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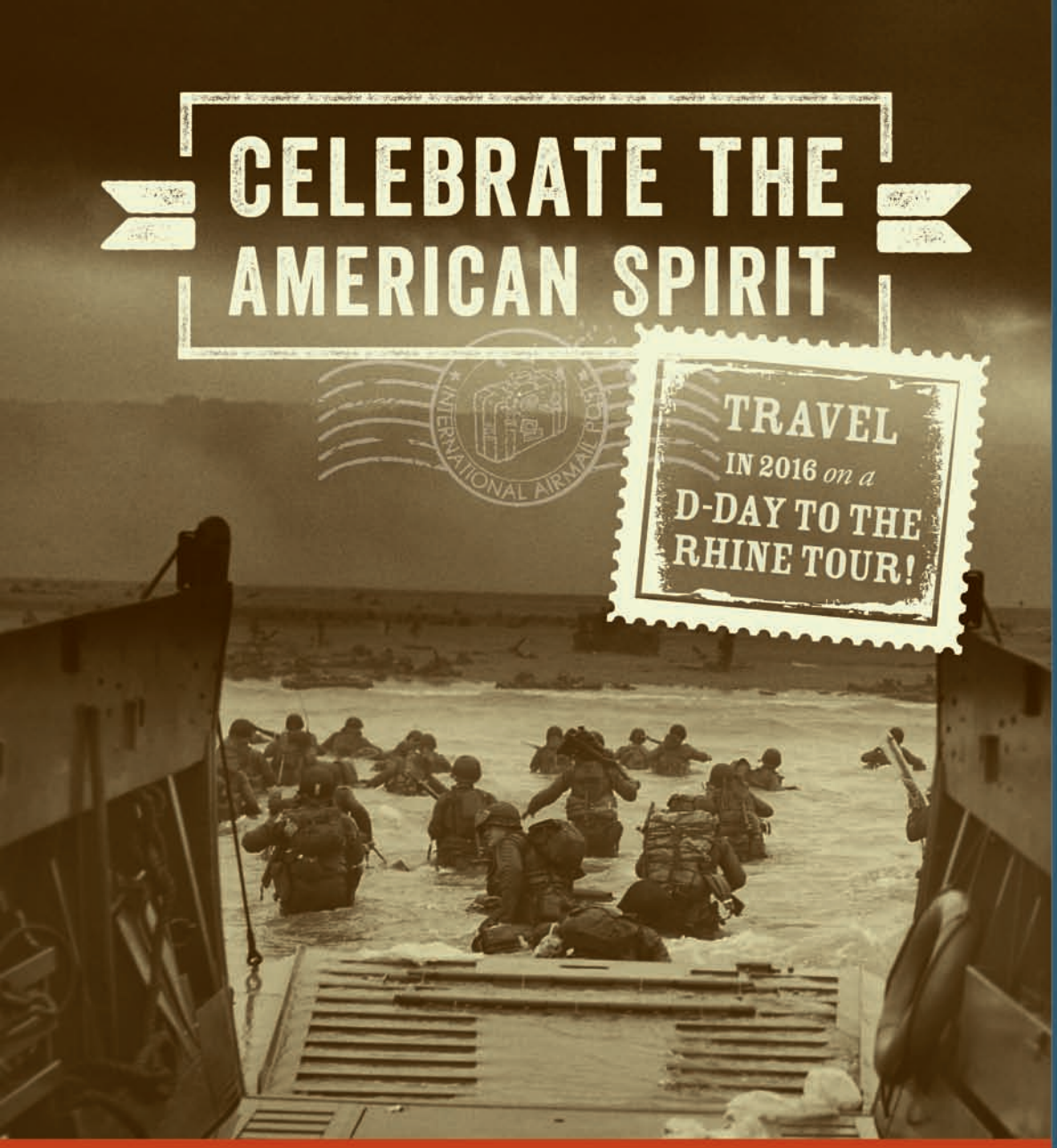

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Cover: American paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division prepare to jump into Normandy in the early hours of June 6, 1944.
See story page 30.

Photo: National Archives

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Stauer. A Different Tale to Tell.

Editorial

The Battle of Los Angeles further frayed already raw American nerves.

THREE MONTHS AFTER THE UNITED STATES WAS PLUNGED INTO WORLD WAR II with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the nation was on edge. From every theater the news was disheartening, and the citizens along the West Coast were particularly aware of their perceived vulnerability.

At 7:05 PM on the evening of February 23, 1942, the Japanese submarine *I-17* surfaced off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, and for 20 minutes the crew fired numerous shells from the 5.5-inch deck gun. The target was the Ellwood Oil Field. The shelling inflicted minimal damage to installations along the shoreline and among a few oil wells, but the primary targets, gasoline storage facilities, went unscathed.

As a result of the shelling, military personnel and civilian volunteers who scanned the horizon from the water's edge and watched the skies day and night were placed on high alert. The tension was palpable. Phantom sightings of Japanese warplanes, rumors of impending enemy air raids, and even speculation that hostile troops were preparing to land on the beaches of southern California were continual.

In the predawn hours of February 25, the sky above Los Angeles erupted with antiaircraft shells. The so-called "Battle of Los Angeles" was on. Apparently, the 37th Coast Artillery Brigade had swung into action with the report of an object sighted above the city. Eyewitness accounts vary as to exactly what was seen, and the descriptions range from a bell-shaped to an oblong or round object that measured anywhere from 16 to 80 feet and traveling as rapidly as 200 miles per hour. It is most likely that the mysterious object was a balloon, first seen in the vicinity of Culver City, California, and reported by civilian, military, and law enforcement observers.

A cease-fire order was issued just minutes after the shooting began, but difficulties in communication and the excitement of the moment resulted in some witnesses claiming that the guns chattered from approximately 2:15 AM until 4 AM, expending 1,400 shells. Officially, the 14th Air Interceptor Command stated that no fighter planes took to the air in pursuit of the object or any Japanese aircraft that might be aloft. However, many individuals clearly remembered seeing fighters in the air—at least five and as many as 25 of them. Radar operators in the area reported the presence of an object but plotted its location as 120 miles west of the city and headed south, in the direction of San Diego.

The all clear sounded at 7:21 that morning, but in the confusion several buildings and homes were damaged by shell fragments and debris resulting from the antiaircraft fire. Two people suffered heart attacks apparently brought on by anxiety, and three were killed in a smattering of automobile accidents. After some semblance of order was restored, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox met the press and explained the events away, attributing the incident to a serious case of "war nerves."

The Battle of Los Angeles received widespread media coverage, and the *Los Angeles Times* published a photo in its February 26, 1942, edition that was purported to show the airborne object illuminated by searchlights as shells burst around it. After Secretary Knox made his statement, the newspaper alleged that some sort of cover-up was being perpetrated. Editors of the *Times* thought so much of the story that they ran it again on October 29, 1945.

Some have asserted that the newspaper refused to allow the truth to get in the way of a good story. A 2011 article, again published in the *Los Angeles Times*, flatly states that the original negatives of the photo in question were located in the Department of Special Collections at UCLA and subjected to thorough analysis. Researchers concluded the photo that ran in the newspaper in October 1942 had been retouched.

Partly truth and partly fiction, the Battle of Los Angeles remains a prime example of both "war nerves" and vigilance. How would the citizenry have reacted if an object had been sighted and no action had been taken? Chances are that the *Los Angeles Times* would have had a sensational story either way.

Michael E. Haskew

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By Don Haines

National Guard

The Legend of Lightning Joe

Joe Farinholt received four Silver Stars for heroism during World War II.

NOT ALL OF THE 68 INFANTRY DIVISIONS AVAILABLE TO THE U.S. ARMY DURING World War II were made up of draftees and enlistees. Some were National Guard divisions composed mostly of men who had signed up during peacetime to be soldiers one evening a week and two weeks every summer. While some were attracted by the opportunity to wear a uniform and still live at home, others had joined for the extra money.

One of these outfits was the 29th Infantry Division, also known as the Blue and Gray Division, because most of its members were from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. One youngster from Catonsville, Maryland, not quite 16 years, old decided he wanted to be a soldier. He told the officer who interviewed him that he was 23.

The young man's name was Joe Farinholt, and when a buddy asked him why he did not say he was 18, the age he could enlist on his own, Farinholt said, "My uncle told me if I ever told a lie, make it a big one. So I did."

The 29th Division was mobilized in March 1941. At the age of 19, Farinholt became a full-time soldier at Fort Meade, Maryland. Farinholt and his buddies had been told they would be on active duty for 12 months. Then came December 7, 1941, and 12 months became "for the duration."

In this National Guard painting Joe Farinholt (left) operates a 57mm antitank gun in the heat of battle at Bourheim, where he stopped a German Tiger tank in its tracks, blowing off one of the armored vehicle's treads.

Farinholt's regiment, the 175th, along with the other 29ers, as they had come to be called, left Fort Meade in April 1942. There were stops in Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida before orders arrived on September 6 directing the division to prepare for overseas deployment. When troop trains headed north, Joe knew he was headed for the European Theater. On September 27, 1942, the passenger liner *Queen Mary,* now converted into a troopship, sailed for Great Britain.

In November 1942, the 29th Division moved into Tidworth Barracks, England, replacing the famed 1st Infantry Division, which was leaving for the invasion of North Africa. At Tidworth the 29ers began 20 months of grueling training. Farinholt relished the tough schedule.

As time went on the 29ers began to wonder just what part they might play in the war. They watched other outfits leave for

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National Archives

During the opening days of Operation Cobra, the Allied breakout across France, soldiers of the U.S. 29th Infantry Division march through the streets of St. Lo beside an M4 Sherman medium tank.

North Africa and the Italian campaign. They knew that other units were being shipped directly from the States to fight in Italy. No one below the rank of colonel, however, knew that the Army had special plans for the 29th Division—participation in the Allied invasion of Western Europe in 1944.

Sergeant Joe Farinholt, who was now commanding an antitank platoon in the 3rd Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment, knew none of this. He knew only that it was his responsibility to keep himself and the 32 men under his command razor sharp. By the spring of 1944, another 17 divisions had joined the 29th in England in preparation for Operation Overlord, the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944.

The 29th Division trained for the amphibious landing that was to come. Unlike other elements of the 29th Infantry Division, the 175th Regiment did not land in the first wave on Omaha Beach. It was the evening of June 7 before Farinholt was on his landing craft and headed for the beach. He says he had no feeling about all the destruction he saw on Omaha Beach. He was numb to any feeling as his training took over. No doubt it was Joe's ability to concentrate on the job at hand that enabled him to compile the brilliant record that followed.

Joe Farinholt and his comrades were given the difficult task of taking the town of Isigny, nine miles inland from Omaha Beach. They expected resistance all the way. Instead, resistance was light except at the village of La Cambre, where a misdirected British air attack inflicted some casualties.

By the time the 175th got to Isigny, the town had been pounded by Allied aircraft and was taken without much of a fight. However, there was plenty of fighting ahead for the 29th Division. Farinholt's platoon deployed 57mm antitank guns and began to develop a reputation for toughness in combat. For his proficiency in destroying German tanks, Farinholt was given the nickname "Lightning Joe" by his company commander.

The drive to the town of Saint Lo, one of the last German strongholds in France, was costly. It was on the Bayeux highway several miles outside the city that Lightning Joe Farinholt earned his first Silver Star on July 13, 1944.

"I spotted a German mortar position, so I picked up a bazooka and ran forward to knock it out," he said. "The Germans I didn't kill ran away. Then I looked up and this German tank was headed right for me. I jumped into the brush, reloaded the bazooka, and knocked out the tank as it went by."

Young Joe, just four days short of his 22nd birthday, scurried back to his lines, landing on his posterior. An officer picked him up and said, "Son, you've just won a Silver Star."

On 18 July, when Saint Lo was about to fall, Lightning Joe won his second Silver Star. He remembered, "Our position was overrun after a counterattack, and we had to leave our equipment or be taken prisoner. After dark, we ran back and hooked two of our guns to trucks while under heavy fire. We couldn't get a truck to our third gun, so we pulled it out by hand. We really baffled the Germans with that move because they thought they had us cornered. The next morning we stopped a column of tanks with those guns. That was my second Silver Star."

By the time Joe had won his second Silver Star, there were only a few of the original National Guard soldiers left in the ranks. Two thousand men of the 29th Division had died in the 43 days it took to go from Omaha Beach to Saint Lo. A ceremony ended with "Taps" and the "Star Spangled Banner" followed by the 29ers yelling in Unison their motto: "Twenty-nine, Let's Go!" Farinholt yelled right along with the rest, but he also thought of those who were lost.

Farinholt knew better than to get close to his men. "I had no control over the replacements I got," he related. "Some men were very green and didn't last long. I got a call on my radio one day. One of my guys said I better hurry to him because he was thinking about shooting himself. By the time I got there he'd shot himself in the leg. I carried him to the aid station and told him to keep his mouth shut about what happened. That was the only time one of my men cracked. I have no shame in what I did. That boy was a good soldier, but he was only 16."

On October 13, 1944, Joe won his third Silver Star west of Geilenkirchen, Germany. The citation describes his heroism:

"T/Sgt Joseph A. Farinholt 20343338 175th Infantry, U.S. Army For Gallantry in Action against The Enemy In Germany, on 13 October 1944, During A Period Of Heavy and Constant Enemy Shelling, Casualties Were Sustained In the First BN, 175th Infantry. Amidst This Intense Barrage of Fire, T/SGT Farinholt Left His Sheltered Position and Went To The Aid Of the Wounded Where He Administered First Aid Treatment and Personally Evacuated Four Casualties To a Place of Safety. The Outstanding Courage and Unselfish Devotion to Duty Displayed by T/Sgt Farinholt While Under Heavy Fire, Reflect Great Credit Upon Himself and the Military Service. Entered Military Service From Maryland."

In his personal account of the incident, Joe Farinholt gives credit to the men who went with him. "My men never ceased to amaze me. They'd do anything for their fellow GIs."

During the battle for Bourheim, Farinholt won his fourth Silver Star. However, the one medal he did not want was a Purple Heart. That was about to change.

Joe's fourth Silver Star citation describes what happened:

"T/Sgt Joseph A. Farinholt 20343338, 175th Infantry U.S. Army For Gallantry In Action Against the Enemy In Germany. On 26 November, 1944 While the Third Battalion 175th Infantry Was Defending the Town of

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*****Enemy Infantry Supported By Tanks Entered the Town and Advanced Against the Battalion's Thinly Held Line. Realizing the Gravity of the Situation, T/Sgt Farinholt Ordered His Antitank Platoon to Remain In Position Where They Delivered Such Devastating Fire Upon the Enemy That They Were Forced to Divert Their Attack to Another Sector of the Town. Then finding All Communications Severed By Enemy Artillery Fire, T/Sgt Farinholt Despite Suffering a Broken leg, Asked to be Placed in a Vehicle While He Drove Under Fire To the Command Post to Inform the Staff of the Situation. Such Courageous Actions Reflect Great Credit Upon Himself and the Military Service. Entered Military Service From Maryland."

What the citation did not say was that Joe had suffered life-threatening wounds. "We were doing a good job of keeping the German tanks at a safe distance until the gun nearest our command post was hit and the gunner was killed," he remembered. "I ran to the gunner to replace the gunner position, and we were able to knock the tread off a Tiger tank, but the tank was still firing. The rest of the crew ducked for cover, but I was stupid enough to stay put while the tank sprayed our position. The armor-piercing rounds cut through the protective shield of the gun, and I was hit with shrapnel. I didn't know how bad I was hit until I tried to walk and saw my leg hanging by skin. I crawled to my jeep and made my way to our command post to let them know what was happening. I couldn't use the brake on the jeep, so I just crashed into a wall. When I looked at my leg I got scared, but somebody said I had a million dollar wound."

Doctors wanted to amputate Joe's leg.

"I told them they couldn't do that because I would need it later," he smiled. A general happened to be on the scene and ordered the battalion surgeon to try to save Joe's leg. The leg was saved, but it never completely healed. Farinholt had to wrap it in bandages twice a day for the rest of his life. He also had 20 pieces of shrapnel in his body. The last two pieces did not work their way out until 1986.

Joe might have had a million dollar wound but it would be 1946 before he could leave the hospital and return home. By that time the war had been over for a year, and the rest of the 29ers who had survived the war were back in the States. Only 10 percent of those who landed on D-Day had not become casualties.

Perhaps Lightning Joe Farinholt had actually been luckier than most. His time in the hospital actually brought him the best luck he would ever have. Her name was Agnes Marshall, a stunning redhead, whom Joe had met when she accompanied a friend to the hospital to visit her husband, who just happened to be Joe's buddy. When Agnes left, Joe bet his buddy $10 he would marry this absolute knockout. Joe won the bet. He and "Reds" were married on May 19, 1946, and the union would last 56 years.

By the time Joe and Agnes had come home and settled in the small town of Finksburg in Carroll County, Maryland, the victory fever of 1945 had abated and most GIs had settled into civilian life. No brass bands greeted the man who had set a record for winning Silver Stars. Joe and Reds set about living their lives and raising a family. Sometimes people would ask Joe what he did in the war and he would reply that he had received four Silver Stars.

Few people seemed that impressed. Only Joe's buddies at the American Legion recognized the greatness of his combat record, and for many years that was good enough for Joe. Besides, he and Agnes soon had four kids and there was a living to be made. Those Silver Stars did not put any bread on the table.

It was not until 1994 and the 50th anniversary of D-Day that people began to ask questions and Carroll County residents learned that they had a genuine hero in their midst. The

accolades for Lightning Joe began to pour in and have never stopped. He became arguably Carroll County's most beloved senior citizen, gaining a place of honor in Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades, sometimes riding in a jeep or a restored 1942 Desoto. He could not march in the parades because of his leg injury, but there were photos aplenty of Joe standing ramrod straight and saluting Old Glory while wearing his American Legion cap that bore the 29th Division logo. He always had a Silver Star pinned to his shirt.

Gradually, stories began to emerge about Carroll County's most famous soldier, and folks began to believe that Joe Farinholt deserved even more honors. They learned how Joe's lieutenant had recommended him for a battlefield commission after he had won his third Silver Star but the record had gotten lost in the military bureaucracy. Joe had assumed the commission would come through even though his military career had ended after his fourth Silver Star. The commission never arrived, and Joe did not know he could pursue it after so much time had passed. Someone else did. Shortly after the effort to secure the commission was undertaken, Lightning Joe Farinholt attended his granddaughter's wedding wearing lieutenant's bars. Joe laughed off the issue of back pay, saying the bars were enough.

Corporal Joe Farinholt stands at left with PFC Bill Stamos, also a member of the 175th Infantry Regiment. When Farinholt was confronted with long odds on the battlefield, he exhibited extraordinary courage and received four Silver Star medals.

The U.S. Navy admiral who awarded Joe his fourth Silver Star decades earlier had been so impressed with his magnificent combat record he suggested that Joe trade his four Silver Stars for one Medal of Honor. Joe declined. "Thanks, but I'll just keep these." On that day Joe was a severely wounded soldier, thinking mainly of getting well and getting home. Another medal did not seem that important. Years later, a campaign to get Joe the Medal of Honor was ultimately unsuccessful.

In 1997, the 29th Division was deployed in Bosnia. It was the first time since World War II that the 29ers had deployed overseas. Joe welcomed the opportunity to visit the young soldiers. Those who made the trip marveled at how the old soldier became an instant hit with the modern 29ers. They crowded around him, clasping his hand and asking that he tell the story of his four Silver Stars. He glowed with appreciation as he patiently talked of his exploits on those long ago battlefields.

In June 2002, Joe Farinholt was approaching his 80th birthday. He suddenly became ill and died a short time later. After his death, Agnes worried that Joe might be forgotten. The worry was needless. Joe Farinholt will live forever in the hearts of Carroll Countians.

Don Haines is a Cold War veteran of the U.S. Army and retired registered nurse. He resides in Woodbine, Maryland.

By Jon Diamond

Australia's Owen Gun

The diggers of the Australian military carried the odd-looking weapon into battle. More than 50,000 were produced.

A CASUAL OBSERVER OF WORLD WAR II PHOTOGRAPHS AFTER 1943 WILL OFTEN notice slouch hat- or beret-wearing Australian "diggers," or armed Melanesian natives in the Australian Constabulary battalions, slogging through the muck and jungle of New Guinea, Bougainville, New Britain, and Borneo carrying a rather odd-looking weapon with a vertical top-mounting magazine.

It was the Owen submachine gun (SMG) or Owen machine carbine, and the Australian infantry often favorably referred to it as the "Digger's Darling." According to historian Michael Haskew, the "blowback-operated Owen was the only weapon of its type developed in Australia and used in World War II.... It reached service with the Australian Army in 1943 and fired the 9mm (.35in) Parabellum cartridge fed by a 32-round detachable magazine."

Eventually, about 50,000 Owen SMGs were produced, primarily for jungle use. The firearm's developmental history, however, had some political hurdles and obstacles, which delayed its implementation to frontline Australian infantrymen combating the tenacious Japanese, who were on the defensive by the time the Owen gun appeared in combat. Prior to the Owen gun's introduction, each Australian infantry section commander carried a Thompson 1928A1 SMG. The very expensive Thompson was extremely effective at close quarters but could not withstand the punishment of a jungle environment and was prone to jamming, necessitating almost constant field stripping and cleaning.

The history of the Owen gun's development aptly begins with Evelyn Ernest Owen, who was born on May 15, 1915, and hailed from Wollongong, a seaside city located in the Illawarra region of New South Wales, Australia, just over 50 miles south of Sydney. From a young age, Owen enjoyed tinkering, which gradually progressed to designing his own guns and home-made bombs. As he grew up, Owen, without any formal engineering or firearms training, concentrated on the theory of ballistics and matured from working on single-shot firearms to machine guns. His goal was to design a machine gun with a high rate of fire possessing inherent simplicity in design and with the bolt being the only working part. It also had to be accurate and capable of sustained fire without jamming.

Owen started working on this project in 1931 from the bottom up. His gun's simple construction comprised a barrel, bolt, spring, pistol grip, and a solitary piece of bent steel for a stock. The principle of the Owen SMG was that it operated by the recoil of each shot or "blowback."

After working on this compact automatic weapon throughout the 1930s, Owen offered

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: An Australian soldier demonstrates the firing of the Owen gun. The Owen gun took a circuitous path to approval and production but eventually reached frontline troops and more than 50,000 were manufactured. LEFT: An Australian digger armed with an Owen gun greets an American paratrooper on the island of New Guinea.

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The view of the Owen gun above reveals the relatively few major parts that were fabricated to complete the assembly of the automatic weapon, at right.

the original design for his SMG to the Australian Army at Victoria Barracks in Sydney in 1939. He was 24 years old at the time. Owen's original prototype for a SMG chambered a .22LR cartridge from a drum-type magazine made from a revolver cylinder. It also used a thumb trigger instead of the normal type. For these design reasons, as well as the gun firing only the light .22 caliber round, the Australian Ordnance Officers in Sydney informed Owen that his weapon would not be suitable for the Army, although it fired accurately and did not jam.

Also, the prototype did not have an effective magazine that could be reloaded or exchanged since the gun essentially used a giant revolver cylinder or steel ring with holes to house the cartridges. Finally, an Australian Army colonel rejected Owen's gun because Australian Imperial Force (AIF) commanders saw no value in SMGs, stating, "That is an American gangsters' gun; the army has no use for those." A prevailing belief among the Australian senior officers was that if a SMG was desired, then it would have to be on British advice and British made.

Following the outbreak of World War II, Owen joined the Australian Army as a private in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF), as his two older brothers had done. By 1940, Owen had lost enthusiasm for his gun and its unique features. During leave back home before his deployment, he had taken his gun to the beach to fire a few last shots before returning to his unit. Then, a moment of serendipity entered Owen's SMG saga. After shooting his gun at the beach, Owen joined his friends for some libations, leaving his self-designed weapon in a Hessian bag leaning against a wall that separated his parents' home from some neighbors.

One of the Owens' neighbors was Vincent Wardell, the general manager of Lysaght Newcastle Steelworks, a metal fabrication firm located at Port Kembla. Finding a gun barrel protruding from the sack outside his abode, Wardell was intrigued by the firearm's appearance and started searching for its rightful owner. Per Wardell's own account, "When I came home from Lysaght's works late one afternoon in September 1940, Evelyn Owen's .22 calibre wheel gun was in a sugar bag by a low garden wall at the garage of my flat.... I took the gun into my flat intending to hand it in to the police station. Seeing Mr. Owen [the father] outside I asked him in for a drink and showed him the weapon. He rather 'exploded' about his son's carelessness and told me something of his background."

Owen wanted to leave for deployment with his battalion and brothers, so further development of the gun was to be undertaken by Wardell and his associates at Lysaght. Now the politics and control of weapons development in wartime Australia would become apparent to Wardell and Owen.

Wardell brought the gun to the attention of Director-General of Munitions Essington Lewis, and as a result of their discussion Owen would eventually be transferred to Melbourne to continue work on his gun. On September 24, 1940, the .22-caliber version was first presented by Owen to a Colonel Meredith, who was a local director of artillery. In a subsequent demonstration on November 14, 1940, it was exhibited to the Central Inventions Board of the Department of Defense Coordination. Captain Cecil Dyer, secretary of this government body, immediately saw the potential for Owen's gun since Britain faced imminent invasion and Australia's reliance on arms shipments from the beleaguered British Isles was wholly unrealistic.

With some foresight, Dyer recognized Australia's need for an inexpensive "home-made" SMG that would be durable in tropical climates, as Japan was becoming even more bellicose in its attempt to gain hegemony in the Pacific. Also, the war in the West was looking bleak for the Allies, who still maintained control of colonial possessions that Imperial Japan was eyeing for conquest. Thus, Dyer commissioned engineering drawings of a gun utilizing Owen's "blowback action" mechanism and presented them to the inventions board and the principal ordnance engineer.

It seemed that enthusiasm for Owen's SMG or machine carbine was not meant to be. Due to the "requisite time, effort and monetary costs," the Australian military leaders decided not to manufacture a prototype. However, there were even more reasons for the delay in production of an Owen SMG. First among them was that senior Australian Army officers, like their British counterparts, had little enthusiasm for SMGs. These officers fostered a bias for true bolt-action rifles and support machine guns like the venerable .303 Vickers Mk I. Their rationale was based erroneously on terrain, which for Europe meant that firepower could be easily transported; however, on Pacific islands like New Guinea, an infantryman's firepower would have to be carried through dense, humid jungle, across streams, and up and down mountains on rudimentary, narrow trails.

A second reason for not supporting an Owen SMG prototype centered on the Australian Army's disinterest in a locally manufactured gun. After Australia formally declared war on the Axis in September 1939, the country was required to modernize much of its heavy industry. However, as the Australian military lacked much in the way of producing its own weapons at the outset, a rigid mind-set developed based on taking deliveries

of foreign-made guns, tanks, and aircraft. The military leaders were anticipating a large shipment of the British Sten gun that used a 9mm cartridge to arrive from Britain.

Australia's senior Army staff was anticipating adoption of the Sten gun, and the plans and models for this weapon had been promised to them by the British government. The Australian military apparatus simply did not want to complicate SMG weaponry with competing designs.

In an uncharacteristic move to overcome these bureaucratic hurdles, Dyer personally urged Wardell's firm, Lysaght Works, to forge ahead and produce prototypes of Owen's gun design in a variety of different calibers and with different barrels. Ultimately, a design prototype utilizing .32-caliber bullets and part of a .303 Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE) barrel enabled Wardell and Owen to resubmit the design to the Inventions Board on January 30, 1941, after just three weeks of retooling. This prototype looked more conventional than Owen's initial 1939 offering in that it had a traditional trigger, dual pistol grips, and a detachable top-mounted box magazine, which was more easily exchangeable as well as allowing the shooter to fire effectively from the prone position.

National Archives

A Papuan native who has entered service with Allied forces displays his target after hitting 11 out of 15 rounds with his Owen gun from a distance of 30 yards. The Owen gun remained in service with Australian soldiers until the 1960s.

According to Wardell, the "ease of manufacture, simplicity, rapidity of dismantling, no sliding features ... and reliability" were the gun's attributes. When the Australian Army would not supply 10,000 rounds of .32-caliber ammunition for a test range firing demonstration, both Wardell and Owen rightfully suspected an element of resistance on the part of the army.

To overcome the "lack" of sufficient .32-caliber rounds, Lysaght Works persisted and built another Owen gun prototype in March 1941 that was chambered for .45-caliber Automatic Colt Pistol (ACP) bullets. The .45 ACP round had made the Thompson 1928A1 a formidable, short-range submachine gun with incredible stopping power. Lysaght had been assured that plenty of ammunition would be available this time. However, after a successful test firing, the Australian Army would only supply .455-caliber ammunition, suitable only for the Webley Revolver, rather than the necessary .45 ACP rounds.

Army officials cited a shortage of .45 ACP ammunition for this new SMG since stocks of the round were used for the Thompson SMG. Wardell's comments on the Army's obstructionism were quite vitriolic. It was only through his tenacity and direct approach to civilian authorities that the project had not been completely derailed. Some individuals with connections in the War Cabinet in Canberra, who had been present when Owen and Wardell had exhibited their .32- and .45-caliber prototypes,

concurred with Wardell's observation that the Owen gun would have already been manufactured and distributed to Australian troops if the Army had cooperated.

The Army bureaucrats continued their obstructionism, telling Lysaght to provide a sample gun that chambered a .38-caliber Smith & Wesson (S&W) round. The demand was disingenuous since neither ammunition nor a barrel was to be provided for factory use. Wardell made dutiful attempts at an Owen Gun Annex at the Lysaght Works to produce an Owen gun prototype utilizing the .38 S&W rimmed revolver round. Predictably, the prototype failed in testing in July 1941 because the .38-caliber cartridge was underpowered for use with a SMG.

By September 1941, Wardell was convinced that any acceptable Owen gun prototype would require a 9mm round. Privately, he seethed to Essington Lewis, Director-General of Munitions, "Almost to the day it is 12 months since your prompt action caused Owen to be transferred from the Infantry at Bathurst to the Inventions Board at Melbourne, and it is two years since the war began. The Army's answer to the submachine gun problem has been ... to delay in every way possible the production of an Owen gun for [lack of] suitable ammunition."

Finally, within days of Wardell's outburst, the Army Ministry surprisingly commented, "There appears to be marked hostility, verging on deliberate obstruction ... concerning the Owen gun." The manufacture of Owen guns in 9mm was approved on September 7, 1941, with the performance trials at the end of that month, albeit an incredibly short interval for Lysaght Works to rechamber the gun.

Despite this plan of action, some senior Army officers still were of the belief that the Owen gun would fail and that an Australian-manufactured Sten gun would stop production of the expensive Thompson SMG and curtail production of the Owen gun. The Australian need for 100,000 SMGs would have been satisfied by the Sten gun if it had been left to the discretion of certain high-ranking Australian Army officers. In September 1941, Maj. Gen. Milford, who was Captain Dyer's senior officer, had approved of the production of an Australian Sten gun. Additionally, General Sir Thomas Blamey's initial preference for an SMG was the Australian Austen weapon, which was soon overshadowed by the superior Owen with the former rarely being used. Blamey was to become the Allied Land Forces commander in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) under MacArthur.

Australian War Memorial

Evelyn Ernest Owen displays examples of his Owen gun, which was criticized in some quarters but nevertheless entered production in Australia.

Rigorous testing of accuracy and mechanical functionality, using battle condition impediments such as sand being poured over the weapons and water and mud immersion, was conducted at Long Bay on September 29, 1941, comparing the Sten Mk 1 (9mm), the .45 ACP Thompson 1928A1, and both the 9mm and .45 ACP Owen versions. Dirt proved to be the nemesis of both the Thompson and Sten SMGs during the tests, and even Milford recognized that the Owen gun "continued to function satisfactorily when subjected to severe conditions ... and had distinct possibilities as a suitable and efficient weapon."

Endurance testing over several days, involving the continuous firing of almost 3,000 rounds of ammunition, showed the Owen and Thompson SMGs to be reliable; however, the Sten Mk I broke down several times. In tests conducted by the Lysaght Works, the American Winchester 9mm round seemed to feed the best and was more accurate than either British or Australian-manufactured bullets, much to the dismay of Australian Army officers.

After the Long Bay testing, an order for 2,000 Owen guns was placed by the Department of Munitions on October 3, 1941. It had become apparent to many that the Army had procrastinated unnecessarily due to bias, and this opinion eventually made it to many Australian newspapers and other periodicals.

Once accepted into service, production of the Owen SMG began initially in the Lysaght facilities. The production was augmented by the Lithgow Small Arms Factory. The full production rate was limited to 2,000 guns per month due to the constraints of a nascent Australian military-industrial infrastructure.

The Owen SMG was a simply designed weapon with basic construction, allowing for mass production that the developing Australian industrial infrastructure could deliver. Lysaghts' 9mm Owen gun was adopted in 1942 and manufactured in three basic versions, Mk I-42 (with bent steel wire butt), Mk I-43 (or Mk I with a wooden butt); and a Mk II. The Mk II version was a simplified production version of the Mk I-43 but only appeared in prototype form by war's end.

The Owen SMG had a rate of fire of 7,000 rounds per minute and weighed just under 9.3 pounds unloaded and 10.6 pounds loaded. Its overall length was 32.5 inches with a barrel length of just under 10 inches. The gun had a muzzle velocity of almost 1,400 feet per second and an effective range up to 220 yards. There were also rear and forward pistol grips, both made of wood, for a firm two-point hold that incorporated finger grooves to improve stabilization of the gun platform. Additionally, the barrel was designed to be changed quickly, which would prove useful under rare circumstances when the gun was fired in a sustained fashion.

The only downside to the Owen SMG was its somewhat heavy weight; however, a sure two-hand hold on the pistol grips and use of the shoulder stock helped to balance this shortcoming. During the war, the average cost to manufacture the Owen SMG was approximately $30.

From a gun design standpoint, the Owen was essentially a typical "blowback" system utilizing a tubular, featureless receiver with an open bolt capped by a removable barrel assembly. Initially, the stock was skeletal to keep the weight down. The lower portion of the two-chamber receiver was hollowed out and a simple wooden pistol grip and trigger were affixed. The magazine feed was set across the forward upper end of the tubular receiver and vertically springloaded in a detachable, 32-round box magazine.

The top-mounted magazine required the iron sights to be offset to the side slightly, but it made no major impact on shooting since the Owen SMG was often fired from the hip. The magazine design also made for a reliable feed aided by both the magazine spring mechanism and gravity. Since the cartridge ejection port

was on the bottom of the receiver tube, dirt that might enter from the magazine would often fall straight through, having no place to collect, which made it ideal for jungle fighting. Also, the top-loading box magazine and catch design allowed for a faster magazine change.

The Owen gun was resistant to fouling from dirt and mud. Its front-loading bolt and return spring, which was on a round piston, moved forward and backward in a separate compartment inside the receiver by means of a small bulkhead that isolated the small diameter bolt from its retracting cocking handle, effectively sealing the chamber, bolt, and spring area from the elements. Any dirt or mud that did get in was captured in areas machined on both ends of the bolt or was blown out through the bottom ejection port. Also, the gun had no sliding surfaces under heavy load. This design prevented dirt and mud from jamming the bolt.

Once deployed to the "diggers" fighting the Japanese, the weapon aptly proved its intrinsic value by withstanding the unforgiving nature of the jungle environment. The Owen SMG also sported various camouflage paint schemes to blend in with dense foliage. Some guns were fitted with short bayonets alongside the barrels since patrol action was often at close quarters and stealth was frequently required. The Owen's rate of fire and reliable 32-round magazine made it formidable against fanatical Japanese banzai charges. The Owen SMG was further modified to take two magazines, a feature that would become quite common by 1945.

Within the Australian Army, soldiers preferred nothing less than their Owen SMG. New Zealand's infantry also used the weapon. General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area Command also contracted for 60,000 Owen SMGs, but the request could not be fulfilled due to a lack of raw materials and available machinery for such a large undertaking.

The Owen SMG was taken out of production in 1945; however, it remained in Australian service until the late 1960s and saw action in Korea, the Malayan Crisis, Vietnam, and the Rhodesian Bush War, where its ruggedness and durability were appreciated in harsh climates. Unfortunately, Evelyn Owen became an alcoholic and died on April 1, 1949, from cardiac arrest caused by a bleeding gastric ulcer. He tinkered with firearms until the end.

Jon Diamond is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *His Stackpole Military Photo Series book,* New Guinea, *was released in June 2015, and a subsequent volume in this series,* Guadalcanal, *was released in January 2016.*

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By Mark Carlson

AP Photo

The Lost Children of 1940

The sinking of the SS *City of Benares* is a little-known tragedy of World War II.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1940, THE WORLD WATCHED WITH RAPT ATTENTION AS THE citizens, airmen, sailors, and soldiers of Great Britain steeled themselves for imminent invasion by the victorious German Army. From July 31 to September 15, the daily air raids by the Luftwaffe rained death and destruction on airfields and cities.

Only the determined efforts of Royal Air Force Fighter Command denied the Luftwaffe its objective—air superiority. In the end, the German air raids were nothing more than vengeful reprisals against an implacable British spirit that refused to die. Hundreds of young and brave airmen had been lost while Britain fought on, but not all of those who died were combatants, or even adults. Some were innocent children doomed to die a cold and terrifying death far out to sea during what they thought was a great adventure.

On June 17, three weeks after the evacuation of Dunkirk, Under Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs Geoffrey Shakespeare had formed the Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB), which developed a means to evacuate children from the British Isles to relatives overseas. CORB, which was sanctioned by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his cabinet, was intended to save as many children as possible from starvation or death. The government would cover most of the cost of transportation. Applications were arranged through schools and churches.

In two months more than 211,000 children were registered with CORB. While traveling they would be accompanied by one teacher and one nurse for every 15 children. Traveling without passports, they were issued CORB numbered luggage tags and ID tags. The relocation was meant as a temporary measure, and the evacuees would be returned home after the end of the war.

By August, 24,000 children with 1,000 adult volunteers were ready to be sent across the sea. Canada would receive the largest percentage, followed by Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Others were bound for the United States. Ocean liners provided by several shipping companies would join organized convoys in Liverpool and sail west.

Parents, who were understandably concerned for the safety of their children, were assured by CORB representatives that the ships would be escorted by Royal Navy warships. That was true, but only up to a point.

The Royal Navy had to stretch its assets as far as possible. With dozens of convoys on the open sea, 1,000 miles of coastline to patrol, and few experienced crews, priority was given to the protection of the Home Islands. But the threat of German submarines was deemed slight. Prior to the fall of France, German U-boats had sailed from Kiel and Wilhelmshaven on the Baltic coast of Germany and could not range far out into the North Atlantic for long periods. However, the Kriegsmarine quickly established U-boat flotillas in western France

ABOVE: Crewmen line the superstructure of the German submarine *U-48,* which sank the passenger ship SS *City of Benares* while the vessel was en route to Canada, carrying 90 British children away from the Blitz. TOP: After being adrift eight days in the rough Atlantic, survivors of the sinking of the SS *City of Benares* are finally rescued. This boatload includes five children.

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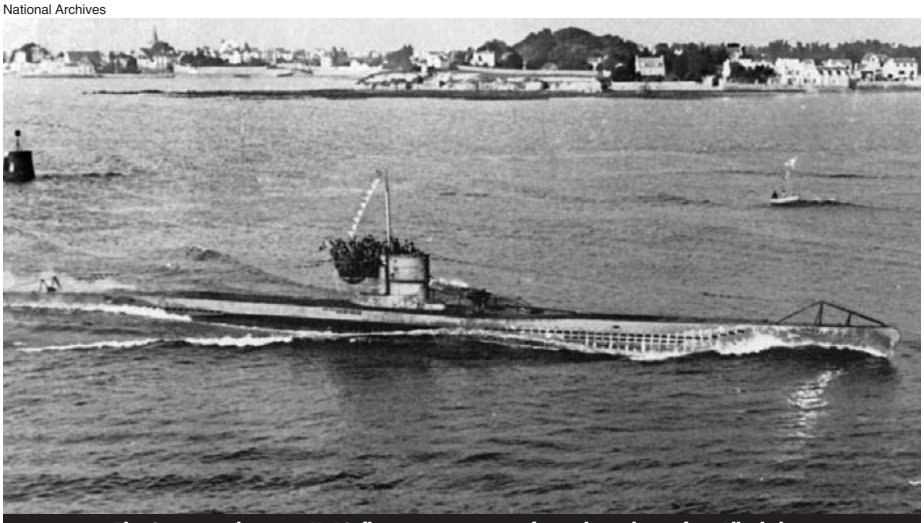

The German submarine *U-48,* flying pennants signifying the sinking of an Allied ship.

at the port cities of St. Nazaire, Lorient, Brest, and La Rochelle, adding greatly to the U-boats' range. By August the undersea predators could stay on patrol in the North Atlantic for many days, and they were even able to reach the East Coast of the United States.

Given the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, no vessel, even an unarmed passenger liner, was safe.

Bess Walder was a 15-year-old London schoolgirl. She and her younger brother Louis had been among the first children to be registered for the CORB program. Her parents, Bernard and Rosina Walder, had followed the events on the Continent as far back as the Spanish Civil War. Stories of terrible atrocities and barbarism from Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries, and France left little doubt as to what lay in store for innocent civilians if the Nazis came. Finally, the letter from the CORB arrived. When the children were told they would be taking a ship to Canada, they were ecstatic with joy.

"Wonderful! When can we go?" exclaimed nine-year-old Louis, who thought it would be a great adventure and imagined he might see real cowboys and Indians.

On the morning of September 9, Bess and Louis, carrying their single small suitcases, were taken to Euston Station and boarded a train. Rosina hugged her daughter and said, "Now grow up to be a good girl." Then she wept while her husband told Bess, "Look out for your brother." Bess, not understanding the pain her parents were feeling, said she would.

After several train delays due to bombing, they arrived in the port city of Liverpool on September 11 and were directed to a large hall with hundreds of straw mattresses on the floor. A girl of Bess' age, Beth Cummings was a Liverpudlian whose widowed mother was determined to get her daughter to Canada. The two girls became friends.

Colin Richardson, an 11-year-old from North London was wearing a thick red jacket made by his mother. It was stuffed with Kapok to make it into a lifejacket. "Never take this off," she told him as they said their goodbyes.

The next morning, after a quick breakfast, the children were herded down the streets to the docks, where the ships of Convoy OB-213 were preparing to depart. Bess, Louis, and Beth stared wide eyed at the huge vessel towering over the dock, the Ellerman City Line's SS *City of Benares*.

Queen of the England to India run, the ship was an 11,080-ton, 480-foot liner launched in 1935. She was known for her speed, which was her best defense against submarines, and was painted a dusky brown for camouflage. Some of her stewards were dressed in turbans, blue sashes, and pointed slippers to amuse the children on their first sea voyage. Bess remembered that the stewards called them "Little Madams" and "Little Sirs." The liner was still fitted out for the comfort of her passengers. Among them was Mary Cornish, a concert pianist and CORB escort.

On Friday, September 13, the *City of Benares,* one of 20 ships in Convoy OB-212, left Liverpool for Quebec and Montreal. On board were 191 passengers, 90 of whom were children, along with 216 officers and crew.

Convoy OB-213 was commanded by Rear Admiral E.J.G. Mackinnon, who chose the *City of Benares* as his flagship. Captain Landles Nicoll maintained the lead position in the center line of the westbound convoy.

The children were given tours of the ship and shown their cabins. Each one was told where their lifeboat station was and how to put on the bulky lifebelts. Yet even with the dark reality of the danger that awaited them, few children felt any fear. Bess shared a cabin with two other girls. Comfortable bunks, wardrobes, and clean bathrooms were provided. The boys, who included Louis Walder, Fred Steels, and Paul Shearing, all not yet 12 years of age, occupied the port cabins, while the girls were on the starboard side of the ship.

The destroyer HMS *Winchelsea* and two armed sloops comprised OB-213's escort. After the convoy had rounded the northwestern tip of Ireland, a large aircraft was seen to the south. It was a German Focke-Wulf FW-200 Condor reconnaissance plane on patrol, looking for convoys. Mackinnon and Nicoll knew their chances of avoiding German submarines had greatly diminished. The passengers and children were given lifeboat drills and told to sleep in their lifebelts.

On the morning of September 17, OB-213 reached 17 degrees longitude, where the escorts were ordered to join an incoming convoy. From that point on the ships of OB-213 were undefended. But the news that the RAF had claimed 180 German planes two days before only bolstered the spirits of the passengers and crews of the 18 remaining ships.

At 8 PM, 41-year-old Mary Cornish put the 15 girls in her care to bed and went to meet her friends for coffee in the lounge. After a couple of hours they decided to walk out on deck. At 10:02 PM, 250 miles off Rockall, Ireland, Kapitänleutnant Heinrich Bleichrodt, commanding *U-48,* a Type VIIB U-boat nine days out of Lorient, found OB-213.

A storm had been building all day, and by 11 PM the rain was slicing across the ship, driven by a bitter wind. A Force 10 gale was building. The ocean's crenellated gray surface made it impossible to see a periscope, but an attack was unlikely during a storm. Bleichrodt, who would soon become known for his aggressiveness, continued stalking the convoy and chose the largest ship in the center line, the *City of Benares,* as his target.

With the weather steadily growing worse, *U-48* was able to approach undetected. At 11:45 PM, Bleichrodt fired two torpedoes from his bow tubes. Both missed the ship, and the lookouts failed to see them in the turbulent waves. At one minute after midnight, Bleichrodt fired again. This torpedo struck the *City of Benares* on her port side just under the children's sleeping quarters. The ship was mortally wounded. The torpedo destroyed a large area under the main deck, ruptured steam and water lines, and damaged the generators. The cold Atlantic rushed in.

Mary Cornish was just stepping down to the

main deck when she heard a loud thump and the entire ship shuddered. Suddenly, the stairway and corridor below were cluttered with fallen debris and water. She realized her girls were in danger and pushed her way along the dark corridor to reach them.

Young Bess Walder was asleep when the torpedo hit. Instantly she was awake, knowing what had happened. The three-berth room was heaving from the ship's increasing list. The wardrobe door fell open, dumping things on the deck. She tried to get the girl in the lower bunk to awaken, but she refused, not recognizing the danger.

In one of the boys' cabins, 11-year-old Fred Steels fell from his bunk and was instantly trapped under the fallen wardrobe. He heard alarms sounding and managed to force his way free. At the sink, water was spraying from burst pipes. The boy yelled to the others, "We've been hit!" However, like Bess' roommates, they were slow to respond. Finally, Paul Shearing rose from the lower bunk, and the boys put on their lifebelts. With another boy they made their way out to the corridor. It was already crowded with running and screaming passengers and crew.

They had to get to the lifeboats, but every step was like climbing up a mountain in an earthquake. When they reached the upper deck, Steels saw a huge smoking hole in the deck. A dirty seaman picked him and Shearing up and threw them into a lifeboat.

Colin Richardson was reading a penny novel in his bunk when he heard the torpedo explode underneath his cabin. At first he thought the ship had collided with another, but the familiar scent of explosives told him it was a torpedo. He had been through German air raids before being sent to Surrey to live with his grandparents.

Fourteen-year-old Beth Cummings thought she was having a bad dream, but when she awoke to alarms and loud crashing sounds she tried to turn on the light. It did not work. That was when she realized the deck was slanted. The ship was sinking. She got into her lifebelt and reached the corridor, finding Bess already there. "We have to get to the boats," she said, trying to be heard in the din of alarms and shouting. The two girls helped a third girl named Joan, who was very seasick.

Bess had lost her little brother, Louis. She had to find him, but in all the chaos she did not know where to look. The children were trying to do what they had been told about reaching the lifeboats, but the drill had been done in daylight on calm seas and without panic.

The boat deck was totally different from what they had seen a few days earlier. The

lurching ship's motion caused the hanging lifeboats to swing wildly in their davits while the crew tried to fill and launch them. Some adults were hysterical, while others remained calm and helped the children.

On the port side, the boats swung far away from the side of the ship, while those on the high starboard side were almost impossible to lower as they caught on the ship's rivets. Cornish managed to corral some of her girls and get them into their assigned boat. She went below again to look for her last girl but was unable to find her.

Boat No. 2, carrying Colin Richardson still wearing the red jacket his mother had given him, was lowered into the water. As soon as it touched the waves, it was swamped, staying afloat only because of its buoyancy cells. Colin was sitting in freezing water up to his neck.

On the port side Boat No. 8, nearly overloaded, swung back and forth at the end of the falls and smashed into the unyielding side of the ship. Nearly every person in the boat was thrown into the heaving waves. One of them was young Louis Walder. He struggled to stay afloat until an older boy named George Crawford managed to pull him back aboard. When George tried to pull another child out, he fell overboard and was lost.

Fifteen minutes after the torpedo hit, the *City of Benares* was almost gone. The lifeboats were being tossed in the storm like corks. In water-filled Boat No. 8, four of the crewmen who had been working feverishly to bail succumbed to the cold and died. Young Colin helped to lift them from the boat and over the side. Removing the bodies helped to keep the boat afloat. An elderly nurse next to Colin sank into despair and listlessness. Colin tried to comfort her and keep her awake.

Beth and Bess had managed to stay together. The crew herded them into Boat No. 5 on the starboard side. One of the last boats to be lowered, it was grossly overloaded. When it hit the water, it was almost immediately swamped. Then a heavy wave flipped it over, and everyone was dumped into the sea. Bess and Beth, choking on seawater forced into their mouths and nostrils by the wind, struggled to stay afloat. Bess was a good swimmer and tried to find the boat. She saw it in the dim light, managing to reach it and cling with numbed hands to the keel. And then she saw her friend Beth also holding desperately to the clinker planking. She saw a dozen other pairs of hands hanging on to the wet planks.

By the time Cornish was back on the boat deck her boat was gone. An officer ordered her to go to Boat No. 12, already filled with men and boys. She resolved to take care of them.

AP Photo

Appearing shocked but grateful to be alive, Mary Cornish was photographed aboard the destroyer HMS *Anthony* shortly after her rescue.

Number 12 was the last boat launched. It reached the water as the doomed *City of Benares* heeled far over and seemed to be descending like a huge steel cliff. The men began to pump the steel Flemings cranks that drove the lifeboat's propeller and move it to the relative safety of open water.

Among the boys were Fred Steels and Paul Shearing.

Steels, freezing in the wind and spray, saw what the men were doing and bent to add his tiny weight to the task. At least it would keep him warm.

Cornish comforted and held a young boy who was shivering violently from cold and fear. As she rubbed his shoulders, she saw men and women in the water, some waving for help while others floated limply in their lifebelts. Already many of the ship's passengers and crew had died, either from the explosion, drowning, or exposure to the near-freezing water. Cornish felt deep despair but tried not to show it. Holding the boy, she said in a soothing voice, "Don't worry, it's only a torpedo."

Just then the glare of a searchlight cut through the dark night, spreading pools of light on the stormy seas. *U-48* had moved into the area to see the results of its attack. At 12:30 AM as Bleichrodt watched, the *City of Benares* sank, taking Mackinnon, Nicoll, and more than 250 others with her.

U-48 moved away, searching for more targets. Bleichrodt had no way of knowing he had sunk a ship carrying 90 children.

Back in Liverpool, the Royal Navy's Office of Western Approaches copied a message that a ship in Convoy OB-213 had been torpedoed. The eastbound destroyer HMS *Hurricane* was ordered, "Proceed with utmost dispatch to position 56.43 North, 21.15 West, where survivors are reported in boats."

Lieutenant Commander Crofton Simms immediately ordered his destroyer to make a 180-degree turn to the west and headed for the position. It was 300 miles away.

The weather was horrible. Even as the first storm abated, giving the weakened swimmers and people in the boats a glimmer of hope, a new, stronger storm came in. It scattered the boats and caused the swimmers to swallow seawater as their strength ebbed.

Bess and Beth and 10 other survivors tried to climb higher on their overturned boat, but their fingers were too numb to do more than hang on. One by one, other pairs of hands lost their grip and fell away until only Bess, Beth, and two Indian crewmen were left. There was no food, no drinking water, and no rescue in sight. However, Bess was not going to give up. Beth thought of her mother, now alone. She too was determined to live.

HMS *Hurricane* reached the area by mid-afternoon. The crew readied the longboats and skiffs and gathered blankets and slings to lift survivors. Lookouts clad in heavy foul-weather gear were posted on the bow and mast.

Simms heard calls of "Boat in the water!" The storm was still strong but seemed to be slacking off. Rescuers stopped alongside the first boat. Inside were only corpses. Each tiny body was carried in the arms of a Royal Navy sailor, weeping in sorrow. With deepening fear, *Hurricane* moved on to the next boat, No. 11 with 20 drenched survivors. Only two of 15 CORB children were still alive. One of them was Louis Walder.

These survivors were lifted by strong but gentle hands into the slings and up the ladders aboard the destroyer. Sailors threw woolen blankets over them and dispensed hot tea as they led them into warm and dry rooms where a surgeon tended to them. The children were given the officers' quarters to sleep in.

Boat No. 9, which had carried 33 people, had only eight still alive. Colin Richardson was carried aboard. He was totally numb below the waist and wore only his pajamas and the red jacket that had saved his life.

The searchers finally reached the overturned boat with Bess and Beth hanging onto the keel. A Navy coxswain named Albert Gorman reached out to Bess. "Come on, darling, let go." But the girls' hands were so stiff they had

to be carefully pried loose. Then the two girls were gently lifted into the boat and taken back to the ship.

Hurricane rescued 117 survivors. Simms stayed in the area for several more hours, but he finally turned east to Scotland.

Bess became despondent despite her rescue. She had lost her brother Louis and would never know what had happened to him. "I promised my parents I'd take care of him," she wailed.

The next day the door to her room opened and in stepped Simms. "Sit up, miss. I've got a present for you."

Behind him was Louis, safe and sound. He had not known Bess was on board. While being given a tour of the ship he recognized Bess' dressing gown, and Simms realized they had both Walder children.

As *Hurricane* sped away the sea appeared empty but for scattered bits of floating wreckage, deck chairs, lifebelts, and broken planking, but there was still one more lifeboat out there, No. 12 carrying Mary Cornish, five boys, and 40 adults had not been seen. The storm had scattered the boats far and wide, and the broad gray-green swells hid the tiny craft from view. Steels, trying to remain brave, saw bodies in the water, and some of them were children.

Five of the rescued boys that survived the sinking of the SS *City of Benares* rest on the deck of the destroyer HMS *Anthony* after their rescue from the waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

For the next seven days the lone boat drifted aimlessly. The only officer, Ronnie Cooper, rationed out the small supply of water and tinned biscuits. The days dragged by. The pitiful human cargo grew weaker and weaker. On the eighth day, just after noon, a lone RAF Short Sunderland flying boat flew overhead. Low on fuel, it could not land, but Cooper knew it had seen them. Fifteen minutes later another plane flew low and dropped supplies and a note saying help was on the way.

On Thursday, September 26, the destroyer HMS *Anthony* found the lifeboat. The 46 survivors in Boat No. 12 were the last to be rescued.

Bess and Louis Walder were the only brother and sister to be rescued. Some families had lost two, three, and four children. A family named Grumman lost all five of its children. The final death toll among the 90 CORB children aboard the *City of Benares* was 77, ranging from six to 15 years old.

No more shiploads of children were sent overseas.

Bess Walder became a teacher and headmistress and later married Jeff Cummings, Beth's brother.

By the end of the war Kapitänleutnant Heinrich Bleichrodt had sunk 24 ships, totaling more than 124,000 gross tons. He was charged with war crimes at Nuremburg, including the sinking of SS *City of Benares*. Bleichrodt maintained that the ship was a legitimate target and his actions were appropriate. Some of his crew expressed shock at the loss of the children.

Historians maintain that there was no way Bleichrodt could have known of the CORB evacuees on board the doomed ship. Such is the tragedy of war.

Author Mark Carlson has written on numerous topics related to World War II and the history of aviation. His book Flying on Film: A Century of Aviation in the Movies 1912-2012 *was recently released. He resides in San Diego, California.*

By Chuck Lyons

The Mystery of the Amber Room

One of the greatest art treasures of Imperial Russia disappeared with the Nazis and has yet to be found.

IN SEPTEMBER 1941, DURING THE SIEGE OF LENINGRAD, AS THE SOVIETS THEN called St. Petersburg, Nazi troops overran the Tsarskoye Selo Palace, the former summer residence of the czars in the suburban town of Pushkin. Inside the palace, these German troops discovered something that must have seemed otherworldly to them after they had spent the past 10 weeks marching and fighting in the dust and heat of the Russian summer.

It was a Baroque chamber made completely of amber and decorated with large mirrors and amber carvings of cupids and family crests, nymphs, and monograms. Called, fittingly enough, the Amber Room, the chamber had been created in Prussia in the early 16th century and was later given to Russia's Czar Peter the Great. In its two and a half centuries of existence it had become famous throughout Europe and had been called, among other things, the "Eighth Wonder of the World" and "one of the world's most extraordinary works of art."

Its estimated value today is more than $180 million.

The Nazis carefully dismantled the chamber, packed it in crates, and shipped it to Königsberg Castle in eastern Germany, the ancient seat of the Teutonic Knights and the heart of their medieval amber trade. There Erich Koch, head of the Nazi Party in East Prussia, had the room reassembled and advertised it as a "German possession, now at last restored to its rightful owners." In 1945, however, as Germany's war was ending with the Allies squeezing the Nazis from the east and west, the room was once again dismantled, packed in 24 crates, and stacked in the courtyard of the castle. From there it disappeared, and it has not been seen since.

National Archives

ABOVE: During the German assault on Leningrad the Nazis took the Amber Room for themselves. Party leader Erich Koch (left) ordered it to be reassembled in Konigsberg Castle.
LEFT: The fabled Amber Room was photographed in 1931, before its unexplained disappearance during World War II. At the time, the room was on display in the Tsarskoye Selo Palace in the Leningrad suburb of Pushkin.

Amber is fossilized tree resin that is about 44 million years old. Up to 90 percent of the world's supply is mined along the southern shore of the Baltic Sea.

For millennia, resin had flowed from coniferous trees and settled on the forest floor in Eastern Europe. Then as the Earth's plates moved and ice sheets formed and melted, the area became flooded and the Baltic Sea formed. From early times, bits and pieces of amber, which has been called the "gold of the North," were torn from the sea floor and washed ashore to be picked up and treasured. It has been found most often on the east coast of the Baltic Sea from the current site of Danzig in Germany north to Estonia.

Eventually an amber trade grew, and mining

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The exterior of the Tsarskoye Selo Palace in Pushkin, Russia, where the original Amber Room was displayed until looted by the German military.

operations, first by men wielding large nets, were developed. Often these net wielders were slaves in the employ of the Teutonic Knights, an order that grew rich on amber. By the 13th century, the knights controlled the trade and had centered their amber commerce at the newly built Königsberg Castle on the Pregel River. By the 16th century, however, with the Protestant Reformation sweeping Europe, the Teutonic Knights renounced their Catholicism, becoming Lutherans and forming the Teutonic order's Prussian territories into the Duchy of Prussia as a Polish fief. Eventually Prussia gained independence from any feudal obligations, and in 1701 Elector Frederick III was crowned as Frederick I, the first King of Prussia.

Frederick married his second wife, Sophie Charlotte, a great granddaughter of England's James I, in 1684, and she invested most of her time and effort in artistic pursuits, one of which was to make the Prussian capital of Berlin shine. In 1696, when Frederick was still Elector, she asked the sculptor Andreas Schluter to work on the interior redesign of the royal palace. Schluter began searching in the palace's storage cellars and found a number of chests filled with amber. He later claimed it was the largest collection of amber he had ever seen in one place.

After discovering the amber in the palace's cellars, Schluter conceived the idea of using it to create an entire room made of the precious substance. He developed a design for such a room, a complete chamber decorated floor to ceiling with amber panels backed with gold leaf and covered with mirrors, polished mosaics, carvings of nymphs, cupids, and angels, coats of arms, monograms, and inlays, some so small the observer needed to use a magnifying glass to view them. He hired the Danish carver Gottfried Wolfram and put him to work developing the Amber Room. Over the next several years, Wolfram evolved a method of bonding amber slivers into larger pieces and created some 46 massive amber panels, a dozen of them 12 feet high.

In 1705, however, Sophie Charlotte died, and Schluter fell out of favor. He was banished from court, and the carver Wolfram was fired. In 1713, Frederick I died and was succeeded on the throne by his son, Frederick William I, a no-nonsense man much more interested in building a strong Prussian army than he was in tinkering with amber panels.

The unfinished Amber Room remained at the Berlin City Palace until 1716, when Russia's Peter the Great entered the tale.

That year Peter visited the court of Frederick William and talked of the unfinished Amber Room. Peter had always been an admirer of the gold of the north, and Frederick, uninterested in the amber anyway, gave the amber panels Wolfam had assembled and carved to Peter as a gift.

The amber panels were carefully disassembled, packed in crates, and loaded on eight carts that slowly moved their precious cargo to Peter's summer palace in the Russian capital of St. Petersburg. When the panels arrived, some pieces were broken and others were missing.

Besides the broken and missing pieces, no one could seem to figure out how the remaining panels should fit together, and no instructions from the banished Danish carver who had created the panels or the Prussian sculptor who had conceived them could be found.

The amber was stored in the palace and languished there for almost 20 years after Peter's death in 1725.

In 1743, however, Empress Elizabeth ascended the Russian throne, and one of her first acts was to have the amber transferred to her new winter palace on the River Neva where the Italian sculptor Alexander Martelli was put in charge of assembling the panels and installing them in a large hall at the palace. Somehow, Martelli solved the puzzle of assembling the chamber.

Elizabeth was still dissatisfied and had the room moved three more times and embellished with additional mirrors and amber mirror frames. Eventually the chamber covered more than 55 square meters, or 188.4 square feet, and contained over six tons of amber. In 1755, however, it was again moved, this time to the palace of Elizabeth's favorite niece, Catherine, at Tsarskoye Selo. Catherine, who came from the amber mining region on the Baltic Sea, ascended the Russian throne herself in 1767 and eventually became known to history as Catherine the Great.

Czarina Catherine added another 900 pounds of amber to the room, replacing some sections with large windows. She also commissioned four stone mosaics corresponding to the senses of sight, taste, touch, and hearing. Visitors to the completed chamber said it "came alive" in candlelight.

The Amber Room remained in splendor until shortly after June 22, 1941, when 99 German divisions, including 14 panzer divisions and 10 motorized divisions, stormed into the Soviet Union along a front from the Baltic to the Black Sea. For a month, the Nazi blitzkrieg was unstoppable, and in the north the army group under Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb moved closer to its objective, the Soviet Union's second city of Leningrad.

By mid-August, German troops were approaching the city, their artillery and aircraft attacking it. By the end of the month, the battle for Leningrad had become a siege.

A Soviet counterattack in January 1942 failed to break the siege, and the fighting continued until January 1943 when Soviet forces executed a plan to open a land corridor to the besieged city. After six days of heavy fighting, the corridor was established with German forces cleared from the southern shore of Lake Ladoga for several miles, but it was not until a year later that the Germans were driven 50 miles from the city and the siege was considered broken.

By then, however, it was too late for the Tsarskoye Selo palace and the Amber Room.

Tsarkoye Selo, translated as "Czar's Village," is part of the town of Pushkin situated

24 miles south of Leningrad's center. In September 1941, during the early stages of the siege, German forces overran Pushkin and plundered a number of Soviet and Russian national monuments there. Among them was the czarist place that Catherine the Great had built in the 18th century. Pushkin remained in German hands until its liberation by the Red Army on January 24, 1944.

As the Germans approached Pushkin and Leningrad in 1941, the Soviets took steps to save as many of the treasures housed in the cities as possible, including the Amber Room. The curators of the chamber first tried to disassemble the room's panels, but over the years the amber had dried and become brittle. As attempts to remove it were undertaken, the fragile amber began to crumble. Rather than moving it and subjecting the amber to further damage, a false room was constructed inside the amber room's walls in an attempt to hide it. Some sources assert that the amber was simply covered by wallpaper.

When the Germans occupied Tsarskoye Selo, probably already aware of the famous chamber and its location, they discovered the Amber Room and were able to disassemble it under the supervision of a pair of experts. The amber panels, mirrors, cherubs, and nymphs were carefully packed. On October 14, 1941, Rittmeister Graf Solms-Laubach, who was in charge of the disassembly and packing, ordered the 27 crates shipped to Königsberg for display in the town's castle.

The Amber Room, he concluded, was going home.

The chamber was carefully reassembled at Königsberg and became another trophy of the Third Reich's military prowess. On November 13, 1941, the newspaper *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on the opening of an exhibition of part of room at the castle.

By the end of 1943, however, Königsberg was coming under increasingly frequent Soviet bombing attacks. The room was again disassembled, and the crates were stored in the castle's cellar. In January 1945, as the war continued turning against Germany, Koch received instructions to load the amber panels into 24 strongboxes and prepare them for shipment.

"As soon as this is done," Koch wrote, "I shall evacuate the panels to Wechselburg, near Rochlitz in Saxony."

It is known that the packing was completed on January 15, 1945, and that the crates were piled in the courtyard of the castle. But the trail ends there. The crates are believed to have never arrived in Wechselburg, and whether they even left Königsberg is unclear, although some eyewitnesses have reported seeing them stacked at a railroad station.

In 2003, the reproduction of the Amber Room that now resides in the Tsarskoye Selo Palace was completed. The location of the historic original remains a mystery.

Over the years a number of extensive searches, including several by the Soviet Union, have proved fruitless. In 1997, a piece of the room was found. An Italian stone mosaic known to have been part of the room turned up in western Germany. It was owned by the family of a soldier who had helped pack the Amber Room at Königsberg in January 1945, and this soldier's souvenir sheds some light on the fate of the Amber Room. In 1998, two separate teams also claimed to have found the Amber Room, one in a German silver mine and the other in a lake in Lithuania, but neither was able to produce the room itself.

As recently as 2008, another alleged discovery of the Amber Room was announced. Radar scans were reported to have detected a large amount of metal believed to be too dense for copper in an abandoned copper mine in Deutschneudorf, Saxony. Some observers, including Hans-Peter Haustein, mayor of Deutschneudorf, claimed the mine was the burial site of the Amber Room.

Another theory put forth is that the amber was taken from the castle's courtyard in early 1945 and again hidden in its cellars. It was then destroyed when the castle was heavily bombed by the Royal Air Force. This theory is supported by the conclusions of two studies made by British investigative journalists Catherine Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy and by Soviet investigators. Both studies concluded that the Amber Room was most likely destroyed when Königsberg Castle was burned shortly after its surrender.

Another theory suggests that the room lies with other Nazi-plundered treasure at the bottom of 350-foot-deep Lake Toplitz in the Austrian Alps, where senior German officers are known to have retreated as the Allies advanced through Germany. It has been claimed that these officers transported large boxes by truck and horse-drawn carriage to the edge of the lake and sank them.

Other investigators have speculated that the Amber Room was hidden 2,000 feet below ground in a salt mine near Gottingen, Germany, that has since been flooded. Supporting this last theory is a coded message sent to Berlin in January 1945. It reads, "Amber Room, operation completed, object is stored in B. Sch. W.V." This message may refer to the B shaft of a mine near Gottingen known as Wittekind Vollpriehausen.

After the war, a full reconstruction of the Amber Room was created at Tsarskoye Selo based on 86 black and white photographs taken of various fragments of the room. The project was begun in 1979, and by 2003 the work was largely completed. Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder dedicated the room at a celebration of the 300-year anniversary of the city of St. Petersburg. A miniature model of the room, made of original East Prussian amber, has also been constructed and is on display at Kleinmachnow, Germany.

The fate of the original Amber Room, however, remains one of the great mysteries of World War II.

Author Chuck Lyons has contributed to WWII History *on a variety of topics. He resides in Rochester, New York.*

SHELLFIRE rocked the aid station. A ceiling beam cracked, raining down plaster. One explosion obliterated a window, hurling stone, wood, and glass shards into the room.

Father Francis L. Sampson rushed patients under a bed, fearing the building might collapse. He led everyone in the Lord's Prayer while changing bandages and cleaning plaster dust from pallid faces. All the while he kept blood plasma flowing. The dozen wounded men watched the chaplain with awe. He was their lodestar, a beacon in death's dark shadow. His internal gyroscope spun true and level, as if providence had created him for this task.

In the coming months, Father Sampson's actions in Normandy would garner a Medal of Honor recommendation, a proposal supported by Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight Eisenhower. But the valiant priest would never receive America's highest combat decoration.

This is the untold story behind the man and the medal.

The intricate path to the aid station began in 1942 when Father Sampson answered a recruiting call for paratrooper chaplains. He later admitted his naiveté. "Frankly I didn't know when I signed up for the airborne that chaplains would be expected to jump from an airplane in flight." Fear of embarrassment kept him from reneging once he understood the term "airborne."

The Army sent him to the parachute school at Fort Benning, Georgia, where his chaplaincy afforded him no lax treatment. At age 30, Francis Leon Sampson stood 5-10, weighed 185 pounds, and sported a flattop haircut. He excelled at athletics, but the school pummeled him into a deflated heap. Many trainees washed out or landed in a hospital bed, but he persevered even after a brush with death when he descended into the Chattahoochee River on one jump. He graduated in May 1943, unaware that his close call in the river foreshadowed events to come.

Imbued with new confidence, the chaplain boarded a train for Camp Mackall, North Carolina, the home of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment.

He reported to Colonel Howard R. Johnson, the regimental commander. The 40-year-old leader was an inexhaustible human dynamo who ignited sparks at every turn. He exhorted his men with fiery words, spurring them to surmount impossible odds and to shake the gates of Hell. The colonel also had a penchant for profanity, language the clergyman found offensive. He voiced dis approval, and uneasiness developed between the two men.

The priest found instant rapport with his flock of Catholic paratroopers. His empathy, comedic talent, and love for all people endeared him to the men who dubbed him Father Sam.

The 501st fought mock battles for two months during the autumn in Tennessee. While there, Father Sam received his captain's bars. He also qualified as a combat medic, having learned to apply a splint, infuse blood plasma, and perform other emergency procedures.

Overseas movement began on January 18, 1944, when the regiment embarked for England, where it joined the 101st Airborne Division. The regiment settled outside Newbury, and, as a security measure, adopted the codename "Klondike."

Soon after arriving, the uneasiness between Johnson and Father Sam boiled into conflict when the colonel instructed his troops to carry condoms while on leave in London or anywhere else that venereal diseases and prostitutes proliferated. The rubbers filled a fishbowl, and the soldiers helped themselves. Father Sam expressed opposition, and Johnson fired back, "You take care of their souls Chaplain, and I'll take care of their asses!" The priest bristled.

"The morals in England are worse than you can possibly imagine," he explained in a letter home. "I am having a terrific struggle with our commanding officer to protect our Catholic boys' rights of conscience. He is trying to enforce something contrary to our faith. My opposition may cost me my job."

The padre appealed to the division chaplain, an Episcopalian colonel.

Several weeks later Father Sam again wrote about Johnson. "I have won the first couple rounds in our little feud, and he sure glares at me."

The fishbowl disappeared, and the chaplain kept his job.

Cold, drizzling rain prevailed as preparations mounted for the Allied invasion of France. Practice jumps continued, and on one drop Father Sam landed in a lake, his second water landing.

On a night maneuver, the chaplain fell asleep in a ditch. He awoke feeling something cold pressing under his chin. "A snake!" he thought and slowly opened his eyes. It was a knife wielded by Johnson. "Chaplain," he said, "in combat you'd have been a dead duck by now."

Yet another travail unfolded when Father Sam fired his assistant, Private James W. McDermott, who repeatedly shirked his duties. The wayward clerk retaliated and stole £85 (about $340) from the chaplain's desk. He fled the scene, threw a couple drunken parties, and betrothed himself to an English woman while his wife was pregnant back home. McDermott spent nearly all the money and eventually landed in the regimental stockade.

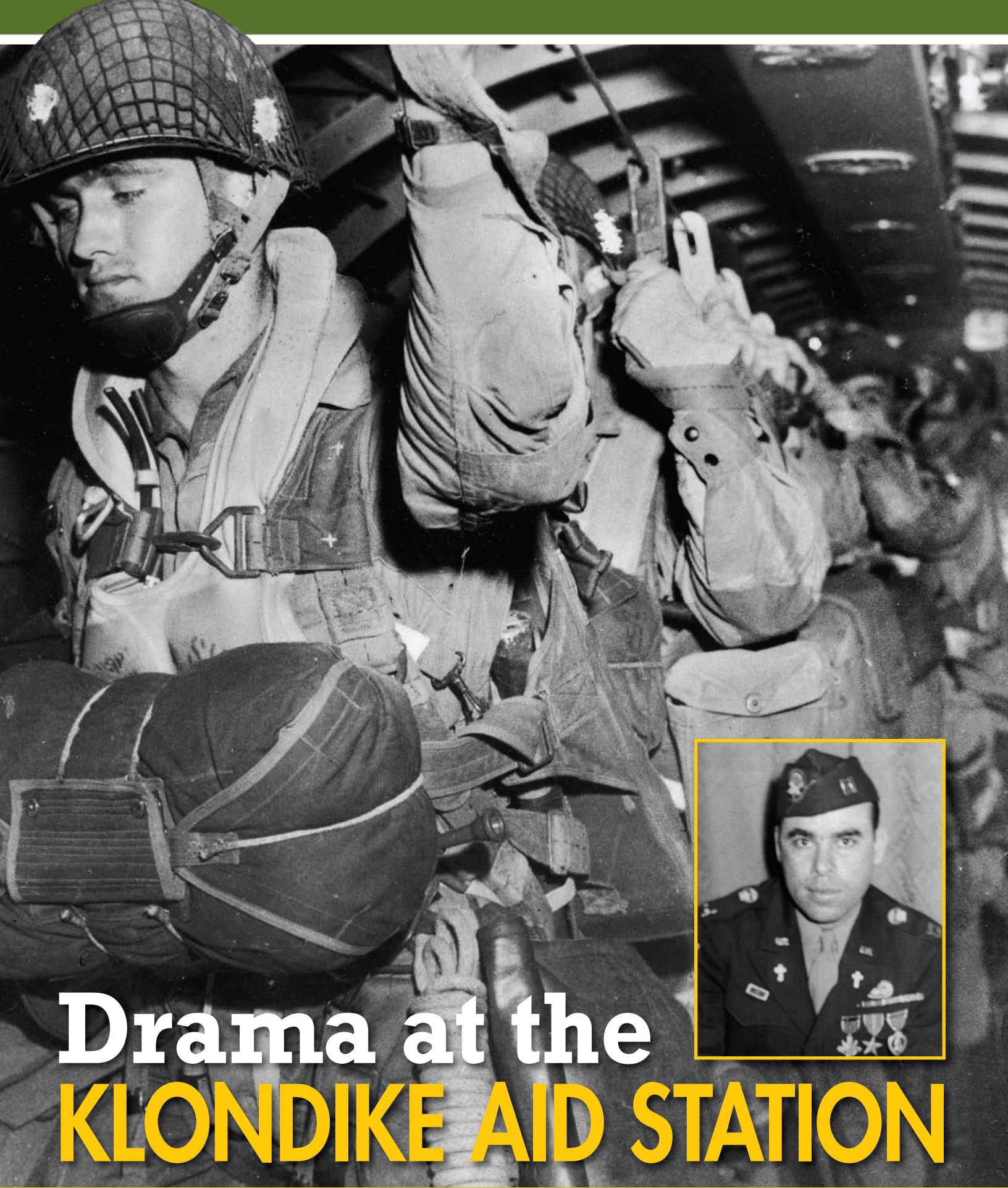
Several days after the larceny, the 101st conducted Exercise

FATHER FRANCIS L. SAMPSON RISKED HIS LIFE TO SAVE OTHERS IN NORMANDY AND WAS RECOMMENDED FOR THE MEDAL OF HONOR.

BY BILL WARNOCK

Paratroopers of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division stand and hook up moments before jumping from their transport aircraft during the opening hours of the D-Day invasion of Europe on June 6, 1944. Father Sampson jumped with his unit and rendered extraordinary service in the combat zone. INSET: Father Francis L. Sampson is shown still in uniform and holding the rank of captain following his return from Europe after World War II. The Distinguished Service Cross, Bronze Star, and Purple Heart are among the decorations visible on his uniform.

Right: National Archives, Inset: Bonnie O'Hara



Drama at the KLONDIKE AID STATION

Mark Brando

ABOVE: Troopers of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment receive Holy Communion from Father Sam during Second Army Maneuvers No. 3, held in Tennessee during September through November 1943. Thirty-one percent of the airborne troopers in the 501st were Roman Catholic. RIGHT: Colonel Howard R. Johnson, codenamed "Klondike Beaver," commanded the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. Colonel Johnson and Father Sam clashed on more than one occasion.

Eugene Amburgey via Mark Brando

Eagle, a night drop on May 12, 1944, and a dry run for the division's part in the invasion of Western Europe. On the way down, Father Sam struck a tree trunk and bruised his ribs. The regiment incurred 150 casualties that night with 90 percent of them requiring hospitalization. The losses ended all practice jumps and rigorous training.

The bruised priest initiated a new assistant, Private William A. France from Philadelphia. Born into an Episcopalian family, "Buck" France had recently converted to Catholicism. Father Sam had baptized him into the Roman Church a month earlier along with six other troopers.

The final countdown to peril began on May 28, when the regiment split its ranks between two airfields. Father Sam and his Protestant counterpart flew back and forth between them. Mass attendance soared, as did penance, the padre's boys confessing their 10,000 venial sins.

Invasion architects assembled 821 aircraft, excluding spares, to haul 13,348 American paratroopers into battle. Just 13 jumpers were chaplains.

Father Sam quartered in a tent at Merryfield airdrome, home to the 441st Troop Carrier Group commanded by Lt. Col. Theodore G. Kershaw. Barbed wire and armed guards confined the paratroopers to the installation once they knew their destination—Normandy.

Rain and high seas delayed the operation 24 hours. On D-Day eve, Colonel Johnson addressed his Merryfield contingent. He brandished a Bowie knife above his head and swore to plunge it into the "foulest, black-hearted Nazi bastard in France." He whipped the men into savage spirit before they saddled up with their gear and parachutes.

Father Sam's accoutrements included a Red Cross brassard and two canteens, one filled with medical alcohol and the other with consecrated wine. He stowed religious items in a musette bag. The items included cards with the Latin texts for absolution and anointing the sick as well as a chalice and small ciborium, the latter safeguarding consecrated wafers. He wrapped the objects in altar linens and his white vestments. He also carried a gas mask, a dispatch case, a bulky medical bag, a blood plasma kit, and a second musette bag with toiletry items and extra underwear. K-ration boxes bulged his pockets.

He shook hands with men as they walked to the aircraft and bid "God bless you," to each. Aboard his plane, the troopers bowed their heads, their faces blackened with burnt cork, and Father Sam led them in prayer.

Aircraft barreled down the runway, their Pratt & Whitney engines pulling them into the sky. The planes circled and climbed in the fading twilight and assembled over southern England. The lead ship reached the coastline at 12:31 AM, the drop zone (DZ) less than an hour away.

Laden with gear, the chaplain lumbered to his plane's open passenger door. He gazed down at the English Channel, its whitecaps illuminated by the moon. His eyes wandered across a breathtaking vista—naval vessels, too many to count, all steaming toward the invasion beaches.

In the cabin, engulfed by engine roar, Father Sam studied the deadpan faces. "The men were generally quiet," he recalled. "Some tried to sleep, others smoked steadily, and a few tried to be nonchalant by humming some modern songs."

He wondered how many would survive to see daylight again.

Ahead at the DZ, pathfinders were on the ground. These elite troopers encountered dogged enemy fire as they struggled to set up T-lights and Eureka radar to help guide the 441st. The Germans had identified the area as a potential landing zone, and they defended it.

Like everyone in the air, Father Sam knew nothing about the trouble on the ground, but a greater problem loomed ahead in the sky. An enormous cloud bank hung over the Normandy coast, an obstacle piled high with danger.

Still locked in formation, the pilots climbed to 1,500 feet, the altitude ordered for the coastline crossing. The aircraft reached land near Portbail, France, and plunged into the clouds, the DZ just 10 minutes away.

Visibility dropped to nil in places.

Anxiety gripped many pilots. They broke formation, hoping to avoid midair collisions. Aircraft veered left and right. Some dove, some climbed, and others held their course. Lt. Col. Kershaw bored straight ahead through the gray soup. Father Sam's pilot stayed with the colonel, and they gradually nosed down to 700 feet, the jump altitude.

German antiaircraft fire shot into the clouds, albeit scattered and imprecise. The booms and flashes nevertheless set everyone on edge.

A red warning light suddenly glowed by the door, indicating to Father Sam and his fellow passengers that only four minutes remained to the DZ. He watched the jumpmaster, 1st Lt. Ted Fuller, pull himself to his feet and yell, "Get ready!" The men followed his commands and attached their static-line fasteners to an anchor cable that ran overhead in the cabin. They checked their equipment one final time.

German gunners spun a deadly web in the

Albert A. Krochka via Mark Bando / Bill Warnock

Paratroopers from Headquarters Company, 501st on their way to Normandy. First Lieutenant Foster G. Beamsley (Assistant Regimental S-2) served as jumpmaster aboard this C-47 from the 99th Troop Carrier Squadron. The 99th led the 441st Troop Carrier Group to France.

sky, zeroing in on the C-47 transport planes as they emerged from the clouds. Tracer rounds crawled high into the night, painting long, fiery lines that vanished as the rounds spent themselves and tumbled earthward.

Turbulent air rocked Father Sam's aircraft, and bullets pierced its aluminum skin, shooting up through the floor. One projectile hit Technician Fifth Grade Stanley E. Butkovich and penetrated his left thigh. Waylen Lamb, a medic, clambered to the wounded man, who insisted on jumping. Lieutenant Fuller consented and unhooked Butkovich from the anchor cable and moved him to a seated position in the door, his legs dangling overboard. Fuller reattached Butkovich to the cable.

In the lead aircraft, Kershaw and his co-pilot scanned the ground for T-lights signaling the place where the paratroopers should receive the green light to jump. The aviators saw only flames leaping from a barn torched by the Germans to illuminate the invaders. Kershaw thought the DZ lay below, and he switched on the green light. Father Sam's pilot copied.

Fuller gave Butkovich a shove out the door. Equipment bundles followed him, and then his comrades in rapid succession.

Father Sam stepped into prop blast and plummeted until his parachute deployed, its camouflaged canopy unfurling overhead. He marveled for a fleeting moment at the lethal fireworks all around. "It will always remain a mystery to me how any of us lived," he later wrote. "I collapsed part of my chute to come down faster. From there on I placed myself in the hands of my guardian angel."

It seemed his angel drew the short straw. Father Sam plunged into a flooded drainage ditch. His heavy gear pulled him beneath the cold, black water. Unable to find his feet, he fumbled for his knife and cut away his medical bag, plasma kit, toiletry bag, and religious items but failed to free himself from a watery grave. He would probably have drowned, but his canopy stayed open and a wind gust pulled him into shallow water.

He recovered for a moment and shed his parachute harness. German bullets zipped over the swamp as he crawled back to the ditch and dove for his religious items, especially anxious to save the ciborium and its sacred contents. After five or six attempts, he latched onto the musette bag and pulled it to the surface.

He spotted another man from his stick, his assistant Buck France, who had lost his rifle after nearly drowning. Soaked to the skin, the two scrambled to a hedgerow for cover.

They looked up to see a C-47 heading their way, flames gushing from its left wing. The dying bird approached low, its pilot fighting to regain control. The aircraft pitched into a field and exploded in an orange fireball that billowed high into the sky. The two onlookers prayed for the dead crewmen now cooking in the funeral pyre. The pair also prayed for the souls aboard two other flaming aircraft that blazed across the distant sky like giant bottle rockets.

Father Sam and his assistant soon found two more 501st soldiers who crawled to their position. The four weighed their options and moved out, hugging hedgerows while wending their way toward an area where they hoped to meet friendly faces.

They bumped into six airborne warriors who pointed out a circuitous route to a rally point. The route crossed a vast swamp. Back in 1942, the Germans had closed lock gates on the Douve River, and rainwater flooded the lowlands creating a barrier to airborne assault.

Father Sam's group picked its way across the marsh until receiving enemy fire near a farm owned by Théophile Fortin. The chaplain advanced alone to a small house where he found an aid station and its officer in charge, Captain Tildon S. McGee, the Protestant chaplain for the 506th Parachute Infantry. Father Sam backtracked and led his group to the house.

McGee, a Baptist theologian from Philadelphia, Mississippi, had landed at Angoville-au-Plain, barely missing that town's church steeple as he descended. The near calamity and its irony dawned on him, perhaps along with a narrowly avoided headline—"Chaplain Killed by Church."

McGee had left Angoville and trekked across the swamp, helping evacuate casualties to the Fortin house where a dozen 506th medics gathered, as well as one from the 501st. Father Sam and his group were welcome additions.

Near the aid station, the 3rd Battalion, 506th dug in and defended two wooden bridges over the Douve River. Germans across the river chopped at the defenses with shells and bullets.

Father Sam witnessed a civilian tragedy when an enemy shell struck behind the house and

Father Sam narrowly avoided drowning in the flooded fields of Normandy and ventured alone across an expanse of German-held territory during the opening hours of the Allied invasion of France. The priest's heroic efforts on behalf of his wounded men earned him the Distinguished Service Cross.

killed the farmer's wife, Odette Fortin, and an eight-year-old girl, Georgette Revet, after they stepped outdoors to fetch water from a pump.

"As I knelt to anoint them," he recalled, "the farmer threw himself on their bodies and broke into agonizing sobs." The priest placed a hand on the grieving man's shoulder. He immediately sprang up, his face and hands smeared with blood, and ran toward the Germans, yelling and shaking his fists in rage.

Inside the aid station, several patients required care beyond that presently available. Father Sam decided to locate the 501st regimental aid station and a surgeon. He conferred with McGee and struck out alone across the marsh, avoiding roads and enemy eyes. The swamp flora concealed him as he skulked along through frigid water sometimes chest deep. He chanced upon a friendly patrol that directed him toward high ground and the Klondike aid station in a hamlet named Basse Addeville.

He plodded upslope toward his destination and toward a firefight, its tenor rising to a rapid crackle. The 501st men at Basse Addeville faced German Army troops one hedgerow away. The enemy included foreign legionnaires, ex-Red Army soldiers from Soviet Georgia.

The chaplain reached friendly forces and discovered GIs gathered around a recent casualty, a towheaded kid from Service Company—Technician Fifth Grade Norman L. Dick. His own hand grenade had detonated in a pocket. Somebody thought a bullet triggered the mishap, but, whatever the cause, the explosion turned his right leg into a bloody sluice. Father Sam helped carry Norman to the aid station.

Major Francis E. Carrel, the regimental surgeon, labored inside the medical facility, a one-story dwelling built during the 18th century. The house looked sturdy, its fortress-thick walls constructed from stone and torchis, a traditional building material made from clay and straw. An interior wall divided the building into separate residences. Noémie Diorey lived in the one now filled with American casualties. Her daughter Maria Lebreuilly owned the adjoining residence, where the two women took refuge.

Noémie's first husband, Maria's father, had perished during World War I. When the Germans invaded in 1940, Maria had two brothers-in-law who served as infantrymen. One died in combat, and the other lost both legs. The two ladies knew war and its pain, but never before had its horrors erupted at their doorstep.

Father Sam located Major Carrel as he tended to patients in the cramped, cavelike facility. The doctor listened to the chaplain's report and sent Captain Clarence N. Sorenson, the 2nd Battalion surgeon, to the 506th aid station along with an enlisted man and supplies.

Father Sam returned outdoors and found Major Richard J. Allen, the regimental operations officer and the leader at Basse Addeville. Allen told Father Sam that Colonel Johnson held their unit's initial objective, the Douve River locks at La Barquette. Most of the Basse Addeville defenders had departed for the locks. Allen now led a 50-man rear guard. These troops would leave at nightfall along with the chaplain, the medical staff, and the ambulatory patients. As for the men unable to walk, their fate lay in German hands.

Back at the aid station, Carrel and Father Sam discussed the immobile patients. "This is a bad time to leave them," the doctor said. "Neither side is taking many prisoners now, and the Germans will consider them a liability."

Father Sam regarded abandonment as an unthinkable sin even if dictated by the military situation, and he voiced his intent to stay. "I tried to discourage him," Carrel recounted, "but he insisted. He felt his duty was with the men."

The doctor felt freer to leave, but he doubted anyone at the aid station would survive, even though the padre downplayed the risk. The two men reviewed each patient's condition, including Pfc. Thomas L. Hildebrand, who was sequestered next door in Maria's cider room.

Hildebrand jumped with Company D, 501st

and suffered a severe concussion on landing, which caused faulty memory, constant headache, and emotional outbursts like a neuropsychiatric casualty. "Better keep him away from the others," Carrel said.

The doctor and chaplain also discussed young Norman Dick, and another patient overheard the physician's prognosis. "He told the chaplain there was not much chance of this man recovering, but, if he did, he would lose his leg."

Carrel summoned his sergeant and told him to select a medic to remain with Father Sam. The sergeant asked the medics to draw paper slips, one with the word "stay" written on it. Private Everett L. Fisher recalled the lottery. "I was the first to draw, and I picked the stay slip."

The 22-year-old Fisher hailed from Little Valley, New York, where he left high school to work as a farmhand until drafted in September 1942. He joined the 326th Airborne Medical Company the next month. For the invasion, his unit assigned men to each parachute regiment, and Fisher jumped with the 501st. He met Father Sam for the first time at the aid station.

Noémie's residence had two rooms connected by an interior door. Each room also had an exterior door exiting onto the street. The larger room functioned as a bedroom and a living area with a fireplace. The smaller room served as a pantry with a ladder that led up to a loft.

The final withdrawal from Basse Addeville began on schedule. Major Allen led his rearguard, the medical team, and the ambulatory patients across the swamp toward La Barquette as the sun disappeared and a full moon appeared.

Father Sam now had more space in the aid station and moved all but three casualties into the large room. There were 14 patients. He placed two men with injured legs next to a door to watch Hildebrand. The chaplain fashioned a white flag from a bed sheet and hung it outside.

He asked Fisher to scrounge for food. The medic brought back rations abandoned in the yard. He also collected bottles of wine and gathered eggs from the pantry. An elderly Frenchwoman, probably Noémie, brought milk and butter. The men possessed a squad stove with two burners, and they cooked eggs scrambled with crushed crackers, protein and carbohydrates for the patients.

The chaplain and medic cleaned wounds and sprinkled sulfa powder to prevent infection. They changed dressings and squeezed morphine into groaning patients. Father Sam administered blood plasma to keep Norman Dick alive as well as Corporal James F. Jacobson from Company C, 501st, who lay on Noémie's bed.

The 20-year-old corporal, a Catholic kid from Chicago, had a bicep torn by shrapnel and a bullet hole in his thorax that produced internal bleeding. Blood loss caused his veins to collapse, requiring numerous attempts by the chaplain before he successfully infused plasma.

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-584-2160-12; Photo: Reich

Crouching beside the wall of a farm building in Normandy, two members of Fallschirmjäger Regiment 6 attempt to avoid detection by Allied fighter bombers. The paratrooper at left is carrying a Raketenpanzerbüchse 54, popularly known as the Panzerschreck (an antitank weapon comparable to the American bazooka), while the man at right appears to be carrying a case of ammunition for the weapon.

Norman Dick lay on the floor in a corner, clutching a wooden crucifix that Father Sam lifted from a wall. He received three plasma units and rallied enough to reminisce about his family as the chaplain sat by his side and listened.

Norman said he grew up in Saint Clairesville, Ohio, where his parents died during the Great Depression. He moved to Coalinga, California, after graduating from high school and lived with his sister and her husband. The former Ohioan loved woodworking and found employment as a cabinetmaker until volunteering for the parachute infantry in September 1942. Three brothers also served in uniform, one having earned a Purple Heart and a Silver Star as a B-24 Liberator bombardier on a mission over France.

By now most men in the building had fallen asleep. Father Sam urged Fisher to do the same, and he dozed off. The chaplain returned to the white flag and stood silhouetted in the doorway waving the sheet, hoping to prevent the enemy from attacking the aid station. He did that every 15 minutes. In the meantime, he tiptoed among the patients, watching over them. He helped Norman, a devout Presbyterian, say his prayers.

The day ended with Basse Addeville unprotected and the Germans unaware.

The village lay silent under the stars. Faraway artillery occasionally broke the hush, like rolling thunder, miles away. Father Sam continued alternating between the flag and the patients until he heard a disturbance.

"About 2 AM Norman became delirious," the chaplain recalled, "I rested his head on my arm and regularly wiped perspiration from his forehead. At intervals he would have a lucid moment and would squeeze my hand."

In a low voice, the chaplain asked anyone awake to join him in prayer for their comrade. Jacobsen prayed despite his own injuries.

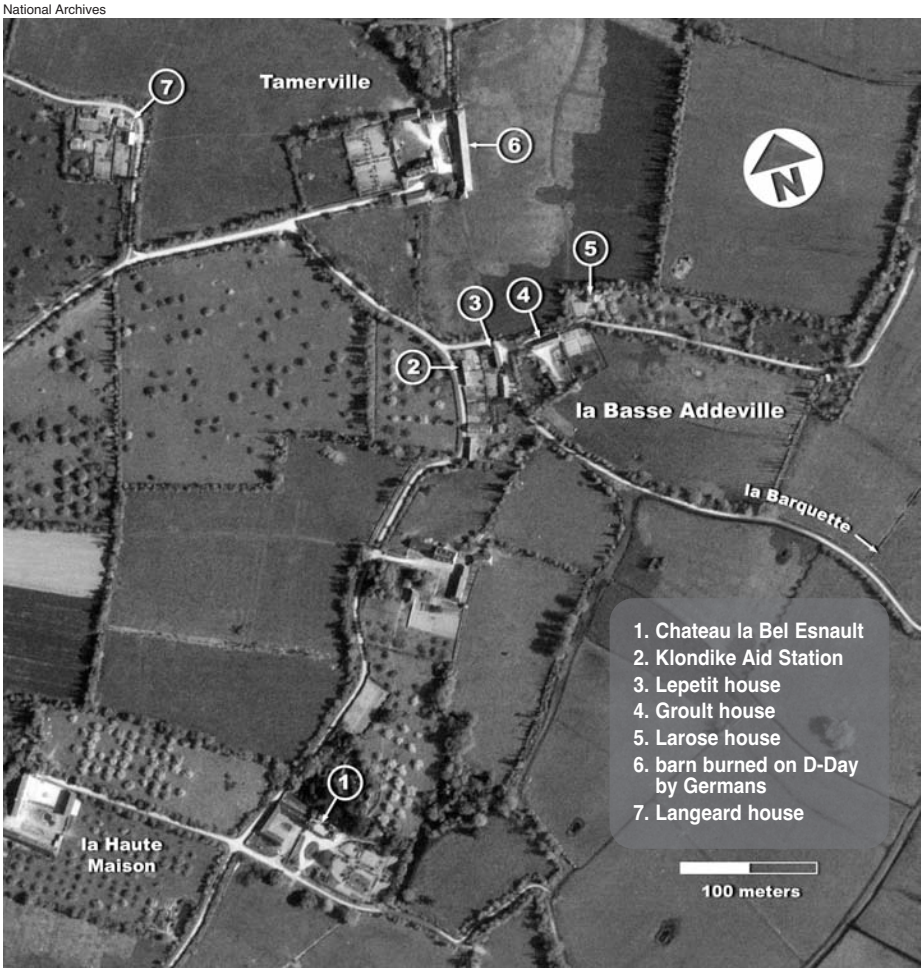
Norman Dick died about 3:30 AM. Father Sam rolled his body in a parachute and laid him outside with Fisher's help.

Roosters crowed as sunlight crept above the eastern treeline two hours later. Jacobson and the other wounded men remained alive, but the Germans had yet to arrive.

When Fisher awoke, he relieved Father Sam, a man almost sleepwalking. He napped for three hours, his first shut-eye since England. The medic prepared eggs and hot chocolate for the chaplain after his rest, and he had just enough time to wolf them down.

The casualties required care, and the two angels in olive-drab hustled to meet the unrelenting task. Fisher had a queasy feeling.

National Archives



This aerial photograph of Basse Addeville and the surrounding area reveals the relative distance between certain points and the precarious situation confronted by Father Sam and his wounded men.

"We'd heard many stories about what happened to American paratroopers when captured," he recalled.

The Germans finally realized their opponents had abandoned Basse Addeville. Enemy paratroopers from the 6th Parachute Regiment approached the aid station at 10:30 AM.

One enemy soldier darted past a wood-frame window that overlooked the street. Furtive glances through the opening revealed a machine-gun crew planting its weapon nearby. The tension reached a gut-twisting climax when the men heard pounding on the pantry door and shouts in German. Father Sam grabbed the white flag and told Fisher to remain inside.

The chaplain yelled, "All right" and opened the door. An enemy paratrooper thrust a machine pistol into the clergyman's midriff and shouted, "Hände hoch!"

Father Sam raised his hands.

The Germans yanked the priest outside where he repeatedly pointed to a Christian cross on his collar and the Red Cross brassard on his left arm. None among the enemy paratroopers had ever seen an airborne chaplain. No such person existed in their regiment, and the Luftwaffe as whole had no chaplains, having disbanded them years earlier.

Two young Germans with dour, hostile faces prodded him down the road at gunpoint.

Three other German paratroopers kicked open the door to the large room and ordered Fisher outside with his hands raised. "I stepped into the doorway," he recalled, "and a young German stuck a machine pistol in my stomach. It clicked, and the boys on the floor turned their backs, expecting me to get a belly full of lead."

Fisher brought down his left arm enough to show his brassard to the enemy soldier, and he pulled away the machine pistol. Inside the aid station, the Germans tried to interrogate their captives and fired rounds into the ceiling to frighten them. The Germans ransacked both rooms, searching for weapons and food. They snatched all the remaining eggs.

Enemy soldiers also rousted Maria and Noémie. The women in their homespun dresses looked harmless, and the soldiers released them after rummaging through Maria's home.

The two Germans with Father Sam marched him about a quarter mile before stopping.

"One of them pushed me against a hedgerow," he recalled, "and the two stepped back about 10 feet and pulled the bolts on their weapons."

The blood sank from his face when he saw the violence in their eyes. He tried to recite the Act of Contrition, but in nervous haste he said the Grace before Meals.

Shots rang out.

The chaplain saw a German noncommissioned officer running down the road. He had just fired into the air and was yelling at his comrades. The handsome noncom spoke to Father Sam in broken English. This German was a veteran campaigner, an "old hare," and he shoved one of the would-be killers when he saw the priest's credentials. The noncom snapped to attention, his heels clicking like a pistol shot. He saluted and bent at the waist, making a slight Prussian bow. The noncom produced a Sacred Heart medallion from under his uniform.

Father Sam breathed easy as his rescuer escorted him to an officer who summoned a fluent English speaker. The chaplain explained that he possessed no military information and asked to remain with his wounded men. The officer consented. Back at the aid station, Fisher heard the shots and presumed the worst. He and the others believed a massacre now awaited them, but they guessed wrong.

Their padre reappeared at the door with the noncom at his side. Father Sam looked relieved, almost cheerful. The noncom inspected the aid station top to bottom, including each man's injuries. He promised to send a doctor. The wounded noticed the decorum shown toward Father Sam, a hopeful sign.

The noncom departed as his comrades dug in at Basse Addeville.

Work in the aid station resumed for the chaplain, but he carried on alone. He asked Fisher to stay with Hildebrand. Father Sam feared the mentally unbalanced soldier might heed an animal urge to bolt free, overpowering his two injured guards, and that the Germans outside would shoot him.

The injured men hobbled back to the aid station with help from Father Sam. He placed Sergeant Lowell E. Norwood and Corporal Elbert F. Yeager in the pantry since no floor space remained in the large room. Both men belonged to Company B, 501st. Norwood grew up in Paris, Tennessee, where he had a wife and two young boys. His older brother Ted was also a paratrooper. The Germans captured him in Italy the previous year and interned him at Stalag IIB.

Norwood, Yeager, and the other patients drew hope from Father Sam. As night settled

over the countryside, their survival seemed possible, even probable.

That night the 101st Airborne Division prepared to recapture Basse Addeville and to seize nearby Saint-Côme-du-Mont. The division had lost much of its own artillery during the D-Day drop and consequently received support from the 65th Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

The 65th, codenamed "Castle," landed on Utah Beach. Its battalion fire direction center (or FDC) lay in a hamlet named Holdy. The unit fielded 18 M7 Priests, 105mm howitzers mounted on tank chassis. The guns sat in three firing batteries outside the hamlet.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward A. Bailey commanded the battalion. The 1938 West Point graduate visited the 101st command post at the Lecaudey farm in Hiesville, where he worked with the paratroopers to develop an artillery plan for the coming attack. They mapped out a rolling barrage that would sweep through orchards and pastures. They also selected eight targets, known as "concentrations," that covered road junctions and enemy strongpoints.

Both: Bill Warnock

ABOVE: Today the Klondike aid station still bears some scars from World War II. After the war, its roof and walls were repaired, and the work is evident. Maria Lebreuilly, its owner during the war years, died in 1986. Her nephew Gerard and his wife currently own the building, which has been in the same family since the 18th century. LEFT: The pantry that belonged to Noémie Diorey, where Corporal Elbert F. Yeager and Sergeant Lowell E. Norwood died, was rebuilt after the war and converted into a woodshed.

The staff at the Castle FDC plotted them on a firing chart and labeled each with a three-digit number. Concentration 402 included the Klondike aid station.

At midnight, the 65th began intermittent harassing fire intended to deny the Germans rest and to reduce their combat effectiveness. The artillerymen had no forward observer in place to adjust fire on the concentrations, but pinpoint accuracy was unnecessary. Battle maps and firing tables provided ample data for harassing fire.

The first detonation at Basse Addeville jolted everyone awake inside the aid station. More rounds screamed in and exploded, falling closer and closer to the building. The explosions produced supersonic shock waves and sound beyond decibel measure.

The wounded clenched their teeth and waited for a direct hit. Maria and Noémie huddled next door, both women terrified beyond words.

The artillerymen hammered away but soon lifted their fire and shifted it to another concentration. They returned to 402 several times that night.

The chaplain shuttled between the wounded and regularly ventured out to check on Fisher and Hildebrand. The concussion victim lay in a coma-like sleep, cocooned from reality.

One patient in the large room, Private John C. Marnye from Company D, 501st, recalled the chaplain's poise. "Father Sampson was just as calm as if nothing was happening." Marnye saw a man who had reached deep inside to some guarded corner and found grace, a man grateful to be where most needed, optimistic in the direst of circumstances.

Less than three miles away, muzzle flashes from the three howitzer batteries attracted at least one German aircraft. Two bombs landed near the guns but failed to explode. The artillerymen ignored the aircraft and continued blasting away. At 4:15 AM, they stepped up their fire to a steady drumbeat.

Shells struck Basse Addeville with unprecedented fury. The aid station had avoided a direct hit, but that changed when an explosion split the darkness with blinding light and a booming crash. The seismic blast hurled the aid station occupants into an unworldly miasma, a place between life and death where time stood still.

Three hits in quick succession brought down the pantry roof and walls. Father Sam thought the large room would also crumble, and he threw himself over three men. Miraculously no collapse followed. The detonations left the chaplain's ears ringing, but he somehow heard a voice call his name. It was Corporal Yeager.

The 23-year-old paratrooper from Iola, Texas, lay in the pantry doorway. Father Sam stumbled to him through a dusty haze as more wreckage fell and buried Yeager to the waist. The chaplain cradled the corporal's head in his lap. "Father, they got me," he said. The padre turned and said, "Let's all pray for this boy." Yeager moaned a couple of times, and Father Sam felt the young man's heart pump hard for a minute before it stopped.

There was another man in the pantry. The chaplain climbed into the room and dug through the debris until he found Sergeant Norwood dead.

Amid the cataclysm, Father Sam noticed that a shell burst had propelled a GI flashlight onto

the street. The light's tiny bulb shone bright, and he feared that an artillery observer might see it. He leaped outside to switch off the light as shells continued to explode nearby.

The bombardment flummoxed the German defenders, and Father Sam heard their wild shouts. He almost collided with one who darted past. As he bent to grab the light, he saw a wounded enemy soldier in a watery ditch. The man died as the chaplain attempted to lift him.

Father Sam headed back indoors but recoiled upon seeing a German slumped against the building with an assault rifle. The weapon posed no threat, its owner a walleyed cadaver.

The chaplain hustled into the large room just as a shell exploded near the doorway and brought down more of the building. The blast injured a German outside who screamed for help. Father Sam wanted to assist, but his patients beseeched him to stay put.

T/3 Richard M. Montgomery, Detachment J, 165th Signal Photo Company / Bill Warnock

On June 9, 1944, at 11:35 pm, two German bombs scored direct hits on the Château de Colombière at Hiesville. The chateau housed a medical facility where many casualties of the 101st Airborne Division were being treated at the time.

The artillerymen halted their fire at 4:40 AM, but only for five minutes.

When they resumed, their guns delivered a massive barrage in a box-shaped area facing the 1st Battalion, 401st Glider Infantry Regiment. High-explosive shells tore raw holes in the ground and shot up fountains of earth. White phosphorus projectiles radiated fire and noxious smoke. The aid station lay outside the impact zone, but the building trembled. After 10 minutes, the shelling turned to a rolling barrage that advanced 100 yards every four minutes.

Glider troops edged forward behind the barrage as daylight returned to Normandy. The attacking force also included two jeeps and trailers loaded with men and supplies from the 501st, the men tasked with reaching Johnson at La Barquette.

First Lieutenant Sumpter Blackmon led the jeep-borne force. He and his soldiers received enemy fire, and they responded with rifles, grenades, and two vehicle-mounted machine guns. The exchange killed a jeep driver, Private First Class John A. Houlihan. The men knew nothing about Father Sam's aid station, and they thumped the building with rifle grenades.

Bullets also smacked the aid station, and a bright red tracer flew through a shattered window and ricocheted down from the ceiling. It passed through Father's Sam pants, setting them on fire, as well as a wool rug. He quickly smothered the flames but sustained second-degree burns on his groin. The skin bubbled and blistered, yet he brushed off the pain and kept working after dressing the wound.

As German resistance wilted, Blackmon's men hastily searched each house except the aid station because they received no fire from that building. The lieutenant's party soon motored on to La Barquette and delivered the supplies.

The rolling barrage ended at 6 AM, but small-arms fire rattled on.

At La Barquette, Colonel Johnson instructed Blackmon to begin evacuating casualties. The jeep teams loaded wounded men aboard the trailers and began making trips to a surgical facility established by the 101st at the Château de Colombière in Hiesville.

The journey was 10 miles roundtrip, and on the last ferry mission Blackmon learned about the wounded left with Father Sam at Basse Addeville.

The jeeps sped back there, and Blackmon headed for the one house ignored earlier. Only its north and south ends stood. As he approached, the lieutenant clutched a hand grenade, unsure what to expect. Masonry and broken rafters blocked the front door, so he circled to the rear.

Fisher saw Blackmon and shouted, "Americans in here!" Father Sam dashed outside, yelling to prevent another tragedy. The two officers met, and Blackmon learned that 11 wounded paratroopers had survived. He also noticed the chaplain's injury. "His trousers were in tatters, and there was something wrong with his leg," Blackmon recalled. "I asked him if he was hurt. He said no, that I was to get these men out and take care of them."

The lieutenant explained that wounded soldiers already filled his two trailers, but he and the jeeps would return. He surveyed the devastated aid station before leaving Father Sam, who now had the squad stove back in operation.

Sniper fire erupted when the jeeps returned. One shot hit Blackmon's driver, Pfc. Roy L. Spivey, who suffered a lacerated scalp that drenched his face in blood. His buddies sprayed bullets into foliage along the road and flushed out two shooters, young parachute soldiers in camouflaged smocks who promptly surrendered. The incident occurred near the aid station. Father Sam witnessed the aftermath. Both prisoners bubbled with contempt, their minds molded by a National Socialist education that twisted them into hate machines wholly committed to Adolf Hitler. They snickered at Spivey and hocked saliva on the ground.

Their insolence enraged Blackmon's men. His radio operator, Private John T. Leitch, leveled a carbine at the Germans. Father Sam realized Leitch's intent and ordered him to stop, but Leitch riddled the pair. The murder of unarmed men, even Nazi ideologues, sickened the chaplain. He felt obliged to initiate judicial action against Leitch, but that could wait.

The time had come for the aid station survivors to make their exodus. Father Sam and Fisher helped carry men to the trailers, the most seriously injured first.

Private Floyd H. Martin from Company C, 501st had wounds to his face and shoulder caused by machine-pistol bullets. He was only 16, having lied about his birth date when he enlisted. The underage paratrooper marveled at the aid station and its bashed-in roof. "Looking at the house the next day when we left it, I can't figure out how we ever came out alive."

Maria and Noémie also survived the build-

ing's destruction.

The evacuation required three back-and-forth excursions to Hiesville. Father Sam stayed at the aid station until the final pickup.

As he waited, 2nd Lt. Elder B. Collier from Company D, 501st led a patrol into Basse Addeville to hunt for German holdouts. His men dislodged an enemy officer and his orderly from one house. Collier later recalled seeing the chaplain. "He was filthy and tired-looking, and he was very noticeably quiet."

Father Sam departed in the last jeep.

At the Château de Colombière, a stone edifice that looked like a medieval fortress, he found Captain Joseph A. Duehren, Catholic chaplain for the 401st Glider Infantry. Duehren recalled, "We helped where we could, carrying the wounded men in, taking them to the operating room, administering the Last Sacraments and administering to their material wants."

About an hour after Father Sam arrived, he answered an urgent call for Type O blood, the universal blood group. He rolled up his sleeve and gave two pints for a soldier with an abdominal wound and a rare blood type.

"At 0230 he sent me to bed," Duehren recalled. The 501st chaplain carried on alone among the wounded, catnapping when he could. He worked at the chateau until about noon on June 9, when a lieutenant from his regiment arrived with wounded men and drove him to Vierville where Colonel Johnson assembled the regiment.

Two paratroopers dug Father Sam a foxhole and stuffed it with a parachute for bedding. As he flopped into the downy nest, a German aircraft dropped three bombs nearby, but, as he later explained, he was too exhausted to care. "If the whole German Luftwaffe came over, it couldn't have kept me from going to sleep. I slept 24 hours straight through."

Combat ended for the 501st in mid-June, and its survivors returned to England by ship in July. The regiment received new men to replace those lost.

First Lieutenant Richard Engels joined regimental headquarters and became personnel officer, replacing a captain who died of wounds. First Lieutenant Laurence S. Critchell Jr. became his assistant. Among their duties, the two newcomers oversaw awards and decorations.

The duo sent Bronze Star and Silver Star recommendations to division headquarters for Maj. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor's approval. He possessed sole decision-making authority for these decorations. Colonel Johnson also had 10 men whom he nominated for the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), the nation's second highest decoration for combat valor. Final decisions on these rested with higher headquarters in Europe.

Pvt. Robert P. Runyan, Detachment J, 165th Signal Photo Company / Bill Warnock

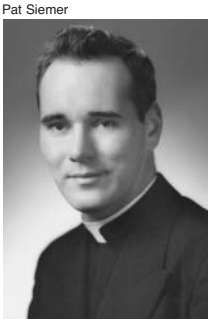
ABOVE: Kneeling in a temporary burial site on the grounds of the Château de Colombière, Father Sam grants absolution to paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division who have been killed in action or have died of wounds. The cemetery had been established by a group of glider pilots as they awaited transportation back to England, and eventually 188 Germans and 249 Americans were temporarily interred there. Among the Americans were Tech 5 Norman Dick, Corporal Elbert Yeager, and Sergeant Lowell Norwood. The bodies of the Americans were later transferred to a cemetery in Blosville, while the Germans were reinterred in Orglandes.

Teri Kruse

Nancy Glandon

Drew Carrel

Pat Siemer



Pictured left to right are Sergeant Lowell E. Norwood; Tech 5 Norman Lee Dick; Major Francis E. Carrel, the regimental surgeon who was codenamed "Klondike Angel" and established the Klondike Aid Station at Basse Addeville; and James F. Jacobson, the trooper from Company C, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment whose aid station experience led him to the priesthood after the war.

Johnson also asked Engels and Critchell to prepare a proposal for the Medal of Honor. News about Father Sam's deeds reverberated through the regiment and changed the colonel's attitude toward his Catholic chaplain. The padre exemplified selflessness and regarded his own survival as incidental, traits that Johnson valued above all else. After Normandy, no man in the regiment inspired more respect from Johnson.

Army Regulation 600-45 stipulated that a Medal of Honor recommendation contain "incontestable proof" in written form, namely eyewitness affidavits. Engels took sworn statements from aid station survivors now in England. Critchell traveled to the 81st General Hospital in Cardiff, Wales, to interview Jacobson and obtain his statement. The two lieutenants collected a dozen affidavits. The regimental draftsman, Private Val B. Suarez, created a map, and Critchell wrote a three-page narrative detailing the full story.

Johnson submitted the recommendation to General Taylor on August 7. He promptly endorsed it, but for a lower decoration, the DSC.

Taylor himself lacked the authority to approve or disapprove a Medal of Honor. The War Department reserved that prerogative for itself. The division commander could offer only an opinion. The War Department also required that the division commander send the recommendation up the chain of command without

regard to his own opinion. Taylor complied.

Father Sam informed his family, "I have been put in for the Congressional Medal of Honor," he wrote. "I know you will be as thrilled by the honor of my being recommended as I was surprised."

The recommendation reached First Army headquarters on August 18. Seven days later its Awards and Decorations Board reviewed the documentation, and the three colonels on the board agreed with Taylor and voted for the DSC.

On September 1, Father Sam mailed another letter home. "The little matter I wrote about in my last letter did not go through. It was changed to the Distinguished Service Cross, and I am afraid that is quite above and beyond anything I may have done in combat."

The chaplain misunderstood the process. No final decision had occurred.

Major General William B. Kean, chief of staff for First Army, studied the recommendation and scribbled a terse note: "Ask the board to reconsider for MH. Maybe I am wrong but believe it is strong enough."

The board reconvened on September 2, and two colonels changed their votes to Medal of Honor. First Army commander, Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges, then endorsed the recommendation, giving a nod for the Medal of Honor. His staff sent the paperwork on to Lt. Gen. Omar N. Bradley at Twelfth Army Group headquarters.

While the papers traveled from desk to desk, the 101st and Father Sam returned to combat. The padre made his fourth water landing when he descended into a Dutch castle moat.

Colonel Johnson died on October 8 from an abdominal wound caused by a shell fragment. The steely-eyed chieftain passed into legend. He had forged his paratroopers into a lethal instrument of destruction, but the only man he deemed Medal of Honor worthy was a priest, a man with no weapon, no bravado, and no killer instinct.

The week after Johnson perished, General Bradley's board recommended approval for the Medal of Honor. Bradley concurred, adding his signature. In November General Dwight D. Eisenhower lent his support and forwarded the recommendation across the Atlantic.

The documentation arrived at the Pentagon just after Thanksgiving. The War Department Decorations Board scrutinized the affidavits and Critchell's narrative. On November 28, Board President, Maj. Gen. Emory S. Adams, announced its vote—Medal of Honor.

The file folder with the paperwork landed on Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall's desk for final approval. The top Army officer delegated much responsibility to subordinates, untangling himself from a jungle of decisions and paperwork. He focused on issues impacting the war's outcome but made an exception regarding the medal. He reviewed each proposal for its award, affirming or rejecting the recommendation made by his Decorations Board. Only the president or secretary of war could overrule his decision, and they seldom intervened.

Although an Army regulation governed the process, unwritten policies played a role. One policy held that "non-combatants," namely chaplains and medical personnel, deserved no place among Medal of Honor recipients. General Marshall loosened the policy as the war progressed and permitted five combat medics to receive the medal, but he never wavered on chaplains.

He lowered Father Sam's decoration to the Distinguished Service Cross.

A staff officer recorded the decision on December 2, 1944, without explanation.

The same month, four other chaplains had their Medal of Honor recommendations lowered to the DSC. The four men, one Jewish, one Catholic, and two Protestants, had died together in 1943 after giving their life jackets to fellow passengers when their ship sank following a German submarine attack. The drowned clergymen and Father Sam were the only U.S. Army chaplains nominated for the Medal of Honor during World War II.

Back in Europe, Father Sam fell into German hands on December 20 while searching for casualties during the Battle of the Bulge. The Army reported him missing in action. In February 1945, his family received a letter from him through the International Red Cross. He was a prisoner at Stalag IIA. The Army contacted his father in Portland, Oregon, and arranged for a DSC presentation ceremony. His father received the decoration on his son's behalf.

Soviet troops seized Stalag IIA in late April. Father Sam journeyed home and separated from the military but returned to active duty in 1946 due to a chaplain shortage.

He made his final combat jump—and fifth

AIRBORNE EPILOGUE: KLONDIKE AID STATION SURVIVORS

TWO SURVIVORS OF THE KLONDIKE AID STATION LOST THEIR LIVES BEFORE WORLD WAR II ENDED.

AN ARTILLERY SHELL killed John Marnye in Holland on September 24, 1944. The Hammond, Indiana, native left a wife in North Carolina, a young woman he met while at Camp Mackall.

Albert Meyer also fell in Holland. The Company A, 501st rifleman from Los Angeles spent 27 days hospitalized after the aid station, recovering from a shell-splinter wound to his left leg. He died in combat on October 5, 1944.

For the survivors who lived to see home again, Father Sam's dedication and high courage had a ripple effect, making possible families and future generations. Claude W. Koenig parachuted into Normandy as a mortarman with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st. Enemy bullets fractured his left femur on D-Day, and an artillery shell broke the bone again on November 10, 1944. The second mishap ended his combat service. He returned to Superior, Wisconsin, and later moved to Milwaukee where he worked as a process engineer for a cement company. He died of a heart attack on July 3, 1976, leaving a wife, two children, and three grandchildren.

Joseph C. Newman served with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st. He arrived at the aid station after a rifle bullet punched a large hole in his shoulder. In February 1945, another bullet fractured an arm bone, and a medical discharge followed that summer. He eventually married and became a stepfather of four. He retired as a station manager for the U.S. Postal Service in Kokomo, Indiana, and died at age 66.

The concussion victim, Thomas Hildebrand, recalled Normandy as a blur. "I don't remember a whole lot," he said. "I was out of my head most of the time, and afterward I was in the hospital for 17 days." Injured again at Bastogne, the lucky survivor returned home to Wisconsin. He settled in Rhinelander after he married and started a carpet business. Hildebrand later commanded an American Legion post, served as a school board president, and led the local Chamber of Commerce. He had three sons and seven grandchildren by the time he died in 1999.

The medic, Everett Fisher, nearly died on July 8, 1945, when a card game went awry and a pistol slug ripped into his abdomen. He returned to civilian life after 214 days hospitalized. Fisher married in 1950 and fathered three children. The former aid man worked as a letter carrier for the Postal Service and lived 50 years after Normandy.

Floyd Martin suffered a leg wound in Holland but soldiered on until VE-Day. He returned home to

water landing—with the 11th Airborne Division during the Korean War. The conflict lasted three years, and no army chaplain received the Medal of Honor, the bar still set beyond their reach.

Father Sam made the military his career and ascended to major general in 1967 and became Chief of Chaplains, the highest post for a U.S. Army chaplain. The general occupied a Pentagon office and exerted influence at the top.

It was no coincidence that in 1968 an Army chaplain received the Medal of Honor for rescuing 20 wounded soldiers in Vietnam. The following year, another Army chaplain received the medal, a posthumous award to a paratrooper padre killed in Vietnam.

Father Sam retired from the army in 1971 and guided the USO for two years as its national president. Afterward, he relocated to South Dakota and became a parish priest in the Sioux Falls Diocese. He remained there until 1983, when he accepted a position at the University of Notre Dame as special assistant to the president for ROTC affairs.

Few people knew about his Medal of Honor recommendation. He omitted it from his published memoir along with all mention of awards and decorations, but in 1986 he shared the story with Sgt. Maj. Francis X. Boyle Jr., chief ROTC instructor at Notre Dame. The story amazed the sergeant major, who wrote to Senator Dan Quayle and called for a "congressional inquiry" to rectify what Boyle considered an injustice.

The senator investigated and received a courteous response from the Military Awards Branch at the U.S. Army Military Personnel Center. The

SP5 Thomas C. Nurre / Bill Warnock

On January 28, 1971, at the height of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, Major General Francis R. Sampson, serving a chief of Army chaplains, visits patients at a U.S. Army hospital in Japan.

responding officer explained that in 1952 Congress had terminated Medal of Honor awards for World War II deeds, and the Army had no power to waive that statutory restriction. The respondent also explained that General Marshall personally made the decision in Father Sam's case, and it would be "presumptuous" of the Army to arbitrarily review the general's "subjective judgment" after so many years.

Boyle reluctantly dropped the matter. He died two years later at age 50.

The chaplain returned to Sioux Falls in 1987, having retired again, though he occasionally substituted when a local priest was ill or away from town.

Father Sam led a humble but happy retirement, residing in a tiny wood-frame house once owned by his maternal grandparents. He underwrote school tuition for local families who

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Charlotte, North Carolina, and became a pipefitter before moving to Florida in 1955 with his family. Reflecting on France, he saw only one explanation for his survival: Father Sam. "I feel my life was in his hands and he brought me through." Martin had three children and died in 2000.

All the survivors shared his opinion, but none ever imagined the chaplain's actions would propel one man to the priesthood. James Jacobson felt forever indebted to Father Sam. "I know for a fact that without his aid and constant vigilance I would have been buried over in France someplace."

The desperate hours at the aid station continually flooded back on Jacobson, and he found inspiration in that nightmare. The chaplain's poise and purpose pulled at him.

The handsome boy from Chicago radically altered his postwar life. He relinquished his girlfriends and career ambitions to enter the Catholic seminary at Ipswich, Massachusetts.

Ordained in 1954, Father Jim's life and work became one. He served in Missouri and Michigan before volunteering for missionary work in Madagascar. His tropical sojourn began in Morondava, a small port city with sandy streets and mangrove swamps. He eventually transferred inland to Ankavandra on the island's broad, dusty savannah. After five years, Father Jim returned to Missouri in 1968 to preside over a seminary in Jefferson City. He oversaw the school until relocating to Texas, where he pastored Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Lufkin and Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Diboll. The former parachute infantryman occasionally spoke to parishioners about combat in Holland and the crucible at Bastogne, where he earned a second Purple Heart. Yet it was in France where death collected a promissory note from him.

That IOU came due on Thanksgiving Day, 1978. His associate pastor nodded off while driving them home and slammed their automobile against a tree in the Angelina National Forest. Father Jim's heart stopped forever in that lonely woodland. He was 54.

More than 500 people gathered at a double funeral for the two priests. The mourners represented a small sampling of the lives bettered by Father Jim. He led a purpose-driven life after the war, a frenetic effort to reconcile his debt by advancing the welfare of others.

Today the names of four other aid station survivors remain uncertain. But no matter their identities, all the survivors stand as testaments to war's greatest paradox, something best explained in Father Sam's words:

"General Sherman was not quite right when he said, 'War is hell,' for in hell there is no love, no charity. There is only hate. And though war is the greatest expression of hate on earth, yet even there the divine spark of love occasionally shines through the dark, like a diamond on black velvet, or like a star through the storm clouds on a moonless night."

For those men and countless others, that light was Francis Sampson.

JFK's First Brush with

LST-449 and the future president of the United States survived a massive Japanese attack in the Solomon Islands. **BY JOHN DOMAGALSKI**

All Photos: National Archives

Activity at Japanese air bases in the northern Solomon Islands reached a fever pitch as the South Pacific sun rose on the morning of April 7, 1943. The distinctive sound of roaring aircraft engines filled the air at fields bearing the names of Ballale, Kahili, and Buka. All of the bases were on or near the island of Bougainville. Scores of planes marked with the red circle insignia of the rising sun were soon taking off. The aircraft combined into four groups while circling before turning south.

Perhaps unknown to the Japanese pilots, however, the planes were under careful watch by Allied coastwatchers. The agents quickly reported the developments to American authorities on Guadalcanal.

The operation was the first act of a massive air offensive against American positions in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea directed by Fleet Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. The attacks were dubbed the "I" Operation and would hit four key target areas over the course of a week. The admiral ordered the action to help reverse recent Japanese setbacks in the region and stall the forthcoming American advance that was sure to continue from Guadalcanal. The Americans had recently won control of the embattled island after nearly six months of heavy fighting.

The large Japanese formation numbered 177 planes—67 Aichi D3 Val dive bombers and 110 Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighters. The attackers were only slightly fewer in number than those in the first wave of the Pearl Harbor attack 15 months earlier. It was one of the largest Japanese air strikes mounted to date during World War II.

The air formation was bound for Iron Bottom Sound. The narrow body of water separates Guadalcanal and the nearby islands of Florida and Tulagi. Just a few months earlier, the area had been the scene of a bitter struggle. Now, however, it was a forward operating base for American forces preparing to advance up the Solomons chain. A stockpile of supplies and ammunition sat at Guadalcanal waiting for future operations. Tulagi harbor had been developed into a major naval base capable of housing warships as large as cruisers.

On the morning the Japanese air attack took off, *LST-449* (Landing Ship, Tank) was slowly plodding toward the Guadalcanal area. The vessel was under the command of Lieutenant Carl Livingston. It was near the end of a voyage that had begun at Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. A small landing craft designed to carry tanks in coastal waters and an assortment of cargo including some bombs, its heavy load consisted of army troops and naval officers bound for duty in the Solomons.

Essentially a large landing craft, *LST-449* was designed to haul tanks, vehicles, and personnel over the open ocean directly to beachheads. Spanning more than 300 feet in length and measuring 50 feet wide, it displaced 1,625 tons empty. The slow speed—generally less than 10 knots—earned the class of ships the deserving nickname of "large slow targets." The vessels' few weapons were an assortment of light guns for antiaircraft defense.

Among the passengers aboard *LST-449* that day was Lieutenant (j.g.) John F. Kennedy. It was the end of a long trek to the South Pacific for the young naval officer. He came from a wealthy Massachusetts family and his upbringing included private schools and a college degree from Harvard. The patriarch of the family, Joseph P. Kennedy, served a stint as the American ambassador to Great Britain. An older brother, Joe, was serving in the Navy as a pilot.

Despite having a bad back, the younger Kennedy was able to enter naval service in late 1941 through the help of an officer who had served as the naval attaché in London when his father was ambassador. He spent time in Washington, D.C., at the Office of Naval Intelligence

Death

A convoy of LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) and its escort vessels steam toward the island of New Guinea. John F. Kennedy was aboard LST-449 when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. INSET: A youthful John F. Kennedy poses for a photographer while wearing the uniform a U.S. Navy lieutenant. Kennedy nearly lost his life before he ever took command of the PT-109.

and in Charleston, South Carolina, before attending Naval Reserve Officers Training School in Chicago. The school was a crash course for recent college graduates, delivering the basic responsibilities of a naval officer.

Kennedy volunteered for PT-boat duty while in Chicago. The small, fast boats had gained national attention when Lieutenant John Bulkeley evacuated General Douglas MacArthur and his family from the Philippines in early 1942. The PT-boat service had since been expanded and offered the alluring opportunity for action and a seagoing command. Kennedy next went to the Motor Torpedo Boat Training Center in Melville, Rhode Island. After graduation he was ordered to remain at the facility as an instructor.

Like many men in uniform at the time, however, Kennedy wanted to get into the war. His chance came on February 23, 1943, with orders to report to Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 2 operating in the Solomon Islands. Kennedy

rode the transport *Rochambeau* out of San Francisco to the South Pacific before boarding *LST-449* for the final run to Tulagi.

Kennedy would eventually command *PT-109*. He was destined to become a war hero for saving some of his crew after the boat was rammed and sunk by a Japanese destroyer. But on April 7, 1943, as the LST slowly plodded toward Guadalcanal, Kennedy was just another young officer serving thousands of miles away from home.

LEFT: A Japanese Aichi D3A Type 99 dive bomber is caught in flight by a photographer in a nearby aircraft. RIGHT: The Grumman F4F Wildcat was the first American fighter that was capable of dogfighting the nimble Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter during the opening months of World War II in the Pacific. TOP: This aerial view of Tulagi island in the Solomons chain illustrates the close nature of the waterways in the southern area of the archipelago. LST-449 was steaming toward nearby Guadalcanal when the vessel entered the combat zone.

Japanese officers expected a large bounty of targets to be waiting for their pilots in the waters around Guadalcanal. A morning intelligence report placed 12 warships and 14 transports in the immediate area. The targets were indeed plentiful. A force of American cruisers and destroyers, readying for a voyage north to bombard Japanese land positions, slipped out of the area before the attackers arrived, but a number of other Allied vessels remained. The nearly three dozen vessels in or near Tulagi harbor included a PT tender, minesweepers, tug boats, and transports of various sizes. Across the sound near Guadalcanal were two naval cargo ships, two destroyers, and three merchantmen.

The coastwatcher's early warning gave the American air commanders some time to prepare for the onslaught. At 2 PM the radar station on nearby Russell Island picked up the first sign of the intruders, prompting radio Guadalcanal to broadcast the first of two "condition red" reports. The coded messages warned that an air attack was imminent.

The alert sent crewman on ships across the area racing to man guns. The firepower, though, was limited as many of the cargo and auxiliary vessels only had small machine guns for air defense. Additional firepower was available on land in the form of two quadruple 40mm gun mounts positioned on the high point of Tulagi.

The best chance to thwart the enemy assault rested with the American airpower in the region. Bombers of various types were the first to take off, flying southeast to escape the impending attack. Seventy-six fighters then rose from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal to meet the approaching attackers. The force was a mix of frontline American aircraft, including, Lockheed P-38 Lightings, Grumman F4F Wildcats, Vought F4U Corsairs, Grumman F6F Hellcats, and Bell P-39 Airacobras.

The air battle began about an hour after the initial radar contact. The outnumbered American planes tangled with Zeros in a series of fierce dogfights over the approaches to the Guadalcanal area. The Val dive bombers roared past the melee into Iron Bottom Sound.

Fifteen bombers headed for the *Kanawha* just after 3 PM. The tanker was leaving Tulagi harbor escorted by the destroyer *Taylor* when it was hit by five bombs. The crew abandoned the burning ship as several smaller vessels closed to help. It was subsequently reboarded, taken under tow to the west side of Tulagi, and beached. *Kanawha,* however, did not survive the night, sliding into deep water and sinking by the stern without fanfare.

The New Zealand corvette *Moa* did not receive the urgent air raid warnings. It was fueling from the tanker *Erskine Phelps* in Tulagi harbor when the attackers arrived. The small warship quickly sank after taking two direct bomb hits. The missiles were apparently aimed at the much larger tanker.

A third tanker, positioned off Guadalcanal, narrowly escaped the furious attack. *Tappahannock* and the destroyer *Woodworth* started moving toward open water at the first sign of trouble. The pair managed to dodge seven Vals with slight damage from a few near misses.

Other ships made sure the attackers paid a heavy price. The PT tender *Niagara* and several small torpedo boats moored under jungle foliage in a nearby river were in a perfect position to fire on the Vals coming out of their dives. The ships shot down at least two and damaged several others.

At the height of the action a lone American Wildcat fighter piloted by Marine 1st Lt. James E. Swett chased the enemy through friendly antiaircraft fire. He shot down three Vals during their dives and four more over nearby Florida Island. With his plane out of ammunition and badly damaged, Swett made a safe water landing near Tulagi. The remarkable effort earned him the Medal of Honor for

"extraordinary heroism and personal valor."

The skies were still clear of enemy aircraft when *LST-449* arrived off Togoma Point on the northern coast of Guadalcanal in the early afternoon. A local base officer soon came aboard to provide assistance—a routine procedure when a new vessel arrived in the area. Livingston remembered, "A number of transports and destroyers were observed leaving the area at high speed." The radio operator then picked up the urgent "condition red" message.

A small boat was suddenly spotted heading toward the LST from Togoma Point. It delivered Marine Major Nichols. He reported aboard with orders to form a task force consisting of the destroyer *Aaron Ward*, *LST-449,* and *LST-446*. The group was to leave the area at once and head toward Espiritu Santo with Nichols in overall command.

ABOVE: Shown riding at anchor off Okinawa in 1945, LST-449 survived the attack by Japanese planes off Guadalcanal in 1943. The LST was a workhorse of the massive sealift that carried Army, Marine, and Navy personnel to victory across the Pacific in World War II. LEFT: U.S. Marine fighter pilot James E. Swett shot down seven Japanese Aichi D3A Val dive bombers over the Solomons during the attack on LST 449. He received the Medal of Honor for his actions.

Livingston quickly scanned the area to find the other ships. "Neither the *Aaron Ward* or the *446* were in sight," he noted. "The *Aaron Ward* was sighted a few minutes later and stood over toward this vessel at high speed." It was about 2:20 PM. Several other small vessels were in the immediate area, but *LST-446* never did appear.

The sailors aboard the slow *LST-449* knew *Aaron Ward* offered a good measure of protection. The destroyer was almost 350 feet long and displaced nearly 2,400 tons fully loaded. It bristled with an assortment of guns, including a 5-inch main battery and 40mm and 20mm antiaircraft guns.

The destroyer and LST were positioned about a mile and a half off Togoma Point. The sky was partially overcast with low clouds. *Aaron Ward* signaled for the LST to follow its movements and begin zig-zagging when enemy planes approached. The pair then began to move eastward paralleling the Guadalcanal coast. Clearing the confined waters between Guadalcanal and Tulagi offered the protection of the open waters to the east and south.

The distant appearance of enemy planes to the north prompted *Aaron Ward* to begin zigzagging and increase speed to 20 knots to widen the distance between the two vessels. The destroyer then began alternating its rudder from full right to full left.

Just after 3 PM, lookouts on *Aaron Ward* were able to clearly make out two distinct groups of aircraft. The first was a cluster of planes involved in a dogfight to the northwest in the vicinity of Savo Island. The second group, representing a greater danger, was heading south from Tulagi. It was the dive bombers searching for vessels to attack after slipping past the fighters. The gun director on *Aaron Ward* began tracking the second group of planes.

A group of Vals descended on the small flotilla less than 10 minutes after the aircraft were sighted. Livingston reported that his vessel was attacked by nine dive bombers. *LST-449* was straddled by six bombs. "No bomb missed the ship by more than 75 feet," Livingston later wrote. "Ship was shaken severely by each explosion. The nearest on the port quarter lifting stern and listing the ship to starboard about 20 degrees."

As a simple passenger, Kennedy had no duties aboard the vessel. He was lying in his bunk reading when the attack began. Although the sharp movements of the LST aroused his attention, there was no announcement regarding any type of action. "Ship was maneuvered with full right and left rudder, rudder being put over when word was received planes were diving," Livingston wrote of the action.

Further sharp movements prompted Kennedy to rise from his bunk to head for the deck. The ship's 20mm cannons and 3-inch gun suddenly opened fire. The first near-miss bomb then splashed close aboard, throwing the ship into a 20-degree list. A cascade of water hit Livingston on the port wing of the bridge. Kennedy was nearly thrown off his feet. The passenger made it to the deck in time to see the subsequent near misses hit the water on both sides of the LST. Each explosion rocked the ship and sent a plume of water high into the air.

The 20mm guns aboard *LST-449* expended 1,600 rounds of ammunition, while the 3-inch cannon fired off 13 shots. "Two planes were shot down and seen to crash in the water and a third was burning, leaving a trail of black smoke when last seen," Livingston wrote of the engagement. After reviewing gunner accounts, the commanding officer was so certain his ship downed two enemy planes that he quickly asked for the tally to be made official. "It is requested official credit be given this vessel for the shooting down of two Japanese dive bombers," he recorded in an action report. A direct hit would have surely sunk the boat, but no Japanese bomb would find *LST-449* on that afternoon. The ship, however, did not escape damage. The near misses jarred the landing craft fastened to davits on the port side, damaged several bulkheads, and wrecked the port ballast pump. "Rudder believed to be out of line as steering gear has failed twice since bombing," Livingston added. "Helmsmen continue to report difficulty with steering."

The warship nearest to the LST was not as

Continued on page 74

Guderian's La

GERMAN PANZERS UNDER GENERAL HEINZ GUDERIAN CAPTURED THE UKRAINE IN 1941.

During the German Army's advance into the Ukraine in the summer of 1941, a tank emerges after fording a stream. German armored spearheads advanced rapidly across open terrain that provided good tank country, and waterways were at times only a slight hindrance to their progress.

st Victory

BY JEFF CHRISMAN

AKG Images

THE FIRST TIME ADOLF HITLER VENTURED into the captured territory of the Soviet Union was six weeks into the campaign on August 4, 1941, when he traveled to Borisov to the headquarters of Army Group Center and its commander, Field Marshal Fedor von Bock. Colonel General Heinz Guderian, commander of the Army Group's Panzer Group 2, whose troops had spent those seven weeks slashing through the western Soviet Union, had been called to the headquarters to make a report to the Führer.

During their meeting, Hitler spoke of his indecision regarding the further course of the campaign. He said that Leningrad was the campaign's primary objective at this point because of its industrial capacity. But he was not sure whether Moscow or Ukraine would come next. Later, Guderian wrote, "He seemed to incline toward the latter target for a number of reasons: first, Army Group South seemed to be laying the groundwork for victory in that area; secondly, he believed that the raw materials and agricultural produce of the Ukraine were necessary to Germany for the further prosecution of the war; and finally, he thought it essential that the Crimea, 'that Soviet aircraft carrier operating against the Rumanian oilfields' be neutralized."

On the flight back to his own headquarters, Guderian decided he would make preparations based on a continuation of the attack toward Moscow, which was the course he thought to be best and he knew that it was the priority for Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, commander in chief of the Army, Army Chief of Staff Colonel General Franz Halder, and Field Marshal von Bock. At that point the troops on the panzer group's north flank were in heavy combat in the Yelna salient east of Smolensk, while on the south flank they had just encircled several Soviet divisions in Roslavl, 425 miles from their start on June 22 and 225 miles from Moscow.

On July 19, Hitler had issued Directive 33, ordering Army Group Center to continue its advance toward Moscow with only infantry units and to turn its armored units to the north toward Leningrad and to the south toward Ukraine, unleashing a storm of controversy. Over the next five weeks, what had been a simmering bone of contention flared into open controversy. Halder pleaded for a continuation of the attack toward Moscow, believing that diversions to the north and south would only bog his troops down in positional warfare. Bock also lobbied for Moscow, supported by Guderian and Col. Gen. Hermann Hoth, commander of Army Group Center's other armored spearhead, Panzer Group 3. All three firmly believed that the only way to defeat the Soviet Union was to capture its capital,

the central hub of the entire nation, before year's end.

On August 12, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, commander of the armed forces, issued an order confirming the intention of removing the armored units from Army Group Center for use in attacks to the north and south. On the 18th, Halder and von Brauchitsch sent a long memorandum to Hitler thoroughly explaining their objections. Hitler stood firm. Halder suggested to von Brauchitsch that they resign in protest, but von Brauchitsch vacillated. They did not resign. Ironically, on the other side of the front line Soviet Marshal Josef Stalin was enduring a similar struggle.

Toward the end of July, General Georgi Zhukov, chief of staff of the Red Army, had reported to Stalin that a continued German advance from Smolensk toward Moscow was unlikely. He said German losses at Smolensk had been heavy and they had no available reserve. He therefore suggested that some of the units in front of Moscow should be transferred to other, more threatened sectors. Stalin flatly refused. He was sure that Moscow was Hitler's primary target and would not even consider lessening its protection.

As he was concluding his remarks, Zhukov struck what turned out to be another tender spot when he said that Kiev would have to be surrendered. Stalin would not even think of surrendering Kiev, the third most populous city in the Soviet Union. He saw Zhukov's words as an indication that he had lost his nerve and removed him from his position as chief of staff. Fortunately for the Soviets, Stalin assigned Zhukov to command the Reserve Front rather than having him shot, as had been his previous practice.

On August 12, Stalin appointed Lt. Gen. Andrei Eremenko to command the new Briansk Front composed of the Fiftieth and Thirteenth Armies and gave him specific orders to prepare to stop the renewed German offensive against Moscow, which was expected soon. Zhukov, though no longer chief of staff, kept himself fully informed about the overall situation. When he learned that recent prisoner interrogations indicated that Army Group Center had indeed gone over to the defensive on the approaches to Moscow he became alarmed.

Zhukov wired Stalin on August 19 and reiterated his concerns in light of recent events. In his reply, Stalin agreed with Zhukov that enemy operations indicated a potential threat to the Southwestern Front in Ukraine, but he said that resolute measures were being undertaken to prevent that. Stalin also restated his resolve to hold Kiev. Col. Gen. Mikhail Kirponos, commander of the Southwestern Front, agreed with Stalin. He could and would successfully defend Ukraine.

Army Group Center's Second Army, which was attacking eastward on Panzer Group 2's right flank, had not been able to keep pace with the motorized units of the panzer group. During the first week of August, Second Army's easternmost units were attacking near Cherikov on the Sosh River, almost 100 miles southwest of Guderian's units fighting on the Desna River east of Roslavl. Therefore, the panzer group's XXIV Motorized Corps spent the next three weeks cleaning up pockets of enemy troops on its southern and southwestern flanks, eliminating the threat and enabling the Second Army to catch up. This brought Panzer Group 2's units farther south. Whether they would continue in that direction or turn to the northeast toward Moscow was still up in the air.

On the 23rd, Guderian, as well as all the Army commanders subordinated to Army Group Center, were summoned to a conference at army group headquarters with von Bock and Halder. Fourth Army's Field Marshal Hans von Kluge, Second Army commander Col. Gen. Maximilian von Weichs, commander of the Ninth Army Colonel General Adolf Strauss, and the panzer leaders Guderian and Hoth were gathered in the conference room when von Bock and a dour looking Halder walked in.

"The Führer has decided to conduct neither the operation against Leningrad as previously envisaged by him, nor the offensive against Moscow as proposed by the Army General Staff, but to take possession first of the Ukraine and the Crimea," Halder announced.

The generals were stunned!

"What can we do against this decision?" asked von Bock. "Nothing. It's immutable," Halder replied. There it was, the decision that they all feared and fought had been made.

But maybe there was something they could do. Bock suggested that Guderian accompany Halder back to the Führer's headquarters in East Prussia and try to convince Hitler to change his mind. They had to try something.

Guderian and Halder arrived at the headquarters about 8 on that Saturday evening; Halder went to check on arrangements for a meeting with Hitler while Guderian reported to von Brauchitsch. Guderian was floored when von Brauchitsch greeted him with the words, "I forbid you to mention the question of Moscow to the Führer. The operation to the south has been ordered. The problem now is simply how it is to be carried out. Discussion is pointless!"

Guderian thought the meeting was, therefore, pointless, but the army commander insisted, make your report, but no mention of Moscow.

Several members of the Führer's staff were present in the map room, including Keitel; General Alfred Jodl, chief of the operations staff of the armed forces; Colonel Rudolf Schmundt, Hitler's chief adjutant; and many others but neither Halder nor von Brauchitsch. Guderian was on his own.

National Archives

ABOVE: German infantrymen question Red Army prisoners and round up villagers after capturing a small settlement in the Ukraine during their 1941 advance. OPPOSITE: German tank soldiers survey the muddy quagmire in the immediate vicinity as they pause near the banks of the Dneiper River in the Ukraine. During the conquest of the region, elements of the 17th Army crossed the great river at the end of August 1941.

National Archives

Hitler greeted the panzer leader cordially and asked for his report. Guderian spoke about the current situation, the condition of his troops and their equipment, about the supply situation and Russian resistance.

"Do you believe your troops are still capable of a major effort?" Hitler inquired.

Guderian saw his opening. "If the troops are set a great objective, the kind that would inspire every man of them, yes."

"You are, of course, thinking of Moscow," Hitler replied.

"Yes my Führer, may I have permission to give my reasons?"

"By all means Guderian. Say whatever is on your mind."

General Guderian began slowly, laying out the detail he had organized on the plane:

Moscow was the head and heart of the Soviet Union ...

It's the communications center ...

It's the political brain ...

It's an important industrial area in its own right ...

It's the transportation hub of the empire ...

It's the only place Stalin would never abandon ...

It's where the Red Army would stand and fight ... and be destroyed.

The season and the weather were running out ...

The troops' morale ...

The orders and plans are ready ...

Hitler listened quietly, and when Guderian finished he walked over to the map, put a hand on Ukraine, and launched into a lecture justifying his intention to attack there first.

The conference broke up around midnight. Guderian strode out of the Wolf's Lair toward what would be the last victory in his long career. Guderian was the man who would be acknowledged as the creator of the German panzer forces in the 1930s. Western journalists coined the term "Blitzkrieg" to describe Guderian's plunge through Poland in 1939 and France in 1940. It was now 1941, and his troops had just cut through the western Soviet Union in a similar fashion and were set to encircle the enemy's capital. But first, there would be a diversion to the south, through the Ukraine.

In a quick call before leaving East Prussia, Guderian told his chief of operations, Lt. Col. Fritz Bayerlein, the news. This meant a suitably forlorn staff when the general arrived back at his headquarters. "There was nothing I could do, gentlemen, I had to give in," he told the assembled group upon his return. Halder and von Brauchitsch had left him out to dry, alone in front of Hitler and his entourage. Interestingly enough, when Guderian arrived back at his headquarters well after midnight, Halder's order for the attack was waiting for him, having arrived well before his meeting with Hitler.

The plan the German generals quickly developed was straightforward. Panzer Group 2 would continue south through eastern Ukraine and meet troops from Army Group South about 120 miles east of Kiev. Second Army would move south on the panzer group's right flank and provide a tight seal on the north side of the forming pocket. Army Group South's 17th Army, which was at that point closing up to the Dnieper River southeast of Kiev, would forge a bridgehead over the Dnieper near Kremenchug, about 150 miles southeast of Kiev. Panzer Group 1, Army Group South's armored strike force, would then advance northeast out of that bridgehead and meet Panzer Group 2's attack, closing and holding the eastern side of the pocket. Then the Sixth Army, currently holding the western side of the Dnieper north and south of Kiev, would crush Kiev and liquidate the pocket.

At the last minute Guderian had to give up his strongest corps, the XLVI Motorized Corps. Halder had it transferred to Army Group Center reserve on the eve of the attack in an attempt to husband it for his favored attack toward Moscow. This left the panzer group with only the XXIV Motorized Corps and the XLVII Motorized Corps.

All units of the panzer group were badly in need of rest and repairs. There had not been a break since the campaign began. The weather was hot and muggy between thunderous downpours. The best of the roads were compacted dirt that quickly turned into quagmires of deep mud when it rained. And when it did not rain there was the dust! Great clouds of dust hung over the march routes, stirred up by anything that moved and so fine that it penetrated clothing, coating the troops' sweating bodies. Engines broke down because their air filters could not keep out the dust. But the capture of Ukraine would not wait.

Assignments for the attack depended to a great extent on a unit's current location. The XXIV Motorized Corps units—3rd Panzer Division, 4th Panzer Division, and 10th Motorized Division—having been engaged for the last few weeks in eliminating pockets on the army's southwestern flank, would lead the attack south on the army's right flank while XLVII Motorized Corps units—17th Panzer Division,

National Archives

German engineers construct a bridge across a stream somewhere in the Ukraine during their advance in the summer of 1941. The engineers were also experienced combat troops.

18th Panzer Division, and the 29th Motorized Division—would cover the east. The attack would start on August 25 with the town of Konotop the first objective. After that, specific objectives would be decided on the road according to results achieved.

On August 24, Marshal Boris Shaposhnikov, Stalin's new chief of staff, informed Eremenko that his Briansk Front could expect Guderian's main blow to fall on its northern flank, first toward Briansk and then toward Moscow, probably the next day. Guderian's main blow did fall the next day. But it was on the front's southern flank toward Ukraine, not toward Moscow.

At first light on the 25th, Guderian set out for the headquarters of the 17th Panzer Division near Pochep on the panzer group's left, or eastern, flank. That flank was sparsely held, and Guderian wanted to make sure the division was fully informed as to its critical role. Unfortunately, before he could reach the division his command car and several vehicles of his column broke down completely due to poor road conditions.

General Walter Model, commander of the 3rd Panzer Division, XXIV Motorized Corps' spearhead, had reorganized his division into three balanced battle groups after the capture of Novozybkhov and was thrusting southeastward toward Novgorod-Seversk on the afternoon of the 25th. Aerial reconnaissance had determined that the bridges over the Desna River were still intact. It was imperative that at least one of those bridges be captured. Time was of the essence. About 5 PM, the lead battle group (Kampfgruppe), Kampfgruppe von Lewinski, three kilometers short of the Desna River, ran up against the first Soviet defensive positions.

Lieutenant Colonel Werner von Lewinski, commander of the division's 6th Panzer Regiment, called a halt to confer with his subordinates in a nearby ravine. Enemy observation aircraft circled overhead. General Model arrived to join the meeting. Just then the Soviet artillery fire escalated. Model was wounded in the hand, Colonel Gottfried Ries, commander of the division's artillery regiment, and several staff officers were killed. Model had no alternative but to pull back, await the remainder of the division, and prepare an attack for the morning.

During the 25th the 10th Motorized Division, on the XXIV Motorized Corps' right flank, was moving south. There were small pockets of determined resistance and roving groups of enemy troops who had been cut off from their headquarters. The division had captured Klinzy against light resistance on the 24th and was now moving toward Semenovka and Cholmy. The 4th Panzer Division, which had been clearing enemy pockets around Unecha, was now maneuvering south as well and began meeting stiff resistance as it approached Starodub, 45 miles north of Novgorod-Seversk.

Guderian did not reach the 17th Panzer Division headquarters near Pochep until mid-afternoon, just ahead of the XLVII Motorized Corps commander, General Joachim Lemelsen. Guderian was worried that the forces assigned to him for flank protection (XLVII Motorized Corps) were insufficient to handle the task and maintain the pace of the XXIV Motorized Corps as it plunged south into Ukraine. Guderian had requested the return of the XLVI Motorized Corps but had been rebuffed. He explained his concerns to General Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma, commander of the 17th Panzer Division, and General Lemelsen. Both men understood and were confident that they could maintain their advance along with the XXIV Motorized Corps. Guderian spent the night in Pochep so he could observe the division's attack in the morning.

Lemelsen also updated Guderian on the positions of the other corps units. The 29th Motorized Division was clearing the western bank of the Sudost River north of Pochep and waiting for relieving units from Fourth Army. The 18th Panzer Division was regrouping, having been spread out during the fighting for Roslavl.

At 5 AM on the 26th, the renewed 3rd Panzer Division attack on Novgorod-Seversk began with the three combined arms battle groups attacking from different directions. Artillery fire rained down on the lead elements as they approached the first positions, but now their own artillery was able to respond. The first roadblock was overrun. Maps indicated that the bridge over the Desna was at the northern entrance to the city. The advanced guard was soon at the northern entrance, but there was no bridge.

At about that time, Lt. Col. Gustav-Albrecht Schmidt-Ott reached the high ground northeast of the city with his 1st Battalion, Panzer Regiment 6. The broad valley of the Desna spread out before them, on their right the city and beyond that the high wooden road bridge over the Desna with a never-ending stream of vehicles fleeing eastward. Schmidt-Ott immediately ordered an attack.

By 10 AM the lead tanks reached the foot of the 875-yard-long wooden bridge. Suddenly, machine-gun and rifle fire erupted from two guard houses on the near end of the bridge. Artillery and mortar shells from the far bank began to fall. Tanks of the advanced guard opened up and quickly destroyed both guard houses. A German engineer vehicle roared up, and several men scampered under the bridge to remove demolition charges.

The tankers knew the bridge could go up at any minute. The tanks, firing at anything that moved, reached the far end of the bridge, and the shocked Soviet riflemen fled their positions. Tanks and half-tracks rushed across; engineers were rapidly cutting wires. Success! The panzer group had breached the Desna River. General Model immediately ordered his entire division

over the bridge with the 10th Motorized Division securing the rear.

Guderian received the news just after he had left the 17th Panzer Division operation on the east side of the Sudost River south of Pochep. Earlier he had diverted the 4th Panzer Division to the left flank to deal with Soviet forces gathering near the confluence of the Sudost and the Desna, southeast of Pogar. They would temporarily fill the gap between the 17th Panzer Division bridgehead at Pochep and the 3rd Panzer Division bridgehead at Novgorod-Seversk. There was little else Guderian could do until Second Army units arrived from the west or Fourth Army units arrived from the north to relieve his units.

In late afternoon, the 4th Panzer Division moved into Kister, a small city near the confluence of the two rivers, in open combat formation and met significant Soviet forces. General von Langermann's troops spent the remainder of that day and most of the next in difficult house-to-house combat, eliminating that threat to the panzer group's flank.

Guderian's headquarters had moved to Unecha during the day, and he arrived there just before midnight.

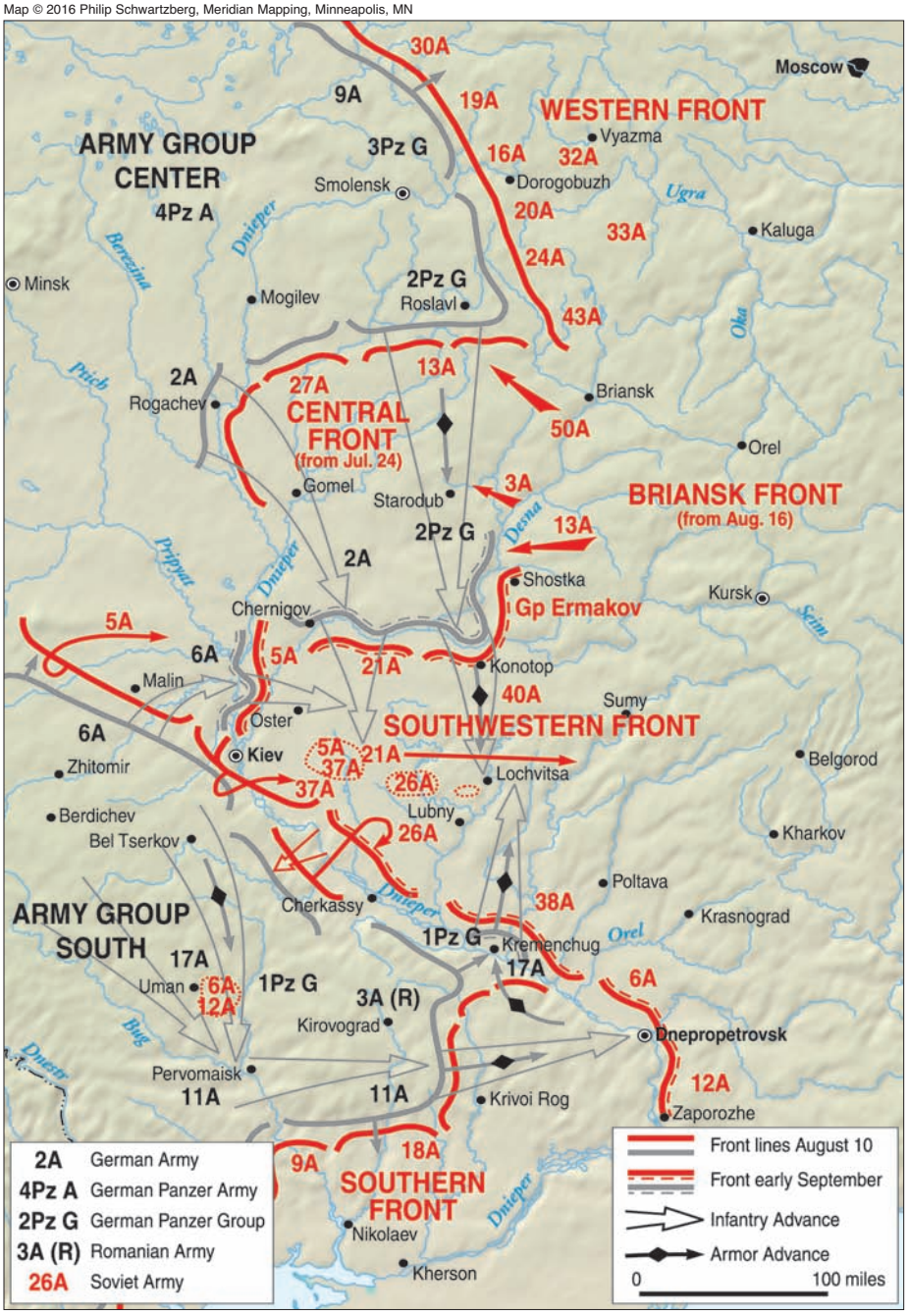
On the 27th, most units remained in contact with the enemy. The 17th Panzer Division was fighting near Semtsy, 7.5 miles south of Pochep; the 3rd Panzer Division was defending and enlarging its bridgehead south of Novgorod-Seversk, the 4th Panzer Division was engaged in heavy combat near Kister, and the 29th Motorized Division was covering the panzer group's deep eastern flank between Shukovka and Pochep. The 10th Motorized Division now covered the western flank near Cholmy. The 18th Panzer Division had finally gotten clear of Roslavl but was strung out on the road from there to Mglin.

Operations were mostly suspended the next day when early downpours created a sea of mud. By this time the Second Army was approaching the Desna River east of Chernigov. The boundary between Second Army and Panzer Group 2 was established as the line Surash-Klinzy-Klimovo-Cholmy–Sosnitza.

Sunrise on the 29th found virtually all units under Soviet air attack. During the next week the Soviets threw more than 4,000 ground attack and bomber sorties against the panzer group. Soviet units desperate to withdraw to the east undertook several vigorous and coordinated attacks against the panzer group's spearhead.

The 10th Motorized Division, having crossed the lower Desna, was leading on the panzer group's west flank and approaching the Kiev-Moscow railroad west of Konotop when it came under heavy attack to its front and right flank. The situation became so dire at one point that the division's bakery company had to drop its aprons and pick up its rifles. But the division still had to pull its forward units back across the Desna temporarily to stabilize the situation. The lead elements of the 3rd Panzer Division were also under extreme pressure at Shostka and Voronezh on the east side of the Desna. Voronezh had to be evacuated, but Shostka held.

The 17th Panzer Division was struggling to clear the east side of the Sudost south of Pochep. Once units of the Fourth Army had taken over for the 29th Motorized Division along the eastern flank south of Zukovka it was moved through the Novgorod-Seversk bridgehead to the east side of the Desna and turned north to relieve some of the pressure on the 17th Panzer Division. The 18th Panzer Division had finally begun to arrive and was replacing the 4th Panzer Division while clearing up the enemy on the west side of the Sudost near



Under the leadership of General Heinz Guderian, German forces invaded the Ukraine on Hitler's orders in the summer of 1941. Hitler chose to move into the region rather than continue efforts to capture the Soviet capital of Moscow or the major city of Leningrad.

Sovfoto

ABOVE: Soviet tanks and infantrymen advance across open ground during their effort to stem the German tide in the Ukraine. The Red Army suffered heavy casualties and yielded significant territory to the invaders.

Kister. After it was relieved, the 4th began shifting to Novgorod-Serversk, but its maneuvering was limited due to lack of fuel.

Once again General Guderian became concerned about his flank, but this time it was his west flank. He flew to XXIV Motorized Corps headquarters and told General von Geyr to spend the 30th liquidating the threat to his west flank. He could then resume his advance to the south on the 31st.

Guderian repeated his appeal for enough troops to do the job and pleaded for the return of the XLVI Motorized Corps. This time his entreaties bore fruit, if only grudgingly. Initially, only the Infantry Regiment Grossdeutschland was released to him on the 30th. Guderian needed the whole corps, but it was not available. On September 1, Army Group Center added the 1st Cavalry Division and on the 2nd came the 2nd SS Division Das Reich. Finally, the XLVI Motorized Corps headquarters arrived.

On the Army Group South front, 17th Army units made several assault crossings of the Dneiper River near Kremenchug, 160 miles southeast of Kiev, on the morning of August 29. They quickly enlarged and fortified their bridgehead against pressure from the Soviet 38th Army's units nearby.

On the 30th, Stalin ordered the new Briansk Front to attack from the Sevsk area toward Starodub and Guderian's spearhead. However, because it was still ordered to guard against an attack on Moscow, its efforts were more aimed at keeping Guderian from turning east than preventing his moving south. These attacks hit hard, but 3rd Panzer Division units were able to more or less fend them off and continue southward. The Germans did, however, recognize the threat to their left wing and leave forces to protect it.

The more immediate concern for the 3rd Panzer Division on the 30th was the Soviet force attacking its western flank. Lokotki and Schostka were hit in the morning from a dense wooded area to the west. Several 52-ton KV-1 tanks, against which the German antitank guns were powerless, threatened to overrun positions there until individual artillery pieces were brought forward to fire on the Soviet giants over open sites.

The next day, 4th Panzer Division tanks struck south-southwest from the Novgorod-Seversk bridgehead into the north flank of the enemy concentration in the wooded area and destroyed the threat. By evening on the 2nd, reconnaissance elements of the 3rd Panzer Division had pushed south to just five miles north of Krolovetz. The surge to the south continued.

The Grossdeutschland Regiment began arriving on September 2 and was directed to Novgorod-Seversk to hold the bridgehead, freeing up more of the 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions to continue the attack southward.

Guderian met the commander of the 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich, General Paul Hausser, in Avdeievka on September 3, informed him that 1st Cavalry Division would be coming up on his right flank in a day or two, and told him to be prepared to attack Sosnitza on the 4th.

Guderian next visited the 10th Motorized Division, which had been under extreme pressure and had suffered exceptionally high casualties fighting off attacks from the west. Over the past few days the division had been opposed by a greatly superior force of no less that four infantry divisions and a tank brigade. Guderian met with division commander General Friedrich von Loeper and praised him for his steadfast defense against such an overwhelming enemy force.

Pushing south along the east side of the Desna on September 2, the 3rd Panzer Division ran up against stiff resistance south of Voronezh. In the middle of a large wooded area with several lakes, the Soviets were holding the rail and road bridges over Essmany Creek, the only bridges for miles.

At mid-afternoon, after the division artillery had been brought forward and placed intense fire on the enemy positions, the reinforced 1st Battalion of Rifle Regiment 3 made an assault crossing of the creek and stormed the enemy positions. Simultaneously, the regiment's 2nd Battalion, which had found a concealed crossing spot upstream, fell on the enemy positions from behind. The Soviets pulled back.

The 4th Panzer Division resumed the advance to the southwest and captured Zarevka on September 3 against light resistance. It then encountered a Soviet column in Shernovka and destroyed it, taking 800 prisoners.

In the XLVII Motorized Corps sector on the 3rd, the 18th Panzer Division engaged a Soviet tank brigade at Trubchevsk and destroyed it, capturing four tanks intact and taking more than 1,000 prisoners. The 17th Panzer Division held the line of the Desna southwest of Trubchevsk to near Yevdokolye, and the 29th Motorized Division south from there to where the Sudost flows into the Desna. Since the beginning of the attack on August 25, the XLVII Motorized Corps had taken 17,000 prisoners, while the XXIV Motorized Corps had taken 13,000.

Guderian returned to his headquarters late, just as it started to rain again. He was a wor-

ried man, now more than ever. Not only were his flanks under heavy pressure, but his spearheads were meeting more and more resistance. The mud was making travel by wheeled vehicle virtually impossible. His panzer divisions had been reduced to half their original complement of tanks. Disabled vehicles littered the sides of every road they had traveled.

The next morning it had stopped raining, but it still took Guderian 4½ hours to travel the 45 miles to the 4th Panzer Division's front. The 4th was attacking Korop from the northeast and running into more determined resistance the closer it got. A Ju-87 Stuka dive bomber attack just after Guderian arrived loosened the defense, and Korop was captured later that afternoon. This allowed the 10th Motorized Division to shift to the west and fill the gap with the Das Reich at Sosnitza.

The corps commander, General Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg, was also with the 4th that day. He told Guderian that the 3rd Panzer Division had captured a map of Soviet dispositions and it indicated that his XXIV Motorized Corps was quite near the seam between the Soviet Thirteenth and Twenty-first Armies. The officers agreed that this presented an opportunity. Guderian then left for the 3rd Panzer Division to get Model's thoughts on the matter.

Completely by accident, the 3rd had taken a notable prisoner on September 3. Soviet General Pavel Vasilevich Chistov, a holder of the Order of Lenin, had been dispatched from Moscow to oversee the establishment of defensive positions along the Desna River. He had more than a million workers at his disposal. He arrived by train in Novgorod-Seversk direct from Moscow that morning, completely unaware that the city was in German hands.

The 3rd Panzer Division had captured Krolovetz the night before and was moving south toward Spaskoye when Guderian reached it. Model agreed with Guderian as to the opportunity they faced and the need for speed to exploit it. A short time later word came from the advance guard that there were no serviceable bridges over the Seim River at Spaskoye. Unfortunately for the impatient Model, it took his division two days and attacks at three different locations to get across the Seim.

Behind the XXIV Motorized Corps spearhead and covering the lengthening eastern flank, the 18th Panzer Division was holding along the Desna at Trubchevsk, the 17th Panzer Division was holding south to the confluence with the Sudost River, the 29th Motorized Division was extending the line along the Desna to Novgorod-Seversk, and Grossdeutschland was holding from Novgorod-Seversk to Schostka and moving southeast toward Gluchov. On the west flank, the 1st Cavalry Division was patrolling the area behind Das Reich at Sosnitza north to Seminovka as units of the Second Army moved in from the northwest.

On September 6, Guderian drove to the Das Reich front southwest of Sosnitza. That afternoon, after heavy combat against a determined enemy, the division captured the railroad bridge over the Desna at Makoshino, just downstream from the confluence of the Seim and the Desna. Guderian told Hausser to enlarge the bridgehead as quickly as possible and to be prepared to attack eastward toward the south side of the Seim to help XXIV Corps units to cross that river.

Both of Guderian's spearhead divisions were locked in heavy combat at the Seim River, the 4th Panzer Division at Baturin and the 3rd Panzer Division just upstream at Melnya. For the first few days of the offensive the spearhead divisions had usually met unorganized resistance from surprised units that were hastily brought together to oppose them. But for more than a week now the defense had been growing more and more stout every day. It now seemed that whichever way the Germans turned the enemy met them with combined arms attacks and artillery.

The 3rd Panzer Division approached the Seim River bridge in Melnya just before midnight on September 6, and just as they had been so many times recently, this bridge was blown up. This time, however, Colonel Oskar Audoersch, commander of the division's 394th Rifle Regiment, was on the scene and immediately ordered his men into rubber rafts and across the river. Against heavy rifle and machine-gun fire the assault succeeded, thanks in part to the gathering darkness. The riflemen struggled to expand the bridgehead under constant machine-gun fire and air attack throughout the next morning. At 1 PM, just as Model arrived at Audoersch's command post, German bombers hit the dominant Soviet positions on the high ground overlooking the river, obliterating them. The engineers immediately set about building a combat bridge while the riflemen continued to expand the bridgehead as best they could.

Sixteen miles to the west, the 4th Panzer Division was in a similar situation. Early on September 7, its tanks had set upon an enemy assembly area just north of the Seim bridge at Baturin. They destroyed some 30 artillery pieces, 13 antitank guns, and six tanks. The action, however, alerted the bridge guards. This span was also blown up. At 4 AM on September 8, the 3rd Panzer Division engineers completed a combat bridge at Melnya, and both divisions' motorized units began to cross there.

In Moscow, Zhukov was again counseling Stalin to pull back all Southwest Front troops to the eastern bank of the Dneiper and send all available reserves to the Konotop area to defend against Panzer Group 2. He also continued to insist that Kiev would have to be abandoned. The next day, September 9, in a sign that he might be coming around to Zhukov's point of view, Stalin ordered the Southwest Front to pull its northernmost Fifth Army and the right wing of the Thirty-seventh Army defending Kiev back to the east bank of the Dnieper and to bend their fronts back to the east to face Second Army and Panzer Group 2 coming down from the north. In the process, they were to continue to protect Kiev.

Early on September 8, the commander of the Southwest Front, Col. Gen. Mikhail Kirponos, requested that forces be sent immediately from Kiev to Romny to block the German penetration there. Stalin said the Southwest Front should hold its positions as ordered and the Briansk Front would handle the penetration at Romny, as ordered. Later that morning, Marshal Semen Budenny, commander of the South West Theater, appealed again to the Soviet High Command, STAVKA, for a withdrawal from Kiev. These repeated requests annoyed Stalin; he accused the commanders of incompetence and loss of nerve and decided to replace Budenny with Marshal Semen Timoshenko. The one move that Stalin did allow was the transfer of two infantry divisions from the Twenty-sixth Army holding the Dnieper line southeast of Kiev to the struggling Fortieth Army. The Fortieth Army was a new formation that had been hastily assembled two weeks earlier and inserted into the Konotop-Shostka area to block Guderian.

When the XXIV Motorized Corps overcame the Soviet forces at the Seim River on September 7-9, it burst through the Fortieth Army and penetrated deeply between the front of the Soviet Twenty-first and Thirteenth Armies, at the seam between the Southwest Front and the Bryansk Front. Model surged south, bypassing Konotop to the west. By the evening of the 9th, his advance guard had reached Korabutovo and captured the two bridges there. Rain began to fall during the night.

With word of the 3rd Panzer Division's success, Guderian set out for the front early on the 10th. At Geyr's command post in Ksendovka, he learned that Model had completely bypassed Konotop and penetrated all the way to Romny, that the 4th Panzer Division was attacking Bachmach, and that Das Reich was moving on Borsna. Before setting

off for the 3rd Panzer Division, Guderian had Geyr order the 10th Motorized Division to attack and secure Konotop.

Shortly before noon on September 10, after six hours of struggling through the mud and the muck, Major Heinz-Werner Frank's lead detachment of Model's division rushed up to the Roman River bridge at the northwest edge of Romny. The Soviet guards there were so startled that at first they did not resist. The lead German vehicles did not stop; they dashed through the cobblestone streets of the small city and grabbed the vital bridge over the Sula River in the center of town.

As more 3rd Panzer Division elements arrived they spread out and combed through the city, clearing it block by block. Enemy air forces attacked relentlessly throughout the afternoon despite the bad weather. By dark the city of clean white houses and cobblestone streets was as one single torch blazing in the night sky, abetted by the numerous new oil wells that the Soviets had ignited on their way out of town. The 3rd Panzer Division now held Romny, 131 miles east of Kiev.

Guderian continued to worry. With his strength dwindling every day, the mud that seemed only to be getting deeper, and his 145-mile-long southeastern flank it was difficult to feel optimistic. At this time the XLVII Motorized Corps was spread thinly, covering the eastern flank north from Novgorod-Seversk. To the south, the XLVI Motorized Corps was pushing southward on the eastern flank. The 17th Panzer Division was holding Gluchov and advancing on Putivl while Grossdeutschland had leapfrogged south and was approaching Shilovka on the Seim south of Putivl.

Both spearhead units were out of touch with the enemy on the 11th, undertaking only patrolling and reconnaissance. The 4th Panzer Division had captured Bachmach late on September 10 against nominal opposition but could go no farther due to lack of fuel. The mud made it difficult for the fighting troops to move, but it was doubly difficult for the supply sections that had to move back and forth from the nearest railhead some 248 miles away. The 3rd Panzer Division captured a small fuel dump in Romny but spent all of the 11th and most of the 12th there consolidating forces and getting a little rest.

Meanwhile, at Army Group South 115 miles to the south, operations were starting to move. At noon on the 11th, a temporary bridge over the Dneiper at Kremenchug was finished in driving rain, and Panzer Group 1's XLVIII Motorized Corps began crossing into the 17th Army bridgehead as soon as it was dark. The 9th and

Both: ullstein bild / The Granger Collection

16th Panzer Divisions crossed in the pouring rain on a pitch black night. At 9 AM on the 12th, Hans Hube's 16th Panzer Division took the lead and surged north out of the bridgehead. In knee-deep mud the division plowed forward 43 miles in barely 12 hours. The race to close the pocket was on.

News of the Army Group South attack renewed the enthusiasm and vigor of the 3rd Panzer Division troops. Major Frank and his advance guard moved out of Romny at last light on September 12, overran the weak Soviet positions around Romny, and surged south. In less than two hours it captured the intact bridge over the Sula River at Mliny. Lochvitsa, its objective, lay just over a mile beyond the river. By daybreak on the 13th, the Soviets had realized the situation and were bringing heavy pressure to bear on the small bridgehead. Major Frank radioed for help.

Soon a Kampfgruppe built around the 3rd battalion of Panzer Regiment 6 was heading south from Romny to help Frank. Fortunately it had not rained in more than a day, and the roads were drying out so the Kampfgruppe was able to set a rapid pace and reached the advance guard at about 4 PM.

Major Frank and Lt. Col. Werner von Lewinski, the Kampfgruppe commander, decided not to wait for infantry and artillery support but to attack Lochvitsa at once. A small tributary of the Sula snaked around Lochvitsa and joined the river at that point, and several bridges over both water courses needed to be secured. As they began to move out, the Soviets brought heavy fire on the bridgehead from Lochvitsa. Direct fire from antiaircraft guns quickly became the major concern.

By early evening, the Germans had worked their way into the eastern part of Lochvitsa but became bogged down there. The Soviets were firing heavy guns over open sites down every street that the Germans approached. As darkness fell Lewinski pulled his tanks out of the city for fear of individual infantry attacks during the night. The tanks took up screening positions in the defiles and gullies along the edge of town. One battalion of German infantry had arrived during the attack, and it was left to hold the eastern part of Lochvitsa overnight. It defended against several strong Soviet attacks and was able to hold those parts of the city that had been captured.

At 5 the next morning, while the fog still hung low over the rivers and Lochvitsa, Major Ernst Wellmann and his troops moved out to attack pockets of enemy resistance. As they took the large northern bridge they were amazed to find six heavy antiaircraft guns standing in front of the bridge on the far side, wheel to wheel across the width of the street, unmanned. As they dragged the gunners out of their bedrolls in a nearby hut and made them prisoners, the rest of the Soviet troops began withdrawing. By 10:30 AM on September 14, Lochvitsa was in German hands.

Guderian was still worried. Despite a dry day here and there, rain predominated and the mud grew worse, air reconnaissance was possible occasionally, and ground reconnaissance impossible. All of his divisions were strung out 20 to 40 miles. Furthermore, the pressure on

his spearheads was great. With Panzer Group 1 surging northward, the Soviets would surely put two and two together and rush for the exits from the developing pocket, only increasing that pressure.

After breaking through the stiff Soviet defenses around the Kremenchug bridgehead on the 12th, the XLVIII Motorized Corps encountered much less resistance as it raced north to meet Guderian's troops. On the 13th, the 9th Panzer Division captured Mirgorod against only moderate resistance while the 16th Panzer Division took the intact bridge over the Sula River at Lukomye and turned north toward Lubny.

Lubny was fiercely defended. The local Soviet commander had called on the populace to defend the city, and they did along with anti-aircraft units and formations of the NKVD, Stalin's secret police. General Hube pulled his units back to reorganize and prepare an attack for the next day. It went in at first light on the 14th and produced savage street fighting. In the end, the ad hoc Soviet force was no match for the panzergrenadiers, and by afternoon Lubny was in German hands with only small pockets of enemy resistance remaining. Thirty miles remained to close the pocket.

The capture of Lubny meant that the last rail and road connections for supplying the five Soviet armies in the pocket were cut. Their only supply now would have to come by air.

At about the same time, a small detachment of the 3rd Panzer Division was moving south from Lochvitsa. Lieutenant Hans Warthmann, commander of the 6th Company of Panzer Regiment 6, had only two tanks and four other armored vehicles at his disposal. His mission was to find the 16th Panzer Division.

The only enemy force that Warthmann met was traveling west to east across his path, trying to escape the encirclement. The Soviets did not want any part of the enemy. Whenever the Germans approached, the Soviets jumped from their vehicles and fled into the fields. Then the Germans raced through.

Warthmann's little group crossed the Sula River over an intact bridge near Luka at about 4 PM and then followed the east bank southwest toward Lubny. It was just getting dark as it crested a small rise and the troops could suddenly see the silhouette of a city in the distance and hear the crack of small arms fire. This must be Lubny. But where was the enemy, and where were the friendly troops?

Warthmann scanned the skyline through his binoculars for a few moments and then cautiously moved on. He soon approached a small creek that was not fordable and began to look for a bridge. A small bridge was spotted, and it would have to do. As he approached, the bridge was blown sky high. The Germans had crossed many small bridges this day, and this was the first one that had been defended. Suddenly, gray-clad figures jumped up from the underbrush and rushed toward the blown bridge waving their arms frantically. They were covered in dirt with stubbly beards. They were men of the 2nd Company, Panzer Pioneer Battalion 16, of the 16th Panzer Division. It was 6:20 PM on September 14, and the pocket had been closed.

As more troops arrived over the next few days the east side of the pocket was securely sealed. On September 17, Stalin finally relented and gave permission for the Southwest Front to withdraw. On the 19th, Kiev fell to the Germans, and on the 25th fighting in the pocket came to an end. Despite concerted efforts to break out and several external attacks to free the trapped troops, six Soviet armies were destroyed and 665,000 soldiers captured in the worst Soviet defeat of World War II.

Guderian had little time to enjoy this great victory. In less than two weeks the next major offensive of Army Group Center, Operation Typhoon intended to capture Moscow, would begin, and his Panzer Group 2 would play an integral part. After Typhoon's failure in December 1941, Guderian was relieved of duty by a frustrated Hitler looking for a scapegoat.

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ABOVE: Crouching in the cover of a ditch, German infantrymen prepare to move out during an attack near the city of Kiev, capital of the Ukraine. A group of dazed Red Army prisoners sits farther down in the depression at right. Kiev fell to the Germans on September 19. OPPOSITE: Tanks of German Army Group South's Panzer Group 1 pass a burning Soviet tank along a dirt road in the Ukraine during late summer 1941.

Modest Start for THE MIGHTY

GENERAL HENRY H. "HAP" ARNOLD, commander of the U.S. Army Air Forces, was a man both driven and under great pressure in the spring and early summer of 1942.

He wanted his bombers and fighters in the air as soon as possible, operating from airfields in Great Britain and joining the hard-pressed Royal Air Force in its offensive against Nazi Germany. He had promised British Prime Minister Winston Churchill action by July 4.

The jovial Arnold had to justify USAAF appropriations to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Congress, and the public. In addition, he had to maintain aircraft production and strategic priorities in the face of challenges from the British and the U.S. Navy. All of this required a perception of the USAAF as a successful and aggressive offensive weapon. FDR demanded results justifying the massive aircraft production and shipping program.

But by that summer, several months before it had become a force to be reckoned with, Arnold's growing air arm also needed to have its image bolstered. Navy carrier planes had won the climactic Battle of Midway, June 4-6, 1942, while officials and the public were still disturbed about the USAAF's performance in December 1941 at Pearl Harbor and in the Philippines, where large numbers of aircraft had been destroyed on the ground by Japanese raiders.

Arnold's demands put pressure, in turn, on his main combat commander, Maj. Gen. Carl A. "Tooey" Spaatz, who had recently arrived in England to head the newly formed U.S. Eighth Air Force, and Brig. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, commander of the Eighth Bomber Command. While waiting for Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber groups to cross the Atlantic, the tireless, methodical Spaatz also had to satisfy the needs of Maj. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the new U.S. chief of European operations. The latter was busy with Operation Bolero, the buildup of war matériel in England for the coming invasion of Nazi-occupied Western Europe, and the planned invasion of North Africa later that year, which had been decided upon at the Arcadia Conference in Washington in December 1941-January 1942.

Both: National Archives

General Carl A. "Tooey" Spaatz pins the Distinguished Service Cross on the chest of Captain Charles Kegelman, who led the first U.S. Army Air Forces bombing strike against Nazi-occupied Europe on July 4, 1942.

While Spaatz and Eaker lacked the planes for a major operation, the USAAF did send bombers against a European target for the first time on June 12, 1942. Led by Colonel Harry A. "Hurry Up" Halverson, a pioneering Army Air Corps flier, 13 Consolidated B-24D Liberator heavy bombers took off that day from the RAF airfield at Fayid, near the Suez Canal in Egypt, and attacked the German oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania. It was the first of a series of missions against the strategic target. Halverson's B-24s bombed through heavy cloud, and only minimal damage was caused. Seven of the planes landed as planned in Iraq, two were interned in Turkey, and another crash landed. The raid passed almost unnoticed because headlines were full of the Navy's triumph at Midway.

On June 28, General Spaatz received orders from the impatient Arnold to schedule a raid in northwestern Europe—the first for the USAAF—on Independence Day, six days hence. President Roosevelt had approved the mission, and he and Arnold believed that July 4 would be an appropriate day for the USAAF to open its aerial offensive against Germany. But Spaatz and Eaker considered the venture premature. Eaker's B-17s had not arrived, and the 31st Fighter Group was learning to handle RAF Supermarine Spitfires.

Spaatz regarded the planned mission as a "stunt" triggered by the American press, which believed that the Allies needed a morale boost. But he went ahead, nevertheless, and chose a squadron of Eighth Air Support Command light bombers for the groundbreaking mission. The assignment fell to the 15th Bom-

A flight of Douglas A-20 Havoc light bombers of the U.S. Army Air Forces turns toward home as smoke billows from its target, a railroad marshaling yard somewhere in Europe. The early Eighth Air Force raids of 1942 were extremely small compared to those that soon followed.

EIGHTH

The destructive power of the Eighth Air Force steadily grew during the bombing campaign against Nazi Germany.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

National Archives

Captain Charles Kegelman, commander of the first U.S. Army Air Forces bombing raid on targets in Nazi-occupied Europe, poses with other members of his crew in front of its Douglas A-20 Havoc light bomber. Royal Air Force A-20s accompanied the American planes on their first mission.

bardment Squadron (Light), which had arrived in England a few weeks before as part of a token U.S. force.

Constituted on December 22, 1939, and initially activated as part of the 27th Bombardment Group at Barksdale Field in Louisiana in February 1940, the 15th Squadron had been reassigned to the Fifth Air Support Command in late 1941 and based at the Fort Dix, New Jersey, Army airfield. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the unit flew antisubmarine patrols along the New York and New Jersey coasts.

The squadron was reassigned to Lawson Field in Georgia and manned by the personnel of the inactivated 27th Group, who had fought in the ill-fated Philippines campaign of 1941-1942. The unit was briefly redesignated the 1st Pursuit (Night Fighter) Squadron in April 1942 before being assigned to the Eighth Air Force in England. It was redesignated the 15th Bombardment Squadron (Light) on May 7, 1942, and arrived at the RAF's big Grafton Underwood base in Northamptonshire on May 12. After being assigned to Eaker's Eighth Bomber Command two days later, the unit moved to the RAF airfield at Molesworth, Cambridgeshire, on June 9.

The squadron was equipped with twin-engine Douglas A-20 light bombers from No. 226 RAF Squadron. Called Havocs by the Americans and Bostons by the British, A-20s had been used briefly by the French Air Force in Algeria and saw extensive service with the RAF in the Western Desert. In action later with the RAF and the USAAF in the European and Pacific Theaters until the end of the war, they flew in New Guinea, Guadalcanal, Sicily, Italy, Burma, and Normandy. A-20s also served with the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps and the Australian, Canadian, South African, New Zealand, Free French, and Soviet Air Forces.

Manned by a crew of three, the versatile A-20 "attack bomber" had a maximum speed of 317 miles per hour, a bomb payload of up to 4,000 pounds, and mounted six .50-caliber forward-firing machine guns, two in a power operated dorsal turret and one in a ventral tunnel. Its ceiling was 25,000 feet and its range 1,025 miles.

The 15th Bombardment Squadron was commanded by 26-year-old Captain Charles C. Kegelman, a clean-cut, genial native of Oklahoma destined to become America's first hero in the Allied aerial offensive in Europe.

Born on Friday, October 22, 1915, in the small agricultural town of El Reno on the North Canadian River in Oklahoma's central Canadian County, Kegelman was the son of Missouri-born Charles Kegelman and his Nebraska-born wife, Alva. Young Charles had three sisters—Renee, Inez, and Anna. Nicknamed "Sonny," the boy attended local schools, studied at the Oklahoma Military Academy until 1934, and then went to the University of Oklahoma to prepare for a medical career. But after graduation, aviation and a possible future in the Army Air Corps beckoned the young man.

Charles underwent flight training at Barksdale Airfield in Bossier City, Louisiana, and Savannah, Georgia, and attended a transition bomber pilots' school in Nevada before being promoted to captain and ordered to England in the spring of 1942.

Kegelman and six of his inexperienced crews underwent several weeks of training in the Bostons and then moved to Swanton Morley in Norfolk, where they were attached to the RAF's No. 226 Squadron commanded by Squadron Leader J.S. Kennedy. For the Independence Day raid the six American-manned bombers would accompany six RAF Bostons and be under overall British leadership. It was to be a low-level daylight raid against four German airfields near the North Sea coast of Holland. The operation was expected to be a "milk run."

At 7:11 AM on Saturday, July 4, the dozen light bombers started taking off from the small, grassy airfield at Swanton Morley. After assembling into four flights of three planes, with a seasoned RAF crew in each flight, the Bostons headed across the North Sea toward Holland. They flew low to avoid detection by enemy radar.

Everything went smoothly until they passed over two German "squealer" boats, which radioed a warning to defense outposts in Holland that hostile aircraft were approaching. When the Bostons droned across the Dutch coast, the Germans were ready. Antiaircraft batteries threw up salvos so intense that it shocked the veteran RAF crews.

The four flights split up to attack assigned targets. All pilots had been instructed to make their approaches and bomb runs flat and low. Intense fire greeted the three Bostons heading for the airfield at De Kooy. The leading RAF plane escaped, but an American-manned A-20 piloted by Lieutenant F.A. Loehrl had its nose blown off by a direct hit and crashed in flames.

The third Boston, piloted by Captain Kegelman, was shot up badly as it swept in low over the De Kooy airfield. Its starboard engine took a direct hit, the fuselage was ripped open, and the right wing was damaged. The right wingtip and rear of the fuselage scraped the ground, but Kegelman skillfully wrestled with the controls and managed to keep the plane airborne.

Kegelman jettisoned his bombs, and the crippled Boston swung away from the airfield—into the path of fire from a flak tower. But the American's trigger finger was faster than the German's as he silenced the tower with his nose guns. Then he steered the plane to the dubious safety of the North Sea.

The second trio of Bostons flew low over the airfield at Bergen, where they dropped their bombs amid intense fire. A German battery damaged Lieutenant William G. Lynn Jr.'s plane, and

it crashed a few miles north of the airfield. A second bomber in the flight was shot down by a Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter. The other six Bostons struck the airfields at Haamstede and Valkenburg. Bombs hit hangars, administrative buildings, and dispersal points, and an enemy fighter on the ground was set afire. The leader of the trio that attacked Valkenburg failed to open his bomb bay doors soon enough, so all the airfield received was a severe but brief strafing by the planes' machine guns.

Eight of the surviving A-20s flew back to Swanton Morley, where their weary, shaken crews were debriefed and greeted by Generals Eisenhower and Eaker. But there was no sign of Captain Kegelman. Then, while the airmen, ground crews, and reporters clustered around the generals at the Swanton Morley control tower, a lone Boston was sighted limping low toward the airfield. Cheers went up, for Kegelman had managed somehow to bring his plane and crew home on one engine.

The raid was front-paged by London and American newspapers, and the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin* declared, "Yanks Join A.E.F. Raid." Although the mission had inflicted only minimal damage on the Germans for the loss of two American crews and one RAF crew, General Arnold regarded it as a success because American airmen had been bloodied in action. But General Spaatz said the results justified his counsel against forcing action prematurely. He noted brusquely in his command diary, "The cameramen and newspapermen finally got what they wanted—and everybody seemed contented." Arnold, meanwhile, pressed Spaatz for more USAAF operations and publicity.

At his London headquarters on the night of July 4, Eisenhower read the action report and considered that "the mission was well carried out." He then scribbled across the report an immediate recommendation for Kegelman to receive the Distinguished Service Cross. He cited his "superior airmanship and extraordinary gallantry and coolness in saving the lives of his crew." Spaatz pinned the nation's second highest combat decoration on the smiling Kegelman on July 11. It was the first DSC earned by a member of the Eighth Air Force in World War II.

Kegelman also received a British decoration and was promptly promoted to major. Three of his men, Lieutenant Randall Dorton and Sergeants Bennie Cunningham and Robert Golay, were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Six weeks after Kegelman's raid, the Eighth Air Force launched its first heavy bomber mission. A dozen B-17s of Colonel Frank A. Armstrong Jr.'s 97th Bombardment Group took off from Polebrook Airfield in Northamptonshire on the afternoon of Monday, August 17, and bombed the German railroad yards in the French port of Rouen. General Eaker flew aboard the B-17 nicknamed *Yankee Doodle* as an observer. The following day, 24 Flying Fortresses flew in support of the ill-fated assault on the heavily defended port of Dieppe by Canadian infantry and British Commandos.

More B-17 and B-24 groups arrived in England, and the "Mighty Eighth" was able to mount increasingly destructive daylight missions against Nazi-occupied Europe and the German homeland, complementing RAF Bomber Command's nightly raids. The enemy was soon being bombed around the clock.

Library of Congress

A Royal Air Force Douglas A-20 Boston light bomber retracts its landing gear as it takes off from a base in England. British bombers participated with American planes in the first bombing mission for the U.S. Army Air Forces against German targets on the European continent.

Flying Bostons from Molesworth, Major Kegelman's 15th Bombardment Squadron took part with RAF units in low-level daylight raids on English Channel ports and German airfields through the summer of 1942. The squadron did not receive USAAF A-20 Havocs until September 5. Ten days later, and now under American colors, it was transferred to the RAF base at Podington, Bedfordshire, from where it flew a few more sorties.

Kegelman's squadron was transferred on October 15, 1942, to the Mediterranean Theater, where it joined the Twelfth Air Force to support Operation Torch, the great, three-pronged Allied invasion of North Africa, on November 8. The squadron saw action in Tunisia with a USAAF Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter group and then was assigned to the Northwest African Training Command. Using Havocs and later North American A-36 Apache dive bombers (P-51 Mustang variants), the 15th Squadron's veterans provided advanced training in ground support at several airfields during 1943. The squadron was disbanded at Mediouna Airfield in Algeria on October 1, and its crews and planes were absorbed into the 47th Bombardment Group.

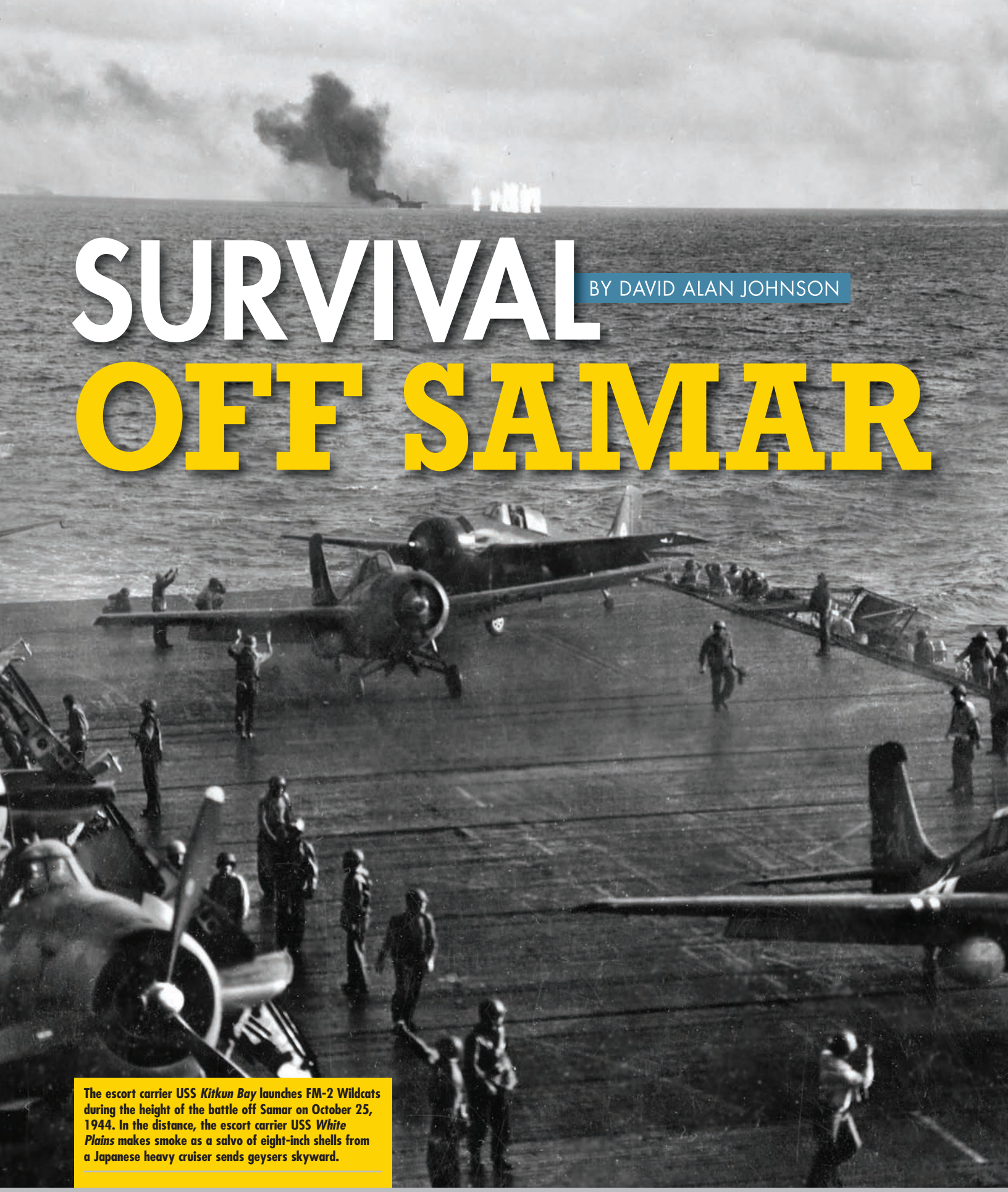
Kegelman returned home in 1943 and was honored at a big celebration in El Reno attended by Oklahoma Governor Robert S. Kerr. The hero remained in the United States for a year training airmen, but he itched for more action. So, in 1944, he put in a request for active duty. Sent to the South Pacific that September, he was given command of a North American B-25 Mitchell medium bomber group. But after several months of action, his luck ran out tragically.

While leading his group on a routine bombing run over the Japanese-held island of Mindanao in the Philippines on March 9, 1945, Kegelman's wingman lost control and collided with his own B-25. The two planes plunged into the jungle, and Kegelman was killed at the age of 29. El Reno mourned its gallant son, and the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 382 was named in his honor.

Author Michael D. Hull is a frequent contributor to WWII History *and writes on a variety of topics. He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

SURVIVAL OFF SAMAR

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON



The escort carrier USS *Kitkun Bay* launches FM-2 Wildcats during the height of the battle off Samar on October 25, 1944. In the distance, the escort carrier USS *White Plains* makes smoke as a salvo of eight-inch shells from a Japanese heavy cruiser sends geysers skyward.

National Archives

At exactly 6:45 on the morning of October 25, 1944, Rear Admiral Clifton A.F. Sprague received a message from one of his pilots on antisubmarine patrol. The admiral recalled that the message went something like this: "Enemy surface force of 4 battleships, 7 cruisers, and 11 destroyers sighted 20 miles northwest of your task group and closing in on you at 30 knots."

Admiral Sprague, nicknamed "Ziggy," was annoyed by the message. He was certain that the sighting report was a case of mistaken identity. "Now, there's some screwy young aviator reporting part of our own forces," he said to himself with no small amount of exasperation. The "enemy surface force" was probably just part of Admiral William F. Halsey's fast battleship group. Actually, Halsey's Third Fleet was miles away to the north.

Admiral Sprague shouted into the squawk box, "Air plot, tell him to check his identification," and went back to work. His six escort carriers, screened by three destroyers and four destroyer escorts—officially known as Task Group 77.4.3, but usually referred to by its call sign, "Taffy 3"—had been flying support strikes for the recent landings on the Philippine island of Leyte for the past eight days. Taffy 3 was operating just east of Samar Island, and Sprague had another full day of patrols and air strikes to schedule.

Three minutes after the first report, Sprague received another message from the pilot who made the first report. "Identification of enemy force confirmed," he radioed. "Ships have pagoda masts."

At about the same time, a thick pattern of antiaircraft puffs began bursting off to the northwest—another confirmation that the surface force was not Admiral Halsey's battleships. Enemy gunners were shooting at the pilot who had just spotted them. The pilot, Ensign William C. Brooks of Pasadena, California, was returning the compliment, dropping his payload on an enemy cruiser. The only trouble was that the ensign's payload consisted of two depth charges—hardly effective weapons against an enemy cruiser. This attack could be seen as a symbol of the battle that was to come—an American David confronting a Japanese Goliath, armed with not much more than a slingshot.

The force that Brooks had sighted was the middle section of a three-pronged Japanese advance against the American landing beaches at Leyte Gulf. Admiral Takeo Kurita's Center Force, which was made up of four battleships, six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 11 destroyers, had been hit by air strikes from Halsey's Third Fleet in the Sibuyan Sea the previous day. Although Kurita had initially withdrawn his force after Halsey's fleet had damaged several Japanese warships and had sunk the battleship *Musashi,* he reversed course and made his way through the San Bernardino Strait during the night. Many senior American officers reached the conclusion that Kurita was retreating from the battle, but that was not the case.

Shortly after Ensign Brooks confirmed that the approaching warships were Japanese, Sprague's lookouts were able to provide visual confirmation—the unmistakable superstructures of Japanese cruisers and battleships began popping over the northwestern horizon. At 6:58, the ships opened fire. Less than a minute later, colored splashes from the Japanese shells landed astern of Taffy 3. Each Japanese warship used a different color dye marker, which allowed them to spot their own shells and make targeting adjustments.

Admiral Sprague's command, Taffy 3, was made up of six escort carriers: *Fanshaw Bay, St. Lo, White Plains, Kalinin Bay, Kitkun Bay,* and *Gambier Bay* along with three destroyers, *Heermann, Hoel, and Johnston,* and four destroyer escorts, *Dennis, J.C. Butler, Raymond,* and *Samuel B. Roberts. Kitkun Bay* and *Gambier Bay* were actually a separate carrier division, under Rear Admiral Ralph Ofstie, although they were still part of Taffy 3. The heaviest armament on any of these ships was the 5-inch batteries aboard the destroyers and destroyer escorts. Each of the escort carriers also had one 5-inch gun. This was clearly no match for Kurita's force, which included the 18-inch guns of *Musashi*'s sister ship, the giant battleship Yamato.

"Wicked salvos straddled the USS *White Plains,* and then colored geysers began to sprout among all the other carriers," Sprague later reported. "In various shades of pink, green, red, yellow and purple, the splashes had a kind of horrid beauty." A seaman aboard the *White Plains* remarked, "They're shooting at us in Technicolor!"

Sprague was fully aware of his predicament and did not think that his force of "baby flattops" and their escorts would last 15 minutes against the oncoming battleships and cruisers. As soon as the approaching task force was confirmed as Japanese, he "took several defensive actions in quick succession." He ordered a change in course from north to due east, which pointed Taffy 3 "at full speed toward a friendly rain squall nearby." The new course also turned his carri-

IN AN EPIC STAND AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS, TAFFY 3 HELD OFF A POWERFUL JAPANESE TASK FORCE DURING THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF.

All: National Archives

ABOVE: Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers practice a torpedo run during training exercises on the East Coast of the United States. Avengers pilots were among the brave American fliers that made repeated runs at the Japanese ships off Samar even after their ammunition had been expended. RIGHT: The Japanese super battleship *Yamato,* with 18.1-inch main guns, stirs a wake as it maneuvers during the battle off Samar. A Japanese heavy cruiser is visible of the *Yamato*'s port quarter.

ers into the wind, and at 6:56 Sprague ordered all carriers to begin launching aircraft for torpedo and bombing attacks against Kurita's force. A minute later, he ordered the carriers and their escorts to make as much smoke as possible to screen Taffy 3 from the Japanese gunners. A smokescreen offered scant protection against large-caliber enemy shells, but it was better than nothing.

The carriers began launching their aircraft as soon as it was practical. Admiral Sprague's flagship *Fanshaw Bay,* called "Fannie Bee" by her crew, sent her full complement of Grumman TBF Avengers off first, armed with torpedoes. *White Plains* began by launching Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters and brought her bomb-carrying Avengers up to the flight deck after the fighters were in the air.

It would have made very little difference to Sprague at that particular moment, but Kurita was having some harrowing thoughts of his own. When lookouts aboard *Yamato* first spotted the American ships at 6:44, he was as surprised as Sprague by the encounter. No one aboard *Yamato* could see that the carriers of the enemy task force were escort carriers and not fleet carriers. Kurita had already seen what American carriers could do and was shaken by the unexpected sight of still more of them off Samar.

He ordered his force to deploy from sailing in columns on course 170 to a circular antiaircraft formation on course 110. Before the command could be carried out, Kurita changed his orders, this time to "General Attack," which threw his entire fleet into confusion. "No heed was taken of order or coordination," his chief of staff reported. Instead of forming a battle line with his four battleships and six heavy cruisers, which would have allowed Kurita to bring all of his big guns to bear, he scattered his ships and his firepower. Because of the general attack order, each Japanese ship would operate independently, which dispersed Kurita's advantage in gunnery.

Sprague did not know anything about Kurita's confusion. He only knew that he had a large enemy force bearing down on his lightly armored carriers and escort vessels. At 7:01, he broadcast an urgent request, in plain language, for assistance. Admiral Thomas Stump, commander of Taffy 2, responded immediately. Taffy 2 was the nearest carrier force to Sprague, about 30 miles away. Admiral Thomas Sprague (no relation to Ziggy Sprague) also sent aircraft from Taffy 1, about 70 miles away. Admiral Stump sent words of encouragement to his friend. "Don't be alarmed, Ziggy," he shouted over the TBS (Talk Between Ships), "Remember, we're in back of you—don't get excited—don't do anything rash!" His voice went up a level or two every time he spoke, making the officers on *Fanshaw Bay*'s flag bridge smile in spite of themselves.

The attacking Avengers went in singly or in small groups. They did not have time to form up in a coordinated attack. Whether they carried torpedoes or bombs, the Avengers made their runs without the benefit of strafing fighters to run interference for them.

By 7:30, just about every one of Taffy 3's operational aircraft had been launched. The heavy cruiser *Suzuya* was one of the first Japanese warships to come under attack. The cruiser was hit several times and, according to one report, was "slowed down." All aircraft in the Leyte Gulf area were ordered to attack Admiral Kurita's Center Force. Six Avengers armed with torpedoes and 20 fighters attacked at 8:30, along with aircraft that had already been launched from the escort carriers.

But these planes were very hurriedly armed and launched and had no time to coordinate their movements, either. Even so, their attacks were aggressive and constant. Most of the Avengers were armed with torpedoes until the supply of torpedoes ran out. Then they were sent out with bombs—any kind of bombs that were available, including 100-pound all-purpose bombs that were designed for hitting small land-based targets.

After they dropped their bombs, the pilots made dry runs on the enemy ships to distract the Japanese gunners. The commander of *Gambier Bay*'s air group flew his Avenger through enemy flak for two hours after he dropped his bombs. The pilots of the Wildcat fighters were sent in to strafe "with the hope that their strafing would kill personnel on the Japanese warships, silence automatic weapons, and, most important, draw attention from the struggling escort carriers." When their ammunition ran out, the fighter pilots also resorted to dry runs to harass the enemy. One pilot made 20 strafing runs, 10 of them without ammunition.

Five planes of *Gambier Bay*'s air group circled the Japanese fleet for 20 minutes looking for a hole in the clouds that would allow them to make their runs against the big ships. While they were waiting for their chance, the pilots watched a group of Avengers and Wildcats going after the battleships. "The attacks were well executed," observed the flight leader. But there were too few aircraft, and the Avengers had bomb loads that were too dissimilar, usually too light, to do any real damage.

Japanese officers were inclined to disagree

with this assessment. "The bombers and torpedo planes were very aggressive and skilful and the coordination was impressive," a Japanese officer told his American interpreter after the war, "even in comparison with the many experiences of American attacks we had already had, this was the most skilful work of your planes."

In addition to his carrier's air groups, Sprague also sent his destroyers and destroyer escorts against Kurita's force. The normal job of these screening warships was to protect the escort carriers from submarines, but now they would be performing a completely different task.

The *Johnston,* under Commander Ernest E Evans, was a Fletcher-class destroyer (along with *Heermann* and *Hoel*) and would be one year old in two days' time. Evans opened fire at 7:10; his target was the Japanese cruiser *Kumano*. Johnston fired more than 200 rounds at the cruiser, and numerous hits were observed. The Japanese ships returned fire. Enormous splashes of four or five different colors erupted around the destroyer.

American warships had a distinct advantage in gunnery over the Japanese due to the radar-controlled Mark 37 Fire Control System and the Ford Mark I Fire Control Computer. The radar-directed system gave *Johnston* efficient firing solutions for her 5-inch guns, which allowed her gunners to hit their target repeatedly in spite of the greater range of the enemy warships. Japanese gunners had to rely on their colored dye markers from initial salvos to find the range.

Evans also gave the word to begin a torpedo attack. Sprague had ordered all three destroyers to attack with their torpedoes, and *Johnston* would go in with *Heermann* and *Hoel*.

Unwitting adversaries during the battle off Samar, American Admiral Clifton A.F. Sprague (left) commanded Taffy 3, escort carriers and small warships that were screening and providing air cover for the landing beaches on the Philippine island of Leyte, and Admiral Takeo Kurita (right) commanded the powerful Japanese surface task force intent on wrecking the American landings.

Because *Johnston* was closest to the enemy, she was the first to attack, closing to within 10,000 yards of *Kumano*. She fired her full complement of 10 torpedoes, which were observed to run hot, straight, and normal. When all torpedoes had been fired, Evans reversed course and retired behind a smokescreen.

"Two and possibly three heavy underwater explosions were heard by two officers," reported another officer from *Johnston,* "at the time our torpedoes were scheduled to hit." The leading enemy cruiser emerged from the smoke about a minute later, her stern section burning furiously. Most reports mention two or three torpedoes striking *Kumano,* but Kurita acknowledged only one hit from an American destroyer. *Kumano* dropped out of the fight. The heavy cruiser *Suzuya,* which had been hit by bombs and was traveling at a speed of 20 knots, also withdrew.

At 7:30, *Johnston* was finally hit by three 14-inch shells and three 6-inch shells. These hits knocked out the after fire room and engine room, cut all power to the steering engine and the three after 5-inch guns, and rendered the gyrocompass useless. The ship's speed was reduced to 17 knots. Its radar antenna snapped off its mast, crashing into the bridge and killing three officers. All of Evans' clothes above his waist were blown off, along with two fingers of his left hand. Many sailors stationed below decks were killed.

But the destroyer did not sink, and all stations answered "aye" to bridge inquiries. The same rain squall that covered the escort carriers now passed over *Johnston,* giving her crew about 10 minutes to repair some of the damage. Japanese gunners depended on optical rangefinders, and their shooting tended to be ineffective when their target was obscured by rain, clouds, or smoke. Three of *Johnston*'s 5-inch guns would be back in action in a short time.

Hoel's target was the battleship *Kongo*. *Hoel*'s captain, Commander Leon S. Kintberger, began firing at the enemy battleship at 14,000 yards. *Kongo* fired back, hitting *Hoel*'s bridge and knocking out all voice and radio communication. Two minutes after opening fire with her 5-inch guns, *Hoel* launched a half-salvo of five torpedoes at the battleship. *Kongo* managed to avoid the torpedoes by making a hard left turn at 7:33.

American torpedoes were not fast and were easily avoided. However, the evasive action not only slowed the advance of the Japanese warships but also created confusion. Admiral Kurita himself said, "Major units [warships] were separating all the time because of the destroyer torpedo attacks." He realized that he was losing more tactical control every time his

During the opening minutes of the Battle off Samar, the escort carrier USS *Gambier Bay* and others make smoke to disrupt the aim of Japanese gunners aboard the heavy cruisers and battleships that were poised to wreak havoc with the American troops and transports at Leyte.

John Hamilton

American aircraft press home attacks against the heavy Japanese warships that suddenly appeared near Taffy 3 off Samar on October 25, 1944. The Japanese cruiser *Chokai* was hit by American torpedoes and is shown far right sinking during the battle.

ships had to turn to avoid Taffy 3's torpedoes.

While her torpedoes were still running their course, *Hoel* was struck by several heavy caliber shells. The destroyer's port engine was knocked out along with three guns, and the rudder was jammed hard right. Before her rudder could be brought amidships, *Hoel* found herself heading straight for *Kongo*. While steering was being corrected, her number one and two guns continued to fire at targets of opportunity.

Even though the destroyer was badly damaged, Kintberger did not withdraw from the battle. He fired the rest of his torpedoes at the heavy cruiser *Haguro,* the leading ship in the straggling cruiser column. All five torpedoes ran straight toward their target, and "large columns of water were observed to rise from the cruiser at about the time scheduled for the torpedo run." Japanese records do not confirm that any of *Hoel*'s torpedoes struck the cruiser.

After launching the last of his torpedoes, Kintberger did his best to withdraw to the southwest, away from the enemy's big guns. But the destroyer only had one engine, the battleship *Kongo* was only 8,000 yards off his port beam, and heavy cruisers were only 7,000 yards off his starboard quarter. *Hoel* was boxed in and did not have enough speed to get away.

"Every Japanese ship within range took a crack at her," according to one report. *Hoel* zigzagged for over an hour, and her two bow guns fired about 500 rounds of 5-inch ammunition at whatever enemy ship seemed the most menacing. At the same time, she received more than 40 hits herself, 5-inch, 8-inch, and even 16-inch. The shells were armor piercing, and some went right through without exploding. But these unexploded shells punched the destroyer full of holes, including many below the waterline. The Japanese heavy cruisers passed close enough that *Hoel*'s crew was able to observe their antiaircraft gunners at work.

At 8:30, an 8-inch shell knocked out the remaining engine, leaving *Hoel* dead in the water. The ship began flooding and settling by the stern. Kintberger saw no alternative to giving the order, "Prepare to abandon ship." Some crewmen stayed behind to make sure that no explosion would occur—No. 1 magazine was on fire—while the destroyer was being abandoned. At 8:55, after all the men left the ship, *Hoel* finally rolled over and sank. Japanese ships continued firing at her until the end.

The last of the three American destroyers, *Heermann,* did not hear the order to join *Hoel* and *Johnston* in the torpedo attack. She had been busy screening the escort carriers and just did not get the word. The order finally did get through at 7:50, and *Heermann* went charging off at full speed through the carrier formation, or what was left of it. Visibility was not the best, owing to both the smoke and the rain. The destroyer's captain, Commander Amos T. Hathaway, had his hands full. Twice Hathaway had to signal his engine room to go to emergency astern to avoid a collision. As it was, *Heermann* narrowly missed both *Hoel* and the destroyer escort S*amuel B. Roberts*.

After literally steering clear of all nearby friendly vessels, Hathaway straightened his course and headed toward the nearest enemy warship, which happened to be the heavy cruiser *Haguro*. *Heermann* began shooting at the cruiser with her 5-inch guns and launched seven torpedoes at 7:54. Actually, the attack was supposed to be only a five-torpedo salvo, but the torpedoman accidentally fired two extras. *Haguro* dodged all of the torpedoes and opened fire on the H*eermann*. All of the cruiser's salvos missed their target.

Hathaway turned away from *Haguro* after firing his torpedoes and headed toward *Kongo* and *Haruna*. Astern of these two battleships were *Yamato* and the fourth Japanese battleship, *Nagato*. Enemy warships seemed to be at every point of the compass, but more enemy warships meant more targets, at least as far as Hathaway was concerned. He turned to course 270 to get into a firing position for the rest of his torpedoes and shifted his 5-inch guns to the cruiser *Chikuma*.

While *Heermann* had *Chikuma* under fire, *Kongo, Nagato,* and *Yamato* were targeting *Heermann*. Red, yellow, and green shell splashes erupted all around her, but she was not hit by anything larger than shell fragments. After maneuvering to avoid the big guns of the battleships, *Heermann* was only 4,400 yards

ABOVE: The destroyer USS *Heermann* brews up a smokescreen off Samar and fights to defend the escort carriers of Taffy 3. *Heermann* was one of several destroyers and destroyer escorts that crews sailed into an unequal fight with heavy Japanese ships. *Heermann* survived the ordeal. BELOW: Heavy-caliber shells from Japanese ships bracket the escort carrier USS *Gambier Bay* during the battle off Samar. Already hit and on fire, the little escort carrier eventually rolled over and sank. The escort carriers were so thinly armored that some Japanese shells passed through one side of their hulls and out the other without detonating.

Both: National Archives

away from *Haruna*. At 8 AM, Hathaway launched his remaining three torpedoes at *Haruna,* opened fire with his 5-inch batteries, and broke away.

All of this frantic activity happened within a matter of minutes—between 7:50, when Hathaway began his high-speed run past Taffy 3's escort carriers, and 8:03, when he turned away from *Haruna*. It was a lucky 13 minutes for *Heermann*; the ship had not been hit by enemy gunfire, even though she had been the target for several Japanese warships.

Heermann's action report claims that one of her torpedoes hit *Haruna,* but two of the torpedoes missed their mark and headed for *Yamato* along with two torpedoes that had probably been fired by *Hoel* at another Japanese ship. *Yamato* turned away to evade the torpedoes, heading north and keeping on that course for about 10 minutes. This effectively took Ya*mato* out of the fight. Kurita had lost his biggest battleship, as well as what should have been his most effective gun platform, at the height of the battle.

Kurita was becoming convinced that he was facing a major American task force, not just a few escort carriers and destroyers. However, the battle was far from over. At about the same time that *Hoel* was firing her torpedoes at *Haguro,* Sprague ordered his destroyer escorts to begin their runs at Kurita's warships: "Little Wolves form up for a second attack," he barked. "Wolves" was code for the destroyers, while the radio call sign for the destroyer escorts was "Little Wolves." So far, the destroyer escorts had been assigned almost exclusively to antisubmarine patrols. Torpedo attacks against cruisers and battleships were something new to Taffy 3's Little Wolves.

They threw themselves into the task. Raymond took on *Haguro,* the leading Japanese cruiser. Just before 8 AM, she launched three torpedoes at a range of about 6,000 yards. *Haguro* turned to avoid them while *Raymond* changed course and got away from the scene as quickly as possible.

Dennis followed the same course of action. She fired her torpedoes at the nearest Japanese cruiser, either *Chokai* or *Tone*, and turned sharply to the southwest. At about 8:10, *Dennis* opened fire with her after 5-inch battery on a cruiser that was already under air attack. After exchanging gunfire with the cruiser for about seven minutes, *Dennis* wheeled off to the southwest at high speed.

As soon as they made their torpedo attacks, all of the Little Wolves reversed course and headed southwest, making smoke and firing their 5-inch guns at the nearest enemy ship. None of the little ships were hit by enemy gunfire, and there were no collisions, which is nothing short of miraculous considering the fact that all of them were turning and swerving to avoid enemy salvos.

Nobody on either side had anything resembling a clear overall view of what was taking place. The weather was not helping—rain and clouds reduced visibility and sometimes blocked it altogether. Smoke from the destroyers, destroyer escorts, and escort carriers further obscured visibility.

Japanese officers still had no real idea of what they were facing. At first the escort carriers of Taffy 3 were identified as carriers of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet. Some lookouts identified them as Japanese carriers. Others imagined that they saw cruisers and even battleships. Both *Haguro* and *Tone* reported firing on a "heavy cruiser"—actually the *Johnston*—and *Haguro* opened fire on a "destroyer"—actually the *Raymond*.

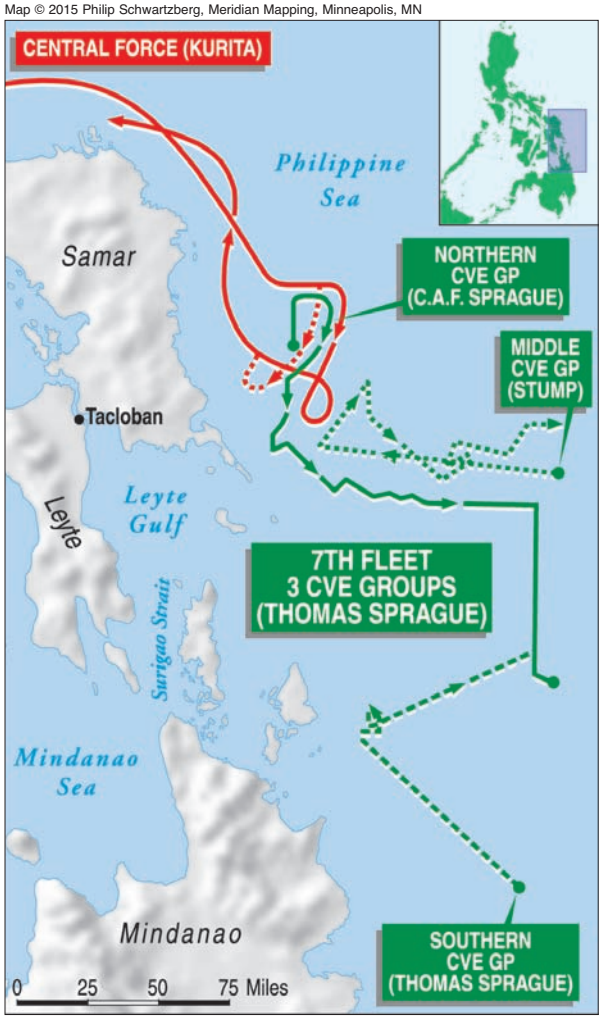
Japanese gunners began to register hits on the American escort vessels. At about 8:50, *Dennis* received a direct hit from *Tone*. The shell went through the main deck and out the starboard side about three feet above the waterline. Ten minutes later, she had her 40mm gun director knocked out by a second hit and a third hit struck her No. 1 5-inch gun shield, rendering the gun inoperative. Since the destroyer escort had already lost her No. 2 gun to mechanical trouble, she altered course to 220 and retired to the southwest.

Samuel B. Roberts was hit at about the same time and received three more in rapid succes-

sion. At about 9 AM, her captain, Commander R.W. Copeland, reported a "tremendous explosion" with the impact of two 14-inch shells fired by *Kongo*. The explosion blew a long, jagged hole 30 or 40 feet long and about seven to 10 feet high in the destroyer escort's port side, right at the waterline. It wiped out No. 2 engine room, burst the after fuel tanks, and started fires on the fantail. The order to abandon ship was given at 9:10. *Samuel B. Roberts* rolled over and sank at 10:05. Of her crew of eight officers and 170 men, three officers and 86 men were killed, missing, or died of wounds.

Gambier Bay managed to outmaneuver everything the Japanese fired at her for about 30 minutes. The carrier changed course every time an enemy salvo fell, confusing enemy gunners and making them correct their aim. From 7:41 to 8:10, the range between *Gambier Bay* and the enemy cruisers decreased from 17,000 yards to 10,000 yards.

At 8:10, the escort carrier received her first hit, which started fires on the flight deck and in the hangars. From that point, she was hit continuously. The forward port engine room was holed below the waterline, flooding the forward spaces and causing the engine room to be abandoned. The ship slowed to 11 knots and dropped astern of the rest of the group.



Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

The battle off Samar was a confused melee early in the campaign to liberate the Philippines from Japanese rule. Admiral Takeo Kurita was mistaken when he believed that he had engaged a much more formidable force of U.S. Navy ships.

Johnston reentered the fight at about this time. Commander Evans saw what was happening to *Gambier Bay* and told his gunnery officer to begin firing on the nearest cruiser, which happened to be *Chikuma*. His idea was to draw her fire away from the escort carrier. "We closed to 6,000 and scored five hits," according to *Johnston*'s gunnery officer, but the tactic did not work. *Chikuma* ignored the destroyer and kept firing at *Gambier Bay*. *Johnston*'s gunnery officer thought it was stupid for *Chikuma* to concentrate on the escort carrier. "He could have sunk us both."

Heermann also did her best to distract *Chikuma,* but she had no luck either. Although the big cruiser did shift some of her fire to *Heermann* and managed to hit the destroyer, her primary target continued to be *Gambier Bay*. Steering was knocked out, radar was disabled, and the carrier's engine room flooded. By 8:45, *Gambier Bay* was dead in the water and sinking.

Five minutes later, the order was given to abandon ship. *Chikuma* and another cruiser kept firing, killing men in the water with shell fragments, until the carrier finally capsized and sank at 9:07.

After *Gambier Bay* sank, *Johnston* turned her attention to Japanese destroyers that were moving into position to attack the escort carriers. The destroyers were sighted when they were still more than 10,000 yards away. *Johnston* immediately opened fire on the leader, which was actually the light cruiser *Yahagi*. The enemy fired right back, hitting *Johnston* several times, according to one account. *Johnston* hit *Yahagi* about 12 times, and the cruiser turned 90 degrees to starboard to get into position to fire torpedoes.

Yahagi fired seven torpedoes at 9:05, and the Japanese destroyers began launching shortly afterward. They were too far away from their target. The nearest carrier, *Kalinin Bay,* was 10,500 yards distant. The squadron commander's decision to launch torpedoes was premature; he was rattled by *Johnston*'s determined attack. The Japanese action report states, "Three enemy carriers and one cruiser were enveloped in black smoke and observed to sink one after the other" as a result of the attack. This was nothing but wishful thinking.

Actually, the torpedoes had no effect at all—every one missed. One was deflected by an accurate shot—some would say a lucky shot—from *St. Lo*'s 5-inch gun. Another was detonated by strafing from one of *St. Lo*'s Avengers. The others were evaded, their runs toward the escort carriers so long that the targets had more than enough time to get out of the way.

"Thus," according to historian Samuel Eliot Morison, "one damaged destroyer, which had expended all her torpedoes and lost one engine, managed to delay, badger, and disconcert a Japanese destroyer squadron."

Johnston's captain, Commander Evans, was absolutely elated over what he had accomplished. "Now I've seen everything," he chuckled.

But Evans did not have much time to celebrate. After the Japanese destroyer squadron fired its torpedoes, it turned its attention to *Johnston*. The destroyer was hit by what has been described as "an avalanche of shells." All power and communications were lost, and only the No. 4 5-inch gun, which was being operated manually, could return fire.

"There were two cruisers on our port, another dead ahead of us, and several destroyers on our starboard side," one of *Johnston*'s officers recounted. And the Japanese destroyers circled around her, shooting at her "like Indians attacking a prairie schooner." At 9:40, *Johnston* went dead in the water. Five minutes later Evans gave the order to abandon ship. When the destroyer went down shortly after 10:10, the captain of one of the Japanese destroyers saluted. It was one of the few acts of gallantry shown that morning.

Losses were not entirely one sided. The cruiser *Chokai* was hit by a 5-inch shell, possibly from *White Plains,* which set off eight of the ship's Long Lance torpedoes. The resulting explosion knocked out the cruiser's rudder and damaged her engines, slowing her down and causing her to drop out of formation. A flight of Avengers completed the damage, scoring five bomb hits amidships, one hit and two near-misses near the stern, and three hits on the bow.

One of the pilots observed the heavy cruiser "to go about 500 yards, blow up and sink within five minutes." A report from *Haguro* puts the cruiser's sinking at 9:30.

An air strike from Admiral Stump's Taffy 2 accounted for the cruiser *Chikuma*. Stump claimed that his torpedo bombers scored hits on two cruisers. *Tone*'s action report states that *Chikuma* was "knocked out" by a torpedo attack at 8:53.

Kurita lost two cruisers but still had more than enough firepower to sink what was left of Taffy 3. His battleships and cruisers had been firing at the American escort carriers since before 8 AM. *Kalinin Bay* received a direct hit at 7:50. *Fanshaw Bay* was hit by four 8-inch shells with a loss of three killed and 20 wounded. *White Plains* was damaged by a 6-inch salvo, and *Kitkun Bay* had several men wounded by shell fragments. *Kalinin Bay* was hit by no fewer than 13 8-inch shells and almost certainly would have gone down if it had not been for the determination of her damage control team. Holes below the waterline were plugged, power was restored, and steering control was done by hand from far below decks. The carrier remained afloat.

Nobody aboard any of Taffy 3's carriers or escort vessels had any idea that Admiral Kurita's destroyer attack, which had been short-circuited by *Johnston,* was the last Japanese offensive action of the morning. At 9:25, while he was preoccupied with dodging torpedoes on the bridge of *Fanshaw Bay,* Sprague heard one of his signalmen shout, "Goddammit boys, they're getting away!"

Sprague looked to see what all the shouting was about. "I could not believe my eyes, but it looked as if the whole Japanese fleet was retiring." He admitted, "It took a whole series of reports from circling planes to convince me."

It was true. Kurita had decided to break off action. At 9:25, he ordered: "Rendezvous, my course north, speed 20." His intention was to regroup his scattered warships and take stock of damage before resuming course toward Leyte Gulf. But as the morning went on, and as he thought about the air and surface attacks he had suffered at the hands of Taffy 3, the prospect of going back toward Leyte Gulf became less appealing.

Kurita hovered in the vicinity of the morning's battle for more than 3½ hours, changing course several times—from due north to west to southwest to west again, then back to southwest, and finally to due north. At about 1:10 PM, it was apparent that he was heading away from the Leyte landing beaches and the vulnerable American transport craft offshore, which had been his intended target early that morning.

Kurita's decision to withdraw was based on a lack of solid information. No one was able to give him any reliable information on the true makeup of Taffy 3. His staff officers kept insisting that it must be a part of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet and that the escort carriers were either Ranger-class or Independence-class aircraft carriers. Also, the optical rangefinders aboard the Japanese ships were not able to track Taffy 3's carriers. Some reports stated that the escort carriers were making 30 knots, possibly an optical illusion. The little escort carriers were built on Liberty Ship hulls and had an optimistic top speed of about 18 knots.

To make a bad situation even worse, *Yamato*'s two spotter planes failed to return; they had been sent out to reconnoiter Leyte Gulf. Their loss deprived Kurita of a vital source of information. A report that the admiral did receive at 9:45 only added to his confusion. A mysterious enemy task force was spotted only 113 miles north of Suluan Island, off the coast of Samar. And the plain language calls for help—there was more than one—made him fear the worst. After the war, he admitted that he had been influenced in deciding to withdraw by hearing this plain-language transmission, which led him to believe that powerful American surface units were on the way to reinforce the ships he was attacking.

Kurita had received a severe beating from Halsey's Third Fleet the day before and had no desire to repeat the encounter. From what he knew, as well as from what he imagined, he might very well be doing just that if he remained off Samar. At 12:36, Kurita signalled Tokyo: "First Striking force has abandoned penetration of Leyte anchorage. Is proceeding north searching for enemy task force. Will engage decisively, then pass through San Bernadino Strait." The enemy task force he was searching for did not exist. This was the mysterious fleet that was reported at 9:45.

Continued on page 74

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: After sustaining torpedo damage during the battle off Samar on October 25, 1944, the Japanese cruiser *Chikuma* maneuvers violently to avoid more damage. The aggressive attacks of the American destroyers and destroyer escorts helped convince the Japanese that they were facing a much more powerful force. RIGHT: The escort carrier USS *St. Lo* was struck by a Japanese kamikaze suicide plane on the same day of the battle off Samar. The small carrier was wracked by explosions and later sank.

By Christopher Miskimon

Japan's Vast War

Imperial Japan waged World War II from the jungles of Burma to the steppes of Manchuria and the Arctic.

ON APRIL 12, 1942, THUNDER SOUNDED ACROSS THE WATERS SURROUNDING the island of Corregidor. It was not a natural storm, however, but a conflagration of steel. That day artillery belonging to the United States military and the Empire of Japan began dueling for ultimate control of the island, which, if the Japanese succeeded, would signal the end of the Philippine campaign. In the beginning the American guns, some as large as 12 inches, caused great damage among their enemy's emplacements. Corregidor was a tough target, heavily armed and fortified; some thought it impregnable.

The position's apparent strength was largely a façade, however. American General Douglas MacArthur had failed to stock the island with sufficient provisions as prewar plans required. There were not enough trained troops to man all the defenses. Over the next two weeks the Japanese guns pounded Corregidor systematically, gradually wearing down the defenders and silencing their artillery. By the end of April, the American troops could barely return fire even though they still had plenty of ammunition. By early May most of the American guns lay silent, and the troops awaited the inevitable enemy landings. When they came, it was over within two days. The Japanese military had achieved another victory, though by year's end its winning streak would be over.

Americans on Corregidor fire one of the 12-inch M1895 guns from Battery Crockett during practice sometime before the Japanese attack.

The meteoric rise and ensuing fall of the Japanese Empire is a complex and long story spanning almost two decades. Many Japanese referred to the period as the Fifteen Year War, placing the conflict's start in China at the Mukden Incident of 1931. From there the Japanese nation was embroiled in a series of conflicts that continued until 1945, when it lay shattered and broken under Allied boots. Japan took a complex path to war, some of it deliberately planned and other aspects more reactionary to events. The full story of this momentous occurrence is covered in extraordinary detail in Francis Pike's new book ***Hirohito's War: The Pacific War 1941-45*** (Bloomsbury Press, 2015, 1,152 pp., online link to maps and photographs along with other material, notes, bibliography, index, $45.00, hardcover).

This book strives to convey the full breadth of Japan's war experience. Japanese history up to the 1930s is recounted in a brief but nonetheless detailed fashion, giving background on Japanese attitudes and thoughts. There is also extensive space dedicated to explaining Japanese decisions in context to world events and the actions of Japan's foes, particularly the United States. Their war decisions and preparations are neatly organized and mixed with what their eventual opponents were doing, giving insight into what the Japanese could see and interpret from their position. There are interesting sections on the extent of Emperor Hirohito's war guilt and level of involvement in decision making. The author argues that while he was not in complete control, Hirohito was more than just a bystander and knew much about what his soldiers and sailors were doing in his name. When they were winning he joined in the revelry and only later appeared unenthusiastic when fortune turned against his country.

Moving into the war itself, the various campaigns and engagements are divided into chapters to enable the reader to digest each battle's meaning and how its outcome affected the war as a whole. The influences of technology and new tactics are discussed as well. For example, the author goes into detail about how the development of fire control systems and antiaircraft weapons affected the outcome of the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. While in some books this might seem a digression from the main story, here it is woven into the narrative effec-

tively. The book continues through all the campaigns and regions of the Pacific War until reaching the penultimate finale in the skies over Hiroshima and Nagasaki along with the surrender itself.

This book, at 1,152 pages, can seem daunting to the reader at first, but upon opening the cover one can see it is organized with this length in mind. Each of the 37 chapters is easy to read on its own, and within them the text is cleverly divided into easily digestible blocks so a reader with only a few minutes can read through the next section while one with more time can read at length. This volume appears intended to be the definitive work on the Pacific War and succeeds in being just that. The book can easily serve as the single source on its subject in a library and still leave the user feeling informed in depth. The publisher, in an interesting twist, has put the entire book's related map and photographs on a website the reader can view at will for easy reference.

Hidden Warships: Finding World War II's Abandoned, Sunk and Preserved Warships

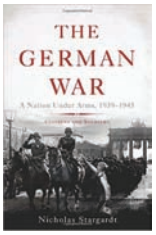
(Nicholas A. Veronico, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2015, 256 pp., photographs, maps, appendices, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover).

Thousands of ships went to the bottom of the oceans during World War II. More were scrapped in the years and decades afterward. A precious few were dedicated as floating museums and memorials to the sacrifice of their crews. Some were simply abandoned, left to rust away, often in forgotten corners of the world. Even as decaying hulks, however, these ships have stories to tell. Each year divers visit many of the sunken wrecks, such as the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* near the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay, or the veritable undersea fleet of sunken Japanese ships in Truk Lagoon. There, encrusted relics of mankind's greatest conflict lay, recognizable to discerning, educated eyes. Museum ships can speak to those above water, reminding them of the achievements of generations past.

This latest work is a worthy follow-on to the author's previous two volumes of the *Hidden Warbirds* series. He follows the exploits of divers exploring sunken warships, chronicles the tales of ships that today lie abandoned on reefs and beaches, and reveals where some ships ended their seagoing lives as museums. Each chapter gives the historical background of the subject vessels, and recent images provide the

reader with a sense of the passage of time. The efforts of the various diving and research teams are also given attention. Some of the ships covered in the book are famous and others unknown, but all have a story to tell.

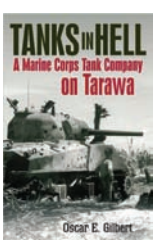
The German War: A Nation Under Arms, Citizens and Soldiers 1939-1945 (Nicholas Stargardt, Basic Books, New York, 2015, 720 pp., maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)



Outside the circle of diehard Nazis, the German populace actually did not welcome the invasion of Poland in 1939. Yet, despite this lack of enthusiasm for war, when it finally ended in 1945 it was with fanatical resistance at the very steps of the Reich Chancellery building in Berlin. There are two stereotyped views of how this occurred. The German populace was both complicit in and knowledgeable of what was happening, or it knew nothing and was led astray by the Nazi regime. Neither is entirely true, adding a level of complexity to the issue which forces a reader or student to consider conflicting evidence in order to understand the chaos and uncertainty of the time.

To convey a sense of what the German people's varied perspectives were, the author delves into detailed accounts of common citizens, soldiers, judges, lawyers, housewives, and others. All these disparate viewpoints are woven together into a work that is indeed thought provoking. The crimes of Nazi Germany are so heinous it is often easier to generalize, but this new book tells the story of wartime Germany in a dispassionate, detailed, and comprehensive way.

Tanks in Hell: A Marine Corps Tank Company on Tarawa (Ocsar E. Gilbert and Romain Cansiere, Casemate Publishing, Havertown, PA, 2015, 364 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, $34.95, hardcover).

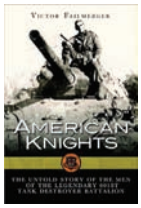


The Battle of Tarawa shocked America. It was a bloody, grinding fight that chewed up men on both sides and caused horrific casualties. The Marines who landed on this tiny island fought a Japanese force whose commander bragged Tarawa could not be taken in 100 years by a million men. The Marines took it in just over three days but paid a fearful price.

Instrumental in the battle for the island fortress were the men and tanks of C Company, 1st Corps Medium Tank Battalion. The unit was formed on January 18, 1943, at Camp Pendleton, California. It entered combat 10 months later at Tarawa. During the deadly fighting the tanks of C Company went ashore to help expand the beachhead. The Japanese used every weapon at their disposal to destroy them; only two tanks survived. Despite their heavy losses the tank crews helped the hard-pressed infantry to move forward, allowing more Marines to land and move inland. Without them, victory would have been even harder to win.

This is the story of a single tank company in a single battle. As such, it brings a high degree of detail to the storytelling, allowing the reader to explore what the fighting was like at a personal level. The author gives enough detail about the organization and planning for the battle to enhance the understanding of why the Marine tankers had to do what they did. There are already a large number of books on Tarawa; however, this book stands out through its thorough study of a small but essential part of it.

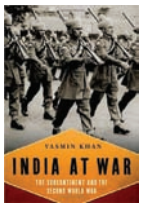
American Knights: The Untold Story of the Men of the Legendary 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion (Victor Failmezger, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2015, 352 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $32.95, hardcover).



The Battle of El Guettar began in the early morning hours of March 23, 1943, with the men of the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion arrayed in front of the American artillery positions east of the town. The Americans were preparing to advance when a German attack materialized from the east. The Americans had half-tracks with 75mm guns against a mix of panzers and other armored vehicles. Soon the two forces were engaged in a bitter duel; smoke swirled around the battlefield as cannons roared and men were maimed and killed. When the action finally ended the Germans were withdrawing; they had been fought to a standstill despite their numbers and experience. The Americans had shown what they could do, in particular this battalion of tank killers. It was credited with 30 panzers.

The 601st served in combat from North Africa onward, ending the war in Germany. Only a handful of tank destroyer battalions can claim such an achievement. The author, whose uncle was a member of the unit, discovered his relative's letters and was inspired to learn more about the formation. His research is extensive, and the writing is engaging. The story of the 601st is a tale of American armored combat experience during World War II in fascinating detail.

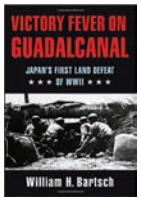
India at War: The Subcontinent and the Second World War (Yasmin Khan, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2015, 432 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, hardcover).



Of all the nations in Britain's Commonwealth, none contributed more soldiers to World War II than India. The subcontinent contributed 2.5 million men, all of them volunteers; they served across the globe but particularly in North Africa, Italy, and Southeast Asia. While those troops were helping win the war, however, the Indian home front was in turmoil. Social and cultural changes were occurring. Indians were heavily engaged in war production and building the infrastructure the military needed to train and fight. Meanwhile, Indian territory was under occasional attack by the Japanese.

There has been relatively little published in the United States about India during the war, and this book goes far toward redressing that imbalance. The author concentrates on how average Indians dealt with the circumstances that were forced upon them. She also explains how the mobilization for war affected what was already happening in India, such as the growing independence movement in the context of greater world events like the impending twilight of the British Empire. This book fills a gap on the study of World War II and one of its lesser known theaters.

Victory Fever on Guadalcanal: Japan's First Land Defeat of WWII (William H. Bartsch, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 2014, 339 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover).

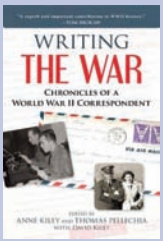


Many battles are referred to as turning points in World War II; Guadalcanal is deserving of the moniker. After this campaign the Japanese were on the defensive until war's end. When America realized Japan was building an airfield on the island, it responded, capturing it in a day. That was the simple beginning to what became a miserable, brutal, slogging fight as the Japanese made repeated attempts to dislodge the entrenched U.S. Marines. For the next six months the Japanese wave crashed against the American rock to no avail. In the end, the Japanese forces had to withdraw, wholly defeated for the first time.

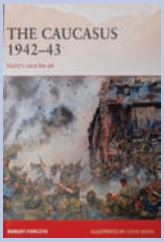
The story of this epic struggle is told at the foxhole level with individual accounts through-

New & Noteworthy

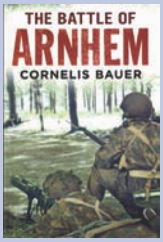
You Can't Get Much Closer Than This: Combat with the 80th "Blue Ridge" Division in World War II Europe (A.Z. Adkins Jr. and Andrew Z. Adkins III, Casemate Publishing, 2015, $18.95, softcover). A veteran's memoir of his time in combat. His account ranges from entering the service in August 1944 to the end of the war in Nuremburg.



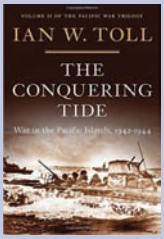
Writing the War: Chronicles of a World War II Correspondent (Edited by Anne Kiley and Thomas Pellechia, Prometheus Books, 2015, $25.00, hardcover). This is a collection of the letters and recollections of a *Stars and Stripes* correspondent and his love, who labored on the home front.



The Caucasus 1942-43: Kleist's Race for Oil (Robert Forczyk, Osprey Publishing, 2015, $21.95, softcover). A detailed account of the German offensive to seize the Soviet oilfields in the Caucasus. It is well illustrated with both photographs and original art.

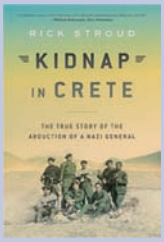


The Battle of Arnhem (Cornelis Bauer, Fonthill Media, 2015, $25.95, softcover). An in-depth story of the battle using many firsthand accounts and interviews. The author tries to dispel some of the myths surrounding the campaign.



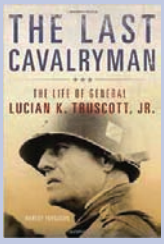
The Conquering Tide: War in the Pacific Islands 1942-1944 (Ian W. Toll, W.W. Norton and Company, 2015, $35.00, hardcover). This is the second volume of a trilogy by this author. It covers the American island-hopping campaign from the foxhole to the admiral's cabin.

World War II at Sea: A Naval View of the Global Conflict 1939 to 1945 (Jeremy Harwood, Zenith Press, 2015, $30.00, hardcover) A wide-ranging summary of the major campaigns and actions across the oceans. It is well-stocked with photographs, charts, and maps.

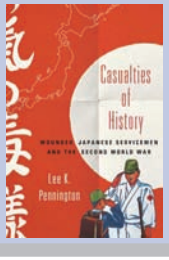


Kidnap in Crete: The True Story of the Abduction of a Nazi General (Rick Stroud, Bloomsbury Press, 2015, $28.00, hardcover) In April 1944, a small force of Special Operations Executive (SOE) operatives and partisans carried out a kidnapping of a Nazi general on the island of Crete. The tale is told in full here for the first time.

Check Six! A Thunderbolt Pilot's War Across the Pacific (Jim Curran and Terence Popravak Jr, Casemate Publishing, 2015, $32.95, hardcover). A memoir by a Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter pilot who served in the Pacific Theater. He entered the war in New Guinea in 1943.



The Last Cavalryman: The Life of General Lucian K. Truscott (Harvey Ferguson, University of Oklahoma Press, 2015, $29.95, hardcover) A biography of the famous general. Bill Mauldin stated Truscott "could have eaten a ham like Patton for breakfast."



Casualties of History: Wounded Japanese Servicemen and the Second World War (Lee K. Pennington, Cornell University Press, 2015, $39.95, hardcover). A study of how Japanese soldiers were treated once they returned home after World War II. The author uses memoirs to help explain what the injured soldiers who survived the war experienced.

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

PLAYSTATION 4 GETS MORE FLIGHT AND GROUND BATTLING ACTION, AND WORLD WAR II MAKES ITS WAY TO VR IN A TRULY UNIQUE WAY.

AIR CONFLICTS: PACIFIC CARRIERS

PUBLISHER KALYPSO MEDIA
GENRE ACTION • **SYSTEM** PLAYSTATION 4
AVAILABLE NOW

If *Air Conflicts: Pacific Carriers* sounds familiar, that's because it was originally released for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and PC back in December 2012. Now, three years later, it's finally available on PlayStation 4, and while the core game is intact, some of its problems are more glaring than ever on the new platform.

Air Conflicts offers up four campaigns, with players able to take on missions both as the American and the Japanese forces, from the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and beyond. Straightforward training missions make way for a variety of sorties, some mandatory and some optional, and the shooting remains mostly satisfying throughout. If you're more of an arcade-style player (such as myself), you'll find plenty of helpful guides to make taking down enemy aircraft a breeze. Rather than figuring out the exact trajectory and how far ahead of a plane you need to aim on your own, you can simply aim for the handy target leading the enemy fighter's nose to light them up and swiftly knock them out of the sky.

Things get a little more dodgy when it comes time to go on bombing or torpedo runs. Bombing isn't as satisfying as it should be, especially considering how large of a role it plays in the overall experience. Dropping torpedoes on enemy vessels is finicky on a whole other level, though, and even after going through training it's not very clear just how low and straight is low and straight enough to successfully deploy munitions. It's a shame because the rest of *Air Conflicts: Pacific Carriers* controls well and looks decent enough, even if its origin as a 2012 dogfighter is visually apparent. I actually think this one will be more fun for folks who want to go the sim route and play with more realistic options, because the pure arcade satisfaction doesn't linger for too long. If you're hard up for World War II aerial combat on PS4, which is understandable, then *Air Conflicts* is worth taking for a spin. Just be aware of the rough edges that make it tough to stay in the skies for any extended period of time.

WORLD OF TANKS PS4

PUBLISHER WARGAMING
GENRE ACTION • **SYSTEM** PLAYSTATION 4
AVAILABLE NOW (BETA)

Every time a new version of *World of Tanks* is released I get the opportunity to remind myself that I'm really bad at *World of Tanks*. The latest to be fully available to the public is *World of Tanks on PlayStation 4*, which recently had a December 4-6 beta weekend timed to coincide with the PlayStation Experience event. The beta event came and went as smoothly as one could hope, with all participants receiving an exclusive PlayStation 20th anniversary M22 Locust Premium U.S. light tank as a bonus gift for joining the fight.

As for the game itself, anyone who has played *World of Tanks* before will be right at home with this version. The visuals make the transition to Sony's platform wonderfully, with each available map truly shining on the console. I tried out a few large-scale battles over the beta weekend, and was both delighted and dismayed at how good everyone already was! That's okay, though, because it also means teamwork was on point for the majority of the festivities, with bonuses implemented to reward even the most basic of strategic assistance. It's hard to feel completely useless in a match when the post-game breakdown shows that one of your teammates might not have been able to take down an enemy tank had you not sacrificed yourself just to spot it in the first place.

At this point *World of Tanks* is available on pretty much every platform, and it's as free to play as ever on PlayStation 4. You don't even need a PlayStation Plus membership to play this one online, so everyone with a PSN account will be able to get in on the action when the full version launches.

WORLD WAR TOONS

PUBLISHER SONY • **GENRE** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER • **SYSTEM** PLAYSTATION VR

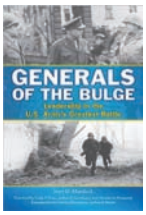
If there's one place that hasn't had much opportunity to spread its wings in the world of World War II-related games it's virtual reality. We're still in the early stages of VR gaming, and even with retail Oculus Rift units becoming available shortly it's still far from viable to your average consumer, but things are beginning to get interesting on that front. *World War Toons* is a PlayStation VR game that was originally shown at E3 2015, and it brings with it not only a novel approach to World War II games, but a unique take on the first-person shooter genre in general.

The team behind *World War Toons* is Reload Studios, which is comprised of not just former *Call of Duty* devs, but veteran animators from both Disney and Marvel, as well. While its setting is indeed inspired by World War II, the stylistic approach manages to spin it into a more family-friendly affair that can be enjoyed by everyone. Reload Studios unveiled a new trailer during December's PlayStation Experience event, highlighting a blend of cartoony, operatic comedy and pre-alpha in-game assets. The result is a strikingly different take on the WWII shooter, with a refreshing lightheartedness that manages not to come off as inappropriate.

Special item pick-ups cause pianos to drop from the sky, enemies ride *Looney Tunes*-esque TNT rockets across the battlefield, and the recently revealed Sniper character even gets a very literal heads up in the aiming department. More specifically, whenever the Sniper peeks through his scope, his opponents' heads boom into cartoonishly massive caricatures, letting the player focus on aiming without getting motion sickness from zooming in and focusing too far ahead. That's really the aim of the entire control scheme. There are still plenty of people who can't touch VR, especially first-person shooters, because of motion sickness issues. A refined control scheme is being implemented to make sure *World War Toons* is more accessible than anything else, and Reload is hoping to revolutionize the FPS genre within the world of VR with this one. Here's hoping they succeed and we get the chance to try out *World War Toons* for ourselves soon. □

out. Small details are strewn across the pages, providing dramatic vignettes that often grip the reader at an emotional level. The care that went into the research for this work is clear, making it entertaining and engaging.

Generals of the Bulge: Leadership in the U.S. Army's Greatest Battle (Jerry D. Morelock, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2015, 365 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover).



The Battle of the Bulge encompassed six weeks of horrible fighting. Germany's last great offensive in the West challenged the U.S. Army to the extreme. At the front lines, infantrymen fought and died trying to stem the Nazi tide. Behind them, however, were officers charged with deciphering German moves and developing responses. Eventually they would have to resume the offensive and push the enemy back. Their decisions ruled the lives of those at the front and ultimately determined the outcome in the Ardennes.

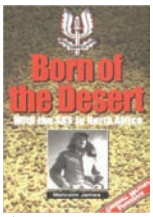
The author took a close, critical look at the generals who oversaw the campaign. Each chapter covers a different level of command, beginning with General Dwight Eisenhower at Supreme Headquarters. From there, General Omar Bradley, the 12th Army Group commander, is evaluated followed by General William Simpson of the Ninth Army. The VIII Corps commander, General Troy Middleton, is next, and a final chapter evaluates the generals who led the defense of St. Vith, Alan Jones and Bruce C. Clarke. Each is rated as to his effectiveness or lack thereof. It is an interesting study in leadership.

Auschwitz, The Nazi Solution: An Illustrated History and Guide (Andrew Rawson, Pen and Sword Publishing, 2015, 136 pp., illustrations, index, $16.99, softcover).

There were many concentration camps across Germany and Eastern Europe during World War II, but the complex of Auschwitz-Birkenau is among the most notorious. The camp progressed from a Polish prison encampment into a death camp where prisoners faced summary execution or a brutal existence as slave laborers until torment or starvation claimed them. A few resisted or tried to escape, but the camp was overall a place of horror and evil.

This book is part of a series that provides guidance on how to visit the famous—and infamous—locations of World War II. This volume gives the reader the background on the camp and the experiences of those trapped there. The history of Auschwitz is followed by directions to the City of Krakow, a good starting point for a reader to begin touring the area and viewing what is left of one of history's most horrific places—in the hopes it will be remembered as a warning for the future.

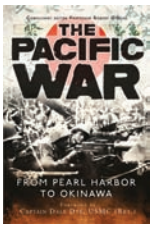
Born of the Desert: With the SAS in North Africa (Malcolm James, Frontline Books, Yorkshire, UK, 2015, 224 pp., maps, illustrations, appendix, $29.95, softcover)



This is a classic tale of the early missions of Great Britain's world famous Special Forces unit. Formed in 1941 to conduct reconnaissance and raids behind enemy lines, the Special Air Service (SAS) ranged across the desert, hitting the Germans and Italians where they were most vulnerable. They sowed fear wherever they went and forced the enemy to divert scant resources to protect against them.

The author was a medical officer in the SAS, and this account was originally published in 1945. Here it is reprinted in the original font with a section of new notes updating the reader. It is an interesting first-person account, written when the events were still fresh in the author's mind. The book contains a level of detail only a participant can reliably bring to the events covered within.

The Pacific War: From Pearl Harbor to Okinawa (Edited by Robert O'Neill, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2015, 264 pp., maps, photographs, index, $9.95, softcover).



The Pacific War was fought over a vast area, requiring massive efforts in transportation and logistics to make even the smallest effort at engaging the enemy possible. America, drawn into the war through a surprise attack, endured through the dark days of 1942-1943 and rebounded with a military force that proved able to take the battle to Japan on a massive, war-winning scale.

Ten of the major campaigns of the Pacific are covered here, from Pearl Harbor to Okinawa. Each has its own chapter written by a different author. Each writer is an authority on their subject, able to tell the story of their given battle in great detail and accuracy. The book is concise, providing an excellent overview. Land and sea battles are both represented, giving the reader an overall perspective of how armies and navies fought across the great distances of the region. □

Klondike

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lacked his pension and investments, and he donated funds to build a school chapel. The former general spent little on himself, his frugal habits tied to his spiritual convictions. Cigars were his one indulgence. He smoked pipes as a young man, later switched to cigarettes, and finally settled on cigars, fat stogies as well as slender cigarillos.

Cancer ended his twilight years. He died in hospice care on January 28, 1996.

Several months later, Congress made an exception to its statutory restriction and permitted the U.S. Army to award Medals of Honor to soldiers denied the decoration on racial grounds during World War II, reversing an unwritten policy that created a bias against them. Seventeen years later, the Army upgraded a DSC posthumously awarded to a Catholic chaplain during the Korean War, but that Medal of Honor involved no prior denial.

The rationale behind General Marshall's disapproval remains unclear.

Marshall belonged to the Episcopal Church, but his wartime writings reflect esteem for Catholic chaplains, more so than many of their Protestant peers. Denominational prejudice played no discernable role in his judgment regarding Father Sam.

The general and the chaplain possessed similar moral qualities. Altruistic to the core, both men bridled their egos, scorned vanity, and declined advantage. Self-denial fit them like comfortable shoes. Did the general believe the Medal of Honor contradicted the solemn vows of men whose vocation ran contrary to fame and personal reward?

Whatever motivated the 1944 decision, it spared Father Sam all the fanfare and hero worship that often accompany the medal. He preferred that laurels fell upon others and that only the Almighty merited worship.

It was never the medal that mattered, only the lives saved.

Bill Warnock authored The Dead of Winter, *a 2005 book chronicling present-day efforts to recover missing U.S. soldiers killed during the Battle of the Bulge. He received a 2010 Distinguished Writing Award from the Army Historical Foundation. Bill is currently writing a history of the U.S. 741st Tank Battalion in World War II. While conducting research for that book, he chanced upon the Medal of Honor paperwork drawn up by Engels and Critchell. The yellowed and forgotten pages propelled a quest to uncover the story presented here.*

JFK

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lucky. "When next seen the *Aaron Ward* was on fire aft and settling in the water," Livingston wrote of his escort. The destroyer had taken a bomb hit to the after engine room, causing the loss of all electrical power to the 5-inch and 40mm guns. Two near misses caused flooding in the firerooms. Two more bombs landed close aboard the port side as the powerless ship drifted to a stop.

LST-449 stood near the stricken destroyer until the minesweepers *Ortolan* and *Vireo* arrived on the scene. An attempt to tow *Aaron Ward* to safety failed, and she later sank three miles short of Tulagi. Livingston pointed his ship in the direction of two parachutes observed falling from the sky shortly after the two rescue vessels arrived.

Kennedy was among a small crowd of curious passengers who intently watched as the LST approached a Japanese pilot in the water. A rescue party was positioned near the front of the ship. Taking no chances, Livingston stationed his executive officer on the wing of the bridge with a loaded submachine gun. The downed airman took off his lifejacket and began swimming away with one arm under the water at all times as the vessel closed for a rescue. He suddenly produced a pistol and fired two shots toward his would-be rescuers.

"He was liquidated," Livingston simply reported. The second downed pilot could not be located. "Welcome to the South Pacific," Kennedy mumbled to himself after witnessing the events.

The massive Japanese air strike on the Guadalcanal area on April 7, 1943, did not stall the American advance in the South Pacific. Fears of additional attacks, though, kept *LST-449* at sea for five more days. The boat eventually pulled into Guadalcanal on April 12. All aboard had survived a close scrape with death.

Carl Livingston took satisfaction knowing that his largely inexperienced crew courageously discharged its duties in the face of a fierce enemy air attack. He had no way of knowing that the precious cargo he safely delivered was not only supplies, ammunition, and replacement soldiers, but a future president.

For John F. Kennedy, his arrival in the South Pacific marked the end of one long journey and the beginning of another. Less than four months later he would again be fighting for survival.

John Damagalski is a graduate of Northern Illinois University and a resident of the Chicago area.

Samar

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Sprague had no insight into Kurita's motives. He only knew that a large Japanese fleet, which by rights should have sunk his entire force and gone on to attack the landing force at Leyte Gulf, had inexplicably turned away. The battle was summed up by one historian: "In a running fight lasting almost two hours and a half, six escort carriers and their screen of three destroyers and four destroyer escorts, aided by planes from Stump's escort carrier unit, has stopped Kurita's powerful Center Force, and inflicted greater loss than they sustained."

Sprague himself had this to say about what had happened off Samar. "The failure of the enemy main body and encircling light forces to completely wipe out all vessels of this task unit can be attributed to our successful smoke screen, our torpedo counterattack, continuous harassment of enemy by bomb, torpedo and strafing air attacks, timely maneuvers, and the definite partiality of Almighty God."

The action for Taffy 3 that day was not over. At about 10:50, five kamikazes from an air base on Luzon attacked Sprague's carriers while they were recovering aircraft. The suicide planes approached at low altitude and never showed up on radar. *Kitkun Bay* was badly damaged by a bomb from one of the Japanese aircraft, although the kamikaze itself bounded off the port catwalk and splashed harmlessly into the sea.

St. Lo was not as fortunate. One kamikaze, a Zero fighter, crashed through the flight deck and exploded below. Torpedoes and bombs that had been brought up to the flight deck began exploding, setting the entire length of the carrier on fire. At 11:25, *St. Lo* went down under a dense cloud of smoke. *St. Lo* has been originally commissioned as USS *Midway,* but had her name changed when *Midway* was given to one of the new fleet carriers. Old timers blamed *St. Lo*'s misfortune, after surviving the big guns of Admiral Kurita's Center Force, on the carrier's renaming. Everyone knew that changing the name of a ship was sure to bring bad luck.

Morison wrote fittingly of Taffy 3's fight: "In no engagement of its entire history has the United States Navy shown more gallantry, guts and gumption than in those two morning hours between 0730 and 0930 off Samar."

Author David A. Johnson has written numerous articles on a variety of World War II topics. His recent book Yanks in the RAF *is now available through Prometheus Books.*

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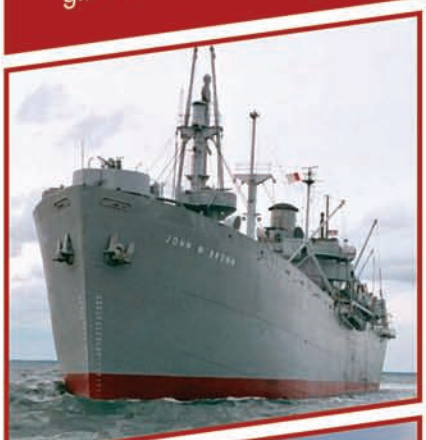

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