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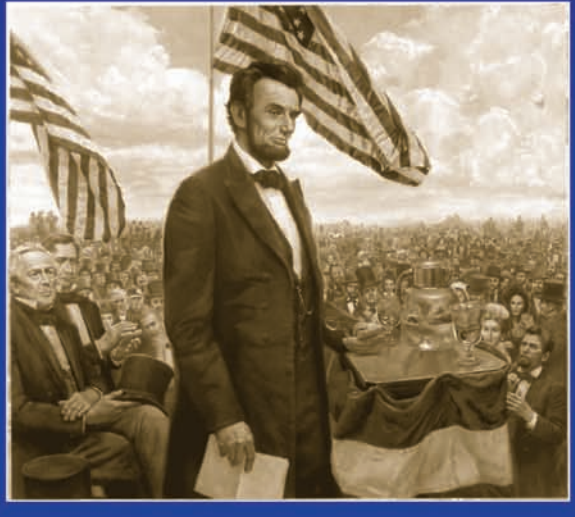

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Photo: Signal Magazine

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John D. Hoptak is an American and Civil War historian and educator. Author of *The Battle of South Mountain, Our Boys Did Nobly, First in Defense of the Union,* and *Antietam: September 17, 1862,* Hoptak brings to life the riveting conflicts that divided a nation. Hoptak's laboratory is the Antietam National Battlefield, where as a Park Ranger he shares his vast knowledge about the bloodiest day of battle in U.S. history.

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Editorial

The USS *Buchanan* achieved lasting fame with another navy and under another name.

THE DESTROYER USS *BUCHANAN* (DD-131) WAS STRUCK FROM THE U.S. NAVY ROLL on January 8, 1941, after being delivered to the British Royal Navy four months earlier to conclude the "Destroyers for Bases Deal," a critical element of the Lend-Lease program. Renamed the HMS *Campbeltown,* the ship was packed with explosives and destroyed when it rammed the huge drydock at the port of St. Nazaire in Nazi-occupied France.

By the time of the St. Nazaire Raid in March 1942, the *Campbeltown* was well past her prime. So, a fitting end would be to strike a blow against the Nazis and disable the only drydock large enough to service the behemoth German battleship *Tirpitz.*

In her heyday, however, the warship, which was originally the Wickes-class destroyer USS *Buchanan,* served with pride during the years between the world wars. Constructed at the Bath Iron Works in Maine, its keel laid on June 29, 1918, followed by its launching the following January, the *Buchanan* was a 1,260-ton vessel that bristled with armament, including four 4-inch main guns, a secondary 3-inch weapon, and two banks of 23-inch torpedo tubes. The ship was slightly more than 314 feet long and its beam was just over 30 feet. Four boilers and geared turbines produced a top speed of 35 knots.

The destroyer had been named for Admiral Franklin Buchanan, an officer of the U.S. Navy who had sided with the Confederacy during the Civil War and commanded the ironclad CSS *Virginia* (formerly the USS *Merrimack*) during its epic duel with the Union Navy ironclad *Monitor* in Hampton Roads in March 1862. The USS *Buchanan* sailed the Caribbean and later the Pacific during the early 1920s before being decommissioned and placed in reserve at San Diego, California, for eight years from 1922 to 1930. In and out of full commission two more times during the 1930s, the *Buchanan* sailed to Alaska and was stationed along the Gulf of Mexico, patrolling off the coasts of Florida, Cuba, and Texas.

A year after Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, the old destroyer, whose career had been wholly unremarkable to date, was sailed to the port of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and decommissioned for the final time on September 9, 1940. Renamed HMS *Campbeltown,* the destroyer escorted Atlantic convoys and played cat and mouse with German U-boats, sometimes picking up survivors from torpedoed merchant ships.

When the *Campbeltown*'s number came up, it was determined that the old destroyer would serve a rather unique purpose as the centerpiece of the daring commando raid on St. Nazaire. Although its career had involved very little of note to that time, the destruction of the great drydock indeed left its mark on history.

After the end of World War II, the bell of the old HMS *Campbeltown,* once the sleek USS *Buchanan,* was given by the British government to the city of Campbelltown, Pennsylvania, in a gesture of appreciation for the Lend-Lease program which had undoubtedly saved Britain from collapse when the island nation had stood alone against Germany.

In May 1989, the modern Type 22 frigate HMS *Campbeltown* was commissioned into service with the Royal Navy. Aboard, in a place of honor, was the bell of the old World War II destroyer, on loan to the new frigate for the duration of its service with the Royal Navy.

From obscurity during the interwar years, the USS *Buchanan* had rendered valuable service to the Allied cause. Although its original name and career in the U.S. Navy are largely forgotten, HMS *Campbeltown* is remembered for the heroism of those who undertook one of the riskiest missions of World War II and paid a heavy price for success.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

Volume 11 ■ Number 2

Tito's War

Dear Editor,

I have enclosed three photos that show without any doubt that the photo used in the "Tito's War" article is a fake. The first photo was used on pages 54 and 55 in *WWII History*, November 2011 issue. The second shows the same scene from a Getty Image photo from 10/10/1942 from *Picture Post* magazine from the UK. The third is a 1944 American lobby card by Columbia Pictures for the movie *Underground Guerrillas* (the U.S. rerelease of *Undercover*). As you can plainly see, this is the same scene from the movie *Undercover* (1943). In short, it is a movie still, not a real photo from World War II.

In your editorial policy, it says you will use letters in Dispatches that are short and are of interest to readers of *WWII History* magazine. Using a fake photo like they did in Nazi Germany and the USSR and in totalitarian countries is definitely of interest to readers of the magazine. I think using a fake photo in this manner is very serious and significant.

Moreover, using the photo in this forged and dishonest way is unethical and academically reprehensible. Scholars do not do this kind of thing. This is something Joseph Goebbels does. What is troubling in this instance is that using the photo is not incidental or insignificant. It touches on the very issue involved here, on the ultimate issue. Did Tito's Communists really fight the Germans?

The photo seems to be visual proof that Tito fought the Germans. But it is a fake or phony photo. It is from a movie, ironically, about the Chetniks. The photo is being used, in effect, to prove John Brown's case, i.e., that the Communists fought the Germans. So it is crucial in the article and is thus not a minor glitch.

More importantly, Mr. Brown presents a very one-sided view of Draza Mihailovich. He omits the fact that General Dwight D. Eisenhower recommended to President Truman that Draza receive a U.S. Legion of Merit award. In 1948, Truman acted on Ike's suggestion and awarded Draza a Legion of Merit award. Now, is Mr. Brown saying that Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman were Nazi collaborators too! (Because they gave an award to an alleged Nazi, they must be Nazis too!) It is nonsense. But this is the part of the story Brown conveniently censors and covers up. Draza rescued over 500 downed U.S. airmen that Muslims and Croats wanted to kill. I would recommend perusing my article "Draza Mihailovich and the Rescue of U.S. Airmen During WWII" found at: www.serbianna.com/columns/savich/038.shtml. The article is about U.S. Air Force veteran Richard Felman and his eyewitness account of being rescued by Draza's forces in WWII. This is the other part of the story censored and faked by Mr. Brown.

Carl Savich
Sterling Heights, Michigan

Mr. Savich,

I am not really surprised to learn that the photo we used, is, in fact, not authentic. Unfortunately, we were not able to learn more about the image until we received your e-mail.

We publish hundreds of photos every year in our publications and make every effort to identify them accurately. We are frequently at the mercy of the photo suppliers regarding the captions since we simply don't have the resources to research and verify each image. While all of the sources we use are reputable, and generally have reasonably correct caption information, we do sometimes spot "fake" photos that are incorrectly identified.

We have forwarded your e-mail to the photo agency that provided the photograph in question in the hopes that they will correct their caption. Again, thanks for taking the time to correct our mistake.

Carl Gnam
Editorial Director

Dear Mr. Savich,

Mr. Gnam has explained the error of the photo.

I had never seen the photo until a copy of the magazine reached me, therefore I could not have used it to "prove the communists fought the Germans." And you continue with "I used the photo to prove my case, that the communists fought the Germans" and that using "the photo in this forged and dishonest way is unethical and academically reprehensible" and other rubbishy remarks. I repeat: the first time I saw the photo was when I received a copy of the magazine and therefore could not have used it in the way you describe.

That Tito and his partisans fought the Germans and

Italians, and took heavy losses, is a fact of history. Also a fact of history is that Mihailovic, a Royalist, not an alleged Nazi, did ally himself first with the Germans then the Italians, and at times fought Tito's partisans. He was dedicated to returning the monarchy to Yugoslavia when war ended. He was executed by the Tito government for his collaboration with the enemy.

You say that I omitted the fact that Mihailovic was awarded a Legion of Merit in 1948; that is three years after the war ended and outside the scope of my story. Was this an award for rescuing 500 U.S. airmen, or was it political? Quoting from a book I have here, among the flyers the Chetniks and Partisans rescued were an estimated 2,000 U.S. B-24 crews flying out of Italy to raid targets in eastern Germany and eastern Europe and bomb the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania. If the figures of 500 and 2,000 are correct, were 1,500 airmen rescued by Tito's Partisans?

I hope this covers your queries, and add that I always keep in mind that the Allies engaged in all kinds of deception, as did the Axis.

John Brown

DeGaulle the Surrender Monkey

Dear Editor:

Your piece about General DeGaulle in the Fall issue is interesting—more for what it doesn't say than anything else. De Gaulle was a poseur who never won a battle as a professional soldier although he was intelligent and later developed great political skills. He was captured by the Germans at Verdun in the Great War and in his only outing as a regimental commander in World War II, against the Germans, was again defeated. A few weeks later, he deserted his post in France, escaped to London, and found a place there on Mr. Churchill's payroll. The real reason the Dakar expedition of 1940 failed was that the local French considered DeGaulle a renegade and a British stooge. And it was no accident that the Allies would not let him set foot in France until after it was safely reconquered.

But DeGaulle's crowning achievement came some 17 years later, in Algeria. There, the French Army won a stunning counterinsurgency victory. At the time DeGaulle decided to give up, the rebel FLN did not control even one square mile of Algeria. But the French at home were tired of war and DeGaulle wanted France out of Africa to devote all efforts in Europe and to develop the Bomb. He shamelessly used racist arguments against the Algerian French and the Arabs and invoked racial segregation.

So what happened? All one million French had to leave as did over 1000,000 Harkis (Moslem French soldiers). More than 300,000 Arabs were butchered by the FLN because they supported the French. The Moslems that could immigrated to France to live like animals. So the general became, in addition to all else, a French surrender monkey. Good luck, Mr. Haskew, in your rehabilitation efforts.

Kenneth Lynn
Pompano Beach, Florida

Dear Mr. Lynn:

I appreciate your perspective on several aspects of this controversial figure's life; however, I must say that the choice of words that he "deserted his post" is quite intriguing. For DeGaulle, it was a matter of honor. Refusal to collaborate with the Nazis hardly qualifies as desertion in the truest sense of the word. Then, the assertion that the defenders of Dakar considered him a "renegade and a British stooge" is nothing noteworthy. He considered them minions of the puppet Vichy government. Which is worse? The verdict of history has been rendered. True enough, DeGaulle was a savvy and pragmatic politician. He had few friends and quite a large number of detractors. While he may have been despised by some, he is considered a hero by others. In my work, there is no rehabilitation agenda and actually there is no need for one. De Gaulle would simply say that his record and his work on behalf of France speak for themselves. For De Gaulle, there may in fact have been three choices, the right way, the wrong way, and the French way.

Michael E. Haskew

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By Brandt Heatherington

The Concrete Fleet

An emergency measure defied the laws of physics.

IT IS A FACT THAT WAR HAS SPARKED SOME AMAZING INNOVATIONS. IT HAS AT the same time spawned incredible desperation. The attempt by the U.S. Navy in both world wars to construct seagoing vessels made of concrete would seem to be a combination of the two at first glance.

A hulking gray stone façade lay for years in the surf off Sunset Beach at Cape May, New Jersey. It appeared to be the skeletal remains of some strange vessel with the bow protruding upright from the water. The waves lapped its ghostly shape as if it was always intended to be a forlorn breakwater. This was the remnant of the SS *Atlantus,* a relic from one of the strangest programs the U.S. Navy has ever undertaken.

Concrete ships were not unheard of prior the *Atlantus* and her World War I-era contemporaries. The oldest known concrete ship was a dinghy built by Joseph Louis Lambot in southern France in 1848. The boat was featured at the 1855 World's Fair. In the 1890s, an Italian engineer named Carlo Gabellini built barges and small ships out of concrete. Numerous small concrete boats were built in the England in the first decade of the 20th century, and one of these ships, the *Violette,* built in 1917, is now a boating clubhouse on the Medway River. This makes her the oldest concrete ship still afloat.

When the United States finally entered World War I in 1917, steel became scarce, and at the same time the demand for ships increased. The U.S. government invited a Norwegian named N.K. Fougner to head a study into the feasibility of building ships made of ferro-concrete, or concrete reinforced with steel bars. In August 1917, Founger had successfully launched the first cement ship, the 84-foot *Namsenfjord,* and the United States wanted to see what he could do to expand its fleet using inexpensive alternative materials.

Based on the study, President Woodrow Wilson approved the Emergency Fleet program, which commissioned the construction of 24 concrete ships for the war effort. The ships would be used for transport purposes, mainly as steamers or oil tankers.

Meanwhile, a businessman named William Leslie Comyn took the initiative and formed the San Francisco Ship Building Company to begin constructing the newly authorized vessels. The first American concrete ship, a steamer named the SS *Faith,* was launched in March 1918 and cost $750,000 to build. By the time the war ended eight months later, construction had begun on only half the fleet at a cost of $50 million, and none of the concrete ships had actually been completed. Several companies had joined the effort by this time, including the Liberty Ship Building Company based in Wilmington, North Carolina. Eventually, a dozen ships were completed and sold to private companies which used them for commerce, storage, and scrap.

What became of the World War I fleet was almost as intriguing and bizarre as the concept of concrete ships itself. The SS *Atlantus* was a steamer eventually purchased for use as a ferry landing. During construction of the landing, the *Atlantus* broke free from its moorings in a storm and grounded on the beach in Cape May where it remained for decades. The SS *Cape Fear* was another steamer. It collided with a cargo ship in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, shattered and sank, killing 19 crewmen. The SS *Palo Alto* was an oil tanker that was turned into a dance club and restaurant at Seacliff Beach, California, and is now a fishing pier.

The *Belair* No. 1 was the first concrete ship launched in the San Francisco Bay area since World War I. Photographed in June 1943, workmen cluster about on the forward section of the deck.

Another tanker, the SS *San Pasqual,* was damaged in a storm in 1921 and eventually purchased by a Cuban company in 1924. It was run aground off Cuba in 1933 and used for a time as a prison. Later outfitted with machine guns and cannon in

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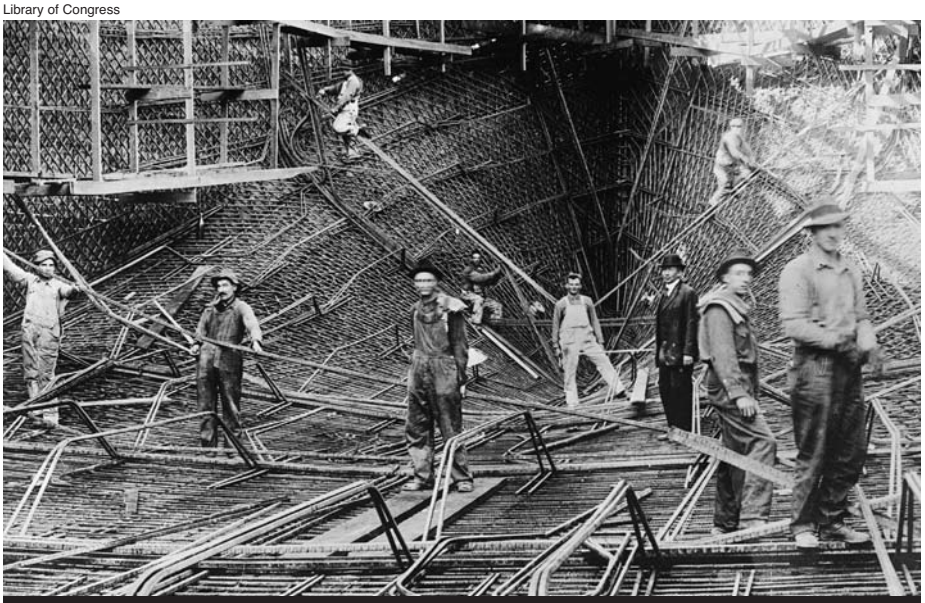


Constructed by the San Francisco Shipbuilding Company in 1918, the SS *Faith* was the first concrete ship built in the United States. The idea of concrete ships was resurrected in 1942 due to the exigencies of war.

World War II, it was used as a lookout post for German submarines. Today, it is a 10-room hotel accessible by boat from mainland Cuba. The SS *Sapona* was a steamer sold for scrap but then converted into a floating liquor warehouse during Prohibition by a rum runner from the Bahamas. She was grounded off the shore of Bimini during a hurricane, and all the liquor inventory was lost.

A number of the ships were sunk as breakwaters or converted to floating oil barges in Texas and Louisiana. The SS *Peralta* was an oil tanker turned into a fish cannery and finally a floating breakwater in British Columbia, Canada. She is the last of the World War I fleet still afloat. The first concrete ship, the SS *Faith,* was used to carry cargo for trade until 1921, when she was sold and scrapped as a breakwater, also in Cuba.

With the advent of World War II, steel was once again in short supply. In 1942, the U.S. government decided to revisit the experiment with concrete ships, and the United States Maritime Commission contracted McCloskey & Company of Philadelphia to construct a new fleet, again to total two dozen ships. Thirty years of improvements in concrete would make this new fleet lighter and stronger. Construction started in July 1943, and the ships were built at an amazing rate with one being launched every month. They were appropriately enough named after pioneers in the science and development of concrete, including a Roman engineer named Vitruvius Pollio who lived in the first century BC.

Two of these ships did see combat service. In March 1944, the SS *David O. Saylor* and the SS *Vitruvius* set sail from Baltimore for Liverpool, England, to join the fleet preparing for the D-Day invasion. An American merchant mariner named Richard Powers was on the maiden voyage of the *Vitruvius*. He was offered a return voyage aboard the luxury liner *Queen Mary* in exchange for helping to sail *Vitruvius* to England.

Powers went to the docks in Baltimore where the *Vitruvius* was moored. He said the ship was unlike anything he had ever seen. Upon boarding the vessel, Powers noticed it was made of concrete and he became concerned as to whether it would get him and his shipmates across the Atlantic. He said he felt better once he realized the ship's hold was being filled with lumber.

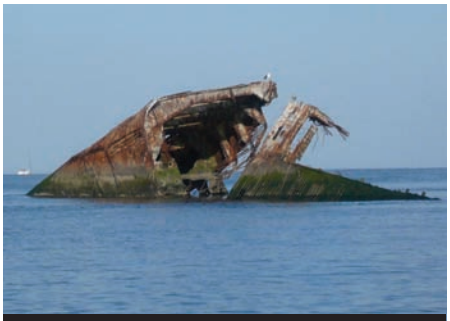
"We left Baltimore on March 5, and met our convoy just outside Charleston, South Carolina," Powers recalled. "It wasn't a pretty sight: 15 old 'rustpots.' There were World War I-era 'Hog Islanders' (named for the Hog Island shipyard in Philadelphia where these cargo and transport ships were built), damaged Liberty Ships."

A Panamanian ship built in 1901, and the other concrete ship, the *David O. Saylor,* were also part of the group. Powers said the motley fleet looked like a floating junkyard. The ragtag flotilla made the crossing to Liverpool in 33 days without incident.

Powers reckoned, "The U-Boats were not stupid enough to waste their torpedoes on us."

Once the *Vitruvius* docked, it was the subject of great curiosity, with many of the locals coming to the port to see it. Powers recalled that one old gentleman tapped the hull with his cane to make sure it was actually made of concrete as he could not believe it. One day, Army engineers came aboard with several cases of dynamite and set up charges in the holds. *Vitruvius* rendezvoused at Portsmouth with other ships destined to be blockships sunk as part of the artificial Mulberry harbors to form a breakwater and landing piers off the coast of France in support of the D-Day landing.

On June 1, 1944, the ship again headed out to sea. About two days into the voyage, the captain called all hands on deck and read a letter from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied commander in Europe, telling the crew they would be making history by participating in the invasion of Normandy.



In this modern photograph of the remains of SS *Atlantus,* very little of the ship is recognizable on the beach near Cape May, New Jersey.

One thousand American merchant mariners were among the crews of the blockships. There were nearly 100 American and British freighters, from ancient tramps to comparatively new Liberty ships, making their way into the choppy English Channel at a snail's pace of five knots. A low-flying German reconnaissance plane, U-boat, or E-boat would have been quite curious about the mission of these ships as almost every one of them bore obvious defects. Some had gaping torpedo holes in their sides, while the structures of others were mangled from collisions or mine explosions. But they limped along with an even more puzzling heavy naval escort of planes and destroyers, their mission and purpose surely a mystery to any observer. All the while they had their antiaircraft guns manned around the clock against attack. Perhaps their benign appearance served them well. Crossing the Channel on D-Day brought no harm to the *Vitruvius* and her companion vessels that were soon destined for a watery grave. The Army had stationed armed troops on board, but their services were not needed.

D-Day was cloudy, and the Luftwaffe had surrendered air supremacy over the Channel. Occasionally, a German plane would make a flyover and every ship would open fire with its antiaircraft armament.

Library of Congress

The forlorn hulk of the SS *Atlantus* lies off Cape May, New Jersey. Launched on December 5, 1918, *Atlantus* was the second concrete ship built in the United States. The vessel was used to transport American soldiers home from World War I and ran aground in 1926.

Powers mused, "It was the 4th of July multiplied tenfold."

The panorama that presented itself to the crews of the blockships off the coast of France was awe inspiring to Powers and his shipmates —battleships with heavy guns blasting the shoreline, destroyers, destroyer escorts, and every kind of landing craft imaginable. Those aboard the blockships had a bird's-eye view of the landing craft heading for shore, the fighting on the beach, and the bodies floating in the water. Powers was glad to be on a ship even if it was made of concrete.

On D-Day + 1, the crew tried to maneuver *Vitruvius* to its assigned position, but German artillery prevented them from doing do. They tried again on day three with the same result. Finally, on D-Day + 4 the ship got into position and the crew was offloaded to an LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry). After several attempts, engineers set off the dynamite that sank the Vitruvius in the shallow water off Normandy, leaving about half the ship still visible above the waterline.

By the end of D-Day + 1, a total of 89 ships of this fleet of merchant has-beens had carried out one of the most difficult and dangerous operations of the Normandy invasion. The remainder of the fleet, including *Vitruvius,* did follow shortly thereafter. The concrete ships had been sunk a mere 1,000 yards off the beaches that comprised the hottest combat zones of the invasion. Their upper decks formed a steel breakwater, calmed the waves and swells, and allowed the thousands of smaller landing craft to hit the beaches safely to deliver soldiers and war matériel.

The crews were ferried to a troopship that took them back across the Channel to Bournemouth, England. By then the merchant mariners were hungry due to the extra time it had taken to sink the ships. They had actually run out of food aboard the *Vitruvius* and many of her sister blockships. The British fed the crews a meal of cabbage, boiled potatoes, and hard rolls, and Powers said they were grateful for it.

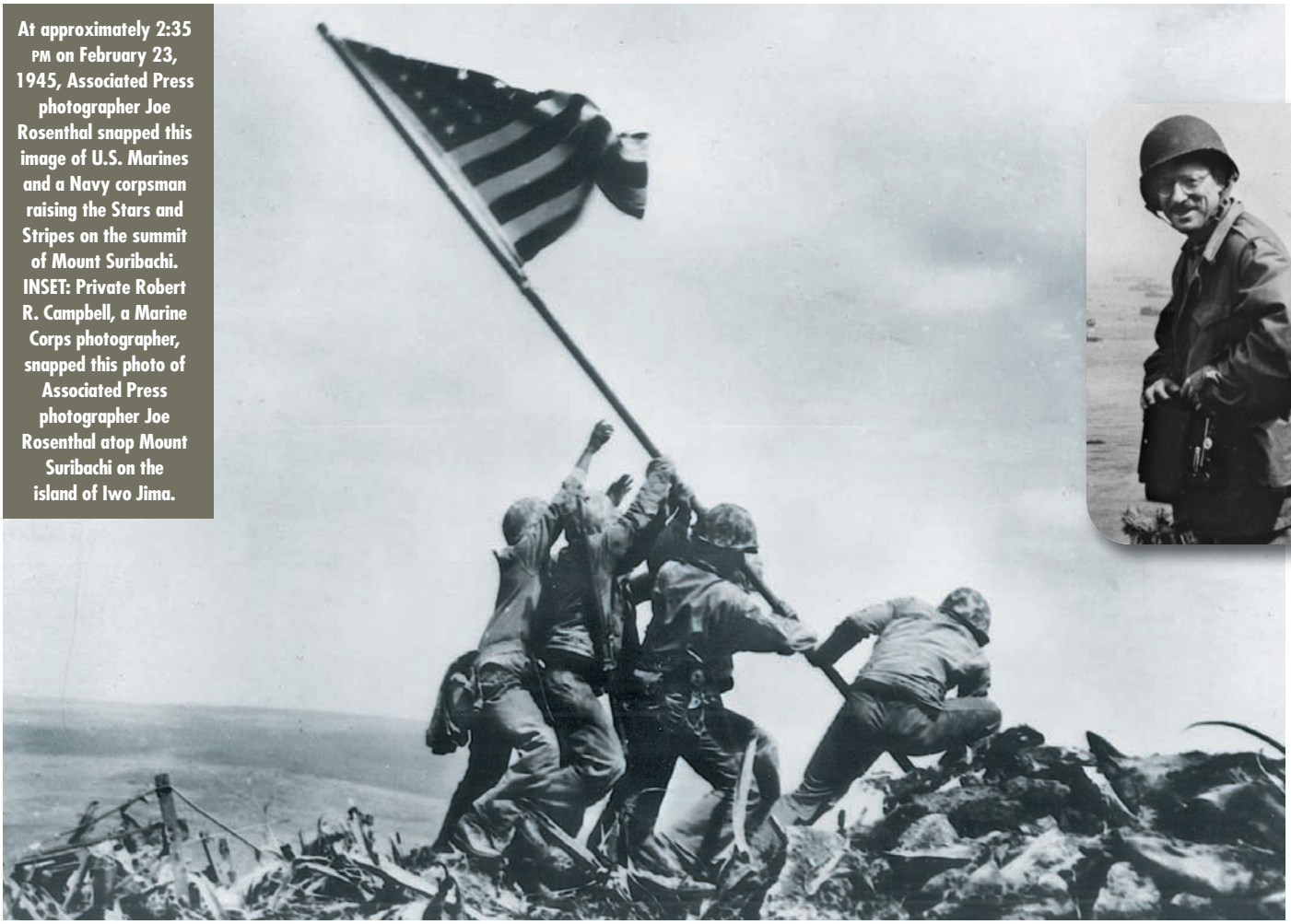
Thousands of Merchant Marine vessels supported the invasion by ferrying troops and supplies to the invasion beaches, but perhaps no other ships performed so unique and critical mission, intentionally designed end in their sinking. Military engineers saw no other way to form the critical breakwaters rapidly, and the lumbering hulks led by two of the concrete fleet filled the bill admirably.

True to the promise, all the blockship crews were put on the *Queen Mary* except for five who volunteered to stay in Liverpool as replacements for seamen killed or wounded. Richard Powers was among the volunteers, so after his epic ordeal he missed his chance to sail on the *Queen Mary.*

The fate of the remaining World War II concrete fleet was not as unique or entertaining as their predecessors of World War I. Nine were sunk as breakwaters for a ferry landing in Virginia, two are now wharves in Oregon, and seven are still afloat as part of a breakwater on the Powell River in Canada. The World War II fleet ended America's experiment with concrete ships, one of the most unusual naval projects in history. □

Brandt Heatherington is a freelance writer and collector of militaria living in Arlington, Virginia. He is a member of the Company of Military Historians and is active in several recreated military units.

By Gene Beley



At approximately 2:35 PM on February 23, 1945, Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal snapped this image of U.S. Marines and a Navy corpsman raising the Stars and Stripes on the summit of Mount Suribachi. INSET: Private Robert R. Campbell, a Marine Corps photographer, snapped this photo of Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal atop Mount Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima.

All: National Archives

Flag-Raising Photographer

Joe Rosenthal of the Associated Press captured an iconic moment in World War II history on the island of Iwo Jima.

THE "RAISING OF THE FLAG" PHOTO TAKEN BY 33-YEAR-OLD ASSOCIATED PRESS photographer Joe Rosenthal on the fifth day of the Iwo Jima battle provided the world with a much-needed uplifting symbol in February 1945. And on January 13, 1968, Rosenthal, then 57, provided this then young reporter with a life's inspirational success formula in that San Francisco interview that has become part of my DNA for more than 43 years.

Rosenthal said when he was trudging up the 546-foot Mount Suribachi, sidestepping Japanese land mines, other war photographers were coming down the hill, making fun of him. Staff Sergeant Louis Lowery, a Marine publication photographer, hollered, "Ho, ho, ho, Joe, you're late. I photographed the patrol raising the flag at the summit!"

"You must have heard the expression 'falling into a manure pile and coming up with a rose," Rosenthal said at my long-ago interview at the San Francisco Press Club. "When you're late you don't call your office and say 'I'm late.' You poke around and see what you can do—an interesting angle maybe the others missed. That was my goal. I thought I'd better continue and see what's there. What I had in mind was trying to find that first patrol and at least get a picture of them by the flag for hometown newspapers. That was my job as an Associated Press photographer."

From that day on when I was on the police beat assignment for the *Ventura Star-Free Press* newspaper where I worked then, I would stay longer at the news scene than competitors to look for a different angle. Throughout life, I have applied Rosenthal's philosophy of thinking out of the box to get more results to everything. It is amazing how it worked in three subsequent businesses I owned that included amusement games, robots, and a community newspaper.

"The significance of the flag being up there was not seen as a dramatic incident," Rosenthal continued. "The importance of it was being on the highest, exposed part of the island and readily seen by all the troops. More important, it was seen as a morale booster bearing on the

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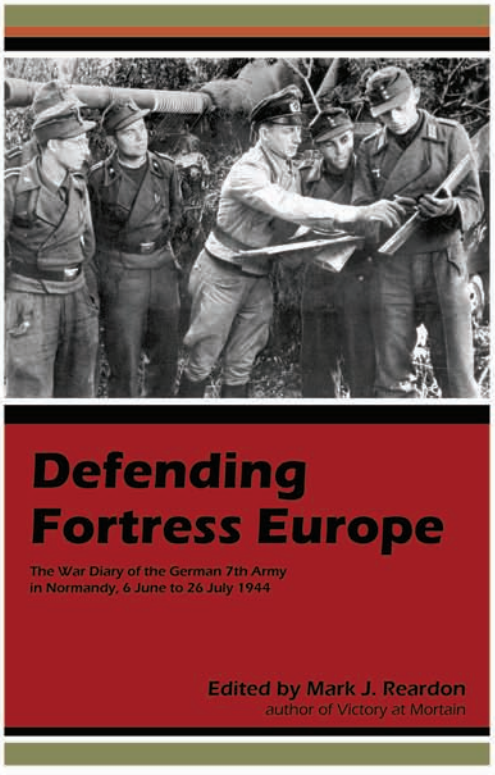

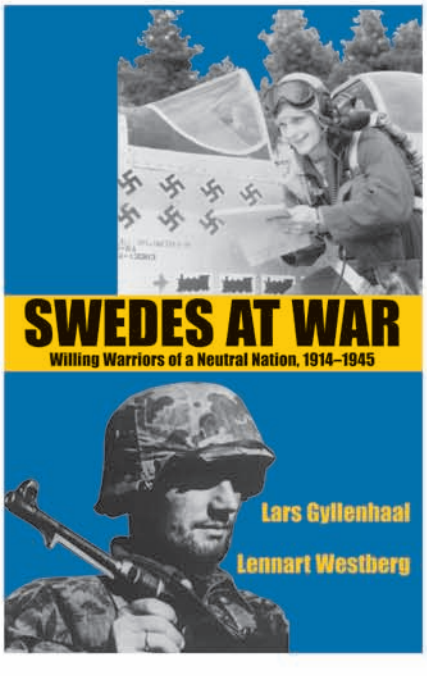

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strategic progress of the battle."

But the first flag raised at 10:20 AM on that February 23, 1945, was too small to be seen by the men in ships off shore, and they requested that a larger one be hoisted. The Marines found an 18-foot length of pipe that weighed about 150 pounds from the wreckage of a radar station. The second flag came from LST 779 near the base of Suribachi. When Rosenthal arrived, this eight-by-four and two-thirds-foot flag was being erected, and he caught this shot on the fly with his big Speed Graphlex camera. Throughout my college career, I had heard many journalism professors badmouth Rosenthal, saying this was a staged shot, but that was not true. The decision was solely made by the military before Rosenthal ever arrived.

Rosenthal nearly did not go to the historic flag-raising event. He and magazine correspondent Bill Hipple were on an LCT the morning the Marines reached the top of Mount Suribachi. Rosenthal and Hipple first learned about the flag event from a boatswain, who had heard over the ship's radio about a patrol going up the mountain with a flag.

"I think we'll be too late for the flag raising," Hipple told Rosenthal. But fortunately, the philosophy that Rosenthal passed on to me for a life's important lesson kicked into high gear and led to the historic photo. When Rosenthal and Hipple arrived at the command post of the 28th Regiment, they were told a 40-man detachment with two patrols had reached the top at 9:40 AM. Rosenthal said photographer Bob Campbell and combat photographer Marine Private Bob Genaust, who took the 16mm color movie sequence of the famous Rosenthal flag raising, were at the command post.

"I think we'll be too late for the flag raising," Private Genaust said.

"I'd still like to go up," replied Rosenthal, "and you two guys are carrying guns and I'm not. How about coming along?"

That was a good decision because, as they progressed up the hill, they had to stop half a dozen times to take cover while Marines tossed grenades and set off demolition charges in caves where Japanese soldiers were actively defending themselves. Rosenthal and his group got to the summit shortly before noon. They saw one group of men hauling the long iron pipe, while another Marine was folding the original flag for a souvenir.

After the Marines told Rosenthal that they were going to hoist the larger flag taken from LST 779, he thought about trying to get a picture of one flag coming down with the other one going up. Rosenthal failed to line it up, though, and backed away about 35 feet to photograph the new, larger flag being raised.

ABOVE: In this photo taken by Marine photographer Robert Campbell, Marines are seen removing the smaller original flag from a length of pipe as the second flag snaps in the breeze behind them. BELOW: A Marine sentry stands guard atop Mount Suribachi. The expanse of Iwo Jima, including the bitterly contested landing beaches, stretches into the distance.

Rosenthal stood five feet, five inches tall. He put down his Speed Graphlex and piled up some stones and a sandbag to elevate himself about two feet. Then he picked up the camera and climbed onto the crude platform. He set his lens between f/8 and f/11 at 1/400th of a second.

"I'm not in your way, am I, Joe?" Genaust hollered the question at Rosenthal.

"No," Rosenthal shot back, "and there it goes!"

"I saw the men start raising the flag, swung my camera, and shot the scene," Rosenthal said. Next, he shot another photo with men putting guy ropes on the pipe. To please hometown editors, he then staged a picture with 19 men underneath the flag, waving and cheering.

"On the day I shot it, I caught the mail plane that took the undeveloped film back to Guam. There our pool editor, Murray Befeler, supervised the processing and transmission to member newspapers. The censor had to pass the picture and Befeler had to decide it was good enough to be scheduled via radiophoto, or it would have been passed over and been nothing but a piece of film."

Two days after the photo was taken, Rosenthal received a message: "Congratulations on the fine flag raising picture."

"When I got that message, I wasn't quite sure which picture they were talking about—the picture on the fly or the one I worked so hard at getting the fellows set up and cheering. Most of them didn't want to do it because there was still shooting going on from the caves."

Rosenthal said he had to coax these soldiers by saying, "This is historical!" He finally got a group of them to consent for his hometown newspaper goal. He was just happy to finally get a compliment from these editors who usually sent messages like, 'Where were you?' or 'How come ...' for the one that got away."

"There's a lot of things you have to do that you really don't like to do," Rosenthal continued when asked about the ethics of posed photos. "You don't really like to keep pestering someone, or delving into their personal affairs, or embarrassing them. But this is the nature of the job and you can't be selective about it. What is there has to be reproduced. At times you may help a civic project with your illustrations. I think a photographer has to have a certain type of toughness or he'll become too emotional. Most of the arguments about posed pictures are nonsense. What you're sent out for—what you're hired for—is to illustrate your story."

Rosenthal thinks the legend that the historic photo was staged began when a *Time* magazine reporter asked him two weeks after the event, "Did you set that picture up?"

For the historical record, Rosenthal told me he thought the reporter asking the question was either Robert Geiger or Shirley Popevich. And Rosenthal, thinking it was the hometown photo with 19 Marines that he staged for his Associated Press employer, answered, "Sure it was posed."

It was a simple, innocent mistake that went viral decades before the world ever heard of the Internet. When he was then shown the picture

that had already become famous, he said, "Gee, that's good all right, but I didn't pose that one. I wish I could take credit for posing it, but I can't.

"How was I to anticipate this one shot would come out [like it did]? The only way you can usually set up a picture like that is to make them with inspiring studio actors. The accidents that happened all happened in favor of the picture. Usually you can count on a few breaks, but here's one where every damned element worked. The stage was already set, the wind whipping that flag across the sky, and the fact it was high noon gave it a good amount of light. It is a good picture. Maybe this is some of the objectivity left in me after several years as a caption writer and photo editor."

In retrospect, Rosenthal felt the *New York Times* publishing the photo with an accurate story, reporting details of the battle, made it great. Millions of people saw the photo before Rosenthal. "The frame for the picture was already waiting for it to be placed there," Rosenthal theorized. "World War II had been on for three and one-half years. A lot of people had lost relatives. They were looking for a lift."

When Rosenthal returned to New York, he became a celebrity and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1945. He was not accustomed to having his own office and being interviewed by reporters.

Robert Campbell took this photograph of Rosenthal as he photographed Marines posing with the recently raised flag. At far left, Marine Private Bob Genaust is visible as he captures the moment on 16mm color film.

"It was awful," Rosenthal told me. "They put me on the public relations staff for the AP. No one told me, 'Be on your good behavior,' but I knew I should be. By that time, I'd learned this picture had a lot of meaning to many people. The war was still on and it served a purpose. It was almost like I was no longer a photographer available to cover shipwrecks, four-alarm fires, and babies. I'd find myself realizing I should straighten my tie because there might be a photographer around."

Toward the end of World War II, Rosenthal balked at being sent on assignment to South America for three years and said he wanted to go to San Francisco. The AP wanted to keep him in New York, but caved in and sent him to San Francisco.

"By late August, of course, America dropped the big bomb on Japan spelling the end of the war," he said. "I developed the delayed tensions of having an enemy in my foxhole and took a three and one-half month sick leave, got in my car, and went to Mexico. When I returned, someone said, 'I thought you were going back East.'"

"Don't move anyone," Rosenthal told his associates. "I am not coming back."

He went up one floor in the San Francisco Chronicle Building and his friend, John Bruce, offered him a job as a photographer with the *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper. He stayed with the *Chronicle* for the rest of his professional career.

Few people today can comprehend that 6,621 Americans died and 19,217 were wounded in that one battle on the island of Iwo Jima, plus 20,000 Japanese were killed in just 36 days.

I asked Rosenthal that January 13, 1968, why he was not listed in *Who's Who in America*?

Continued on page 76

By Michael D. Hull

National Archives

Confident Carrier Admiral

Marc Mitscher handled the U.S. Navy carrier forces superbly and quietly during the war in the Pacific.

HE WAS A SEAGOING J.E.B. STUART WHO HID BENEATH WEATHER FRONTS TO make his attacks, and he fought more naval engagements than John Paul Jones and David Farragut combined.

Engaged in every major naval battle in the Pacific Ocean during World War II, except the Coral Sea standoff of May 4-8, 1942, he introduced or sponsored most of the intricate tactics used by the U.S. fast carrier task forces to defeat Japan. And he helped to build the biggest naval air arm in the world.

Marc A. Mitscher was a pilot, a brilliant tactician, and the U.S. Pacific Fleet's senior carrier admiral—recognized belatedly as one of the leading combat officers in the history of air-sea warfare. But his name, like that of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, the victor of Midway, never became a household word because he, too, was a reticent man who did not court publicity.

Unlike some of his contemporaries in the Pacific Theater, "Pete" Mitscher shunned self-imagery, never gave a speech he could avoid, and destroyed his private papers before his death. To some in the Navy, he seemed remote and baffling. But to those who served over, with, and under him, he was regarded as a fighting admiral of skill, courage, and human understanding.

Wearing his trademark baseball cap, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher peers from the bridge of the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* off the island of Saipan in June 1944.

His career spanned the 20th-century growth of American naval aviation, and he spent most of his lifetime preparing to fight air battles over the ocean. He understood both the sea and the air masses above it.

The second child of Oscar Mitscher, a high-strung mercantile clerk of German extraction, and Myrta, his quiet-spoken wife of English stock, Marc Andrew Mitscher was born on Wednesday, January 26, 1887, in Hillsborough, Wisconsin. The family moved to dry, windy Oklahoma City, where Oscar opened a haberdashery and then a general store.

Marc's childhood was a happy one. He went on hunting trips and rambles across the plains with his father, learned to play bridge and poker, and relished the big pots of noodle soup his mother made for him. Obedient and gentle, the boy loved his parents, though he seldom showed his feelings. Marc rode bareback on a frisky Indian pony and got into fights because of a frilly suit his mother made him wear on special occasions.

His grades were low in school, and he showed little interest in anything besides horses, baseball, and football. One of Marc's teachers said he was shy and that he "blushed easily and avoided girls of any age." The boy was delighted when his father was appointed agent for the Osage Indian Reservation at Pawhuska in northern Oklahoma in 1900. The family moved there, and Marc, now a teenager, enjoyed chasing jackrabbits and watching tribal dances.

But Oscar Mitscher decided that the Indian school was not suitable for Marc, his sister, Zoe, and his younger brother, Tom. So, when W.S. Field, a former business partner, offered to arrange winter schooling for Marc and Zoe in Washington, D.C., Oscar agreed. Marc made use of the Fields's large library, where he happily snacked on sugar toast while reading Dick Merriwell and other adventure stories. Slightly built but muscular, he played sandlot football.

During summers in the Oklahoma hills that Marc loved, he spent much of his time riding, camping, and playing with the Indian boys. His father, meanwhile, had decided that he wanted a son to enter the U.S. Naval Academy. Tom was not yet eligible, so Marc became the choice. He was a slightly built, towheaded

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young man with piercing light blue eyes and a quiet manner.

Oscar Mitscher enrolled Marc in a Washington preparatory school, secured an appointment at Annapolis, and enlisted the aid of a friendly congressman. A 1904 letter to the Navy Department signaled the beginning of Marc's career.

At the age of 17, Marc sat for the Annapolis entrance examinations on June 22, 1904, and his prospects were not bright. He was at the foot of the class. A lackluster student, he chafed at the discipline and found the studies almost impossible. It was only his innate stubbornness that kept him going. He piled up demerits, rebelliously became involved in hazing escapades, and was forced to resign in March 1906.

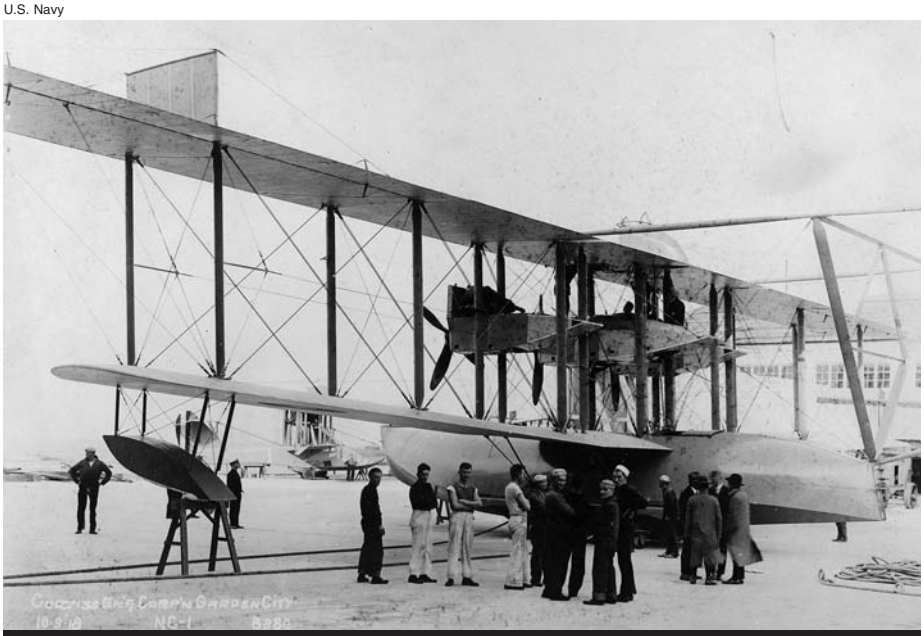
His angry father told Marc to stay at Annapolis while he convinced his congressman friend to make a reappointment. Marc was allowed to reenter and start all over again in June 1906. He was chastened and sober, but not dispirited. He made new friends and collected more demerits for smoking, card playing, and disorderliness, yet he persevered and devoted all of his free time to his books. His marks were still low, but he displayed an aptitude in seamanship, gunnery, and naval warfare studies. After graduating 107th in a class of 130 on June 3, 1910, he requested and was granted an assignment aboard the USS *Colorado,* a Pacific Fleet cruiser based in Seattle, Washington. He joined her complement that July.

The *Colorado* was a spit-and-polish ship but a welcome relief for Ensign Marc Mitscher after the rigors of Annapolis. The grades in his fitness report rose, and officers and shipmates found him to be "calm and even-tempered." But he still got into trouble. He spent a night in jail after a tavern brawl in Valparaiso, Chile, in the autumn of 1910, and narrowly avoided being booted out of the Navy after missing the last liberty launch to the *Colorado* at Chimbote, Peru.

The year 1911 was an eventful one for Mitscher. At the May wedding of a comrade in Bremerton, Washington, he met the young woman he determined to marry. She was blonde, brown-eyed Frances Smalley, the daughter of a Tacoma lawyer. They would be wed in January 1913. Also, in November 1911, while the *Colorado* was steaming toward the Philippines, Mitscher recalled a British book on aviation he had read at Annapolis and requested a transfer to the Navy's aeronautics branch. It comprised three rickety airplanes, six pilots, and a dozen enlisted men.

Marc's request was approved by the Pacific Fleet commander, but the young man was urged to learn seamanship first. He sailed in the Far East and Central America aboard the cruiser USS *South Dakota,* the gunboats USS *Vicksburg* and USS *Annapolis,* the cruiser USS *California,* and the destroyers USS *Whipple* and USS *Stewart*. He gained engine room and gunnery experience and was eventually promoted to lieutenant (junior grade).

U.S. Navy



Marc. A. Mitscher and a group of U.S. Navy personnel inspect an NC-1 biplane in preparation for a historic flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

But he was still interested in aviation and never stopped firing off requests for transfer to aeronautical duty. These were consistently pigeonholed, but naval aviation was expanding. An office of aeronautics had been established, and a flying school was being set up in Pensacola, Florida. Finally, on September 7, 1915, when the destroyer *Stewart* docked in Bremerton, Mitscher received orders to report to the cruiser USS *North Carolina,* the Pensacola station ship, for aeronautics training. The usually reserved and dignified young lieutenant jumped for joy on the deck of the *Stewart*.

Reporting to the Pensacola flying school in October 1915, Mitscher was one of 13 students in the first formal class. He took his first airplane ride on October 13, and learned to fly crude wood-wire-and-fabric Curtiss, Wright, and Burgess-Dunne biplanes with 100-horsepower pusher engines and no cockpits. The pilot sat, strapped in, on the leading edge of the wing. Mitscher flew under instruction every day and methodically learned all he could. He excelled at Pensacola, and his fitness report cited his "eagerness." He won his wings in June 1916, and was designated as Naval Aviator No. 33. He was then 29 years of age.

Mitscher, who found flying exhilarating but not glamorous, dedicated himself fully to the service. He became the Pensacola engineering officer and soon rose to command the naval air stations at Miami and Long Island, New York, when America entered World War I in April 1917. He saw no combat but took part two years later in a landmark operation—the first west-to-east attempt to cross the Atlantic Ocean by air.

At the age of 32, balding and grizzled beyond his years, Lieutenant Mitscher was chosen in 1919 to fly with Lieutenant Patrick N.L. Bellinger in one of three big Curtiss "Nancy" flying boats—NC-1, NC-3, and NC-4—from Trepassey, Newfoundland, to England, with layovers in the Azores and Portugal. The three planes took off on May 16. The next day, Mitscher's plane, NC-1, became lost in dense fog near the Azores, so Bellinger decided to set her down in choppy seas. NC-1 was disabled in the landing.

NC-3 also was forced to drop out, but Lt. Cmdr. Albert C. Read's NC-4 was able to push on and reach Lisbon on May 27, and Portsmouth, England, four days later. The Americans were hailed in London, where Pete Mitscher was introduced to the Prince of Wales and Winston Churchill, the secretary of state for war and air. The fliers were later decorated by the Navy Department, and Mitscher was awarded the Navy Cross for "distinguished service." But he was bitterly disappointed that NC-1 had failed to complete the historic flight.

After serving aboard the seaplane tender USS *Aroostook,* Mitscher led the San Diego air

detachment in 1920-1921 and was promoted to lieutenant commander. From 1922 to 1925, he commanded the naval air station at Anacostia. Then, in 1926, came the break he had been awaiting. He was ordered to join the USS *Langley,* the Navy's first aircraft carrier, and head her air department. A converted collier, the *Langley* was nicknamed the "Old Covered Wagon." Six months later, Mitscher was appointed air officer aboard the new 36,000-ton USS *Saratoga,* the Navy's third carrier.

After returning to the *Langley* and then the *Saratoga* as executive officer, he spent seven frustrating years waiting to realize his dream, a carrier command. In August 1941, he went to Norfolk, Virginia, as prospective commanding officer of the brand new, 19,900-ton USS *Hornet*. He was exhilarated.

Mitscher and his hand-picked staff were getting the carrier ready for sea when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, thrusting America into World War II. The skipper had missed out on the action in 1917-1918, but he would see plenty of it from 1942 to 1945. He had the words "Remember Pearl Harbor" painted in big letters on the *Hornet*'s smokestack, and she sailed from Norfolk at daybreak on December 27 for her shakedown cruise to the Gulf of Mexico. In February 1942, Mitscher was selected for flag rank.

Two months later, he and his ship made history in America's first offensive action of the war—the audacious air raid on Japan led by the legendary Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle. On March 31, 1942, the *Hornet* docked at the Alameda, California, naval air station, across the bay from San Francisco, and 16 Army Air Forces twin-engine B-25 Mitchell medium bombers were hoisted aboard. They were the biggest planes ever to operate from an aircraft carrier, and rumors that they were being transported to Pearl Harbor were encouraged. The operation was planned with the tightest security.

On the morning of April 2, the *Hornet* steamed through the Golden Gate, outbound into the Pacific, with the cruisers USS *Nashville* and USS *Vincennes,* the oiler USS *Cimarron,* and screening destroyers. The carrier's code name for the operation, chosen whimsically by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was "Shangri-La." As the little Task Force 16 headed westward, Mitscher relinquished his bunk and cabin to Doolittle, and the two became good friends. Both were optimistic about the mission, and morale was high in the task force. The ships pushed on through heaving seas and squalls.

At 4:11 on the morning of Saturday, April 18, general quarters was sounded on the *Hornet* after unidentified targets had been spotted on the radar. It was decided to launch the B-25s before reaching the planned take-off point. Mitscher turned the *Hornet* into the wind, and the 16 bombers were warmed up on the flight deck. Doolittle waved goodbye, and Mitscher saluted him. Then Doolittle's B-25 lumbered along the deck and into the air. The *Hornet* skipper watched anxiously as the other Mitchells followed at brief intervals. He was amazed that all took off safely.

U.S. Navy

Mitscher is seated at the controls of an A-type seaplane during flight training at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1916. Mitscher was among the earliest pilots in the U.S. Navy's aviation program.

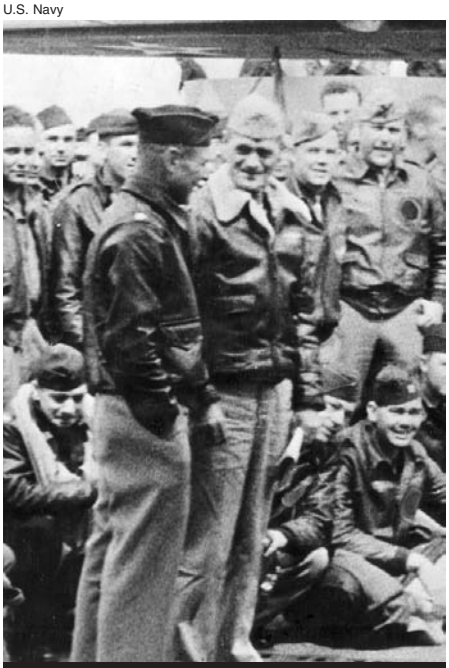
Doolittle's raiders dropped bombs on Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagoya. They inflicted only minimal damage, but the raid lifted American morale and alarmed the Japanese high command, causing it to seek a decisive engagement to destroy U.S. naval power in the Pacific. Mitscher believed that the Doolittle operation "paid big dividends, since it threw the [Japanese] islands into a panic and forced them to keep a large defense force at home, instead of sending them, as intended, to support the proposed invasion of Australia."

The *Hornet* returned to Pearl Harbor on April 25, and later headed for the Solomon Islands. She was too far from the Coral Sea to receive a baptism of fire in history's first carrier battle and steamed back to Pearl Harbor. There, Mitscher was promoted to rear admiral on May 31. Meanwhile, a new commanding officer, Rear Admiral Charles P. Mason, was named to the *Hornet*. He had not had time to be "shaken down," so Mitscher stayed aboard when the carrier sailed again, carrying 77 torpedo bombers and fighters. Her destination was the tiny American base at Midway atoll, 1,304 miles west-northwest of Hawaii.

There, the *Hornet* joined the carriers USS *Yorktown* and USS *Lexington* of Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance's Task Force 16 to prevent Midway's seizure by Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto's powerful Japanese fleet. During the furious battle on June 4-6, 1942, the most decisive naval encounter since Trafalgar, planes from the *Hornet*'s Air Group 8 and the other two flattops attacked and sank all four fleet carriers—*Akagi, Hiryu, Kaga,* and *Soryu*—of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's strike force.

In one of the most valiant and tragic actions of the Pacific War, Lt. Cmdr. John C. "Jack" Waldron led 15 stubby Douglas TBD Devastators of the *Hornet*'s Torpedo Squadron 8 against the enemy carriers without fighter protection. The American planes were shot down by antiaircraft fire and Zero fighters, and only one member of Torpedo 8, Ensign George Gay, survived.

U.S. Navy



During the famed mission to bomb Tokyo in 1942, Mark Mitscher, captain of the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet,* chats with Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, who led 16 B-25 Mitchell medium bombers in the raid on the Japanese capital.

The venerable *Yorktown* was lost during the battle, but the American victory halted Japan's southward expansion and was the turning point in the Pacific War. Pete Mitscher cared for his pilots and was particularly proud of Waldron. He nominated the men of Torpedo 8 for the Medal of Honor posthumously, but they were eventually awarded the Navy Cross. The losses at Midway deeply affected Mitscher, and the concern he felt for his men began to take a toll on his health.

Mitscher left the *Hornet* for nine months of rear area assignments and then was ordered to the Solomons early in 1943 for his biggest task yet. After arriving on Guadalcanal, which had been secured that February by U.S. Marine Corps and Army troops, Mitscher took charge of air operations. Under his command were Army, Navy, Marine, and Royal New Zealand Air Force pilots flying an assortment of Grumman Avengers, Grumman Wildcats, Vought F4U Corsairs, Lockheed P-38 Lightnings, and Boeing B-17 bombers. They flew from four airfields.

It was a hectic, challenging time for Admiral Mitscher as he strove to upgrade defenses and living conditions for the pilots, secure much needed supplies, and shore up morale. He and his men huddled in dugouts and foxholes during punishing day and night Japanese air raids and endured heavy rains, mud, and malaria. On the humid, cloudy morning of April 18, 1943, the first anniversary of the Doolittle raid, a flight of Army Air Forces P-38s flying from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal intercepted and shot down a Mitsubishi Betty bomber carrying Admiral Yamamoto over Bougainville. The commander of the Japanese Combined Fleet was killed.

During his tough six-month tour of duty on Guadalcanal, Admiral Mitscher completed his assignment with flying colors. The bombers and fighters under his command downed 340 Japanese fighters and 132 bombers, sank 17 ships, and damaged eight. A total of 2,083 bombs were dropped by the Allied planes, and the enemy air threat to the Solomons was eliminated. But the strain was too much for Pete Mitscher. After malarial fever felled him for two weeks, his skin was yellow, his cheeks hollow, and his weight down to 115 pounds. Guadalcanal had left him physically and mentally exhausted. In late July 1943, he was relieved by Maj. Gen. Nathan F. Twining and ordered back to San Diego for a new command and recuperation. Frances Mitscher wept when she was reunited with her husband.

Admiral Mitscher's post as commander of the West Coast Air Fleet provided him with a light workload and plenty of leisure time. He regained his health and spirits by hunting and salmon fishing in Alaska and the rugged Sierra Nevada range in eastern California, and, when his duties took him to Washington, by fishing in Maryland streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Inevitably, he grew restless for sea duty.

Marking time in San Diego as the year 1943 waned, Mitscher feared that he was perhaps being shelved at the age of 56. Yet, he was about to be given the biggest assignment of his career and one that would have a profound effect on the course of the Pacific War. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Pacific Fleet commander, and Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey Jr., commander of the Third Fleet, conferred with irascible Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, chief of naval operations, about a new commander for the fast carrier spearhead of the Third and Fifth Fleets. They agreed that Pete Mitscher was the best prospect. His air leadership on Guadalcanal had been impressive, he was arguably the Navy's leading expert on naval aviation, and he was available.

Mitscher was notified of the command on December 23, 1943. Fit and eager for more action, he flew to Pearl Harbor a few days later and set up an underground headquarters on Ford Island. But soon his headquarters would be just a swivel chair on the wing of a carrier bridge.

In January 1944, Mitscher assumed command of the new Task Force 58/38, comprising four task groups of 12 big carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, fleet oilers, and ammunition ships. The fleet often included more than 100 ships carrying 100,000 men. Eventually, the task force included 15 flattops mounting 956 aircraft screened by eight new fast battleships and cruisers and destroyers. Mitscher's command was designated TF-58 when it operated with Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet, and TF-38 when it sailed with Halsey's Third Fleet. With its composition remaining the same under each fleet commander, and equipped to remain operational for long periods, the powerful unit became the Navy's primary strike force in the Pacific.

Putting to sea without delay, Task Force 58/38 started its combat service by establishing air supremacy over the Marshall Islands before the Marine and infantry landings there in January 1944. As it ranged across the Pacific, blasting enemy-held islands and coral atolls, Japanese naval and air units were unable to offer an effective defense against Pete Mitscher's decisive force. His flattops were crowded with a total of 470 Grumman Hellcats, 199 Grumman Avengers, 165 Curtiss Helldivers, 57 Douglas SBD Dauntlesses, and Vought Corsair F4U night fighters.

The task force was engaged in almost all of the major sea actions and amphibious landings in the Pacific Theater, including Hollandia, the Marianas, the Philippine Sea, the Bonin Islands, Palau, Truk, Mindanao, Formosa, the East China Sea, Leyte Gulf, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. During the famous "Marianas Turkey Shoot" and the Battle of the Philippine Sea on June 19, 1944, Mitscher's pilots claimed 395 Japanese carrier planes downed with the loss of only 130 American aircraft.

Wearing his trademark long-billed baseball cap and aviator's brown shoes, and riding backward in a swivel chair on the wing of a carrier flag bridge, Mitscher whispered orders and ran his task force with deceptive ease. Confident and steady, he understood all facets of the complex air-sea operations and kept in close touch with the tactical situation by personally debriefing strike leaders and selected pilots after their missions.

His pilots loved him because he looked out for them. Knowing from experience what it was like to be ditched, he went out of his way to ensure that downed air crews were rescued. On one memorable night, Mitscher disregarded blackout safety regulations and ordered all task force lights switched on so that returning pilots could locate their carriers. "His fliers worshipped him," observed the admiral's chief of staff, the legendary Commodore Arleigh "31-Knot" Burke.

National Archives

Admiral Marc Mitscher, commander of the fast Essex-class fleet carriers of the U.S. Navy during the war in the Pacific, congratulates Navy fighter ace Alexander Vraciu following a successful mission against Japanese planes.

Mitscher seldom interfered with his task group leaders once they had their orders. He knew their capabilities and said simply, "I tell them what I want done, not how." He grew to rely heavily on Burke.

After a well-deserved leave at home following the great Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, Mitscher returned to Pearl Harbor to help plan air strikes against the Japanese home islands and support the big invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Then on December 18, 1944, while operating with Halsey's Third Fleet in the Philippine Sea, Mitscher's task force was caught in a raging typhoon. Three destroyers were sunk, and seven flattops and 11 destroyers were damaged. The casualty toll was 790 men.

Task Force 58 planes and ships' batteries supported the 4th, 5th, and 3rd Marine Divisions' landings on Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945, and air strikes were made on Tokyo. Then, Mitscher's armada headed for the last enemy island stronghold, Okinawa, and Operation Iceberg. For more than 80 consecutive days at sea, from mid-March to late May 1945, Task Force 58 furnished direct support for Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner's U.S. Tenth Army and the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions in their costly struggle to eliminate fanatical Japanese resistance.

It was during the climactic Okinawa campaign that Japanese kamikaze attacks against the U.S. and British Pacific Fleets reached their height. The Allied losses were 26 ships sunk and 160 damaged. After leading a charmed life, Admiral

Continued on page 78

By Glenn Barnett

Vichy Desert Prison

The Vichy French held British prisoners deep in the Saharan desert of Algeria.

AS THE RETREATING BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE SOUGHT ESCAPE AT Dunkirk in the face of onrushing German tanks, a small group of British soldiers was cut off. They made their way to Marseille in the south of France. From there they made passage to Algeria, hoping to be repatriated to their homeland.

In the time it had taken them to make their journey, Field Marshal Philippe Pétain had concluded peace terms with Hitler. Seemingly overnight, the official French relationship with Nazi Germany had changed. The British soldiers in Algeria now found themselves in a nominally neutral but German-sympathetic country, and they were interned. Their situation was not helped when the British bombarded the French fleet at Oran in July to prevent the warships from falling into German hands. Vichy France severed relations with its former British ally. There was no love lost for the British internees in Algeria.

As the war heated up in the Mediterranean an increasing number of downed British airmen and sailors washed up on the shores of Vichy-controlled North Africa. When there were about 60 of them, the French authorities decided to house them in a single location. From their relatively comfortable jail cells on the Mediterranean coast they were moved inland to the suburb of Aumale. There they were confined to the second floor of a warehouse. The bottom floor was the home of an insane asylum for Arab women. The poor wretches screeched or whimpered at all hours and formed a backdrop of unreality for the airmen, sailors, and soldiers upstairs.

Outside the gates of this eerie compound, Arab guards with fixed bayonets patrolled and occasionally took potshots at the windows of the British internees, who enjoyed taunting them. Meals consisted of an inadequate tub of slop delivered to the second floor and greedily gobbled down by increasingly hungry men who fought each other for every bite. One internee remembered that his first meal was "fish heads in a batter."

The chaotic scene at mealtime gave the French commandant the opportunity to refer to the British condescendingly as animals. For sanitation there were but a few holes in the floor that emptied into large buckets. These were rarely emptied. The conditions were filthy at all times.

The internees had but one advocate. The neutral United States was sending food to Algeria to sustain its population. This provided the Americans with access to a number of vice consuls, who oversaw the distribution of food but also acted as spies. They put pressure on the Vichy government to allow the detainees to send and receive correspondence from home and to receive Red Cross parcels. They also set up a fund of 1,000 franks a month for each man to be used to purchase personal items. The French made a huge profit on this by selling the prisoners soap, toothbrushes, canned goods, and alcohol.

The ability to send and receive letters opened an avenue of communication with military channels in London. Some of the captured pilots had been taught a rudimentary code before their capture. This allowed them to secretly inform London of their condition and the state of affairs in their camp. Later, one message asked for a shipment of boots, as many of the men were barefoot after two years of internment. The boots arrived from the Red Cross and were a tremendous lift to morale.

Many of the downed flyers also carried French currency concealed in their uniforms for just such an emergency. They were able to buy tinned sardines, bread, and dates from local Arabs once a week. These extra supplies kept the men alive.

The insane asylum at Aumale was only a temporary confine-

Officers of the French Foreign Legion tour the oasis at Laghouat in 1932. The government of Vichy France later identified the isolated location of Laghouat as ideal for a prisoner of war camp. Situated deep in the North African desert, the oasis was considered virtually escape proof.

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Gilbert Wines

Standing second from left, Royal Navy Lieutenant Charles Wines was piloting a Fairey Swordfish torpedo plane of the Fleet Air Arm when he was shot down and taken prisoner. Wines was held in the prison at Laghouat and is shown here with three other inmates in 1942.

ment. A more permanent camp was prepared deep in the Algerian desert at an oasis called Laghouat, home of a Foreign Legion outpost. At the time a railroad reached from Algiers on the coast to Djelfa, 120 miles inland. Another 75 miles of bad desert road led south over the Atlas Mountains to Laghouat. With the Sahara as prison walls, Laghouat was the only Axis POW camp from which no one was able to escape. The commandant of the camp, a man universally known as The Slug, pointed out this desolation to the men when they arrived.

The internees were assigned to barracks that had previously housed Arab soldiers. A sign above each door read "*Vingt-cinq Hommes*" (25 men). Even on the first day, 40 men were confined to each of the barracks. The number would grow to 80 and then to 100 men confined to this space designed for 25.

Three barbed-wire fences surrounded the compound, and an 11-foot wall encompassed these. Between the fences more barbed wire was laid out in rolls. There were the usual guard towers and machine-gun emplacements to deter escape.

The food situation was not improved, and if anything was worse. A coffee substitute brewed from date pits and served in the morning became amazingly popular. Once when the daily ration of this brew was withheld the camp inmates rioted. Each man was also allotted a liter a day of very crude wine, the product of the most recent of many pressings of the grape. Resourceful men could barter this vintage to Arab guards in exchange for favors such as emptying chamber pots that overflowed in the solitary punishment cells.

Hygiene was also inadequate. Twelve holes were dug to squat over, and rarely was the accumulation removed. Once a day, cold water spigots were turned on for brief showers. Later, as the number of prisoners grew, the frequency was reduced to once a week. Sadistic guards enjoyed turning the water off when the men were still soaping up. Sometimes shower privileges were taken away altogether on the pretext of the lack of water in the surrounding oasis.

As at Aumale, insects infested the camp. Cockroaches, bed bugs, lice, scorpions, and other desert bugs abounded. Men sitting idly talking and smoking would casually stab roaches with the lighted ends of their Red Cross cigarettes. Crude mattresses stuffed with straw and hardened camel dung could not be cleansed of these pests.

Disease spread among the growing number of overcrowded inmates. Polio, beriberi, and dysentery were common. A case of polio would get a man transferred to Algiers to an iron lung if the disease were discovered in time. Otherwise, he would die. A victim's friends were quarantined as much as possible.

As with all POW camps, the prisoners plotted escape. Imaginative men soon became forgers, scroungers, tailors, candle makers, and tunnel rats. A hidden basement below one of the crowded barracks was discovered and seemed to be unknown to the French authorities. The basement, a 15-foot cube, was the perfect place to begin a tunnel and store the dirt. The digging of the tunnel gave bored and desperate men an outlet for their energy.

When the air became too fetid to continue digging, men on the surface dug a pit, which they told the guards was for a latrine. Empty tin cans were joined together to make a pipe, and this was planted into the ground. The prisoners would then pretend to urinate in it. Occasionally, however, the Arab guards would insist on relieving themselves there also. When the tunnel joined up with this impromptu pipe, there was plenty of air circulation for the diggers.

The tunnel was completed in the heat of summer in 1941. The camp leaders pleaded with the men to wait until the cooler autumn to make their escape, but even the prospect of a 75-mile hike in the hot sun could not deter desperate men. They knew that the Foreign Legion had offered the Arab tribes a 1,000 franc bounty if they captured an escapee alive (and 2,000 Francs if dead), but they had to go anyway.

The morning after the escape, the remaining men lined up for roll call. The French were furious when they learned that 27 men were missing. The scorching sands of the desert proved too much for the escapees, and all were eventually rounded up and returned. The months of tunneling and scheming had been for naught.

News from the outside was precious. The French continually fed the camp with propaganda suggesting that Britain was losing the war. Each new arrival in camp was questioned for accurate news. If he had been involved in a battle that the French claimed the British had lost, the new man was encouraged to give a lecture about the conflict to share with the inmates the truth of the situation.

The other source of news was a radio the French allowed the prisoners to use. It could only be played during the few hours a day that electricity was available to the camp. The French would confiscate the radio occasionally as punishment for some infraction. So, a mock radio was constructed of the same size and weight and given over with feigned reluctance to the camp guards when they came to confiscate the real radio. In this way the camp prisoners always had their news source.

It became a part of the officer's duty roster to have the radio continually monitored for news from the BBC. Yet, even with the entry of the United States into the war, the news was most often grim throughout 1941 and most of 1942.

On April 6, 1942, the destroyer HMS *Havock* was steaming off the coast of Tunisia with other ships of the Royal Navy when the flotilla came across a recently laid Italian minefield. To avoid the lethal trap, *Havock*'s captain ordered her closer to shore. During the resulting maneuver, the destroyer ran aground in shallow water

Imperial War Museum

Commander R.F. "Dick" Jessel, captain of the Royal Navy Destroyer HMS *Legion,* was captured after his ship was sunk by Italian aircraft. Although Jessel was Jewish, he was not separated from the other prisoners at Laghouat.

and her bottom was ripped out. The entire ship's company soon found its way to Laghouat. The prison population grew to about 700 men.

One of the new prisoners had been a passenger aboard *Havock*. Commander R.F. "Dick" Jessel had been the captain of the destroyer HMS *Legion* until the ship was recently sunk by Italian aircraft. Jessel had more reason than most of the British servicemen to be leery of confinement by the Nazi-sympathizing Vichy government. Jessel was Jewish, and there were other prison camps in Algeria for Jewish prisoners awaiting an uncertain fate at the hands of the Vichy government.

Commander Jessel nevertheless became the ranking officer among the prisoners at Laghouat. The French could not separate him out without severe criticism from the watchful Americans and violating the rules of neutrality.

In August 1942, an Italian submarine torpedoed the cruiser HMS *Manchester* about 12 miles off the coast of Tunisia. Half the crew was rescued and brought safely to Gibraltar. The other half drifted onto the shore of Cape Bon and hence to Laghouat. This new influx of weary and hungry men taxed the camp to the extreme. The French authorities either refused or were unable to add to the camp's rations or supplies. The camp veterans came forward with their precious stashes of sardines, Red Cross packages, clothes, and liquor to sustain the new arrivals.

In the fall of 1942, the camp population was over 1,000 and bursting at the seams. Such was the state of affairs in November when the

Continued on page 76

Decision at MALEME

German airborne troops finally secured the island of Crete following a pitched battle for Maleme airfield. BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

"MALEME. 20TH MAY, 1941. Usual Mediterranean summer day. Cloudless sky, no wind, extreme visibility; e.g., details on mountains 20 miles to the southeast easily discernible."

So opened the war diary of the 22nd Battalion, 2nd New Zealand Division. The battalion's official historian, Jim Henderson, would write later, "Of all the days of the war one stands alone in the minds of the battalion. The day is 20 May at Maleme, Crete."

The 22nd Battalion was one of four battalions of the 5th New Zealand Brigade assigned to defend the extreme west of the British and Commonwealth defenses on the island of Crete. Under its tall, austere, professional commander, Colonel Les Andrew, who held a 1918 Victoria Cross, 22nd Battalion held the most important part of the Maleme sector of defense, Maleme Airfield, the key to the rugged island. The airfield would become the epicenter of the battle.

In April 1941, Adolf Hitler came to the aid of his beleaguered Italian ally, Benito Mussolini, whose misplanned invasion of Greece had bogged down in that nation's mountain winter. On April 6, the German panzers plunged into Greece through Yugoslavia, turning the Metaxas Line, crushing the Greek defenders and their British Commonwealth allies, and forcing the British to evacuate.

Most of the troops that came stumbling back from the Greek debacle were dumped on the island of Crete to reorganize and regroup. Both sides saw Crete as an opportunity and a menace.

Both sides saw the potential of the island as a forward base for advances or attacks against their opponents. Both saw the potential of the island as a base for enemy forces. But the British held it with a mixed garrison of British, Australian, and New Zealand troops numbering about 40,000 men including 11,000 Greek soldiers, all poorly armed. Among the Greek troops was King George of the Hellenes, whose royal person had to be protected from German capture, lest the Nazis score yet another propaganda victory.

The British defenders were not in much better shape. As at Dunkirk, the retreating British had left a great deal of supplies and transport behind in Greece, and some of their outfits included composite battalions of artillerymen without guns, supply troops without trucks, and various rear-echelon paper chasers who had been handed rifles and told to fight. General Sir Archibald Wavell, in command of the Middle Eastern Theater, reviewed the situation on Crete and scraped up six battered Matilda tanks from his workshops and 75 captured Italian artillery pieces—all lacking sights—to send to Crete.

To command this mixed force, Wavell appointed the head of the 2nd New Zealand Division, Lt. Gen. Sir Bernard Freyberg, another World War I Victoria Cross recipient, who was well regarded as a determined and pugnacious fighter if not a great strategist. His firm nature seemed perfect to hold Crete's rocky terrain.

Freyberg also held a priceless advantage. Thanks to Britain's codebreaking efforts and the overly chatty Luftwaffe radio net, he knew the entire German plan for the invasion of Crete and could spot his troops accordingly, which he did. British troops were posted to the airfield at Heraklion in the east, Australians to Retimo in the center, and New Zealanders to hold the critical area between the Suda Bay port and Maleme Airfield in the west.

That German plan was one that had been whipped up in a short time by one of Germany's most revolutionary soldiers, Lt. Gen. Kurt Student, commander of Germany's airborne arm. He saw in the Cretan situation an opportunity to prove the ability and worth of the Nazi parachute arm, which consisted of Hitler's bravest and best-trained troops.

So far the parachute arm had enjoyed a small but good war, taking key points in Norway, dropping behind Dutch lines, and overrunning the Eben Emael fortress in Belgium. Now Student wanted to use his battle-hardened 7th Parachute Division in a mass drop on Crete, taking the island by storm.

The plan was simple enough. His four regiments would drop

The second wave of German Fallschirmjäger lands on the rugged terrain of Crete and begins to assemble and move out toward their objective. Their comrades continue to float earthward toward a rude reception in the background.

Imperial War Museum

Imperial War Museum

A group of Allied soldiers, including Greek and Commonwealth troops, enjoy a smoke during a lull in the fighting on the island of Crete. Stubborn resistance took a heavy toll among the German invaders, but the defenders were eventually evacuated.

on the island at four places: Retimo, Heraklion, Canea and Suda, and Maleme. The 11,000 paratroopers would seize the airfields and ports, enabling 12,000 more troops to land from the air and sea to finish the job of taking the island. The Luftwaffe's "flying artillery" would cover the entire operation. The daring nature of the plan and its use of shock and speed appealed to Hitler, who approved the plan as a necessary prerequisite to covering his flank for the invasion of Russia.

But the plans ran into trouble right away. German intelligence underestimated the British defenses, believing there to be only 5,000 men on the island. There were not enough planes to deliver the paratroopers to their drop zones all at once—the Luftwaffe would have to make three shuttle flights on the invasion day to get all the paratroopers to their targets. And the paratroopers, lightly armed and short of supplies, would have to take their ports and airfields in a very short time or they would be isolated and helpless.

Still, Student had great faith in his men, and the whole operation, codenamed Mercury, got started on May 20, with paratroopers boarding their trimotored Junkers Ju-52 transports before dawn, wearing heavy camouflage uniforms in the hot Mediterranean sun. The planes took off from their dusty airfields in quick order.

A paratrooper wrote, "Dawn came and went. We flew on until below us we could see the dun-colored, inhospitable-looking terrain with mountains blinding white in the sunlight. These peaks ran along the length of the island like a spine. Pillars of black smoke rose still and straight into the blue sky. The Luftwaffe had been softening up the enemy and destroying his opposition."

Meanwhile, the British had been digging in. With everything in short supply except determination, the 5th New Zealand Brigade, under Brigadier James Hargest, drew the defense of Maleme. The 22nd Battalion was assigned the airfield, and Colonel Andrew deployed C Company directly on it, the Headquarters Company just east of it, and A Company directly on the high ground that dominated the airfield, Hill 107, with B Company south of that. Andrew also had control of two of the Matilda tanks of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment which had been assigned to Crete, but he did not control the Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm parties left behind on Maleme Airfield—they even had different passwords and countersigns. In all, Andrew had to worry about 14 different commands in his small area, including Australian antiaircraft gunners and Royal Marines.

The terrain was rocky and hilly, but the defenders lacked any sort of air cover. The last Hawker Hurricane fighters had already been pulled out. The Luftwaffe's Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive-bombers and Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters dominated the skies over Crete, constantly bombing and strafing the British positions, knocking out hastily laid telephone lines, and disrupting communications.

The German attack on Maleme was assigned to the Assault Regiment, a mostly glider-borne outfit, which would land one force of 500 men under Major Walter von Braun west of the Tavronitis River, seize the bridge over the nearly dry river, and attack the airfield from the west. Another force, under Lieutenant Wulff Von Plessen, was to land at the river mouth and destroy the defenses there, and a third, under Major Walter Koch, the victor of Eben Emael, was to land on the slopes of Hill 107 and take it. The rest of the force assigned to Maleme, 2,000 men, would parachute well clear of the defenses, form up, and come rapidly to support the glider men. The whole command, named Task Force Komet, was a powerful unit, relying on speed, firepower, and surprise to take the airfield.

As the sun rose over Maleme Airfield that morning, the Luftwaffe arrived to deliver what everyone now called the "morning hate," but this time the German airmen concentrated their bombing and strafing on the area around the airfield, strafing olive groves and making it impossible for troops on the ground to move more than a yard or two from their slit trenches.

At least 24 heavy bombers roared over the 22nd Battalion, dropping their ordnance. "Dust and smoke billowed up; the earth shook with explosions; trees splintered; slit trenches caved in," wrote the official historian. In one substantial five-man trench, only Sergeant Joe Chittenden, a Waitara baker, survived.

"The silence after the blitz," wrote Sergeant A.M. Sargeson, a Hawera clerk, "was eerie, acrid, and ominous."

"So accustomed to the 'daily hate,' that as soon as the planes disappeared out to sea the men began to move to breakfast which had been cooking during the raid," the battalion's history recorded. Many of the RAF fitters did not bother to take their rifles with them to breakfast.

"Then, in the middle of a scurrying breakfast," wrote official historian Dan Davin, "There was a new note: a distant buzz, like the sound of a swarm of enormous hornets, rising to a crescendo of drumming, throbbing sound,

loud above the incessant din of machine-gun fire. Looking up, mess-tins in hand, New Zealanders saw the sky so full of great transport planes that it seemed impossible they should not crash into one another. And, even as they watched, the air was full of parachutes dropping from the aircraft and flowering like bubbles from a child's pipe, but infinitely more sinister."

The New Zealanders opened fire with everything they had, mostly Bren machine guns and rifles, aiming at the falling parachutes.

Unlike their American and British counterparts, German paratroopers came to earth clutching only a knife and pistol. Their rifles came in a canister with the stick of paratroopers. German paratroopers were expected to "roll up the stick" and break out the rifles from their canisters. As a result, they were most vulnerable as they were hitting the ground and directly after.

The New Zealanders were impressed but not demoralized by the airborne armada. "Action came as a relief—almost a grim joy—after cowering under cover for a fortnight of air raids, and the remark, 'Just like the duck shooting season!' was widespread at the time," wrote battalion historian Jim Henderson.

Private N.N. Fellows, a Wellington salesman, wrote, "The first thing that met my startled gaze when I looked out was the descending paratroopers. My throat seemed to get very dry all of a sudden and I longed for company."

A German paratrooper, however, had opposing memories: "My parachute had scarcely opened when bullets began spitting past me from all directions. It had felt so splendid just before to jump in sunlight over such wonderful countryside, but my feelings suddenly changed. All I could do was to pull my head in and cover my face with my arms."

The Kiwis slaughtered scores of paratroopers as they came hurtling to the ground.

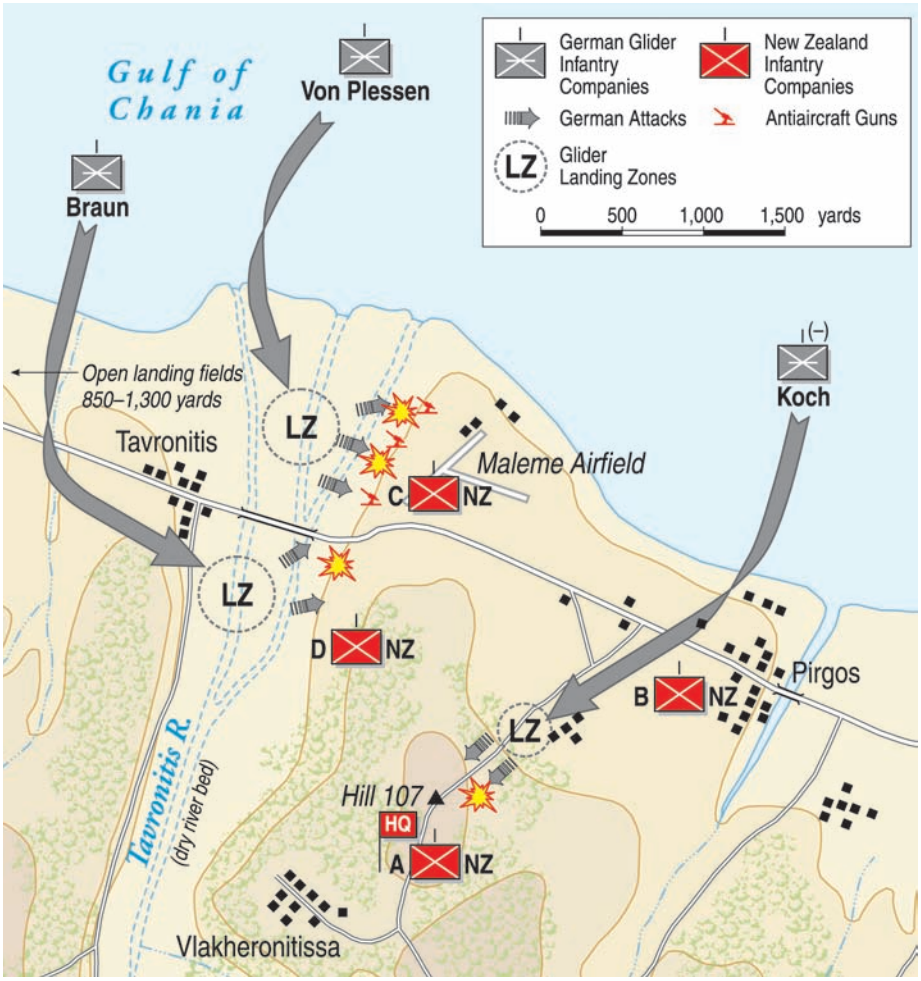
At Maleme the gliders came swooshing in. Everyone watching was amazed at the strange new planes that lacked engines but were headed straight for their positions. Then people yelled, "Gliders," almost in unison.

Von Plessen's gliders swooped in over the northern coast of Crete, did a semicircle, and came in from behind the New Zealand antiaircraft positions. One glider was hit by tracer bullets while still in flight and crashed, bursting into flames. The paratroopers inside leaped out of the glider's windows, their uniforms aflame. Another glider was hit point-blank by a British antiaircraft gun at zero elevation. It disintegrated, spewing pieces in all directions.

As soon as they came to a halt, the Germans

Australian War Memorial

ABOVE: Australian positions on Crete come under fire from German artillery brought in aboard gliders and Junkers Ju-52 transport aircraft to support the Fallschirmjäger in their attempt to wrest control of the island from Commonwealth forces. BELOW: This map of German operations on Crete identifies Commonwealth positions and the landing zones and initial movements of the German airborne troops deployed to take the island.



Map © 2012 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: The bodies of dead German glider troops lie unburied beside their glider that crash landed on Crete during the opening hours of Operation Mercury. BELOW: This photo taken in late May 1941, depicts German airborne troops unloading weapons and supply boxes on the island of Crete.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

inside the gliders began spilling out to take their objectives. Plessen's detachment attacked the antiaircraft gun crews by the river mouth and overwhelmed them. At close range, the Bofors guns were useless, and so were the gunners' pistols. But then Plessen's men faced the New Zealanders' rifles. The New Zealanders stopped the German attack cold. Plessen ordered a withdrawal. As he rose to signal his men, a burst of fire cut him in two. The senior officer attached to this assault group, a Dr. Weizel, assumed command of the detachment and supervised the retreat.

Most gliders landed on the stony riverbed of the Tavronitis, and everyone opened up with small-arms fire, which sounded like a fusillade of firecrackers. Several gliders smashed on the stones of the broad riverbed, injuring their occupants. One bounced off the bridge itself. In at least two cases, accurate New Zealand fire hit the glider pilot, and one glider crashed nose up with the belly striking a rock, breaking the fuselage in half. The only survivor was war correspondent Franz-Peter Weixler in the tail section of the glider.

Some gliders came in too high. One banked very sharply in its descent; its wing dipped low and struck the rocky prominence of a hill. After cartwheeling, the wing crumbled and the fuselage smashed itself against a grove of olive trees. Most of the occupants were killed.

Another 40 gliders landed at the mouth of the Tavronitis and farther up the riverbed, containing the rest of 1st Battalion of the Assault Regiment, the regimental headquarters, and part of the 3rd Battalion. Major Koch's detachment landed in exposed positions and came under heavy fire. Koch himself was wounded, and the survivors had to crawl their way down toward the Tavronitis Bridge to join their comrades.

In his lead glider, Major Koch sat behind the pilot. The glider dipped forward gently, the only sound the hissing of air streaming by the wings. Koch yelled, "Hold tight!" as the glider careened off a stone wall, spun clockwise, and broke in two, coming to a full stop in a cloud of dust. Koch and his men sat there for a moment, realized they were unhurt, and charged out of the glider.

Koch was surprised at what he found. The terrain was more hilly than the reconnaissance photos had led him to believe, and his gliders were scattering among the hills. He sent runners to collect the men and to form his unit into a concentrated body.

Koch got down to business at his command post and soon realized the attack was going poorly. According to the timetable, his glider team was supposed to have captured and secured Hill 107 by now, but of the 150 men in his detachment, only 25 had materialized. Worse, his men were being enfiladed by the New Zealand defenders.

He decided not to wait and attacked with the 25 officers and men of his battalion staff, pushing off toward the summit of Hill 107. They initially hit the RAF tented camp on their side of the slope. According to plan, the RAF men would be caught in their cots. Instead, the cots were empty. "One less problem," Koch shouted, "On toward the summit!"

The men charged eagerly behind him and into a wall of small-arms fire, which stopped the Germans cold. German paratroopers dived for what cover they could find on the bare hill. Koch was not among them. He took three bullets and was left lying in a hollow beside a bush, nearly dead.

Captain T.C. Campbell commanding D Company recalled, "My first thought was, 'This is an airborne landing.' I still have vivid recollections of the gliders coming down with their quiet swish, swish, dipping down and swishing in."

With German troops landing in sections between the five New Zealand companies, the

battle degenerated into separate actions. Headquarters Company, under Lieutenant G.G. Beavan, consisted of 60 men and faced between 10 and 20 planeloads of parachutists. The Germans suffered severe losses, but with their usual tenacity regrouped and formed strongpoints in the grapevines and trees.

Sergeant Major J. Matheson's platoon was cut off and overrun, Matheson being killed by a grenade. Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant J. Woods, who was taken prisoner in the battle, described the scene thus: "Over comes the Hun with Stukas, Junkers, and gliders, not mentioning the 109s. By the time the Stukas and 109s had left us the air around seemed to be alive with Junkers, and believe me the birds that flew out of them were pretty thick. They looked impossible as the odds must have easily been 15 to 1."

After taking Matheson's position, the Germans got no farther. The Germans tried another attack on the Headquarters Company later in the day but were driven off by a shell from C Troop, 27 New Zealand Battery's 75mm guns. The gunners had fashioned sights out of wood and mounted them to the captured Italian guns with chewing gum.

Major Braun was killed, but his glider troops had overwhelmed the machine-gun posts east of the river and seized control of the bridge over the Tavronitis.

The attack also stunned the RAF ground crew at Maleme, left behind when the planes pulled out. Some, still sheltering from the attacks, were afraid to look up. Less fearful (and better-armed) was C Company of 22nd Battalion, whose three platoons engaged anything that came their way. The platoon on the western edge next to the Tavronitis Bridge had to switch fire back and forth between the Plessen group and the Germans on the opposite side of the Tavronitis.

Task Force Komet was commanded by Colonel Eugen Meindl, who at age 51 refused to ride a glider into battle, preferring to jump, to show he was as tough as the youngest second lieutenant. As soon as he hit the ground he grasped the situation with great speed. The New Zealanders were much stronger than anticipated but had nothing west of the Tavronitis River. The airfield was key to German reinforcement and survival, and Hill 107 was key to the airfield. So while Braun's men kept pushing at the airfield flank, he sent Major Stentzler's 2nd Battalion on a right-flank maneuver to take Hill 107 from the rear.

But at the same time, Major Koch was struck down with a severe head wound. Koch's battalion alone would lose 16 officers killed and seven wounded.

The eastern jaw of the German attack on Maleme was the Third Battalion, Assault Regiment, under Major Otto Scherber. These 600 men were dropped by 58 transports between the villages of Pirgos and Platanias along the coast road. Once landed, the paratroopers were to consolidate, then advance on the airstrip from the east.

The transports crossed the coast and came under massive flak as they approached the drop zone. Black transport planes turned into huge orange fireballs, yet the survivors held their course. At 400 feet, the planes were low enough to avoid the fire of the 3-inch antiaircraft guns and drop their paratroopers, doing so at 7:35 AM, five minutes behind schedule.

First Lieutenant Walter Schiller made an uneventful descent from his Ju-52 over a quiet sector. As he drifted to earth, he studied the terrain. It bore no resemblance to his maps. His drop had gone off course. But he saw smoke four miles away and figured that was Maleme Airfield.

Most of the 10th Company of Scherber's Third Battalion dropped halfway between Maleme and Platanias, expecting to find a quiet area in which to consolidate and move west. Instead, they drew concentrated fire from one of the odder outfits in the British order of battle, the Field Punishment Center.

Under the command of Lieutenant W.J.T. Roach, the FPC was the field jail for the British garrison's "plonk artists," deserters,

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As parachutes billow in the sky above the Akrotiri Peninsula on Crete during airborne operations on May 21, 1941, a Junkers Ju-52 transport plane leaves a trail of smoke and flame following a hit by accurate antiaircraft fire from British defenders on the ground.

Australian War Memorial

The distinctive round helmets of these German Fallschirmjäger are clearly visible in this photo depicting a pair of airborne soldiers firing a Schmeisser machine carbine and an MG 34 machine gun from a position in the arch of a stone bridge.

and thieves. As soon as the paratroopers began floating to earth, Roach released his prisoners from their cells and told them that if they fought their offenses would merit a pardon. The prisoners gleefully accepted the firearms they were given, and Roach told his motley crew, "Let's go headhunting for bloody Huns." The convicts headed out, adding to their arms stores by looting German supply canisters that fell from the sky.

The defense at Modhion was not just convicts, though. The 21st and 23rd Battalions were in the area, and they were joined by Cretan civilians, angry at being invaded and armed with ancient flintlocks and fowling pieces. Four Germans racing toward their supply canister were cut down by a volley of fire from old men. The four paratroopers were killed by ancient flintlocks captured from the Turks a half century earlier. Of the total complement of 10th Company, more than 60 percent were killed or wounded at Modhion.

Scherber's other company, the 9th, did not do well either. It landed smack over the 23rd Battalion. Scherber himself landed near a huge open-sided tent, and just as he hit the ground was gunned down, his parachute falling like a burial shroud around him. The 23rd Battalion's commander, Lt. Col. D.F. Leckie, stood in the open, issuing orders and firing away with his pistol. With five shots, he killed five paratroopers.

Of the 600 men in Scherber's battalion, some 400 were killed or wounded in the first hour of battle. Of 126 men from one company of this battalion, which landed between Cretan defenders on one hill and New Zealanders on the other, just 14 survived. A survivor said of the battle, "It was like a terrible dream."

Meanwhile, 22nd Battalion fought on. Captain Campbell's D Company had about 70 men with no mortars and only a few machine guns. The most northerly unit in the company, 18 Platoon, down to 22 men, was thin on the ground. When the German parachutes opened, Sergeant Sargeson observed to Corporal Bob Boyd, a King County van driver in peacetime, "Look at that, Bob, you'll never see another sight like that as long as you live." Boyd replied, "Yes, and if we don't shoot a few of them, we won't live too bloody long."

The soldiers of 18 Platoon fought with the experience of men who had served in the retreat in Greece and the toughness of New Zealand farmers. The men of 17 Platoon watched 17 gliders land on the dry riverbed of the Tavronitis, one on the hillside right by their positions. Corporal H.A. Kettle, a Waitara baker, remembered, "My section was issued with a Bren gun a few days before the blitz, with instructions not to fire indiscriminately with it as it was necessary to conserve ammo. We discovered upon attempting our first burst at the enemy that the gun was without a firing pin."

Disheartened but not defeated, the men scrounged some captured German equipment, including a machine gun, and used that until ammunition ran out at 12:30 PM. Seventeen Platoon took only one casualty in the initial stages of the battle.

On D Company's left flank, 16 Platoon held positions on the hillside overlooking the dry riverbed. Platoon leader Sergeant Vince Freeman led his men in shooting at the landing gliders.

And so it went through the battalion—gliders landing, troops firing back with everything they had, amid the roar of bombs and gunfire. The only plan was to hold the ground.

A Company held its fire until the parachutists were 100 feet from the ground, then opened up. Some 22 Germans who landed alive in A Company's area were accounted for. During the lulls, the New Zealanders broke open the German supply canisters, finding them packed with gear, food, motorcycles, Benzedrine tablets, and even warm coffee. Captain S. Hanton, who commanded A Company, wrote, "The detailed organization of the force amazed us at the time; we had not realized that so much care could be taken to win a battle."

Determined German troops cleared out the RAF camp, which was loosely defended by poorly armed and ill-trained ground crews, and then started advancing on Hill 107. In the RAF camp, the Germans found an RAF codebook and the complete British order of battle for Crete.

German paratroopers, charging through the RAF camp, shot anyone they saw but paused to line up eight RAF men they found on the surface. Leading Aircraftman Lawrence shouted that the Germans had no right to shoot POWs without the express order of an officer. The German paratroopers were amazed at the idea of POWs refusing to be shot unless an officer was sent for, and they did. The officer showed sense—he called off the shooting. But the POWs were not safe. The captors forced them to march forward as a screen to Hill 107. As they advanced, New Zealanders counterattacked from the flank. The eight RAF men took advantage of the confusion to make a dash for safety.

Other fitters and officers had already pulled back from the RAF camp and joined the New

Zealanders to fight as infantrymen.

At his command post, Meindl tried to make sense out of the appalling situation. The Third Battalion had been nearly wiped out. The New Zealanders still held the airfield and Hill 107. There had been no communication with the division commander, Maj. Gen. Wilhelm Suessman, since his glider took off. It had crashed, killing all aboard. There had also been no communication with headquarters in Athens, where General Student and his command team had taken over the Hotel Grand Bretagne.

Meindl did not know it, but the entire German effort on Crete was coming apart. The forces assigned to take the airfields at Heraklion and Retimo had been stopped in their tracks. The force assigned to take Canea was trapped in a valley. The only hope the Germans had to gain control of Crete lay in the hands of the Assault Regiment at Maleme. And Meindl had lost half his men already.

Despite their massive losses, the Germans had several advantages. Air superiority meant they could move freely without fear of air attack, and they had plenty of working wireless sets for local communications. Once the initial dislocation of landing was overcome, the Germans massed their men and proceeded in accordance with their complex plan.

The New Zealanders had a simpler plan: hold the ground. Colonel Andrew considered the morning blitz worse than a World War I barrage, and said, "I do not wish to experience another one like it." Wounded slightly in the temple, he pulled the shell splinter out of his head. "It was bloody hot and I bled a bit." Then he snarled, "We'll go out and get them when the bombing stops."

The problem for Andrew was communications. His phone lines were down, and all he had was a gradually dying radio that connected him with brigade. He was supposed to fire rockets and Verey lights to let the nearby 21st and 23rd Battalions know they had to come to his assistance, but he did not know what the situation was.

The Germans kept building up from the Tavronitis River, and Andrew wondered where and how his men were doing their jobs. Under the heavy bombing, runners could not get through to his scattered companies. Nor did Andrew have any idea of the exact German numbers facing him.

The platoon nearest the sea managed to repel attacks along the beach from the mouth of the Tavronitis. But 15 Platoon, defending the western end of the airfield, was hard pressed. Only 22 strong and lacking machine guns, they held their one-kilometer front with great tenacity.

Meanwhile, Meindl fell back on the favorite German tactic—a sharp, sudden, violent attack. He ordered his two remaining battalion commanders to attack the airfield and Hill 107. Fourth Battalion, under Captain Walter Gericke, who took over from the late Major Braun, would charge across the captured Tavronitis Bridge and attack Hill 107 from the north. Gericke's battalion had mostly heavy machine guns and mortar squads, which gave it firepower but few infantrymen. It would be reinforced by a company of paratroopers from 2nd Battalion and the survivors of the glider force. Gericke had quite a future in front of him. He ultimately commanded the West German Army's parachute division.

The two remaining companies, Major Stentzler's Fifth and Sixth, would cross the Tavronitis, circle counterclockwise in an enveloping maneuver, and assault Hill 107 from the south, thus attacking the hill from two directions. Meindl had left for Greece with 2,500 men. Now he staked the battle on 900 paratroopers.

Stentzler's battalion of two companies tried to attack Hill 107 from the rear and ran smack into a fortuitously placed New Zealand platoon. The Germans were exhausted and dehydrated, sweltering in their gray uniforms designed for Northern Europe, loaded down with weapons, ammunition, and emergency packs. They had already emptied their canteens.

At 10 AM, a C Company runner finally reached Andrew to ask him to unleash the two camouflaged tanks from their lair. But Andrew refused. It was too early to play the trump card.

At 10:55 AM, Andrew warned 5th Brigade over his erratically working wireless set that he had lost contact with C and D Companies. He signaled, "400 Paratroopers landed in the area. 100 near the airfield. 150 to the east of the airfield between Maleme and Pirgos and 150 West of the river."

Around midday, the Germans brought into action their mortars and a light field piece they had parachuted with them. The British artillery batteries could not help because the field telephone lines between the artillery pieces and the forward observation post at Hill 107 had been cut. The gunner officers instead took command of RAF and Fleet Air Arm personnel fighting as infantry.

Then Meindl gave the signal, and his two battalions attacked. At first there was the snap of sporadic fire, but when the Germans were exposed the firing became a thunderous roar.

German airborne troops advance cautiously along a dirt road on the island of Crete. The bodies of British soldiers killed during fighting earlier in the day lie beside a stone wall.

Caught in the open, the front ranks were shot dead. Others were wounded and, lying where they fell, took more bullets. The Germans retreated. Meindl ordered the assault to continue.

But then Meindl saw one of Koch's men hoisting a flag signal halfway up Hill 107. They had reached the point after fierce fighting but could not advance any farther. Meindl grabbed a green signal flag lying on the ground and raised himself over a stone wall to wag back an answer, astonishing his staff since this was a signalman's job, not the commander's.

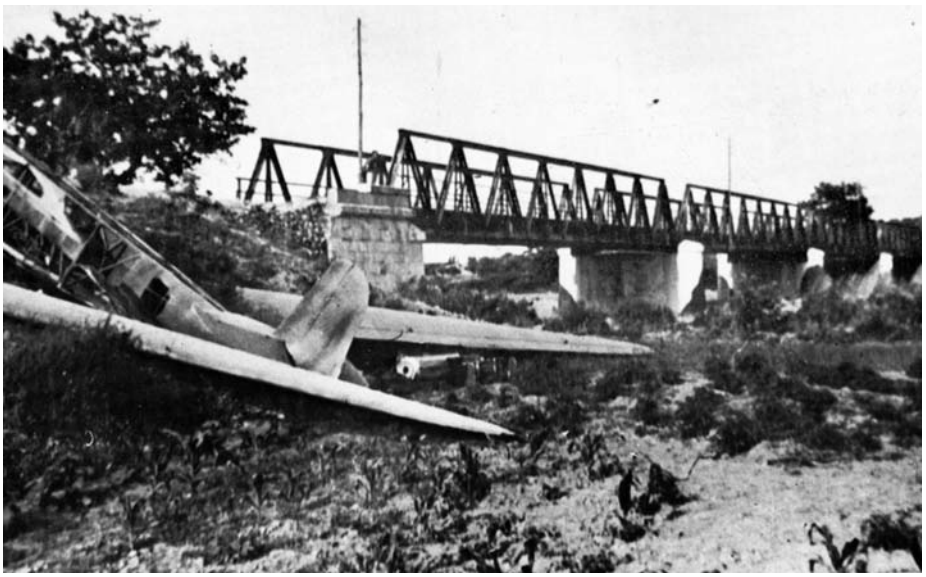
As he stood signaling, Meindl was hit in the hand by a sniper's bullet. He grabbed at his

wrist, fell, rose again, and took another bullet in his chest, then slumped to the ground. The wounds were not fatal. As the medics dressed them, Meindl barked at his men, "Order the men to attack that damn hill—take it at all costs! Don't come back until it is in your hands!"

The Fourth Battalion followed orders. They reformed and stormed up the hill, leaping over the bodies of their buddies, firing their rifles until they were empty, then turning to their bayonets. But the New Zealanders would not budge. The 22nd took heavy casualties but held its ground.

At the bottom, the pale Meindl was told that Stenzler's Second Battalion had been held up by lack of water, and runners were out searching for canteens for the parched men. Meindl ordered the attack to resume without delay.

Imperial War Museum



A crash-landed German glider lies near the main road bridge at Maleme Airfield on Crete. Control of the airfield was the key to the eventual German capture of the island, allowing supplies and reinforcements to land.

On the high ground, the New Zealanders were having their own hard time. They were just as tired and parched as their German counterparts but were hanging on.

Andrew regarded his situation as serious and fired up white and green flares, the emergency signal to 23rd Battalion for help, but nobody saw them in the smoke and haze.

Incredibly, 5th Brigade made little effort to contact him, satisfying itself with messages from the 21st and 23rd Battalions that the area was under control. Hargest signaled back to the two battalions: "Glad of your message ... will not call on you for counterattack unless position is very serious. So far everything is in hand and reports from other units satisfactory." So while Andrew fired off flares and radio messages to his superiors, they did not move or answer.

At 3:50 PM, Andrew finally got a radio message through to Hargest's headquarters just 6.5 kilometers away but got no reaction. With mortar shells landing around his command post and no response from his higher-ups, Andrew was running out of ideas.

Hargest's behavior is difficult to explain, and historians have tried. Unlike Andrew, he was not a professional soldier, but a plump, red-faced farmer and Conservative member of the New Zealand House of Representatives. Pehaps he was exhausted from the violent strain of battle. His communications may have been disrupted. He may have been more concerned about the seaborne invasion. Whatever the cause, Hargest did not send any help to the 22nd Battalion.

Andrew was down to his trump card, the two Matilda tanks. He ordered them along with his reserve 14th Platoon of 19 men under Lieutenant H.T. Donald and six gunner volunteers from 156th Light Antiaircraft Battery into action to clear out the German troops holding a portion of the airfield.

Sergeant Dick Fahey, who commanded one of the tanks, leaped out of his foxhole and with his buddies started removing camouflage from the two vehicles. Down came broken olive branches, uprooted cacti, and hunks of sod covering a huge camouflage net. Fahey revved up his tank's motors.

The tanks emerged like dinosaurs from their camouflaged lair and rumbled toward the Germans in the wrong place. They headed for the Tavronitis riverbed about 30 yards apart.

The tanks clattered into the advance, German small-arms fire ricocheting off the Matildas' tough hulls. The sound of bullets made Fahey's ears ring. He saw a group of Germans to his right and ordered his gunner to sight on the target and open fire.

No response.

"What the hell are you waiting for?" Fahey shouted. "Load it!"

The gunner answered, "The shell won't fit—it's too big!" Fahey stepped over to the gunner's position and found he was right. All the shells in the tank's ammunition rack were for a larger caliber gun. Fahey was livid. "What the bloody hell! Here we are leading an attack and we can't even spit at them!"

Deciding that they could at least overrun the enemy with their treads, they rumbled toward the bridge, then bumped and lurched down into the riverbed. The tank tried to attack the Germans on the flank, passing unscathed through German small-arms fire, but the armored belly struck a boulder and the tank was now a stranded turtle, its treads chewing deeper and deeper into mud. Inside, Fahey and his crew found they could not traverse their turret and abandoned the vehicle.

The second tank could not traverse its turret, so it had to withdraw.

The accompanying infantry was now unprotected and came under heavy German fire. The lead section was killed, as were all the Bofors gunners. The rest—eight survivors of 26—withdrew to Andrew's command post.

As he watched the dispirited eight men walk past him, suddenly Andrew lost faith in his ability to hold Hill 107. Convinced that two of his companies were lost, his mortars and machine guns gone, his position untenable, he put through a radio message begging again for reinforcements, saying that if he did not get them he would have to withdraw from the high ground.

This time, Andrew got an answer. "If you must, then you must," Hargest radioed back. But he would send help. Andrew was now stuck.

Andrew was no coward—he held a Victoria Cross. He was also no fool. But he was exhausted from an extremely difficult day, disconnected from two of his companies, and surrounded by German paratroopers. It was a desperate situation. As Dan Davin observed in his official history, Andrew's "decision to withdraw was taken by an experienced soldier and a brave man who had won a Victoria Cross in World War I. No one who has not shared ordeals and anxieties comparable with those he had endured this day can comfortably criticize him, but the fact remains that by withdrawing from Point 107 and the airfield he gave the enemy the only chance of exploiting the lodgment they had gained."

Freyberg was less harsh in a 1956 letter to 22nd Battalion's official historian, Jim Henderson, writing, "Let me say at once, I do not for one moment hold Col. Andrew responsible for the failure to hold Maleme; he was given an impossible task, and he has my sympathy. I take full responsibility as regards the policy of holding the aerodrome. I did not like the defenses of any of my four garrisons. I would have put in another Infantry Battalion to help Andrew, but it was impossible in the time to dig them in. The ground was solid rock, neither did we have the tools. [Acting Division Commander] Puttick, Hargest and I must bear our share of responsibility for the defensive positions that were taken up at Maleme, which were as good as we could hope for under the difficult circumstances."

Andrew sent his runners to communicate the bad news to C and D Companies, which were battered but intact—but the runners did not get through. C and D Companies did not get the word. They were waiting for relief.

Another high officer was worrying about the situation in Crete. General Student had received nothing but bad news since the attack had begun. Worse, Student's rivals in Berlin were urging Hitler to end the operation and withdraw the troops. Naturally, there was no way to do this, not while the Royal Navy dominated the sealanes, especially by night. Student's career and the lives of 10,000 paratroopers were at stake.

Then Student had a better idea. There was still a chance at Maleme, where his troops were putting up a fight. And Student still had his Force Reserve—two battalions of paratroopers ready to jump—that could be dropped at Maleme to provide the attackers with a little more punch. With one more good shove, Maleme could be German, and the mountain troops could start flying in. The whole battle, he decided, would focus on Maleme. But he needed accurate information from the battlefield.

Student ordered Captain Kleye, one of his staff officers, to fly to Maleme with a working radio, and report on the situation. Within an hour, Kleye was in a Ju-52 headed for Maleme. Incredibly, in total darkness the lumbering Ju-52 put Kleye down on the western edge of the airfield. The plane dropped him and the radio, revved up to its full 830 horsepower, and took back off for Athens. An hour later, Kleye reported to Student that Maleme Airfield was usable and that the paratroopers there could attack again if resupplied.

An emboldened Student began to issue orders. Supplies would be sent in. The force reserve under Colonel Bernhard Ramcke would parachute to Meindl's rescue. And the 100th Mountain Regiment would be put on standby to fly in to Maleme Airfield, to take off at dawn. The division's boss, Maj. Gen. Julius Ringel, a goateed Austrian Nazi, would take overall command, putting a fresh leader at the helm of the flagging attack.

A German Army photographer snapped this image of Fallschirmjäger standing guard over a few British prisoners captured during the fighting on Crete in the spring of 1941. Although the Germans took some prisoners, a large number of Commonwealth troops were evacuated from Crete.

As the sun set over Crete, the fighting died down at Hill 107. The Germans were scattered, alone or in small groups. They were thirsty, hungry, tense, and exhausted. The New Zealanders, up on the Hill, were the same. Meindl, weary with his wounds, worried about a counterattack. "What are the English waiting for?" he asked his aide over and over again in a pain-filled voice. He had less than 50 paratroopers holding the lower part of the western slope of Hill 107.

The New Zealand defenders were also reviewing the situation. Hargest had decided to send reinforcements to Andrew. He ordered Colonel Leckie of the 23rd Battalion to dispatch one company of infantry to assist Andrew on Hill 107 and another from the 28th Maori Battalion in reserve.

Andrew was baffled by the decision. Why send two companies from two separate battalions? Why not send two companies from the same battalion? Why only two companies at all? Moving men around in the dark in battle was not an easy affair.

As the night wore on, the reinforcements did not arrive. By 9 PM, they had not shown, and Andrew ordered the men of Company A to pull off the high ground of Hill 107 and descend to a lower point held by Company B. Half an hour later, the reinforcing company from the 23rd arrived under Captain C.N. Watson. Andrew sent them up to hold the old A Company position.

Incredibly, while Hargest made all these decisions he did not pass them up his chain of command to the acting divisional commander, Brigadier Edward Puttick. All day he reported that things were going well at Maleme. Suddenly, at 11:15 PM he asked Puttick's permission to send the entire 28th Battalion to Maleme. For the first time all day, the top brass realized things were going badly at Maleme.

A little after midnight, the 22nd Battalion commander ordered his A and B Companies to leave their positions on the lower slopes of Hill 107. Captain Watson's relief company would act as rear guard during the withdrawal.

At 1:30 AM, the Maori company from the 28th, under Captain Rangi Royal, finally arrived, having taken six hours to get there from Platanias. En route, they had stumbled into German paratroopers and fought several skirmishes. Royal's men had to make a bayonet charge to break through. When they reached Andrew's position, Andrew said dejectedly, "You are too late, Captain. The situation has deteriorated to the point that I have to pull out."

Royal reported his bayonet charge, and

Continued on page 77

Chad Hanna

Three Times REALLY ARE A CHARM

In the case of Chad Hanna, caught up in the turmoil of World War II, such was definitely true.

BY J.C. HANNA

THE GREAT DEPRESSION greatly affected millions of Americans during the 1930s, and my father, Chad Hanna, was no exception. Life was extremely hard for a mother and her family of eight children whose husband and father had abandoned them. Born in 1920, Dad worked as a paper boy, hunted rabbits for food, and did whatever he could to help the family. He graduated from high school in Breckenridge, Texas, in 1936, worked for the National Youth Administration for a short time, and attended college for one semester in 1937 before the money ran out.

After working 12 hours a day and earning a daily wage of $1 as an apprentice meat cutter in Eunice, New Mexico, he was laid off in the spring of 1938. Returning home to Breckenridge, he could not find work, so he joined the Army after being rejected by both the Marines and Navy due to flat feet and an overbite. He was 18 years old when he signed up for a three-year enlistment period in Lubbock. He had to have both parents grant permission to join the military, so he had to find his father. He then went by train to Fort Bliss near El Paso, Texas, in July 1938, for recruit drill.

J.C. Hanna: What were some of the details about your time at Fort Bliss?

Chad Hanna: I was assigned as a buck private to the First Medical Battalion, which was part of the Post Medical Detachment. My main duty was as a chair assistant in the Dental Clinic. Everyone had recruit drill regardless of your duty, and I was posted to B Troop of the 7th Cavalry (Custer's regiment), which was part of the 1st Cavalry Division. We had extensive mounted and foot drill over an eight-to-12- week period of time.

Does that mean you actually rode horses?

You bet. I got to be a pretty good rider; you have to remember that the gaits of a horse for military purposes are different from those of a civilian. There are only three gaits for the military: walk, trot, and run. Both the walk and trot

Under the watchful eyes of Japanese soldiers and bearing a surrender flag, U.S. soldiers march out of their fortifications on the island of Corregidor. The surrender of American troops to the Japanese in the Philippines was the largest mass capitulation in the country's military history. OPPOSITE: Chad Hanna sports an airman's leather helmet and goggles in this photograph taken in the Philippines in 1940.

National Archives

are used for marching purposes; our post procedure for the trot was to stand up in the saddle and match the horse's stride so there was no bumping. The run technique was only used in battle conditions; you could fire a weapon at a run, but not a gallop, so the latter pace was not used. We also had plenty of firing practice, both with a .30-caliber rifle and a .45-caliber pistol. There was no machine-gun requirement at Bliss, but I later qualified for this weapon in the Philippines.

How long were you at Fort Bliss?

I worked as a dental chair assistant for about one and a half years and I had one promotion to private, 6th class specialist, during that time.

How did you end up leaving Fort Bliss?

I had a good buddy named Jack Tosh, and the two of us decided we wanted to go overseas. There were four choices: Panama, Hawaii, Alaska, and the Philippines. The only openings at the time were in the Philippines, so the choice was pretty easy. I applied for and received a short discharge with a reenlistment term for another period of three years. I left Fort Bliss in late 1939.

How did you get to the Philippines?

I was able to first go home to Breckenridge for a visit, and then I had to find my own way to Angel Island near San Francisco. I remember I rode the bus all the way and the fare was a grand total of $25.05. A six-week trip aboard the troopship *U.S. Grant* followed. We stopped en route at Honolulu and Guam. We arrived in the Philippines in mid-June of 1940.

Where were you stationed and what were your duties?

Somehow I had been assigned to the Army Air Corps, and I was ordered to Nichols Field, just outside Manila. It is interesting to note that I was originally quarantined upon arrival, but I do not remember why; it was possibly due to measles. I stayed at Nichols for about three weeks and then I was sent to Corregidor for recruit drill again. We did both weapons (.45-caliber handgun, .30-caliber rifle, and .30-caliber machine gun) and drill training.

About three weeks later, I returned to Nichols Field for assignment to the Headquarters Squadron of the 4th Composite Group, composed of both pursuit and bomber squadrons. We had somewhat obsolete fighter aircraft such as the P-26A, P-35A, and P-40B; additionally, we had bombers such as the B-3A, B-10, and B-18. It was not until just before the start of the war that we received frontline aircraft like the P-40E and B-17D. Shortly thereafter, I was assigned to the Headquarters Squadron of the 24th Pursuit Group, which was made up of the 3rd, 17th, and 20th Squadrons. This group moved in July 1941 to Clark Field, about 50 miles north of Manila.

Were you at Clark when the Japanese struck on December 8, 1941?

Yes, I had been promoted to corporal, and I was working as a clerk in the Group Engineering Office within the Headquarters Squadron. Nobody was particularly worried about war in the Pacific because we all thought the real war was happening in Europe. A common phrase around the base was, "They've lost the Jap fleet again," meaning that nobody knew where or what the Japs were up to. Thanks to a vacancy that was caused by a transfer, I became chief clerk of the engineering office, with promotion to sergeant in the fall of 1941.

What do you remember about the attack on Clark Field?

I was the only engineering person to be living in one of the hangars instead of the barracks. I was resting in my bunk just after lunch when the air raid siren sounded. Unfortunately, the majority of the 24th Group planes had been aloft most of the morning as a precaution looking for the Japs and they had landed for refueling and lunch.

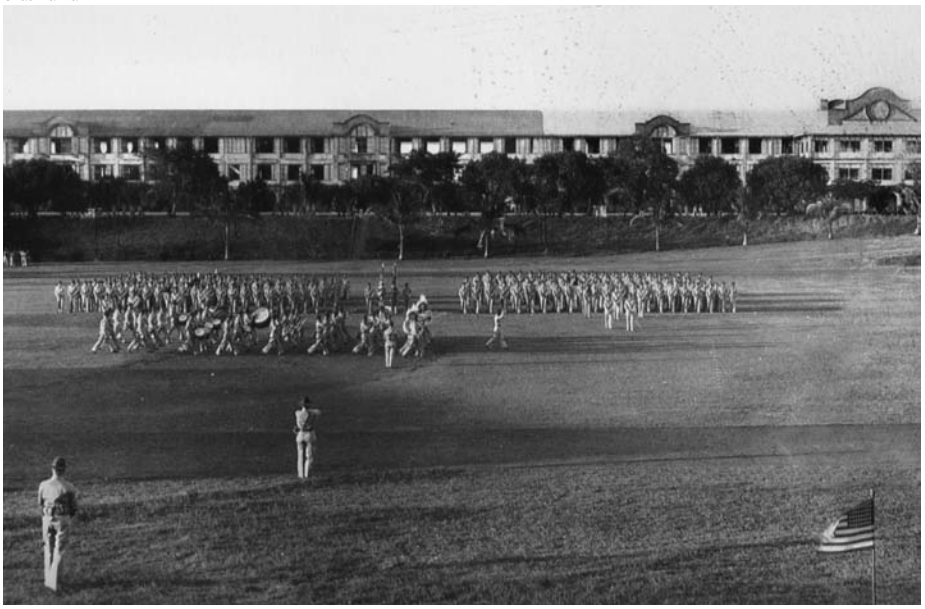
Somewhere between 50 and 60 twin-engine Japanese Betty bombers hit the field; I could see them come in over the mountains. I had my steel helmet, gas mask, and .45-caliber pistol with me as I ran to a drainage ditch that was several hundred yards away. I tripped over a tent stake and I fell flat on my face, making me feel like an idiot. I made it to the ditch, which was wide, but shallow. I was able to get under the lip of the ditch as the first bombs hit.

The closest bomb fell 30 to 40 feet away with a significant spraying of dirt. The Bettys left after one pass, and Zeros [fighters] then made several low passes, strafing as they zoomed by. The overall attack lasted maybe 30 minutes. The field looked completely disabled, although we were fortunate to not have any casualties in my group. Since my hangar and the barracks were destroyed in the attack, we were organized by the first sergeant, bivouacked under trees on the other side of the runaway, and ordered to dig foxholes.

What happened during the next few weeks?

Clark Field was periodically attacked by air

Chad Hanna



Chad Hanna

ABOVE: As war clouds gather in the Pacific, American troops practice drill on the island of Corregidor in the Philippines. RIGHT: Chad Hanna strikes a serious pose in uniform while stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas.

over the next two weeks, and the Japs landed in several places on Luzon. We withdrew from Clark roughly two weeks later, and I remember having Christmas dinner out of mess trucks while we were moving down to Bataan. I was reclassified as an infantryman, and my company was renamed the Headquarters Company of the 71st Infantry Battalion. Our battalion fought in the so-called "Battle of the Pockets" near Mariveles, but the Headquarters Squadron was not sent into battle. By this time, we were directly across from Corregidor.

Along with a few others, I was ordered by the first sergeant to be "loaned to the Navy." My new duty was to help operate the Peninsular Air Warning System in Tunnel No. 4. After being an operator for a short while, I was appointed to be a helper to the chief telephone repairman. Our job was to repair telephone lines that had been cut, which was a normal occurrence after most every Japanese bombing or artillery attack. I can remember that I was caught up on a telephone pole, completely exposed, during one Japanese bombing attack. Luckily for me, I was not hurt. We were still doing air warning work when Bataan fell. Because we were living with Navy personnel, we were very fortunate to make it to Corregidor.

So, this escape to Corregidor could be considered the first of your three lucky charms?

Yes, you could say that. My former unit, the 24th Pursuit Group, ended up as participants in the Bataan Death March. I was able to avoid this terrible march by my temporary reassignment to the Navy.

Although I did not ask for this assignment and actually I was unhappy to be separated from my regular Army unit, it turned out that I was very fortunate not to be captured on Bataan, since those captured were forced to participate in the Death March with dire consequences.

What do you remember about your time on Corregidor?

I'll start by saying that we were bombed by Japanese planes within the first 30 minutes of landing on Corregidor. I was reassigned as a provisional Marine on the South Shore Road. We were susceptible to artillery fire from Cavite and other points on the opposite side of Manila Bay.

We dug foxholes again, and the Japanese attacks intensified after Bataan fell. We were subjected to air attack by both dive-bombers and high-level bombers and artillery barrages by 240mm howitzers on Bataan. We had 3-inch anti-aircraft guns, 5-inch and 8-inch cannon that fired horizontally, and 12-inch rifled cannon and 12-inch mortars in concrete emplacements. Unfortunately, nearly all of the cannon faced seaward, as they were designed to prevent attack from that direction. A landward approach had not been foreseen. The mortars proved to be, by far, the most effective weapon we had against the Japanese, who simply moved most of their artillery back out of the range of the American guns.

Bettman / Corbis

ABOVE: Standing at attention before their Japanese captors near a ruined railroad siding, American and Filipino prisoners on Corregidor wait their turn for counting and interrogation. BELOW: After their capture on Corregidor, a large number of American and Filipino prisoners of war were transported to Bilibid Prison. In this photo, the prisoners are being offloaded from trucks and marched into captivity.

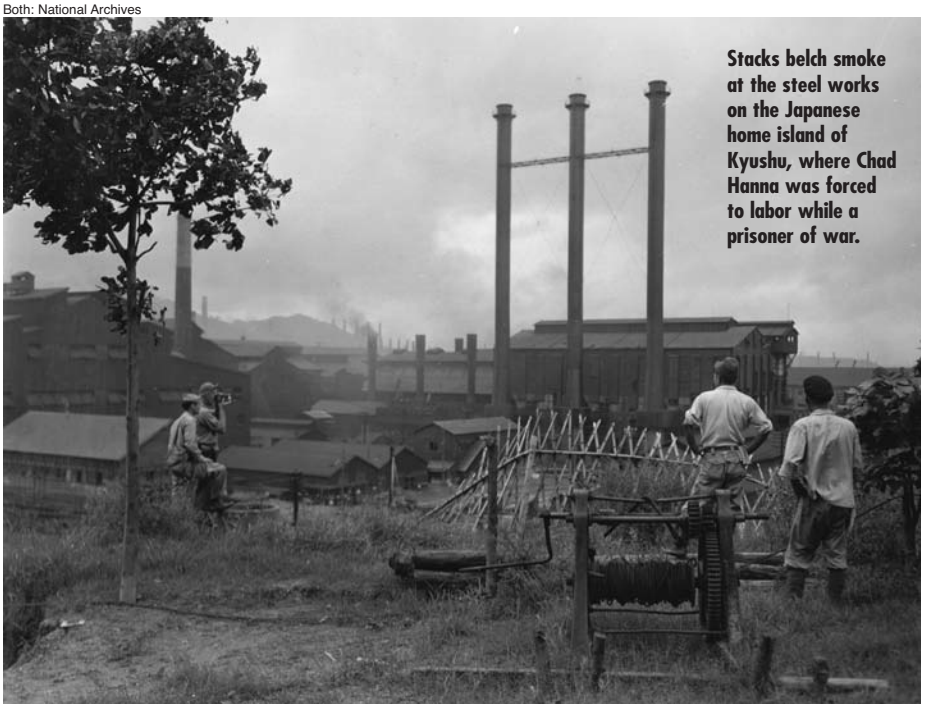
National Archives

So you faced incessant Japanese shelling?

Yes. I was stationed about 250 yards below Battery Geary, which was composed of 12-inch mortars. On April 29, 1942, in honor of the emperor's birthday, the Japanese staged a most intensive barrage that started early in the morning and continued most of the day. There was a direct hit on Geary, and a huge column of smoke and dust covered the battery. There was a tremendous shudder above our position. We thought an earthquake had occurred. A Japanese 240mm howitzer shell had scored a direct hit on the magazine of the battery. I had a good buddy named John York who was stationed at the battery. He survived the blast, and he was later dug out by rescuers. Sadly, I found out that John never made it back to the States; I learned from his family after the war that he had died in prison camp.

So the Japanese were accurate with their artillery shelling?

Both: National Archives



Stacks belch smoke at the steel works on the Japanese home island of Kyushu, where Chad Hanna was forced to labor while a prisoner of war.

As far as I was concerned, they were very capable. They would fire shells that were duds, so they would bounce around inside the concrete emplacements and do damage. They would then follow that up with live shells that would hit the damaged areas and explode. We actually found a part of one of the 12-inch mortars from Geary on the South Shore Road where we were bivouacked. The Americans would respond with both counterbattery fire and box barrages, when all batteries would fire at once, with the shells landing in a box pattern. That way the Japanese would not know which battery had fired at what time.

Could you describe the final days on Corregidor?

In early May, we were moved from the South Shore Road through Malinta Tunnel to defensive positions on Monkey Point, where Japanese troops were expected to land. The Japanese landed on Corregidor on the night of May 5. My provisional battalion did take significant casualties, including the major commanding it, who was killed. We retreated into Malinta Tunnel amid total chaos. We were ordered to lay down arms on May 6.

I saw my first Japanese soldiers at the mouth of the tunnel, and we were marched in groups to the south end of Malinta Tunnel. Later that same night, the Japanese ordered an artillery barrage on the topside of the island. It was totally unnecessary because there was no organized resistance left; however, the topside defenders had no idea what was happening down below. It was at the mouth of the tunnel that I saw my first horrific act. An American was beheaded by a Japanese officer because the American did not follow an order. It was very unsettling to see his head roll down the slope. We were herded into the 92nd garage area on Monkey Point. There were thousands of us in that area. Sanitation was poor, medical care hard to get, and overall conditions were very dismal. Ironically, burial detail was a sought-after duty because you had a chance to find water and some food.

So, what did the Japanese do with the American prisoners?

Along with the Filipino prisoners, we were taken from Corregidor to Manila. We were organized into groups and marched in a column along Dewey Boulevard in order to form a victory parade for the Japanese. We went to Bilibid Prison across the Passig River, where we spent two or three days. We were then loaded into boxcars and transported to Cabanatuan, roughly 65 miles away. Air and water were precious commodities during the two- to three-hour train journey. We stayed one night there after being fed and given water; we slept under a school building.

We were then marched out east of town past the No. 1 Camp, where the Bataan survivors were located, to the No. 3 camp. There we were assigned to specific groups, barracks, and work details. We were placed 10 men to a group. If anyone escaped, the Japanese told us they would execute the other men in that group. I can remember that four men escaped one time, but they were recaptured shortly thereafter, and although the four of them were executed in front of the entire camp the rest of their group was spared. I never understood why they tried to escape because there was no place to go.

How was life at the No. 3 Camp?

Actually, life was not that bad because we [the Corregidor survivors] were generally in good shape. We slept on bamboo slats, and we ate rice as the primary food staple. We had *lugaii* [wet rice] for breakfast, with water or green tea, and steamed rice for lunch and dinner. There were very few vegetables or fruit and infrequent amounts of bread. Looking back on it, the diet was certainly inadequate by Western standards, and the men who survived were the ones who could tolerate a rice-based diet. We did not receive any Red Cross parcels at this camp. You have to remember that Camp No. 3 was set up to keep the Corregidor prisoners separate from the Bataan survivors because we were generally in much better shape than they were. However, after about eight months Camp No. 3 was closed and we were merged with the Bataan men in Camp No. 1.

So this change was not welcomed?

No, it was not because conditions at this camp were terrible compared to where we had been. American prisoners were still dying at the rate of several men each day. I am not sure how many total prisoners were in this camp, but I would estimate there were several thousand. Burial detail in particular was very depressing as we worked in four-man litter teams carrying anywhere from four to six bodies at a time. We would dump them in large common graves that held 15 to 20 bodies. I was lucky in that I only caught this detail one time; however, I can remember that even that single instance was very depressing.

Speaking of work details, what were your daily activities generally like?

We cleared an area for planting a large garden, and we grew sweet potatoes [comotes], cassava [manioc], taro, and various green plants such as okra and sesame, which the Japs usually took for themselves. We also ate the tender tips of the sweet potato plant. We called this area the farm. It was one of two daily work details, along with "airport" duty. The Japs were building an airstrip for fighters, so we were detailed to dig and move dirt, as well as push wheelbarrows and small train-cars of material. Most able-bodied men worked at one of these two details every day except Sunday. We would work about eight hours a day, not counting walking time to and from the job, and we took our lunch in a "bento box." It usually was composed of rice mixed with daikon [pickled relish] or vegetables from the farm. The Japs let us run the camp, so our commanding officer, Lt. Col. Beecher, would organize all the

details and supervise the camp on a daily basis. Although the Japs could come in our camp at any time, they usually did not unless they had a reason.

What were the work details like?

Well, you were more likely to get in trouble at the farm than at the airport. There were a different set of guards and pushers [soldiers who acted as administrators who directed the work—they usually only carried a bayonet] at each location and they were a varied lot.

We gave nicknames to each of them based on certain characteristics. For example, Big Speedo was the supervisor in charge of the farm; he was given this nickname because he knew very little English, but he was large for a Japanese at over six feet. All he would ever say to Americans was "speedo, speedo" to finish the task. Overall, he was a generally fair guy. Smiley was the meanest of all the Jap pushers. Although he smiled all the time, he was still a very dangerous person who would beat you for no reason. We learned to stay out of his way.

Air Raid was the head pusher at the airport; he was usually fair, but you had to watch him. Little Speedo was another pusher who was lower ranking than Big Speedo and smaller in size but similar in nature and character to the farm supervisor. Donald Duck was an assistant to Air Raid. He talked constantly, which reminded us of the Disney character. He was unpredictable, and you had to watch him because he would beat you at a whim.

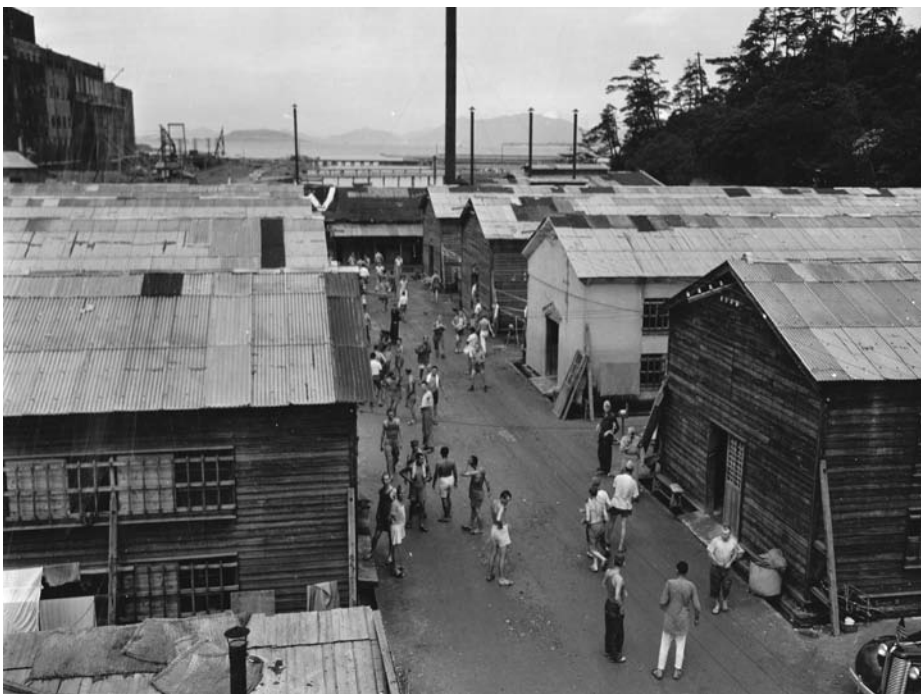
You could be assigned to either work detail, although the majority of the time I worked at the farm. Either job normally consisted of manual labor of some type such as hoeing weeds, planting seeds, and digging or moving dirt. I remember an interesting story that circulated around the camp that helps to illustrate how important the concept of honor is to the Japanese people.

One day Smiley beat an American captain, Arthur Wermuth, for the simple reason that the American was a genuine war hero who was an officer in the Philippine Scouts, and he was well-known for his combat record. Captain Wermuth had done nothing to deserve the beating, but he was so badly beaten by a 2 by 4 that he almost died and he was in the hospital for a long time. Not too long after that Smiley just disappeared. We later found out that Big Speedo had taken Smiley out behind a shed and beaten him severely for an act that he considered to be not honorable. We never saw Smiley again, but we had newfound respect for Big Speedo.

Were you ever beaten?

No, I was not beaten per se, but I was hit twice, once in the Philippines and once in Japan. Donald Duck took a hoe and swung it in circles and hit me with it a couple of times while we were chopping weeds at the farm. However, I was not hurt. The blows hit me on the back; he was just swinging at anyone in general and I just happened to be nearby.

Later in Japan, I was late in snapping to attention when a Jap guard came into our barracks; he slapped me two or three times on the cheeks to express his displeasure. However, it was my fault because I was not ready when I should have been. I have to say that the basic rule for all American prisoners in the Pacific campaign was to keep your mouth shut and do what you were told. If you did this, normally you were left alone, although there could be exceptions such as Smiley or Donald Duck. All in all, just follow the rules and you would likely do all right.



The prison barracks at Camp Fukuoka No. 3 bear stark witness to the Spartan lives prisoners led under the heel of the Japanese. Chad Hanna bunked in the second building on the right.

Why were you sent from the Philippines to Japan?

Over the 18 months I was at Camp No. 1 several groups of men were transferred to other work locations throughout the Philippines, such as Clark and Nichols Fields, Manila [harbor duty], and Mindanao. One day a group of us was sent to Manila; we spent three or four nights in Bilibid Prison again, [were] issued Japanese uniforms, and then placed in the hold of a Japanese sheep vessel destined for Japan. There were approximately 1,200 men in the hold of this ship. The sheep pens were not big enough to stand in, so we spent most of the time sitting down. We went to Japan via Formosa. Our convoy changed directions and speeds several times in evasive action to escape American submarines and planes.

How did this evasive action lead to the second of your three charms?

I later found out that my buddy, Jack Tosh, was a prisoner on board a Japanese transport vessel that was sunk by American submarines en route to Japan. You see, the Americans had no idea that these Jap ships were carrying American prisoners; as far as the Americans were concerned these ships were legitimate targets. Jack's particular ship was sunk with the loss of over 1,000 men. I found out from his parents after the war that he went down with the ship. So, you could say this was my second lucky charm. I was able to make it to Japan without harm. Imagine making it as a POW through a significant period of the war and then dying at the hands of your own countrymen!

What happened when you arrived in Japan?

We landed at the Port of Moji on the island of Kyushu. We were taken by truck to Camp No. 3 in the Fukuoka Military District near Kokura. This was an old Japanese Army camp, and we stayed in the same facilities as the Japanese soldiers. We slept on bamboo mats in bays, and we were able to bathe once a week in a collective bath area. Again, we had an inadequate diet, with rice as the staple item. However, this time we had different nationalities of prisoners

in the camp, including British, Dutch, Indian, and New Zealand troops. The Japanese usually tried to group prisoners together according to nationality. Each of the aforementioned would have their own section of camp.

What type of work or duties did you do?

A group of about 200 Americans, including me, worked in the Seitetsu Steel Mill complex near Yawata. This huge facility was composed of several buildings and it was sometimes the called the "Pittsburgh of Japan." We would ride in open gondola rail cars from camp to a specific site at the mill each day, except Sunday, and we would then walk about a mile or so to the actual building where we worked in various labor capacities. There were soldiers present throughout the process, but the pushers were all civilians. These pushers were the supervisors, and they generally were nice toward the prisoners. I worked for one pusher named Pop, who was an okay guy.

Typical jobs included emptying wet ashes at the bottom of producer gas furnaces. This was very physically hard and dirty work, lining buckets with bricks to keep the liquid steel from melting the container and assisting a Japanese civilian welder. Overall, your work assignments did not vary much. You tended to do the same things over and over again. I worked in one large building where three blast furnaces were located.

I went to work at the mill in July of 1944; it was one month later in August that the plant was spot-bombed by B-29s out of China for the first time. Although the raid lasted an hour, there was little damage, and we went back to work the next day. We were not bombed again until August 1945, when B-24s hit the mill with incendiary bombs. The plant was incapacitated, and we never went back to work. Although we were at work that day, none of us were hurt.

What was your lucky third charm?

After we were repatriated, I found out the primary target for the B-29 carrying the second atomic bomb was the Yawata steel complex. The bomber circled the target for about two hours, but it did not drop the bomb due to cloud cover. Because of fuel constraints, the B-29 moved on to the second target, Nagasaki, in the hopes of finding clearer weather. That city too was covered with the same storm pattern, but at the last minute the bombardier was able to secure visual contact with the target through a hole in the cloud cover. So, the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki instead of Yawata, a good thing for me and the thousand or more other Americans working there. This fact was confirmed by a high-ranking Army Air Corps general, who told us after we were repatriated that the Yawata POWs were the luckiest guys in the world.

So how did you know the war was coming to a close?

There were more frequent air raids in mid-1945. We started getting interference with our sleep due to being moved to a shelter in the middle of the night. The ending was kind of weird. The Japs just left one night. When we got up the next day, there were no soldiers in the camp. Food was dropped by air. Although we had to be careful, we gorged ourselves on several types of C-rations and chocolates. We stayed at the camp under our own administration. We marked the camp with the letters "P.O.W." using bed sheets so we could be identified by American pilots. We later found out that plans for repatriation had been made in Okinawa by a team of officers and doctors from each of the POW camps.

How did the actual liberation process go?

Our Camp No. 3 in the Fukuoka district was liberated by Navy personnel, and we were taken by train to Nagasaki. Although we had heard about the atomic bomb, we saw the damage for the first time as our train went through Nagasaki to the port. The damage was widespread and complete within the bomb's central radius, although damage lessened as you went away from that point. Triage was done on all the prisoners at the port, and we were then placed on board a British aircraft carrier, which took us to Okinawa. We were given physicals, and then we were taken to Clark Field on Luzon by aircraft. After being placed on board a D-3 cargo plane, we were then taken to Nichols Field. From there we were trucked to a repatriation center east of Manila. We stayed

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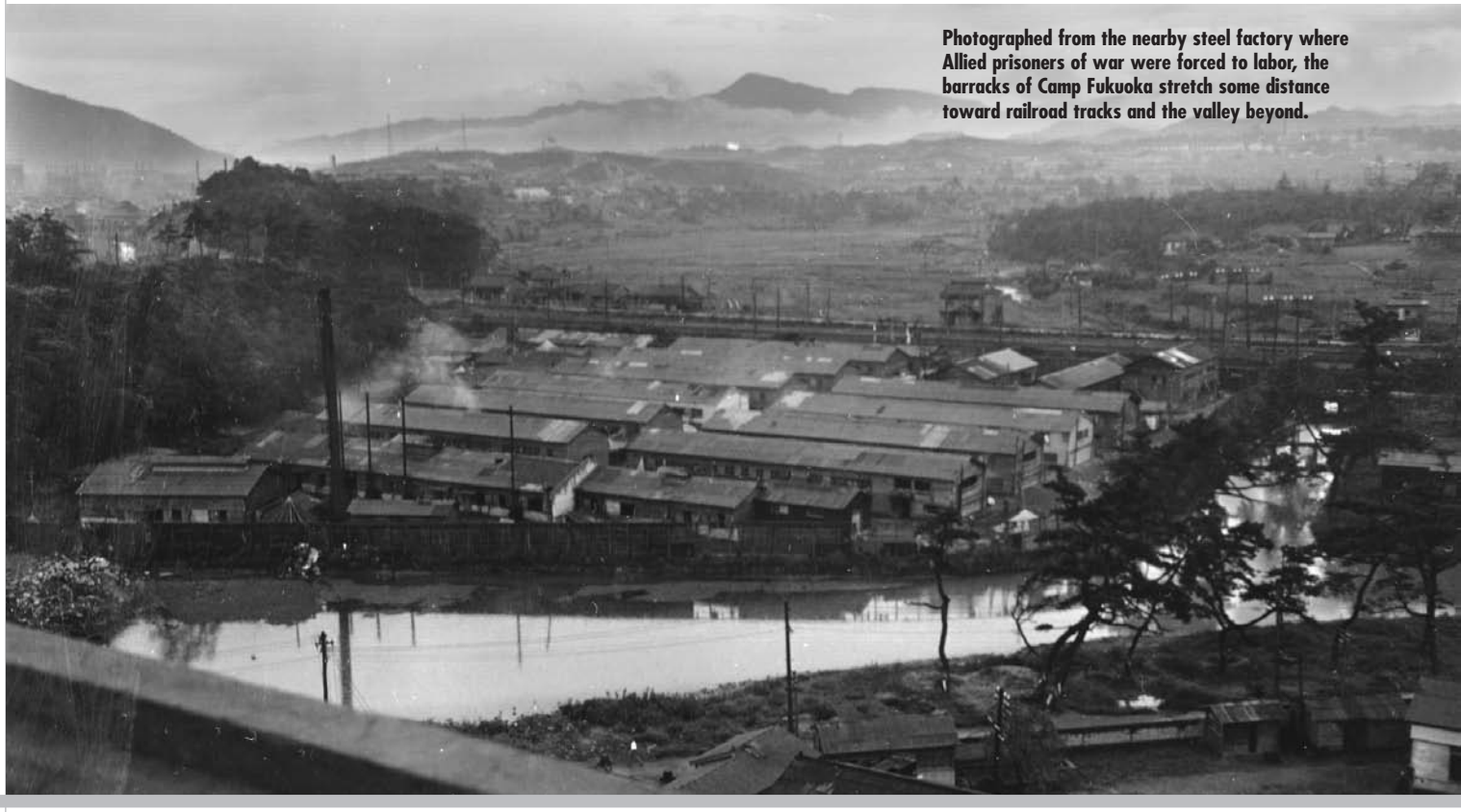

Photographed from the nearby steel factory where Allied prisoners of war were forced to labor, the barracks of Camp Fukuoka stretch some distance toward railroad tracks and the valley beyond.

there about 30 days while our service records were reconstructed.

Each person verified his service history, and their medical status was again substantiated. Everyone was promoted one grade except for master sergeants and full colonels. I was promoted to staff sergeant. We were then loaded onto a transport vessel in Manila that took us to Seattle, a journey of about six weeks. I can distinctly remember that there were very few people that met us as the ship steamed into the harbor at Seattle; I was very disappointed because I expected some type of welcoming committee. We were then taken to Madigan Army Hospital at Fort Lewis, Washington. A period of two to three weeks was allotted to allow for residual medical problems. I then went to Brooke Army Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, by train.

When did you finally make it home?

I was given leave to go home, and I arrived in Breckenridge in November of 1945. I had been gone about five and a half years. My mother knew I was alive because I had transmitted radiogram messages five or six times throughout the course of the war. It was interesting to see that the Japs had censored the messages that my mother had received. I was discharged from the Army in late January or early February of 1946.

What were your plans then?

I had received the approval from my family to go back to school; the financial situation had improved and my eldest sister told me if I wanted to go to school that I should do so. As it turned out, the GI Bill helped me tremendously, as it did thousands of veterans. I originally wanted to be an accountant, so I enrolled in the Cox Business School at SMU for the spring semester of 1946. After a period of time, I realized that the accounting route was not for me, so I changed to a general biology major with the goal of going to medical school. My grades were good, and I was accepted into Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. I felt pretty good about getting into the school because it was the only one to which I had applied and they only accepted about 60 out of the 300 who had received an interview. It should be noted that I only had 92 semester hours of a pre-med major. I never received a B.S. degree because in those days you could enter medical school without a degree.

What happened after medical school?

Well, after four years of medical school, I graduated in 1952. I had decided to go back into the Army for security and the status of an officer. Upon graduation and reenlistment, I was commissioned a first lieutenant and I was assigned to Percy Jones Army Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan, for an internship with no specialty area. I started this internship on July 1, 1952. After finishing internship, I completed a six-month program at the Medical Field Service School (MFFS) at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. I then applied for and received a residency in otolaryngology (ENT) at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C., from July of 1954 until June of 1957. Additionally, during the summer of 1954, I was promoted to the rank of captain.

Chad Hanna

Photographed in Japan in 1987, former POW Chad Hanna and former Japanese Army Colonel Kubo developed a bond of friendship.

My next posting was as chief of ENT at the Valley Forge Army Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, for four years. A two-year tour in the Canal Zone in Panama as chief of ENT at Gorgas Hospital then followed, and I was promoted to major en route to this assignment. A final assignment as assistant chief of ENT at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver, Colorado, completed my career, and I retired effective December 1, 1964, as a major with 20 years of service.

Could you describe your return visits to the POW camp in Japan?

Well, I did not hold it against the Japanese troops for the circumstances of the war. The average Japanese soldier was just doing his duty as far as I was concerned. There are good and bad individuals in both the Army and civilian life, and Americans and Japanese are no exceptions. If you want to blame anyone, blame the leaders, not the people. I believed the Japanese people to be fair enough considering the circumstances. For example, rice constituted the basis of their diet, so it was not unreasonable for them to think the same for us.

I realize that a good many American soldiers do not feel this way, but it is how I think. With this aforementioned background, I decided it would be interesting to revisit the POW areas in Japan. So my wife and I took two separate trips to Japan in 1987 and 1989. We were assisted by several very nice Japanese individuals who helped us in different ways to find the location of the POW barracks [they had been torn down] and the Yawata steel mill, although the particular building where I had worked had been demolished.

One of these individuals was Lieutenant Colonel Kubo, who was the Japanese officer in charge of POWs in the Fukouka District. He was tried for war crimes by the British in Hong Kong after the war; he was found guilty, and he served eight years in military prison. However, Colonel Kubo was very gracious and helpful during my first visit. He was a true gentleman in all respects. Unfortunately, by the time of our second visit the colonel had died, but his son assisted us on the return trip. I cannot say enough about how polite and gracious these many individuals were in planning and implementing these trips. Indeed, two of them have come to Texas to visit us.

What else was special about these trips to Japan?

Well, to my knowledge, I was the first American POW to return to the campsite and the steel mill. A Japanese newspaper reporter interviewed me, and articles with pictures were published in the local papers for both of the trips. It's very interesting to me that the most attention to anything I have done in my life occurred in a foreign newspaper!

Looking back on your wartime experiences, can you really say three times is a charm?

I guess you could say that, without a little luck in each of those situations, I would not be here today. I'm happy to say it was good luck instead of bad!

Chad Hanna practiced medicine for 40 years, including military time, as well as working in civil service positions for both the federal government and the State of Texas in San Antonio and Temple, Texas. He retired in 1994 and he still lives in Temple. □

First-time contributor J.C. Hanna painstakingly researched and crafted this interview with his father. He resides in Bedford, Texas.

Underwater Training *for Overlord*

BRITISH FROGMEN PRACTICED HARD FOR THEIR VITAL D-DAY MISSION.

BRITISH FROGMEN were the first ground fighters to engage the enemy on D-Day—and they did it without weapons. Twenty minutes before H-Hour, 7:25 AM on June 6, 1944, they swam from their landing crafts to the waterline of the Gold, Juno, and Sword Beaches, armed with wire cutters and explosive devices. They blew several lanes though mines and obstacles and created a passage for ships, tanks, and men right up to the shore line. The frogmen's success enabled soldiers and machines to pour through the breach and overwhelm the German defenders.

The British Royal Navy had been experimenting with frogmen since April 1942 at a secret training facility in Portsmouth. Soon, training centers were established at Loch Erisort, Loch Corrie, and Loch Cairnbawn, in Scotland. By the summer of 1944, training had spread to locations off the coast of Norway and around the Mediterranean. Frogmen worked in pools for hours, disarming fake mines and torpedoes and blowing up obstacles. The technology was so new that many frogmen used oxygen cylinders recovered from shot-down German airplanes. Eventually, improvements were made to underwater equipment, such as manned torpedoes and masks with flip-up lenses to allow the use of binoculars.

After D-day, the frogmen continued their mission, sinking floating docks and ships off Norway, Thailand, and Singapore. When the war ended, they were called upon to clear unexploded ordnance and military obstacles around the world. Their legacy continues today, but few missions were as important as clearing a path to victory on D-Day. □

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

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1. In full mission gear, frogmen demonstrate the use of a dinghy.

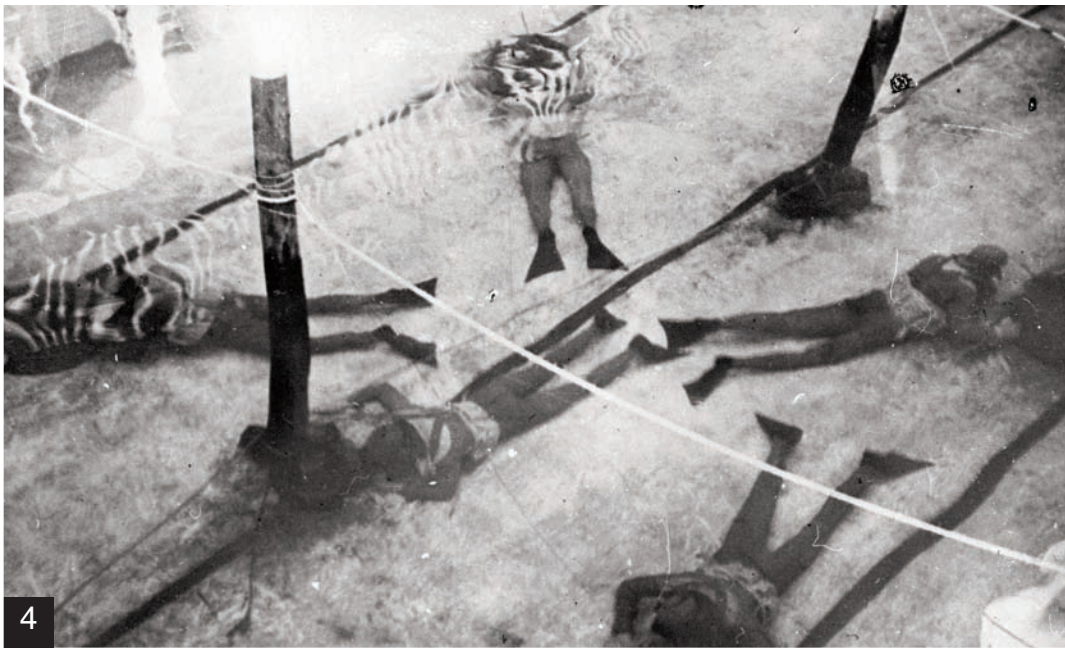
2. A British frogman displays his unique fighting outfit.

3. Beneath the calm waters of a training pool, frogmen dismantle dummy mines.

4. Frogmen fix dummy depth charges to an underwater obstacle.

5. A frogman darts to his next assignment in the training pool.

6. Preparing for a mission is a team effort. A Frogman helps his mate strap on his flippers before hitting the briny.



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In January 1945, American infantrymen prepare for incoming German fire by taking cover in shallow trenches somewhere in the Colmar area. In the background, a U.S. tank destroyer faces toward the distant enemy.

Saving Operation Grandslam

Two embattled regiments of the U.S. 3rd Division blunted a German counterattack during the reduction of the Colmar Pocket. BY ALLYN VANNOY

National Archives

ON JANUARY 23-24, 1945, Allied forces initiated Operation Grandslam against the Colmar Pocket, a German salient that bulged west from the Rhine, south of Strasbourg, France. This salient had been contained by the French First Army for several weeks. With the defeat of the German Nordwind offensive in Alsace-Lorraine, Allied commanders concluded that it was time to eliminate this pocket, while German forces of the 19th Army were instructed to hold at all costs.

A key action around a small farm, La Maison Rouge (the Red House), on the northern shoulder of the pocket was considered by the soldiers of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, veterans of Anzio, as severe as anything they had ever experienced. The farm was just to the southeast of the Colmar Forest and a few miles north of the town of Colmar in northeastern France. It was also close to the Rhine River and near two bridges, one over the Ill River and another on a small stream, L'Orchbach, about 400 yards east of the Ill bridge.

General John W. O'Daniel's 3rd Division was to jump off as part of Operation Grandslam at 9 pm on January 22, force a crossing of the Fecht and Ill Rivers in the Guemar-Ostheim area, then pivot to the south and force a crossing over the Colmar Canal in the Wickerschwihr area. There they would form a blocking position to the southwest in the area of Houssen, thus cutting off the town of Colmar. Upon completion of this task the division was to regroup and prepare to capture Colmar and the Fecht Valley immediately west of Turckheim and assist the French 5th Demi-brigade in the capture of Neuf-Brisach near the Rhine.

National Archives

Major General John W. O'Daniel commanded the 3rd Infantry Division during its difficult days in the vicinity of Colmar.

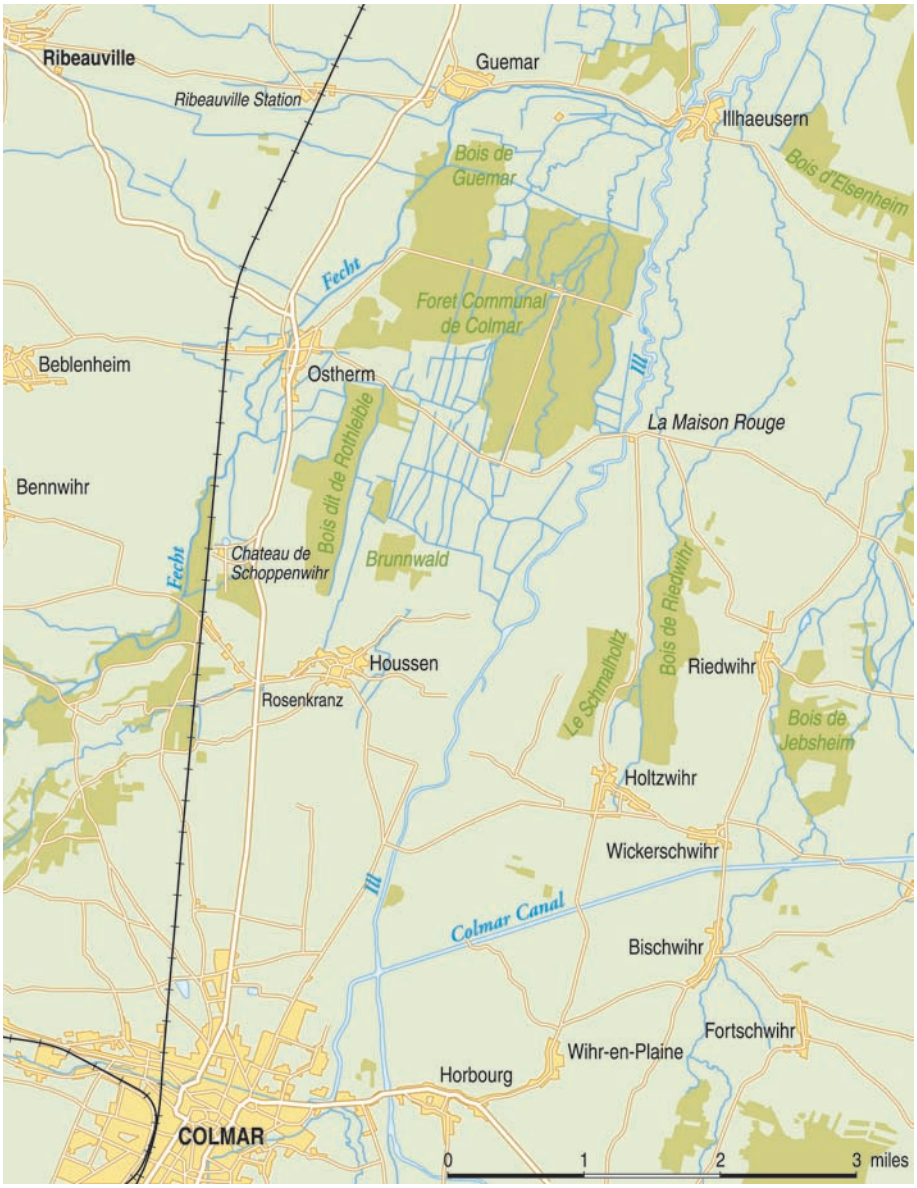
The opening moves of the operation committed two of the division's regiments, the 7th and 30th Infantry, to the attack while the 15th Infantry assembled in the Colmar Forest west of the Ill River as division reserve.

The 30th crossed the Ill River north of the bridge at La Maison Rouge and continued south early on January 23, capturing La Maison Rouge bridge. The regiment then moved south into the Riedwihr Woods toward the towns of Riedwihr and Holtzwihr. Unable to bring up tanks, the men of 30th had only bazookas and 57mm antitank guns to deal with German armor.

Late in the afternoon, German infantry and heavy tank destroyers of the 708th Volksgrenadier Division and 280th Assault Gun Battalion struck. With little cover and unable to dig foxholes because of frozen ground, the 30th Infantry was caught off balance and forced to withdraw toward La Maison Rouge, taking heavy casualties as the retreat turned into a rout.

As elements of the 30th Infantry collapsed, the 15th Infantry was called up from its reserve position, marching through the snow-blanketed woods of the Colmar Forest. In the heart of the forest at a road junction stood three farmhouses in various degrees of destruction. These were known as the Niederwald Maison. As the regiment approached from the north, artillery fire struck the buildings. One structure was completely demolished and another was seriously damaged. The third became the regimental headquarters.

During the afternoon, a reconnaissance was performed by the battalion commanders and staff of the 15th Regiment to prepare to relieve either the 7th or 30th Regiments if needed. Elements of two battalions of the 30th had crossed the Ill River and moved as far south as the towns of Riedwihr and Holtzwihr. Although armor had yet to cross the



German troops were squeezed into a desperate situation around the town of Colmar in southern France. Their strong counterattacks nearly succeeded in breaking out; however, two regiments of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division made a gallant stand.

river, the 15th was to move south and east to protect the rear and flanks of positions at La Maison Rouge.

Love Company, 15th Infantry, was to secure the crossing at La Maison Rouge. King Company was to protect the bridge across the Ill to the north where the road from Niederwald emerged from the Colmar Forest, and Item Company was to take up a reserve position near the southeast edge of the woods.

As the first American tank was preparing to cross the Ill River bridge at la Maison Rouge, a jeep carrying Major John O'Connell, 3rd Battalion commander, and Captain Warren Stuart, Item Company, came speeding along the road to the bridge. At age 34, O'Connell had received his commission in November 1941, and was a veteran of Tunisia, Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, and southern France. Stuart, age 23, had joined the Army in May 1942, and seen action in North Africa, Anzio, and southern France. The jeep slid to a stop. After a brief exchange, it was agreed to allow the tank to cross first. In the meantime, the road to the west, along the southern edge of the Colmar Forest, began to back up with a column of waiting vehicles.

The M4 Sherman of Lieutenant John Harmon, 756th Tank Battalion, crawled up to the first span of the bridge, which had been reinforced with treadway bridging. As it moved onto the mid-span it dropped some eight inches from the treadway to the existing bridgework. Then, with the sound of ripping metal and tearing wood the tank dropped like a car in an elevator shaft, falling 15 feet into the Ill River. Between the jagged ends of planks and beams it sat, tilted but upright in the swift current. The crew members were able to safely escape from the tank. The bridge was out of commission, cutting off support for troops to the east and south.

Captain Stuart walked onto the bridge, climbed down to the tank, moved over the turret, then continued on across the bridge on his reconnaissance to the east. He strolled along the road past the barn and across the small bridge over L'Orchbach. From there he could see 1,000 yards to the east and south across the snow-covered fields. To his right some brush and trees partially blocked his view to the Riedwihr Wood.

Coming toward him were men in groups of two or three, shattered elements of the 30th Infantry, running and stumbling in a wild frenzy across the fields, plunging headlong into L'Orchbach and then the Ill in an attempt to reach the safety of the forest. Stuart shouted at a few men in an effort to get their attention, but no one would stop or even answer. Also, fire was coming from the direction of Riedwihr Wood. Seizing hold of a fleeing enlisted man, the only explanation Stuart could get for the panic was that there were two German tanks on the left and another two on the right.

As Stuart continued east the trickle of men grew to a steady stream. Farther on he encountered others who seemed coherent enough to provide a picture of the extent of the exodus. He identified men from the 30th Regiment's Companies D, G, I, and K, as well as battalion headquarters personnel.

As darkness was beginning to fall, German gunfire from the Riedwihr Wood became heavier. Stuart asked one group of men if anyone was making a stand. Their answer, "Hell, no! It's too rough!"

The troops were falling back, leaving behind weapons, packs, and equipment. Only a few had rifles or helmets. The GIs waded the waist-deep L'Orchbach. Then, impatient to wait their turn to cross the Ill Bridge, they plunged into the current, desperate to reach the other side. Once safe in the forest on the west bank, drenched and freezing, they began congregating. Officers and noncommissioned officers began to round them up, reorganizing and equipping them.

The withdrawal was interrupted by German fire tearing up the surrounding fields. Tracers from German machine guns were passing 18 inches above the ground. The barn and farmhouse at La Maison Rouge became crowded with men seeking refuge from the fire. Captain

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Moving through the war-ravaged town of Bischwir, American infantrymen, some showing obvious signs of fatigue, trudge toward Colmar. RIGHT: The M4 Sherman tank commanded by Lieutenant John Harmon lies amid the wreckage of the collapsed Maison Rouge Bridge. Harmon and other crewmen were able to escape to safety, and the Bailey bridge in the background was erected approximately two days later.

Stuart continued his efforts to organize a defense while the engineers surveyed the damaged bridge. Just to the west of the river, Love Company, 15th Infantry, was moving into position.

It was late evening when some control was reestablished. A platoon of Love Company was in a ditch along the road west of the river returning fire across the fields.

Just west of the bridge was a tank destroyer officer, Lieutenant T. Peter Welch. Welch, 23, was another veteran of North Africa, Anzio, and southern France. In the darkness German panzers could be heard as they approached the river. The faint outlines of Panther medium tanks and Jadgpanther tank destroyers could be observed just beyond La Maison Rouge. Welch, finding a machine gun already set up, opened fire on two men in the turret of one of the panzers. He was joined by another man who appeared from a nearby shell hole.

"F 'Chris' sakes!" the soldier shouted. "Don't fire our gun! You're going to use up all our ammunition and we've only got two boxes left!" But Welch convinced the man to feed him ammo belts while he fired. The panzer returned fire, its first shell falling short but knocking the gun backward in their laps. Set up again, four riflemen on either side of the machine gun joined in to help return fire.

A second tank shell struck close to the machine gun. Welch found himself sprawled in the snow some yards behind the machine gun nest with one leg of the tripod in his hand. The other soldier lay nearby, killed by fragments of the barrel through his head.

Meanwhile, measures were being planned to relieve the situation. Regimental and battalion staffs met after midnight on January 24 at the Niederwald headquarters. Present at the meeting were Captains Stuart and Robert Hahn, company commanders of Item and King, respectively; Captain Fronke, artillery liaison; and Lieutenant Welch of the tank destroyers. Majors O'Connell and Virgil V. Laughlin briefed the assembled officers. Laughlin, the battalion executive officer, age 22, had volunteered for service in 1940 and had been with the 3rd Division in North Africa, Sicily, Anzio, and southern France.

The 30th Infantry losses during the previous day included 345 casualties out of 999 men committed. The regiment had also left as much as 80 percent of its equipment east of the Ill.

The 3rd Battalion was directed to secure La Maison Rouge bridgehead. Item and King Companies were to cross the Ill using an engineer footbridge east of the Niederwald road, then strike south with Item on the left guiding on L'Orchbach and King on the right guiding on the Ill. King was to take up a position extending from the bridge at La Maison Rouge to L'Orchbach. Item was to hold the road junction east of L'Orchbach. Jump off was set for 2:30 AM.

Captain Stuart had already moved his men to the edge of the woods. Captain Hahn, however, had still to find his platoon leaders and separate his men from the improvised formations of stragglers that seemed to be everywhere. Hahn, age 24, was a veteran of operations at Anzio and southern France.

At 1:45, members of Item were asking, "Where the hell is K Company?" Nobody knew. At 2 AM, Stuart was told that King was only 10 minutes away. But at 2:10 there was still no sign of the company.

H-hour came and went. At 4 AM, Stuart finally moved his company across the line of departure. The treadway and footbridges across the Ill were badly battered, and the footing was icy. The men helped each other across and up the frozen banks. Turning south toward La Maison Rouge-Moulin de Jebsheim road, Stuart placed the 1st Platoon on the right, 2nd on the left, and the 3rd in support. A moment later as they moved forward, Stuart shouted, "GI's!" This was both an inquiry as well as an announcement. It was quickly determined that they had come upon elements of the 30th Infantry, holed up in the brush along the stream.

Just before daylight, Item Company reached its assigned position and began setting up defenses. But the ground was frozen, making it nearly impossible to dig in. Dawn was breaking, revealing exposed positions. The snowy fields stretched 1,000 yards to the Riedwihr Wood. "It's suicide!" one of the platoon leaders, Lieutenant Eugene Koschkin, told Stuart. "A man hasn't got a chance out here!" Koschkin wanted to pull his platoon back to the stream bed. Stuart radioed for permission

to withdraw to better cover, but permission was not granted. Armor was promised instead. His men continued to dig, scrape, and chisel at the ground.

Back in the Colmar Forest, at 3 AM King Company found itself still short a pair of platoon leaders. Within an hour most of the company was assembled. Runners were dispatched, and finally at about 4:30, a full two hours behind schedule, Captain Hahn guided his company along the Ill River to La Maison Rouge. Somewhere along the way the 2nd Platoon got lost. It was found again as a firefight broke out to the front. Some of the men had pushed out far ahead and were engaging German infantry. The whole company joined in and apparently caught the Germans by surprise. The right flank of the German La Maison Rouge positions was unprepared for the American assault. Their machine-gun emplacements had been set up to defend against an attack from the west, not from the north. An attempt was made to reorient their defenses, but the speed of the American assault was too much.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY

Their accompanying Sturmgeschütz self-propelled assault gun camouflaged with white sheets for winter combat, German infantrymen ride toward the front lines near Colmar in mid-January 1945.

The guns of Lieutenant Welch's tank destroyers at the edge of the forest added their support to the attack. As the German infantry withdrew, tanks, which had parked behind the Maison, also retired to the Riedwihr Wood. King Company closed in, taking a few prisoners. Hahn checked the area and then directed his company into position.

King was somewhat more fortunate than Item, finding foxholes already dug near la Maison Rouge, previously prepared by the 30th Infantry and augmented by the Germans during the night. In a small hole underneath a plank, one of the company's sergeants found two GIs who had been held captive by the Germans.

It was daylight as 1st Sergeant Claude E. Smith, King Company, made an inspection of positions. At 29, and a veteran of Anzio, he was used to seeing dead people, having been an embalmer in South Carolina before the war. "Get those holes in the ground!" he shouted. "We're going to catch hell!" Smith moved through the three platoons from left to right, the 2nd and 3rd flanking the house and barn and the 1st on the north side of the road just west of the stream. "Who's that in the hole with you?" Smith asked one of his platoon sergeants. "A dead German," came the reply. The German had been shot through the head. There was scarcely room in the foxhole for both the sergeant and the corpse.

Shortly after daylight, King and Item were struck by the first of a series of counterattacks. King reported some white flares, and a little later a German soldier suddenly appeared and just as quickly escaped into the brush. As he dodged away a shout went up, "Get 'em somebody!" A few hurried shots were fired, then the company settled down to sweat out the expected counterattack.

On the left, just east of L'Orchbach, Item found trouble. A wandering German who had apparently been searching for his unit was taken prisoner. From the woods the call came, "Gierke! Gierke!" Receiving no response, a machine gun began spraying the American positions. A half-track then appeared. A man leaped from it and made his way toward Lieutenant Vayssie's 1st Platoon. He was difficult to see as his white camouflage cape became lost against the snow, but he was sighted again when machine-gun fire tore over the road. The platoon then opened up. Many of the men of the battalion were unsettled—almost a third of them were facing fire for the first time.

Vayssie, age 21 and a recent graduate of the infantry school at Fort Benning, Georgia, was in his first firefight. He ordered his bazooka team forward to deal with the half-track. The team crawled across the snow to within 75 yards of the half-track and let go a round, which missed. Closing a little farther, the team fired a second and a third rocket, disabling the half-track. One of the men then crawled close to the vehicle, leaped onto it, and tossed several grenades in.

Once the bazooka team was out of the line of fire, the platoon raked the immobilized vehicle. Several Germans suddenly emerged and for a few minutes busied themselves setting up a mortar behind the damaged vehicle. But the heavy volume of small-arms fire persuaded them to take off for the woods.

Now, from the woods along a 2,000-yard front, German fire grew in intensity. A Panther appeared followed on its left by a Jagdpanther and on the right by a Panzerjäger tank destroyer mounting a high-velocity 75mm cannon. Captain Stuart screamed for artillery support over the field phone, but his request for artillery only produced a few rounds that fell behind the armored vehicles.

Three more tanks came out of the woods. The machine-gun fire sweeping Item's positions was supplemented by a steady barrage of German mortars and artillery. Vayssie watched the German tanks move forward in pairs. One pair would stop and fire while the other pair moved past the first, alternating fire and movement.

When the German tanks were at a distance

of approximately 400 yards, several men scrambled out of their holes and started for the rear. "Where're you going?" Vayssie asked. "Jesus Christ! Tanks! Tanks!" they replied, pointing back to the armor rolling forward.

Item Company's easily discernable foxholes became targets for the oncoming Germans. Because of the frozen ground the holes were shallow. In places the tanks rolled over and crushed some of the GIs. The troops that took flight were raked by machine-gun fire. A shell from the main gun of one of the tanks tore a group of six men apart.

Lieutenant Koschkin, who earlier that morning had stated that trying to hold a line at La Maison Rouge was suicide, tried to surrender his platoon and was shot down. Within moments, German infantry had taken most of 3rd Platoon prisoner, trotting them off into the woods. Men on the left flank of King Company in their position just west of the L'Orchbach saw Item break.

A handful took advantage of what little cover there was at La Maison Rouge. Lieutenant Vayssie crawled along the defilade ditch of the road to the bridge. There he found a few men hiding under the bridge beams. They followed the Ill north, making a crossing at a point near the Colmar Forest.

After his dugout had been raked with tank fire, killing his communications sergeant and smashing his carbine only a foot or so from his head, Stuart tried to find his way back to the American lines near the river. He splashed along the stream until he was so numb with cold that he could hardly move. He then tried the open fields. He stumbled and stopped several times to pick up his helmet. German machine guns were firing steadily, and red tracers from American guns were also flying by. He did not know how he made it to the river.

From their positions just west of L'Orchbach, the men of King Company took flight directly for the Ill. The loose snow made running difficult. The men reached the river, but not all of them could swim, and even those who could found the swift current dangerous. Pfc. Calvin H. Tinsley, unable to swim, floated a few moments, went under, and was then swept back to the east bank. He dropped his pack and plunged in again, fortunately finding a spot that was only waist deep.

One officer made an effort to stop the rout, yelling, "You sons-of-a-bitch, stop and set up a defense line along the river!" But with only pistols and carbines to fight tanks, the troops continued to retreat. Item Company and the left flank of King had completely broken.

At La Maison Rouge the alarm had first been sounded when the German tanks were still among the brush and trees in the distance. The radio in the farmhouse cellar, which Captain Hahn had taken over as the King Company command post, caught the first anxious calls by Item Company for artillery support. A message also came over the radio that armor was on its way, and that the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, would soon be moving through.

As if to punctuate the arrival of armor support, three nearly bumper-to-bumper tanks came roaring up in the next few moments. They had come through Niederwald and crossed a new treadway bridge that was only completed at 7:30 that morning. The commander of the armored column reported to Captain Hahn that he was "in a good firing position." Hahn, while relieved at their timely arrival, recalled later that he should have told them to disperse.

"Hey, Captain," someone called out, "There's a Kraut tank coming up."

From their vantage point on the north side of the road, the American tankers had a clear view of the attack. Also, on the opposite side of the

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ABOVE: Difficult terrain and winter weather contributed to the misery of the fighting men of both sides in the Colmar Pocket. In this photo, German soldiers attempt to extricate a self-propelled assault gun from a quagmire on January 24, 1945. BELOW: Moving forward across a wintry landscape in January 1945, German soldiers take up positions to defend their ground at Colmar.

National Archives

Both: National Archives

A pair of American infantrymen stand ready in their machine-gun position during the campaign to reduce the Colmar Pocket. U.S. soldiers fighting near La Maison Rouge fired thousands of rounds from their automatic weapons, mowing down German troops.

Ill at the southeast edge of the Colmar Forest, Lieutenant Welch and his tank destroyers had a panoramic view of the area. He estimated that 13 German tanks were crossing the battalion front supported by nearly a company of infantry. Welch opened fire on the southernmost section of German tanks emerging from the Schmalholtz Woods. The tanks and tank destroyers also used their machine guns to rake the German troops coming up behind.

In the attic of the building housing the command post, the forward artillery observer, 2nd Lieutenant Frank J. Lonski, Battery C, 39th Field Artillery Battalion, provided coordinates to his radio operator. But before a message could be sent a shell tore through the attic wall and smashed the radio. The two men lay sprawled but unhurt in a pile of bricks and wood.

A volley from the German tanks hit two of the American Shermans and set them on fire. One man managed to crawl out of his flaming vehicle and somehow, with most of both legs blown off, inched his way 75 yards toward the river. Another shell hit a tank destroyer that had also come up in support, but the tank destroyer was able to crank up its motor, whirl around, and race back across the fields.

"Lonski!" Captain Hahn had been shouting as the shells struck. "Get your ass down here and get us some artillery!" Lonski tripped down into the cellar over the battered stairs, picked himself up, and began rechecking coordinates. His radio operator, at a loss without his SCR 609 radio set, fussed with the SCR 300 radio present in the cellar. Then they waited for the barrage.

By now it was 8:45 AM, and 30 to 40 GIs had been taken prisoner and were being escorted toward the Riedwihr Wood. Captain Hahn, with his M1 rifle in hand, turned to those present in the command post and said, "I'm going to stay. If any of the boys want to go, they're free to go. You can take off."

The German tanks continued to advance about 50 yards at a time. The German infantry moved up behind them, running at a crouch.

The U.S. artillery barrage finally began to fall, but exactly where the rounds landed could not be observed. "Range correct, deflection correct, fire two rounds of smoke," Lonski ordered. The shells came over, but they also could not be observed. Hahn grabbed the pad on which the coordinates had been scribbled. "Hell!" he said, "You're giving the wrong coordinates!" The rounds were falling 1,000 yards off target. Corrections were immediately made.

Only a handful of King Company men were still holding at La Maison Rouge. Only 20 to 30 men of the 2nd and 3rd Platoons were still dug in around the barn and farmhouse. Two of Lieutenant Welch's tank destroyers continued to duel with a pair of German Jagdpanthers west of the river. Although both of Welch's tank destroyers were hit and left burning, they in turn accounted for the Jagdpanthers.

There was little chance of more armor support as the last operational tank of the three that had crossed the Ill that morning sat a scant 150 yards from Major O'Connell's command post. Only the artillery seemed to offer any hope of continued resistance. A Sergeant Smith from King Company pulled a 60mm mortar from the rubble. With no sights and little experience, he had some difficulty getting it into action. "How do you set this thing?" he shouted over to 1st Lieutenant Richard A. Koepke, who told Smith to "run it up to 13 turns and it'll just be right."

Smith cranked the elevation screw, dropped in a round, and then ran over to the edge of the barn to observe where it hit. Short 200 yards, he cranked it down three turns and dropped in another round, then ran over again to check its impact. On target. He fired off about 90 rounds before turning the mortar over to other GIs.

The German advance was finally beginning to slow. German infantrymen were being picked off, and Welch's tank destroyer in the woods west of the river was traversing and firing, often blindly just in the hope of hitting something. In the cellar command post there was talk of giving up, but Captain Hahn declared, "When they come in here, I'll bring our fire right down on the house!"

It was just before 9:30 when the first artillery concentrations began to land. Nearly a half hour had elapsed from the time the forward observer had called for support and the delivery of the on-target barrage. When the barrage ended 15 minutes later, 125 rounds had been fired.

The change in atmosphere among the Maison defenders was dramatic as fear and pessimism gave way to elation. Lieutenant Lonski confessed, "We were like kids."

The artillery fire disorganized the German infantry, knocking out one enemy tank as four others began pulling back across L'Orchbach.

Sergeant Smith, who had found a light machine gun, used 10 boxes of ammunition firing at individual Germans on the other side of the stream. The Germans were apparently trying to evacuate their wounded and regroup for another assault.

The fighting continued well past 2 PM as the Germans attempted a series of small counterattacks. Every time they moved toward the Maison, American small arms and artillery opened up.

The GIs continued sniping at Germans who appeared about 500 yards away; a number of them seemed to be walking about aimlessly, possibly dazed by the artillery. Two battalions of 105mm howitzers were now dumping time on target fire on the area.

Artillery was laid between La Maison Rouge and just north of Riedwihr and on the main approaches to the area. One heavy concentration laid down was considered the heaviest fire expended on a counterattack since the

Anzio beachhead. The 39th Field Artillery Battalion expended 1,349 rounds between 8:50 AM and 3 PM.

The promised relief by the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, was delayed, first in the Niederwald because of confusion and traffic jams, and then just before noon as it was struck by a German counterattack at the northern Ill and L'Orchbach crossings. The 1st Battalion finally jumped off at 2:30 PM with Charley Company on the left and Baker on the right. Commanding the 1st Battalion was Major Kenneth B. Potter, age 31, a veteran of Anzio and southern France. Dispersed behind four tanks and three tank destroyers, the battalion attacked using marching fire, moving down both sides of L'Orchbach toward La Maison Rouge and then on toward the Riedwihr Wood. In the process, they flushed out Germans along the banks of the streams. About 60 prisoners were taken, and some surviving members of the 30th Infantry were found, cold and exhausted, but alive.

From the farmhouse cellar Captain Hahn, Lieutenant Lonski, Lieutenant Koepke, and Sergeant Smith watched the German withdrawal into the woods. At about 3 PM, someone shouted, "Troops out this way with beaucoup tanks!" and pointed toward the line advancing from the north. There was a moment of uncertainty about who the troops were. But Hahn had no doubt with his first glimpse. After the action, Hahn resigned his commission in the face of "prospective charges" of delay, negligence, and conducting an unauthorized withdrawal.

"Here they come!" the shout went up. "If that ain't a beautiful sight," Koepke cried. "I never seen one!"

The number of German casualties inflicted was impossible to determine. Vehicle losses included a half-track, several Jagdpanthers and Panzerjägers, a Mark IV tank, and a Panther.

The 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry, had taken serious losses. The strength of Item Company fell from 124 before the fighting to just 47 afterward, and King Company from 127 to 47.

For a few hours German tanks and infantry had controlled the area north of La Maison Rouge and east of the Ill, with the exception of the small band of GIs holding the barn and farmhouse. For a time on the morning of January 24, it appeared that nothing could stop the German 2nd Mountain Division and its supporting tanks from completely upsetting Operation Grandslam. However, the Germans had insufficient strength to exploit their gains. The eventual American success at La Maison Rouge made it possible for other units to be released for action elsewhere and to eventually drive on to the Rhine, eliminating the Colmar Pocket.

Over the next two days, the 15th Infantry pushed south toward the towns of Riedwihr and Holtzwihr. German counterattacks were common, but the American troops were able to parry them with support from tanks and tank destroyers.

On January 26, on the south edge of the Riedwihr Woods, German infantry and tanks emerged from Holtzwihr to counterattack Company B, 15th Infantry. Believing the odds hopeless, Lieutenant Audie Murphy ordered his men to withdraw into the woods. Murphy climbed onto a burning M10 tank destroyer and engaged the Germans with the vehicle's heavy machine gun while calling for artillery fire on his own position. Murphy's determined stand and an attack by fighter bombers caused the Germans to withdraw to Holtzwihr. Murphy was subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor and eventually became the most decorated soldier in the history of the U.S. Army. □

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Sherman tanks and infantrymen advance along a road in the Riedwihr area near Colmar in January 1945. The U.S. 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment counterattacked against the Germans in the vicinity of the town.

Third Reich

IT BEGAN WITH what a German colonel called "a dull, continuous roar of thunder from the east." The Soviet bombardment was so immense in Berlin's eastern suburbs, houses shook, pictures fell from walls, and telephones rang. Berlin civilians heard the rumbling, saw the shaking buildings, and knew the hour had come. On ration queues, women and girls listened "in dread to the distant sounds of the front," and asked each other if the Americans would get to Berlin ahead of the Soviets.

It was April 16, 1945. The rumbling was the sound of 8,983 Soviet artillery pieces, up to 270 guns every kilometer, hurling a stockpile of seven million shells (1.2 million on the first day alone) at the German defenses on the Oder-Neisse River line. The last and most consequential battle of World War II in Europe was starting—the battle for Berlin.

After a breather to finish off the "Oder balcony" in East Prussia and to bring up supplies, the Soviet Army was finally ready to attack Berlin and end the war. To Russia's tyrannical and paranoid ruler, Josef Stalin, nothing mattered more than beating the British and American forces to Berlin. Not only did his prestige demand it, so did vengeance for the bloody trail of atrocities and destruction sown by the Germans all the way to Moscow and Stalingrad.

"Who will take Berlin? Us or the Allies?" Stalin asked his two top commanders, Marshal Georgi K. Zhukov, commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, and Marshal Ivan Koniev, head of the 1st Ukrainian Front, who faced Berlin, in a Moscow conference on April 1.

"We will, and before the Allies," answered Koniev.

"So that's the sort of men you are," responded Stalin, who promptly gave them their orders—Zhukov would drive on Berlin from the center and north, while Koniev hit Berlin from the south, enveloping the immense German capital in a gigantic pincer movement. To achieve this victory, Stalin was massing 2.5 million men, 41,600 guns, 6,250 tanks, and 7,500 aircraft.

The Soviet Army was by 1945 a well-oiled war machine, lavishly equipped with powerful T-34 and JS tanks, superior to most of their German counterparts and fairly easy for the mechanically challenged Soviet tank crews to operate and maintain. Artillery was still Russia's "God of War." Infantry and tanks cooperated with skill, resolution, and aggressiveness. The Soviets understood the importance of surprise, maneuver, and commitment of reserves. They did not rely on numbers alone to win battles.

ABOVE: A Soviet soldier drags a German from his hiding place in the rubble of a destroyed Berlin street. The Red Army soldier is carrying an automatic weapon that became standard issue late in the war. RIGHT: In this famous photograph, which according to some sources was staged, Soviet soldier Meliton Kantarija steadies the banner of the hammer and sickle above the Reichstag in Berlin. The Red Army captured Berlin in May 1945 following a four-year war against the Nazis.

But the Soviets had weaknesses. While ammunition was plentiful, food, spare parts, and even uniforms were in short supply. Soviet troops were often lean and hungry, expected to live off the land. Much of their rations and transport were American Lend-Lease.

Most importantly, the Army was poorly disciplined. Despite the toughness of Soviet political officers, Soviet troops in all echelons had a fondness for theft and rape, which was inspired by the harsh propaganda of Stalin's political writers, who hammered down the idea that the invasion of Germany would be the wreaking of Soviet vengeance—Germany was not to be defeated, but despoiled.

Zhukov's assault on Berlin was the centerpiece of the attack, and the general who "never lost a battle" planned this one poorly. He showed little of his usual verve and flexibility. Facing German troops dug in against him on the Seelow Heights, he deployed 143 searchlights to blind the defenders, one every 200 meters. When the searchlights snapped on, the Germans shelled them, killing many of the lights' female operators.

The German defense was headed by one of that nation's sharpest minds, Col. Gen. Gotthard Heinrici, son of a Lutheran pastor, married to a "mischlinge," a half-Jew. Only Heinrici's ability as a defensive specialist kept him on the Wehrmacht's payroll, as boss of Army Group Vistula, which was actually defending the Oder.

Heinrici planned his defense with great care. He had close to a million men to defend against the Soviets, counting training units, Hitler Youth, police, and Volkssturm, equipped with 10,400 tanks, 1,500 guns, and 3,300 aircraft. The Soviets outnumbered him badly. Worse, the

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY

Death Knell

The fall of Berlin signaled the end of Nazi Germany and its reign of terror in occupied Europe. BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

National Archives

During their long trek toward the German capital of Berlin, a column of Soviet tanks and infantrymen advances through the streets of a shattered town in East Prussia.

German war machine had been ground down by years of defeat and retreat. Tanks were short of fuel, artillery short of shells, and many soldiers had gone unpaid for months. Their morale was worn out by the stream of defeats, refugees clogging roads, letters (when mail came) from home that their houses had been destroyed or hometowns occupied by Allied forces.

Yet they fought on. Some did so with the courage of desperate and fanatical men who believed in Hitler. Others were members of SS foreign contingents, like the tough Nordland Division, made up of Scandinavian Nazis—Swedes, Danes, and Norwegian renegades—who had thrown in their lot with Hitler. Another such outfit was the SS Charlemagne Division, composed of Frenchmen. They fought with the courage of men who had nothing left to lose. Capture meant a treason trial back in their homeland, and escape was impossible. So these mercenaries and opportunists—including a scattering of renegade Britons from the 50-strong British Free Corps—also fought on.

The Germans also had some of their usual strengths: mobility, quick-thinking field commanders, an astonishing ability to regroup under pressure, and immense Tiger tanks that hurled 88mm shells and could withstand heavy bombardment.

There were other incentives for Germans to fight this last battle with determination. Josef Goebbels's propaganda continued to promise miracle weapons to turn the tide of battle. German troops feared the destruction that would rain down upon their homes if the Soviets conquered their Fatherland. SS flying "courts-martial" and the military police effectively patrolled the rear areas. Anyone suspected of being a deserter would get a quick drumhead court-martial, inevitably followed by a hanging.

The picture was bleak. The German divisions that stood on Heinrici's main line of resistance on the Neisse River and the Seelow Heights were not the goose-stepping legions that had terrorized Europe in 1940. There were contingents of German naval personnel drawn from immobile surface ships and bases, Luftwaffe ground crews and pilots without planes, personnel from Army training schools, and the scores of poorly equipped Volkssturm units, made up of locally drawn old men and Hitler Youth, often armed only with one-shot disposable Panzerfaust antitank rocket launchers instead of rifles. Many had no uniforms and no weapons, and less training.

With this, Gotthard Heinrici faced Zhukov's attack. At first, things went well for the Germans. Beyond shooting the lights out, the searchlights themselves were ineffective because their dazzle reflected back off the smoke and dust of the Soviet bombardment. Order and counterorder to turn them on and off soon followed. Overcast skies and rain hampered both sides.

Even so, the bombardment was horrific. The Hitler Youth and trainee youngsters at first thought it was a typical "Morning Concert," but the old hands soon recognized that this was the long-awaited big offensive. Gerd Wagner of the 27th Parachute Regiment said, "In a few seconds, all my 10 comrades were dead." Wagner himself regained consciousness in a smoking shell crater and was barely able to escape. Farther back, an SS panzer battalion commander peered through his pericscope and saw "in the field of view the eastern sky was in flames."

The Soviet bombardment churned up the Seelow Heights, leaving both physical and moral destruction in its wake. An SS war correspondent found a dazed soldier wandering in a wood, having tossed his rifle. This was his first experience of the Eastern Front, he said. He had spent the war as a barber in an officers' hotel in Paris.

Still, Zhukov had trouble. He sent his men storming across the Oder in American amphibious DUKWs, driven by female soldiers. Behind the Lend-Lease vehicles came all kinds of ordinary boats, many of which leaked. Under heavy fire, the boats came ashore and the Soviets advanced through minefields, making little progress. By midday, the troops were wallowing in heavy mud and German shelling.

The Germans were not doing well either. Joseph Goebbels made a passionate speech on the German radio that the new storm of Mongols would break itself against the Oder walls, but Berliners, who could read maps, got into longer lines at food shops to fill their larders as quickly as possible. Heinrici wanted to counterattack, but Adolf Hitler, in a typically loony decision, had taken away three of his panzer divisions and sent them to Czechoslovakia. At the German Army's "holy of holies," the command bunkers at Zossen, Chief of Staff General Hans Krebs kept going on shots of vermouth from a bottle he kept in his office safe, struggling with broken communications to the front and desperate requests for information from the rear.

At noon, a frustrated Zhukov sent his tanks in, but they struggled against the deadly Panzerfausts, the muddy ground, and the chaotic bridgehead, a nightmare for traffic control.

At 3 PM, Zhukov reported to Stalin. "So you've underestimated the enemy on the approaches to Berlin, but you're still on the Seelow Heights. Things have started more successfully for Koniev," Stalin said. Zhukov bellowed at his Army commanders, who bellowed up the line and down the chain of command,

calling for more attacks.

The problems went on. Soviet airmen bombed their own troops when they saw the wrong flares rising up from the ground. Artillerymen shelled their own troops. Medical services were completely overwhelmed, with wounded men lying without treatment for up to five hours. The 27th Guards Rifle Division's casualty clearing station had only four operating tables. Medical personnel had such a horrific time that some gave up the profession after the war.

Koniev's assault had indeed been more successful. His plan was to rely on artillery—249 guns per kilometer—and the 2nd Air Army to batter the German defenses for 145 minutes, twice as long as Zhukov's bombardment. Instead of searchlights, a smokescreen would blind the German defenses.

"We had nowhere to hide," said Corporal Karl Pafflik, a German who was captured after the assault. "The air was full of whistling and explosions. We suffered unimaginable losses. Those who survived were rushing around in trenches and bunkers trying to save themselves. We were speechless with terror."

"The god of war is thundering very nicely today," said a Soviet battery commander.

The Neisse River was shallower than the Oder, and Koniev's men were able to cross simply by swimming the river or wading across fords, weapons over their heads. As soon as the Soviets hit the far bank, they brought up 85mm antitank guns for immediate fire support.

The Germans were stunned by the weight of Koniev's bombardment. Many were hopelessly demoralized. A deserter from the 500th Penal Regiment told his captors, "The only promise Hitler has kept is the one he made before coming to power. Give me 10 years and you will not recognize Germany." Others complained that they had been lied to by their officers, with promises of V-3 and V-4 rocket weapons.

Once Koniev's men secured cables over the river, they ferried over T-34 tanks armed with 85mm guns to support the infantry. The 1st Ukrainian Front picked out some 133 crossing points in the main attack sectors. By the end of the first day, Koniev would be pleased, while his rival Zhukov was furious. Koniev's only complaint was that evacuating wounded was "unbearably slow."

That evening at 9 PM, Stalin cut more orders, setting the border between Koniev and Zhukov. The line on the chinagraph map shot out from the Neisse River from Guben to the town of Lubben, and then stopped. It was clear that Stalin was setting up Koniev and Zhukov to race for Berlin, and the winner would get the spoils.

So a race was on between two rivals. Zhukov was the better known of the two, having won victories over the Japanese at Khalkin-Gol in 1939, the Germans at Moscow in 1941, and Stalingrad in 1942. The former furrier's apprentice and cavalryman had masterminded these triumphs and been celebrated for them. Koniev, by comparison, had not commanded troops in the defense of Moscow or Stalingrad, but served well in relatively obscure assignments, rising to take command of the 1st Ukrainian Front and gaining a reputation among Soviet leadership as a hard charger.

Next morning saw overcast skies and drizzle give way to clearer weather on the Seelow Heights, and the Soviets brought down artillery and airpower again. The Germans took heavy casualties, which overwhelmed their medical stations. Their triage policy was to care for those most likely to return to combat first. A stomach wound meant death—surgery required far too much time. Officers wandered through medical areas, sending walking wounded back to the front.

At checkpoints, German military police, known as chain-dogs, or *kettenhunden,* for the gorgets they wore, searched columns of refugees for stragglers and deserters, sending them back to the front, often to stiffen newly deployed groups of Hitler Youth, some of them as young as 15.

Meanwhile, Zhukov and his troops pressed on. German 88mm antiaircraft guns and tank-hunting infantry with Panzerfausts caused more Soviet losses, but through determination, the Soviets surrounded Seelow. Key to the German defense was the 9th Parachute Division under General Bruno Brauer, a Crete veteran who smoked cigarettes through a holder. Some of the 9th Division's men included veterans from Otto Skorzeny's legendary commando units, but others, mostly replacements, were Luftwaffe ground crews.

The 9th had a rough day on the 17th. A regimental commander was killed, the bombardment and assault panicked many of the men, and the Luftwaffe airmen, most of whom had never seen action, fled the battlefield. Brauer himself suffered a nervous collapse and had to be relieved of what was left of his command.

Still, the Germans tried to counterattack—the 101st Corps, a collection of young trainees and officer candidates, went in, but the Soviets had placed wire-sprung mattresses from nearby houses on the sides of their tanks. The panzerfaust shells simply bounced off. The Germans took fearful casualties. The Potsdam Regiment found that there were only 34 boys left on their feet after its battle.

Buoyed by a false report of peace negotiations with the British from Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, 9th Army commander General Theodor Busse told his men, "Hold on for two more days, then everything will be sorted out."

National Archives

Germans troops, ready to attempt to stem the tide of the Red Army advance into their Fatherland, man an MG-42 machine gun along the western bank of the Oder River. By the spring of 1945, many German units were reduced to less than a quarter of their original strength.

But the reality was a slowly disintegrating German defense. The Luftwaffe sent in Focke Wulf FW-190 fighter-bombers to attack pontoon bridges across the Oder, claiming that two of the pilots destroyed a bridge by diving their damaged planes into the pontoons. In actuality, these desperate tactics achieved nothing. The Soviets had 32 bridges across the Oder.

Koniev's tanks also continued to attack, racing for the Spree through burning pine forests. All day the Soviets crashed through the forests, around lakes, through marshes, heading northwest to Berlin. When Koniev reported that evening to Stalin, the Soviet leader told Koniev, "With Zhukov things are not going so well yet. He is still breaking through the enemy defenses." Stalin suggested that Zhukov attack through Koniev's bridgehead.

Koniev instead suggested that his army group could head for Berlin itself and do the job.

"Very good," said Stalin. "I agree. Turn the tank armies toward Berlin."

In Berlin itself, the offensive was greeted with a flurry of stirring exhortations from Goebbels, who called for resistance to the last and warned, "Any German who offends against this self-evident duty to the nation will lose his life as well as his honor."

In reality, Heinrici faced more attacks with tanks lacking fuel, guns lacking shells, and troops lacking food. Dawn on the 18th saw a red sky on the eastern horizon as the day began with massive Soviet air attacks and artillery barrages. Zhukov was furious, knowing that his rival Koniev had orders to advance on Berlin.

Zhukov's armor resumed the offensive and ran back into the usual German ferocity and Panzerfausts until 9:40 AM, when the Soviet bludgeon finally broke through, sending the remains of the 7th Panzer Division, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's old command, scattering. By mid-afternoon, the defending 9th Army was about to be split in two. Zhukov had the Seelow Heights at a cost of 30,000 dead, for a German loss of 12,000.

To the south, Koniev's armor fended off a counterattack on its left flank but kept pushing on against declining resistance.

The situation was increasingly desperate for the Germans, and they began taking even more desperate measures. First, Hitler ordered all Volkssturm units in Berlin to join the 9th Army to form a new defensive line. Only 10 battalions and some antiaircraft guns could actually be sent, but that left the city with only its immobile flak guns for defense.

Next, Artur Axmann, head of the Hitler Youth, offered his 15-year-old boys to General Hellmuth Weidling and the 56th Panzer Corps, to fight with Panzerfausts. Weidling exploded at the idea of committing 15-year-olds and even younger boys to the battle, and Axmann agreed to retract the order. Even so, Nazi bloodlust rolled on. At Plotzensee Prison, the Gestapo executed 30 political prisoners.

With the Soviets on the offensive, the 9th Army split into three directions. The 9th Parachute Division tried to regroup but failed. The paratroopers fled the scene, giving their ammunition to the arriving SS Nordland Division troopers.

On Reichstrasse 1, the main highway leading east from Berlin, refugees piled west, as the Nordland Division headed east. "Ivan is right behind us!" the refugees and fleeing troops yelled. SS troops and military police manned roadblocks to search for deserters, shooting and hanging them on the spot. To add to the hypocrisy, while SS men hanged deserters the SS formations were told to be ready to fall back to Schleswig-Holstein, near the Danish border, where they could escape the advancing Soviets.

All along the highways on April 19, Soviet aircraft pummeled anything German that moved, civilian or military. German troops from the 101st Corps fled through Mecklenburg, leaving behind all their equipment. The

THE REMARKABLE PANZERFAUST PROVED AN EFFECTIVE ANTITANK WEAPON.

THE IMAGE OF the German defense of Berlin is probably best remembered in the public imagination as that of old men and young boys carrying one-shot Panzerfaust antitank weapons into a battle for a cause in which they no longer believed.

The Panzerfaust was more than a powerful symbol. It was the world's first disposable antitank weapon, a crude form of recoilless gun.

The Panzerfaust was developed in 1943 in response to the waves of Soviet T-34 tanks on the Eastern Front, giving German infantrymen some response to the threat. Dr. H. Langweilder of the Hugo Schnieder Akteingesellschaft of Leipzig developed the weapon. It underwent field tests in Russia in mid-1943 and went into production thereafter.

The Panzerfaust was 1.05 meters (41.5 inches) long and carried a single 3-kilogram (6-pound, 14-ounce) charge. In operation, the firer would ideally be installed in a slit-trench and place the launcher tube on his shoulder, having ensured that the back blast of the weapon would not hit anyone to his rear. A printed warning on the tube read "Achtung Feuerstrahl" meaning "beware flame-jet."

The Panzerfaust operator would keep his head down until the enemy tank was nearly on top of him, then aim through a flip-up sight which also armed the hollow charge, and sent the projectile on its way with a percussion striker. The warhead contained a 1.5 kilogram (3.5-pound) charge of high explosive capable of punching through 203mm (8 inches) of sloping armor, so a determined Panzerfaust operator had an excellent chance of knocking out an enemy tank. The charge was stabilized in flight by four fins that flipped out when the bomb left the tube.

The big weakness of the Panzerfaust was that it was a one-shot weapon. Once it was fired, the launcher was tossed aside. The launcher could be reloaded, but only in a factory, and very few launchers returned to the Reich for reloading.

The first Panzerfaust was the Model 30 Klein, which had a range of only 30 meters. That called for very steady nerves among the soldiers who employed it. However, it could punch through 140mm of armor plate. A newer version was produced, and by mid-1944 it was leaving factories at a rate of 200,000 a month—more than enough for German soldiers fighting in Normandy, Italy and Russia.

A more accurate version of the Panzerfaust, the Model 100, was made in the summer of 1944 and followed in January 1945 with the Panzerfaust 150. The latter was a great improvement, with a hollow charge that required only half the amount of explosive. Production of these was close to 100,000, but few got in the hands of troops.

Finally, in early 1945,the Panzerfaust 250 was produced. It could be reloaded in the field, but the choice of propellant was not settled by V-E Day.

The Panzerfaust was a very rough-and-ready looking weapon, but in the hands of the fanatical SS and Hitler Youth, it was a killer. It was the forerunner of modern disposable anti-tank guided missile launchers and rocket-propelled grenades.

The Panzerfaust was also a symbol of Nazi propaganda. In the waning days of the war, Dr. Josef Goebbels' propaganda machine, still spluttering on, gave prominence to the only victories it could find. These invariably involved some Hitler Youth who had destroyed an Allied tank with his Panzerfaust launcher.

Nevertheless, some German troops issued the Panzerfaust recoiled at the recoilless weapon, asking, "What do we do with this after we fire it? Use the launcher as a club?"

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY

The body of a German soldier killed in furious fighting on the outskirts of Berlin lies in the foreground of this photo as Soviet tanks and troops prepare to continue the fight for the German capital. Casualties on both sides were horrific during the battles in the vicinity of Berlin.

corps, made up of units from trainee and officer candidate battalions, was stunned by the sheer ferocity of the Soviet offensive. Stragglers formed into ad hoc battlegroups to fight briefly for a crossroads or village, then fled again.

All these disasters had little impact on Adolf Hitler, now directing the war from his bunker in the Reich Chancellery grounds, surrounded by flunky generals and obedient secretaries. On April 20, the Führer marked his 56th birthday amid sunny skies and the next-to-last American air raid on Berlin.

With the postal system collapsing like the rest of Germany, there were few gifts for Hitler from his subjects, but the Nazi elite massed one last time to honor their leader. Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring emptied Karinhall, his country house north of Berlin, of art treasures, then pressed the plunger to detonate the buildings, which had all been wired by Luftwaffe engineers. Without looking back, he strode to his enormous car to head to the Reich Chancellery.

The party was a grim one. Except for Propaganda Minister Goebbels and Hitler's personal secretary Martin Bormann, all the Nazi elite were planning escapes. Göring was headed for Bavaria, SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler for Schleswig-Holstein, technocrat Albert Speer to the German Alps. Hitler accepted a sack of money from the German Army's ordinary soldiers and only noted that it was not as heavy as in years past.

At the daily staff conference, the big issue was what to do with a Germany about to be split in two. Hitler announced he would stay in Berlin. After the meeting, the leadership came up with excuses to flee Berlin, while Hitler was recorded on his last newsreel, inspecting a detachment of Hitler Youth, who had received Iron Crosses for knocking out Soviet tanks. The ailing Führer, holding his shaking left arm behind his back, walked down the flanks, patting boys on the cheeks while his aides presented the medals. That evening, Hitler's mistress, Eva Braun, presided over a champagne party to celebrate Hitler's birthday in the bunker.

Outside, in the increasingly ruined Berlin, housewives queued for food and news from the one-page newspaper Goebbels put out. Even that was not helpful. It used circumlocutions to explain where the fighting was taking place. That day, Berliners were supposed to receive "crisis rations" of bacon, sausage, rice, dried peas, beans, and lentils. With water, gas, and electricity services nearly broken down, Berliners were now cooking half-rotten potatoes over a tiny fire enclosed by three bricks on their balconies. Offices closed as shellfire and Soviet air bombardment were making it impossible for people to move through the streets. Everyone waited for the end.

At the front, Zhukov's gunners finally had the range of Berlin and opened fire on the already bomb-blasted city. He gave his 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies an order: "Break in to Berlin first and raise the banner of victory." He wanted to be there by dawn on the 21st. His tanks did not get there until the afternoon.

Meanwhile, Koniev continued a steady advance, hurling his armies across the Spreewald, but not fast enough for Koniev. "You are again moving like a hose," Koniev signaled one commander.

By now there was no front line. Ninth Army's men were holding various points to slow or stop Soviet advances. At Werneuchen Airfield, the flak battery had to depress its fixed 88mm guns to take on the ground targets, to little avail. All roads heading west were blocked by panic-stricken refugees. Weidling ordered his Nordland Division, now mingling with Hitler Youth and 18th Panzergrenadier assets, to counterattack, but the Germans were badly mauled. The Hitler Youth were trapped in a forest that caught fire. The Germans retreated.

At one point, a solitary King Tiger tank stabilized the situation by blasting open two T-34s, halting the Soviet advance. The Nordland Division's Scandinavian nurses were caught in the retreat with their men. One nurse found her Waffen SS lover among the badly wounded and held his head in her lap until he died from his wounds.

German discipline broke down in the retreat. Troops that had not been fed for days broke into abandoned houses and gorged themselves on whatever they could find. Others collapsed into beds in farmhouses, exhausted, in boots and muddy uniforms, to get their first sleep in days. One Hitler Youth slept through a pitched battle. Officers had to restore order at pistol point. With the disintegration, even the SS flying court-martial teams were overwhelmed. Some execution teams themselves deserted. A prisoner told his Russian interrogators that there were about 40,000 deserters hiding in Berlin even before the Soviet advance.

Both: National Archives

During one of his last public appearances before committing suicide in the Führerbunker, Adolf Hitler pats a young member of the Hitler Youth on the cheek after awarding him the Iron Cross.

The 56th Panzer Corps regrouped and retreated again, this time to Berlin's western suburbs, hooking up with the remains of 101st Corps, holding the city's northern side. At Bernau, the Soviet 47th Army hit the last line before Berlin and found the defenders unable to cope. After firing off a victory salute at the city, the 47th Army and 2nd Guards Tank Army pushed inside the autobahn ring, winning the race for Berlin.

On the 21st, Berlin's defense headquarters was besieged by big shots, all demanding authorization to leave Berlin before it became surrounded. Goebbels had ordered that "no man capable of bearing arms may leave Berlin" without a permit, and all the "Golden Pheasants" who ran the Reich or lived its high life were fleeing. Lt. Gen. Hellmuth Reymann, who commanded Berlin, signed more than 2,000 such passes, quite happy to be rid of the useless mouths and armchair warriors.

That morning saw the final Allied air raid of the war and its replacement with the first heavy Soviet shelling of the city. Hitler was astonished that the Soviets could be close enough to bombard central Berlin with guns.

Casualties were heavy as Berliners were queuing up for crisis rations or water at pumps. Crossing a street now turned into a life-threatening ordeal. German families buried their valuables in yards and basements. The German Trans-Ocean News Agency and the Reichssender Berlin both shut down. So did the telegraph office, for the first time in its 100-year history. The last message was from Tokyo, reading, "Good luck to you all."

The last plane left Tempelhof Airport, carrying nine passengers to Stockholm. Berlin's 1,400 fire companies were ordered to the west to sit out the battle and survive. Gas, water, and electrical delivery broke down. Two operations continued: the meteorological station in Potsdam did not miss a day during 1945, and 11 of the city's 17 breweries, engaged by government decree in "essential" production, went on making beer.

With law and order breaking down, civilians turned out to loot—breaking into stalled freight trains in marshaling yards, markets, and even department stores—emerging with all manner of foodstuffs, ranging from canned apricots to chocolate. For hungry and desperate Berliners, it was a bonanza. Stores sold their goods at bargain basement prices, knowing that the money would soon be worthless and the Soviets would loot anything left behind. Those who could not loot cut up dead horses that lay all over Berlin's streets for the only source of marginally fresh meat left in the dying city.

Ignoring realities, Hitler ordered the 9th Army to hold a line that was disintegrating. The 56th Panzer Corps continued to retreat along roads lined with corpses left from Soviet strafing attacks.

Now the Soviets moved to encircle Berlin, determined to crush it before the Americans—who had stopped on the Elbe River—could arrive. Stalinist paranoia was such that even though the American offensive had stopped at the Elbe, he was convinced the Americans were about to enter beleaguered Berlin.

On Berlin's eastern side, Zhukov's troops lined up to attack south toward the Spree River. On the southern side, Koniev's tanks clattered into one of the most sacred places in the German Army, the Oberkommando Wehrmacht's headquarters at Zossen. They found the two complexes, Maybach I and Maybach II, almost completely intact, with three sober and one drunken caretaker there to give a guided tour. The leading Soviet soldiers inspected the mass of bunkers, generators, plotting maps, ringing telephones, and clacking teleprinters, which had given orders to the German Army when it stood triumphant from the Pyrenees to the North Cape. When a phone rang, a German officer at the other end asked, "What is happening?"

"Ivan is here," the Russian retorted. "Go to hell."

Back in Berlin, Hitler studied his maps and ordered the 3rd SS Panzer Corps to counterattack, ignoring the fact that it consisted of a few battalions and some tanks, all already allocated to the 9th Army. On paper, 3rd SS Panzer Corps was three elite divisions, and paper was what Hitler cared about, not reality. "Whoever throws his last battalion into the struggle will be the winner," Hitler said, quoting Frederick the Great.

General Kurt Steiner, who commanded the corps, was dumbfounded by the order, particularly that the penalty for failure to attack was execution. His total forces consisted of six battalions, some from the 4th SS Police Division, the 5th Panzer Division, and the 3rd Navy Division. "The Navy men I can forget about," Steiner told Heinrici. "I bet they're great on ships, but they've never been trained for this kind of fighting. I have hardly any artillery, very few panzers, and only a few antiaircraft guns. I'll tell you what I have: a completely mixed-up heap." He could not attack anyway, being hard pressed by Soviet forces.

That evening, Hitler fired Reymann as commander of Berlin, then appointed an obscure Colonel Ernst Kaether, promoting him straight to the rank of lieutenant general. The next day the appointment was cancelled. Berlin did not have a commander as the Soviets arrived in the suburbs.

Zhukov's forces arrived early on the 22nd, the original target date to capture Berlin. They did liberate hordes of French prisoners at Oranienburg, who waved tri-colored flags and set off through the lines to return home. Koniev's men continued to seal up the ring around southern Berlin, reaching the Teltow Canal, the southern rim of the defense line. A huge Wehrmacht ration store stood on the north bank of the canal, but the administrator refused to pass out the food to the exhausted troops because "a regulation issue

certificate had not been filled out." He set fire to the food instead.

As Koniev's men advanced, they searched through civilians, often finding them to be German soldiers who had concealed their uniforms. They also began the ugly process of raping women and looting homes, carrying off furniture, bedding, and even light bulbs.

That same day, two councils of war were held on the German side. First, Weidling polled his commanders and all wanted to withdraw, either south to hook up with what was left of the 9th Army, or in the Nordland Division's case, north to Steiner's 3rd Corps. But there was no way out of defending Berlin. Weidling's troops were exhausted—filthy, bearded, bloodshot-eyed men who had not even seen their iron rations of processed cheese and hard bread in a week. They were living on tins of pork they found in abandoned houses.

The 9th Army was in little better shape, with men moving singly or in small groups, no organized formations, vehicles all out of gas. German communications were so bad that Army Group Vistula knew nothing of the Soviet advance.

The second major council of war took place in Hitler's bunker that day, with the Führer demanding news of Steiner's counterattack. At noon he was told that no counterattack had taken place. Hitler was furious and went into a massive tantrum. The war was lost, he told his terrified staff. It was the worst such display the staff had yet seen, and it ended with Hitler saying he would stay in Berlin to the end and then kill himself. The aides tried to buck up their leader's spirits and sent for Goebbels. He emerged from the discussion to announce that he was moving his wife and six children into the bunker to stay with Hitler to the end.

Later, Hitler cooled down and came up with yet another solution—Lt. Gen. Walter Wenck's 12th Army, standing on the Elbe against the Americans. With the Yanks no longer moving, it would be disengaged and head northeast to hook up with the 9th Army's fleeing remnants and save Berlin. Hitler gave written orders to his top flunkies, who took advantage of the orders and the situation to leave Berlin for good.

Operation Seraglio began immediately, with secretaries, doctors, and other aides fleeing to Berchtesgaden by air, while other members of Hitler's inner circle began burning his papers. Despite the destruction and shellfire raging in the streets above, the bunker was not short of good food and alcohol. Those still trapped in the bunker by duty or choice soon saw discipline get replaced by drunkenness, dejection, and self-pity, from Hitler on down. Everyone was just waiting for Hitler to kill himself.

On the 23rd, the Soviets ramped up their bombardment of Berlin by hauling in 600mm siege guns. Their targets were the three massive armored flak towers in downtown Berlin, which were also being used as shelters for thousands of people who had lost their homes to earlier bombardments. A woman diarist noted reports of a deserter being hanged at the other end of a U-Bahn tunnel and young boys amusing themselves by twisting the corpse round and making it spin back.

The same diarist, searching for coal, was horrified by the sight of "soft-faced children under huge steel helmets ... so tiny and thin in uniforms far too large for them." She saw this use of children as a form of abuse, and a "symptom of madness."

Meanwhile, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, cut loose from the Führerbunker, hand delivered Hitler's written order to Wenck for the big attack to liberate Berlin. Wenck knew the order was idiotic but saw an opportunity to help the 9th Army flee the Soviets. If he attacked east and hooked up with Busse's 9th Army, Wenck might be able to bring both over to the Elbe and the safer captivity of the Americans. Wenck drove around in a Kubelwagen staff car to his various scattered commands, telling them, "It's not about Berlin any more, it's not about the Reich any more." It was about saving lives.

Back in Berlin, Weidling, now commanding a corps nearly surrounded in Berlin, phoned the bunker to report. Weidling was told he had been condemned to death in absentia in a court-martial for cowardice for not holding the line. Enraged, he drove over to the bunker to defend his honor. Hitler was so impressed by Weidling's determination that he appointed him head of Berlin's defense.

The 56th Panzer Corps did not have much to defend Berlin with. The 9th Parachute Division was cut to pieces. The Muncheberg Panzer Division, freshly put together from training schools, was in little better shape. The 20th Panzergrenadiers were not much better, either. The Nordland Division and the 18th Panzergrenadiers were in better condition. They added up to 45,000 troops. Weidling found he had other odd assets at hand: 40,000 Volkssturm, a collection of Navy midshipmen flown in at Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz's orders, the flak bunkers with their ample supplies of ammunition, SS General Wilhelm Mohnke's 2,000 tough SS Liebstandarte men protecting the Reich Chancellery and the Führerbunker.

Weidling had other advantages. A city of two million offered unlimited supplies of hard buildings, ruins, cellars, and other natural blockhouses for defense. Three years of constant bombing resulted in flak positions with machine guns and heavier cannon throughout the city. Three concentric lines of defensive positions had been built. They just lacked well-trained and well-armed soldiers to man them.

However, the overall picture was disastrous. Two whole Soviet Army Groups were falling on Berlin. The only help at hand was the SS Charlemagne Division, which consisted of renegade Frenchmen. None were eager to surrender, as they would be returned to France to face treason trials. All fought with the courage of

A battery of Soviet artillery maintains a steady stream of fire on German positions ringing the capital of Berlin. Massive Soviet firepower eventually overwhelmed the Berlin defenses.

Both: National Archives

Soviet soldiers proceed with caution through the rubble of a destroyed Berlin street. Constantly on the lookout for German snipers and strongpoints, the Red Army troops were often required to fight house-to-house to secure portions of the capital city.

doomed men.

The division managed to reach the Olympic Stadium in Spandau, where they found a Luftwaffe supply store complete with benzedrine-laced cocoa, which kept the exhausted Frenchmen going.

As the Soviets closed in on Berlin, the Reich's prisoners gained liberation. Many were Soviets, who were quickly given rifles and sent back to replace dead and wounded men at the front. Others were of varied nationalities, eager to go home. And a few were some of Hitler's original victims, surviving Jews. These included some who had worked on the 1936 Olympics and a few foreign Jews, including South Americans. They were held at a camp in Potsdam, and as the shelling closed in, the commandant, SS Lt. Col. Doberke, received orders to shoot the lot. But a prisoner spokesman pointed out to Doberke, "The war is over. If you save our lives, we will save yours." The prisoners prepared a huge form, signed by them all, saying that Doberke had saved their lives. When Doberke saw this, he opened the gates and the guards vanished. But when the Soviet troops arrived, they raped all the women anyway.

Meanwhile, Koniev's troops struggled across the Teltow Canal. Unlike the British and American Armies, the Soviets lacked bridging engineers, so they rounded up anything that could float to cross the canal, even rowing sculls. On the 24th, Zhukov's 5th Shock Army crossed the Spree farther north to Treptow Park.

Weidling wasted no time. He refueled his tanks from Luftwaffe aviation gasoline stores at Tempelhof Airport and counterattacked. The remaining King Tigers of Nordland Division clattered into the attack and punched out several heavy JS tanks.

"In the course of three hours, the SS made six attacks but were forced to retreat each time," wrote a 5th Shock Army divisional commander, "leaving the ground littered with corpses in black uniforms. Panthers and Ferdinands (self-propelled guns) were burning. By midday, our division was able to advance again. They secured the whole of Treptow Park and in the dusk we reached the S-Bahn ring railroad."

All day on the 24th, the Soviets pressured the defenders, pushing hard against the encircled garrison. As the Soviets advanced, they captured scores of civilians and promptly began an orgy of looting and rape that would become one of the best known and most horrific features of the Berlin battle.

The 3rd Shock Army, heading south toward the Spree River bridges, used its 5th Artillery Breakthrough Division on one narrow sector to blast open 17 houses, killing 120 defenders. The Soviets claimed the defending Volkssturm and Hitler Youth waved white flags of surrender and then opened fire.

The Germans tried a counterattack with three assault guns, but a reconnaissance soldier named Shulzhenok stopped them with three captured Panzerfausts, destroying the first, damaging the second, and forcing the third to withdraw. Shulzhenok was named a "Hero of the Soviet Union" for his feat but was killed the next day by a "terrorist in civilian clothes," most likely a poorly dressed Volkssturm member.

April 25 dawned cold and clear. The Germans were barely holding on, but the Soviets needed a break to bring up supplies. They turned the battlefield over to the air force, which spent the day strafing the defenders. The Germans abandoned their last bridgehead south of the Teltow Canal. Soviet tanks slugged it out with the Muncheberg Panzer Division at Tempelhof Airport amid the carcasses of wrecked FW-190 fighters.

The Nordland Division was now barely a regiment in size, but it and the Charlemagne Division fought on. Across the city, anti-Hitler resisters scrawled graffiti to counter the official demands for continued resilience, saying, "SS traitors are extending the war." SS parties hunted for the graffiti artists amid the ruins.

That evening, the French SS men, with 100 Hitler Youth assigned to them, faced a night Soviet tank attack. With determination, Panzerfausts, and a three-man machine-gun team from the Reich Labor Service, the French held the Halensee Bridge against all comers for 48 hours.

Meanwhile, the German civil administration continued to crumble. The German Foreign Ministry told its overseas missions to stop sending reports to Berlin—nobody could receive or answer them. The main German radio station went off the air.

But the big news on the 25th was a climax to the war—the meeting of Soviet and American troops at Torgau on the Elbe River. Germany was now divided in two. Unable to hold on to the Oder much longer, Heinrici ordered his men to start retreating to the west. For doing so, Hitler ordered Heinrici fired. By the time a replacement commander could be found, Army Group Vistula had disintegrated.

On the 26th, the Soviets resumed their offensive, and Weidling's weary men continued to fire and fall back. General Gustav Krukenberg, commanding the Nordland Division, set up his tactical headquarters in the Kroll Opera House, using a throne-like armchair from the former royal box as a bed to grab a couple of hours of sleep.

The early hours of the 26th saw a thunder-

storm and heavy rain, which put out some of the fires raging in Berlin. Civilians lined up for food, resuming their places or taking those of dead ones after a burst of shellfire shredded the ranks. Citizens greeted each other by saying, "Survive" instead of "Sieg Heil." German troops were impressed by the courage with which women lined up for water at pumps and carried buckets through shell and sniper fire back to their homes. A working radio station called for women to pick up weapons and join the men at the barricades, but few actually did, beyond some SS auxiliaries.

Looting was rampant, both Soviet and German. Law abiding citizens, all desperate, stormed into abandoned shops, seizing goods, which they then traded for food. Those trapped behind Soviet lines found themselves victims of robbery and rape by advancing Russians. Some of the worst rapists and plunderers were second-wave Russians, often freshly released POWs. Women as young as 14 and as old as 60 were savagely victimized. Ilse Antz and her family, hiding in their cellar, suffered repeated brutal rapes at Soviet hands and stayed in their cellar from April 24 to May 4, afraid to emerge.

This fear, fueled by Goebbels's *Panzer Bear,* the combat paper for the defenders of Berlin, kept the Germans fighting. So did the occasional radio broadcast or announcement that Wenck's army was riding to Berlin's rescue.

The Waffen SS did not rely on makeshift barricades to halt the attackers but put riflemen in buildings' upper floors, higher than the Soviet tanks could raise their turrets. Panzerfaust crews deployed in cellars and rubble to knock out Soviet tanks. The Russian solution was to mass machine gunners on the sides of their tanks to pour automatic fire into open windows or to cover tank treads with bedsprings and other metal so that the Panzerfaust shells would bounce off.

Soviet urban fighting tactics were highly developed, based on their experience at Stalingrad. With satchel charges, submachine guns, and even pick-axes, the Soviets fought from house to house and room to room, hurling grenades through holes in walls to silence defenders. Flamethrowers and dynamite aided the Soviet advance.

The Soviets were indifferent to Berlin's 2 million civilians, winkling them out of cellars at gunpoint, lining them up, and seizing watches and other goods before separating out women for rape.

Even so, the Soviets had trouble—many officers were inexperienced. The relentless advance wore troops down and made them exhausted and sloppy. Mortar fuses were set incorrectly and blew up in the tubes. Soviet troops who tried to hurl German potato masher grenades at their previous owners sometimes disabled themselves instead.

The morning of the 26th began with a massive bombardment. The Muncheberg Division's battle for Tempelhof finally ended with the Germans withdrawing to the Tiergarten.

General Vasily Chuikov massed his 8th Guards Army on the Belle Alliance Platz, named for the Anglo-Prussian alliance that defeated Napoleon in 1815. Ironically, the defenders this day were French SS. Chuikov was determined to beat Koniev's other armies to downtown Berlin, and his men stormed toward the Tiergarten, a park now churned up by shellfire. Chuikov hurled Katyusha rockets at the German defenders. Weidling and his staff, exhausted and sore, kept going on coffee and cigarettes, deep in the Bendlerblock, the Wehrmacht's Berlin headquarters bunkers, not knowing if it was day or night.

In the evening, Weidling presented to Hitler his recommendation: break out of the city, and avoid further destruction and loss of life. Hitler vetoed it. "Your proposal is perfectly all right. But what is the point of it all? I have no intention of wandering around in the woods. I am staying here and I will fall at the head of my troops. You, for your part, will carry on with the defense."

To that end, SS men scrawled new graffiti on walls, reading, "Berlin remains German." A Soviet soldier saw one such artwork, and added, "But I'm already here in Berlin, signed Sidorov."

By now, the Russians were using heavy force against the slightest resistance. When a Panzerfaust took out a Soviet tank, the local Soviet commander would retaliate with a massive bombardment against the cellar or house. That could lead to odd consequences. The Soviets captured a small Panzerfaust group of French SS, and the Frenchmen convinced the Soviets they were not SS, but merely laborers called up into uniform. The Soviets did not know about SS blood tattoos, so they let the Frenchmen go.

Some Germans simply gave up. Volkssturm battalion leader Karl Ritter von Halt called together the last of his men in the Olympic Stadium and told them to go home. Half of the men were useless anyway—they had been issued Italian bullets for German rifles. "Letting them return home was about all there was left to do," von Halt said. "It was either that or

An officer directs German soldiers as they construct a barricade across a Berlin thoroughfare.

throw stones at the Russians." Others simply deserted, shucking off their Volkssturm armbands and hiding in cellars to avoid both Russians and marauding gangs of SS fanatics, who shot suspected deserters.

That evening came one of the most grotesque moments of the battle. Hitler had received on the 23rd a telegram from Göring, off in Bavaria, asking if the Luftwaffe chief should take over leadership of the Reich. Hitler flew into a rage, seeing treason. He fired Göring and summoned General Robert Ritter von Greim to Berlin to be appointed field marshal and boss of what was left of the Luftwaffe. Greim flew to Staaken Airfield on Berlin's edge, then transferred to a Fieseler Storch, flown by aviatrix Hanna Reitsch. The two tree-hopped to the small airstrip by the Brandenburg Gate, where Greim was wounded. He hobbled to the bunker to become Hitler's last field marshal, ready to die in defense of Berlin.

Incredibly, Hitler sent Greim back to Bavaria with orders to mass the surviving Luftwaffe aircraft to fly back to Berlin. After the usual vegetarian dinner with Hitler, the crippled Greim and Reitsch flew back to Staaken and safety. Everyone in the Führerbunker, where the only conversation topic was how to commit suicide, was amazed by Reitsch's feat. "Miracles can still happen," Goebbels told everyone.

Next day, the 27th, the German self-deceptions continued. General Hans Krebs, the chief of staff, who had served as military attaché to Moscow before the war, told Weidling and others that the Americans had only to cross 90 kilometers to Berlin to break up the Russian attack. Incredibly, senior and junior Germans still believed that the alliance between the Soviets and the West would crumble before Nazism fell.

The Germans now prepared to defend the Citadel, the center of Berlin, with its massive government buildings. The 503rd SS Heavy Panzer Battalion's King Tiger tanks, some fresh from Berlin factories, dug in amid Walther Mohnke's SS Liebstandarte infantry. Other defenders included some Latvian SS. Krukenberg set up his division headquarters in a subway train at U-Bahn station Stadtmitte. The train was stuck due to the lack of electrical power and had no telephone.

Grand Admiral Dönitz's birthday present to the Führer had arrived in the form of a company of sailors and midshipmen, flown in earlier. Now they dug in around the Foreign Ministry, tearing up its gardens.

The German ammunition supply was now reduced to an improvised arsenal in the Reich Chancellery, mostly of Panzerfausts and weapons captured back in the glory days—

National Archives

A wounded member of the Hitler Youth receives instruction from an officer in Berlin.

French, Russian, Czech, Belgian, Yugoslav, even some British rifles and armored cars bagged at Dunkirk in 1940.

Against this the Soviets advanced slowly, bogged down by debris, rubble, and house-to-house fighting. They also took time to rape women. In Dahlem, Soviet troops stormed into Haus Dahlem, a maternity clinic full of nuns and pregnant women, and raped the whole lot. When a woman complained about the Soviet conduct, a Russian officer sneered, "It hasn't done you any harm. All our men are healthy."

As the 12th and 9th Armies struggled to hook up and retreat to the Americans, the defenses of Berlin continued to crumble steadily. SS squads entered buildings flying white flags and shot down any men that could be found. On the other hand, General Werner Mummert, commander of the Muncheberg Panzer Division, ordered the SS death squads out of his division's area and threatened to shoot executioners on the spot.

Exhausted German troops, unable to line up at water pumps, drank water directly from canals and tossed civilians out of air raid shelters and bunkers. Many of the civilians so displaced wound up in U-Bahn and S-Bahn tunnels.

On the 28th, the 3rd Shock Army advanced from the east on the north side of the Anhalter Canal, moving into sight of the famous Victory Column in the Tiergarten. The German defenders were now holding a strip less than five kilometers in width and 15 in length. Hitler Youth defenders clung to the Havel bridges. Colonel Hans-Oscar Wohlermann, Weidling's artillery chief, stood in a gun platform atop the vast concrete flak tower at the Berlin Zoo. "One had a panoramic view of the burning, smoldering and smoking great city, a scene which again and again shook one to the core," he wrote.

Now came a new problem for the Soviets—their two armies would collide with each other in the Tiergarten. It was critical to avoid a friendly-fire incident. Stalin solved it by assigning the Reichstag and the Reich Chancellery to Zhukov's armies, much to Koniev's chagrin.

Back in the Führerbunker came the latest soap opera. American radio announced that Himmler was negotiating with the Swedes to save concentration camp prisoners and possibly to surrender the German forces in the West. Hitler blamed his mistress's brother-in-law, SS Brigadier Hermann Fegelein, and devoted much of the 28th to having him found, hauled to the bunker, court-martialed, and shot.

Late that same evening, Hitler summoned a local city council member, Walter Wagner, from his post as a Volkssturm man, to conduct a wedding ceremony, uniting Hitler with Eva Braun. After the near midnight ceremony, Hitler dictated his lengthy last will and testament to his secretaries, blaming the Jews for the failure of his historic mission. The will made Dönitz Germany's Führer after Hitler's death and Goebbels the new chancellor. Goebbels wrote out his own will, saying he and his entire family would commit suicide out of loyalty to the Führer. Half an hour after leaving the bunker, while returning to his post, Wagner was killed by Soviet shellfire.

Meanwhile, the battle raged on upstairs, with the city turning into a scene of horror. As Soviet troops took over vast sections of Berlin, they broke into liquor stocks and raped any women at hand. Some women conceded themselves to Russian soldiers, hoping that by giving in to one man, he would protect them against other rapists. In areas still held by German troops, SS and Hitler Youth members would open fire on any house showing a white flag. Everywhere were the smells of decomposing corpses, charred flesh, and blasted buildings.

Now the 3rd Shock Army angled its drive on Moabit to seize the prison there and liberate the last few political prisoners. The Germans surrendered quickly, fearing retribution. Sappers searched through the prison for explosives and mines. From there, it was only 800 meters down to the Moltke Bridge over the Spree, and the 150th and 171st Rifle Divisions got the orders: seize the Reichstag and Reich Chan-

cellery by May 1, communism's sacred day.

The attack went in on the afternoon of the 28th. The bridge was barricaded on both sides, mined, protected with barbed wire, and covered with machine guns and artillery. At 6 PM, the Germans blew up the bridge. The explosives failed. The bridge sagged, but was passable to infantry.

The Soviets stormed across, with artillery firing shells at the Germans at point-blank range. By midnight, as Hitler was marrying Eva Braun, the Soviets had a bridgehead across the Spree.

During the early hours of the 29th, the 150th Division stormed the Ministry of the Interior, known as "Himmler's House," battling the SS Reichsführer's personal escort battalion. The immense building was a tough fortress to storm, and the Soviets, for once, seemed lethargic in advance—nobody wanted to be the last man to die in the last battle.

"Sunday April 29," wrote Martin Bormann in his diary. "The second day which has started with a hurricane of fire." Everyone was waiting for Hitler to commit suicide.

Outside, the Soviets resumed their assault on the Citadel, bringing up heavy howitzers to blast holes in "Himmler's House" at close range, and doing so at Gestapo headquarters on Prinz Albrecht Strasse. German troops were told lies to keep them fighting—that the Führer was negotiating a cease-fire with the British and Americans and that Wenck's army was coming. Krukenberg also gained reinforcements—100 elderly police officials.

Everyone was too exhausted to care about messages from the Führerbunker. Defenders would not wake up unless they were shaken vigorously. "Tank-hunting," wrote a defender, had become a "descent into hell." Still, they had done their job. The French SS had knocked out about half of the 108 tanks destroyed in that sector. A French battalion commander explained that they fought because they had one idea in their heads: "The Communists must be stopped." Others said they were trying to provide an anti-Bolshevik example for the future.

Chuikov's 8th Guards Army attacked northward across the Landwehr Canal into the Tiergarten. Some men swam the canal, while others used sewer entrances to outflank the defenders. They took the Potsdamer Bridge through a ruse, attaching oil soaked rags and smoke canisters to a T-34 tank. As it crossed the bridge, the Germans thought they had hit it and ceased fire. By the time the Germans knew what was going on, the Soviets were on top of them.

The Germans were nearly at their last gasp. Weidling summoned his staff to discuss a breakout on the night of the 30th.

At dawn that day, the Soviets had begun a major attack on the Reichstag, the chosen symbol of Nazi Berlin. The 150th Rifle Division was tabbed for the job. On the first floor of "Himmler's House," a battalion commander, Captain Neustroev, tried to orient himself, saying to his regimental commander, "There's a gray building in the way."

"Neustroev," the regimental commander said, exasperated, "That building is the Reichstag!" Neustroev did not realize he was now only 400 meters from the primary Soviet objective of the entire war.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, NY

Armed with the hollow-charge anti-tank panzerfaust weapon, a boy and an older man of the Volkssturm take cover in a trench and await the inevitable arrival of Soviet tanks in Berlin.

The German defenders of the Reichstag included the SS Leibstandarte, and they had turned the battered building into a fortress. Directly in front of it lay a tunnel that had collapsed from bombing and had been turned into an antitank ditch, a formidable water obstacle.

After breakfast, the first Soviet company charged out at 6 AM. They were immediately cut down by a "hurricane of fire from the enemy" from both the Reichstag and Kroll Opera House. The 207th Division stormed across the Moltke Bridge to attack the Opera House, and Soviet guns opened fire. More self-propelled guns and tanks clattered across the Moltke Bridge.

With heavy artillery and tank fire supporting them, the 150th Rifle Division reached the water-filled tunnel just after 11 AM. But when they tried to get over the ditch, they came under more heavy fire from Berlin Zoo flak bunkers and their heavy guns. The Soviets had the 171st Rifle Division clean out the buildings on the left along the Spree, while some 90 guns, including 203mm howitzers, blasted away at the Reichstag, which somehow survived all the shelling.

Soviet shells rained down on the government district, defended by about 10,000 men, includ-

ing a large number of foreign SS. They were trapped, with Koniev's tanks to the south and Zhukov's men all around them, and fought with the courage of despair. Without much food, when someone brought in a frightened Ukrainian POW, the French SS grabbed his little canvas ration bag and devoured its contents.

As the battle raged into the afternoon, the long trail came to an end for Adolf Hitler. In an early morning briefing, Mohnke told the Führer that the situation was hopeless and the Citadel would fall in two days. With that information in hand, Hitler summoned his staff and gave orders for the disposal of his corpse and that of his wife. Sometime after 3 PM, he and Eva Braun shot themselves and took poison in the bunker. Their remains were carried up to the surface and cremated with little ceremony.

With that done, Goebbels summoned Weidling to the Chancellery to tell him to arrange an armistice—but not to tell anyone that Hitler was dead. "I was deeply shocked," Weidling wrote. "So this was the end."

Meanwhile, the battle went on. A Soviet NKVD (Intelligence Agency) team driving through the city found it could not work through the shelled streets and got lost. The secret policemen had to ask passing civilians the directions to the Citadel. The German women answered, "When will this nightmare end?" Women in apartments, fearing Soviet retribution, tore up photographs of husbands, brothers, or fiancés in military uniform, as well as the ubiquitous photographs of Hitler and the top Nazis.

At the Reichstag, the heavy guns thundered away, and Neustroev continued to attack. Everyone wanted to raise the Red flag over the Reichstag, and the battle was fiercely fought, going from room to room. The German defenders, armed with Panzerfausts, fired them from stone balconies over the Russians' heads. Casualties were terrible, but the Soviets, with their usual combination of grenades and submachine guns, fought their way in, gunning down sailors, SS, and Hitler Youth. The battle degenerated into a rugby match style of fighting, with loose scrums of men slugging it out in halls.

A Soviet group with a banner slipped past, struggling to race for the Reichstag's roof. They were pinned down by machine-gun fire and tried again, supposedly unfurling the flag from a Reichstag cupola at 10:50 PM. Even so, the fighting raged on for the battered building. Junior Sergeant S. Scherbina was named as the man who raised the Red flag over the Reichstag, but a number of Soviet soldiers did the same thing.

That night Berlin was lit only by the flames of burning buildings. A group of SS soldiers tried to hide in the Hotel Continental, but the women and children already there gave the foreign SS men hard looks. For once, fighting soldiers were pariahs. They were no longer defenders of the homeland, but a danger to civilians in hiding. When wounded men reached field hospitals, nurses confiscated weapons so that Soviets coming in right behind them would have no excuse to shoot up a hospital.

At 10 PM, General Krebs contacted General Chuikov to arrange a cease-fire. At 4 AM, Krebs was ushered into Chuikov's tactical headquarters, a semi-suburban house on the west side of Tempelhof.

"What I am about to say," Krebs began, "is absolutely secret. You are the first foreigner to know that on April 30, Adolf Hitler committed suicide."

"We know that," Chuikov replied in a straight lie, seeking to disconcert his opponent.

Krebs read out Hitler's political testament and Goebbels's request for "a satisfactory way out for the nations who have suffered most from the war."

Chuikov then rang Zhukov, who called Stalin, waking him up.

"Now he's had it," Stalin commented on hearing of Hitler's death. "Pity we couldn't take him alive. Where's Hitler's corpse?"

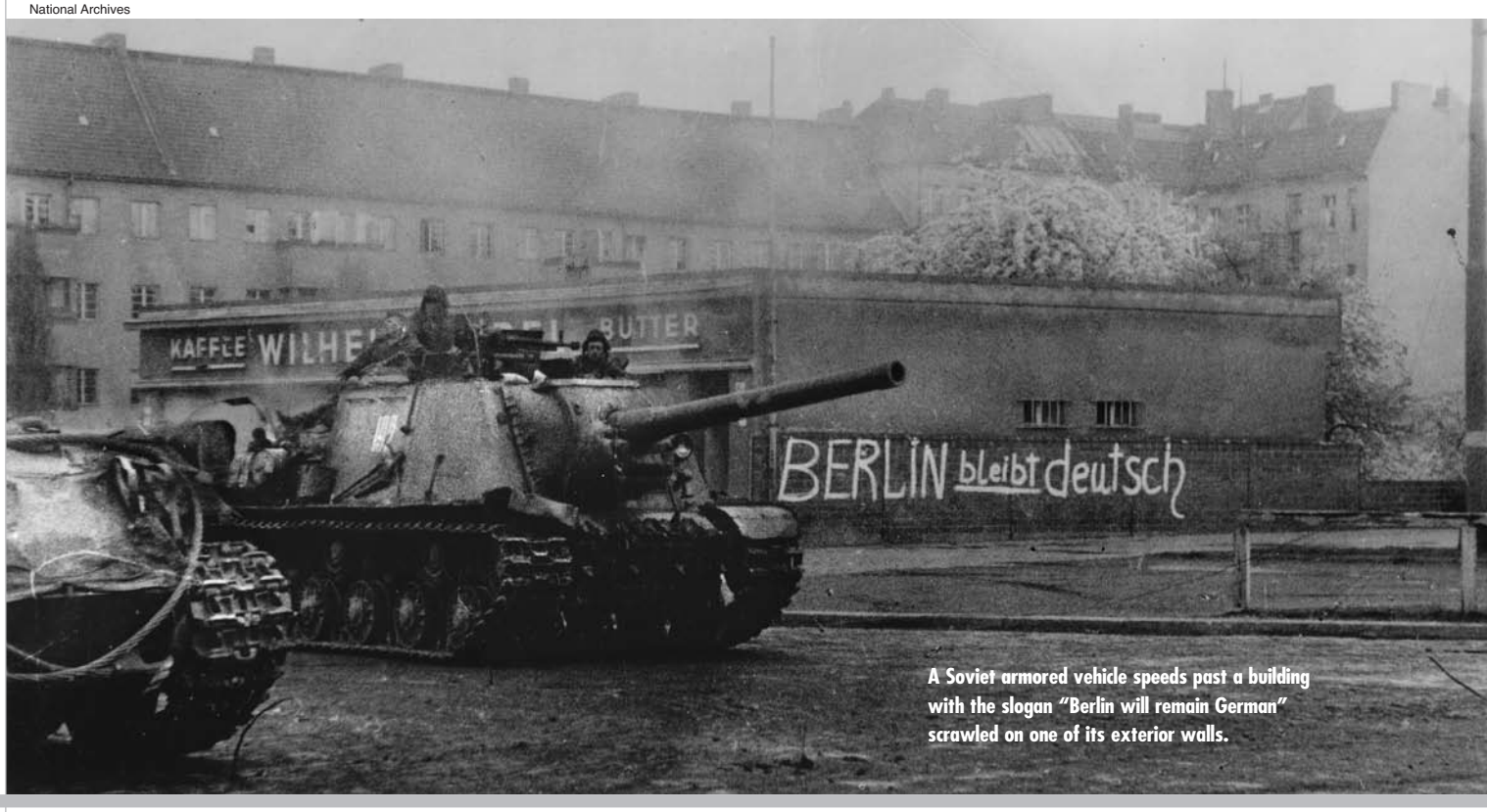
"According to General Krebs, his body was burned," came the reply.

"No negotiations except for unconditional capitulation, with either Krebs or any others of Hitler's lot. And don't ring me until the morning if there is nothing urgent. I want to have some rest before the parade," grumbled Stalin.

Zhukov had forgotten that the next day was May 1, and Moscow would stage a huge May Day parade.

Back in Berlin, Chuikov, joined by Zhukov's deputy, General Vasily D. Sokolovsky, tried to

National Archives



A Soviet armored vehicle speeds past a building with the slogan "Berlin will remain German" scrawled on one of its exterior walls.

National Archives

Fleeing the fighting in Berlin, German refugees and Allied soldiers freed from prisoner of war camps plod westward toward an uncertain future. Soviet tanks line the side of the road.

squeeze an unconditional surrender out of Krebs. But Krebs was wheedling, trying to get the Soviets to recognize the new government under Dönitz. Chuikov saw this as the Germans playing tricks to avoid the inevitable.

Sokolovsky rang Zhukov and said the Germans were being very tricky. "Krebs declares that he is not empowered to make decisions concerning unconditional surrender. According to him, only the new government headed by Dönitz can. I think we should send them to the devil's grandmother if they don't agree to unconditional surrender immediately."

"You're right," Zhukov answered. "Tell him that if Goebbels and Bormann do not agree to unconditional surrender, we'll blast Berlin into ruins." He set a deadline of 10:15 AM.

No answer was received. At 10:35 AM on May 1, the 1st Belorussian Front unleashed "a hurricane of fire" on what was left of the city center, breaking the uneasy truce and quiet.

As the battle resumed, Mohnke told Krukenberg that he was worried that Soviet troops might enter the U-Bahn tunnels and pop up behind the Reich Chancellery. To forestall that, he sent a group of Nordland sappers to blow up the S-Bahn tunnel under the Landwehr Canal. This explosion set off an incident that remains contentious to this day—a flood in the U-Bahn tunnels that killed anywhere between 50 and 15,000 Berliners and wounded soldiers in hiding. Most estimates are that 100 died, but its a certainty the flooding caused fear and consternation among already weary and shocked people. Some of the bodies that washed up and were buried in the old Jewish cemetery in the Gross Hamburger Strasse included a number of SS men.

At the Reichstag, the fighting raged on. One Soviet soldier who tried to throw a German grenade back missed his target and the grenade bounced off a door lintel, exploding at the Russian's feet and ripping them off.

The firing did not die down until late afternoon, when Germans still in the building's cellars asked to negotiate with a senior officer. Neustroev pulled on a colonel's sheepskin coat and went into the basement, and that did it. Some 300 ragged, dirty, unshaven Germans began to pile out of the cellar, hands in the air. Nearly 200 had been killed, and 500 lay wounded in the nearby dressing station.

Next up, the vast Zoo flak tower. The 1st Guards Tank Army and Chuikov's 8th Guards Tank Army clanked toward the tower, with the 79th Guards Rifle Division leading the way. The fortress was too tough to storm, so the Russians sent in German POWs with a pencil-written ultimatum, saying, "We propose that you surrender the fortress without further fighting. We guarantee that no troops, including SS and SA men, will be executed."

A POW returned with a note saying the bunker would surrender at midnight.

Other fortresses were still holding out—the Citadel of Spandau was one, surrounded by bridges over the Havel. Again the Russians sent in a delegation. After climbing a rope ladder, lengthy negotiations, threats, and cajoling, the SS defenders surrendered at 3 PM on the dot, yielding up the German Army's gas warfare center and its secrets of Tabun and other poison weapons, which Stalin very much wanted.

On May 1, the 9th Army made one final effort to break through Koniev's last barrier, where 12th Army had also managed to hold on to an escape hatch to the Elbe. The last four Panther tanks of the Kurmark Division turned up just in time to force the Soviets to retreat, and 25,000 men of the 9th Army (out of its original complement of 200,000), some near collapse, were able to cross the Elbe to American captivity, .

In Berlin, the fighting continued. Mohnke was down to his last Tiger tank. At the Führerbunker, where everyone was planning their escape, Goebbels's wife poisoned all six of her children. After that, Joseph and Magda Goebbels also shot themselves. Their remains were cremated on the spot.

At 9:30 that evening, Hamburg radio announced what had been kept secret for a day and a half, that Hitler was dead, having fallen fighting "at the head of his troops." Very few people in Berlin heard this news, as there was no electricity in the capital city.

Now the battle for Berlin degenerated into a fight to enable Martin Bormann and the other bunker inhabitants to attempt the great escape. Very few made it out. Most, including Mohnke, were caught by the Soviets, and Bormann appears to have been killed in a skirmish with Russian troops.

Krukenberg plotted an escape as well but came under heavy shell fire. He had no choice but to retreat. He and a colleague put on some overalls and he hid out for a week in a friend's apartment until he had no choice but to surrender.

Zhukov, on hearing of breakout attempts, ordered a maximum alert. Even so, shortly before midnight, the remaining vehicles of the Muncheberg and 18th Panzergrenadier Divisions began their breakout from the Tiergarten westward, heading through the Olympic Stadium and Spandau. They rolled over the Charlottenbrucke, the Havel bridge held by Hitler Youth detachments, in heavy rain and under heavy artillery fire, which killed many people, including Himmler's younger brother Ernst, a radio technician. The bridge massacre was horrific, but the Germans had enough troops to push the Soviets aside and break through. The Soviets continued to hammer at the breakout force, and only a few vehicles reached the Elbe and relative safety. Most of the rest were wiped out.

At 1 AM on May 2, staff officers woke Chuikov up to tell him that 56th Panzer Corps was again requesting a cease-fire. Weidling was told to come under a white flag to the Potsdamer bridge. He arrived there at 6 AM and was taken to Chuikov's headquarters to prepare an order to his men to capitulate.

Continued on page 76

By Joseph Luster

Designer Stuart Black brings his considerable expertise to *Enemy Front.*

ENEMY FRONT

PUBLISHER
City Interactive

DEVELOPER
City Interactive

SYSTEM(S)
PC, Xbox 360, PS3

AVAILABLE
2012

So much of the World War II gaming world is dotted with iterative sequels that some measure of surprise at a new IP is to be expected. Not to knock all of the big-dog franchises; the genre wouldn't be the same without the greats that build on their own successes year after year, from strategy to shooting and beyond. Still, the announcement of a new game project from City Interactive (*Project Freedom, WWII: Pacific Heroes, Wings of Honour*) was nevertheless a breath of fresh air. That project is *Enemy Front,* a first-person shooter built using the CryEngine 3 game engine, which is perhaps best known as the engine used to create Crytek's stunning *Crysis* games, most recently with 2011's multiplatform *Crysis 2*. Thankfully, we've come a long way since the original *Crysis* debuted using CryEngine 2—summarily restricting the game to gamers with the most stacked rigs—as *Enemy Front* is also meant for a multiplatform release across PC, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3.

While "World War II first-person shooter" doesn't exactly scream originality, it's all about the people behind the game and what makes their take on this particular endeavor special. *Enemy Front*'s chief designer is Stuart Black, who joined City Interactive in 2011. If that name rings some bells, it's because Black is formerly of Criterion Games, and was behind a really fun shooter, *Black,* which hit PlayStation 2 and the original Xbox back in 2006. The name of the game with *Black* was sheer destruction, with an emphasis on bombastic visuals and keen sound design, so while one may not relish the thought of an overly stylized, Michael Bay-esque take on World War II, Black has plenty to offer to a project like this.

Enemy Front was billed right off the bat, via its announcement press release, as a "gritty first-person shooter rich in action, combat, and detail that takes players back to the carnage and chaos of WWII." It puts players in the role of a hardened soldier who is dropped behind Nazi lines to engage in a variety of realistic missions with different focuses, from quick skirmishes to espionage assignments and sabotage activities. The narrative spans several years, going through key battles—from the trenches of France to Berlin and a secret weapons base—ultimately tasking our aforementioned hardened hero with stopping the Nazis from using a terrifying weapon that will clinch their victory in the war. Some of the story threads that sway in off the beaten path include the events that occurred in the Wolf's Lair and the deciphering of the Enigma code.

It's much too early to tell whether or not *Enemy Front* will end up as more than a blip on a somewhat crowded and well-worn radar, but Stuart Black's involvement alone is enough to generate more anticipation than normal, especially if you hold his (and City Interactive's, of course) past efforts in any sort of high regard. At the time of this writing, *Enemy Front* only has a fairly vague 2012 release planned, but we'll be sure to offer our concrete thoughts on how it all turned out when it's time to take arms and dive into the trenches.

WAR ON THE OPEN SEAS

NAVAL WAR: ARCTIC CIRCLE

Offering a bit of a change of pace, and location, from our typically WWII-only take on upcoming games is Paradox Interactive's *Naval War:*

Arctic Circle, developed by Turbo Tape Games. Why is this of note, in particular? From early looks at the title, it appears Turbo Tape is delivering a thoroughly hardcore strategy experience in Arctic Circle; the kind that's deliberately paced and catered to a very specific crowd. In other words, it just might be what some of our readers are looking for.

That is, if what you're looking for involves strategic warfare above, on, and below the sea. World domination is naturally the name of the game here, with players able to take naval command of either NATO, the Nordic Alliance, Russia, or the United States. Battles play out in real time, pitting naval and aerial forces against each other on the open seas from the Northwegian and British coasts through Iceland and Greenland, all the way to North America and the North West Passage.

PUBLISHER
Paradox Interactive

DEVELOPER
Turbo Tape Games

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Q2 2012

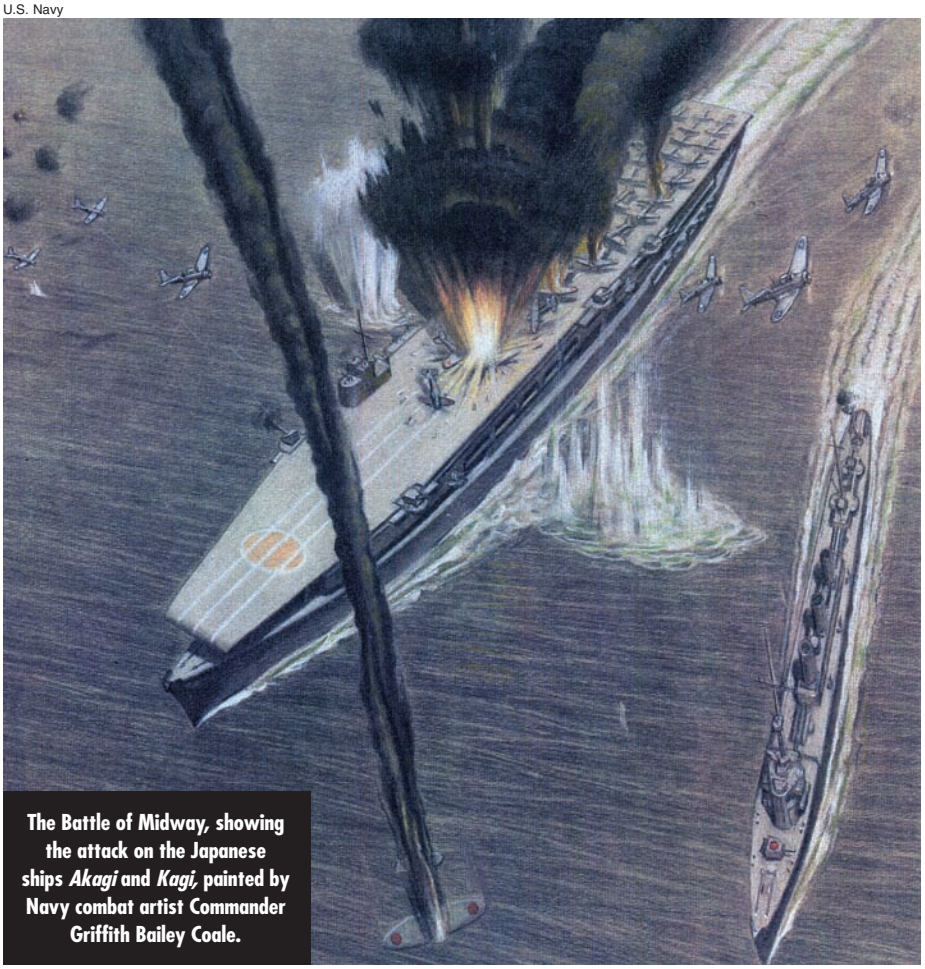
Don't let the RTS classification fool you into thinking that war in *Arctic Circle* will be a slash and burn, cutthroat-quick affair, however. Even firing torpedoes from your sub at an encroaching pack of enemy vessels isn't a click-and-boom action, but you can watch as your torpedoes zip through the waters on their way to the target. If this sounds a little too realistic to you, the game speed can be adjusted. Shots fired from subs are just one example of the game's extreme long-range guided and self-guided weaponry, which plays a major part in the action.

The environments themselves are pretty enormous, as *Arctic Circle* boasts over 35 million square kilometers of open sea and coastline. The battlefield also expands vertically through a seamless zoomable map of the entire North Atlantic, allowing commanders to view everything from the bottom of the ocean floor to aerial units going at it high in the sky. These units will all be affected by a realistic weather model with real world implications.

If you're not feeling as "hardcore" as this game seems to demand, don't fret. It sounds kind of cluttered and overwhelming on paper, but the folks at Turbo Tape seem to be working hard to ensure that there's something there for both those with a more passing interest, and those who want to micromanage every single aspect of battle. Still, it wouldn't hurt to be at least somewhat hardcore and prepared to dive in head-first when *Naval War: Arctic Circle* launches in Q2. □

By Al Hemingway

U.S. Navy



The Battle of Midway, showing the attack on the Japanese ships *Akagi* and *Kagi,* painted by Navy combat artist Commander Griffith Bailey Coale.

Tactics of the War in the Pacific

An intimate look at both Japanese and American naval commanders sheds additional light on the naval war in the Pacific.

MANY AMERICANS VIEW THE CONFLICT IN THE PACIFIC DURING WORLD WAR II as primarily a series of land battles, mainly fought in a jungle environment between the American and Japanese armies. Although this is true, they may overlook the numerous naval engagements that had a significant impact on the Allied victory over the Japanese Empire.

In his new book, ***Pacific Crucible: War at Sea in the Pacific, 1941-1942*** (W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 2011, 597 pp., photographs, maps, index, notes, $35.00, hardcover), historian Ian W. Toll digs deep into the personal lives of the leaders of decisive naval campaigns to give the reader a better understanding of their victories, as well as their failures.

Plebes, such as Chester Nimitz, Ernest King, and William "Bull" Halsey, Jr., entered Annapolis during the first half of the 20th century. Their tactical training was greatly influenced by naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahan, an 1861 graduate of the Naval Academy, whose book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783,* which he wrote in 1890, not only had a considerable impression upon U.S. naval strategy, but also influenced the other world powers including, ironically enough, the Empire of Japan.

On May 27, 1905, the Japanese soundly defeated Russia at the Battle of Tsushima. The Japanese victory sent shock waves around the world. With its victory, Japan emerged on the world scene as a force to be reckoned with—and much of it had to do with Mahan's theories.

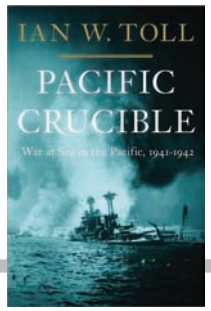
Japanese naval leaders continued to train and improve on their sea tactics during the decades prior to the outbreak of World War II. After their forays into Manchuria and China in the late 1930s, the Japanese suddenly struck at the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands, plunging the United States into World War II.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was indeed innovative because it utilized massive air power at sea launched from the decks of aircraft carriers and did not employ the huge guns of battleships and cruisers.

Unfortunately, the Japanese strategy of the "decisive battle doctrine" did not serve them well. Although they destroyed or damaged numerous vessels at Pearl, they failed to eliminate the U.S. aircraft carriers that were out at sea. Some months later, at the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, neither side's surface vessels came within sight of one another. The U.S. victory at Midway was a turning point in naval warfare—and ultimately led to the defeat of Japan in 1945.

Toll delves into the life of Nimitz's counterpart in the Pacific, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto— a 1904 graduate of the Japanese Naval Academy—who was the chief architect of the Pearl Harbor attack. Wounded during the Battle of Tsushima, when 120 pieces of shrapnel pierced his body, causing him to lose the index and middle fingers of his left hand, Yamamoto traveled through the United States extensively in the 1920s, even learning English at Harvard University.

His firsthand knowledge was instrumental in his attitude toward the United States. He developed a "healthy respect" for the industrial might of the country, saying, "Anyone who has seen the auto factories in Detroit and the oil fields in Texas knows that Japan lacks the national power for a naval race with America."



The author adeptly weaves the tactics learned decades earlier at their respective military institutions to illustrate how the American and Japanese leaders formulated their plans of action during the early stages of the conflict and implemented them on the high seas.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

What can the world, what can the USA, what can Israel do about it?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared publicly – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel must be "wiped off the map." That effort, the destruction of Israel, seems to be the main goal of Iranian policy. When Iranian missiles are paraded through the streets of Tehran, the destination "to Jerusalem" is clearly stenciled on them.

What are the facts?

A death wish for Israel. Ahmadinejad and the ayatollah who is the "supreme leader" have publicly mused that one or two nuclear bombs would obliterate Israel, but that, though it would cause devastating damage and millions of casualties, Iran would survive Israel's retaliatory attack. Iran is a huge country, with about 60 million inhabitants, so they are probably correct. And who can doubt that those religious fanatics would not hesitate to allow the destruction of much of their country and to sacrifice a third or even one-half of their population in order to eliminate the hated Jewish state. When our country was entangled with the Soviet Union in the bitter 40-year long "cold war," with both sides having sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the opponent's country and its people, things were kept in place by MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. However "evil" the leaders of the Soviet Union (the "Evil Empire") may have been, there was one great consolation and assurance: They were not crazy. But the Iranians and other Muslims are crazies, as we understand the concept. Because they take instructions directly from Allah, who tells them to kill the Jews and other infidels, whatever the cost.

Israel has no problem with Iran. They share no borders and have no territorial dispute. In fact, they face common Arab enemies and should be natural allies, as they indeed were under the Shah. Iran's death wish for Israel is based entirely on religious fanaticism. In contrast even to the intractable North Koreans, the determination of the Iranians is immutable. It cannot be changed by persuasion, by diplomacy, by sanctions or by threats.

Once Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, it will not only be a deadly danger to Israel, but to all of the Middle East and to virtually all of Europe. The flow of oil from the Middle East, the lifeblood of the industrialized world, would be totally under its control and so would be the economies of all nations of the world, very much including the United States.

What is to be done? In 1981, then prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin, being aware of Iraq's nuclear ambitions and looming realization of those ambitions, decided that its nuclear reactor at Osiraq had to be destroyed. The IAF (Israeli Air Force) accomplished that in a daring and unprecedented raid. Iraq's nuclear capability was eliminated in one stroke, never to rise up again. Israel had done the world an enormous service. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and, without question, also of Saudi Arabia and its enormous oil fields, and, for that matter, of Iran, could not have been prevented. Saddam Hussein would have been the ruler of the world.

> "An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense."

The solution to the deadly threat that Iran poses to the world is obvious. Of course, diplomacy and persuasion, threats and promises, sticks and carrots – every possible means short of military action – should be used until it becomes clear even to the most obdurate that nothing can deviate Iran from its chosen path of becoming a nuclear power and to dominate the Middle East.

There is reason to believe that the people of Iran, especially the young people, oppose the oppressive and theocratic regime of their country and are hostile to the mullahs who control everything. But the government has the tools of power firmly in its hands. It controls the instruments of coercion – it can kill people and it controls the oil money. While it would be most desirable and in the interest of the world to be able to foment an overthrow of the Iranian regime, that is an unrealistic and unattainable prospect.

Regrettably, there is only one solution to the terrible dilemma confronting the world, the unacceptable danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. The terror, the destruction and the 60 million dead of World War II could have been prevented at several times during the Nazi regime. But the Allied powers, under the leadership of Britain's prime minister Neville Chamberlain, opted for appeasement and for "peace in our time." We cannot afford to make that same mistake again. The world must give Iran an ultimatum: Desist immediately from the development of nuclear weapons; if you do not, we shall destroy the facilities that produce them. There still is a window of opportunity to do that. That window may close very soon. But who would do the job? The United States would be the obvious choice. But if the United States were in accord, Israel could do it, just as it did the job in 1981 in destroying Iraq's nuclear potential once and for all.

An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense. Nobody really knows for sure how far Iran is from reaching its goal — six months. six years? The experts disagree. But if Iran is not stopped now, it may well be too late not very long from now.

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FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East
P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159
Gerardo Joffe, President

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At least one former U.S. president foresaw the war with Japan when he penned a note to the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt in the spring of 1913. Theodore Roosevelt, FDR's fifth cousin, congratulated him on his position and offered words of caution, stating, "I do not anticipate trouble with Japan, but it may come, and if it does it will come suddenly."

Indeed, TR's prediction came to fruition 28 years later on a sleepy, Sunday morning in Hawaii, and involved the United States in yet another global conflict that would cost the lives of millions of people throughout the world.

Free France's Lion: The Life of Philippe Leclerc, DeGaulle's Greatest General by William Mortimer Moore, Casemate, Havertown, PA, 2011, 544 pp., maps, illustrations, index, bibliography, $32.95, hardcover.

Born into an aristocratic family in 1902, Philippe Francois Marie de Hauteclocque, or as he would come to be known, General Philippe Leclerc, was one of France's top military commanders in World War II. With the possible exception of Charles de Gaulle, he was foremost in instilling pride and a strong sense of nationalism among the French people during World War II, helping to defeat the Nazis.

On October 1, 1924, the young Hauteclocque graduated from the French military academy at Saint-Cyr. From there he was transferred to the cavalry school at Saumur, where 11 months later he would leave at the top of his class and be assigned as a troop commander with the 5th Regiment des Cuirassiers based at Trier. He and his bride, Therese, settled down to garrison life. In 1929, he was sent to French Morocco to participate in the fighting to put down the insurrections by tribal leaders. But the fiery Frenchman's real abilities as a military commander would shine as 1940 quickly approached.

When the German juggernaut overran France in 1940, Hauteclocque evaded the Nazis until he was finally captured, not just once, but twice. Quick on his feet, he managed to persuade them that he was just a private and was going home to his family. It was here that he first used his alias Leclerc, a name that would stick with him the remainder of his life.

The French leader Charles de Gaulle, who had established his headquarters in London, was impressed when he first met Leclerc and sent him to Africa. Although Leclerc did a magnificent job in fighting the Italians and the famed Afrika Korps, he was pushed aside for the mysterious Henri Giraud, who seemed to have an agenda of his own. Because of this, Leclerc resented Giraud.

Gaining notoriety during the African campaign, Leclerc soon commanded the 2nd French Armored Division attached to General George Patton's Third Army and to the First Army during the Normandy breakout. When Paris was liberated in 1944, Leclerc's unit rode triumphantly through the streets amid throngs of well-wishers. He continued to demonstrate his dynamic leadership capabilities as the Allies pushed their way into Germany itself until the Nazis surrendered in May 1945.

After the war, Leclerc was assigned to Indochina where the growing insurgency under a little-known leader named Ho Chi Minh was gaining grassroots support. He immediately grasped the situation and advised the French government to "negotiate at all costs" because he saw that France would be dragged into a protracted war.

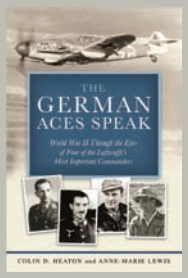
If not for his untimely death in an airplane crash in 1947, Leclerc might have convinced everyone that he was correct in his assessment. We will never know. But one thing is certain, if Philippe Leclerc had not died, the situation in Southeast Asia may have turned out completely differently, for France as well as America.

Fighting for MacArthur: The Navy and Marine Corps' Desperate Defense of the Philippines by John Gordon, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2011, 384 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $32.95, hardcover.

The 4th Marines have the dubious distinction of being the only U.S. Marine regiment to surrender as a unit to the Japanese during the fighting for Corregidor, commonly referred

Short Bursts

The German Aces Speak: World War II Through the Eyes of Four of the Luftwaffe's Most Important Commanders by Colin D. Heaton and Anne-Marie Lewis, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, 354 pp., photographs, notes, index, $29.00, hardcover.

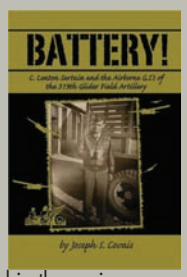


This is not another book about pilots who flew in World War II, but rather a personal look at the German adversaries that Allied pilots faced in the skies over Europe, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

The authors have selected four top German aces—Walter Krupinski, Adolf Galland, Eduard Neumann, and Wolfgang Falck—who have an incredible list of aerial victories to their credit and a host of personal awards.

These soldiers of the skies fought heroically for their country despite their aversion to the Nazi Party and its leaders. Krupinski, who had 197 victories and died in 2000, said, "We will be forever tied to the monsters that ran our country into the ground, killed millions, and ruined the great culture and prestige of Germany. It will take many years to remove the stain. I am also asked for advice, and I have some. Don't trust dictators or madmen."

Battery! C. Lenton Sartain and the Airborne G.I.s of the 319th Glider Field Artillery by Joseph S. Covais, Andy Red Enterprises, 2011, Winooski, VT, 576 pp., $19.99, photographs, bibliography, softcover.



As a child, Joseph Covais would sit watching the television series *Combat* with his father, Salvatore Covais. The elder Covais, a veteran of Battery A, 319th Glider Field Artillery Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division in World War II, would remark to his son that some of the scenes were pure Hollywood.

The younger Covais would listen intently when his father talked about his exploits, and he vowed to someday write an account of the officers and men who participated in the various campaigns of the conflict.

Salvatore Covais passed away in 2004, and his funeral was held on June 6, exactly 60 years to the day after the Normandy invasion. His medals and decorations were proudly displayed near his casket. This served as the impetus for the author to begin researching a book about his father's unit. Sal Covais, as his son writes, was an emotional person when he described his wartime experiences, especially when he discussed those who did not return from the war.

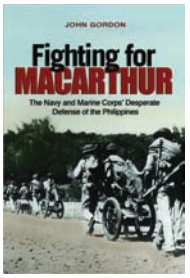
"I am an airborne trooper, and I love this country," his father said. "If the country called me again I would go back again, I would do that, I would do that."

The Final Mission of Bottoms Up: A World War II Pilot's Story by Dennis R. Okerstrom, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 2011, 254 pp., $29.95, photographs, notes, index, hardcover.

This is a riveting story of a survivor of a downed Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber who was captured after the aircraft crashed, survived months as a prisoner

to as "the Rock," in the Philippine Islands in May 1942.

Numbering fewer than 1,600 men, the Marines formed a 4th Provisional Battalion comprised of sailors that knew precious little of infantry tactics. Despite this, they put up a stiff resistance when the Japanese landed on May 5, 1942, and performed remarkably well.

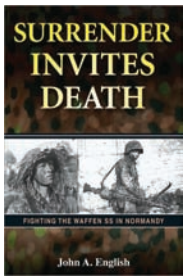


The author, a former U.S. Army officer and senior defense analyst, uses never-before-seen documents to give a detailed account of the battle and its aftermath.

He also provides interesting analysis of the steps the Army, Navy, and the Marines could have to taken to improve their harrowing situation. First, Gordon states that U.S. submarines could have done a better job by attacking the enemy transports delivering troops and supplies to the "Rock." The Army could have given Admiral Thomas C. Hart some advanced warning so he could have delivered additional fuel to Bataan and Corregidor. Also, the Leathernecks might have conducted raids to eliminate some of the Japanese heavy artillery that came back to haunt the defenders.

Colonel Samuel Howard, commanding officer of the 4th Marines, should have strengthened his reserves and created a more formidable defense along the island's north shore. Lastly, the troops went into battle lacking heavy weapons and without tank support that could have greatly improved their situation.

In spite of all of these factors, Gordon stresses that the Japanese still would have seized Corregidor and Bataan. But the sacrifice of those who were killed, wounded, and spent years in horrid Japanese death camps was not in vain. Their stand against a numerically superior enemy force was nothing short of inspirational and rallied the American people in the dark, early days of World War II.



Surrender Invites Death: Fighting the Waffen SS in Normandy by John A. English, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2011, 240 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $27.95, hardcover.

Feared by many and fearless in battle, the elite soldiers of the Waffen SS were courageous on the battlefield but utterly ruthless with their opponents, especially if they were captured as prisoners of war.

Originally formed as Hitler's bodyguard in 1925, the *Schutzstaffel,* or protection squad, mushroomed into panzer and infantry units as the war progressed. Their ferocity and tenacity in battle were extraordinary. Just the word that SS units were being engaged caused concern among the Allied troops.

In 1942, SS units were equipped with the latest weapons in the German arsenal. Augmented by two panzergrenadier regiments, Waffen SS divisions were larger than the armored divisions of the regular German Army.

When the Allies came ashore in Normandy in June 1944, Waffen SS units were rushed to the battlefield to halt their advance. The 75mm guns of American Sherman tanks were no match for either the German Panther or Tiger tanks, mounting 75mm and 88mm high-velocity cannon, respectively. The British, however, had the Firefly, a modified Sherman that possessed a turret-mounted 17-pounder antitank gun that could pierce the armor of both vehicles.

The fighting that raged between Allied and SS units was down and dirty. Nazi propaganda said Americans scalped prisoners. Soldiers from the 115th Regiment, 29th Infantry Division took no prisoners when they heard German troops were bayoneting captured Allied soldiers, and one Canadian trooper wrote in his diary of "settling scores with the 12th SS."

As the author states, the record of Waffen SS atrocities "remains a dark stain on the otherwise commendable fighting record of a unique force that vainly tried to save what God had abandoned."

And in the end, despite the fierce reputation of the SS in combat, Allied troops forced them to withdraw as they took the war to the German homeland. □

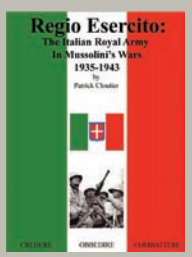
of war, and return to the crash site years later to discover what happened to his fellow crew members.

A Missouri native, Lieutenant Lee Lamar was the plane's co-pilot on its 21st and last mission. After the Liberator, nicknamed *Bottoms Up,* was rocked by a German antiaircraft shell over southern Italy, both Lamar and pilot 1st Lt. Randall Darden struggled desperately to keep the plane airborne. However, when a second round struck her over Croatia all eight crew members realized that they would have to bail out.

Captured, Lamar was released and returned to the United States in June 1945. It would be decades later when a Croatian archaeological team unearthed pieces of Lamar's Liberator. The author describes the emotional experience as Lamar and his family returned to Croatia in 2007 and examined fragments of *Bottoms Up.* Lamar also talked to the Croatian partisans who assisted in rescuing members of the plane's crew.

Lee Lamar had come full circle, returning to the spot that had altered his life forever and getting answers to questions that had haunted him for more than 60 years.

Regio Esercito: The Italian Royal Army in Mussolini's Wars, 1935-1943 by Patrick Cloutier, 2011, 225 pp., maps, illustrations, photographs, $27.95, softcover.

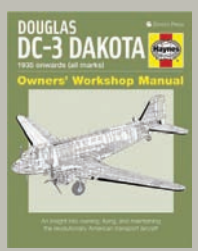


A rare book that is worth the effort to locate if the reader is interested in the battles and campaigns of the Italian troops in Ethopia, Spain, and World War II. This is a detailed account that includes maps and rare photographs of many of the successes the Italian Army had but have received scant attention from historians.

By the time the Americans entered the war in 1942, Italy, which had been fighting for nearly eight years, was tired. After the country's surrender in 1943, the German occupying force demonstrated little sympathy for the civilian population.

This is a must read to gain a better understanding of the Italian Army's pivotal role in World War II.

Douglas DC-3 Dakota 1935 Onwards (All Marks): Owners' Workshop Manual by Paul and Louise Blackah, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, 160 pp., illustrations, photographs, index, $28.00, hardcover.



The Douglas DC-3 Dakota, or its military designation the C-47, was a veritable workhorse in every theater of operation during World War II. It transported troops and supplies, dropped paratroopers in Operations Overlord and Market-Garden and, as one pilot later said, "She was almost flawless and a real lady."

Described by the authors as an engineer's dream it is no stretch to say that the plane played an important role in the Allied victory. This book goes into great detail about the engine parts, control system, propellers—literally every nut and bolt of the aircraft—and how to properly service the plane.

As a testament to the DC-3, General Dwight David Eisenhower reportedly said that there were four items that won the conflict: the bazooka, the jeep, the atomic bomb, and the C-47 "Gooney Bird," the nickname given the C-47 by American troops.

Ike was probably right. □

insight

Continued from page 17

"No one has even written a book on me," he replied. "I tried, but never have finished it. I tell myself, 'You think you're pretty much of a hot shot, but look at you now.' The picture was not my picture. It belongs to the fellows behind it who got it there. I took a picture of something they did. I didn't win this war—not by a long shot."

The 1950 *World Almanac* even listed Joe Rosenthal as having died.

"A friend of mine, Jack Rosenbaum, called me and said the 1950 *Almanac* listed me as dead, and 'What do you think about it?'"

"Well, as long as I'm thinking, I'm still here," Rosenthal laughed. "I raced down to read the *Almanac* and it said, 'The first flag went up, but the second flag is more widely known.' Then it itemized who was in that picture and said who was wounded and killed. It said 'Rosenthal also died later.'"

Another friend called Rosenthal and said, "You should sue the *Almanac*."

"Oh, God no," Joe told his friend. "This is a great opportunity in life to say, like Mark Twain, 'The report of my death is greatly exaggerated.' They wrote it right because some day, it will be correct since they said, "Rosenthal died later.'"

And that prediction became true on August 20, 2006, when Rosenthal died in a Novato, California, assisted care living center at 92 years of age. He told this writer he only made about $7,000 total on the flag-raising photo. He recalls being offered $200,000 not too long after he took it, but told the man it was a pool photo owned by the Associated Press.

Rosenthal admitted he would have liked even five percent of the participating rights, but "didn't know how to go about it." And he said that it should be kept for the people on a patriotic level. He said Ken Cook of the Associated Press told him in 1945 that they had proposed turning over all sales proceeds from the photo to the Navy Relief Fund.

"I don't want this to sound noble on my part," Rosenthal continued, "because I saw a lot of money taking wings, but it was still a very fine thing to do."

Rosenthal said the Associated Press did award him a year's salary bonus of $4,200 and a $15 a month raise. □

Author and photographer Gene Beley has published work in numerous periodicals and newspapers during a career that spans half a century. He resides in Stockton, California.

top secret

Continued from page 27

officer charged with monitoring the radio went screaming about the camp that the BBC had reported that the Allies had just landed in North Africa. There was celebration and shouting throughout the camp.

The French authorities, however, knew nothing of this. The phone lines had been cut by the landing Allies, and they had no communication with the outside. There was no news or orders for the Legionnaires or the Arab guards at the camp. The Slug demanded to know what the cheering was about. When he was told, he stalked off for a few hours presumably to listen to his own radio. He then made the prisoners a most surprising offer.

The Slug proposed to arm the prisoners. He told them that the Arab soldiers hated their French officers, and the French feared that the Arabs might rise up and shoot every Frenchman and then every European in the camp. By arming the British, he proposed, they could form a united European front against the mutinous Arab soldiers. The bewildering offer was refused.

Instead, the prisoners were soon liberated, loaded on trucks and taken the 75 miles to Djelfa where a train sped them to the coast and a waiting troop ship for the journey back to England. Before they sailed, one disgruntled Tommy made his way to Aumale, found the commandant of the asylum that once held him and his mates captive, and shot the man to death. He was quickly and quietly hustled out of the country.

Safely back in England, the ship was met by an official entourage led by Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The prime minister told the ex-prisoners that he was glad of their return but then made a strange request of his own.

The Battle of North Africa was still very much in doubt, and the Allies needed to count on the former Vichy French in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia for support against the Germans. Therefore, it would be best for the war effort if the returning prisoners from the hellhole of Laghouat did not speak of their ordeal publicly, thereby avoiding inciting their new French friends.

After an extended leave, the soldiers, sailors, and airmen of Laghouat were reassigned to new commands and their ordeal was officially forgotten. It remains all but a secretive footnote to World War II to this day. □

Glenn Barnett is a freelance writer living in Los Angeles. Recently he served as an historical consultant for the film Spiritual Warriors.

fall of berlin

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In the Führerbunker, Krebs and another key Hitler satrap, General Wilhelm Burgdorf, committed suicide with their Luger pistols, sitting side by side. So did the commander of the Leibstandarte guard in the bunker, Captain Franz Schaedle. As the Soviet troops reached the Reich Chancellery, they found it a deserted wreck. Russian troops scrawled their names on the concrete walls.

An estimated 100,000 civilians perished in the battle, 20,000 of them to heart attacks, 6,000 in suicides. Rape estimates range anywhere from 20,000 to 100,000. Abortions, normally illegal in Germany, were allowed for months after the war, but there is no figure on how many were performed. The Soviets reported having smashed 90 divisions, taking 480,000 POWs, and capturing 1,500 tanks and self-propelled guns, 4,500 aircraft, and about 11,000 guns and mortars. The Soviets also reported at least 100,000 killed in the drive from the Oder to Berlin, 2,000 tanks lost, and 500 aircraft.

At the Zoo flak tower, the deadline to surrender had come and gone, but the Soviets still waited. Now that Weidling had made it official, the Zoo tower's defenders emerged from their lairs, as did thousands of Berliners, who had been hiding from the horrors.

With the battle over, the rape and looting died down. Soviet troops carried off everything they could, but the NKVD teams began to restore order among the troops, who turned to clearing streets, restoring sewer lines, and scrawling their names on the wrecked Reich Chancellery. In July they were joined by American, British, and French occupation forces, who took over their zones of Berlin, ending the Third Reich and beginning the Cold War.

Ilse Antz emerged two days after the surrender, on May 4, into a deathly quiet Berlin. "At first, unaccustomed to the brightness, I saw nothing but black circles before my eyes," she said later. "But then I looked around. The sun was shining, and spring had come. The trees were blooming; the air was soft. Even in this tortured and dying town nature was bringing back life. Up to now nothing had touched me; all emotions were dead. But as I looked over at the park, where spring had come, I could not control myself any longer. For the first time since it had all started, I cried." □

Author David H. Lippman has been writing on World War II topics for years. He maintains a daily website on the topic and resides in Newark, New Jersey.

maleme

Continued from page 37

Andrew said, "You are damned lucky to be alive."

Andrew still had an opportunity to save the day. He had 300 unwounded men available to defend the hill, and 150 men from 23rd Battalion, plus 100 or so more from the 28th. That gave Andrew 630 men to hold Hill 107, almost as many as he had at the start of the battle. Instead of leading the new men and old men back up the hill to hold the high ground, Andrew followed the opposite course.

"It is too late, Captain Royal," Andrew said adamantly. "It's too late. I suggest you take all your men back to Platanias."

At 2 AM, Captain Watson and his relief company also left Hill 107 and followed Andrew's men back to the 23rd Battalion. Minutes later, two runners from Captain Beavens's isolated Headquarters Company at Pirgos finally burst through to the Command Post of 22nd Battalion to find it empty. It was then too late to let Andrew know that his missing companies were relatively intact. Beavens himself undertook a personal reconnaissance of B Company's positions only to find them abandoned. He decided to withdraw at 3 AM.

What happened to the other companies of 22nd Battalion? C Company spent the whole day making fruitless counterattacks, withering away. At 4:20 AM, the battered company also withdrew, yielding most of the airfield to the Germans. C Company sheltered in trees to avoid the morning bombing, then pulled back to 21st Battalion's area.

D Company got the word from a straggler, a Royal Marine gunner, who told D Company's Captain Campbell that the rest of the battalion had withdrawn. Campbell refused to believe it. Thirst was his main problem. He and his company sergeant major set off to battalion headquarters to get water and the word. They were shocked to find the battalion had indeed gone.

To ensure silence, the New Zealanders took off their boots and hung them around their necks. They were silent anyway—they knew they had absorbed severe punishment and had held the high ground all day. They wanted to stay and fight it out. Most of all, they resented leaving so many comrades behind. As the men retreated, they heard the sound of snoring Germans around them. An irritated New Zealander silenced some of the snoring by hurling a hand grenade into the darkness. The snoring was replaced with screaming and bursts of machine-gun fire. The New Zealanders trotted away down the hill.

With Maleme's fall, the Battle of Crete was lost. It had nine bloody days left to run, but the rest was a long delaying action to enable the British and Commonwealth forces to evacuate their men from the island. With Maleme Airfield secured by the Germans, they began landing green-clad mountain troops, whose numbers and firepower would overwhelm the British defenders.

Ironically, the victory was a phyrric one for Germany. One of every four paratroopers who made the jump on Crete died on the rugged island, and Hitler was so shocked by the losses that he forbade any further large-scale parachute operations. German paratroopers would spend the rest of the war fighting as elite infantry, specializing in counterattacks and last-ditch stands, but never again make a mass jump. Crete itself would not become the gateway for German airborne or seaborne advance. The island instead became a backwater of the war, occupied by German troops who spent much time battling guerrillas.

The 22nd Battalion and Colonel Andrew survived their ordeal depleted but unbowed to fight other battles in North Africa and Italy, ultimately driving all the way through Italy to Trieste.

Early on May 21, the Germans opened fire with machine guns on the New Zealanders and were surprised to find no answer from Hill 107. The senior paratrooper, Dr. Heinrich Neumann, the Assault Regiment's physician, led a small group of men up the western slope of Hill 107 to the summit. German propaganda would make it appear that Neumann, a notorious disciplinarian in steel-rimmed spectacles, took the hill with a heroic assault. In fact, there were just a few shots in the dark.

There, he was met by 1st Lieutenant Horst Trebes, who led a platoon from Stentzler's Second Battalion, which had approached the crest from the southern slope. Incredibly, Hill 107 was abandoned and empty.

As the sun rose over Crete and Greece, the German Ju-52s lined up on airfields around Athens and began delivering the 100th Mountain Regiment to Crete. They would come under artillery and flak fire as they approached Maleme, which disrupted landings, but ultimately, the Austrian mountaineers would start unloading their gear and head east to take on the New Zealand defenders and conquer the island. □

Author David H. Lippman has been writing on World War II topics for years. He maintains a daily website on the topic and resides in Newark, New Jersey.

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Mitscher's flagship, the 27,200-ton carrier USS *Bunker Hill,* was struck by two suicide planes on the morning of May 11. She burned furiously and was badly damaged, with the loss of 396 men killed and 264 wounded. Several members of the admiral's staff were wounded.

That afternoon, Mitscher—frail and weary from months of arduous duty—was lowered carefully down a Jacob's ladder and transferred with a skeleton staff to the 19,900-ton carrier USS *Enterprise.* Three days later, she, too, was set afire by a kamikaze, and more of Mitscher's aides were wounded. After the *Enterprise* and her task group withdrew for refueling, Mitscher and his flag were transferred again, to the 27,200-ton carrier USS *Randolph.* On May 27, he was relieved as task force commander by Admiral John S. "Slew" McCain. Pete Mitscher's fighting days were over.

The Navy Department announced in July that Task Force 58 had destroyed or damaged 3,259 Japanese aircraft in the Okinawa campaign, while Mitscher's staff claimed 3,170. The admiral received high praise for his Pacific record. Admiral Nimitz stated, "It is doubtful if any officer has made more important contributions than he toward extinction of the enemy fleet."

In a fitness report on Mitscher, Admiral John H. Towers said, "He has demonstrated to the world at large those outstanding qualifications of leadership and aggressiveness which I have always held in high esteem. I consider him one of the Navy's outstanding flag officers."

After meeting Admiral Mitscher on Ford Island, famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle observed, "I've been with the Army so long in Europe that I didn't think the Navy had such human people. From now on, Mitscher is one of my gods."

Pete Mitscher's decorations included three Navy Crosses, the Legion of Merit, two Distinguished Service Medals, three Presidential Unit Citations, the British Order of the Bath, the French Croix de Guerre, and Belgian and Portuguese awards.

After returning home for a tearful reunion with his devoted wife, some restful fishing trips in the West, and an emotional parade in his Wisconsin hometown, Mitscher was appointed deputy chief of naval air operations in July 1945. He spent six days a week at his mahogany desk, all the time yearning to be back on a carrier bridge and far from Washington bureaucracy.

On Sunday, November 18, 1945, Vice Admiral Mitscher was invited to the office of Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal. Mitscher went gladly because he admired the dynamic Forrestal, who was, like him, a former naval flier and a man of few words. After they had discussed the course of the postwar Navy and the Soviet threat to peace, Forrestal abruptly offered Mitscher the post of chief of naval operations, succeeding Fleet Admiral King. Mitscher was overwhelmed. No aviator had yet held the Navy's highest command. But the carrier admiral declined. "No, thank you, Mr. Secretary," he said quietly. "I'd want to make too many changes around here."

Detached from the air operations post on January 31, 1946, Mitscher was promoted to four-star admiral and given command of the Eighth Fleet. His flag was hoisted on the 27,200-ton carrier USS *Lake Champlain*, based at Norfolk, Virginia. He was one of only two of the pioneering Pensacola fliers to achieve four-star rank (the other was Towers).

Mitscher became distressed when President Harry S. Truman proposed the unification of the armed forces, and he campaigned against it. But his spirits rose when he went back to sea in April 1946. Flying his flag on the new 47,000-ton carrier USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt,* he hosted Truman, Secretary Forrestal, and Admiral Nimitz during maneuvers off the Virginia coast. It was the first time a U.S. president had been aboard a carrier at sea. That summer, Mitscher also doubled as acting commander of the Atlantic Fleet.

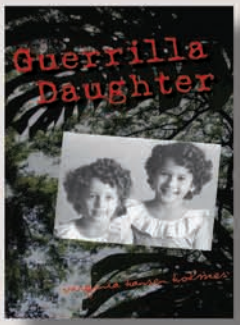
Eventually, failing health caught up with Pete Mitscher. He complained of a cold while celebrating his 60th birthday on January 26, 1947, and a doctor admitted him to the naval hospital in Norfolk. It was believed that he was suffering from bronchitis, but a heart attack was soon diagnosed. President Truman sent Mitscher a wire, telling him to "keep your chin up and get well soon."

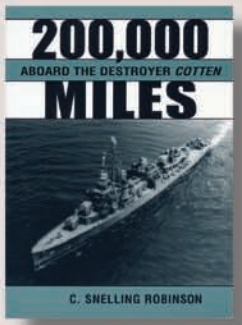
But it was too late. Four years of war had worn out the frail admiral, and he died of a coronary thrombosis early on the morning of Monday, February 3, 1947. Commodore Burke reported, "The admiral has slipped his chain."

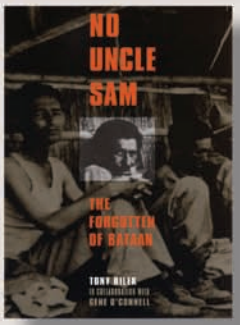
Two days later, on February 5, Pete Mitscher was buried on the eastern slope in Arlington National Cemetery. A 17-gun salute echoed sharply in tribute to the gallant little warrior who shaped American naval aviation and led it to victory in the Allied crusade against fascist tyranny. □

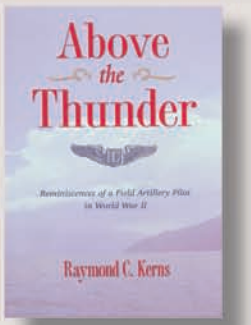
Author Michael D. Hull is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Enfield, Connecticut.*

First-Hand Accounts That Will Put You in the Middle of the Action









Grasshopper Pilot

A Memoir

"There is a group of men who have been forgotten, ignored, or are just plain unknown to most people . . .the Grasshopper pilots . . . These daring men were constantly in the thick of battle. . . . The only defense against an assault upon the Piper Cubs was the pilot's ability to outmaneuver enemy fighter planes and dodge gunfire."

—from the Introduction

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This memoir of an American family's struggle to survive the Japanese occupation of Mindanao is the story of how the men in the family fought as guerrilla soldiers in the resistance movement, while the women were left to their own resources to evade the Japanese. Faced with immediate death if found and suffering from hunger, disease, and barely tolerable living conditions, they hid out in the jungle and remote villages to remain just ahead of the Japanese presence and avoid capture.

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