavieng. He squeezed his eyes tightly shut and grimaced because he knew they must be headed back for another rescue attempt. The anguished thought that Gordon was absolutely crazy to put them all in such great peril was immediately erased with his guilty realization that Gordon had taken the same risk to pick up *Pissonit*'s survivors.

With *Princess Pat* flying cover, *Arkansas Traveler* circled Captain Cavoli's crew in Kavieng harbor. Nate Gordon flew right over amazed Japanese gunners temporarily stunned into inaction. He made his best landing of the day, a good thing considering the plane's compromised bow plates, coming to a stop within a few yards of the rafts. Immediately, the Catalina became a duck in a shooting gallery as the shoreline lit up with muzzle flashes. The fire was so intense that Gordon was sorely tempted to push the throttles forward and simply take off again. Shells landed all about the plane, and he could attribute their current safety only to the Almighty's protection. In record time six more passengers were hauled aboard as the fear of getting killed by enemy fire overcame pain and fatigue.

The starboard engine immediately restarted, but the portside engine refused to turn over. The plane was now running in a circle with Japanese shells getting ever closer. Gordon knocked the hands of Ensign Walter L. Patrick, his co-pilot, away from the starter button. It was evident to Gordon that one of the engines was flooded. They waited for a couple of minutes, which to every occupant on board seemed more like several hours. Patrick finally engaged the starter again, and the prop blades started moving, slowly at first, then picked up speed until finally the blade tips were a blur. Again, with a payload grossly beyond the norm, Gordon, his other seven crewmembers, and 15 Army aviators left the heaving ocean in the faithful

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THE SECOND Pearl Harbor

THE WEST LOCH DISASTER OF MAY 22, 1944, CAUSED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO HARBOR FACILITIES.

BY GENE E. SALECKER

National Archives

THE first explosion came as a complete surprise to everyone around Pearl Harbor. The Sunday had started out clear and bright, but the sky quickly darkened as great clouds of thick black smoke rose high above the burning ships.

Fuel oil spilled atop the water and caught fire, sending giant licks of flame spreading out across the surface. In an instant, over two dozen ships were in danger. Only the quick actions of their captains and crews could save them. It was not December 7, 1941, but May 21, 1944, and it was not the Japanese that set off the first explosion. It was careless smoking.

The whole ordeal began on May 15, when dozens of landing ship, tanks (LSTs), scheduled to take part in the upcoming invasion of the Japanese island of Saipan in the Marianas, headed toward the Hawaiian island of Maui for a rehearsal. Saipan and the neighboring island of Tinian would be invaded by the Northern Troops and Landing Force of Task Force 56, consisting of the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions, the XXIV Army Corps Artillery, and the Saipan and Tinian Garrison Forces, a total of 71,000 men. A Southern Troops and Landing Force, made up of the 3rd Marine Division, the 77th Infantry Division, and the III Army Corps Artillery, some 56,500 men, was assembled to capture Guam.

To carry the troops to Saipan, the Navy had assembled 110 transport vessels, including 10 high-speed destroyer transports (APDs) and 47 LSTs, the big transport vessels that could beach themselves on an invasion beach, open their bow doors, drop their ramps, and belch forth invading troops. To help get the men ashore over a fringing reef, the Navy had 579 troop carrying landing vehicles, tracked (LVTs or amtracs), and 140 armored amphibian tanks. The Army's 105mm howitzers would be carried ashore in DUKWs, the amphibious version of the 2.5-ton truck. Both the LVTs and the DUKWs would be carried to the Marianas in the bellies of the big LSTs.

Both inside and outside, the LSTs were loaded with ammunition, equipment, vehicles, and men. "Much of the cargo was placed by the Army quartermasters on the tank deck [i.e., enclosed lowest deck], piled about three feet deep," recalled Ensign Carl V. Smith of LST 224. "They then covered all their cargo with 1 x 6-inch rough lumber called dunnage. It was criss-crossed so that the [LVTs] could be parked on [top of] it securely." Once the lumber was in place, the LVTs or DUKWs were backed into the mouth of the LSTs and parked atop the wooden supports. Each LST could carry 17 LVTs or LVT(A)s (amphibious tanks) or 11 DUKWs.

Thick clouds of smoke billow from the West Loch of Pearl Harbor after a series of massive explosions on May 21, 1944, sank or damaged several vessels.

Many of the 328-foot-long LSTs were piggybacking a smaller, 120-foot long landing craft, tank (LCT) on their wide open, flat main decks. The smaller ship was hoisted onto the larger craft by cranes at Pearl Harbor and placed atop sturdy wooden greased skids spread perpendicular across the main deck. Once chained in place, there was a small space underneath the LCT that provided a shaded area for many of the Marine Corps or Army passengers to pitch their cots if they did not want to sleep in the enclosed tank deck, which stank of gas fumes. Other Marines and soldiers simply elected to sleep inside the open-topped LCT itself. Once the big LST arrived at the invasion beach, the ship was ballasted to lean to one side, the chains were unhooked, and the LCT simply slid off into the ocean. The crew then climbed in and went about the business they were trained for.

If an LST was not carrying an LCT, it was probably carrying two large floating pontoons attached to either side of the hull. Since many invasion beaches were too shallow even for the flat-bottomed LSTs to get close enough, floating pontoons had been designed to fill in the gap between the dry sand and the end of the LST ramp. Ensign Smith wrote, "Pontoons were made of steel cubes measuring 6' x 6' x 6'. The steel was about 1/8 inch thick. These cubes were joined together by six-foot steel angle irons, and the pontoon could be as long as the need dictated…. Cables lashed it into place [on the sides of the LST]. When it came time to launch, the cables were released and the pontoons fell into the water."

The entire invasion fleet was commanded by Admiral Raymond Spruance, with the Amphibious Force commanded by Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner. Know-

ing that many of his ship commanders and crews were young and inexperienced, especially on the LSTs, Turner scheduled five days of full-blown rehearsals around Hawaii for mid-May, "The biggest and longest held to date in the Pacific campaigns."

Unfortunately, things went wrong from the start. On the night of May 14, while the LSTs and other ships were moving toward the rehearsal beach on Maui, the weather turned downright nasty. Strong winds and rolling waves battered the various craft as they moved through the darkened waters. At 2:19 AM on May 15, the chains holding down LCT 988 on top of LST 485 snapped.

"The weather was rough and the strain on the cables was too great," reported Marine Corps historian Carl Hoffman. "The craft was pitched overboard with the sleeping men aboard. Nineteen men were either missing or killed, and five were injured as the craft was rammed and sunk by the next LST in column."

ABOVE: LSTs (landing ship, tank) were the backbone of amphibious cargo and personnel transport on a tactical level. In this photo taken at the Amphibious Training Base at Camp Bradford, Virginia, sometime in 1943-1944, an LST offloads an Army truck with a towed howitzer. OPPOSITE: Photographed with an LCT (landing craft, tank) lashed to its deck, LST 940 rides at anchor. On May 14, during rehearsal for the Saipan invasion, three LCTs broke loose from their LSTs and two sank in the ocean during a storm. Unfortunately, a number of Marines sleeping in the LCTs were missing or killed when the LCTs pitched off the LSTs.

About 25 minutes later, as the seas continued to batter the rehearsal fleet, another landing craft, LCT 988, pitched off the deck of the Coast Guard-manned LST 71. Although the bow ramp was up when LCT 988 hit the water, it quickly became waterlogged and a number of Marines that had bedded down inside the open vessel were swept away or drowned. Although swamped, the landing craft stayed afloat and was eventually towed back to Pearl Harbor.

Unfortunately, before the night was through, one more of the smaller vessels, LCT 984, was prematurely launched off the deck of LST 390. Unprepared for the disaster, the LCT had its engine room doors open and, upon hitting the water, its front ramp came down. The open ramp and doors caused the craft to become "so waterlogged that it capsized." Bobbing up and down in the middle of the rehearsal lanes, LCT 984 became a "marine hazard" and was later sent to the bottom by some well-placed gunfire from a submarine chaser. There were no survivors out of those who had been swept overboard.

Perhaps the reason why LCT 988 and LCT 984 broke their chains in the heavy seas was because they had been equipped as mortar gunboats. To add a little punch to the landings, Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill, in charge of the ships and amtracs transporting the men toward the shore, had turned three LCTs into floating gunships, equipping each with eight 4.2-inch mortars. The mortars were welded to the decks, and each craft was loaded with 1,250 cases of mortar shells, with two shells to a case. Perhaps in the heavy seas the additional weight of the mortars and shells had put too much strain on the chains holding the LCTs in place. Three LCTs were gone, dozens of lives were lost, and the rehearsals had not yet begun.

Throughout May 15-19, trouble haunted the rehearsal. Several LSTs collided with each other, causing minor damage, while many more had broken ramp chains once their wide bow doors were opened and their ramps were lowered. Additionally, two DUKWs sank as the heavy waves continued to pound the ongoing rehearsal. Fortunately, all crews and passengers were rescued.

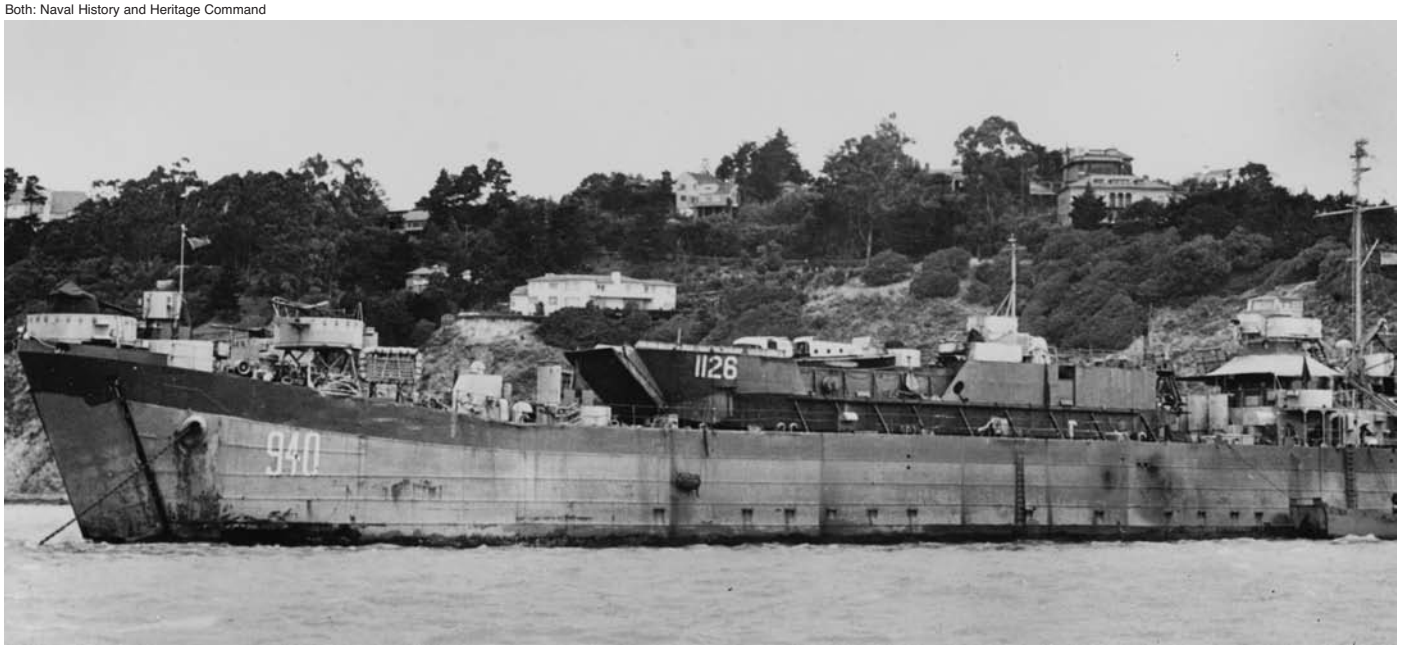
In spite of the tragic loss of three LCTs and their crews and many Marine passengers along with the minor accidents, the rehearsals went on. After the fifth day, Admiral Hill and others made an assessment. Hill deemed the activity "very ragged and poorly conducted." Unfortunately, the weather had played a big part. Other officers, however, felt that the rehearsals "proved to be immensely beneficial in providing much needed supervised drill for [the] Commanding Officers of the LSTs in the expeditious launch of tractors [amtracs] at the right time and right place."

The rehearsals were over by 1 PM on Friday, May 19, and most of the LSTs headed back to Pearl Harbor. The only ships left behind were those whose crews were trying to repair broken ramp chains or close stubborn bow doors. While the main group of ships was returning to Oahu, many of the amtrac and DUKW crews took the opportunity to refuel their vehicles. In most cases, up to one hundred 55-gallon drums of high-octane aviation gasoline had been strapped to the forecastle of the LSTs' top decks. Of course, the refilling of the LVTs or DUKWs left dozens of empty or half-empty drums of aviation gasoline tied on the bow of each ship, a dangerous situation since the remaining fumes were highly combustible.

Equally as dangerous was the fact that many of the Marines and Army personnel were using the gasoline to weatherproof their rifles. Rather than bunk inside the LST, where the air smelled of exhaust fumes and gasoline, many Marines and soldiers set up their cots on the wide open main deck, bunking under the LCT or around and inside the many jeeps, trucks, or ammunition-laden trailers crowding the main deck. With their rifles exposed to the corrosive sea air, many of the men began wiping a layer of gasoline on their weapons. It was not unusual for at least one 55-gallon drum to be equipped with a spigot so that the Marines and soldiers could siphon off a bit of gasoline to coat their rifles. This also left a half-empty drum of gasoline.

Most of the returning LSTs maneuvered through the entrance of Pearl Harbor on Saturday morning, May 20, and then turned left into a narrow channel that led to a shallow area of Pearl known as West Loch. Too shallow for most of the deep-bottomed combat ships, West Loch was an excellent anchorage for the flat-bottomed LSTs, which drew only 14.5 feet of water. During the infamous December 7, 1941, attack, the Japanese had concentrated on the ships and facilities in East Loch, missing the large Naval Ammunition Depot on Powder Point in West Loch, which housed most of the

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command



powder and ammunition for the Pacific Fleet. In 1941, the depot had been housed on only 200 acres of land. By May 1944, it had expanded to cover 537 acres and contained almost every kind of munition, including torpedoes, fuses, detonators, mines, and shells.

Situated along the sides of West Loch were sets of mooring posts known as tares, consisting of a few dolphins or pilings resembling long telephone poles, wrapped with iron bands and sunk upright into the bottom of the harbor about 25 feet from shore. When a ship docked at a tare, it simply moved up alongside the dolphins and tied up sideways, bow and stern. Other crews that needed to dock simply pulled their vessel up alongside the first ship, threw a few facile rope bumpers between the two craft, and fastened the two ships together with thick hawsers. In this fashion, several ships could dock alongside each other at each tare. Loading and unloading of the vessels was done by small boats or landing craft, usually through the big bow doors and ramps.

There were a total of 10 tares or mooring stations at West Loch. Tares 1 through 4 were situated along the West Loch channel below Powder Point and the Naval Ammunition Depot. Tares 5 and 6 were north of and opposite Power Point. Around a little outcropping of land known as Intrepid Point sat Tare 7, while straight west across a wide shallow bay known as Walker Bay were Tares 8, 9, and 10. West, beyond the depot, was a shallower back bay that was usually used by even smaller, shallower draft vessels.

Through Saturday and into Sunday morning, several LSTs came and went from West Loch, tying up to the different tares or queuing up to Tare 3, the water dock, to top off their fresh water tanks. After docking, some of the LSTs disgorged their amtracs or DUKWs for simple maintenance or cleaning. These moved onto a parking area set up between the western tares and a wide sugar cane field bordering the western side of the loch. By 3 PM on Sunday, May 22, there were five LSTs tied to Tares 5 and 6, five at Tare 10, seven at Tare 9, and eight at Tare 8. Additionally, there were three APD high-speed transport destroyers at Tare 7 at Intrepid Point and a cargo ship, SS *Joseph B. Francis,* unloading 3,000 tons of ammunition at the depot. Not far away, also waiting to be unloaded, were two barges containing another 3,000 tons of explosives. Tied up as the LSTs were, and packed to the gills with ammunition and equipment for the invasion of the Marianas, the situation was ripe for disaster. Noted one LST commander, "If one LST caught fire due to the nature of the cargoes on board, probably all the ships would be lost in one [tare]."

In the early morning of May 22, while about half the crew of each ship disappeared on shore leave, a group of civilian workers, including a number of Hawaiian-born Japanese, went aboard several ships to tighten down or replace the chains holding the different LCTs to the top decks. On board LST 353, the seventh ship of the eight at Tare 8, two sailors broke out a welder's torch and began cutting and welding some angle iron needed to carry extra life rafts for their Marine passengers. A little forward of where the two men were welding, a group of African American soldiers from the 29th Chemical Decontamination Company was hard at work removing the 1,250 cases of mortar shells from LCT 963. Earlier that morning, after reflecting upon the loss of the two heavily laden gunships during the Maui rehearsals, Admiral Turner had decided to scrap the idea of the mortar gunships and retrofit the one remaining vessel, LCT 963, to a regular LCT. However, before the mortars could be removed with a welder's torch the cases of ammunition had to be removed.

To facilitate the unloading, a 2.5-ton truck had been brought out to LST 353 and raised up to the top deck via the large cargo elevator near the bow. Since the LCT was elevated on the greased timbers, even with its bow ramp down it was higher than the truck. Because of this, the ammunition handlers placed slides from the six-foot-high lowered ramp to the raised tailgate of the truck, which remained on the raised elevator. With most of the handlers working inside the LCT and only a couple inside the back of the truck, the soldiers lifted the mortar round crates from the deck of the LCT and pushed them down the slides to the waiting truck.

Although this worked well for a while, a few crates slid off the slides and cracked open, spilling the twin mortar rounds onto the steel deck. After some time, when it was evident that this process was taking too long, it was decided to forgo the slides and simply load the crates by hand, passing them from one handler to another. By 3 PM, after one truck had been loaded and brought back to shore, a second truck was beginning to fill up when the loaders paused to get an accurate count, having been ordered to load no more than 110 crates in the truck lest the weight cause the elevator to suddenly collapse. While a few men stood inside the truck and counted, others broke out cigarettes in spite of the fact that LST 353 had a "no

Both: Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: This aerial view of Pearl Harbor's West Loch in flames clearly shows burning LSTS at Tares 8 and 9 while other LSTs attempt to rapidly maneuver away from the conflagration toward safety. Several vessels clustered to the right in this image appear to remain stationary despite the threat. OPPOSITE: The hulk of LST 480, burned thoroughly and still emitting smoke, lies forlornly grounded at Intrepid Point in Pearl Harbor's West Loch on May 22, 1944. A pontoon floats along the starboard side of the LST while the Coast Guard cutter *Woodbine* has come up at its stern.

smoking" order in effect.

Unfortunately, the no smoking rule was disobeyed in other areas as well. Forward on the left side of the bow, just in front of the 80 drums of high-octane aviation fuel that LST 353 was carrying, one crewman and one officer were also smoking. "I had ... come up from below deck and was sitting on the port side of the bow ... talking to [Ensign Dean Delbert] Urich," recalled S2/c James Henry Kane. "I had been smoking a cigarette, and I believe other people were smoking on the forecastle." In spite of the "no smoking" orders and the proximity of the aviation fuel, several people were smoking on the bow of LST 353.

Shortly after 3 PM on Sunday, May 21, 1944, while hundreds of men were working or relaxing aboard the almost three dozen LSTs spread around West Loch, the bow of LST 353 exploded. In a split second, the peaceful Sunday afternoon was shattered.

Nobody expected an explosion, so nobody was sure exactly when or how it happened. An official military investigation fixed the time as 1508 hours, but it is obvious that the investigators were not sure either and took that time as an average. Likewise, the investigators were not sure what caused the explosion. Some suspected sabotage by the civilian work crews, while some felt a miniature Japanese submarine had slipped into the harbor. The investigative board fixed the cause as a "dropped mortar shell," but many others felt it was caused by careless smoking.

"I've seen a lot of mortar shells dropped," reported PhM William Johnson from LST 69, "and unless they're armed, they don't go off. They have to be armed ahead of time." Carleton Drake, a Marine radioman assigned to LST 353, agreed. "Well, those 4-inch shells aren't detonated until they're ready to fire." None of the shells aboard LCT 963 were armed ahead of time, and in fact some had been dropped earlier in the day, and none had exploded.

The most likely cause of the explosion was careless smoking. The Navy court of inquiry had numerous eyewitnesses who claimed that the blast came from among the gasoline drums on the bow, including Ensign Urich and Seaman Kane, who were both blown overboard by the explosion. "My first thought," Kane said, "was the gasoline had gone up…. There was a deep, long, drawn-out boom." Carpenter's Mate 2/c Henry Bonne, with the 1035th Construction Battalion, was working nearby when the explosion went off. Because of his work in construction, Bonne knew the difference between a gasoline and an ammunition explosion. "I have seen lots of gasoline fires and dynamite explosions, and I am sure it wasn't ammunition," he recalled. "There was a dense black smoke with reddish-orange flame and it looked to me like a couple of barrels of gasoline." Unfortunately, anyone close enough to know for sure was gone and the whole loch was suddenly in danger.

The explosion on the bow of such a heavily combat-loaded ship scattered flaming debris and shrapnel in all directions, landing on ships moored at Tares 7 through 10 and some of the vessels moored in Walker Bay. The blast had enough force to send objects and people flying into the air and shake ships at least 500 feet away. Windows at the Naval Ammunition Depot shattered. Immediately, the remaining stored aviation fuel drums on the bow of LST 353 began to burn and explode.

The ships on either side of LST 353 were in grave danger with flaming debris landing atop the stored gasoline drums on the bows of LSTs 179 and 39 moored port and starboard, respectively. Ships a little farther away also caught fire. The canvas tops of jeeps and trucks and the tarps covering ammunition-loaded trailers quickly caught fire. Most of the ships alongside and behind LST 353 began to burn. Throughout the loch, ships began to sound general quarters and crews began to man fire stations.

Seaman 2/c Chet Carbaugh was in his rack inside LST 39 reading letters from home when he felt the ship rock from the first explosion. "I ran topside," he remembered. "It was a nightmare. There was smoke everywhere, shrapnel was falling down like rain, and the water was on fire from all the oil that had spilled." Hoping to save his ship, Carbaugh joined other crewmen as they manned a fire hose and began to fight the fires quickly spreading across the entire vessel.

Shortly after the first explosion, a second, more violent explosion occurred. "This time the flames shot up maybe 75 or 100 feet into the air," wrote Lieutenant William Zuehlke of LST 43, two ships to the left of 353. Although his crew rushed to break out the fire hoses, they were impeded by Marines and crewmen from the other ships rushing across LST 43 to get away from the burning ships to the right.

Dozens of Marines had set up cots with tents as awnings on the main deck of the Coast

Guard-manned LST 69, which was piggybacking LCT 983. Marine Harry Pearce and his buddy, Sam, were on their cots underneath the LCT. "The blast just leveled everything. Sam and I were blown off our cots," Pearce recalled. "All we had was our skivvies and our shoes. We each grabbed a helmet and put it on." Looking around, they spotted Sergeant Paul Bass sprawled on the main deck, a victim of the concussive power of the explosions. "Blood was coming out of his eyes and ears and his nose and mouth," Pearce said. The two Marines rushed to his side.

Crews on the other ships at Tare 8, to the left of LST 353, manned fire stations and started their engines, hoping to get away. Unfortunately, the engines on LST 69, three ships to the left, were down for repairs. Skipper Lieutenant (j.g.) Albert Gott rushed over to the vessel moored to his port, LST 179, to ask if 179 could tow him away when that ship left its mooring. Although the officer was willing, he said that Gott would have to sever the mooring lines to LST 43 on Gott's right before 69 could be pulled free. Satisfied with the answer, Gott rushed back aboard his ship to see about severing the lines.

Regrettably, the exodus of hundreds of Marine passengers and crewmen from the burning, exploding vessels caused panic among the crews and passengers of the other vessels. As men poured over the railings from ship to ship, heading toward the innermost ship and shore, they created confusion among the other crews. Soon, there were few crewmen manning the fire hoses as the gasoline drums and ammunition on LST 353 and now the other ships continued to burn and explode.

The crews on the seven LSTs in Tare 9 were also fighting to put out the flaming debris that had landed on their decks. A crewman on LST 23, the fifth ship in the tare, recalled, "Debris from [353] covered other LSTs. Fire was breaking out on LSTs all around us. Our crew reacted quickly, and while some were throwing life jackets to men in the water, others were hosing down the decks to prevent fire from spreading to the 23." While engine room personnel started their engines, many sailors on the ships in Tare 9 threw life jackets overboard or threw lifelines out from lowered bow ramps and pulled swimmers from the burning ships to safety.

"We started the engines, but because they had not had time to warm up, they kept dying when we tried to back down," remembered Motor Machinist Mate 2/c Floyd Williams on LST 224. "I began to worry about all those fires on the main deck, all that ammunition stored in the tank deck, the gasoline on the main deck, and the fact that the engine room held us trapped below the water line."

A 23-mile-per-hour wind coming from the northeast carried a large amount of flaming debris back toward the ships in Tares 9 and 10. As fires broke out on the tarps and canvas on the main decks, fire crews went to work. Soon, one by one, the ships in Tare 10, at least 1,000 yards behind the exploding ships in Tare 8, began leaving the mooring, some peeling off from the far side, others severing mooring lines with the ships on either side and backing straight out.

While some ships immediately headed for the narrow channel that led out of West Loch, others, looking at the congestion, turned in the opposite direction and headed into the safety of the shallow western back bay of the loch. Once there, they dropped anchor, continued to man their fire stations, and watched the enfolding disaster before them.

To the right and almost straight across from the exploding ships of Tare 8 sat the three high-speed World War I destroyer transport APDs at Tare 7. Being northeast of Tare 8, they were upwind of most of the flaming debris but were not immune from the heavy bits of jagged, hot metal that spewed outward from the exploding ships. While their crews manned fire stations, their small boats were sent out to help rescue survivors.

All around the loch people were coming to the rescue in spite of the growing conflagration that had now spread to the four ships on the end of Tare 8 and a burning slick of oil that was spreading over the surface of the water. Seaman 1/c Alex Bernal was alone in a small motor launch when the first explosion went off. "I was maybe 30, 40 yards away from the ship that exploded and [it] rocked the whole bay," Bernal recalled. "You could see all kinds of debris going up sky high." After rescuing one man, Bernal looked at the water around him. "We looked back, and fire started on the water and then the oil was burning. You couldn't even see the sides of the ships."

Perhaps five minutes after the first big explosion, a second massive explosion erupted from one of the ships on the end of Tare 8. The official court of inquiry reported, "A second large explosion occurred among one of these three LSTs [353, 39, and 179], which threw burning fragments in all directions and set fire to the high octane gasoline, bedding, canvas, and other flammable materials on the decks of the other LSTs."

Marine Harry Pearce and his buddy Sam were carrying the injured Sergeant Bass by his arms and legs and passing from one ship to the next when the second explosion hit. "When the explosion went off, it picked me up and took me clear over the LST that Sam was on," Pearce stated. "I came down on one of the guide wires that was holding an LCI on board. It just folded me in double, and I went round and round three or four times and fell on the steel deck on my back only to have Sam reach out and grab me

and pull me underneath the LCI."

While Pearce was blown clear across LST 274 and over LCT 982, Sam had been blown under the piggybacked craft. Unfortunately, when the concussive blast hit the two Marines they lost their grip on Sergeant Bass, dropping him between the two ships. "I can remember as I went up in the air," Pearce said, "I saw him hit the water between the two vessels and just disappear. He was lost."

Few crewmen remained aboard the fiercely burning ships when the order to abandon ship was finally given. The flames and continuing explosions had proved too much. Eventually, LST 39, the last ship moored at Tare 8, burned through her mooring lines, broke away from the other ships, and began drifting southward toward the few remaining ships in Tares 9 and 10. Although a few of the ships on the outer edge of Tare 9 had already peeled away to race for safety down the West Loch channel, several still remained. Faced with the danger from drifting LST 39, orders were given to chop the mooring lines between vessels and get out as soon as possible.

Executive Officer Anthony Tesori on LST 340 in the middle of seven ships recalled that the men "were able to sever hawsers holding [LST 340] to the other ships at the moorage and back away from the most dangerous area." However, he admitted, "We did not escape entirely unscathed." As the officer of the deck later noted, "[The second] and more intense explosion occurred in Berth 8, strewing our deck with wreckage and burning material. The firefighters of the vessel immediately flooded the entire main deck and the tank deck."

As quick as they could, the ships at Tares 9 and 10 maneuvered to get away from the exploding vessels in front of them or the drifting, burning hulk of LST 39. Unfortunately, LST 480, sporting a pair of pontoons and sitting moored to the dolphins in the number one position at Tare 9, could not move until all the other ships outboard of her got underway. In trying to maneuver out of his tight spot, the skipper of 480 had moved the ship back and forth and had somehow gotten stuck on the other side of the dolphin pilings between the shore and the pilings.

By the time LST 480 got stuck between the dolphins, several other burning vessels from Tare 8 were drifting southward. A third large explosion forced any remaining personnel on any of the five outermost vessels to abandon ship. While the ships in positions six, seven and eight were engulfed in flames and exploding, the crews of the two middle vessels, LSTs 69 and 43, had fought back gallantly but fleeing personnel from the outboard ships had hampered firefighting efforts. When the third huge explosion came, throwing even more burning debris and shrapnel over the two ships, there were few firefighters left to battle the growing flames. Orders were given to abandon ship.

"One of the LSTs that was burning was being driven by the current and wind directly into the ammunition depot," recorded a witness. "Just before it reached the dock ... the brake burned and released the anchor. This prevented the vessel from being blown into the ammunition depot."

Eventually, two ships from Tare 8 managed to move away from the burning vessels and beach themselves on the shores of Walker Bay. They were the number two and three ships, LSTs 225 and 274, both sporting LCTs on their main decks. Although the skipper of LST 274 had agreed to pull LST 69 out of the nest if Lieutenant Gott's crew could sever the mooring lines to the burning ships on his right, the men had been unable to cut the forward lines because of the raging inferno. Hoping to save his own ship, LST 274, Gott had been forced to move forward without taking LST 69. With his ship wrapped in flames, Gott fled to the fantail of 69 only to find that he was all alone. As LST 274 began pulling forward, Gott climbed over the port railing and jumped onto the fleeing ship. Behind him he left a floating, drifting, burning, exploding hulk.

The two outermost ships in Tare 8, LSTs 39 and 353, had drifted away from the others and begun to drift straight south. In the middle, LSTs 69, 43, and 179 remained together, perhaps stuck by cables, and began to drift toward Tare 9. Eventually, LST 69, piggybacking LCT 983, broke from the others and bore down on LST 480, still stuck between the dolphin pilings at tare nine. "A derelict burning ship drifted into us on our starboard," remembered Shipfitter Art Sacco of LST 480. "Soon our ship was ablaze.... Flames covered the whole deck; we couldn't see the bridge. I made everyone jump over the port side and swim under the burning oil to get to shore."

Unfortunately, just because a man managed to reach shore did not mean he was safe. Immediately opposite Tares 8, 9, and 10 was the parking area for the LVTs and DUKWs, and beyond that a large sugar cane field. The fleeing men who reached shore, wet and covered with fuel oil, found it hard to scramble up a steep embankment to reach the amphibious vehicle park. Then, while some men sought refuge behind the parked amphibians, most took off through the cane fields. "The cane had been cut, leaving stubbles about six to eight inches high that were cut at an angle and sharp," recalled Marine Harry Pearce. Most of the men had removed their shoes prior to jumping overboard. "It cut our legs and our feet all to pieces," Pearce added.

In addition to their feet, the men also had to worry about their heads. "You see," wrote S1/c Walter Slater, "a lot of guys went up through the sugar cane fields, and that's where a lot of them got killed. Because the shrapnel, when the explosions would go off, it would go up high in the air, and there'd be big chunks of sheet metal flying, spiraling, and coming down, showering, and it would mushroom out." More than a few men were killed when parts of the exploding ships hit them and killed them in the cane field. At least two Marines had their legs severed by flying jeep or truck engines.

Near 4:30 PM, when it was reported to the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard that the exploding ships were drifting south toward the Naval Ammunition Depot and the cargo ship *Joseph B. Francis*, three PT boats from Motor Torpedo Squadron 26 were dispatched from East Loch toward West Loch with orders to torpedo and sink, if need be, any drifting ship that might reach the depot. Within minutes, the three fast plywood boats were racing out of East Loch toward the growing danger in West Loch.

After LST 69 had hit LST 480 and set her afire, the two abandoned ships drifted about 200 yards past the Tare 10 pilings before a courageous tugboat crew rushed in and shoved LST 480 aside, stopping her southward drift. Around 4:50 PM, LST 353, which was still carrying LCT 963 on her deck, sank about 70 feet east of the Tare 10 pilings. Shortly thereafter, LST 39 stopped drifting, perhaps fouled in the wreckage of 353. With her bow doors open, ramp down, and a pair of pontoons on either side of her hull, LST 39 continued to burn.

Only three ships were still moving, LSTs 69, 43, and 179 carrying LCT 961. All three were

bearing down on the ammunition depot and the *Joseph B. Francis*. The ammunition-laden merchant ship had remained in place for more than an hour as civilian stevedores and naval personnel hurried to unload over 3,000 tons of explosives. At 4:20, with 350 tons remaining and the burning ships drifting nearer, the decision was made to move the merchant to Middle Loch. As she was leaving, a huge explosion aboard one of the drifting ships pelted her top deck with white phosphorous shells, sending at least one shell into an open hatch. Seconds later a fire started. Only the quick action of the crew prevented another ship from exploding.

At 5:05 PM, while *Joseph B. Francis* was making her way up the main channel toward Middle and East Loch, one of the phosphorous shells reignited, sending flames and black smoke billowing out of the forward bay. Fearing a massive explosion from the 350 tons of unloaded ammunition, the Navy Yard started moving ships out of the way. At 5:20 the escort carriers USS *Long Island* and USS *Copahee* were ordered to get out of East Loch immediately. Two minutes later, however, the skipper of *Joseph B. Francis* reported, "Present fire out." After two Marine Corps fire inspectors confirmed the report, orders were issued to the escort carrier crews to stand down.

Back in West Loch, the three burning LSTs continued drifting toward the ammunition depot. Just about the time the three PT boats reached the scene of the disaster, Navy tugboats, which had rushed in from Middle and East Loch, and fire tugs from as far away as Honolulu arrived in West Loch. Rushing into the maelstrom despite the apparent danger from the burning ships, the crews of the small but powerful boats went to work stopping the drifting vessels or putting out the flames while men in smaller craft continued to rescue people in the water.

Coast Guard fireboat X1426, commanded by Coxswain Lindel C. Jones, entered West Loch and was immediately stopped by a small boat carrying Vice Admiral Turner, who had rushed over to see what was happening to his precious invasion craft. "The admiral directed each boat to a certain area," Jones recalled. "He sent a couple of boats to the ammunition dock and sent us to the center of the loch." Remembered Marine Corps Colonel Robert Hogaboom, "At great personal danger, [Turner] personally supervised the operation until the fires were suppressed."

While several of the tugboats and fireboats fought to suppress the fires on the three drifting LSTs and to stop their southward movement, others rushed over to help the three remaining ships from Tare 8 and the three high-speed transports moored at Tare 7. Although upwind from most of the flaming debris that had been thrown into the air by the explosions, the three old converted destroyers had become engulfed in the flames from the burning water. Only the quick actions of the tug and fireboat crews saved the three APDs from becoming victims of the West Loch disaster.

Sometime near 6 PM, with the PT boats still standing by, the three drifting ships suddenly came to a stop about 500 feet north of the Naval Ammunition Depot and the two anchored barges loaded with additional ammunition. "One of the LSTs that was burning was being driven by the current and wind directly into the ammunition depot," recorded a witness. "Just before it reached the dock ... the brake burned and released the anchor. This prevented the vessel from being blown into the ammunition depot." When the first ship stopped, the second got fouled on the first, and the third got fouled on the first two. All three had stopped but all three continued to burn and explode. And the tugboat and fireboat crews continued to risk their lives.

"One fireboat disappeared into the fire several times," wrote Marine Bill Simpson aboard LST 224, which had moved into the shallow back bay area. "Each time it backed out with its rope bumpers smoking or on fire. Finally, it went into the holocaust one more time, and this time it was never seen again." The small seaplane tender USS *Swan,* capable of fighting fires, was severely damaged while trying to extinguish the fires on LST 480, the last ship to catch fire. "[Our skipper] brought the bow against the LST and tried to push it over in the water," reported Signalman Charles E. Schiering. "There were two Navy men on that LST, and before [we] could get them off, it exploded, killing the two

Naval History and Heritage Command

During the evening of May 21-22, 1944, sailors manning fireboats battle the flames aboard LSTs in Pearl Harbor's West Loch. The horrific destruction probably was initiated by the careless securing of combustible materials combined with smoking.

men and injuring several crew members of the *Swan*." Heavily damaged and with several men injured, *Swan* left West Loch, hobbled into the Navy Yard for repairs, and spent the next six weeks in drydock.

For the next several hours the tugs and fireboats fought valiantly to control the fires in the six burning LSTs. The burning ships had become separated into two groups. LSTs 39, 353, and 480 near Tares 9 and 10, and LSTs 43, 69, and 179 in mid-channel about 500 feet northwest of the ammunition depot. In the latter group, 43 eventually capsized. When she did, one of her two pontoons, which was aflame, came loose and began drifting toward the moored ammunition barges. Fortunately, some yard tugboats rushed in and towed the two barges deeper into the shallow back bay while a few fire tugs doused the wayward pontoon.

By late evening the authorities had the disaster under control and the other ships out of the danger area. As the six ships continued to burn, dozens of firefighting boats, tugs, and harbor patrol craft dotted the surface of West Loch. The burning oil on the surface of the loch continued to be a menace to the rescue craft, while a heavy coating of unignited fuel oil and gasoline lodged under one of the piers near the ammunition depot. Firefighting teams went to work with hoses to break up the heavy sludge and keep it from igniting until the ebb tide carried it out of the area.

Throughout the night the firefighters doused the burning vessels from boats and from shore aided by six portable lighting sets that managed to turn night into day. At 5:10 AM on Monday, May 22, 1944, as the sun began to brighten the eastern sky, the Pearl Harbor signal tower reported, "Fire and smoke still visible at Tare 8." It was the last report containing any mention of fire or smoke. More than 14 hours after the initial explosion had erupted aboard the forecastle of LST 480, the West Loch disaster came to an end. At 7:15 AM, the duty officer in the signal tower entered into his logbook, "Sandwiches and coffee for 50 men sent to Tare 8."

Within 30 minutes of the first explosion on LST 353, three investigators from the Navy Intelligence Unit arrived at the Naval Ammunition Depot. With an invasion in the offing and the destination still unknown to most officers and personnel, the three officers were hoping to gather all "maps, papers, and secret and confidential documents" that might indicate where such an invasion would occur. Over the next few weeks, the men collected hundreds of documents and found enough "secret, confidential, and restricted publications" to fill "two large packing boxes." No one knew, however, how much was not found and whether any vital information on the upcoming invasion had leaked. Only time would tell.

The gruesome task of gathering and identifying the dead began with first light on Monday, May 22. Coast Guard Coxswain Jones took his fireboat up to the burned-out bow of one of the LSTs and anchored on the open lowered bow ramp. "The ship was completely gutted," Lindel remembered, "and there were dead bodies all over the ship ... they never had a chance."

That same morning Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, ordered a court of inquiry to look into the West Loch disaster. Three days later, while the court was in full session, Nimitz issued a press release to explain what had occurred on May 21.

Historian Howard Shuman noted, "At least 250,000 people on ships and ashore at Pearl Harbor and tens of thousands more from Honolulu to Ewa saw the black smoke and fires and heard the blasts at West Loch. The disaster was not unknown."

Trying to downplay the disaster, Nimitz issued the following statement: "An explosion and fire which occurred while ammunition was being unloaded from one group of landing craft moored together in Pearl Harbor on May 21, 1944, resulted in destruction of several small vessels, some loss of life, and a number of injuries. A court of inquiry has been convened…." Nimitz had put a beautiful little spin on a devastating accident.

Fearing that word of the disaster would leak to the Japanese, a censor order was placed on the entire invasion force. As ordered by Admiral Nimitz, it was against regulations to talk about the disaster to others, including men from your own ship, or to write about it in letters home or elsewhere. William Wright, Jr., had been at paymaster school during the disaster but rejoined his ship just prior to the invasion. "I knew nothing about it until a long time later," he recalled. "I didn't even hear anybody talk about it among themselves. I guess they were threatened."

All of the official information and documents pertaining to the disaster, including the official court of inquiry transcripts and testimonies, were classified as top secret and stored away until January 1, 1960. Author A. Alan Oliver noted the ramifications of such a classification in a magazine article: "In the Navy's divine wisdom, clamping a TOP SECRET status on the tragedy caused much evidence that might have been of importance to be lost because of the interval of time before the incident was declassified and made public in 1960—16 years after its occurrence…."

The Navy court of inquiry wrapped up its hearings on June 12 and submitted a detailed report to Admiral Nimitz. Although any conclusive evidence was lacking, the court decided that the cause of the explosion was the detonation of a dropped mortar shell aboard LST 353. The court also found that the single detonation was so damaging because of "the stowage of gasoline in the immediate proximity of high explosive ammunition" and the "nesting of numerous combat loaded vessels at one berth."

As far as major material losses, the court determined that six LSTs had been completely destroyed, three LCTs had been lost, and 17 LVT amtracs had been lost inside one LST and eight 155mm howitzers had been destroyed inside another. Two more LSTs has been so severely damaged that they were deemed too unsafe to make the 3,200-mile trip to Saipan.

In a monumental effort to replace his losses, Nimitz transferred several LSTs earmarked to transport garrison troops to the battle area to frontline duty. Eventually, the Navy found 11 alternate LSTs to replace the eight that were lost during the West Loch disaster. Although the LST fleet was scheduled to leave Hawaii on May 24, the departure was delayed one day and the vessels left port on May 25, making up the lost day up en route and arriving off the Saipan beaches on the preplanned invasion date of June 15, 1944. It was a fanciful bit of scurrying, but Nimitz and his staff had pulled it off.

The casualty count for the West Loch disaster was officially placed at 163 killed and missing and 396 injured for a total of 559. To a man, the survivors are skeptical of that number. Lieutenant Phil Kierl from LST 480 wrote, "There were reports circulated that total casualties exceeded two thousand." PhM2/c William C. Johnson of LST 69 managed to get an uncensored letter home a few days after the disaster. He wrote, "They have estimated the loss of men at one thousand.... I saw plenty of dead, fellows with their arms and legs off and plenty of them nervous wrecks." Seaman 1/c Walter Slater called 163 dead a conservative number. "I think 1,400 is a closer figure," he said.

It was stated that the Marine Corps alone had 193 men killed and injured. However, Major Carl W. Huffman, who wrote the Marine Corps historical monogram on the invasion of Saipan, reported, "The Second Marine Division lost a total of 97 men and the 4th Marine Division 112 in the disaster." The Marine Corps total, therefore, was actually 207. If the Navy had made a mistake in calculating the loss of personnel among its Marines, which had fewer bodies aboard the different ships at the time of the disaster, could it also have miscalculated the

Naval History and Heritage Command

As night falls on May 21, 1944, sailors silhouetted against the flames across the West Loch of Pearl Harbor attempt to suppress the raging fires that have consumed numerous LSTs, LCTs, and LVTs (landing vehicle, tracked).

loss among Navy personnel?

Although Admiral Nimitz generally agreed with the findings of the court of inquiry, he decided to modify one finding. The court felt that the cause of the explosion was a mishandled mortar shell, but Nimitz wrote, "There is some evidence which might lead to the opinion that the initial explosion could have been caused by gasoline vapor." The cause of the initial explosion was almost certainly careless smoking.

One step above Nimitz was Admiral Ernest J. King, commander in chief of the U.S. Fleet. When King read the report he saw red. "The organization, training, and discipline in the LSTs involved in this disaster leave much to be desired," he wrote. "The lack of proper understanding and compliance with safety precautions when handling ammunition and gasoline, particularly in LST 353 where the first explosion occurred, is also noted. It is perfectly apparent that this disaster was not an 'Act of God.'"

A survey was soon made to find several different loading and mooring spots for LSTs in the area. The survey found a number of new spots outside West Loch that would "permit spacing the LSTs in loading berths sufficiently to prevent fires from quickly spreading to adjacent vessels in case of fire or explosion." The survey also suggested that no more than three ships be nested alongside one another at the mooring dolphins in West Loch.

In response to the suggestions of the court of inquiry, the Navy Department equipped "numerous tugs and vessels as fireboats for the protection of harbors and anchorages." Fifty-two fire protection consultants were trained to "assist ships during periods of availability in reducing shipboard fire hazards, inspect fire-fighting equipment, and advise Commanding Officers of the latest firefighting practices and techniques." By the end of 1944, there were 11 Class A and 15 Class B fire schools established at several Navy bases.

On July 17, 1944, another 320 sailors and civilians were killed and another 390 wounded in an explosion and fire that occurred during the loading of ammunition aboard a ship at Port Chicago, near San Francisco. The West Loch disaster and the Port Chicago explosion led to significant changes in the way the Navy handles ammunition. The Navy no longer moors ships in large nests, and all ammunition handlers now undergo specified training and certification before touching live ammunition. Additionally, modern munitions have been designed to make them much safer to handle.

The loss of life at West Loch did not end on May 22, 1944. On February 17, 1945, during salvage operations around one of the sunken LSTs two divers became trapped under a shifting piece of steel while working at a depth of 40 feet and in mud 20 feet deep. Plunging into the pitch-black water, Boatswain's Mate 2/c Owen Francis Patrick Hammerberg, a Navy diver, rushed to their assistance. "Despite the certain hazard of additional cave-ins and the risk of fouling his lifeline on jagged pieces of steel imbedded in the shifting mud," he managed to free one diver and then continued working toward the second.

For several hours Hammerberg stayed beneath the water, digging a shaft beneath the sunken LST with a water jet, washing away the "oozing subterranean mud in a determined effort to save the second diver." Miraculously, he managed to reach the second man, but while trying to remove the diver a second piece of metal broke loose from the bottom of the LST. Shielding the other diver, Hammerberg took "the full brunt of terrific pressure on himself." Although both men were eventually rescued and brought to the surface, Hammerberg died in agony 18 hours later.

For his unselfish actions, Hammerberg was awarded the Medal of Honor. His citation reads in part, "His heroic spirit of self-sacrifice throughout enhanced and sustained the highest tradition of the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country."

So had many others during the West Loch disaster of May 22, 1944.

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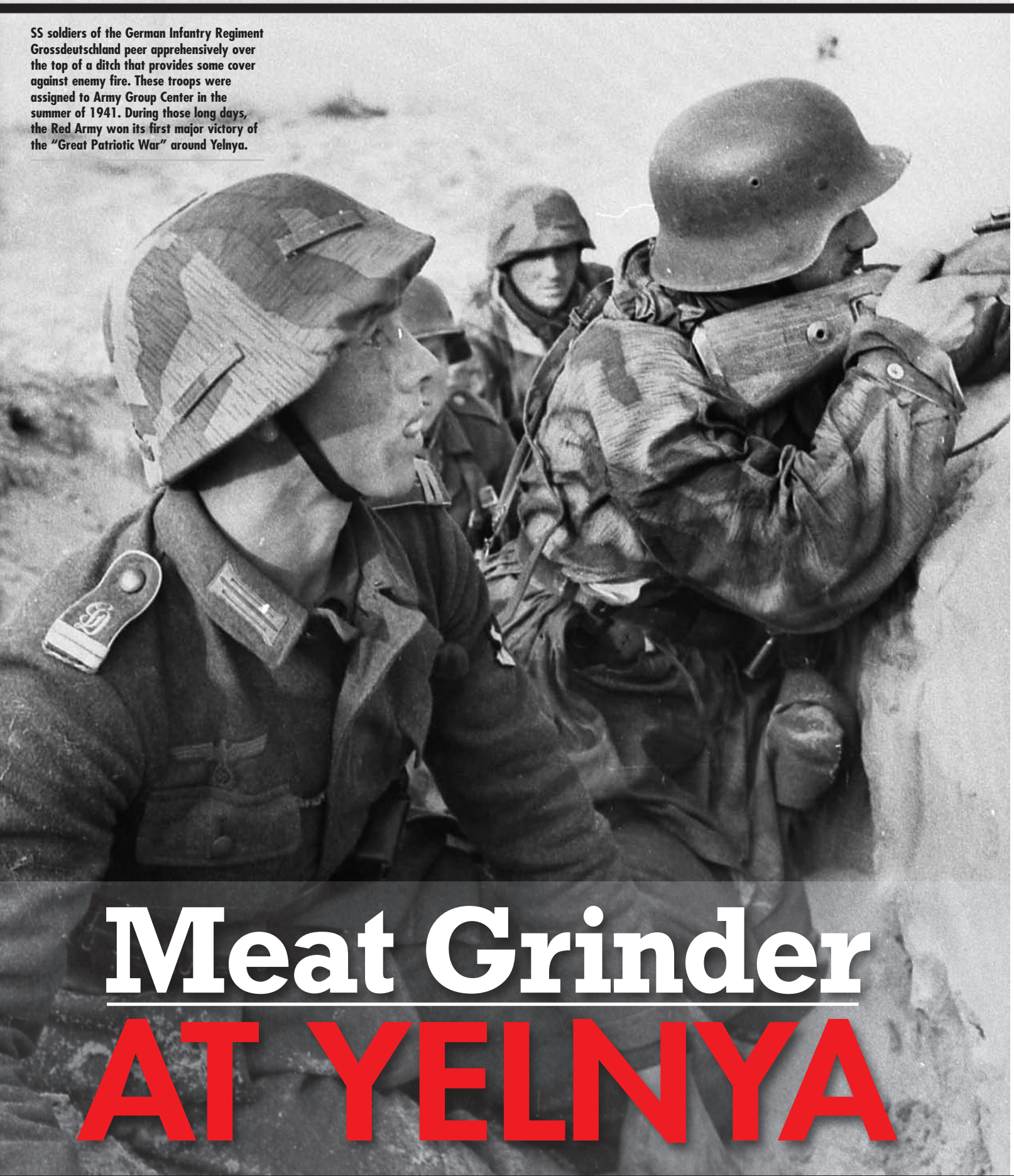


SS soldiers of the German Infantry Regiment Grossdeutschland peer apprehensively over the top of a ditch that provides some cover against enemy fire. These troops were assigned to Army Group Center in the summer of 1941. During those long days, the Red Army won its first major victory of the "Great Patriotic War" around Yelnya.

Meat Grinder AT YELNYA

The smell of victory was in the air as the forces of Field Marshal Fedor von Bock's Army Group Center continued to drive deep into the Ukraine during the final week of June 1941. To most of the young soldiers of the army group it seemed that this would be another unstoppable blitzkrieg. Their commander, however, saw things differently.

Von Bock was one of several higher commanders who were against the entire notion of invading the Soviet Union. His contemporaries described him as vain, irritating, cold, and humorless. On the occasion of his 60th birthday in December 1940, von Bock had a personal visit from Hitler. He bluntly told the Führer that he was concerned about the Russian undertaking, citing the lack of knowledge about the strength of the Red Army and the vast area that the Wehrmacht would have to fight in. Hitler met the comment with silence. Nevertheless, von Bock became commander of the most powerful of the three army groups poised to invade the Soviet Union.

At 0315 on June 22, 1941, the early morning silence was shattered by a thunderous barrage. The western sky lit up as thousands of German shells streaked overhead to hit identified Soviet targets. Operation Barbarossa had begun.

The German attack caused unbelievable panic at General Dmitrii Grigorevich Pavlov's soon to be Western Front headquarters. Overhead, the Luftwaffe decimated the Red Air Force in Pavlov's sector of the front on the first day, and the communications between Pavlov and his subordinate units were utterly disrupted, resulting in an almost complete lapse in command and control.

Soviet counterattacks during the first two days of the invasion were easily brushed aside. On June 24, Pavlov ordered his deputy, Lt. Gen. Ivan Vasilevich Boldin, to counterattack with the 6th and 11th Mechanized Corps, supported by the 6th Cavalry Corps, to stop the growing threat of a German encirclement of Soviet forces around Bialystok.

The attack was doomed from the start. Mechanical breakdowns plagued the Soviet tanks, and the Luftwaffe's total control of the air proved disastrous for the Russian columns trying to move to their assembly areas. General Wolfram von Richtofen's VIII Air Corps caused massive casualties even before the counterattack got started.

Among von Richtofen's units was Lt. Col. Günther Freiherr von Maltzahn's Jagdgeschwader (Fighter Wing) 53. Hermann Neuhoff, a pilot in Captain Wolf-Dietrich Wilcke's III Group, described the scene: "We found the main roads in the area congested with Russian vehicles of all kinds, but no fighter opposition and very little flak. We made one firing pass after another and caused terrible destruction on the ground. Literally everything was ablaze by the time we turned for home."

The commander of the 6th Mechanized, Maj. Gen. Mikhail Gregorevich Khatskilevich, was killed on the 24th. Of the more than 1,200 tanks in his command, approximately 200 made it to their assembly area. Low on fuel, the survivors were easy marks for the Germans.

WEEKS OF HEAVY FIGHTING PRODUCED THE FIRST RED ARMY VICTORY OF THE WAR ON THE EASTERN FRONT.

BY PAT McTAGGART

June 25 saw more disaster for the Russians. A mere 243 tanks from Maj. Gen. Dmitrii Karpovich Mostovenko's 11th Mechanized Corps made it to the front. Most of those were destroyed the same day while making piecemeal attacks on German forces. The accompanying 6th Cavalry Corps suffered more than 50 percent casualties, and its commander, Maj. Gen. Ivan Semeiotic Nikitin, was captured and later executed by the Germans.

On June 27, the 2nd and 3rd Panzer Groups linked up near Minsk, trapping the Soviet 3rd and 10th Armies in the Bialystock area. Most of the 13th Army and part of the 4th Army were also inside the pocket. While German armored and infantry units fought to destroy the encircled Russians, other panzer forces continued to drive east. Bobruysk fell to General Leo Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg's XXIV (motorized) Army Corps on June 30, securing a crossing over the Berezina River. The battle for the frontier was basically over by July 3 with the elimination of the Russians inside the Bialystock pocket.

In Moscow, Premier Josef Stalin was furious. He had Pavlov relieved and arrested. The unlucky front commander was executed on July 22. Lt. Gen. Andrei Ivanovich Eremenko took over command of the Western Front until the new commander, Marshal Semen Konstantinovich Timoshenko, arrived in Smolensk on July 2.

Timoshenko's main objective was to stop the German panzers at the Dnieper River. The odds of that happening looked pretty slim. Upon his arrival in Smolensk, Timoshenko found the front command in total disarray. His armored forces had been decimated, leaving him with about 200 tanks. About 400 aircraft were still operational, but they were being hunted down by the Luftwaffe and were largely ineffective.

Nevertheless, Timoshenko ordered his subordinates to make an orderly withdrawal to the river while using combat groups to strike at enemy spearheads. On July 5, the XXIV Panzer Corps reached the western bank of the Dneiper. Von Schweppenburg met heavy opposition from the remnants of Lt. Gen. Fedor Nikitich Rezmezov's 13th Army that had escaped the Bialystock pocket. General Adolf Kuntzen's XXXIX (motorized) Corps ran into the same thing as it confronted Lt. Gen. Pavel Alekseevich Kurochkin's retreating 20th Army. Throughout the next few days, the Germans continued their advance at a moderate rate despite several intense counterattacks from the Russians.

By July 9, another major battle of encirclement ended as the Minsk pocket was crushed. The defeat cost the Western Front 290,000 prisoners and as many as 100,000 dead. Timoshenko was able to make good some of those losses as Stavka (the Soviet High Command) continued to pump reinforcements into the area.

The next week saw more German advances. Von Schweppenburg's corps gained a bridgehead across the Dneiper on July 10. More German units expanded the bridgehead the next day, forcing the 13th Army to retreat once again. As the Soviets retreated the inexperienced conscripts that were arriving made fruitless counterattacks to try and stem the German advance.

Another great battle of encirclement ensued, this time around Smolensk. General Heinz Guderian's Panzer Group 2 struck across the Dneiper, and by July 13 his 29th (motorized) Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Walter von Boltenstern, was within 18 kilometers of the city. Meanwhile, General Hermann Hoth's Panzer Group 3 attacked on a parallel course. By July 18, the two panzer groups were within 18 kilometers of each other, but strong Soviet counterattacks kept a gap open, allowing some Russian forces to escape.

At the head of Guderian's spearhead was Brig. Gen. Ferdinand Schaal's 10th Panzer Division. Guderian order Schaal to head toward Yelnya, a town of about 15,000 located on the banks of the Desna River 82 kilometers southeast of Smolensk. With an eye toward the future, Guderian saw the heights surrounding the town as

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-696-0450-10A; Photo: Karl Leher

the perfect spot for the continuation of the drive toward Moscow after the Smolensk pocket was eliminated.

Schaal moved out during the early hours of July 18. Upon reaching the Khmara River his lead elements found that the bridge crossing the river had been damaged by the Russians. At 0545 a single panzer from Lt. Col. Theodor Keyser's 7th Panzer Regiment tried to cross the bridge but ended up crashing through it. Schaal was forced to postpone his advance until the following day so that the bridge and another one a few kilometers away could be repaired.

Yelnya, which means spruce grove, was defended by Maj. Gen. Iakov Georgievich Kotelnikov's 19th Rifle Division of Maj. Gen. Konstantin Ivanovich Rakutin's 24th Army. Upon hearing of the enemy's approach, Kotelnikov used the time lost by 10th Panzer to good purpose. An antitank ditch that engineers had dug across the road to Yelnya was fortified, and some heavy artillery was allotted to bombard the road once the Germans attacked.

Sovfoto

ABOVE: Crouching behind their light machine guns, infantrymen of the Soviet Red Army fire on advancing German troops somewhere along the front lines in embattled Russia during the summer of 1941. Weeks of desperate fighting produced a major Soviet victory, eliminating the myth that the Germans could not be beaten in the field. OPPOSITE: German soldiers follow a Panzer 35(t) as a Russian village burns furiously in the background during the advance toward Moscow. The Panzer 35(t) was a Czech-designed light tank produced at the legendary Skoda Works.

The Duna River, which began on the Smolensk Heights northest of the town, was about 60 meters wide and three meters deep in the area. Kotelnikov ordered that the eastern bank be fortified and had service troops and civilians begin digging trenches and creating strongpoints on the heights east of the town.

To Schall's left, SS Maj. Gen. Paul Hausser's 2nd SS (motorized) Division "Reich" was ordered to advance to Dorogobuzh, some 40 kilometers north of Yelnya, and capture the heights in that area. SS Major Otto Kumm, commander of the division's "Der Führer" (DF) Regiment, was to lead the assault. Kumm had his doubts about the mission. An overcast sky with intermittent showers prevented him from having hard air reconnaissance on enemy dispositions. Nevertheless, Kumm started out on his 100-kilometer march with SS Captain Johannes Mühlenkamp's reconnaissance battalion in the lead.

"The road conditions were very bad," Mühlenkamp recalled. "Bridges that crossed small streams in the area were worthless. The Ivans were dug in west of Dorogobuzh, and we launched an attack in the area to drive them out. However, [enemy] reinforcements arrived and counterattacked, forcing us to retreat. The fighting continued throughout the day [July 19]."

In the Yelnya sector, 10th Panzer came under artillery fire as it neared the enemy antitank ditch, which stretched about two kilometers on either side the of the Yelnya road. The Russians were dug in and refused to budge, so Schall split his spearhead into two combat groups to outflank the enemy. Lt. Col. Karl Mauss led the left group, consisting of the II/Panzer Regiment 7, II/Rifle Regiment (motorized) 69, and the 3/Anti-Tank Detachment 90. On the right Lt. Col. Keyser had the I/Panzer. Regiment 7 and Motorcycle Battalion 10.

While other elements of the 10th kept the Russians manning the ditch busy, the two combat groups made their way around the enemy position. The Soviets, realizing their position was flanked, retreated while taking many casualties. Lead elements of 10th Panzer entered Yelnya around 1430 and soon found themselves heavily engaged with two of Kotelnikov's regiments. The fighting was savage, with the Germans having to clear each house individually.

As his men fought to take Yelnya, Schaal received an order from General Heinrich von Vietinghoff, commanding the XLVI Panzer Corps, to send a combat group to the Dorogobuzh sector to support the Reich Division, which had also run into fierce resistance. Schall protested, stating that he was embroiled in combat at Yelnya and weakening his division would only prolong the matter, but von Vietinghoff would have none of it. The I/Rifle Regiment (motorized) 69 with Artillery Regiment 90's 4th Battery and a tank destroyer unit were detached to help the SS.

Kotelnikov's men were fighting to the death. The dismounted Motorcycle Battalion 10 had taken heavy casualties, but it had cleared the eastern half of Yelnya by 1800. Schaal committed his II/Rifle Regiment (motorized) 69 to support the motorcyclists and sent the 86th Rifle Regiment (motorized) to form a defensive line northwest of the town.

As the infantry moved into the western part of the town, they came up against strong Russian positions along a railway embankment west of the Yelnya train station. At 1825 the Soviets launched a strong counterattack. With Red Army artillery pounding the German line, the situation was confused for a while, and Schaal was heard to comment, "It is questionable whether we can take and hold Yelnya."

The Soviet attack lasted nearly four hours, but the Germans were able to hold on. Supported by panzers from Panzer Regiment 7, the infantry cracked the rail embankment defenses and pushed the depleted Russian forces back. By 2300 the entire town was in German hands. Both sides had had enough for the day, and the weary troops settled in with dead and wounded littering the town. The II/Rifle Regiment (motorized) 69 lost a total of 60 men during the fighting, and losses in the motorcycle battalion had also been high.

In the Dorogobuzh sector, Hausser's Reich was not as successful. Although the Russians lost five airfields in the area, which would benefit the Luftwaffe later on, the Reich's advance was slowed to a crawl. Taking advantage of low cloud cover, the Red Air Force launched several bombing attacks that wreaked havoc on the division's spearheads. Soviet counterattacks further hampered the division's advance. "Division dispersed over a great area—enemy everywhere," Hausser wrote in his personal notes.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-209-0090-28; Photo: Zoll

July 19 was the first day of what would become weeks of horror in the Yelnya salient. The German blitzkrieg would mean nothing, and veterans of World War I stated that the fighting there was a throwback to the bloody trench battles of that war. Neither side recognized that on the first day, but the men that fought there would soon find themselves inside a living nightmare.

July 20 found Schaal's division stalled in front of dense enemy positions on the hills west, north, and south of Yelnya. His mechanized vehicles were in trouble—literally out of oil. The lightning advance through Belarus had taken its toll on the vehicles' engines as they raced along the dusty roads that were the primary supply and communications routes. The dust destroyed air filters, and the engines were using twice as much oil as normal. Breakdowns and the lack of oil virtually immobilized the division.

With the 86th Rifle Regiment protecting the northern flank of the salient and the combat group sent to help the Reich still absent, the remaining units of the 69th Regiment did not have the strength to overcome the Russian defenses. Soviet artillery units were in well camouflaged reinforced positions a good way behind the line and peppered the area, and Russian reinforcements were on the way to replace the dead and wounded.

To Schaal's north, Hausser's Reich was still having problems. His Deutschland Regiment tried to make headway west of the previously captured airfields, but Soviet defenses were strong. With heavy enemy artillery fire stalling the attack, Soviet forces were pushing around the division's flanks. Brig. Gen. Wilhelm-Hunold von Stockhausen's Infantry Regiment (motorized) "Grossdeutschland" (GD) had arrived to take over from Reich security forces guarding the airfields, freeing them up for use at the front, but even with those added troops Hausser was hard pressed to hold his division's positions.

Von Vietinghoff, worried that his corps might be split in two, discussed the situation with Guderian. When the two were finished, it was decided that the Dorogobuzh mission had to be secondary to clearing the Yelnya bend. Therefore, Hausser was ordered to disengage and head south to occupy the northern flank of the Yelnya salient, releasing the 86th Infantry Regiment.

With the Reich pulling out, the positions west of the airfields were also occupied by the GD. An account in the divisional history describes the first perceptions of the new positions: "The fields are fallow, the villages gloomy. The landscape is wide, gray, and ugly, the sky appears larger than at home. In the terrain in front of us flows a small brook. Over in the direction of the enemy lay a series of interconnected woods."

Red Army artillery gave the GD a warm welcome. Heavy fire of all calibers raked the area as the men dug in. A member of the unit described the barrage: "Most of the men are sitting in a slit trench. It is narrow and deep. While under artillery fire there are only three possibilities; either one is not hit at all, or one is temporarily buried, or there is a direct hit. Then it's all over in any case. In artillery fire one must remain in one place. Many have died while searching for another place."

After the initial bombardment an uneasy peace fell upon the area. The regiment used the time to strengthen its positions knowing that the lull would not last long. Reconnaissance patrols were already reporting the sounds of motorized equipment in the distance. It was clear that the Soviets were bringing reinforcements to the front and that a new attack would soon take place.

While the forces at Yelnya continued to slug it out, Timoshenko was in Moscow. In a series of meetings with Stalin and Red Army Chief of Staff General Georgii Konstantinovich Zhukov, the three men discussed the possibility of an offensive in the Yelnya area aimed at blunting any enemy thrust on Moscow. Before Timoshenko returned to his headquarters on the 21st, plans had been worked out and reinforcements were underway for the operation.

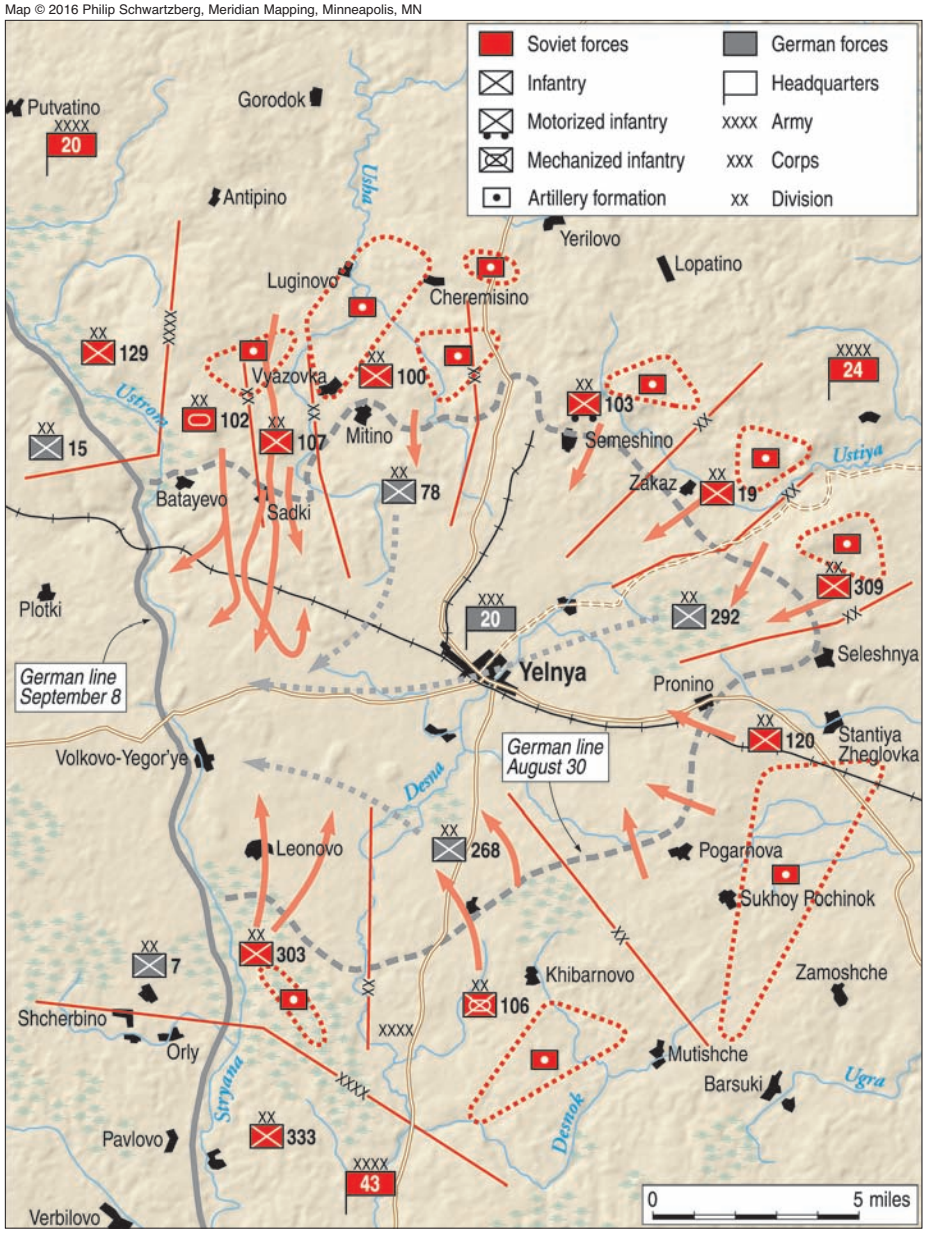
As Timoshenko was returning, the Germans were planning an attack of their own with the combined force of the Reich and 10th Panzer, augmented by assault guns. Rakutin's 24th Army was ready. New units were already arriving for the impending Soviet assault, and positions on the heights around the Yelnya salient had been further strengthened with additional heavy artillery.

German reconnaissance had noticed the movement of new enemy troops, and von Vietinghoff's orders for his own attack were short and to the point. "Enemy defending in fortified positions in the Desna-Usha sector east of Yelnya. Enemy reinforcements approaching Yelnya from the south and southeast.

"The XLVI Panzer Corps will attack south, possibly southeast of Yelnya before noon on 22 July with the 10th Panzer Division on the right and the SS Division Reich on the left.

"Objective: Destroy newly arrived enemy forces and capture ground easily defended by minuscule forces."

Schaal's 10th Panzer objectives were to break through the Russian positions south of Yelnya and roll up the entire Desna defense position in the sector.



Although there is little historical attention paid to the fighting around the Yelnya salient in the summer of 1941, Red Army troops fought resolutely against German veterans and achieved a notable victory in the early days of World War II on the Eastern Front.

Deploying in an area northeast of Yelnya, Hausser's Reich would attack Pronino and Hill 125.6, some eight kilometers east of Yelnya. Once that was accomplished the division was to attack and secure the heights around Kostyuki, eight kilometers southeast of Pronino.

At 1445 the artillery of 10th Panzer opened up a murderous fire on the entrenched enemy. The targeting was helped by two aircraft from the divisional reconnaissance squadron. The other aircraft of the squadron were grounded due either to the lack of fuel or mechanical difficulties.

As the final rounds struck the first line of Russian positions, the infantry attacked across a road embankment and headed for the Soviet defenses. The Red Army soldiers met the attack with heavy fire. Individual positions held out to the last and had to be taken in hand-to-hand combat. A bunker line was secured as Rifle Regiments 69 and 86 reached their first objectives, but several Soviet positions still held out while the first wave of Germans passed them by.

Colonel Wolfgang Fischer, commander of Rifle Brigade 10, was forced to halt his regiments north of the village of Lipnaya, about 10 kilometers south of Yelnya, due to nightfall. Without the benefit of reconnaissance aircraft, his infantry would be groping in the darkness in the midst of strong enemy defenses. The clearing of the Desna positions would have to wait another day.

As evening fell, the few serviceable tanks of Panzer Regiment 7 were withdrawn to an area 12 kilometers west of Yelnya. Mechanics were working around the clock to repair the overused vehicles, but parts were still practically nonexistent. At the end of the day, the division had only five Panzer IIs and four Panzer IIIs fit for combat. Exactly one month before, as the division began its drive into Russia, the complement was 45 Panzer IIs, 105 Panzer IIIs, and 20 Panzer IVs.

The attack began earliern Schaal's left flank. Because of ammunition shortages, there was no preliminary artillery barrage. The I and II Battalions of SS Colonel Wilhelm Bittrich's "Deutschland" ("D") Regiment were the first to advance. Soviet units opened fire from their entrenched positions on the heights, causing heavy casualties. The battalions halted to regroup and struck out again, only to be driven to ground.

Arnold Hoffmann, a member of I/"D", described the attack: "The 3rd [company], the spearhead company, suffered heavy losses. All the 1st Platoon squad leaders died. The company had to dig in…. We dug in next to the 1st [company] command post. Several officers had dug in directly at the embankment, near the I/"D" command post. They had carbines in their hands and were prepared to defend against attacks together with their men."

The Soviets did indeed counterattack, hoping to drive the SS infantry back. Russian artillery crashed into the German positions as the attack began. Overhead, the Luftwaffe tried to identify the enemy battery positions, and several guns were destroyed, but most of the masterfully camouflaged positions escaped detection.

Hoffmann recalled a particular part of the action as the Russians closed with the Germans: "I can still see my friend, SS Private Paul Holzapfel from the 3rd Company's 3rd Platoon, standing next to a Russian antitank gun without sights, peering over the gun tube and firing at the attacking Russians…."

Meanwhile, Kumm's DF Regiment had moved forward. The combined force of the two regiments kept the Russian counterattacks at bay, and the division was able to push forward to engage the strong enemy positions on the heights. Men on both sides fought and died in the burning heat of the afternoon while artillery rained down on friend and foe alike.

Finally, Kumm sent SS Captain Hahn's III/DF to assault the Russians' left flank. After a bitter fight the flank was finally turned, forcing the Soviets to retreat. Around 2100 the exhausted men of the Reich took control of Hill 125.6. They could go no farther.

It had been a costly fight for both sides, and neither the Germans nor the Russians seemed to have the will to continue. As the men lay in their positions, only occasional artillery fire and the cries of the wounded pierced the silence of the night.

The Soviet units holding the heights around the Yelnya salient had suffered heavy casualties, especially among the regiments of Kotelnikov's 19th Rifle Division. However, Rakutin was funneling more and more replacements and reinforcements into the area to make good those losses. Maj. Gen. Ivan Nikitch Russiianov's 100th Rifle Division and the 103rd Rifle Division moved to take positions on the 19th's right flank, taking some of the pressure off Kotelnikov's men. Other units moved in on the left flank of the division. New artillery units were also placed behind the line. Included in those units were Katyusha rocket launchers, which would provide a very unpleasant surprise for the Germans.

On July 23 at 0400, the Russians attacked all along the front of the "D" Regiment's line. By 0600 the entire front of the Reich Division was under heavy artillery fire and tank-supported infantry attacks. It was clear that the Soviets were aiming to regain the high ground lost on the previous day.

Hidden by the dense grain fields in the area, the Russians were able to close with the Germans. In the scorching heat, they advanced on the heels of their artillery, but they were met with devastating defensive fire from the SS infantry and heavy weapons companies. The fire proved too much for the Russians, and they retreated in disorder.

Soviet forces also hit 10th Panzer. Most of the Russian units were on the division's south and southwestern flank, and it was there that the attacks were heaviest. Luckily, the division had the added firepower of the 817th Mortar Detachment and Cannon Detachment 268, which were corps units. Combined with the divisional artillery of the 10th, the Russians were kept at bay while suffering heavy losses.

The division was forced to strengthen its left flank when it received a communication from Mühlenkamp's Reconnaissance Battalion, which was occupying positions about 20 kilometers west of Yelnya near the Glinka Railroad Station. Mühlenkamp reported that he was under heavy artillery fire and infantry attack. If he was forced to retreat, it would threaten Schaal's left. In response to the information, some artillery was shifted to help with Mühlenkamp's defense. Losses piled up for the SS, but they managed to hold their position with the added support.

In the midst of the battle, Guderian showed up at Schaal's headquarters. Schaal informed his superior about the attempt to expand the salient. At the same time, he told Guderian about the wretched shape that his tanks and vehicles were in. Oil, parts, fuel, and artillery ammunition were in short supply, and Schaal bluntly stated that it would most likely not be possible to make any great gains in the area without resupply. The speed of the initial German advance into Russia meant that supply columns would have to travel about 450 kilometers to reach Yelnya—a daunting task for any army at that time.

Guderian also visited the Reich Division and received a similar report. Guderian wanted to see the front for himself, so he visited the positions of SS Captain Fritz Klingenberg's Motorcycle Infantry Battalion, which was the farthest unit occupying the eastern point of the salient.

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-L19885; Photo: Huschke

Deciding to see the Yelnya front himself, Colonel General Heinz Guderian visited the positions of SS Captain Fritz Klingenberg's Motorcycle Infantry Battalion, which was the farthest unit occupying the eastern point of the salient.

Klingenberg gave Guerin a no-nonsense junior officer's view of the capabilities of his men. They had suffered many casualties, and they were tired from days of battle. They could fight, but the enemy positions facing them were just too strong to overcome without more supplies and more support.

Returning to his own headquarters, Guderian ordered von Vietinghoff to put his corps on the defensive until supplies could reach the front. He also ordered von Stockhausen's GD to move into the Yelnya salient as soon as it could be relieved.

The arrival of the GD would be a welcome addition to the German forces defending the Yelnya area, but it would have to wait. The division scheduled to relieve von Stockhausen was still part of the forces trying to eliminate the Smolensk pocket. Heavy fighting was still going on, and the German lines were not strong enough to seal its perimeter.

Guderian steadfastly refused to yield his planned jumping off points for his future drive on Moscow, and in doing so the ring around the Russian troops at Smolensk remained porous. Historian Brian I. Fugate wrote: "It is true that the Wehrmacht was overburdened, but the Smolensk pocket could have been sealed effectively if Guderian had been willing to give up his position at Yelnya. In his eyes, however, forfeiting Yelnya would have been giving up Moscow, and that is something he would not do."

At Smolensk the Russians threw everything they had against the German perimeter, but the attacks were poorly coordinated. Smolensk was a time-consuming operation for the Germans. The trap would finally be closed on July 27, sealing the fate of most of the 16th, 19th, and 20th Armies. More days of fighting lay ahead before the pocket was finally eliminated. An estimated 309,000 prisoners were taken, and thousands more soldiers lay dead on the battlefield, but many troops were able to escape through the thin German lines.

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring estimated that more than 100,000 Red Army soldiers managed to escape the pocket. Returning to their own lines, they would be used to form new divisions that would continue the fight against the German invaders.

As it awaited relief, the GD was going through the same hellish fighting that was

occurring at Yelnya. Well-entrenched Soviet artillery rained death on the German positions before each Russian attack. A member of I/GD described the opening of one such assault: "From 0100 to 0300 the fire was weaker. Then it thundered down with renewed vigor.... Right at the beginning they brought in my old Oberfeldwebel [sergeant] Herold; he had lost his hearing and his wide eyes stared into space."

As the bombardment relented, the commentary continued: "They're coming! Great masses of men were climbing down into the bottom land. Mounted officers circled round them. Everything ahead of us was brown with Russians…. A sustained fire opened up from 12 [German] machine guns at once…. The Russians came ever closer. Their fire sang, crackled, and whistled everywhere…."

That attack, like many others, was finally beaten back. Once the Russians retreated, the artillery renewed its bombardment. The cycle would repeat itself day after day until the GD was finally relieved.

At Yelnya the fighting continued unabated. The Russians made another attempt to take Hill 125.6 with a combined armor-infantry attack. With his own antitank guns damaged or destroyed, Kumm called on 10th Panzer for assistance. Schaal sent most of his Anti-Tank Detachment 90 to back up the SS.

Fighting raged throughout the morning and early afternoon as the Russians tried to press their numerical advantage in the sector. In response to another request, Schaal sent the few combat-ready panzers of 7/Panzer Regiment 7 to assist in the defense. Their timely arrival on the scene stopped a Russian penetration that had taken place a few minutes earlier. Well-placed shots from the panzers destroyed all seven of the Soviet tanks that had broken through.

In another sector, SS Sergeant Erich Rossner was defending a ravine with his 50mm antitank gun. A group of eight Russian tanks appeared, and Rossner ordered his gunner to wait until they came within 50 meters of his position before he opened fire. After the first tank in the column was destroyed, the second tank, equipped with a flamethrower, set off a jet of flame toward the German position. Rossner's men jumped away just in time to avoid the flames.

As the crew of the tank dismounted to inspect the position, Rossner and his men opened fire, killing the curious Russians. They quickly returned to their gun and destroyed the seven remaining Russian tanks. The 23-year-old Rossner was wounded by shrapnel the following day and died on July 30. He was posthumously awarded the Knight's Cross for his actions.

The Russians pressed their attack along the entire division's front, with particularly heavy fighting taking place in the northeast sector. Soviet troops were able to move down the main road from Dorogobuzh quickly, making it easy to replace battle casualties and keep the attack going. A breakthrough there would threaten von Vietinghoff's entire corps.

While the Soviets fired their artillery with impunity, the Reich artillery continued to be plagued with shortages. On July 24, the Russians managed to take the village of Uschavkova on the Dorogobuzh road about 38 kilometers northeast of Yelnya. The village changed hands three more times before the Germans finally regained it, but a Russian counterattack was able to cut off the defending troops.

On the 25th the Reich's chief of staff, SS Lt. Col. Werner Ostendorff, arrived in the area with a depleted panzer company from the corps reserve. Carrying out a personal reconnaissance, Ostendorff placed his meager forces in the most advantageous avenue of attack and led them through the encircling Soviets, restoring the main line.

Other attacks hit the junction of the Reich and 10th Panzer. Schaal deployed some 88mm antiaircraft guns on the front line, and together with accurate fire from his few combat ready panzers they destroyed 13 of 27 Russian tanks threatening to break through.

The Russians still had not mastered the intricacy of a combined infantry-armored assault, which showed as the tanks outran the infantry and fell prey to German infantry. A German corps order of the day mentioned some of the actions that took place on the 25th.

"SS 2nd Lt. Weise and SS 2nd Lt. Ehm, who jumped onto heavy tanks, fought the crews through the vision ports and set the tanks on fire with explosives or gasoline when neither 37mm antitank guns nor heavy infantry guns could knock them out. The 11/"D", under its company commander SS 1st Lt. Kumpf, independently counterattacked, inflicting bloody losses on the enemy. It destroyed three tanks, five antitank guns, two heavy mortars, six heavy machine guns, five light machine guns, and a large number of rifles."

Sovfoto

The crew of a Soviet artillery piece works rapidly to service its gun in action during the bloody month of August 1941. Well-concealed Russian artillery pounded the Germans in the Yelnya salient while German artillery crews ran short of ammunition.

Captain Mühlenkamp recalled, "We had never experienced such fighting before. There was confusion everywhere, and the Russians fought to the death, as did our men. No quarter was asked or given."

On July 26, a German patrol found the position of a depleted squad led by SS Sergeant Förster, which had defended the left flank of SS Captain Klempt's 1st Motorcycle Infantry Company. Förster and his men, SS Privates Klaiber, Buschner, Oldenbuerhuis, Schwenk, and Schyma, were all dead. Around their position lay 60 to 70 dead Russian soldiers.

Guderian had told both Hausser and Schaal that infantry divisions would soon arrive to relieve their two divisions, and word soon spread to the frontline units. However, the elation of the troops faded as the fighting at Smolensk continued and Soviet attacks stepped up, looking for a weak place in the line.

At 1050 on July 26, another Russian attack hit the junction of the two divisions. Klingenberg's motorcycle battalion was hit by different enemy forces at 1105, followed by another attack against Bittrich's "D" and SS Colonel Jürger Wagner's SS Infantry Regiment 11. The attacks were beaten off, but casualties were heavy. At 1345, Hausser sent the following message to von Vietinghoff:

"Artillery fire upon Regiment Der Führer becoming more unbearable. Wounded can no longer be brought to the rear. Decisive measures are necessary immediately. If not, the division is in danger of being pounded to pieces."

It was a stark admission, especially for an SS division that had experienced nothing but victory during the war. Von Vietinghoff could offer nothing. The much needed fuel and artillery ammunition were still making their way to the front, and the Luftwaffe was dealing with Red Air Force units that were bent on destroying their newly won airfields.

On the front line, both sides had constructed a maze of slit trenches, foxholes, and bunkers to protect themselves from enemy artillery and air attacks. "When I was young I talked to veterans from World War I who had served on the Western Front," Mühlenkamp recalled. "They described the positional warfare and life in the trenches, but I could not fathom what they had really experienced. At Yelnya I found out what they had gone through, although our ordeal lasted only a few weeks, not years, thank God."

July 27 brought another hope of relief for the men of the 10th Panzer and Reich Divisions. The Smolensk battle was finally showing signs of success, and Guderian thought, rightly or wrongly, that some of the German units manning the pocket perimeter could start moving toward Yelnya.

Sovfoto

Advancing in the region of Smolensk, Soviet armor rolls forward across the barren Russian countryside in August 1941. While these Red Army infantrymen have hitched rides aboard the vehicles, the Soviets had not yet mastered combined infantry-armored assaults.

Brigadier General Erich Straube, commander of the 268th Infantry Division, radioed von Vietinghoff to discuss the movement of his division. He suggested that von Vietinghoff send all his available corps vehicles to transport as much of his infantry as possible to the pocket. In the end, Straube was able to pack two regiments into the vehicles and send them toward Yelnya, saving at least one or two days of forced marching. Straube's third regiment, along with the horse-drawn elements of his division, would make their way on foot.

Elements of Maj. Gen. Friedrich Bergmann's 137th were also moving to relieve von Stockhausen's GD. By July 28 the III/GD was able to disengage and move into the salient, where it was held as a reserve unit. The 41st and 85th Engineer Battalions, units attached to higher headquarters, were also moving into the Reich and 10th Panzer sectors. The new units came under fire immediately, even as elements of 10th Panzer and Reich strove to disengage and move back.

Relieving a friendly unit that is disengaging from the enemy is a hazardous maneuver at best, and the Russians took full advantage of the action. The new German units trying to move forward to occupy frontline positions were slowed by the enemy fire, while the SS and panzer troops in the front line came under more assaults. Estimates from the Reich's intelligence officer placed five enemy rifle divisions and two mechanized regiments in front of the division's lines.

Although elements of the 268th and the engineer battalions were able to man the line, the units being relieved were just shifted to other parts of their division's front. Casualties had been so high that they could not afford to be rotated to the rear. An estimated 2,000 Russian infantry, supported by tanks, attacked Klingenberg's battalion at 1630 on the 28th. Despite being heavily outnumbered, the motorcyclists repulsed the enemy, but Klingenberg's men were worn out. At 1820 Kumm's "D" came under heavy artillery fire, causing more casualties before a flight of Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bombers appeared to silence the enemy.

The 10th Panzer was also hit hard, even as Bergmann's 499th Infantry Regiment was mov-

Sovfoto

In this dramatic photograph taken in August 1941, a Soviet T-35 tank rolls across the flank of a disabled German tank somewhere in Russia. Soviet armored innovation produced the legendary T-34 medium tank, which helped turn the tide of the war in the East.

ing into the line. On the 29th the division's operations officer, Major Görhardt, was on his way to brigade headquarters when the wagon he was riding on struck a mine. Gerhardt was horribly burned and was on his way to a hospital in Germany a day later. The division had lost a key member of its headquarters just when it needed him most.

With the Smolensk pocket finally destroyed, Guderian was ready to move on Moscow. The Yelnya salient was still a thorn in his side, but it had become a matter of prestige for it to be held. If he could not use Yelnya, he planned to move his panzer group north to find a new area for his planned offensive. The gradual relief of the troops in the salient would continue while the rest of the panzer group took time to refit as best it could.

More infantry units were finally able to begin moving toward Yelnya to occupy the salient. The infantry would be charged with holding and enlarging it. However, when Guderian was finally ready to move his panzer group he would take his attached army artillery units with him. The Luftwaffe units supporting the salient would also move with him. The move would leave just corps and divisional artillery units to continue to support the infantry.

Things were about to change on the Soviet side. General Zhukov was one of the few Soviet generals and politicians who had the nerve to stand up to Stalin. As early as June 29, he had sent the Soviet leader an analysis of the situation after one week of war. He pointed out the threats of encirclement for the Southwest and Central Fronts and advocated evacuating Kiev and retreating to defensive positions on the eastern bank of the Dneiper River.

Stalin was enraged when he read the report. Even as the events Zhukov predicted were unfolding, he summoned the general to his war room. When he entered the room, Zhukov found Stalin flanked by two of the most dangerous men in the Soviet Union: Lavrentii Pavlovich Beria, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), and Commissar Lev Zakharovich Meklis, the head of the Main Political Propaganda Directorate.

Zhukov recalled Stalin "cursing me in crude terms for suggesting that we lose Kiev which, like Leningrad, he counted on holding at all costs." The general was not cowed as Stalin and his two companions glared at him.

"If you think the Chief of the General Staff talks nonsense, then I suggest you relieve me of my post and send me to the front," he replied.

During the coming weeks Zhukov sent a steady stream of reports concerning the worsening conditions at the front. In one of them he drew attention to the Yelnya salient, which marked the easternmost advance of the German Army in Russia, and pointed out the necessity of destroying it to eliminate its threat to Moscow.

Remembering their previous turbulent meeting, on July 30 Stalin decided to name Zhukov as the commander of the Reserve Army. The army was formed to control the training of newly formed units. Located in the rear, the army's divisions could be used as a reserve to counter any German penetrations on the front east of Yelnya. Zhukov sped up the combat training of his divisions so that he could use them—not defensively but offensively. Within a month the Germans inside the Yelnya salient would learn just what an effective commander Zhukov was.

Meanwhile, the battle that was Yelnya continued. At 0200 on July 30, a section of 10th Panzer's line came under heavy artillery fire, followed by a mass infantry attack at 0345. The Russians hit the positions of the II/Rifle Regiment 86, II/Rifle Regiment 69, and the 10th Motorcycle Battalion. After intense fighting, the attack was beaten off.

As the sun rose, another massive bombardment hit the line at 0700. The positions of the motorcycle battalion were penetrated by a tank-infantry force, and the situation was quickly becoming critical. Schaal committed his last reserves, a company from Panzer Engineer Battalion 49, to the area. He also called the commander of Straube's Artillery Regiment 268 and requested aid. The 268th sent two battalions forward and had artillery observers sent to the front line. With their help, the Soviets were forced to retreat, and the line was restored.

July 31 brought more carnage. In the GD sector the Russians used their Katyusha rockets for the first time.

"There was little we could do, and nothing could prevent the enemy from placing his masses of artillery wherever he liked," the divisional history states. "There were no pauses between impacts. We pressed close together in the semi-darkness of the slit trench ... for the first time, the so-called "Stalin Organ," which was a salvo of 36 rockets, was used. Its greatest effect lay in the large amount of shrapnel it spread horizontally over a wide area. The new weapon's effect on morale was alarming."

More of Straube's 268th was arriving, but once again the relieved units were just shifted to other areas of the line. One of Straube's regiments, which had just taken over a section of the Reich's line, was promptly attacked by Russian infantry supported by tanks. In close combat, Straube's men destroyed two tanks, two anti-tank guns, 12 heavy machine guns, and several light machine guns.

A Soviet officer and several enlisted men were also captured. The regiment had received its first taste of the Yelnya salient only an hour after it had arrived at the front. In its first battle it had lost 12 officers and 28 men killed and 52 men wounded.

The salient now extended along the Dneiper bend from Stradino, about 48 kilometers northwest of Yelnya, to Shmakovo, 30 kilometers south-southwest of the town. It was an

extremely long front to cover. Battalions covered an average of 4-5 kilometers, whereas German military doctrine set a limit of two kilometers at the most.

An enemy attack on August 2 broke through a gap between the 41st Engineer Battalion and the 11/SS RGT 11. With artillery ammunition still almost nonexistent, the Russians were pushed back by a desperate counterattack that resulted in heavy casualties. A divisional report to von Vietinghoff emphasized the critical situation: "If the division [(Reich] must remain in this position for several more days, everything will be crushed. The present strength of an infantry company is 60-70 men. III/SS RGT 11 is holding a five-kilometer front with 11 officers, 32 NCOs, and 232 men. Engineer battalion only has six platoons remaining in the unit. Reserve presently consists of only parts of the reconnaissance and motorcycle battalions."

After repelling another attack, this time aimed at the II/DF, the artillery unit supporting the battalion sent Hausser the following message: "The batteries must withdraw if no more ammunition arrives. Occupying positions without firing will cause unnecessarily large losses."

The battle raged throughout the first week of August. The Soviet pressure on the salient grew steadily as new divisions were fed into the Russian line. Attacks on the northeast portion of the salient were successful in breaching the line in the GD sector. The regiment sent an ominous message to corps headquarters, stating: "Could not hold the positions reached this morning. Some companies only have 20 men remaining. Two officers have been killed in action. Cannot obtain reinforcements from the right flank. Enemy still making continuous tank attacks. It is questionable whether we will make it through the coming night."

Von Vietinghoff responded by attaching the GD to the Reich. Counterattacks to restore the line failed, and the GD was forced to establish new positions farther south. The casualty tally continued to grow as the XLVI (motorized) Corps reported losses of 3,616 officers, NCOs, and men for the period of July 22 to August 3. Straube's 268th, which had only been in the line for a short time, contributed 456 men to that total.

On August 5, Colonel Gustav-Adolf von Zangen, commander of Infantry Regiment 86 of Maj. Gen. Ernst-Eberhard Hell's 15th Infantry Division, arrived at von Vietinghoff's headquarters and received a detailed briefing on the situation inside the salient. His orders were to relieve the 11th SS Infantry Regiment as soon as possible. Meanwhile, corps transport units would be sent to bring up the 81st and 106th Regiments of the 15th to relieve the GD and form a corps reserve. Maj. Gen. Martin Dehmel's 292nd Infantry Division was also scheduled to arrive within the next two or three days.

By August 6, some of the bloodied units at the front were turning their positions over to the arriving infantry. The 11th SS pulled out of the line as the 15th Infantry took its place. The 81st and 106th Infantry Regiments were due to move into the GD sector the following day, and vehicles from the Reich were sent to pick up Colonel Horst Christiani's Infantry Regiment 508 from Dehmel's 292nd.

By the end of August 10, most of the Reich and GD were finally out of the salient, assembling west of Yelnya, beyond the range of Soviet artillery. From July 20-August 9 the 10th Panzer, Reich, and GD had lost a total of 924 officers and men killed, 3,228 wounded (many of them seriously), and 100 missing.

Sputnik / AKG Images

After weeks of violent combat around Yelnya, Red Army troops enter the war-torn village after winning a little publicized but important morale-building victory.

"The men were happy to get out of the hell of Yelnya," Mühlenkamp recalled. "We didn't care where we were going. It was just a relief to get out alive."

As the infantry units began manning the line, the defense of the salient passed temporarily to the control of General Friedrich Materna's XX Army Corps, which would still be under the overall command of Guderian's Panzer Group 2. Rakutin took advantage of the minor chaos caused by the change of command and the redistribution of troops to launch battalion- and regiment-sized attacks with his 24th Army at the junction of the 15th Infantry Division and the remaining elements of the Reich that were still in the line.

The Russians hit German positions on the heights near the village of Klematina, about 16 kilometers northeast of Yelnya. Pounded by the Red Air Force, which had been reinforced in the area, and artillery, the Germans fell back in the face of another combined tank-infantry attack. The Russians then shifted their assault and retook a smaller village near Klematina.

Running short of artillery shells (a problem the Russians never seemed to have), Hell put in a call to Materna, who sent 3,000 precious 105mm shells to the division's Artillery Regiment 15. For the moment, the wall of divisional artillery fire could make up for deficiencies in the line, but Guderian had already taken two artillery regiments for his next move over Materna's protests. Materna later said that the move was a "significant weakening of our defensive strength."

The German positions along the Uzha River now came under attack. Losses on both sides were considerable, with the 15th losing 20 officers during the night of August 10-11. Dehmel's 292nd, which had sent a reinforced combat group to another area, fell back from the hills south of Klematina in the face of heavy Russian attacks. As the situation grew more critical, part of the Reich was sent back to the front to help restore the situation.

Mid-August brought a new series of Russian attacks. Fortunately, they came mostly in battalion strength, but they struck at specific sectors of the thinly held German line and were supported by heavy artillery fire. The

men occupying the foxholes and dugouts on the front line had little contact with anyone except their immediate neighbors on either side, and it was up to those small groups to fend off enemy attacks.

With the final exit of the Reich, the three divisions of Materna's corps were stretched out in the rough, hilly region of the salient where, in most places, the enemy could approach to within 50-75 meters without being spotted. Hell's 15th held a front of 22 kilometers, Straube's 268th, 25 kilometers, and Dehmel's 292nd had 14 kilometers to defend. The three divisions had already lost 97 officers and 2,157 NCOs and men after being in the salient for only one week.

To strengthen the salient, Guderian ordered General Hermann Geyer's IX Army Corps (Bergmann's 137th and Brig. Gen. Ernst Haeckel's 263rd Infantry Divisions) into the northeast sector of the salient on August 15. Maj. Gen. Curt Gallenkamp's 78th Infantry Division was also ordered to relieve the 15th on August 16 to give that beleaguered division some rest behind the lines.

In Berlin the generals at Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH, the German Army High Command) were taking a larger interest in Yelnya. Field Marshal Fedor von Bock was getting impatient as more German divisions became bogged down in the fighting with little to show for it. Guderian still wanted the salient held, and he lobbied the field marshal to remain steadfast, but von Bock had his doubts about hanging on. Indecisive for the moment, he let the battle continue.

On August 22, the command of the salient passed from Panzer Group 2 to Field Marshal Günther von Kluge's 4th Army. At the time von Kluge was ill, so Guderian still had control of the area until he recovered.

The Yelnya salient resembled the head of a mushroom, with its stem only 22 kilometers wide. Stalin was determined to see it wiped out and was also getting impatient with the losses and lack of progress in obtaining that objective. Zhukov, who was still getting the divisions of his Reserve Army ready for battle, had been given orders to destroy the salient, but he would not act until he was ready, adding to Stalin's frustration.

Meanwhile, Rakutin's attacks increased, testing the German line. Haeckel's 263rd felt the brunt of the blows. Located on the northeast sector of the salient, it guarded the northern flank of its "stem." It was a particularly dangerous position, and the Russians knew it. They shelled the division throughout August 23 and launched an attack on a height known as Chimborasso. Although the attack was repulsed, the German division lost 150 men. Other strong attacks followed, and by the next day the average strength of the infantry companies was 30 to 40 men.

On the 25th the division lost another 200 men as the Soviets penetrated its line south of the village of Chuvashi. This time the division had nothing left to seal the breach. A counterattack that tried to recapture the lost positions cost Haeckel another 150 men.

Under pressure from both Geyer and Materna, the now recovered von Kluge visited the salient on August 27 to see for himself what their men were facing. He was appalled at what he encountered. In Haeckel's sector, the 263rd had made another attempt to seal the breach in the Chuvashi area. This time it succeeded, but the division was worn out. Von Kluge immediately ordered Hell's 15th to return to the line and relieve the 163rd.

While visiting Gallenkamp's 78th, von Kluge was informed that the division had lost about 400 men in four days. Gallenkamp estimated that on average about 2,000 enemy artillery shells hit the division every day—most of them heavy caliber. He also stated that his division would be all but useless in a few days.

The other divisions in the salient basically gave the field marshal the same situation report. Returning to his headquarters, von Kluge contacted von Bock. He told his superior that, in his opinion, the salient should either be evacuated immediately or that the Moscow offensive should resume in the next few days to take pressure off the German units fighting there. Unfortunately, neither option was immediately possible.

Hitler, like Stalin, saw the battle at Yelnya as a matter of prestige and was not willing to give up the salient. Guderian, instead of resuming his Moscow offensive, was ordered to move his panzer group south to take part in another battle of encirclement—this time at Kiev.

By August 30, Zhukov was ready. The Germans had become used to the violent battalion- and regiment-sized Soviet attacks that had hit them for the past weeks, but this time the attacks would take place on a divisional level with nine of 24th Army's 13 divisions taking part. Although the Russians would be outnumbered 70,000 to 60,000, they had the advantage of being able to concentrate their forces while the Germans were strung along a 70-kilometer front. Rakutin had received replacements for his divisions, and Zhukov's Reserve Army would provide more as the battle progressed.

With Zhukov in overall command, Rakutin ordered his artillery, which consisted of about 800 field pieces augmented by dozens of heavy mortars and some Katyushas, to open fire at 0730. Zhukov hoped to cut the stem of the salient with a pincer attack from the north and south. At the same time, two divisions would strike the eastern sector of the salient and drive toward Yelnya, splitting the German forces in two. As the thunderous barrage swept the German line, Zhukov gave the order to attack.

In the north, Russiianov's 100th Rifle and Colonel Pavel Vasilevich Mironov's 107th Rifle Divisions, supported by the 102nd Tank Division, struck the 137th on a four-kilometer front in the Sadki area, about 15 kilometers northwest of Yelnya. Soviet forces were able to penetrate the German line, and the tanks of the 102nd, supported by more infantry, widened the breach, pushing back the 483rd and 485th Regiments.

The southern sector of the stem, defended by the 268th, was hit by Aleksei Nikolaevich Pervushin's 106th Motorized Rifle Division, supported by the 303rd Rifle Division. The attack took place on an eight-kilometer front in the Leonova area, some 16 kilometers southwest of Yelnya. With the greater width of the frontal attack, the Russians made slower progress. However, the Soviet artillery continued to cause rising losses among the German defenders.

On the 31st Zhukov pushed more tanks into the Sadki gap, allowing the Russians to advance another two kilometers. At the same time Russian infantry, supported by heavy artillery, slammed into Gallenkamp's 78th north of Guryevo. The lead elements of the northern spearhead were now about six kilometers from Yelnya.

September 1 saw a continuation of the battle around Sadki. The southern attack around Leonova, although making little headway, prevented Materna from committing his meager reserves until he was certain where the main attack was coming.

At Sadki a regiment of Mironov's 107th was able to move forward and cut the Yelnya-Smolensk rail line. The regiment was surrounded after a German counterattack, but it held out for three days until rescued by other Russian units.

Materna was almost ready to commit his reserves to the Sadki sector when a new crisis arose. Maj. Gen. Iakov Georgievich Koletnikov's 19th Rifle Division, supported by the 309th Rifle Division, hit the junction of the 78th and 292nd Infantry Divisions, creating another gap in the line. With Maj. Gen. Konstantin Ivanovich Petrov's 120th Rifle Division, which occupied positions south of the

Continued on page 73

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By Christopher Miskimon

Tigers in the Sky

A small group of American aviators was always outnumbered but never outfought in the skies over China and Burma during World War II.

AMERICA HAD BEEN AT WAR FOR LESS THAN TWO WEEKS WHEN CLAIRE Chennault watched his American Volunteer Group (AVG) take off for its first combat mission. They were in Yunnan, China; it was about 10 AM on December 19, 1941. Chennault had laboriously set up an early warning network, and today it spotted 10 Japanese bombers heading toward Yunnan from the direction of Hanoi. Now he would see if all his efforts would pay off. "I felt that the fate of China was riding in the P-40 cockpits through the wintry sky," he later wrote. He yearned to be with them, but his role was to command the overall effort.

Squadron Leader Robert Sandell led his 1st Pursuit Squadron into the skies, leveling off at 20,000 feet and heading southeast toward the enemy contacts. Soon the fighter pilots were in sight: 10 twin-engine Kawasaki Ki-48 bombers painted pale green. They were Imperial Japanese Army Air Force (IJAAF) planes flying in a tight formation. As soon as they saw the American aircraft approaching, the Japanese jettisoned their bombloads and turned for home; they had no fighter escort. The Americans pursued, initiating a chase that would last 10 minutes before they finally caught up to their fleeing prey.

A squadron of Flying Tigers photographed in close formation over China in 1942.

Pilot Charlie Bond dove on the bomber formation, noting the Japanese were slowing down and targeting the fighters with their rear machine guns. He squeezed his trigger—and nothing happened. He had accidently switched his guns off when checking them earlier! He broke off his attack, turned his gun switch on, and came around for another pass. This time his guns fired, sending a stream of bullets into the fuselage of a bomber. He made more passes as his fellow Americans did the same. Several pilots followed damaged bombers as they descended, watching until they crashed in the mountains below.

Sandell finally realized they were 200 miles from their base; it was time to go home. The squadron broke off its attack and headed for home. One pilot ran out of fuel and had to crash land, but he survived. Three Japanese planes were shot down, with a fourth crashing on the way back to Hanoi. Chennault's system had worked, though the pilots admittedly had forgotten teamwork in the wild melee of the action. Still, his network spotted the enemy flight, and his pilots had intercepted them. He still wanted improvement. "Well, boys, it was a good job but not good enough," Chennault told his flyers. "Next time get them all."

This was to be the ethos of the AVG, which would in time become known as the Flying Tigers, Yankee volunteers who flew for the Nationalist Chinese in the early days of World War II. They were aggressive, daring, and most of all successful. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek referred to the AVG as her "little angels." They helped keep China in the war during a crucial period. Their story is told in Bill Yenne's new work ***When Tigers Ruled the Sky: The Flying Tigers: American Outlaw Pilots Over China in World War II*** (Berkeley Caliber Press, New York, 2016, 368 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $27.00, hardcover). The AVG included two men who later received the Medal of Honor. One of them was Gregory Boyington, who achieved fame as a Marine aviator in the Pacific later in the war. They destroyed hundreds of Japanese planes in the sky and on the ground while losing only a dozen pilots in combat, an amazing result for a group that was always outnumbered and at the end of a tenuous supply chain.

This book's format is practically a staple of military history books, starting with the origins

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

DEVELOPER GAME-LABS GOES ALL OUT WITH THE SEQUEL TO TACTICAL BATTLE GAME ULTIMATE GENERAL: GETTYSBURG

ULTIMATE GENERAL: CIVIL WAR

PUBLISHER GAME-LABS • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC
AVAILABLE NOW (STEAM EARLY ACCESS)

Back in 2014, developer Game-Labs released a nice little strategy game called *Ultimate General: Gettysburg,* which was met with generally high praise. The game put players in charge of thousands of soldiers in the Battle of Gettysburg, which they could tackle as either the Confederate or Union Army. One of the secrets to its success was that it came more or less out of nowhere from one of the best *Total War* mod creators in the world, and the results were about as impressive as one would imagine. Now, two years later, a much more robust sequel is available via Steam Early Access, and what we've seen so far shows an abundance of promise.

The sequel in question is *Ultimate General: Civil War,* which zooms out from Gettysburg to the much bigger picture that surrounded it. The period of 1861-1865 is certainly a far cry from our typical World War II stomping grounds, but fans of WWII-set strategy games will want to see what Game-Labs is cooking up here. One of the initial features that stands out is *Ultimate General*'s variety as far as level of control is concerned. While players take on the role of a general, with full control over the composition of the army, they can decide how much of that control they want to take on directly. Those who feel like getting into the nitty gritty of the campaign can command each unit individually, or you can simply assign a primary goal and see what happens as a result. In the case of the latter option, division commanders will make decisions on their own, making it much easier to control increasingly large armies.

Ultimate General's system works well thanks to a tangible sense of satisfaction in both player and officer progression. As you succeed and develop a reputation, you will have more access to divisions and brigades, and soldiers who survive battle will learn to fight more effectively moving forward. These survivors will go from rookies to veterans over the course of the campaign, ranking up and giving them a chance to command even larger units. While significant bonuses can be gained through victory, defeat brings with it its own unique circumstances. Just because a handful of officers have ranked up during the war doesn't make them any less likely to die in the midst of it all. The more soldiers you lose, the lower army morale and your own reputation will drop, and if it gets bad enough you'll have to hand in your resignation.

There's something here for history buffs and experienced strategy game players alike. For the former there are accurate historical weapons and units, and in the case of weapons they've taken historical availability into account. If you want certain weapons that weren't historically available to your troops, for instance, you will need to take them directly from enemy hands or raid their supplies. For the maps, Game-Labs used a combination of satellite data and historical maps to create accurately hand-drawn landscapes. The results go above and beyond the visuals you typically see in hardcore PC strategy games, and the attention to detail pays off in terms of immersion and tactical planning. The lovingly crafted terrain plays a major role in this. Everything from trenches to houses and fields can be used to your advantage, and poor positioning can easily come back to haunt you.

One of the most noticeable differences between *Civil War* and *Gettysburg* is the scale. The shining light of Game-Labs' previous effort was the battle system, but the portrayal of the subject matter wasn't quite complete. Players were able to play through connected events, of course, but *Civil War* aims to recreate the full war from beginning to end. Since the focus of *Civil War* is on a single army rather than your entire side of the conflict, that means it's up to your units to see that it makes it far enough in to experience the last hurrah. At this point one of the few downsides we've experienced is the act of recovering from losses, which can be a bit tedious at times. The reward, however, is a real sense that this is your army, over which you have full control.

As of right now, *Civil War* includes battles such as Battle of Aquia Creek, Battle of Philippi, First Battle of Bull Run, Battle of Shiloh, Battle of Gaines' Mill, Battle of Malvern Hill, Second Battle of Bull Run, and Battle of Antietam, along with 10 minor engagements for each side of the war. Once it's fully ready they will be adding eight more key battles and a handful of minor engagements, so there's more to look forward to in the near future.

Hopefully the success of *Ultimate General: Gettysburg* and *Ultimate General: Civil War* will lead Game-Labs to iterate on those with followups based on other conflicts. Naturally, we would love to see what they do with a World War II setting, so by all means keep the tactical goodness coming. □

of Chennault and his pilots before moving through their training, recruitment into the AVG, and the journey to China, where they would fight. The rest of the volume is a recounting of their combat experiences. This format is so common to histories of fighting units because it works. The author uses it masterfully, giving readers an exciting, readable work that keeps their interest page after page. Any famous outfit's story is a mix of fact and fiction. This work separates the two, but the author details where the fantastic claims came from and what the AVG was doing in truth. The story of the Flying Tigers has been told in movies and television, numerous documentaries, and countless books, but it is a story worth retelling, and this edition stands on its own as a thorough, well-written, and entertaining account of a group of pilots who went thousands of miles from home and helped defend people they did not know from attack by a ruthless and brutal enemy.

Spitfire: The Legend Lives On (John Dibbs and Tony Holmes, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2016, photographs, appendices, index, $45.00, hardcover)

Flight Lieutenant Pat Lardner-Burke was flying an escort mission on August 27, 1943, protecting a group of American Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers on their way to bomb a German rocket weapons site at Watten. He and his fellow Spitfire pilots were covering their third relay of bombers when nine German Focke Wulf FW-190 fighters attacked the formation. The young South African-born Lardner-Burke saw one of the Nazi planes attacking two of his fellow pilots. He quickly maneuvered onto its tail and fired a burst, damaging the aircraft and forcing it to dive away. Flying his Spitfire behind another FW-190, he put a burst into it as well. This plane also dove away, and Lardner-Burke pursued, firing another burst that struck the enemy plane, which went vertical and crashed into the ground. The flyer and his comrades returned to base without loss.

The Supermarine Spitfire is easily the most famous British fighter plane of all time; this new book pays tribute to the aircraft and those who flew it. One of the authors is a professional aerial photographer. This coffee table book is his salute to the Spitfire. Many of these planes still fly, and over time the author has photographed them; the volume is full of modern color images of Spitfires in the air along with period pictures of the plane at war. The text contains numerous firsthand accounts as well as histories of the specific planes in the photographs. The result is a work that can be enjoyed by either a casual flip-through or an intense reading.

Among the Headhunters: An Extraordinary World War II Story of Survival in the Burmese Jungle (Robert Lyman, Da Capo

New and Noteworthy

The Tank Commander Pocket Manual 1939-1945 (Edited by R. Sheppard, Pool of London Press, 2016, $14.95, hardcover) This is a reprint of a vintage edition laying out the training and experiences of a tank commander during World War II. It uses original diagrams, training manuals, and battle reports.

The Hurricane Pocket Manual: All Marks in Service 1939-1945 (Compiled by Martin Robson, Bloomsbury Press, 2016, $15.00, hardcover) This pocket edition covers the famous British fighter. The volume is a blend of original manuals, tips for pilots, and declassified reports.

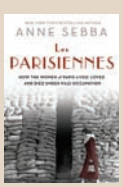
Spies in the Congo: America's Atomic Mission in World War II (Susan Williams, Public Affairs Books, 2016, $28.99, hardcover) Deep in the Belgian Congo lay a mine teeming with uranium ore. The OSS went to great lengths to prevent the Nazis from getting it.

1941: The America That Went to War (William M. Christie, Carrel Books, 2016, $34.99, hardcover) Americans had a different mind-set about war before Pearl Harbor. This work presents the year in a series of monthly vignettes leading up to the nation's entry into the conflict.

Retreat & Rearguard: Dunkirk 1940: The Evacuation of the BEF to the Channel Ports (Jerry Murland, Pen and Sword Press, 2016, $39.95, hardcover) The rescue of the British Expeditionary Force was an extraordinary feat of human ingenuity and daring. This new volume digs into the details of the almost superhuman effort.

Taranto 1940: The Fleet Air Arm's Precursor to Pearl Harbor (Angus Konstam, Osprey Publishing, 2016, $21.95, softcover) A daring surprise attack by British Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers crippled Italian naval capabilities in the Mediterranean. It was a harbinger of the rise of air power in the naval domain.

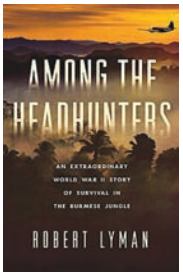
The Dnepr 1943: Hitler's Eastern Rampart Crumbles (Robert Forczyk, Osprey Publishing, 2016, $24.00, softcover) The German effort to prevent Soviet forces from crossing the Dnepr River failed, but at an enormous cost to both sides. This book covers the entire campaign in detail.



Les Parisiennes: How the Women of Paris Lived, Loved and Died Under Nazi Occupation (Anne Sebba, St. Martin's Press, 2016, $27.99, hardcover) This book summarizes the lives of women under the brutal Nazi occupation of Paris. It covers resistors, collaborators, and those trying to stay out of the conflict.

Playing War: Wargaming and U.S. Navy Preparations for World War II (John M. Lillard, Potomac Books, 2016, $39.95, hardcover) After World War I, the U.S. Navy's leadership knew another global war would come to one or both oceans eventually. This book chronicles the service's efforts to prepare through rigorous wargames.

Hitler's Compromises: Coercion and Consensus in Nazi Germany (Nathan Stoltzfus, Yale University Press, 2016, $40.00, hardcover) There were many Nazi proclamations that clashed with German culture or values. The author shows how Hitler navigated these difficulties to maintain his power.



Press, Boston, MA, 2016, 304 pp., maps, photographs, appen- dices, bibliography, index, $25.99, hardcover)

The Nagas, a tribe living deep within the Burmese jungle, were notorious headhunters. They were so famous because the British mounted two expeditions against them during the 1930s, burning their village each time in an attempt to convince them to abandon the practice. The Nagas were undaunted and continued headhunting and human sacrifice. A few years later, in 1943, a Curtiss C-46 Commando transport plane went down in the nearby jungle. All but one of the crew and passengers survived by parachuting to safety; it was the largest evacuation of an aircraft by parachute in history. The 20 survivors soon learned they had landed in the midst of Naga territory. Their ordeal had only begun.

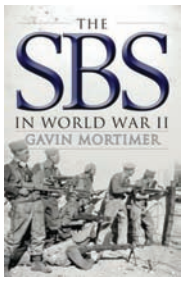
This little-known story of World War II stands out for its detailed accounts of the prewar British expeditions against the Naga and the wartime trials of the crash survivors, who spent a month in the jungle fighting not only the Japanese but headhunters as well. The author is an acknowledged specialist on the China-Burma-India Theater with a number of other titles on the region to his credit. That expertise shows through in the book's smooth prose and clear storytelling.

The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II (Malcolm F. Willoughby, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2016, 347 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, index, $36.95, softcover)

The Coast Guard was a jack of all trades during World War II. It performed convoy escort, manned landing craft, patrolled beaches, secured ports, and flew maritime patrols. When troops went ashore at Sicily, Normandy, and the Philippines, Coast Guardsmen ferried them to the beach, taking the same risks and sometimes making the ultimate sacrifice. They chased Nazi weather teams around the coastline of Greenland, often having to use icebreakers to pursue their quarry. For many sailors and merchant seamen, they were a beacon of hope, rescuing them when their ships were sunk.

This is a newly released edition of the Coast Guard's original official report on its service during the war. It is printed in the original type and lavishly illustrated with photographs of the Coast Guard in action across the globe. The book is a handy reference to the exploits of a service that is often overlooked in popular history. It is divided into sections on domestic operations, sea rescue, and combat actions. The text is easy to follow and full of details on actions both large and small.

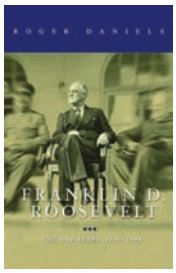
The SBS in World War II (Gavin Mortimer, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2016, 255 pp., photographs, glossary, notes, bibliography, index, $15.00, softcover)



During the night of August 27, 1944, a dozen Royal Marine Special Boat Service commandos crossed the Adriatic Sea from Italy to Yugoslavia. Their mission was to blow up a vital railroad bridge. After reaching the coast they met with a small group of partisans who were supposed to bring mules to carry the explosives. They had none, so the SBS men carried them themselves. For several nights they followed treacherous paths through mountainous terrain to the bridge. They had to be careful not only of the Nazis, but their local allies the Ustashi, known even among the SS for their barbarism. Upon reaching the bridge they watched it for a day and then crept down to plant their charges. The British were delighted to discover the Germans had already drilled demolition holes in case they needed to destroy it. Explosives in place, they set them off. Nothing happened. They tried again with the same result. As the British leader began cursing, suddenly the charges detonated, bringing the whole bridge crashing down. Afterward, they struggled for days, avoiding enemy searchers until finally being evacuated by sea.

Such stories are standard fare for the famed SBS, and this book is full of their daring exploits. It is often difficult to penetrate the veil of secrecy surrounding special forces organizations, but the passage of time has allowed the stories to be told in great detail. The personal statements and memoirs of many SBS men were used in the book, adding an authenticity that helps tell the history in a clear way that is enjoyable to read. A large number of archival and personal photographs add to the richness of this edition.

Franklin D. Roosevelt: The War Years 1939-1945 (Roger Daniels, University of Illinois

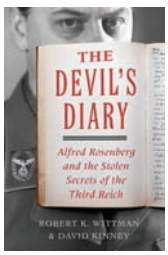


Press, Urbana, 2016, 636 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

The famous American president of the World War II years went into the conflict with nearly unprecedented power over his nation's military, industry, information organizations, and diplomacy. He oversaw the creation of the Arsenal of Democracy, devised the United Nations, and fought an often hostile Congress while doing so. Despite these challenges he was able to preserve a great measure of prosperity for America's citizens and continued pushing his liberal reforms despite the war. While he did not live to see the war's end, Roosevelt was a prime architect of Allied victory in World War II.

This is the second volume of a two-book series on the life of FDR. It focuses on the war years, showing how he led the United States during a time of great threat and danger. The author's narrative goes into great detail on the wide range of issues FDR had to deal with, giving an impressive view of the breadth of effort needed by the president during wartime. The book notably provides a look at World War II from the upper level of the Allied leadership.

The Devil's Diary: Alfred Rosenberg and the Stolen Secrets of the Third Reich (Robert K. Wittman and David Kinney, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2016, 513 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)



Alfred Rosenberg is an unknown architect of the Holocaust. He worked closely with Adolf Hitler; the two shared similar viewpoints about Germany, its future, and the anti-Semitism the German leader let forth. Rosenberg authored a book that sold over a million copies in Germany, a number exceeded only by *Mein Kampf* at the time. He kept an extensive diary, 500 pages long. This diary was examined by the prosecution at the Nuremberg trials but disappeared afterward. A Jewish-American lawyer had taken it along with other documents and secreted them away. It would take decades of detective work to locate and retrieve the diary, which now resides in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

This new work introduces the world to the

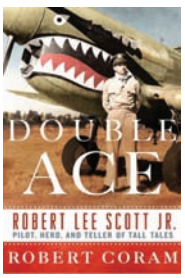
relatively unknown Rosenberg and his diary, a look at the internal workings of the Nazi hierarchy. It often reads like the detective story it is; the authors are a former FBI agent who specialized in stolen art and a journalist. Together they have produced a book that is readable and scholarly at the same time. Events noted in the diary are placed into their proper context within the larger scope of the war.

Behind Nazi Lines: My Father's Heroic Quest to Save 149 World War II POWs (Andrew Gerow Hodges Jr. and Denise George, Berkeley Caliber Press, New York, 2015, photographs, appendices, notes, index, $27.95, hardcover)

Andy Hodges, a young man from Mobile, Alabama, had been rejected for military service; during his college years he suffered a shoulder injury playing football. Determined to serve, he joined the Red Cross and volunteered to serve in Europe. There, in the autumn of 1944, he was asked to assist Allied POWs in German hands by delivering much needed supplies. Andy did far more than that, however. He repeatedly dealt with the Third Reich's officers and by the end of the year had negotiated the release and exchange of 149 prisoners, using only his wits and sense of duty. This included Bernie Rader, a young Jewish soldier from New York. Wounded in an ambush and captured, he buried his dog tags so the Germans would not know he was Jewish.

Written by Andy's son, this work is a tribute to his father's dedication and devotion to both his duty and his fellow man. The story is not entirely his, however. Also covered are the stories of the various prisoners exchanged through Andy's negotiations. Their stories are as varied and fascinating as that of the young man from Alabama who refused to let his injury keep him out of the largest conflict in human history.

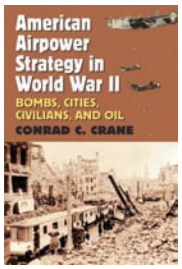
Double Ace: Robert Lee Scott Jr. Pilot, Hero, and Teller of Tall Tales (Robert Coram, Thomas Dunne Books, New York, 2016, 336 pp., photographs, notes, index, $26.99, hardcover)



Robert Scott barely graduated high school, but that did not hold him back. He joined the famous Flying Tigers in China, where he became an ace with 10 confirmed kills to his record. When not taking a P-40 into combat, he often flew cargo missions over the Himalayas, helping keep supplies flowing to the Chinese and American aviators fighting Japan in relative isolation. After the war he wrote a memoir titled *God Is My Co-Pilot*. The book quickly became a best-seller and was soon made into a movie. Still, he could be a difficult man. This stifled his career and destroyed his marriage. In later life he walked the Great Wall of China and helped found the Georgia Museum of Aviation.

This biography of a complex man is well done. The author does not hesitate to point out Scott's flaws as well as his strengths. The result is an honest look at a human being who was larger than life but paid a price for his brashness. Men of the World War II generation had different attitudes about many things—how to state their opinion, how much to drink, and how to deal with obstacles. In many ways Scott was typical of his era, and this book portrays that well.

American Airpower Strategy in World War II: Bombs, Cities, Civilian and Oil (Conrad C. Crane, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, 2016, 272 pp., photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)



The American air campaigns against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan are subjects of some controversy even today. Many decry the campaigns as directly targeting civilian populations for the purpose of destroying their will to fight. This caused widespread suffering among noncombatants. The author has researched the subject for decades and here argues the bombing campaigns were truly focused on reducing the enemy's ability to make war rather than a sole aim of breaking civilian morale. While he agrees there was a widely ranging lack of concern about the civilian casualties that resulted from their efforts, American planners remained focused on German and Japanese war-making capacity. This book takes a particular look at the last three months of the air war against Germany, when radar assisted many of the bombing runs. Also included is a comparison of the campaigns waged by the two major formations in Europe, the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces. □

flight out of hell

Continued from page 45

Arkansas Traveler.

Coltharp, coming alongside, waggled his B-25's wings in acknowledgment of Gordon's skill and bravery. Coltharp was magnificent on this day as well. He had remained over the target searching for survivors and flying cover until it was doubtful his plane had the fuel left to get home. Indeed, the *Princess Pat* would have to make an emergency landing at Cape Gloucester with only 10 gallons of gas in her tanks. Major Chester Coltharp later received the Distinguished Service Cross.

Four times Gordon had put his plane down on the rough waters of the Bismarck Sea under heavy Japanese fire and had survived. He was relieved to be heading back to the safety of Allied-controlled skies and to Finschafen. Now out of harm's way, the crew of *Traveler* began to realize the enormity of what they had done. They had executed perhaps the finest air/sea rescue of the Pacific War and had in all likelihood saved the lives of 15 men. Strangely, as *Traveler* reached cruising altitude, those rescued and many of the crew, including Gordon, felt lightheaded and jittery, and some could not even light cigarettes because their hands were trembling. Gordon would soon have the satisfaction of delivering his cargo of aviators back to the naval hospital and safety.

With a total of 23 men on board, *Traveler* was fully packed. Lieutenant Smith felt a mixture of pain, relief, grief, exhaustion, wonderment, and deep gratitude. Looking around at his fellow rescued flyers, Smith broadly smiled as he recognized a face he had not seen in some time. Lieutenant Jed Kirkland, co-pilot of *Gremlin's Holiday,* met Smith's gaze at the same time, and they both laughed. Maneuvering toward each other, they embraced and talked excitedly. Lieutenants Smith and Kirkland had become fast friends at flight school in Columbia, South Carolina, but were not even aware that they were in the same theater of action. But in war, even the joy of a miraculous rescue often is fleeting. Kirkland was killed in action six weeks later.

Mission 46D-1 was a complete success. Reconnaissance photos revealed total devastation; the supply dumps and warehouse area at Kavieng burned for several days, and smoke was visible for 70 miles. The success came at a high price: two B-25s from the 38th, three from the 345th, and three Grim Reaper A-20s. Kavieng and its facilities were completely destroyed, and the base would remain meaningless for the remainder of the war. The capa-

bilities of the Japanese at Rabaul were further nullified, and the invasion of the Admiralty Islands could be carried out.

Navy medical corpsmen at Finschafen quickly but carefully evacuated the badly wounded. Smith, against his protests, was made to stay overnight in the Navy hospital for treatment of his burns and his leg wound. A Navy Seabee introduced Smith to the delights of the cafeteria the following morning. There he enjoyed the best food he had tasted since his training days in Australia, and the first ice cream he had eaten in many months. Before noon, the 71st Squadron commander flew over in a fat cat, a Mitchell stripped of armament and used for transport only, and ferried *Pissonit*'s crew back to the Seventeen Mile airbase. As they returned Smith had a profound regret that he had not had the opportunity to personally thank that brave pilot of the PBY for rescuing him. He had attempted to do so but had been told that Gordon had already left for another mission.

Square-jawed, blond-haired Nathan Gordon, whose courage, strength, skill, and iron will were well demonstrated by the multiple rescues made that day, was presented America's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor. He was indeed the only PBY pilot given this award in World War II and the first Navy man in the Southwest Pacific to receive the award.

Admiral William F. Bull Halsey stated, "Please express my admiration to that saga writing Cat crew. This rescue was truly one of the most remarkable feats of the war." Gordon would survive the war and return to his native Arkansas, ultimately serving as lieutenant governor of his beloved state for 20 consecutive years. He practiced law until he died at the age of 92 in September 2008.

William J. Smith flew 46 more combat missions over New Guinea, the Dutch East Indies, Biak, Morotai, and the Philippines. He survived both "the best landing I ever made" while a 100-pound parafrag bomb was hung up in his bomb bay, and having a piece of shrapnel go through his plane's windshield just over his head. He was promoted to captain before his 23rd birthday and became the 71st Squadron Operations Officer.

General Kenney personally awarded Smith the Purple Heart, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal. After the war Smith graduated from Marshall University and from Southern Theological Seminary and became a Baptist minister in 1950. He served for more than 50 years in pastorates in Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia.

At long last, in 1999, Reverend Smith was able to express his gratitude to Nathan Gordon by phone. This "thank you" call developed into a long and satisfying discussion of wartime experiences and crossed paths in the South Pacific more than half a century earlier. After retirement, and for more than 20 years, Smith served as a volunteer chaplain to hundreds of U.S. Army basic trainees at Fort Benning, Georgia. In March 2002, Smith was able to fly in a B-25J nicknamed Panchito at the invitation of its owner, Mr. Larry Kelley, for the first time in 57 years, and in fact on his 80th birthday!

Bill Smith was hesitant to talk about wartime experiences but did often say that he learned one very important lesson from Navy pilot Nathan Gordon that day: never give up on rescuing anyone. Captain William J. Smith, a veteran of 72 wartime missions, died on December 23, 2010, three months before his 89th birthday. On his bedside table were his well-worn Bible and a mahogany model of his beloved B-25.

Steven D. Smith is the son of Captain William J. Smith. He is a municipal court judge and chief magistrate in Columbus, Georgia.

yelnya

Continued from page 66

breakthrough, still uncommitted, Dehmel could not weaken other areas of his sector to help seal the breakthrough.

A meeting between von Bock, Halder, and Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, commander-in-chief of the Army, took place at Army Group Center's headquarters on September 2. The consensus was that no one really knew when the Moscow offensive could be renewed. The best estimate would be late September, but it was only a guess. It was decided at the meeting that the Yelnya salient was serving no useful purpose and, with heavy fighting continuing there, it should be evacuated as soon as possible.

The withdrawal would be done in stages—something that the Germans became more and more adept at as the war went on. On September 4, service and supply personnel moved out undetected during the night. The following night, the divisions at the far eastern point of the salient retreated, covered by strong rear guards that fended off Soviet probing attacks. Heavy rain and fog masked the final stage of the withdrawal.

As the weather cleared, Rakutin attempted to catch the Germans, but it was too late. Soviet units entered Yelnya on September 6, but a new German defensive line several kilometers west of the town prevented any further advance. War correspondent Alexander Werth was allowed to visit the town a few days later. He described the scene in his book *Russia at War:* "Yelnya had been totally destroyed. On both sides of the road to the center of town, all the houses had been burned and all that was left was a pile of ashes and chimney stacks. The only building that still stood was a large stone church."

The human cost at Yelnya was high on both sides. In his memoirs, Zhukhov estimated that the Germans sustained 45,000 to 47,000 killed or wounded, which is probably fairly accurate. The 24th Army, which bore the brunt of the fighting, suffered about 10,700 dead and 21,000 wounded of the 131,000 men committed to the battle from August 30 to September 9 alone.

With so little actual good news to report, the Soviet propaganda machine went into overdrive in reporting the victory at Yelnya. Press reports blew it all out of proportion, but there were some truths nestled in the writing. Although it was a minor battle compared to other actions in those first months of Barbarossa, it was the first real victory for the Red Army since the war began. It was also the first piece of Soviet territory wrested from the Wehrmacht.

The infantry divisions of the IX and XX Army Corps had been drained at Yelnya. Their depleted battalions would need several months to recoup, making them fairly ineffective once the drive for Moscow continued.

For conspicuous gallantry the elite status of Guards was introduced into the Red Army. On September 18th, Russiianov's 100th and the 127th Rifle Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Timofei Gavrilovich Korneev and later by Colonel Andrian Zakharovich Akimenko, were reformed as the 1st and 2nd Guards Rifle Divisions for their performance at Yelnya. Mirinov's 107th and Petrov's 120th became the 5th and 6th Guards Rifle Divisions on September 26.

Although Yelnya became nothing more than a footnote in the history of the war on the Eastern Front, it showed what a determined Red Army could accomplish, even in the opening months of the war. For the men on both sides who fought and survived, it would be burned into their memories for the rest of their lives.

Author Pat McTaggart is an expert on World War II on the Eastern Front. He writes frequently for WWII History *and resides in Elkader, Iowa.*

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ordnance

Continued from page 15

Minister Winston Churchill gleefully watched as 1.25 million British and Canadian assault troops crossed the river and swarms of Dakotas and gliders dropped men of the British 6th Airborne Division on the eastern bank. The following day, C-47s dropped the U.S. 17th Airborne Division east of the Rhine.

After the war, C-47s were widely used for many years. Six of them, fitted with skis and jet-assistance bottles, were flown off a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier in January 1947 to support Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd's Antarctica explorations, and some of the newly formed Military Air Transport Service's 239 C-47s were the first aircraft used in the 1948-1949 Berlin Airlift. RAF Dakotas also flew supplies into the besieged German capital.

Besides the USAAF, the U.S. Navy, the Marine Corps, and the RAF, a number of other countries' air forces used C-47s or their variants, including Canada, Australia, India, Germany, the Soviet Union, Romania, Honduras, Guatemala, Dominica, El Salvador, and Haiti. RAF Dakotas served during the successful British campaign against Malaysian communists in 1948-54, and also in the 1950-1953 Korean War, along with C-47s of the U.S. Combat Cargo Command.

The Gooney Birds were so reliable and adaptable that the U.S. Air Force still retained 1,000 of them in 1961. A decade after the Korean truce, C-47s saw service in the 1964-1973 Vietnam War. After early use as general cargo carriers, a few C-47s were converted as warplanes. Introduced in 1965 as the AC-47 gunship and nicknamed "Puff the Magic Dragon," it mounted three rapid-firing 7.62mm guns and was enormously successful until it and the regular C-47 were retired from the USAF in 1969. The last Dakota in active British service was operated by the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, Hampshire, from 1984 until 1993, when it was transferred to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

C-47s and Dakotas were featured in several war films, most notably William Wellman's 1949 classic *Battleground*, Darryl F. Zanuck's sprawling *The Longest Day* (1962), and Sir Richard Attenborough's spectacular *A Bridge Too Far* (1976), and the 2001 television miniseries, *Band of Brothers*.

Michael D. Hull is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

profiles

Continued from page 21

Brooke's advice to appoint Lord Gort as the new governor-general of Malta.

In May 1942, Dobbie was almost 63 years old and had been acting governor-general and then governor-general of Malta since May 1940, shortly before the Italians began attacking the island. After two years of increasing strain, Dobbie was certainly in poor health. Like everyone on Malta, he had lost weight, and the low-calorie rationed diet undermined his strength and energy. Furthermore, upon his return to Britain a month later, he collapsed.

Perhaps the best words about Dobbie's fortitude during the successful defense of Malta are his own delivered in February 1945 to the Empire Club of Canada: "One of the reasons that we were able to hold Malta and why the Union Jack is still flying there was that everyone in the island pulled together. We give a lot of lip service, don't we, to the word 'Co-operation.' We want to do more than that. We have got to see that we do it as well as talk about it. It is not always easy to do, especially when we think the other fellow isn't doing his bit. In Malta we wanted to look at everything from the point of view of the whole and not from the point of view of the interests of some section of the people. We had plenty of opportunity for people to be pulling in all sorts of different directions. We had the Navy, the Army, the Air Force and we had the civil population. Their interests, their sectional interests, might all be somewhat different, but we had to look upon everything from the viewpoint of the Maltese interest…"

"There was another lesson, which we learned, which I think is even more important. I have told you how very weak we were. I have told you also how strong the enemy was and you will agree that the prospects of the defense of Malta, especially in the early days, were not too rosy," he continued. "We had to face facts and we realized that our resources were inadequate. Well, gentlemen, we faced it as the British Empire had, I think, faced that same difficulty elsewhere, by asking and obtaining the help of God Almighty. We realized we needed His help, we asked Him for it and He gave it to us."

As Dobbie had professed early in his tenure on the embattled island, "Malta will triumph over the powers of darkness," and it did.

Jon Diamond writes from Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History. He is currently working on a book, Britain's Military Pariahs.

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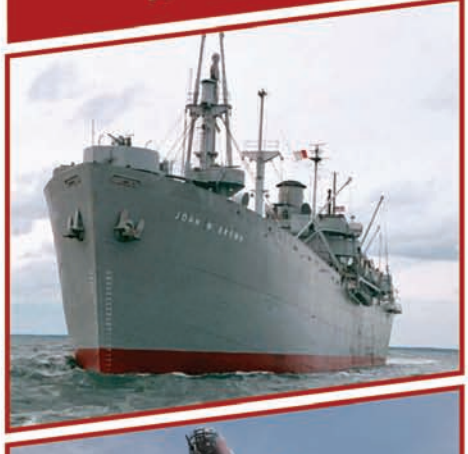

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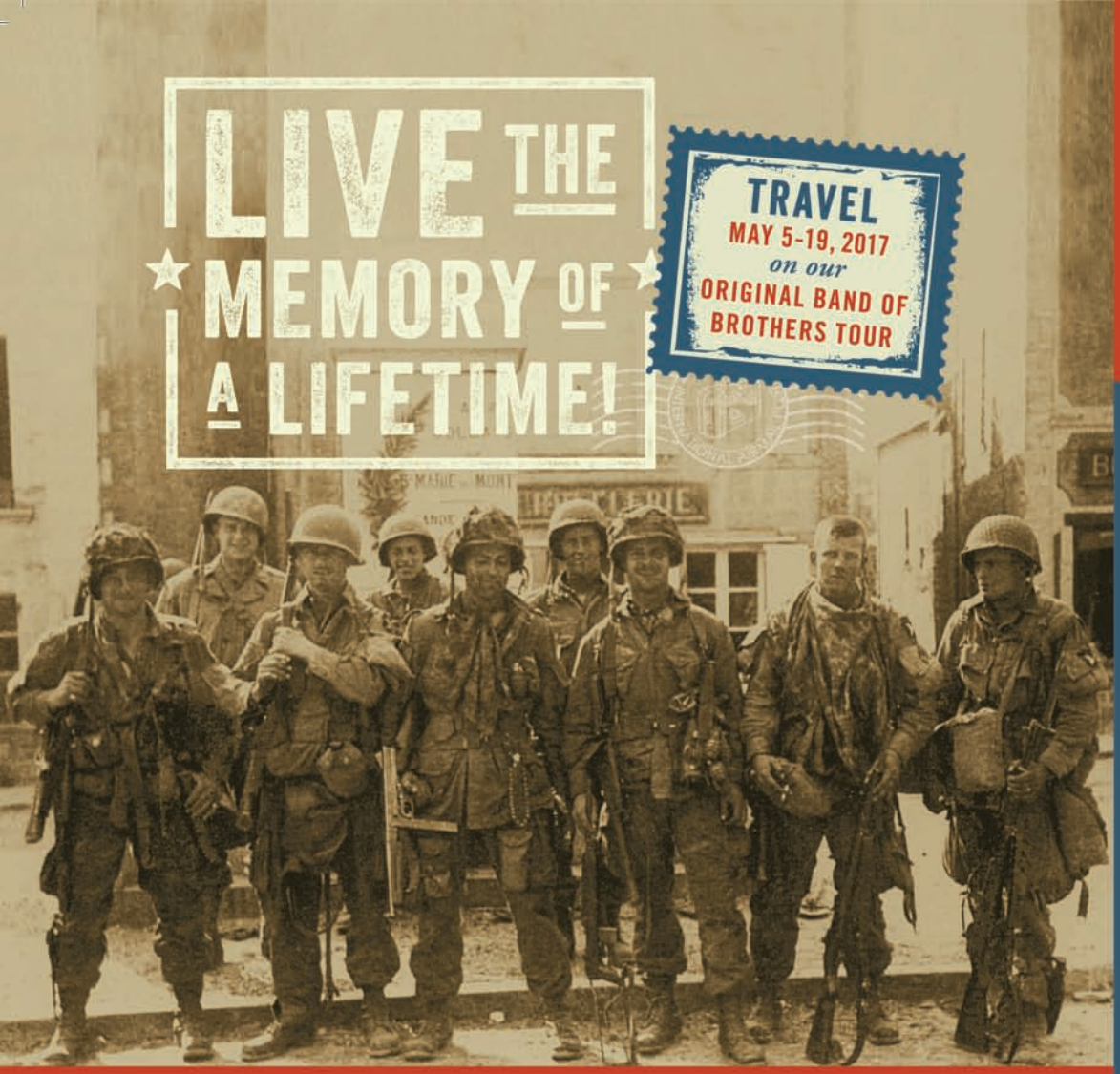

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