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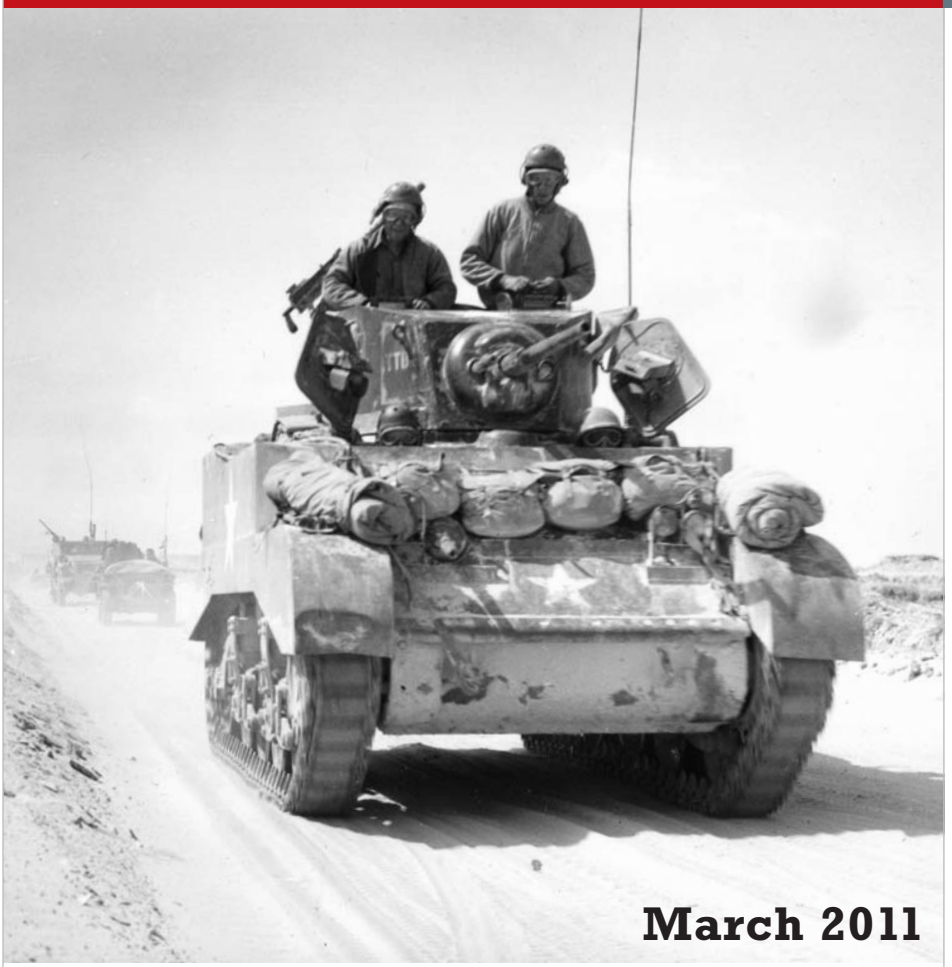

March 2011

Features

Columns

Cover: Lieutenant Alex Vraciu, a pilot of the USS *Lexington*'s VF-16 squadron, celebrates six air-to-air victories during a single day of combat in the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.

Photo: National Archives

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He nicknamed the watch *Ritorno* for homecoming, and the rare heirloom is now valued at $42,000 according to *The Complete Guide to Watches*. But to our family, it is just a reminder that nothing is more beautiful than the smile of a healthy returning GI.

The hunter's back

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Editorial

Bodies of Japanese Casualties Discovered on Iwo Jima.

WHILE MOST IMAGES OF A TOURIST TRIP TO HAWAII HAVE TO DO WITH beautiful beaches, hula skirts, and great surfing, a student of history must make it a point to visit two sites, Pearl Harbor and the Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, commonly referred to as the Punchbowl because of its distinctive location within the crater of a extinct volcano in sight of modern downtown Honolulu.

Thousands of graves are marked with headstones that reveal a litany of sacrifice during World War II as American forces advanced across the expanse of the largest body of water on the face of the Earth. Medal of Honor winners rest near others, known and unknown, who gave their lives fighting the Japanese. However, if a more poignant sight is possible, just beyond, in the Garden of the Missing, stand long pylons bearing the names of many more service members whose final resting place is unknown. The tribute to these individuals whose earthly remains may never be located is fitting and somehow set apart from those who lie buried in the soil of their native country.

The effort to locate the missing and presumed dead of World War II has continued almost since the day the guns fell silent more than 65 years ago, and the search parties have not only been American. Teams of military and forensic experts from all the former warring nations have conducted expeditions into the jungles, beneath the waves and across the mountain ranges of the Pacific.

By far the heaviest losses sustained during the war were suffered by the Japanese, and last October another expedition trekked to the island of Iwo Jima, where U.S. Marines landed on February 19, 1945, to wrest control of the inhospitable, pork chop-shaped spit of volcanic land from a defending garrison that had honeycombed miles of tunnels beneath the ground and through the sides of Mount Suribachi, which towers 550 feet above the now silent beaches.

Nearly 7,000 Americans died in the fighting, which lasted more than a month before the island was declared secure on March 26, and the Japanese fighting on the island were virtually annihilated. The American dead were temporarily buried on Iwo Jima or transferred to ships offshore. All of the U.S. dead whose bodies were located were eventually repatriated.

The story for the Japanese, on the other hand, was quite different. More than 22,000 soldiers of the Rising Sun perished in the horrific fight, and up to 12,000 of these were never identified or recovered. Some of the defenders were trapped in their underground caves, which became tombs when U.S. engineers sealed the entrances with satchel charges or tanks and flamethrowers spewed fire, burning the occupants to death or depriving them of oxygen. After the battle, thousands of Japanese corpses were interred by the victors in mass graves marked only on maps as collective burial sites.

The Japanese recovery team that ventured to Iwo Jima last autumn explored two areas listed by the Americans years ago as enemy cemeteries. They searchers discovered the remains of 51 soldiers, and the sites may contain the bodies of as many as 2,200 of the nation's fallen. A representative of the Japanese Kyodo News Agency confirmed for the Associated Press that the recent discovery was the most significant in decades. The Japanese Health Ministry will conduct further excavations of the sites on the island now known as Iwo To, and the operation is expected to last several months.

One site is located at the foot of Mount Suribachi, which U.S. Marines climbed on the fourth day of the fighting to plant the American flag atop the promontory for all below and at sea to view. The other site is near one of the contested airfields which was captured by the Americans and later used as an emergency landing strip for crippled heavy bombers returning from raids against the Japanese home islands.

Although most of the family members and friends who waited in vain for their loved ones to return from battle to the United States, Japan and so many other countries have passed away by now, succeeding generations continue the quest to bring the dead home for proper burial and to receive the military honor that is long overdue.

Michael E. Haskew

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By Blaine Taylor

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Steel's Hammer

Vyacheslav Molotov was a founding member of Soviet Communism, confronted anti-Soviet figures from Hitler to Truman, and outlived all his Kremlin colleagues.

THE ARRIVAL OF VYACHESLAV M. MOLOTOV, THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR FOR Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, in Berlin on a rainy November 12, 1940, was a solemn, strained occasion. Compared to the whirlwind visit of Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop to Moscow on August 23, 1939, which resulted in the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, there was little gaiety at the Anhalter railroad station that day.

Grim-faced, the bullet-headed, stammering little man with the glinting pince-nez perched on his nose reviewed a German Army honor guard with von Ribbentrop and Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, both of whom he would live to see hanged six years later at Nuremberg.

The man whose last name alias meant "hammer" in Russian to Stalin's own "steel" and for whom the facetious Finns named their anti-armor gasoline bomb in the famed Winter War of 1939-1940 had been sent to Berlin to make demands of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler. What did the Führer mean to do in Eastern Europe opposite the new Soviet frontier with Nazi Germany? What would be the place of the Soviet Union in the Axis Pact? There were more demands, too.

According to an eyewitness, German Foreign Office interpreter Dr. Paul Schmidt, "Little time was wasted on formalities…. The representatives of Germany and Soviet Russia went for hard, expert boxing…. The questions hailed down upon Hitler. No foreign visitor had ever spoken to him in this way in my presence…. Hitler did not jump up and rush for the door…. He was meekly polite…."

Later, when the two delegations had to retreat famously to an air raid shelter during a British Royal Air Force attack, Molotov sarcastically ridiculed von Ribbentrop's assertion that Great Britain had already lost World War II and was as good as finished: "If that is so, then why are we in this shelter, and whose are those bombs that are falling on us?"

It was, indeed, this fateful state visit that finally convinced Hitler to assault the gigantic Soviet Union the following June and that led, ultimately, to the destruction of the Third Reich.

After the war, Josef Stalin's right-hand man, a former leader of the Red purges of the 1930s and 1940s whom early Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky called "mediocrity incarnate," became one of the prime hard-liner architects of the Cold War between the former victorious Allies of East and West.

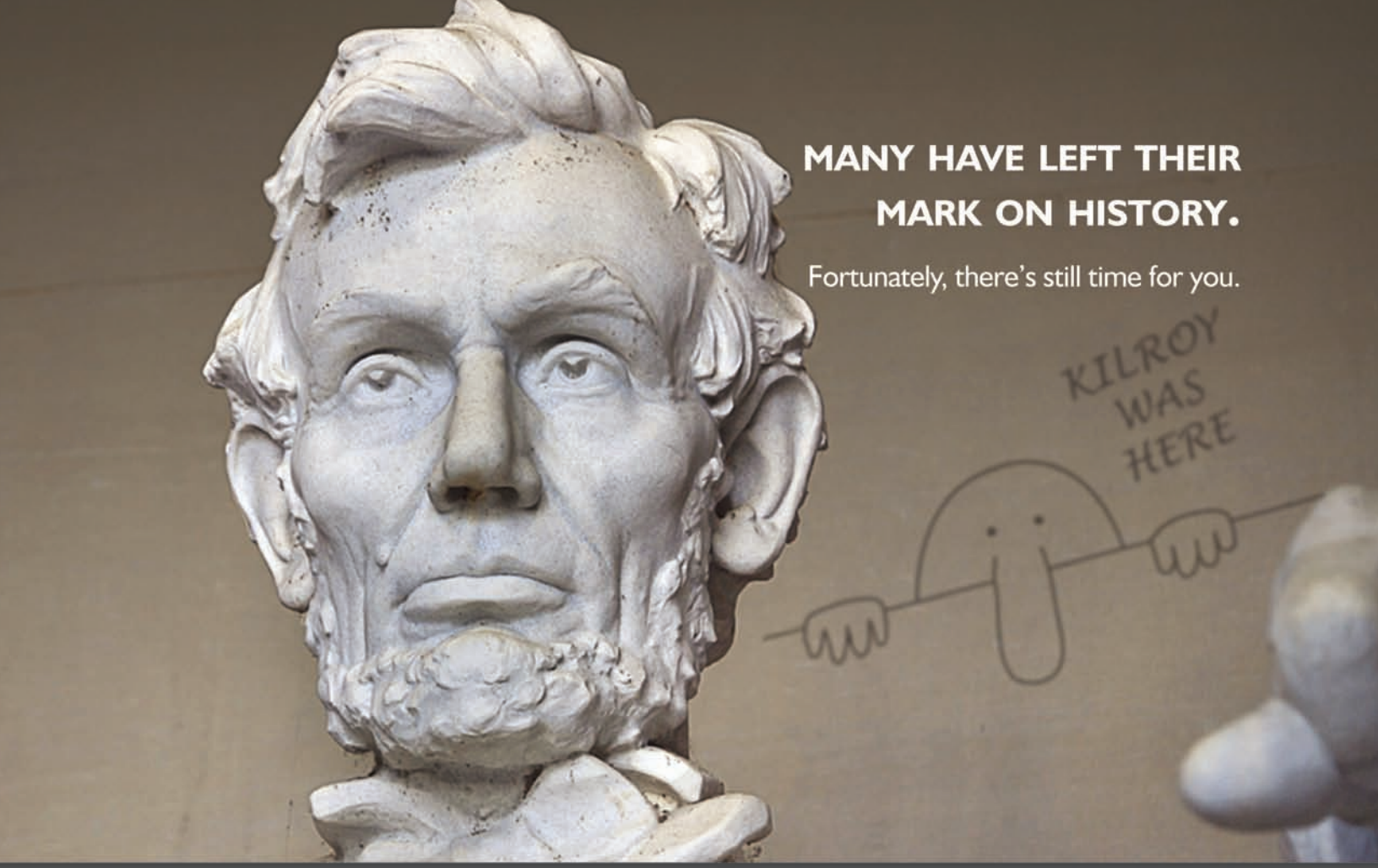
In a notable argument with President Harry S. Truman on April 22, 1945, Molotov asserted the Soviet positions on Poland, Allied control of Japan, the opening of the postwar San Francisco Conference, the United Nations Charter, and the veto power of that new body's security council.

After one particularly heated exchange, the man who had stood down Hitler was famously checkmated himself by the little haberdasher from Missouri, and he retorted angrily, "I've never been talked to like that in my life!" Truman tartly answered, "Carry out your agreements, and you won't get talked to like that!"

In his post-White House memoirs, Truman assessed his adversary thus: "I often felt that Molotov kept some facts from Stalin, or that he would not give him all the facts until he had to. It was always easier to get agreement out of Molotov than out of Stalin. Where Stalin could smile and relax at times, Molotov always gave the impression that he was constantly pressing."

To Dr. Schmidt, "This rather short Russian with his lively eyes ... constantly reminded me of my mathematics master," with "a

Reviewing an honor guard in Berlin on November 12, 1940, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov is joined by several German officers and diplomats. To his immediate right is German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. To the right of Ribbentrop is Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, a member of Hitler's inner circle throughout the Nazi period from 1933-1945.



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rather frosty smile over his intelligent chess master's face.... In his precise diplomacy, he dispensed with flowery phrases ..."

In the end, even the ruthless Soviet dictator Stalin feared the poker-faced, stonewalling old Bolshevik who had come to office with him and Lenin in 1917, accusing him of being in U.S. employ as a traitor to the Soviet Union. Stalin also accused Molotov's Jewish wife, Paulina Z. Zhemchosina Molotov, of being a secret Zionist who wanted a Jewish Soviet Republic.

Thus, while grimly waging the Cold War with the West, Molotov had to accept his wife being sent into exile and jail and did not know whether she was alive or dead. He was not without human emotion, however, as his colleague and rival Nikita S. Khrushchev discovered when Madame Molotov was released after Stalin's death in March 1953. "Molotov was overjoyed that she was still alive and threw himself into her arms."

Molotov "blew his stack" at Krushchev's collective farm policy and formed the famed Anti-Party Group that attempted to oust Khrushchev, but was himself demoted instead. Banished to the farthest Soviet diplomatic post of Ulan Bator in Outer Mongolia, Molotov resurfaced briefly in 1961 in his capacity as Soviet representative to the International Atomic Energy Commission to to help welcome U.S. President John F. Kennedy to the Vienna Summit Conference.

During Khrushchev's de-Stalinization period, however, Molotov became a pariah-like "unperson," even losing his Communist Party card in 1964. Krushchev was also deposed that same year by his own underlings and died in exile in 1970. When Madame Molotov died that year, her Moscow funeral in May was one of her disgraced husband's last public appearances. However, he lived long enough to regain his Party membership card in 1984, after 20 years.

In 1957, the U.S. State Department's Division of Biographic Information offered a public assessment of Molotov: "Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich [Russian for son of Michael]. A First Deputy Premier since 1941, Molotov has been Minister of State Control since November 1956, but he is best known for his long career as foreign minister (1939-49; 1953-56).... He has been a Bolshevist since 1906.

"Party chief in the Ukraine in 1920, he was Responsible Secretary Central Committee in 1921, when replaced by Stalin. He remained, however, a Party Secretary until Premier in 1930 when he was again replaced by Stalin in 1941. He was also a member of the Comintern/Communist International Executive Committee from about 1926 onward.

"Congenial, sometimes bouyant toward his Western colleagues outside the conference room, Molotov proved disputatious, tenacious, and occasionally vitriolic, a master of the art of maneuver, at the meeting table. [British Prime Minister Winston] Churchill called him 'a man of outstanding ability and cold-blooded ruthlessness.... His cannonball head, black moustache, and comprehending eyes, his slab face, his verbal adroitness, and imperturbable demeanor were appropriate manifestations of his qualities and skill. He was above all men fitted to be the agent and instrument of an incalculable machine.'

"John Foster Dulles wrote in 1949, 'I have seen in action all the great international statesmen of this century.... I have never seen such personal and diplomatic skill at so high a degree of perfection as Mr. Molotov's.'"

Awarded every possible high Soviet decoration, including five Orders of Lenin, Molotov, according to the *Baltimore Evening Sun* on May 26, 1976, "returned quietly to Moscow at his retirement on a $400 monthly pension ... to the same apartment he had always occupied, two blocks west of the Kremlin." His funeral in 1986 was paid for out of the total of his long life's savings: 500 rubles.

Like the dead Krushchev, who allowed his taped, two-volume, post-power memoirs to be smuggled to the West, Molotov, too, had his own recorded from 1969 to 1986 by an interviewer posing questions that he, in turn, answered. The result was *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics/Conversations with Felix Chuev,* published by Ivan R. Dee in English in 1993. Repetitive at times because the interviewer, a Russian poet and biographer, interviewed his loquacious subject several times on the same topics, it is still an outstanding volume in all respects and well worth the read.

"Not everything has happened as we thought it would," admitted Molotov, the last survivor of the top Soviet leadership of the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the Stalinist purges, World War II, and the Korean and Cold Wars. He had outlived Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev and survived to tell the tale, a true rarity in the Soviet hierarchy.

A cofounder of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda,* Molotov also revealed that he thought that Stalin was actually "soft" when compared with the far more radical Lenin, who in return had called Molotov "old stone ass" and "Mr. Iron Pants" for his reputed ability to sit throughout long, boring Party meetings.

Born on March 9, 1890, as V.M. Scriabin in the village of Kukarka, Molotov attended secondary school at Kazan and joined the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party at 16, taking the alias "hammer" (*molot* in Russian) before 1909, when he was first arrested and exiled for two years in Siberia. Released in 1911, he enrolled at the St. Petersburg Polytechnic School. It was at *Pravda* that he reportedly encountered the young Josef Stalin. Arrested again in 1913, Molotov was shipped off to exile to Irkutsk but escaped in 1915, returning to the czarist capital once more.

Molotov played a major role in the February Revolution of 1917 that helped overthrow Czar Nicholas II, as he did again that November when the Bolsheviks in turn ousted the provisional government of Premier Alexander Kerensky. Thereafter, the man who played tennis and performed in a mandolin quartet for relaxation rose rapidly to power at the side of, first, Lenin and then the dour Stalin, particularly during Stalin's long struggle against his archrival, the winner of the Russian Civil War, Leon Trosky. One of the anecdotes from *Molotov Remembers* related that when the car in which he and Lenin had been riding suffered a flat tire the local peasant farmers failed to even recognize the great Lenin in their midst.

About the Great Purge—he was the cosigner

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ABOVE: Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov greets Hitler prior to the signing of the 1939 nonaggression pact between the two nations. BELOW: Following discussions for the opening of a second front in the West against the Nazis, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov posed for photographers on November 20, 1942.

National Archives

National Archives

During the contentious Yalta Conference held in February 1945, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov (left) confers with Soviet Premier Josef Stalin. Between them is U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman.

with Stalin of countless death sentences—Molotov, a master of understatement, recalled wistfully, "We occasionally bashed some heads. I can see Lenin now as if he were alive. The fact that Stalin was his successor was very fortunate… I think that he was a great person.

"Twice in my life I called Stalin a genius.... At the pinnacle, Stalin alone stood out. The more they assail him, the higher he rises! Let us assume that he made some mistakes.... In his time, there was no equal!... Many errors were committed—many.... Hitler wasn't a fool, but was a capable man."

Regarding his own long stewardship in office and out, he stated, "I know not a single foreign language.... This was my main shortcoming in diplomacy.... I was a bad husband. I had no time to take her to the movies."

In 1943, in the very middle of the Great Patriotic War against the Nazis, Stalin thought enough of Molotov, his hammer, to place him at the head of the secret Soviet atomic bomb project.

Molotov recalled in the 1993 *Molotov Remembers,* "The bombs dropped on Japan were aimed at the Soviet Union.... According to American plans, 200 of our cities would be subject to simultaneous atomic bombing.... If the U.S. had A-bombed us in 1946, the Red Army would have landed in Alaska."

Stalin, before his death, replaced Molotov in charge of atomic weaponry development with his dreaded NKVD secret police chief, Lavrenti Beria, as near the end he was becoming ever more paranoid and delusional regarding Molotov's suspect loyalty. Until then, for some 27 years, the Hammer had been recognized generally as his master's eventual successor, but it never happened.

Wrote American author John Gunther in 1938: "Molotov has a fine forehead and looks and acts like a French professor of medicine—orderly, precise, pedantic. He is ... a man of first-rate intelligence and influence. Molotov is a vegetarian and a teetotaler. Stalin gives Molotov much of the dirty work to do."

Molotov was, however, politically outmaneuvered by Khrushchev from within the top ranks of the party, just as Stalin had done to Trotsky a quarter century before.

The unrepentant old Stalinist died at age 96 on Sunday, November 9, 1986, falling just four years short of the century he had hoped to see. The man had carried the caskets of both Lenin and Stalin, fought the last Russian czsar, and had been present at the creation, as Dean Acheson said, of the founding of the Soviet Union. It outlasted him by only five more years. Reportedly, Stalin's death more than 30 years earlier had saved Molotov's own life from an expected future Great Purge.

Finnish-American reporter Antero Pietila covered Molotov's funeral in Moscow for *The Sun* newspaper on November 13, 1986: "Mr. Molotov's final resting place is near the site where Stalin's wife—Nadeszhda Alliluyeva—was buried after she committed suicide in 1932. She was a good friend of Mrs. Molotov."

Perhaps the most fitting final word on Molotov's career came from Churchill: "In the conduct of foreign affairs, Mazarin, Talleyrand, and Metternich would welcome him in their company, if there be another world to which Bolsheviks allow themselves to go." □

Towson, Maryland, author Blaine Taylor is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He has written numerous books on World War II topics.*

By Sam McGowan

All photos: National Archives

Mastering the Skies

The Douglas C-54 Skymaster served around the globe during World War II and accelerated the growth of peacetime air travel.

AT THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR II, THE GLOBE SEEMED HUGE—COVERED BY thousands of miles of ocean and uninhabited land mass, but by the time it ended everything had been brought closer together, thanks largely to the four-engine transports of the United States Army Air Transport Command, particularly the Douglas C-54 Skymaster.

By mid-1945 the C-54 had come to symbolize the modern international airline system, a system that linked the entire world and reduced travel times from weeks and months to days and even hours.

The C-54 was the result of a prewar civilian design that the Douglas Aircraft Company developed as a successor to its highly successful DC-3. The original design, later designated as the DC-4E, featured a pressurized cabin to allow high-altitude operations in relative comfort, but the design was too expensive for the cash-strapped airline industry of the Depression years and was put on hold.

Instead, the company decided to develop and market the basic DC-4, an unpressurized all-metal four-engine monoplane with transoceanic capabilities and a design that would be far less expensive than the pressurized model the company had originally envisioned to compete with Boeing's Stratoliner. It was not until 1942 that the new airliner was ready for its first flight, and by that time the country was at war.

All the DC-4 production that had been ordered by the airlines was appropriated for military use, and it was not until the end of the war that the four-engine transport finally put on airline paint. In the interim, the C-54 had become the workhorse of the U.S. Army Air Transport Command and was perhaps the most important airplane to come out of the war. It was also one of the most costly, second only to the Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber in cost per model. Initial purchase costs were more than half a million dollars in 1940, and even though production costs dropped the cost per airplane was still more than a quarter of a million dollars in 1945.

Loading operations are under way as a large Douglas C-54 Skymaster sits at the airfield in Westover, Massachusetts. The C-54 became a workhorse of U.S. logistics during World War II.

Although little thought had been given to military air transportation in the 1920s and 1930s, by 1940 the War Department was starting to recognize the need for long-range transports, primarily to provide transportation for government officials and important dispatches to the far-flung regions of the world. A new need that developed just before the war was to return Army ferry pilots to the United States from overseas delivery points.

The newly established need for long-range transports became so great that when the Army received its first Consolidated B-24 Liberators 11 were converted into transports even though the type had been developed to fill a requirement for a long-range bomber to replace the Boeing B-17. The converted Liberators were assigned to the recently established Air Corps Ferrying Command to establish a route system over which multiengine aircraft could be delivered to the combat zones. They were also adopted as a means of delivering dispatches and transporting high-level personnel to and from England.

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ABOVE: A four-engine C-54E is shown in flight in 1946. By 1943, large numbers of C-54s had reached the military and were being assigned to Air Transport Command.
BELOW: The rather spacious interior of a C-54 Skymaster is depicted in September 1944. Note the seating and storage area. A broom has been secured at the far end of the compartment.

On July 1, 1941, Lt. Col. Caleb Haynes took off from Bolling Field outside Washington, D.C., on the first run of the "Arnold Line," a transoceanic military airline service. Routes were soon established to other destinations; in one case an Army Liberator flew the new ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman, to his assignment in Moscow.

The need for four-engine transports was so great that the War Department ordered large numbers of B-24s converted to the transport role as the C-87 Liberator Express. The Ferrying Command also had its eye on Douglas Aircraft Company's new DC-4, which the military designated as the C-54, although the command hedged its bets by also ordering the twin-engine Curtiss C-46 Commando.

On March 26, 1942, the first C-54 made its maiden flight. Since it was a basic transport and needed no modification for military use, deliveries to the Army Air Forces began in June. The original DC-4 had been conceived as a passenger-carrying airplane; production aircraft came from the factory with fixed seats and a floor that lacked the reinforcement necessary to transport heavy cargo. Thus, they were initially assigned primarily to transport high-priority passengers and dispatches.

The first Army C-54s were operated by civilian contract crews employed by Pan American World Airways on a scheduled run south out of Miami to Natal, Brazil. The route was soon expanded to North Africa, and by October C-54s were flying to England by way of Marrakech. Since the early C-54s were configured primarily to carry passengers, the Army requested a new model equipped with foldable metal bucket seats that would allow quick conversion from passengers to cargo, which was starting to become a major military air transport commodity as U.S. forces deployed throughout much of the world.

Designated as the C-54A, the new version did not become available for military testing until February 1943. The first operational airplanes entered service a month later. A second modification, the C-54B, was equipped with canvas seats instead of the metal buckets of the earlier version in a weight-saving move; the easily stowable seats also allowed transportation of large crates and other items of cargo, including aircraft engines and small vehicles. The B model also featured additional fuel capacity to increase range and entered service in the spring of 1944.

Between April and June 1942 the military air transportation system underwent a major overhaul as existing air transportation units were turned into troop-carrying organizations and a new Air Transport Command was established, using the headquarters for the prewar Air Corps Ferrying Command. The mission of the new ATC included ferrying of aircraft to combat units overseas as well as all air transportation not within the domain of troop carrier units.

By 1943 substantial numbers of C-54s were starting to come into the ATC inventory, and the new four-engine transports soon became favored by the pilots and crew members who flew them. The Douglas transports were very reliable—only three would be lost at sea during the entire war, and one of those was an intentional ditching. They were also a pleasure to fly and, unlike the C-87s and C-46s, very popular with their crews.

While the Liberator had a reputation for causing a pilot to really work when flying it, the Skymaster was surprisingly light on the controls and, even though it was equipped with a reliable autopilot, pilots enjoyed taking the controls on long flights. The C-54 also featured a steerable nosewheel, a feature that allowed pilots far more control of their airplanes while taxiing and in the early stages of the takeoff roll before the rudder became effective.

Takeoffs in a C-54 were a lot safer than in a C-87 due to the increased directional control. The C-54 developed a reputation for being able to handle a sizable load of ice, and World War II lore among ATC flyers is that it was superior in this regard to the B-17 and B-24. The C-54 quickly became a favorite of the crews who flew it, and many believed it was superior to the C-87.

The best feature of the C-54, and it was also true of the Liberator and other airplanes, was that by exercising fuel management techniques pilots could increase the airplane's range substantially. During the first years of ATC operations, there were no standardized procedures and each pilot operated by his own set of rules. Experience soon showed that pilots who operated using varying power settings were able to fly much farther than those who simply shoved the power to the firewall and left it there.

The C-54 had one drawback—and it was a major one. Although the airplane was easy to fly and reliable, its high-altitude performance

ABOVE: A Douglas C-54M flies between Hawaii and Japan to deliver priority cargo. The plane was refitted as a litter-equipped hospital aircraft and transported wounded soldiers from the battlefields of Korea in 1951. LEFT: Two U.S. aviators sit in the cockpit of a C-54 Skymaster, which completed a remarkable demonstration at Wilmington, Delaware. The plane took off, flew, and landed entirely under the remote control of a pilot on the ground.

was limited. The maximum allowable ceiling was only 22,000 feet, 78 percent of the Liberator's. Since the C-54 was not pressurized and loads often included passengers, pilots operated at much lower altitudes, and the normal cruising altitudes of 10,000 to 15,000 feet presented little problem on flights over the oceans and deserts of the world.

Mountains, however, were another issue. By 1943 the towering Himalayas were a frequent sight for ATC crews on their way to and from airfields in eastern India. In December 1942 ATC assumed the role of ferrying supplies from airfields in India to China, a mission that required operations at high altitudes over the eastern reaches of the Himalayas in order to avoid interception by Japanese fighters. The high altitudes required for the Hump fliers precluded the assignment of the C-54 to operations into China at the time.

The new Skymaster had another drawback. Since it had been designed for airline use where it would receive regular maintenance, the C-54 suffered greatly from mechanical problems when it was operated under austere conditions such as those existing on the India-China ferry.

Initial C-54 operations were in support of the war in Europe, as the first airplanes went to work ferrying personnel and dispatches from Miami to Natal. It was not until mid-1943 that the C-54s made their appearance over the Pacific. The first C-54 to operate over the Pacific was an airplane that had been drawn off of the Atlantic route for a special airlift of B-24 stabilizers to Australia in response to an urgent requirement. A second C-54 was assigned to the Pacific Wing a few days later and, as more Skymasters were delivered, the numbers on Pacific routes increased.

In early 1944 the Allies commenced an operation that would change the fortunes of war in the China-Burma-India Theater and that would greatly improve the efficiency of the airlift to China and allow the introduction of the C-54 to the China ferry. A small U.S. Army provisional force under the command of Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill began an unannounced and initially unheralded walk into northern Burma.

While the British force would soon be withdrawn the same way they had come in—by air—Merrill's men were ordered to continue eastward to capture the Japanese-held airfield at Myitkyina. They managed to walk through several hundred miles of jungle and rough terrain and then captured the airfield in August, after almost six months in the field. Throughout their Burma operations, Merrill's men were supplied entirely by air by transports assigned to Tenth Air Force Troop Carrier Command.

The capture of Myitkyina was undoubtedly the most fortuitous event of the war in the CBI Theater for the Allies. Although Chinese troops who were airlifted in to capture the town became bogged down and the operation turned into a siege, the airfield was now in Allied hands and available for use by ATC transports as a delivery point from which supplies could be transported by truck and river into the Chinese interior. Even more important, the capture of the airfield deprived the Japanese of an advance fighter base from which they could threaten the Hump routes and also could serve as a base for American fighters. In short, the capture of Myitkyina led to the attaining of air superiority over Burma—and opened the door for the introduction of the C-54 to the Hump airlift.

Previously, ATC transports had been forced to go northward out of their bases in India's Assam Valley before turning eastward for their off-load points in China to avoid the threat of Japanese interception. Since some of the mountains overlooking the Assam reached well above 20,000 feet, C-54 operations had been ruled out. The capture of Myitkyina allowed more direct routes into China, routes that could be transited at much lower altitudes.

Now the C-54 could be introduced, helping increase the amount of tonnage over the Hump since the latest versions of the Skymaster were capable of transporting as much as seven tons on the comparatively short legs required for the airlift (the distance from the C-54 bases in India's Assam Valley to Kunming was only 500 miles).

Shortly after the capture of Myitkyina, Brig. Gen. William H. Tunner arrived in India to take command of the India-China Wing of the ATC. Tunner had developed a fondness for the new Skymaster, and before he left the United States for India he proposed that C-54s be sent to India to replace the less reliable C-87s and C-46s. His rationale was that the C-54 was a safer

Continued on page 68

By Eric Ethier

All photos: National Archives

Imbroglio at Brolo

An American amphibious operation during the Sicily campaign ran into trouble from the start.

FRESH OFF A TENSE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH MAJ. GEN. LUCIAN Truscott, Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., climbed into a jeep and rumbled over to Truscott's 3rd Infantry Division headquarters east of Terranova, on Sicily's northeastern coast. Dusk had fallen on August 10, 1943, and the gung-ho general with the ivory-handled pistols on his hips wanted action. Specifically, he wanted an amphibious operation scheduled for that night to go ahead as planned despite the protests of his subordinates.

"Goddamit, Lucian," Patton roared, "what's the matter with you? Are you afraid to fight?" Truscott brushed off his boss's challenge. "You have ordered the operation and it is now loading. If you don't think I can carry out orders, you can give the division to anyone you please."

The problem, Truscott insisted, lay in linking his advancing infantry with the landing force before regrouping German defenders shoved them into the sea. But Patton would not be moved.

A month into Operation Husky, the Allied campaign for Sicily, Patton was pushing his Seventh Army hard in an effort to seal the Axis escape route at Messina. While the 9th Division pressed the 15th Panzergrenadier Division northwest of towering Mount Etna, to the south Truscott's 3rd Division was driving the 29th Panzergrenadier Division eastward from the ridges along coastal Highway 113 and the Tyrrhenian Sea. South of Etna, meanwhile, Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery's Eighth Army was hurtling toward Messina up the island's mine-strewn southeastern coast. Keen to bag German prisoners and equipment, Patton was equally eager to outpace Montgomery and earn some accolades for his young army.

But Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's Axis legions (by early August, mostly Germans under the direction of General Hans Hube) were moving grudgingly. Forced from the formidable Etna Line on August 5, the 29th Panzergrenadier Division withdrew behind blown bridges to new positions along the San Fratello Ridge. With the help of Admiral Lyal A. Davidson's Task Force 88 transports, Lt. Col. Lyle Bernard's 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, leapfrogged the German position by sea on August 7-8, gaining 12 miles in a hair-raising raid.

Hoping for still better results, Patton ordered another amphibious operation for the night of August 9-10. Designed to skirt the new German defensive positions along the Naso Ridge, on the Cape Orlando-Randazzo line, this one would place American GIs just west of the town of Brolo. With luck, the balance of Truscott's onrushing 3rd Division would roll up a tidy bag of German prisoners. But after allowing one postponement caused by a damaged LST (landing ship, tank), Patton was in no mood to heed the last-minute requests of Truscott and Maj. Gen. Omar Bradley, commander of the U.S. II Corps, for another.

Once again, the job fell to the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, a gritty bunch that reflected the spirit of its commander. Closer in appearance to a college professor than a typical infantry leader (he was destined for a post-Army career teaching mathematics), Lyle W. Bernard was spectacularly lean and sported a wisp of a moustache on his long face. Just 33, this thoughtful Idaho native habitually chewed on a pipe and referred to himself as "the Old Goat." But he had also entered West Point from the soldiers' ranks and was a smart, tough, and cool customer.

LEFT: Crossing a steep embankment somewhere in Sicily, American infantrymen advance single file as they pick their way through a vineyard. RIGHT: All quiet after Allied forces captured the island, Brolo beach on Sicily is shown in January 1944.

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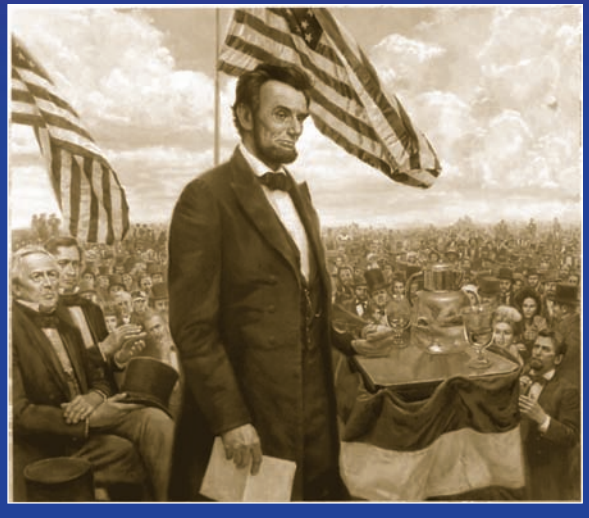

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Bernard's understrength command included perhaps 650 men, his weary 2nd Battalion backed by five medium tanks from the 756th Tank Battalion, eight self-propelled guns from the 58th Armored Field Artillery, and engineers from the 10th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 540th Amphibious Engineer Regiment. Tagging along to watch was an impressive squad of press men led by veteran battlefield scribes Jack Belden (*Time* and *Life*), Don Whitehead (Associated Press), and Homer Bigart (*New York Herald Tribune*). Each watched as Bernard spoke to assault troops gathered atop his LST before they climbed down into their assault boats.

On August 11, 1943, an American soldier digs in with his heavy machine gun on a hillside near Brolo. U.S. forces attempted to outflank German troops with an amphibious landing near this site during Operation Husky.

"I didn't want to make this operation," he declared. "I didn't think I had enough men, enough tanks, or enough time. And I, like you, am tired." Noting the reassuring presence of three coast-hugging destroyers and the light cruiser USS *Philadelphia,* he added, "If we catch that bastard this time, we'll be in Messina within a week."

Bernard's target was Monte Cipolla, the double-humped nose of a ridge that petered out 450 yards short of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Commanding both the coastal road and the stone-housed village of Brolo, just to the east, it was held by only the tiny headquarters force of Colonel Fritz Polack's 29th Artillery Regiment, the balance of which was posted alongside portions of the 71st Panzergrenadier Regiment in and beyond Brolo.

After staking out a beachhead between the dry Brolo and Naso riverbeds that flanked Monte Cipolla, Bernard would cross Highway 113 and occupy it with two companies. But he expected quick and heavy counterattacks and was counting on assistance from the 7th and 15th Infantry Regiments backed by the 30th Infantry's two remaining battalions which would quickly fight through General Walter Fries's 29th Panzergrenadier Division (the 71st and 15th Panzergrenadier Regiments) and across the rugged Naso Ridge.

Under a star-filled sky and the protective guns of the *Philadelphia* and six destroyers, landing craft lugged Task Force Bernard ashore between 2:43 and 3:30 AM on August 11. Slowed only by barbed wire, Company E split up to secure the landing site's flanks, bridges over the Brolo River to the east and the Naso River to the west. While engineers struggled to wheel the armor and field artillery into position, Companies F and G, fortified with the heavy machine guns and 81mm mortars of Company H and trailed by Bernard and his battalion headquarters, dashed inland.

In the quiet, predawn darkness, the extended line crept over a massive railroad embankment, through a large lemon grove, and over a high stone wall to cross Highway 113. Crouching low, the troops let an oblivious motorcyclist pass. Then came the ominous rattling clunk of metal on pavement.

"We dived behind a stone wall," newsman Bigart recalled, "waiting for what seemed an eternity. The clanking grew steadily louder and finally materialized as a German half-track." The lumbering vehicle slowed, and nervy Americans blasted its driver with rifle fire. When a German officer stopped to investigate moments later, a GI blasted his car with a bazooka.

"By this time," Bigart noted, "the Germans in Brolo were thoroughly awake."

Surprised Germans posted around Brolo fired off flares and opened fire as Bernard's men struggled up the nose of Monte Cipolla, a treacherously steep, brick-hard height topped by scrub trees and Colonel Polack's headquarters outfit. Polack's outgunned party tore up the slopes around the scrambling Americans with small-arms fire, killing several, then beat a hasty retreat off the hill and into Brolo.

Trading their rifles for shovels, the Americans went to work digging slit trenches and setting up mortar positions with Company F on the first hump and G slightly behind and to its left. Others assigned the labor to a group of German soldiers found napping in a ditch, apparently unfazed by the fire. By the time *Philadelphia* began delivering supporting fire at 5:38, Monte Cipolla was secure.

Caught off guard by the American landing, General Fries ordered Polack to organize an attack on Bernard's fragile, 2,000-foot-wide beachhead while he dispatched help from the west. He got further help from the terrain as gaping gullies and monstrous stone walls soon immobilized each of Bernard's five M4 Sherman tanks, rendering them all but useless. Bernard's 105mm self-propelled guns had no better luck maneuvering into the terraced rise below the highway, and their crews set up shop in the lemon grove below.

As the sun climbed into a cloudless sky above Bernard's hilltop stronghold, German scouting parties crept down the Ficarra Road and dusty bed of the Brolo River to the southeast. Company G fire shattered both. Spotting a company of 15th Panzergrenadier Regiment reserves along the dusty bed of the Naso River to the west, Bernard's GIs greeted them with rattling machine guns and thumping mortars. The attackers retreated minus 30 of their comrades.

Then, at about 9 AM, a procession of trucks carrying 71st Panzergrenadier infantrymen rumbled down Highway 113 from Cape Orlando. From the deck of the *Philadelphia,* the procession resembled a bumbling line of ducks in a huge shooting gallery. Together with Bernard's seaside artillery, her six-inch guns plastered the twisting highway and sent numbed German infantrymen diving for cover.

By late morning, however, Bernard was beginning to worry. Provided with air cover only until noon, the *Philadelphia* and her destroyer escort steamed west for the safer waters off Palermo. Germans mowed down the Americans' ammunition-carrying mules in their hillside tracks, squeezing off Bernard's supply line from his parked DUKWs (amphibious vehicles better known as "Ducks") and forcing his mortar crews to ration rounds.

Grass fires sparked by exploding shells sizzled across Monte Cipolla, burning up telephone wires and cutting off thirsty GIs from the height's only stream. Still more difficulty was forthcoming. Pressed by Truscott's advancing infantry, Lt. Col. Walter Kreuger was marshaling his 71st Panzergrenadier troops for another push down the coast. Shortly after 11 AM, Polack packed two companies of infantry into personnel carriers, backed them with a half dozen tanks, and sent them rumbling out of Brolo. From his lonely olive grove headquarters atop Monte Cipolla, Bernard watched as the Axis pincers closed on his command.

For help, Bernard could only appeal to Truscott, who was anxiously monitoring developments from his command post. Beginning at 11:40 Bernard called for air, naval, and finally

Lieutenant Colonel Lyle W. Bernard (left) and radio man Private Joseph C. Boycik establish communications and rest in their makeshift command post on a Sicilian hillside after the successful landing at Brolo on August 11, 1943.

artillery support; Truscott responded by turning loose his 155mm Long Tom artillery on Brolo, and relaying appeals upward to Patton.

Reporting Polack's advance at 12:30, Bernard radioed: "Must have everything." As minutes passed and substantial aid failed to materialize, his appeals became increasingly desperate. At 1:05, Bernard reported, "Situation critical." At 1:40, he radioed, "Enemy counterattacking fiercely. Do something."

Some help arrived in the form of the returning *Philadelphia,* whose guns began booming again at 2:04 PM. While the cruiser's shells chewed up the coast, a dozen A-36 fighter-bombers, the ground attack version of the North American P-51 Mustang fighter, arrived to blitz Brolo. A second group followed a half hour later. But the effective one-two, sea-air punch quickly fizzled. Stymied by a loss of radio contact and convinced the ground situation was in hand, Admiral Lyal Davidson pulled the *Philadelphia* away from the coast once more.

Jumping at his sudden advantage, Krueger unleashed his artillery on Bernard's fragile beachhead while three tanks smashed across Bernard's Brolo River flank. Closing quickly on Battery B's howitzers, Polack's tankers quickly destroyed two; a third American crew then confronted a German tank in a point-blank duel that left each vehicle in flames. Wheeling in support, a Battery A gun holed a second tank and sent the third rolling back to the cover of town after pausing to blast Battery B's remaining gun.

Monitoring the shoreline contest from smoke-draped Monte Cipolla, Bernard showed little anxiety. Don Whitehead recalled that he was "puffing at his dead pipe as though this were a Sunday afternoon picnic and he was enjoying the antics of a playful group of children."

To firm up his flanks, Bernard sent Company F scrambling downhill to the vital Brolo overpass to relieve besieged Company E riflemen, who, in turn, trekked west to join their company mates at the Naso bridge. Then tragedy struck. Racing to Bernard's aid just after 4 PM, the A-36s misplaced their payloads. Exploding bombs killed 19 Americans and wrecked all four of Battery A's 105mm guns. Bernard calculated his options and chose to consolidate, ordering all units to join him on the heights of Monte Cipolla.

"We are now preparing to make one of Bernard's last stands," he told one officer. "We will go into a tight circle on the hill and defend ourselves with rifles."

Heeding urgent Seventh Army calls, the hard-working *Philadelphia* appeared yet again to blast German targets. Opening up at 4:31, the cruiser quickly drew the guns of buzzing Focke Wulf Fw-190 fighters.

Then, another quirk of misfortune all but sealed Bernard's fate. Hitching a ride out to the cruiser to reestablish broken communications, a fire control officer inadvertently spurred a confused exodus of Ducks. American fighters arrived to cover the strange retreat, but Bernard's badly needed ammo was lost. By 5:25 PM, his situation was dire: "Must have navy and air on 702504 (coordinates) immediately or we are lost," Bernard's aide radioed Truscott. Lacking air cover, the *Philadelphia* steamed westward at 6:25, this time for good.

Darkness and fog descended on Monte Cipolla as Companies E and F scrambled for the hilltop retreat. Thwarted by shadowy terrain and German fire, GIs clung in pockets to the flats below the ridge top. Those who reached the summit extended Bernard's thin line and defended it with grenades and machine-gun fire. Tracers zipped across the dark landscape like neatly organized fireflies.

Jack Belden testified that enemy bullets smacked "against the hard ground and churned into confusion the hill, which swarmed with figures running and cursing and falling down." During lulls in the action, German chatter flitted up from the highway; enemy footfalls sounded in the surrounding hills. Come daylight, Bernard told his diehards that they should be ready to slip from their trenches and try to reach Truscott's lines.

At the last moment, lady luck finally smiled on Bernard. A day earlier, General Hube had implemented full-scale German evacuation plans, and Fries's 29th Panzergrenadier Division had received orders to withdraw eastward with all haste. Turning from the pesky force atop Monte Cipolla, German troops began piling into trucks and rumbling east down shell-blasted Highway 113. Truscott's 3rd Division, meanwhile, had surged up the coast, across Naso Ridge, and into Bernard's backyard. At 1:30 on August 12, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry troops made contact with the 2nd Battalion.

"Then," said Sergeant Jack Dailey, "we came down off the hill. But a lot of guys didn't."

Of Bernard's 650 men, 177 were casualties; at least 40 were dead. Greeting a relieved General Truscott that morning, Bernard said, "General, you just don't know how glad I am to see you."

Arriving later that morning to view charred bodies strewn across the surf, Patton crowed about the battalion's accomplishment. Some of the newsmen were not in the mood. "All at once," Whitehead wrote, "the whole little tableau sickened me."

Had the ships been available to support it, a larger assault force likely would have trapped much of the 29th Panzergrenadier Division. As it was, only Bernard's grit, sharp gunnery from the *Philadelphia,* and Hube's withdrawal orders had prevented what might have been the task force's annihilation. By the time Patton buttoned up Messina on August 17, barges had ferried some 40,000 German soldiers and 10,000 vehicles across the Strait of Messina to the Italian mainland. □

Author Eric Ethier writes from his home in Narragansett, Rhode Island.

By Kelly Bell

The Art Archive/Imperial War Museum

Stealing the Enemy's Eyes

The Bruneval Raid was crucial to gathering information on a new and dangerous German radar system.

THE PARACHUTE OF APTLY NAMED MAJOR J.D. FROST CRACKED OPEN IN THE freezing air high above the French Channel coast at 12:45 AM, and he commenced drifting down through the moonlit gloom. It was light enough for him to pick out the landmarks he had memorized from countless reconnaissance photographs. A foot of fresh snow cushioned and muffled his landing. He checked his combat knife and American .45-caliber automatic pistol. They were still with him and in good order.

After the din inside the Whitworth Whitley bomber, the silence of the nocturnal French countryside in midwinter was deafening. While Frost's soldiers touched down nearby, he disconnected the red locater light on the equipment canister that had landed next to him. He led his men to the cover of a nearby tree line and hoped the softly falling snow would cover their tracks before first light. Everything had gone smoothly. So far.

On January 21, 1942, Lord Louis Mountbatten, as the newly appointed commander of the Royal Navy Combined Operations Department, presented to the British Chiefs of Staff a proposal for a commando raid on a cliffside facility on the coast of German-occupied France. The Royal Air Force's Photo Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) had detected a suspicious installation that counter-intelligence thought might house a new radar device British agents had heard of recently.

This revolutionary apparatus could supposedly lock onto a Lancaster, Wellington, or Stirling bomber with a narrow beam and unerringly guide Luftwaffe night fighters to it. A pilot flying a Spitfire specially adapted for reconnaissance had recently taken a priceless photo of a worrisome mechanism resembling a huge saucer standing on edge. It was set up on a seaside cliff just north of the French coastal village of Bruneval. English technicians desperately wanted to examine one of these machines and devise a means of counteracting it before it could be brought into widespread, destructive use.

On May 8, 1941, a Wellington bomber, designated a Ferret since it was adapted to home in on radar pulses, had detected the signature of an apparatus on the revolutionarily accurate range of 570 megacycles. London frantically adjured its espionage operatives on the Continent to learn all they could about this unexpected technical development.

The agents managed to learn that these new sets were called "FMG," but did not know what these initials meant. It actually stood for Funk Messgerat (radio-measuring apparatus), and the spies managed to pass the news to London that four of the mysterious devices were operating in Vienna. This was so deep inside the Third Reich that these sets had to be receivers, absorbing data sent to them from other locations.

Late in 1941 someone calling himself a "well-wisher in the American Embassy in Berlin" managed to forward to London a most interesting photograph. The print showed a newly erected flak tower in Hitler's capital. On top of the tower was a metal lattice aerial that looked like a saucer standing on edge. A few weeks later a Chinese scientist working in Berlin visited the U.S. embassy and confirmed the photographic report. He described the dish as 20 feet in diameter and parabolic shaped.

Mountbatten was confident one of these new radar sets could be grabbed by a commando unit and returned intact to Britain. He asked for a company of paratroopers, a section of airborne Royal Engineers, a couple of RAF radar mechanics, a squadron of Whit-

In this painting by Richard Eurich, British commandos drop by parachute onto the cliffs at Bruneval and scramble across the beach from landing boats.

ley bombers to ferry the commandos to France, and adequate naval elements to return them to England.

Bruneval is located in a huge ravine that ends in a cliff-encircled beach that PRU planes could meticulously map. In agreeable weather the beach seemed an acceptable spot for landing craft to pick up the special unit. Mountbatten quickly obtained approval for the operation and contacted the commander of the Army's airborne forces, Maj. Gen. F.A.M. Browning, to recommend a unit for the project. Browning selected the newly formed 2nd Parachute Battalion (virtually all of the Army's experienced outfits were already occupied), which was assembling at Hardwick Hall in the Midlands.

Frost had been serving in a conventional role as adjutant of the 2nd Parachute Battalion when the order came to send one company to Wiltshire on the Salisbury Plain, where it would receive training for a special assignment. The unit selected was C Company (also known as Jock Company), and Frost, who had just turned 30, was its commanding officer. He was to train separately from his men at the RAF parachute training center outside Manchester.

When Great Britain and Germany had independently discovered radar in the 1930s, neither country knew the other had it. It was the British who would need it first, and if they did little else to prepare for the coming conflict with the Third Reich they did perfect an aircraft early warning system. By the time war erupted they had developed radar to an extent beyond that of any country in the world, but the Germans still knew absolutely nothing about the United Kingdom's sophisticated network of radio direction finding posts.

This did not mean that Nazi technicians, mindful of their Führer's impatient expectations, toiled any less feverishly on their own technology. By late 1941 they had produced an apparatus that threatened the existence of the budding Allied strategic bombing offensive. Across the English Channel, the British military prepared to react to this peril.

Back in November 1940, an RAF reconnaissance aircraft had photographed a couple of odd-looking circular depressions in the Le Havre area. At first glance they looked like cow pens, but closer examination revealed they were no more than 20 feet in diameter. Further overflights confirmed they were flak pits; but what would the Germans have in this isolated area that needed protection from aerial attack?

The following February, British radio monitors picked up radar pulses on 120 megacycles.

Imperial War Museum

A reconnaissance photo of the German radar station at Bruneval reveals certain features that may not be readily apparent to the untrained eye. However, the large dish located a distance from the house is rather obvious.

This banished the mystery of the cow pens. They were antiaircraft installations placed to protect a radar installation, and presumably the worrying 570-megacycle sets would also have to be in this area since it was the only route Allied bombers had for their runs into German-occupied Europe. The realization that Hitler had not only the most powerful air force in the world but also radar to forewarn it of approaching warplanes was sobering. Something had to be done.

Headquartered aboard the landing ship HMS *Prins Albert,* Jock Company spent January 1942 drilling intensively and frustratingly on the rocky, windswept, icy beaches of Loch Fyne on the Argyll coast. The company's center of operations was the town of Inveraray, and the unit endured an agonizing training period. Practicing nocturnal landing and embarking in landing craft on the boulder-littered beaches was not only difficult but also dangerous in the crashing, freezing surf.

The tides seemed always to be flowing in the wrong direction, and when drilling on how to pick up the commandos after the raid the landing craft crews had great difficulty finding the dark-clothed commandos on the beaches at night and frequently did not see flashlight signals and flares from the men on shore.

Although the troops could not help but wonder about the quality of training they were receiving, there was no doubt it was at least preparing them for the worst. They figured the mission could not possibly be harder than the training.

The British were not the only Allies working hard to ensure the success of the coming assignment. In Paris a French spy code-named Bob was a crucial part of the operation. His real name was Robert Delattre, and on the evening of January 24, 1942, he received two coded transmissions from his control center in London and passed them on to his chief, Gilbert Renault, the legendary Allied spy who went by the cover name Remy. Aided by his wife, Edith, Renault decoded the message: "24.1.42 TO RAYMOND CODE A NO 49 need information indicated questionnaire message that follows stop ... inform us within forty-eight hours delay necessary obtain this information observing following conditions firstly do not act yourself nor gravely risk members your organization secondly do not compromise success operation Julie stop…to deceive boches in event your agent taken he be ready to reply same question not only for place chosen but for three or four other similar places on coast stop to follow…."

Although his cover name was Remy, Renault was addressed as "Raymond" in coded messages. Operation Julie was his impending air trip to London to receive his next assignment. The evening's communications continued: "24.1.42 TO RAYMOND CODE A NO 50 questionnaire first position and number machine guns defending cliff road at theuville repeat theuville on coast between cap antifer and saint jouin latter being seventeen kilometers north le havre secondly what other defenses

Imperial War Museum

Discussing the plan of attack for the Bruneval raid, Major John Frost, left, confers with another airborne officer. Note the distinctive Pegasus shoulder patch of the 6th Airborne Division on Frost's uniform.

thirdly number and state preparedness defenders stop ... are they on qui vive stop ... first class troops or old men stop ... fourthly where are they quartered fifthly existence and positions barbed wire [message] ends."

On his first wartime visit to London, Renault had met the Free French commanding general, Charles de Gaulle, who flattered him by assigning him as Allied intelligence's eyes and ears for the entire French Atlantic coast. One of Renault's early spy recruits was one Roger Dumont, an embittered officer of the recently defeated French Air Force.

Code-naming his new man "Pol," Renault assigned him to keep close and vital tabs on Luftwaffe activity throughout the region. Dumont quickly informed Renault of a suspiciously well-guarded German radio installation just north of Bruneval. When Renault passed this information on to London, the British intelligence chiefs were very interested and commenced laying plans for the commando raid.

In Le Havre another of Remy's agents, a mechanic code-named "Charlemagne," was the purpose of Remy's flight to England. Charlemagne's real name was Charles Chauveau, and Remy was ordered to assign him the task of chauffeuring Pol from Paris to the coastal area near Le Havre so he could study the area and draw maps to be used to prepare for the coming raid.

When the two spies were examining the installation, they noticed the guards were awfully bored and not at all vigilant. They also saw a German enter the compound by pulling open a camouflaged door in the barbed wire perimeter and, showing no sign of caution, walk into the building across a stretch of open ground surrounded by "CAUTION: MINEFIELD" signs. After noting the guards' blasé attitude, the location of the hidden entrance, and the bogus minefield, they examined the adjacent beach. Careful to visit at low tide, they could see there were no anti-landing-craft obstacles that would be submerged at high tide, when the commandos would be coming in order to have a shorter distance to cover from the water's edge to the radar post. After leaving the beach they visited a nearby black market restaurant Charlemagne knew of, and Pol studied the register and wrote down the names of all the higher-ranking German officers stationed in the area. By sending these names to London, Allied counterintelligence could learn from earlier obtained lists the designations and quality of the Wehrmacht units guarding the installation.

Meanwhile, a young physical chemist named F. Charles Frank, on loan to the RAF from Aberdeen University's College of Natural Philosophy, was working on the project. While looking over a batch of recon photos of installations of the Germans' older Freya radar sets, he saw something else interesting. There was an isolated house near the Freya installation. This structure was presumably quarters for the radar station's guards, but there was an intriguing little path that led south from the house to the radar installation and veered to one side to pass next to a small black dot before continuing on to the radar shack. It was not big enough to identify, but the fact that the path connected the dot to the barracks indicated it was something important. When Frank reported this to his immediate superior, Professor R.V. Jones, also of Aberdeen University, Jones and his colleague on the project, mathematician Claude Wavell, ordered more photos taken of this intriguing dark speck.

These pictures led Wavell to conclude that this inauspicious looking dot might be the source of the 570-megacycle pulses that were responsible for the steadily increasing bomber losses over Germany. Information from this surreptitious set, which the Germans called Wurzburg, was being transmitted to the receiving stations in Berlin and Vienna, from where it was sent to coastal fighter airfields to vector aircraft to the British bomber formations.

Jones passed this information on to Lord Frederick Cherwell, Prime Minister Winston Churchill's scientific adviser, and from that point the raid on Bruneval began to take shape.

As data on the target arrived, C Company assigned code-names to the assorted aspects of the objective and the area surrounding it. The enemy beach defenses were designated Beach Fort, Redoubt, and Guard Room. The isolated house near the set became Lone House, a nearby farm was Rectangle, and the Wurzburg radar was Henry.

Frost reviewed his orders: "To capture various parts of Henry and bring them down to the boats. To capture prisoners who had been in charge of Henry. To obtain all possible information about Henry and any documents referring to him which may be in Lone House."

Frost's commando team would be divided into three 40-man sections, each group with its own distinct assignments. The units would jump at five-minute intervals, with the first 40 men parachuting at 12:15 AM.

This 40 would move as quickly as possible to the beach. When Frost gave them a signal from his position slightly inland, they were to take Redoubt, Beach Front, and Guard Room, thus securing the company's route from the objective to the beach. As soon as their area of responsibility was secured and swept for mines, they would signal the Royal Navy elements offshore that the raid was under way and the line of retreat was established. This aspect of the operation was perhaps the most crucial simply because it was impossible to be sure how many Germans would be manning the defenses after midnight, whether they would be surprised, or their quality and resolution.

The second 40-man element was to establish a defense line west of Rectangle to guard against enemy counterattacks on Henry and Lone House. They would also surround Henry and Lone House and then work on dismantling and bagging as much of Henry as possible.

The last 40 men would serve as a screen inland of the radar installation as a reserve in case help was needed by one of the other groups and to be a rear guard as the entire company withdrew to the beach.

As in any commando operation, speed was essential. All men would deploy as quickly and silently as possible. Due to darkness, Frost would be unable to tell for sure when his men were in position, but when he estimated it had been long enough he would signal for the attack to begin by sounding four blasts on his whistle. The drop zone was east of a dirt road east of the objective and running north to south. A nearby tree line would serve as an assembly point.

The raid was scheduled to commence during the predawn of Tuesday, February 24, 1942, but immoderate weather forced repeated postponements. At noon on Friday the 27th, Browning personally arrived at Frost's headquarters in the Channel coast town of Tilshead and handed down the word from 1st Airborne

Division headquarters: "The raid is on for tonight."

That afternoon the *Prins Albert* took on her regular crew plus 32 Welsh commandos who would secure the beach departure point after Frost and his men completed the mission. Two destroyers and five motor gunboats escorted *Prins Albert*. The gunboats each packed two two-pounder cannon, four half-inch Vickers machine guns firing a mixture of tracer and armor-piercing cartridges, and four depth charges in case of enemy submarine contact.

At 9:52 PM in freezing, inky blackness, *Prins Albert* lowered six commando-laden landing craft into the cold Channel waters. Each vessel carried its regular Navy crew and four soldiers armed with Bren guns who would provide cover should the commandos be pursued to the beaches after the mission. Her task done, *Prins Albert* headed home.

The gunboats and landing craft then closed on the French coastline. There was a bright moon, good visibility, and little wind so far, but the wind was forecast to pick up uncomfortably early in the morning.

Frost and his command leaped into the night and touched down, but not all was well. Two of the 10-man light assault sections, composed entirely of Scotsmen and commanded by Lieutenant E.C.B. Charteris, were missing. Their planes had strayed off course and dropped them a mile and a half to the south, just east of the town of L'Enfer.

Imperial War Museum

Taken prisoner during the raid on Bruneval, a pair of Germans is searched during the voyage back to Britain. One of the captives is a member of a Luftwaffe unit, while the other is an infantryman.

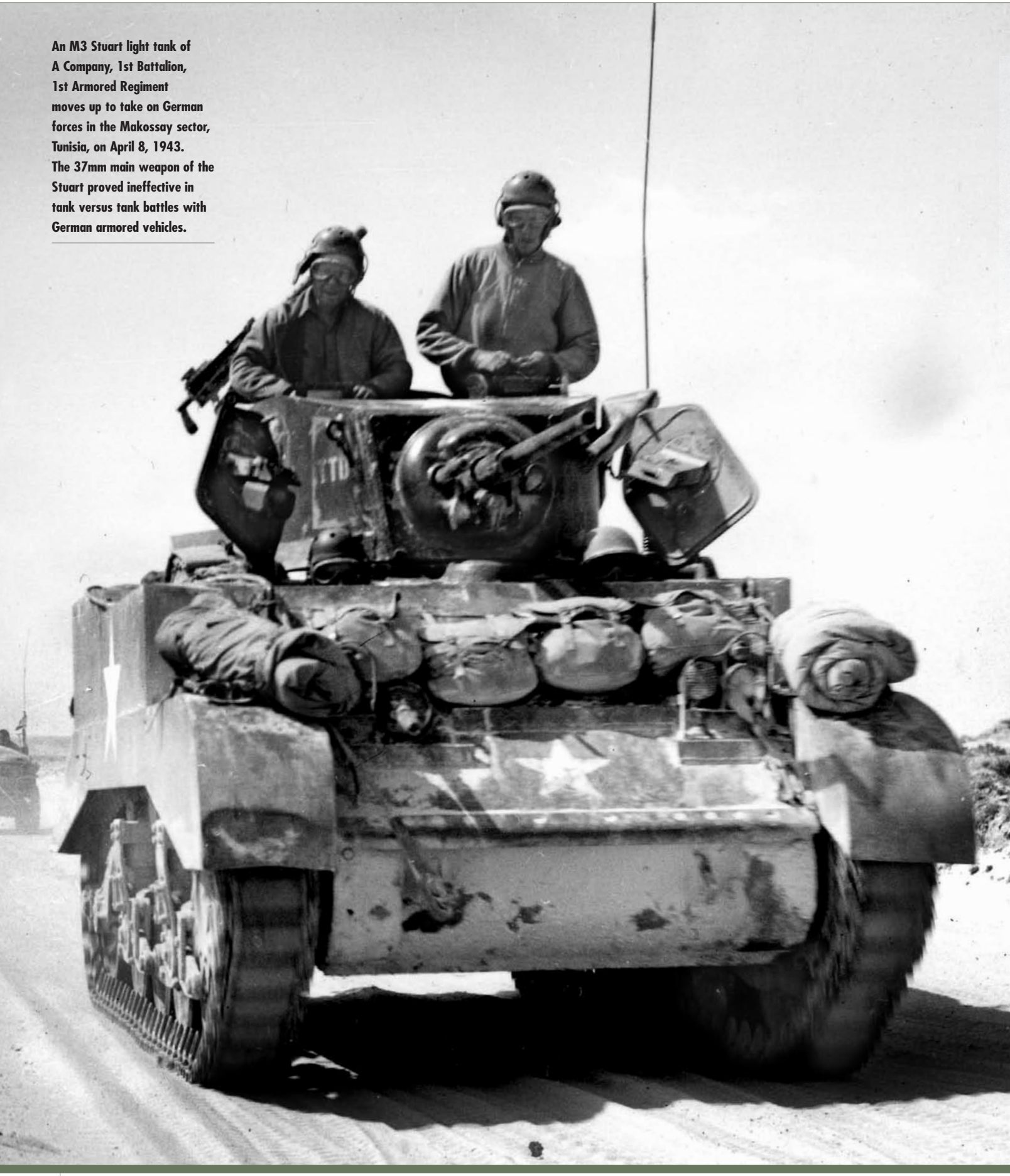
After waiting a few minutes, Frost realized he could delay no longer. He led his 40 men toward the Lone House to commence dismantling Henry. To their astonishment they found the door wide open and the structure's ground floor unoccupied. The Wurzburg radar was unguarded.

As several of his men crowded inside and surrounded the apparatus, Frost stayed outside long enough to sound four piercing blasts on his whistle. Seconds later a solitary, half-asleep German on the second floor began firing his Mauser down the stairwell at the Britons around the radar set. Three commandos rushed onto the stairs and, as he was clumsily working his rifle's bolt action, riddled him with their Bren guns. These three then searched the rest of the building and were amazed to find it empty.

Lieutenant Peter Young led a group of commandos in a charge against the radar dish and quickly overran it. Most of the Germans fled without hesitation, but the British managed to take one prisoner who had no desire to be a martyr. He quickly told Frost's interpreter that he was part of a Luftwaffe communications regiment, just the kind of prisoner Frost was supposed to take; that about 100 of his regimental comrades were bivouacked at Rectangle; and that, although they were armed with small arms and mortars, as signalers they were not experts in their weapons' usage.

Even if these communications specialists were not frontline veterans, they quickly opened fire on Lieutenant Peter Naumoff and his 20 men who had established a defensive line

Continued on page 70



An M3 Stuart light tank of A Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment moves up to take on German forces in the Makossay sector, Tunisia, on April 8, 1943. The 37mm main weapon of the Stuart proved ineffective in tank versus tank battles with German armored vehicles.

National Archives

TANK BATTLE IN Happy Valley

AN AMERICAN ARMORED BATTALION'S INTRODUCTION TO COMBAT RESULTED IN TWO VICTORIES: ONE AS A RESULT OF INITIATIVE, THE OTHER COSTLY AND HARD WON. BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

THE U.S. ARMY entered the war in North Africa in November 1942, eager to engage the German and Italian armies and prove itself their equal. In the months to come it would be introduced to combat and would learn hard, expensive lessons along the way.

Many American soldiers would receive rude shocks about the true nature of modern combat, the inadequacies of some of their weapons and equipment, and the raw inexperience of not only themselves but their leaders as well. It was a tough period for the Army, but it was also a tempering one, a forge that would begin to shape and harden men into the weapons they needed to be to carry the fight from Tunisia to Germany itself.

akg-images

German tankers in North Africa have unbuttoned their hatches to look for the enemy.

The 1st Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment (1/1) of the 1st Armored Division was one of the units destined to enter this crucible; its initiation into combat included a number of smaller engagements that led to the first tank battle between a regular American armored unit and the panzers of the German Army (a small detachment of American tankers had in fact served with the British earlier in 1942 in order to gain experience). The 1/1 could trace its lineage back to the 1830s and the U.S. Regiment of Dragoons through various cavalry units until it finally became the 1st Armored Regiment in July 1940. In May 1942, the unit shipped to Ireland and began training until its eventual movement to England and the selection of its parent division to take part in Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa.

The 1st Battalion was equipped with the M3 light tank, now commonly known as the Stuart, though during the war American tankers rarely if ever used this British-applied name. The other two battalions of the regiment used the larger M3 medium tank, standard organization for an armored unit at that time. The men of the 1st knew their tanks were smaller than their medium counterparts, but they still tried to undertake the same missions.

The M3 was reliable, quick, and agile. The crews had trained with them for many months and knew them well. They were aware the tank had some shortcomings. Its narrow track made for tough going on soft ground, and it had poor visibility when buttoned up, all hatches closed. The men had taken comfort, however, in the tank's armor and also in its diminutive 37mm cannon. They would soon discover the extent of their misplaced faith.

The battalion commander was Lt. Col. John Knight Waters, son-in-law of the soon to be famous General George S. Patton, Jr. Serving under him was 29-year-old 2nd Lieutenant Freeland A. Daubin, a platoon leader in A Company. Daubin would bear witness to the battalion's first fights and later write an extensive firsthand account of the action.

In October 1942, more than 70,000 American soldiers boarded transports destined for the shores of North Africa, and the men of the 1/1 were among them. The soldiers loaded their light tanks aboard three oil tankers that had been converted into the first landing ships,

tank (LSTs) of the war, under the flag of the Royal Navy. The soldiers were unaware of their destination as the convoy set out for Oran, Algeria, escorted by five armed trawlers.

After 20 days, the ships arrived offshore and the landings began. The battalions equipped with light tanks, including the 1/1, were landed first because the landing craft available could not carry a tank as large as the medium M3 Lee. The medium tanks would wait in the holds of transports until a port had been secured. In the confused fighting that took place against the Vichy French forces, the battalion was ordered to take control of the Tafaraoui airfield, about 10 miles south of Oran itself.

On November 8, Colonel Waters moved his unit there and secured it, preventing interference by the landings of the Vichy air force. B Company, under the command of Captain William Tuck, a Georgian, was the first unit of the battalion to arrive at the airfield. They got to the field without resistance, but the French started shooting at them with antiaircraft guns when they were partially across it. Luckily, the guns could not depress far enough to hit the American tanks.

"The action there only lasted an hour and it was not very intense," Tuck said. "We considered it intense at the time…. We had a lot to learn."

THE FRENCH RESPONDED the next day by ordering a column to advance north toward the airfield from the Foreign Legion post at Sidi-bel-Abbes. This force was mechanized and included a number of Renault R35 tanks. Aerial reconnaissance spotted the column as it wound its way north, continuing despite attacks from Allied aircraft. The 1/1 was ordered to intercept the Vichy force, so Colonel Waters deployed his tanks south down the road the enemy column traveled.

The two columns met and engaged near the town of St. Lucien, about seven miles southeast of the airfield. Tuck's B Company, again in the lead, was deployed with two platoons in front and the third about 500 yards behind, supported by some T30 half-tracks carrying 75mm pack howitzers. The French force had time to take up defensive positions atop a small hill. A sharp but one-sided tank battle ensued, in which the French tankers were badly defeated.

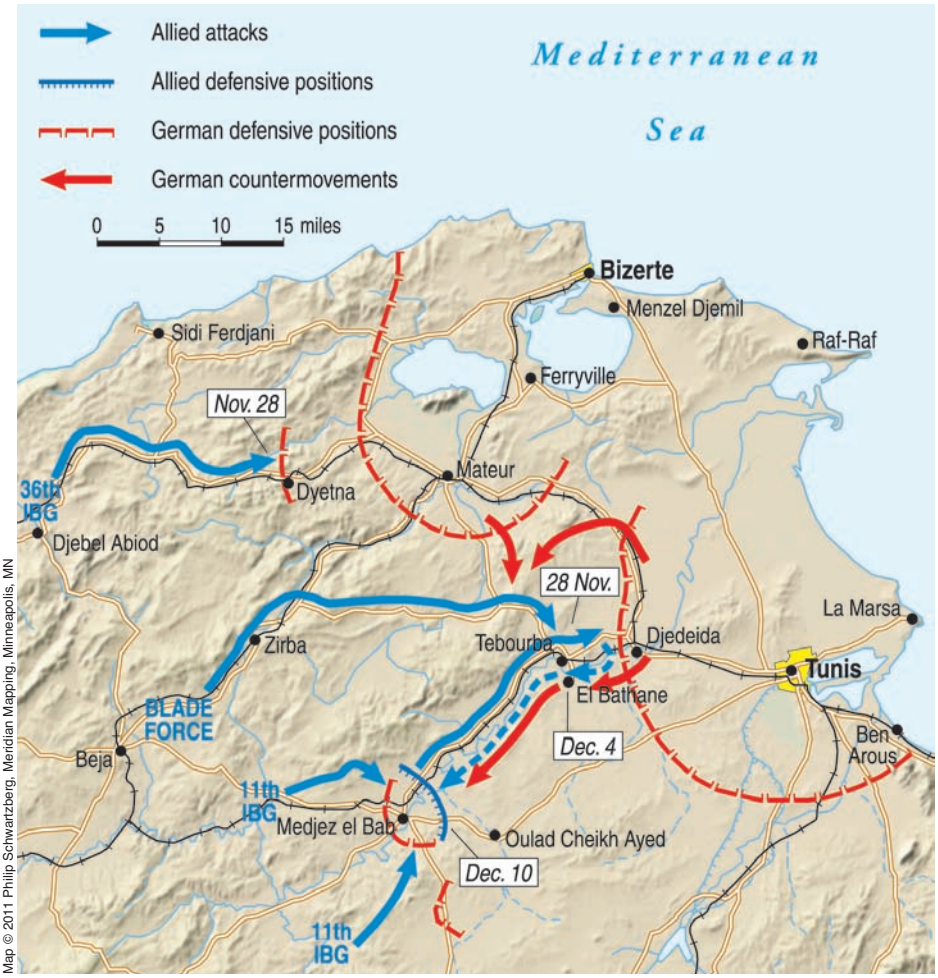
Tuck laid down a base of fire with one platoon while the other two assaulted the Vichy position from the right. The French rounds bounced off the M3s while the American rounds penetrated. At the cost of only one American wounded and one tank damaged, B Company knocked out 14 R35s, many of them set afire. Tuck belatedly realized that, if the French tanks had been equipped with effective cannon, his company would have taken heavy casualties; he resolved to fight more wisely in the future.

After the fighting against the Vichy French ended, the men were quite pleased with themselves and the performance of the battalion. This quickly developed into what some thought was a careless attitude toward the upcoming showdown with the Germans. This was of great concern to Colonel Waters, who addressed his men on the subject and warned them not to get too cocky. Daubin remembered Waters telling them, "We did very well against the scrub team. Next week we hit German troops. Do not slack off in anything. When we make a showing against them you may congratulate yourselves."

Afterward, the 1/1 loaded its tanks aboard trains and the troops into a truck convoy and began the trip into Tunisia to meet that German foe at last. Offloading at Souk Ahras, the battalion became part of the Allied effort to occupy Tunisia and block the retreat of General Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps, thought to be pulling back in preparation to evacuate North Africa. Allied intelligence estimated the Germans were evacuating as many as 10,000 troops a day through Tunis and Bizerte and that the remaining soldiers were poorly equipped and had only obsolete tanks. Instead, Axis reinforcements were pouring in and preparing to fight.

As Daubin later reflected, "The figure 10,000 proved to be correct, except that they were coming in—not leaving." As the unit made its way east, it came under sporadic air attack. Tuck recalled that the battalion quickly learned to spread out its vehicles to reduce the danger. Along the roads, British engineers had placed signs: "Don't sit and die—jump and run."

Assigned as part of the joint British-American battle group nicknamed Blade Force, the battalion bivouacked north of the town of Beja. There it joined with a British armored regiment, the 17/21st Lancers, and prepared for the advance. Morale was still quite high, and many of the men expressed fears that the Germans might escape



Map © 2011 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

The maneuvers of the Eastern Task Force in the North African desert resulted in some of the first encounters between American armored units and the battle-hardened tanks and infantry of the German Afrika Korps under the command of the legendary Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

before the Americans could get a shot at them. Waters reported to Beja, headquarters for the Blade Force, to receive his orders.

Those orders turned out to be some of the vaguest instructions any battalion commander ever received. He was told to create a "tank infested area" around the Chouigui Pass, which connected the Tine River valley of northern central Tunisia to the Plain of Tunis. Just how to "infest" the area with tanks was not explained; there was a sense, however, that the area was perhaps a soft spot in the Axis line. The difficulties were many; air and artillery support were almost nonexistent, save the battalion's own mortars and howitzer-toting halftracks.

Likewise, there was no infantry support, a severe limitation for an armored unit that depended on infantry to help protect it from enemy antitank guns. Supplies would have to be brought up from Beja, over 30 miles to the southwest. Still, with such orders Waters would have a chance to exercise his own initiative and discretion. His troops were soon to come up against the main team he had warned his men about.

The 1/1 moved out the next morning, November 25, 1942, forming the right side of the advance alongside the Lancers as they spread out across the floor of the valley. German aircraft flew overhead but, intent on their assigned targets, ignored the armored force below them. The area was full of rugged hills that were cut by the narrow, three-mile-long Chouigui Pass (quickly renamed by the troops as "Chewy Gooey Pass"); it was a key feature of the area that Waters realized would have to be held in order for the battalion to accomplish its task. A hard-surfaced road wound its way west from the town of Chouigui through the pass before turning north to the town of Mateur.

National Archives

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ABOVE: Flush with victory, German soldiers of the Afrika Korps move through the recently captured town of Tebourba near Tunis in December 1942. By this time, however, the tide had turned against the Germans. The British Eighth Army had won its great victory at El Alamein in October. TOP: This Stuart light tank, a later M5 version, is shown during combat maneuvers in the United States. The Stuart's thin armor and light 37mm weapon combined with its high profile to make the vehicle susceptible to German armor-piercing shells.

WATERS QUICKLY deployed his three companies, assigning A Company, under Major Carl Siglin, the task of holding the west end of the pass to protect against any German advance southward down the road from Mateur. B Company, under the now Major Tuck (all the company commanders had been promoted after the actions around Oran but as yet remained in command of their companies) would hold the eastern end of the pass facing Chouigui. Major Rudolph Barlow, the C Company commander, would take his tanks on a reconnaissance to the east of the pass.

While the companies carried out their missions, two Italian tanks were spotted coming south down the road from Mateur, apparently trying to scout out the American positions. Lieutenant "Red" Yale, a platoon leader in Headquarters Company, led the tanks of the battalion command section against them and quickly knocked them out. While he was doing that, the battalion reconnaissance platoon discovered an enemy-occupied farmhouse about one and a half miles north of the pass on the Mateur road. Consistent with farmhouses in the area, it was actually a small complex of buildings surrounded by a stout wall. As much a small fortress as a farmstead, it was built to resist the depredations of local raiders and bandits and would now prove just as resistant to American soldiers.

Major Siglin's A Company was ordered to attack the farmhouse but not to become so heavily engaged they could not carry out their primary mission of defending the western end of the pass. Siglin ordered his first and second platoons forward, and the battle began. The German defenders opened fire with rifles and machine guns, having little effect on the tankers. Unfortunately, the fire from the cannon and

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Newly delivered Stuart tanks undergo testing in the North African desert. Later, the U.S. supplied the heavier M3 Lee tank, with a sponson-mounted 75mm gun in the hull and a turret-mounted 37mm cannon.

machine guns of the Stuarts had little effect on the stout walls of the farm. The tanks then came under fire from several antitank guns concealed in a cactus hedge near the complex's front gate. The Americans returned fire to suppress the enemy gunners. Soon one of the Stuarts had been knocked out and another disabled.

Lieutenant Daubin took his 1st Platoon command tank through a vineyard on the south side of the farm and right up to the enemy-held wall. In front of that wall was a trench line filled with German defenders, who popped up to fire at Daubin's tank with rifles and submachine guns. Daubin opened fire in return, killing many of them. Now, at point-blank range from the wall, the tank began to take fire from more German riflemen who were poking the barrels of their Mausers through loopholes in the stone. The experienced German troops quickly knocked out every vision prism on the tank, forcing Daubin to take risky glances out of the hatch.

One loophole obviously contained a machine gun, and Daubin fired several 37mm cannon rounds directly into it, apparently disabling the enemy gun. However, he noticed that with the last shot from his cannon its recoil mechanism froze, leaving the 37mm gun stuck out of battery and now useless. As Daubin tried to reform his platoon to continue the attack, orders came over the radio to fall back and return to the pass. His tank was covered with rifle and machine-gun bullets that had hit the tank, flattened out, and stuck to the hull, causing the Stuart to look like it had a "three day growth of beard."

With the tank platoons pulled back, the farmhouse was shelled by the assault gun and mortar platoons. As showers of red terra cotta-style tiles were blown from the roof with every hit, there was little other effect and the bombardment was soon ceased. Without infantry or artillery support, the farmhouse would remain in German hands, though under surveillance. A Company resumed its defensive positions at the pass.

Soon after A Company had returned to its positions, a solitary German Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive-bomber appeared overhead. Flying low over the position, it dropped a single bomb to no real effect and flew away. Soon after, however, a squadron of enemy planes, a mix of Ju-87s, Ju-88 bombers, and Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters came overhead and attacked the company; apparently the lone plane had been a scout testing the defenses.

DAUBIN NOTED WITH pride that every one of the .30-caliber antiaircraft machine guns in his platoon was quickly manned to repel the German attack. His pride succumbed to dismay when every one of the guns immediately jammed. The boxes holding the belts of .30-caliber ammunition were slightly wider than the length of the rounds; the bouncing and vibrations of the tank during normal movement had caused some of the rounds to work loose from the belts, causing jams. Daubin's gunner got off about 10 rounds between three jams as a Stuka dived toward them on a strafing run.

Nearby, the company first sergeant, Henry Surowski, climbed atop the command half-track and manned its .50-caliber machine gun, firing bursts at the planes when they swooped down on an attack run. The men in the company maintenance section clustered around their own half-track, firing away with their 1903 Springfield rifles. The air attacks went on for several hours as the enemy planes returned after rearming. Many of the American troops sheltered in a nearby wadi until a lucky hit sent debris and rocks flying into it.

Daubin and his machine gunner reloaded their gun with a fresh belt from inside the tank and let loose on the next plane to fly over them. Leading their target, they watched as their tracer rounds seemed to impact the nose of the enemy plane but it flew off, seemingly unaffected. Unfortunately, the effort seemed to draw the attention of the next plane, an Me-109 that strafed them as they stood exposed atop their M3. Both of them jumped off the tank and took cover with the rest of the platoon.

An errant bomb struck a nearby hillside, landing in the middle of a herd of goats, wounding or killing almost all of them. Their piteous cries were heard by the entire company until one soldier could take no more and went up the slope with his rifle, putting the poor creatures out of their misery. A Stuka pilot flew slowly and defiantly overhead, shaking his fist at the Americans as his machine gunner in the rear cockpit fired.

Soon after, the raid was over. The troops moved around, checking for casualties and damage to their precious vehicles and equipment. A Company had been relatively lucky; no tanks knocked out, a few light wounds, and only one man dead. While checking, however, they found that a man from the 3rd Platoon was missing, a soldier named Smith who had a brother in the company. Smith had been a crew member of the Stuart tank knocked out earlier at the farmhouse. Because his wounds made him unable to move to safety during the battle, he had threatened to shoot himself if his fellow soldiers had risked themselves to move him. His tank commander, a sergeant named Smarts, had grudgingly agreed to leave him, though the platoon had returned later in their tanks to look for him. As nightfall descended, the search had been called off for fear of crushing the man under the treads of the searching tanks.

Major Siglin, however, refused to give up on the soldier. He asked for a volunteer who knew Smith's rough location to go with him to get the man. Immediately Sergeant Smarts stepped up, and the two set out in the major's jeep.

The rest of the company watched as Siglin and Smarts risked their lives to save the wounded Smith. It was not yet completely dark, and a number of nearby haystacks had been set ablaze by the day's fighting, giving the Germans

good visibility of the rescue attempt. Quickly three of their machine guns opened fire on Siglin's jeep, white tracers flashing about it. The odds seemed heavily against the two men. Then bursts of pink tracers began racing back toward the Germans; Sergeant Smarts was firing back with the jeep's .30-caliber.

This tiny but ferocious battle went on for a few minutes. The jeep came limping and sputtering back to the American positions, steam escaping from its punctured radiator, three tires flat and flapping. Siglin and Smarts had found Smith and brought him back, and not one of them had been hit in the attempt. It was an inspiring and heroic act on the part of the two men.

WHILE A COMPANY was fighting its battle at the farmhouse and enduring air attacks, C Company was conducting its reconnaissance east of the Chouigui Pass. Its orders included checking the condition of two bridges in the towns of Tebourba and Djedeida. Both bridges crossed the Mejerda River and provided routes to the east and Tunis. In accordance with the mission of "infesting" the area, Major Randolph Barlow, the company commander, was authorized to engage any enemy formations encountered if practical. These orders were to prove fortuitous and would lead to a number of successful engagements.

The first occurred as the company moved through the pass. Halfway to the eastern end, a small German scout detachment of several cars was encountered. This group was quickly destroyed, and the company continued eastward. The town of Chouigui lay at the eastern end of the pass, and the American tankers moved right in, gaining complete surprise over a company-sized element of German reconnaissance troops in more cars and motorcycles. Caught unaware, these troops were quickly cut down by the cannon and machine guns of the American M3 tanks. Bodies and wrecked vehicles soon littered the town.

With two successful engagements under the unit's belt, Major Barlow then pointed his company south toward Tebourba. Moving at full speed, they made for the bridge. A small detachment of Germans guarded it, and within minutes they succumbed to the superior fire of the American tanks.

Barlow's remaining objective, the bridge at Djedeida, was five miles to the east. He reasoned that by now the Germans in the area must be alerted to his presence. He moved his company off the road and into adjacent olive groves, providing some concealment. After just two miles the groves thinned out, but Barlow continued, his advance guard led by a Lieutenant Hooker.

ullstein bild

ABOVE: Lieutenant Daubin's platoon was attacked for several hours by Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive-bombers and Messerschmitt Me-109s, like these photographed over North Africa in 1942. BELOW: The wreckage of German aircraft near Tunis. Major Barlowe's C Company attacked the airfield containing the same fighters and bombers that had flown against Lieutenant Daubin's platoon earlier in the day.

National Archives

Hooker's platoon moved ahead of the rest, stopping on a ridge to survey what lay beyond. What the Americans saw both astounded and excited them. A German airfield lay spread out before them, dozens of planes parked and vulnerable. Ironically, this was the same mixed force of fighters and bombers that had attacked A Company earlier in the day.

Hooker reported his find to Barlow, who took the initiative and quickly brought his company on line to attack the airfield. The major placed his tank at the center of the line, with Hooker's platoon on his left and another commanded by Lieutenant Bud Hanes on the right. Lieutenant "Daniel" Webster's platoon formed a second line and followed the first in. Their hasty plan completed, the company roared off the ridge and attacked the airfield.

C Company's charge was reminiscent of a horse cavalry charge from a history book or a Western, and the result was utter chaos for the Luftwaffe troops below. Resembling "fat geese on a small pond," the German planes were destroyed by the U.S. tankers. Cannon and machine-gun fire poured from each tank, riddling enemy planes where they sat. A few tankers took their M3s and crushed the tails of

National Archives

An American light tank moves to the front during the Allied offensive in Tunisia.

fighters under their treads.

One tank quickly moved to the end of the runway. Some of the German pilots were desperately trying to get their planes airborne before they were destroyed. As each enemy plane tried to take off, the tankers fired a round of 37mm canister into the cockpit area. After such a hit, the plane would careen out of control and crash in a ball of flame. Some of the enemy pilots were so intent upon escape that they crashed their planes into one another. Still others made for an almost comical scene as they tried to taxi away from the field, an M3 chasing each down to destruction. Eleven planes were quickly destroyed, and only two got off the ground.

Major Tuck, dug in on the east end of the pass, could actually observe the fight and had been relaying radio traffic from Barlow back to Waters. "Rudy [Barlow] called me and said, 'We're laying down a base of fire now and we'll be attacking.'" Members of B Company watched the attack unfold, seeing their brethren rampage over the airfield.

ON THE GERMAN END, the attack indeed caused quite a shock. Some Germans had thought the oncoming tanks were friendly at first, and even waved at them. When the attack began, Arndt-Richard Hupfeld, an Me-109 pilot of Jagdgeschwader (fighter squadron) 53 mistook the attackers for a British unit and recalled, "There was a mad scramble when British tanks attacked our base. Messerschmitts took off in every direction. Suddenly I saw a 109 coming straight toward me.—A head-on collision would have been unavoidable had the other aircraft's cowling not flown off just as it was about to lift off, whereupon the other pilot closed the throttle and did not take off. I just cleared the other aircraft and thus avoided a catastrophe."

With the airfield personnel driven off or killed, the tankers turned their attention to the nearby hangars with more planes, fuel stocks, repair shops, and other supplies. All of these quickly went up in flames. The final count stood at 36 aircraft of all types destroyed, not including a number of planes still in crates in the hangars. The two planes that had taken off lingered a while to strafe the American tanks; they killed two tank commanders, including Lieutenant Hanes, as they stood vulnerable in the hatches of their M3s.

One other tank disappeared entirely; no one in the company saw it or the crew again. Deciding they had done all they could for the day, Major Barlow pulled his company back to the Chouigui Pass. C Company had dealt a serious blow to the Germans, destroying over a company's worth of enemy ground troops and dozens of valuable aircraft the Luftwaffe sorely needed to defend against the American advance. The next year Major Barlow received the British Military Cross for the action, although strangely, no publicity was given to this award. The Germans were dismayed by the report of this attack, received at the same time as a false rumor about American tanks nine miles outside Tunis.

With darkness overtaking the area, Waters situated his battalion for the night. He had been informed that the 1/1 would now become the Blade Force reserve. C Company was positioned on the east side of the pass as a guard force. A Company was situated high on a hill, three-quarters of a mile south of the western end of the pass while B Company was placed slightly north of the same entrance.

At dawn Major Tuck placed his company on the reverse slope of a ridge that paralleled the roadway. Carefully, he positioned every tank hull-down so that only the turrets stood above the crest of the ridge, enabling them to sweep the road with cannon fire. The road itself lay only 50 to 100 yards from their position. Headquarters Company was two miles to the west at a complex known as Saint Joseph's Farm. The tankers of A Company had christened the area "Happy Valley," after the air attack they had endured earlier. The rest of the battalion quickly took up the ironic name.

The day began quietly, the soldiers drinking tea and smoking ersatz cigarettes made from leaves rolled in toilet tissue. A flight of German bombers came overhead but passed by. Major Siglin left A Company to go the battalion command post. Daubin, Lieutenant John Deck, the company maintenance officer, and First Sergeant Surowski were at the command halftrack talking when they saw movement on the road, coming their way. Daubin and Deck had trouble making out what was approaching, equipped as they were with older-model low-magnification binoculars. The first sergeant, however, had liberated a pair of French naval binoculars in Oran, much more powerful than what the officers had. What he saw through them excited him, and he passed them to Daubin.

A cloud of dust had reached the walled farm where they had fought the day before. Dimly visible through the dust were a number of vehicles, each with what appeared to be a long boom extending from it. The three men concluded it had to be a German engineer unit unaware of the American presence ahead. If they continued along the road they could be ambushed easily.

Their hopes were dashed as enemy shells began to land among the company. They had been spotted, and not by a unit of engineers. Instead, the approaching Germans were a unit of Panzer Battalion 190 with 13 Mark IV tanks, equipped with long-barreled 75mm cannon the American tankers had never seen before. The standard Mark IV had a short-barreled 75mm L24 cannon, a relatively low-velocity weapon primarily intended for firing high-explosive rounds in a support role. This new variant, the Mark IV F2, had the much deadlier, longer-barreled L43 weapon and had been in service for only a few months prior to the Operation Torch landings.

Some sources state that the German force was a mixed one of perhaps six Mark IV F2s

and a few Mark IIIs, with some Italian armored vehicles in support. While it is more likely the German force was composed of mixed tank types, Daubin's account mentions only the Mark IVs. In any event, it was a formidable force for the Americans, who were equipped only with light tanks.

Colonel Waters saw the enemy column from his position at the farm, calling it "a beautiful column, preceded by some pathetic Italian reconnaissance vehicles." Major Siglin saw the enemy movement as well and quickly commandeered a jeep to get back to the company. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Deck ordered the company to ready for action. The tankers of A Company started their engines, quickly took down camouflage netting, and removed excess gear from their tanks. Now ready to go into action, they sat awaiting their commander's return.

AS THEY WAITED, the company had an excellent vantage point for watching an attack on the enemy formation by the battalion's assault gun platoon. Led by Lieutenant Ray Wacker, this platoon was composed of three 75mm pack howitzers mounted in half-tracks. As the men of A Company looked on, the three vehicles moved across the valley floor in a wedge formation toward the oncoming panzers.

At just under 1,000 yards from the enemy formation, the half-tracks broke out of a small olive grove and set up to fire. Each howitzer's section chief ran out and set up stakes to aim the weapons. Within moments the center gun was firing ranging shots at the lead German tank. Just as quickly, the range was found and all three cannon opened fire, each firing 10 rounds as fast as it could.

The gun crews had no armor-piercing or antitank ammunition. Nevertheless, they threw high-explosive shells at the closing panzers. The initial 30 rounds all fell close to the first tank, with several direct hits. The tank slewed to a halt, and the American gunners shifted to the second tank, then the third.

The explosions created bursts of smoke and kicked up great clouds of dust. After a few moments, the three lead German tanks moved out of the dust and opened fire on the assault gun platoon. The explosive rounds had proven ineffective against the tanks' armor. Luckily for the howitzer crews, the Germans were firing armor-piercing rounds that tore into the ground around the half-tracks. If they had fired explosive rounds, the blast and shrapnel would surely have caused loss among the Americans.

Lieutenant Wacker quickly received orders from Waters to withdraw. The assault guns laid a barrage of smoke to cover their retreat and they fell back without loss.

The German armored column had not been stopped, but it had been delayed long enough for Major Siglin to return to his unit and plan his attack against the German right flank, while B Company across the road would fire on the German left flank from its hull-down positions.

Siglin mounted his command tank, Iron Horse, and prepared to lead his company in the attack. Daubin's 1st Platoon now had only three tanks; none of them had working radio transmitters. He commanded the center tank so he could direct the other two tanks with hand and arm signals. His platoon sergeant, Bud Hall, and another sergeant named Schwartzkopf commanded the other tanks. They smiled encouragingly at their leader.

Daubin later wrote with a sense of pride, "I don't believe any lieutenant ever commanded a better combat platoon than this one." His platoon moved out on the right flank of the company.

As they moved through the scattered olive trees, Daubin spotted an Italian light tank a few hundred yards on the flank of the German column. He stopped his M3 long enough to put two rounds of armor-piercing ammunition into it. A third round, this time high-explosive, set the enemy tank afire. Daubin noticed, however, that several of his company's tanks were now burning as well.

The German tanks had barely had time to move out of their column formation, so quickly had A Company launched its attack. The long barrels of their cannon were pointed at the approaching M3s, and now they replied with their own deadly fire.

Daubin pulled his tank into a small wadi for partial cover from the German fire. He selected an enemy tank, only 140 yards away, as his target and opened fire. Armor-piercing 37mm rounds flew at the Mark IV as quickly as the crew could load and fire. The German crew located Daubin's tank and turned its tank head-on, putting its thick frontal armor toward the attacker.

Even though the little M3 was well within the Mark IV's range, the Nazi crew moved forward, closing the range. The M3s gun popped and snapped like an angry cap pistol. The loader jammed rounds into the breech, and Daubin fired them, practically unable to miss at such close range. He watched as the tracers from his armor-piercing rounds flew into the hull of the German tank and then bounced away in a shower of sparks. The now desperate American crew fired 18 rounds at the German. None of them penetrated its hull or turret.

At 50 yards the German tank fired, but, surprisingly, the round fell short, hitting the bank of the wadi and bouncing away. Daubin later mused that the "German gunner must have been addled or the gun not bore-sighted for such short ranges" for the shot to have missed.

National Archives

Americans watch as a German ammunition dump is hit by Allied fire and erupts in a tremendous explosion.

The German tank now closed to 30 yards, mounting a small rise that robbed the M3 of what little cover it had. Daubin ordered his driver to back out as fast as he could and to zigzag in order to throw off the German aim, but to keep the frontal armor facing the enemy. The driver calmly replied "Yes sir!" and started to back the tank out of the wadi.

Then the Germans fired again. This time, the round struck home, crashing through the front of the M3's hull. The driver was killed instantly;

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Both presenting a haughty Fascist salute, German dictator Adolf Hitler and Spanish Nationalist Generalissimo Francisco Franco met at Hendaye, in occupied France and very near the border with Spain. During the conference of October 23, 1940, Hitler hoped to cajole Franco into joining the war as an Axis partner. To his consternation, Franco refused to acquiesce.

Cat AND Mouse

SPANISH DICTATOR FRANCISCO FRANCO HELD HITLER AND THE NAZI REGIME AT ARM'S LENGTH THROUGHOUT THE WAR. BY MICHAEL D. HULL

AFTER HIS HEADY series of victories in the spring and early summer of 1940, Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler was in for a frustrating six months.

With lightning blitzkrieg campaigns, his armies had vanquished the Low Countries—Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg—and France, where the Vichy puppet government had been set up. Yet an eventual triumph over Great Britain remained, even in his mind, less than certain. Royal Air Force Fighter Command mauled Luftwaffe bomber formations sent to soften up the island nation before an invasion, and opportunities to deal Britain a mortal blow in the Mediterranean Sea had been missed. There, the Royal Navy held the lifelines, while in the Western Desert a British army had destroyed Italian forces three times its size. Hitler and his high command had to devise peripheral ways to "break the British will to resist." Strung out thinly and standing alone against the Axis powers, the British had to be isolated and the Mediterranean closed to the Royal Navy.

Besides Russia and Japan, it was principally from Italy and Spain that Hitler's military chief of staff, General Alfred Jodl, hoped for military support to bring about this desired end. He suggested mining the Suez Canal or inducing Spain to capture Gibraltar with German aid, a suggestion that opened up vistas of carrying the war to the Atlantic islands and vital shipping routes.

Gibraltar was the fulcrum. Captured by Britain in 1704 during the War of the Spanish Succession, retained by treaty in 1713, and made a crown colony in 1830, Gibraltar guarded the narrow entrance to the western Mediterranean from the Atlantic Ocean. A great 1,398-foot rock honeycombed with 25 miles of tunnels containing supply and ammunition dumps, workshops, offices, and barracks, Gibraltar was the only Western Allied stronghold on the European continent until 1943. It was the home base of the Royal Navy's powerful Force H, and convoys for Egypt and Malta were organized from there. In time it was to play a crucial role during the long siege of Malta and in the Allied invasion of North Africa. Gibraltar also housed the then headquarters of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander of Allied forces in the Mediterranean Theater, and its airstrip extending into the sea was crammed with 600 aircraft used to cover the landings.

In 1940 Hitler could not foresee Eisenhower, but Spain's President Francisco Paulino Franco was a sharp thorn in his side and in the side of his military advisers. Although Spain had joined the Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936, under which Germany, Japan, and Italy agreed to threaten the Soviet Union from both east and west, Franco had had no second thoughts since he declared neutrality when World War II broke out on September 1, 1939. Hitler's many reasons for wanting him in his camp were artfully met by the Spanish leader, who set a high asking price for his country's belligerency and kept raising it.

Gibraltar regularly drew air attacks by Italian and Vichy French bombers and sabotage raids by Italian naval units. Crippling Britain was the aim, dependent as she was on manpower and raw materials from India and her other eastern colonies, shipped by way of the strategic Suez Canal and past Gibraltar. As British Prime Minister Winston Churchill observed later, "Spain held the key to all British enterprises in the Mediterranean," since Gibraltar was regarded as indefensible in the event of aggression by Spain.

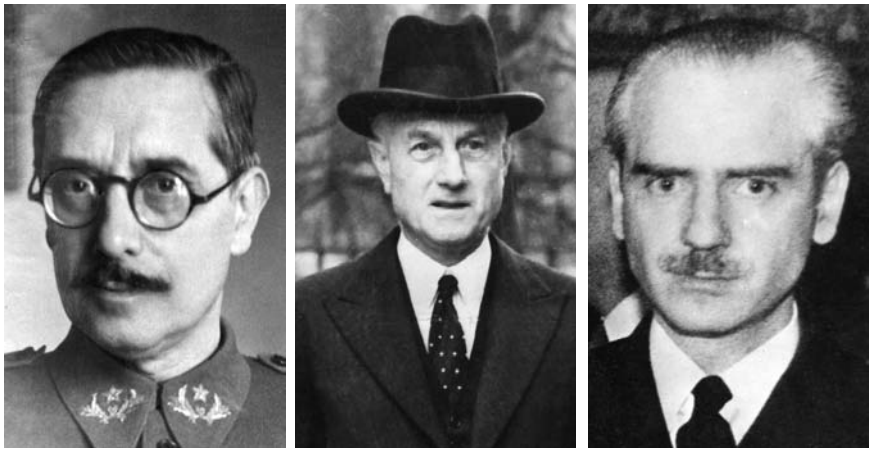
Spain's Franco, commonly referred to as "El Caudillo," was in a league by himself. Cool-headed, calculating, and subtle, he knew that Spain's interests would not be helped by belligerency. Three years of civil war had left his country's economy in tatters and its people literally dying of starvation. "They had had enough of war," Churchill would write later. "A million men had been slaughtered by their brothers' hands. Poverty, high prices, and hard times froze the stony peninsula."

All that notwithstanding, reasons of geography brought pressure from

Except as noted, all photos: National Archives

both the aggressors and the Allies to be exerted on Spain for assistance to each side. "All we wanted was the neutrality of Spain," Churchill explained. "We wanted to trade with Spain. We wanted her ports to be denied to German and Italian submarines. We wanted not only an unmolested Gibraltar, but the use of the anchorage of Algeciras for our ships and the use of the ground which joins the Rock to the mainland for our ever-expanding air base. On these facilities depended in large measure our access to the Mediterranean.

"The attitude of Spain was of even more consequence to us than that of Vichy, with which it was so closely linked," Churchill added. "Spain had much to give and even more to take away. We had been neutral in the sanguinary Spanish Civil War. General Franco owed little or nothing to us, but much—perhaps life itself—to the Axis Powers. Hitler and Mussolini had come to his aid. He disliked and feared Hitler. He liked and did not fear Mussolini. At the beginning of the World War, Spain had declared, and since then strictly observed, neutrality. A fertile and needful trade flowed between our two countries, and the iron ore from the Biscayan ports was important for our munitions."



LEFT: Spanish Foreign Minister Juan Beigbeder had once enthusiastically supported the Nazis but was firmly convinced that Spain should remain neutral. CENTER: British Ambassador to Spain Sir Samuel Hoare planned to evacuate British nationals from Madrid in the event of war with Spain. RIGHT: Spanish Interior Minister Serrano Suñer, Franco's brother-in-law, traveled to Berlin with hollow assurances that Spain would enter the war.

Born in Galicia in 1892, the short, stocky Franco had graduated with honors from the Toledo Military Academy in 1910 and distinguished himself in fighting against Moroccan insurgents. He was known for "incomparable bravery and for extraordinary good luck under fire." A rightist, puritanical martinet, he served as governor of the Canary Islands and commanded the Spanish Army of Africa after it revolted. His capture of Melilla, Spanish Morocco, on July 18, 1936, touched off the Spanish Civil War. Three years of bloody conflict ensued, during which he defeated the Communists and preserved Catholicism. Franco became absolute dictator on August 4, 1939.

Fearing that the Spanish leader might succumb to German pressure, the British sent a new ambassador to Madrid on June 1, 1940. Sir Samuel Hoare's mission was to plan the evacuation of the British diplomatic and business colony there and to do all he could to prevent Spain's entry into the war on the German side. Sir Samuel met with the Spanish foreign minister, Juan Beigbeder, a former German sympathizer who was now convinced that his country needed to stay neutral. An agreement was reached on June 24, 1940, to extend the British-Spanish trade pact.

Meanwhile, the German hope was that Generalissimo Franco would declare belligerency after resolving his country's economic difficulties. Gathering his generals at the Berghof, his mountaintop retreat in southeastern Bavaria, on July 13, Hitler announced that he intended to draw Spain into the war "in order to consolidate the front against Britain from the North Cape to Morocco." That same month, he told Italian high officials that the German staffs were thinking "very seriously" about the possibilities of attacking Gibraltar. Code-named Operation Isabella-Felix, Hitler's plan called for the capture of Gibraltar, the Spanish Canary Islands, and the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands.

HITLER'S DIRECTIVE was clear-cut: "Political measures to bring about the entry into the war of Spain in the near future have been instituted. The aim of German intervention in the Iberian Peninsula will be to drive the English from the western Mediterranean. (a) Gibraltar is to be captured and the Straits closed; (b) the English are to be prevented from gaining a foothold at any other point on the Iberian Peninsula or in the Atlantic islands."

Franco sent envoys to talks in Berlin at which Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's arrogant, bumbling foreign minister, casually mentioned that Germany wanted to annex one of the Spanish Canary Islands for a naval and air base. It was useful information, for Franco.

Among those in the German high command working on the plan was the short, rumpled Admiral Wilhelm Franz Canaris, head of the Abwehr military intelligence service. Cultured, brusque, and enigmatic, he was known for his keen intelligence and sober judgment. Hitler picked him to negotiate with Franco.

"Willie" Canaris, brought up in a wealthy and happy Westphalian family of right-wing but liberal Protestants, had distinguished himself in the Imperial German Navy during World War I. He skippered a U-boat in the Mediterranean, became addicted to espionage, and eluded British and Italian counterintelligence. It was rumored that he once met the legendary Mata Hari in Spain.

Canaris had mastered Spanish and performed veritable feats of espionage in Italy and Spain. He retained a lifelong fascination with Hispanic culture. Nicknamed the "Little Admiral" and "Old Whitehead" because of his prematurely white hair, he initially approved of National Socialism, owing perhaps to an intense aversion to communism. But he soon grew suspicious of Hitler's grand designs and consorted cautiously with anti-Nazi members of the Schwarze Kapelle (Black Orchestra).

As a member of Hitler's inner circle, Canaris had prepared the way for him in many ways. Before long, though, he became disgusted. During the Sudetenland crisis of September 1938, he called Hitler a "madman," aware that he was leading Germany to its ruin. Canaris's upbringing and experience precluded him from espousing the view of conservative contemporaries that the Hitler regime could be controlled; Germany was on a slippery slope toward the abyss.

Torn therefore between his duty as an officer and the demands of conscience, Canaris's attitude toward the German opposition was ambivalent. He never committed himself to an open coup but did provide the military conspirators with information and protection.

Canaris enlisted Jews into the Abwehr to help protect them, was often in conflict with the infamous Reinhard Heydrich and the SS, and reportedly passed intelligence on Hitler's invasion plans to MI-6, the British foreign

secret service. The extent of his dealings with the opposition would baffle Gestapo investigators until the end. Arrested in July 1944 on suspicion of subversive activity, Admiral Canaris was executed in April 1945.

Back in 1940, though, the Little Admiral was Hitler's choice to gauge the prospects for Operation Felix. He arrived in Spain on July 23. He and an entourage of Army officers had traveled in civilian dress and with false passports, by different routes. Three houses in Algeciras, the historic seaport six miles west of Gibraltar, were placed at their disposal. Canaris talked with Franco and Spanish military and diplomatic officials and requested maps of the British defense system at Gibraltar.

THE SPANISH were not encouraging. Franco did not dismiss the German plan out of hand but voiced manifold reservations. He feared the Royal Navy and thought it might retaliate against the Canary Islands. He also stressed his country's economic woes. To this, Spanish Air Minister Juan Vigón added the observation that a surprise attack on Gibraltar was impossible because only one road led there. It would take time to position the necessary artillery support, and the Spanish railway gauge differed from the French.

The meetings were cordial but yielded little encouragement. Canaris and his advisers spent two days taking a closer look at Gibraltar and frowned at what they saw. The steep slopes and unpredictable winds ruled out glider or paratroop drops, and the isthmus connecting the bastion to the mainland was apparently mined. The defenders would have a good field of fire from all positions.

When the results of the German team's four-day tour were discussed at a concluding parley on July 27, the outlook was not hopeful. A surprise attack was out of the question, the degree of Spanish commitment was uncertain, and, even if an assault were undertaken, the Spanish would need to make immense preparations to support a German expeditionary corps.

Despite the numerous obstacles, after Canaris and his team returned to Germany work was started immediately on a plan of attack. Hitler approved Operation Felix on August 24, 1940. Franco had agreed to participate, provided that his massive material demands were met, and Canaris notified General Franz Halder, chief of the Army General Staff, of the amount of weapons, grain, oil, rail cars, and foodstuffs that the Spanish leader thought he needed.

Canaris voiced pessimism about the whole endeavor and tried to bring Halder around to his way of thinking. It was the admiral's firm opinion that Franco would not get involved with Operation Felix until Britain was on its knees, and he advised that it would require a personal visit by the Führer to "work it." On September 14, Hitler told Halder and Field Marshal Walter von Brauchitsch, commander in chief of the German Army, that he was keen "to promise the Spanish all they want, even if we can't deliver in full."

On September 26, even before the postponement of Operation Sealion (the invasion of England), Admiral Erich Raeder, commander of the German Navy, told the Führer, "The British have always considered the Mediterranean the pivot of their world empire…. Germany, however, must wage war against Great Britain with all the means at her disposal and without delay,

ABOVE: Men and women have taken up arms to fight Franco's rebel forces during the Spanish Civil War, which ravaged the country during the 1930s. Franco prevailed with aid from the Nazis. BELOW: Motorcycle troops of Franco's Nationalist forces pause at Vimbodi during their advance on the city of Tarragona on January 26, 1939. Note the Italian flag flying in the background. Both the Fascist regime of Mussolini and the Nazis contributed manpower and matériel to the Nationalist war effort.

Shown at North Front aerodrome, planes of the British Royal Naval Air Section demonstrate the resolve of their government to maintain control of the bastion of Gibraltar at the tip of the Iberian Peninsula.

before the United States is able to intervene effectively. For this reason, the Mediterranean question must be cleared up during the (coming) winter months." Raeder proposed the seizure of Gibraltar and the dispatch of forces to Dakar, West Africa, and the Canary Islands.

In mid-September 1940, Franco had sent his brother-in-law, Interior Minister Serrano Suñer, to Berlin to assure Hitler that whenever Spain's supply of foodstuffs and war material was secure, Spain could immediately enter the war. In a receptive mood, the German leader promised that Germany would do everything in its power to help Spain.

Suñer was convinced of Germany's invincibility, but Franco kept his own counsel. He had told his generals, "I tell you that the English will never give in. They'll fight, and go on fighting, and if they are driven out of Britain they'll carry on the fight from Canada. They'll get the Americans to come in with them. Germany has not won the war." At the same time, Franco had to exercise care lest he exhaust Hitler's patience and subject Spain to the fate of Czechoslovakia and the other small countries that had stood in Hitler's way.

In a letter to the generalissimo, Hitler agreed to "recognize the Spanish claim to Morocco with the one limitation of assuring Germany a share of the raw materials of this area." The Führer promised military and economic aid "in the highest measure possible for Germany" and suggested that he and the Caudillo should meet to settle the details.

The Spanish leader's response was prompt and compliant. In a September 22 letter to Hitler, he wrote, "Your esteemed ideas satisfy our wishes.... We believe ourselves to be in complete agreement.... I reply with the assurance of my unchallengeable and sincere adherence to you personally, to the German people, and to the cause for which you fight. In defense of this cause, I hope to be able to renew the old bonds of comradeship between our armies."

THE CORDIAL words and diplomatic soft soap were just that; the letter made no mention of any date for Spain's entry into the war at Germany's side. In the Reich Chancellery, Hitler ranted wildly about "the Jesuit swine" and "the false pride of the Spaniard." During the first two weeks of October 1940, there was increasing disquiet in Berlin over Franco's delaying tactics, and Hitler's general staff even considered an assault against Gibraltar without Spanish help. General Halder had doubts about the venture; he thought that Gibraltar might even be taken without a fight, but if that was not the case then it would prove too costly. Other top military advisers placed little value on Franco because of the tattered economic situation in Spain.

German State Secretary Ernst von Weizsacker wrote, "My vote is that Spain should be left out of the game.... Gibraltar is not worth that much to us.... Spain is starving and has a fuel shortage ... the entry of Spain ... has no practical value."

Hitler determined otherwise. The significance of having Spain in the fascist Axis was primarily to cover the situation in the Mediterranean and North Africa against the background of Hitler's planned invasion of Russia and at the same time to relieve British pressure on Italy. Franco needed to be reminded that he owed his triumph in the Spanish Civil War to extensive military aid purchased from Germany and Italy, and the moment to redeem his promise to enter the war if given support was at hand. On October 12, Operation Sealion was shelved and the preparations for Operation Felix intensified.

On October 22, the Führer boarded his special armored train, curiously named Amerika, and left Germany. That evening, the train stopped at Montoire, north of Tours in west-central France, where Hitler conferred briefly with Vichy Deputy Premier Pierre Laval, who came aboard to arrange Hitler's meeting with Vichy leader Marshal Philippe Pétain on October 24. Then the Nazi leader headed for the little French resort town of Hendaye, just below Biarritz and opposite Irún, on the Franco-Spanish border. As the train rolled southwestward, Admiral Canaris warned Hitler that he would probably be disappointed by Franco, who was basically a hard-bitten diplomat.

The two dictators' cat-and-mouse game was about to be played out face-to-face. For the ruthless Führer the stakes were high, but the wily Spanish leader had no intention of being ensnared.

On October 23 the German train steamed into Hendaye for the rendezvous with Franco, at the edge of town where the French narrow-gauge and Spanish wide-gauge railway lines met. Hitler arrived in good time for the 2 PM meeting, but there was no Spanish train at the adjoining platform. It was a sparkling autumn day, so the punctual Germans were not annoyed as they stretched their legs, smoked, chatted, and viewed the spectacular scenery. After all, what could one expect from those indolent Spaniards with their interminable siestas?

One hour later, Franco's train appeared on the International Bridge over the River Bidassoa. The tardiness was not accidental and was not due to any siesta. "This is the most important meeting of my life," Franco told one of his generals. "I'll have to use every trick I can, and this is one of them. If I make Hitler wait, he will be at a psychological disadvantage from the start."

As the Spanish train drew alongside Hitler's,

Franco knew that the fate of his country rested on his ability to keep it out of the European war. But would Hitler let him remain neutral? If he gave the Führer a flat refusal, what could stop a German invasion? He had to cling to some slight point that needed further clarification, while giving the impression of joining the Axis.

Franco's Galician heritage was his armor as he stepped onto the platform and started toward Hitler to an accompanying blast of military band music. With their foreign policy aides in tow, the two leaders headed for their historic parley in Hitler's saloon coach.

CONDUCTED THROUGH interpreters, the meeting would last for almost nine hours. The Caudillo began with a set speech laden with compliments and promises. He said that Spain had always been "spiritually united with the German people without any reservation and in complete loyalty," and that in the present war "Spain would gladly fight at Germany's side."

However, he pointed out that the difficulties of doing so were well known to the Führer, in particular the food shortage and the difficulties that anti-Axis elements were making for his poor country in Europe and America. "Therefore," said Franco, "Spain must mark time and often look kindly toward things of which she thoroughly disapproves."

Hitler responded that in return for Spanish cooperation in the war he would let Franco have Gibraltar and some colonial territories in Africa. Offering up evasions while insisting on more concessions, the Spanish leader said his country needed several hundred thousand tons of wheat immediately; was Germany ready to deliver it? And what about the heavy guns Spain needed to defend its coast from possible attacks by the Royal Navy, not to mention antiaircraft guns?

Franco shifted from one subject to another, from recompense for the certain loss of the Canary Islands to the impossibility of accepting Gibraltar as a present from foreign soldiers. The fortress must be taken by Spaniards, he said.

With Franco wanting much and Hitler having little to offer, there was much quibbling. The Führer offered Franco a 10-year alliance and proposed a joint attack on Gibraltar in the new year. The Caudillo replied that Spain would gladly fight at Germany's side as soon as its military and economic deficiencies had been made good and its political aspirations recognized.

He was less enthusiastic, however, after Hitler told him that, because of the danger of a revolt in French North Africa, Germany could make Spain no promises that might lessen the willingness of Vichy to defend its colonies. Franco answered that he could not afford to accept an alliance that did not guarantee him French Morocco and part of Algeria.

The Nazi dictator then promised that Spain would receive "territorial compensation out of French North African possessions to the extent to which France could be indemnified out of British colonies." Franco was not entirely satisfied and made no firm commitment. Besides massive economic assistance and shipments of equipment to strengthen his weak army, he demanded rectifications of the Pyrenees frontier and the cession of French Catalonia (French territory once historically linked with Spain but actually north of the Pyrenees), Algeria from Oran to Cape Blanco, and virtually the whole of Morocco.

Hitler insisted doggedly on Spanish belligerency, submarine bases, and the green light from Madrid for an assault on Gibraltar. With time taken out for dinner in Hitler's special dining coach, the imperturbable Franco spoke at length in a monotonous, singsong voice, standing firm on every important point as his host became increasingly exasperated. At one point, as he had done with British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain at Munich in 1938, the Führer sprang up from his chair and exclaimed that there was no point in continuing the conversations.

At the end of the day, after hours of haggling about honors and rewards, Hitler and Franco produced a secret protocol. Under this agreement, Franco vowed to enter the war at his own convenience. Hitler promised to meet Spanish economic and territorial demands, but only if France could be compensated at the expense of the British.

Ironically, the only beneficiary, indirectly, was Britain, whose situation in the Mediterranean was left intact.

Hitler was fuming when he left his dining car. "Franco is a little major!" he told Admiral Karl-Jesko von Puttkamer. To his valet, Heinz Linge, he reduced Franco further in rank: "In Germany, that man would never rise higher than sergeant!" Yet another in the Führer's entourage heard him lower the Spanish generalissimo to corporal, Hitler's own grade in World War I.

As he left Hendaye, the exhausted Hitler murmured, "We cannot do anything with this guy." He reported later to Mussolini, "Rather than go through that again, I would prefer to have three or four teeth taken out."

Despite many platitudes gushed by the German and Spanish press, the historic meeting was a bust for Nazi diplomacy. Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, who had tried to bully Suñer like a schoolmaster, said of Franco the following morning, "That ungrateful coward! He owes us everything and now won't join us."

Pretense was kept up, though, and the Hendaye talks were held to have been a promising

Spanish Fascist dictator Francisco Franco beams as he shakes hands with Hitler at Hendaye in October 1940. Hitler likened his meeting with Franco to a tooth extraction.

Planes of the Allied 14th Fighter Group land at an airfield on Gibraltar on November 10, 1942. The government of Great Britain acknowledged that the neutrality of Spain facilitated control of the Mediterranean Sea and assisted the Allied victory in World War II.

prelude to Spain's entry into the war. Hitler ordered the preparation of War Directive 18, which included blueprints for the invasion of Gibraltar and the deployment of forces in the Canary Islands, the Portuguese Azores, and French North Africa. As soon as the first German troops had crossed the Spanish border, Luftwaffe planes would attack Royal Navy ships in Gibraltar harbor.

The Wehrmacht's 22nd Infantry Division was fitted out, leave restrictions were imposed, and additional troops were readied for a possible invasion of neutral Portugal, whose long Atlantic coastline would be ideal for U-boat bases. A lightning blitzkrieg operation was out of the question because the German forces would need 38 days in which to move down to Gibraltar from the French border. The first advance commandos were to enter the Iberian Peninsula on December 6, 1940, and the main force would attack early in 1941.

As the German preparations became hectic during November 1940, Admiral Canaris watched with some concern. Stationed in Spain from November 12 onward, he was particularly alarmed by Halder's zealous plan calling for two large advance commando groups to proceed under cover through France—in civilian clothing and riding in French vehicles—and enter Spain under false identities. There would also be German artillery and supply officers in the cities of Seville and Cadiz, and Canaris was sure they were all bound to be detected by British intelligence.

As the month progressed, the Germans started a series of secret operations around Gibraltar. Admiral Canaris sent a naval officer to Algeciras to determine the best location for heavy coastal batteries to support an attack, while other German officers scouted for naval intelligence on Gibraltar's weak points. Canaris drew upon his considerable knowledge and contacts in Spain, and did much cloak-and-dagger work in planning the operation. Yet, he astounded his influential Spanish friends by confiding to them that he believed Germany would ultimately lose the war.

ON DECEMBER 7, 1940, the Spanish leader handed another rebuff to Hitler. On that evening, Admiral Canaris had an audience with the Caudillo in Madrid. Canaris relayed Hitler's desire to commence the attack on Gibraltar soon and requested approval for the transit of troops on January 10, 1941, when promised German aid shipments would also begin arriving.

Ever attentive, Franco was aware that the Luftwaffe had failed to achieve air supremacy over England and that the Italian position in the Balkans was growing worse by the day. And he knew his own problems only too well. The winter of 1939-1940 had been difficult, but the winter of 1940-1941 became known in Spain as the year of hunger. Widespread rumblings of discontent were a constant worry.

Accordingly, the Caudillo told Canaris that he could not fight a long war; it would demand intolerable sacrifices of his people. Furthermore, Franco explained to the admiral, it was impossible for Spain to enter the war on the date set because of the threat of British naval retaliation, his lack of armaments, and the critical supply situation. When Canaris asked him when the transit of German troops would be possible, the Caudillo was unable to provide a date.

Canaris returned to the German embassy and sent a telegram conveying Franco's response to Hitler. The Caudillo had demanded that Germany make the preparations for the Gibraltar assault under conditions of the strictest secrecy and disguise. This was a diplomatic smoke screen. For the second time, Franco was rejecting a direct request from Berlin for Spanish belligerency. On December 10, 1940, Canaris spelled it out for the German high command: "The Caudillo has given us clearly to understand that he cannot enter the war until Britain is on the verge of defeat."

After Franco's stalling tactics and refusals during the autumn and winter of 1940-1941, Hitler relegated Spain and the Mediterranean situation to the back burner of Axis politics. A month after he had issued his November 12 directive, he quietly ordered that Operation Felix be dropped "because the political conditions no longer exist." The Führer's ambition to close the Mediterranean to the Royal Navy was never achieved. He did, however, maintain operational plans for Felix's possible revival.

Spain was spared from Hitler's well-known wrath by Italian blunders in the Balkans and defeats at the hands of the British in North Africa, and by the Nazi dictator's increasing preoccupation with Operation Barbarossa, his plan for an imminent invasion of the Soviet Union.

Although he refused to permit the transit of German troops for an assault on Gibraltar, Franco did accommodate German diplomatic priorities through the de facto and de jure recognition of Nazi puppet regimes and by continuing to allow the use of his country as a forward base for U-boats and spies.

It was distasteful to him, but Hitler made one final effort to influence Franco. In a long letter to the Spanish leader on February 6, 1941, the Führer wrote, "About one thing, Caudillo, there must be clarity: we are fighting a battle of life and death and cannot at this time make any gifts…. The battle which Germany and Italy are fighting will determine the destiny of Spain

as well. Only in the case of victory will your present regime continue to exist."

Unfortunately for the Axis, Hitler's letter reached Franco on the day that Marshal Rodolfo Graziani's remaining Italian forces in Cyrenaica were wiped out by the British Eighth Army south of Benghazi. When the Caudillo got around to replying to the Führer on February 26, 1941, he professed his "absolute loyalty" to the Axis Powers but reminded Hitler that recent developments in the Mediterranean

theater had left "the circumstances of October far behind," and that their Hendaye understanding had become "outmoded."

On one of few occasions in his stormy, odious career, Hitler was forced to concede defeat. "The long and short of the tedious Spanish rigmarole is that Spain does not want to enter the war, and will not enter it," he told Mussolini. "This is extremely tiresome since it means that for the moment the possibility of striking at Britain in the simplest manner, in her Mediterranean possessions, is eliminated."

Meanwhile, despite its neutral stance, Spain did play a partial role in World War II operations. Formed from the Falangist (Fascist) Party, the volunteer Blue Division served with the German Army when Hitler invaded Russia on June 22, 1941. Initially numbering 17,692 officers and men, and commanded by Maj. Gen. Augustin Munoz Grandes and later Maj. Gen. Esteban Infantes, the division reached Germany in July 1941. Its blue-shirted troops swore allegiance to Hitler, although the wording was modified to specify that they were engaged only in "the battle against Bolshevism."

The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: Volunteers of what came to be known as the Spanish Blue Division, shown here in Russia in 1941, did serve alongside the Germans on the Eastern Front, enduring the hardship and ultimately catastrophic defeat inflicted by the Red Army. LEFT: In full military uniform, Spanish dictator Francisco Franco posed for this portrait during the 1950s. The wily Franco survived World War II, his power base intact, while Hitler died in his bunker beneath the ruins of Berlin in 1945.

From October 1941 to February 1943, the German-equipped Blue Division's infantry and artillery regiments fought at Lubkovo, Kurisko, Leningrad, and Krasny Bor, where they suffered 2,253 casualties. Allied pressure and a shift in Spanish policy brought about the return of the division from the Eastern Front, with the last volunteers reaching Spain by the end of 1943. But the smaller Spanish Legion, comprising volunteers from the Blue Division, remained in Russia until the spring of 1944.

OF THE ESTIMATED 47,000 Spaniards who served at different times in the division, 22,000 became casualties and 4,500 died. Fewer than 300 prisoners of war were eventually evacuated from the Soviet Union in 1954. Many who served in the division received German and Spanish decorations for bravery.

Spanish airmen also fought on the Eastern Front. Five Blue fighter squadrons served consecutively with German Army Group Center. Providing support for German bombers, they shot down 156 Soviet planes and lost only 22 men missing or killed before returning home with the Spanish Legion.

On the other side during World War II, many Spaniards were active with French Resistance groups in southern France, thousands fought in the Zouave regiments of the French Army of Africa, and about 70 belonged to the legendary British Commando group, Layforce, in the ill-fated Crete campaign.

Ultimately, thanks to the actions of the artful President Franco and the enigmatic Admiral Canaris, Spain and Portugal were not violated by the Nazis, Gibraltar stood firm, and Britain's precarious hold on the Mediterranean lifeline prevailed. Supported in time by American forces, British strength brought about the defeat of the Axis powers in North Africa and the eventual liberation of Sicily and Italy. Much was owed, Churchill would admit, to the "duplicity and ingratitude" of Franco's dealings with Hitler and Mussolini.

"Spain held the key to all British enterprises in the Mediterranean," wrote the prime minister, "and never in the darkest hours did she turn the lock against us." □

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THE Turkey Shoot

The other invasion also began on June 6, 1944.

By virtue of the International Date Line, the two invasions sailed on different days, but both sortied within the same 24-hour period. One invasion involved 127,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines and 535 ships and landing craft. The second invasion had 10 times that number.

One invasion was headed for Normandy in France. The "other" invasion was headed farther, a 10-day voyage from Hawaii and other bases to Saipan, an island 1,200 nautical miles from Tokyo, 12 miles long and 46.5 square miles in area. Once taken, it would provide the U.S. Army Air Forces with a base for the huge Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers to pound Tokyo. Also up for invasion in the same attack were Saipan's neighbors, Tinian, and a small piece of American soil that had been violated since Pearl Harbor, the island of Guam, under Japanese occupation for three long years.

Seizing the Northern Marianas would thus redeem American honor. It would also signal to Japan that the Empire's main defense line had been breached and force the Combined Fleet to emerge from two years of hibernation and training to fight the decisive battle against the Americans to save that Empire—the biggest carrier battle yet fought and one of the most decisive naval battles in history.

By 1944, the American counterattack against Japan's aggression was in full flood. The losses at Pearl Harbor and thereafter had been made good with what was virtually a new navy and air force, and a series of invasions had taken the Gilbert and Marshall Islands from the Japanese.

Indeed it was a new navy. Of the 15 carriers lined up at Majuro Atoll under Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, only one predated Pearl Harbor—the venerable USS *Enterprise*, with a battle record unmatched in nearly any navy. The battleships, cruisers, and destroyers that

In this painting by artist Nicolas Trudgian, Lieutenant Alexander Vraciu takes off in his *Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS* Lexington on June 19, 1944. Vraciu shot down six Japanese planes in a single day during the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.

U.S. NAVY AIR POWER SHATTERED JAPANESE CARRIER-BASED STRENGTH IN A ONE-SIDED BATTLE DURING THE INVASIONS OF SAIPAN, GUAM, AND TINIAN. BY DAVID H. LIPPMAN

escorted "Murderers' Row" were also relatively new, fast ships that bristled with antiaircraft guns and electronics unheard of before the war.

The aircraft were from a new generation as well, powerful Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers and massive Grumman F6F Hellcat and Vought F4U Corsair fighters, which could run rings around Japan's Zeros with their powerful engines. The ships' very names showed America's resilience. Four of the aircraft carriers, *Lexington, Hornet, Wasp,* and *Yorktown,* all bore the names of American carriers sunk in 1942.

Yet the old ships were still there—one of them, the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis,* known to her crew as the "Indy Maru," doubled as Spruance's flagship. The battleships that endured bombing at Hawaii were back as well, too slow to form the primary battle line but loaded with high explosive shells for shore bombardment. Spruance's 5th Fleet was a huge organization, but at its core was Task Force 58, under Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher, flying his flag on the *Lexington.* Mitscher commanded 15 fleet and light carriers, seven fast battleships, 12 escort carriers, 11 cruisers, and 91 destroyer escorts. Covering this force were nearly 900 aircraft.

Spruance, the boss of the entire 5th Fleet, was no aviator, but he had already won the greatest air-naval battle of them all, America's incredible victory at Midway. Cool, quiet, described as a "patient fox," he used caution to plot the deadly Midway ambush. Now he was leading a huge fleet on a massive offensive on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.

He may have known it from radio intercepts and codebreaking, but Spruance gave no inkling that he was interested in the fact that the commander of the Japanese garrison on Saipan was an old enemy, Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, who had led the attack on Pearl Harbor and been defeated at Midway.

Painting courtesy of Military Gallery

All photos: National Archives

Adversaries during the Battle of the Philippine Sea, Japanese Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa (left) strikes a stoic pose, and Admiral Marc Mitscher (right), a naval aviator by trade and commander of U.S. Task Force 58, is shown in his trademark baseball cap.

But Nagumo was not leading Japan's naval riposte to the American invasion, now steaming down on Saipan. That job was in the hands of Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, regarded as the Empire's best carrier admiral. Commanding the Mobile Fleet, his situation was becoming increasingly critical. While the U.S. Navy grew in strength, his navy was slowly being whittled away. Japanese dockyards and training schools could not keep up with American industry and technical skill. American submarines, having overcome torpedo deficiencies, were cleaning the seas of Japanese tankers, strangling the homeland and denying the Imperial Navy vital fuel.

To fight the battle, the Imperial Navy had moved the carrier force to Singapore, close to its oil stocks in Java and Borneo. The Borneo crude oil was of such high quality that it could be pumped straight into the Imperial Navy's bunkers without refining. However, the unrefined sulfur-ridden Borneo crude could damage the Navy's pipes, and more importantly, was even more flammable than the refined variety.

None of this mattered to Ozawa. His brief was to defeat the Americans, and even if that meant his ships would all have to get major engine repairs after the battle, he would fight hard with what he had. The plan was called Operation A-Go, and it was activated shortly after the U.S. Fleet arrived off Saipan on June 8, to start softening up the island.

OPERATION A-GO called for the Japanese to hit the Americans with everything they had as soon as the American objective had been determined and destroy the enemy with one blow. To do so, the Japanese had some high cards to play. First were Ozawa's eight carriers, which included his flagship, the powerful new *Taiho*, a 34,000-ton behemoth, the largest carrier afloat and Japan's first with an armored flight deck. She carried 60 aircraft.

Behind her were the last two veterans of Pearl Harbor, *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku,* sisters at 29,800 tons each, carrying 80 aircraft apiece. Behind these three tough warriors were two smaller carriers, the *Hiyo* and *Junyo,* both converted liners weighing 26,949 tons, carrying 53 aircraft each. With four more light carriers, *Chitose, Chiyoda, Zuiho,* and *Ryuho,* Ozawa could sortie 450 aircraft—much fewer than his American counterpart, but still the largest carrier-based air force Japan would ever deploy.

Ozawa also had 540 land-based aircraft scattered on airfields across the Pacific with orders to concentrate on Saipan and the Marianas. He also had something new for Japan, *giman-shi,* or deceiving paper, better known to the British as "window" and the Americans as "chaff," metallic paper that would jam American radar screens.

The planes were also tough, if outdated. The main fighter was still the Mitsubishi A6M5 Zero, while the primary torpedo bombers were the older B5N Kate from the Pearl Harbor glory days and the newer B6N Jill, both from Nakajima. The dive-bomber of choice was the modern Yokosuka D4Y1 Judy, which sported retractable landing gear and a Daimler-Benz engine, backed up by the venerable Aichi D3A1 Val. One fatal weakness was evident. While American aviators had up to 400 hours flying time, some Japanese pilots had as little as 20 in their logbooks.

Behind the Japanese carriers came a powerful force: the two of the largest battleships ever built, *Yamato* and *Musashi*, equipped with nine 18-inch guns each; the slower *Nagato,* with 15-inch guns; and the powerful and fast battleships *Haruna* and *Kongo.* Seven heavy cruisers and one light cruiser backed up the dreadnoughts, along with 19 destroyers.

The key to the Japanese plan was the 500-odd aircraft on its ground bases, which would attack the Americans initially and whittle down their air umbrella, enabling the surface ships and carriers to punch out the American carriers and battleships, leaving the American transport fleet open to attack.

The American invasion of the Marianas would require their fleets to sail as far as 1,017 miles from their anchorage at Eniwetok, and as far as 3,500 from Hawaii. More than 535 ships loaded with 127,571 troops sortied from a variety of ports, with the assault set for June 15. The invasion was code-named Forager.

Nagumo's defenses were formidable. The 21st Army, under Lt. Gen. Yoshitsugu Saito, fielded about 31,629 men which included 6,690 Navy men, including a tough 800-man Special Naval Landing Force regiment and naval guard force of 400 men. They were equipped with eight Whitworth-Armstrong 6-inch guns, nine 140mm guns, eight 120mm guns, four 200mm mortars, and a collection of bunkers, pillboxes, and machine guns.

Task Force 58 sailed from Majuro at Eniwetok in early June amid a steady drizzle. Under the gray skies, 96,618 men crewing 111 U.S. warships painted in dazzle camouflage steamed from the anchorage at two-minute intervals. It took the whole task force five hours to sortie and shuffle into antisubmarine formation. Behind them came the bombardment forces and transports.

On June 11, the 15 American carriers got to work pulverizing the Japanese defenses, hurling more than 200 fighters and torpedo bombers against Saipan and Tinian. The senior American carrier air unit was CVG-10, based on USS *Enterprise*. Under its ebullient boss, Commander William R. "Killer" Kane, CVG-10 was a well-trained veteran outfit, which included a night-fighting group of F4U Corsairs. That day Kane led 58 Hellcats against Saipan.

Kane nailed one of two Zeros and Lieutenant (j.g.) Alfred Taddeo got the other one. Killer spotted another Zero above and shot that one down, too, with a single well-sighted burst. Taddeo spotted a big Japanese four-engine Kawanishi reconnaissance plane and filled it full of .50-caliber bullets. Some 36 Japanese planes fell on or over Saipan.

Over Guam, the *Hornet*'s VF-2 had good hunting too, getting into a dogfight with an estimated 30 Zeros. Two F6Fs and two Zeros closed on each other at a combined 500 mph, but VF-2's skipper, Commander William A. Dean and Lieutenant (j.g.) David R. Park each flamed their enemy. Then Dean spotted another Japanese fighter, closed in and shot the Zero down in flames. He pulled back on his throttle and shot down another Zero, becoming VF-2's first ace.

Also entering battle over Guam was VF-15, the "Fabled Fifteen," part of CVG-15 from USS *Essex,* led by Commander David McCampbell, famed for his flying ability and movie-star looks. In its first dogfight, VF-15 splashed nine Japanese planes. The Americans claimed nearly 100 kills for 11 losses, but three of the Americans were pulled from the drink. Actual kills over Guam amounted to 98 (American sources) or 22 (Japanese sources). The following day, the Americans resumed pounding the islands, splashing 22 more Japanese planes over Guam. *Enterprise* launched 169 sorties that dropped 52 tons of bombs.

American planes spotted a convoy of 12 merchant ships loaded with reinforcements for Saipan 160 miles away. The Americans hit it twice on the 12th and again on the 13th. In two

days, the Americans disposed of a torpedo boat, three sub-chasers, and 10 of the merchant ships for a total of more than 30,000 tons.

Meanwhile, the Americans continued their attacks on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, hammering the Japanese airfields. By D-day on the 15th, the Japanese air force on the three islands was reduced to nothing.

On the 11th, Ozawa ordered his ships to sea from Singapore, to fuel at Tawi Tawi, and then to engage the Americans. The Japanese were spotted on the 13th by the submarine USS *Redfin.*

MEANWHILE, THE U.S. Navy's old battleships and cruisers took on Saipan's gun emplacements. Their first bombardment, on June 13, was accomplished by the seven fast battleships, which had not trained on shore bombardment, and was a failure. On June 14, the more skilled slow battle wagons steamed in, having trained at the Kahoolawe gunnery range under Admiral Jesse Oldendorf. The battleships *Maryland, Pennsylvania, California,* and *Tennessee* represented the victims of Pearl Harbor, and the *Colorado, New Mexico, Mississippi,* and *Idaho* made up the rest of the force. Six heavy cruisers, five light cruisers, and 26 destroyers added to the din.

Nagumo peered through a telescope on shore to watch with chagrin as the ships he had bombed and damaged at Pearl Harbor exacted revenge, blasting open his defenses. Later he would commit hara-kiri in despair.

The Japanese shot back. "The nerve of them!" said a bluejacket on the cruiser *Honolulu.* They scored hits from a single 4.7-inch field battery in a cave mouth on *California,* one killed, nine wounded; the destroyer *Braine,* three killed, 15 wounded; and *Tennessee, eight* killed and 26 wounded. All three ships stayed in battle.

On June 15, the huge landing force faced heavy opposition on Saipan. Thirteen Japanese planes were downed, seven to the light carrier *San Jacinto*'s air group alone. After dark, Japanese planes were spotted, but the night squadron VF (N)-76, operating from *Enterprise,* chased them off.

Ozawa's force steadily advanced, watched by American submarines. Late that afternoon, the USS *Flying Fish* caught the Japanese exiting San Bernardino Strait. *Seahorse* saw them off the Surigao Strait. The Americans ordered more submarines to intercept, among them the brand new USS *Albacore* on her first patrol.

On June 16, some 54 American planes hammered Iwo Jima's defenses, bombing and strafing 60 aircraft on the field. On Saipan, Marines fought hard to drive inland against ferocious defenses. Japanese snoopers kept an eye on Task Force 58.

American submarines continued to dog Ozawa's moves. Commander Herman Kossler's USS *Cavalla* spotted Ozawa's tankers that night on radar and tried to attack, but the Japanese escorts chased him away. Kossler headed back in and found a group of 15 ships. June 17 came, and Kossler closed the range on his radar targets.

On *Taiho,* Ozawa planned his battle. He would hit the Americans with the aircraft from his light carriers first, holding his heavy carriers back for the second wave. Ozawa was confident that because of Spruance's conservative nature the Americans would stay within 100 miles of the invasion beaches. Both sides were squaring to outflank each other but did not know it.

After church services ended on Sunday, June 18, Task Force 58 began launching scouts to find Ozawa. Simultaneously, Ozawa launched his scout planes. The fleets were 420 miles apart, beyond the American search radius, but within Japanese range. All day long the scouts prowled the Pacific.

Ozawa's Mobile Fleet stayed undetected, but the Japanese were able to locate the Americans when Scout Number 17 found three carrier groups 180 miles west-northwest of Guam. On June 19, both sides would launch carrier strikes, and Ozawa would use his superior aircraft range to keep his force out of the American torpedo bombers' sights. He changed course from northeast to southwest to open the range.

Meanwhile, ground-based Japanese dive-bombers hit American Task Group 50.17, a group of oilers. They damaged three, losing three raiders to flak. American fighters shot down 23 of the 31 Japanese planes in this opening skirmish.

Studying the situation, Spruance realized that his massive force could not close the range to sink the Japanese carriers, so he would fight a defensive battle. His ships would absorb the Japanese attack and whittle down the enemy airpower with fighters and flak. Then, once the Japanese had lost their air umbrella, Spruance would counterattack—if possible.

Before dawn on June 19, both sides' carriers signaled "Flight Quarters," and scout planes departed on their missions. The Japanese had learned the lessons of Midway and would send out a two-phased search system. The first wave of Japanese scouts did poorly: only six of 15 returned. At 5:15, 14 more reconnaissance planes leaped off Ozawa's decks and catapults—to find nothing. An irritated Ozawa launched 43 more reconnaissance planes.

On the other side, the Americans headed east, into the morning wind as the sun rose at 4:30 AM. At 5:15, the Americans picked out their first bogies, and the carriers scrambled their F6F combat air patrols. The first kill of

The 20mm and 40mm antiaircraft guns aboard an American destroyer, possibly the USS *Halford,* swing into action off the coast of Saipan.

the air massacre that came to be known as the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot went to Lieutenant (j.g.) Walter T. Fitzpatrick and his USS *Monterey* division, which shot down two Judy scout bombers 30 miles west of their ship.

The American plan for the day, assuming there was no carrier battle, was to hit Guam, and they did so while their scouts went to work. By 7 AM, the American combat air patrol (CAP) had splashed 10 Japanese scouts from Ozawa's first-phase search.

OZAWA'S SECOND-PHASE team did better, finding some of Vice Admiral Willis A. "Ching" Lee's destroyer screen, but at 7:30 a Jake floatplane, heading back from the limit of its range, spotted an American carrier group and Ching Lee's fast battleships and fired off an accurate report.

Ozawa planned to take advantage of his long range. His planes would strike the Americans and then either return to his carriers or to the bases on Guam or Saipan to refuel. From there, they could attack the Americans again and return to his carriers. Between 8:30 AM and 11:30, Ozawa's carriers launched 326 aircraft in three groups at Mitscher's carriers. Then Ozawa turned south.

The lead Japanese group, "Raid I" to the American radar plotters, was 69 planes from the three light carriers *Chitose, Chiyoda,* and *Zuiho*: 45 Zero fighter bombers, 16 Zero fighter escorts, and eight Jill torpedo planes. Organized as Air Group 653, the planes headed east with orders to attack the Americans and then return home or to Guam, depending on their fuel situation.

Another American advantage in battle was about to be manifested for the first time: the Combat Information Center, a dark room that glowed with light from radar tubes and crayoned letters on glass plotting boards—one of the few compartments on a warship that had air conditioning because of its lack of portholes and other ventilation. The CIC enabled radar plotters, air defense directors, gunnery officers, and admirals to plot battles in a swift, organized, comprehensive manner. As the Japanese planes advanced toward their targets, they were picked up by American radar, and plotters wrote in the information on the Plexiglas screens (writing backwards and in reverse) so that the brass hats could make the right decisions.

During a strike against Japanese defenses and air installations on Saipan, a Grumman TBF Avenger takes off from the deck of an American aircraft carrier on June 14, 1944. Primarily used as a torpedo bomber, the Avenger was a multipurpose aircraft that could also attack land targets with conventional bombs.

The first Japanese raid showed up on those boards at about 10 AM, 150 miles away. On the carrier flight decks, signal flags snapped the diamond-design "Fox" flag, which meant "Commence flight operations."

By 10:23, the carriers had turned into the wind and were launching planes. While the F6Fs formed up into four-plane divisions, the rest of the fleet went to general quarters. When the Japanese were 60 miles out, they tidied up their formation and regrouped stragglers. At that point, the American fighters attacked, with half an hour to go before the Japanese were in range of the American ships—more than enough time.

Eight Hellcats from USS *Essex*'s VF-15, under Commander Charles W. Brewer, slammed into the Japanese first. Brewer and his wingman, Ensign Richard E. Fowler, quickly downed four planes apiece. Lieutenant (j.g.) George R. Carr, a Floridian with Royal Canadian Air Force experience, shot down two Jills before a Zero came after him. Carr shoved his stick full forward into a headlong dive, then pulled out at nearly 500 mph, turned to the right, losing the slower-moving Zero. Carr saw another Zero heading right for him. Both sides fired, but only Carr scored hits, setting the Zero on fire. As it flamed, Carr saw yet another Zero and opened fire, tearing off the Zero's wing. Then Carr split-essed to line up a finishing shot, and the Zero exploded. Carr recorded five kills during his first U.S. mission.

In a few minutes, VF-15 had claimed 20 kills.

Six more squadrons charged in, ripping holes in the Japanese formation. Commander Ronald W. Hoel of VF-8 from *Bunker Hill* was saved when his wingman shot down an attacker. Next came VF-2 from *Hornet,* whose eight Hellcats claimed nine Zeros and three Jills. Then came *Princeton*'s shark-mouthed Hellcats storming up at the Japanese from below. Lieutenant Fred Bardshar gunned down a bomber, then a second.

The Japanese scored only a single hit against Lee's battleships, a solo shot on USS *South Dakota,* which had a reputation as an unlucky ship. The 500-pound bomb hit her first superstructure deck and killed 27 of the crew, blasting a large hole in the ship. Wiring and piping were damaged, a 40mm gun knocked out, and the captain's and admiral's quarters damaged. But *South Dakota* maintained course and speed, shooting down two enemy planes within minutes of the hit.

The Japanese lost 42 of their 60-odd planes for the loss of three Hellcats. Not one Japanese plane reached the American carriers. It was a textbook example of fleet air defense.

The Japanese claimed hits on a large aircraft carrier and a large cruiser. Ozawa's second wave, Air Group 601, launched at 9 AM with 128 planes—53 Judy dive-bombers, 27 Jill torpedo bombers, and 48 Zero escorts—from the

big carriers. This group included planes armed with *giman-shi.*

After forming up over *Taiho, Shokaku*, and *Zuikaku,* they flew toward the Americans and took antiaircraft fire from their own ships. Friendly fire knocked down two Japanese planes and forced eight to abort. As the survivors hurtled on, Ozawa ordered his last two carriers, *Hiyo* and *Junyo,* to launch Air Group 652, some 47 additional planes, in the third raid.

While the carriers secured from flight quarters, the Americans began their counterattack, starting with their smallest weapon, USS *Albacore,* the brand new attack submarine. Commander Blanchard had kept his submarine fixed on the Japanese fleet and finally got a dream attack. A Japanese carrier group appeared right before his periscope and target data computer (TDC). He let one carrier pass, then set up his shot two miles from the next carrier. Just as Blanchard was ready to fire, the TDC broke down. Blanchard stayed on his periscope and set up a visual solution. Six torpedoes raced toward the carrier.

As Blanchard took his submarine deep, he told his men to brace for depth charges. They heard and felt plenty—two dozen rattled *Albacore* but did not damage her. The last torpedo scored a hit.

The unlucky carrier was the new *Taiho*, and she was nearly saved. Warrant Officer Sakio Komatsu had just been launched on the second raid. He saw a torpedo heading toward his flagship and dived right on it, killing himself, his observer, and the American fish. But one of the other five struck home, flooding the forward elevator well. Water gushed in, drooping the bow down four feet, knocking the elevator down six feet, and putting the flight deck temporarily out of commission.

Work crews broke out two-by-fours and laid planks over the elevator hole, patching it up within half an hour. Reassured his flagship was operational, Ozawa stayed aboard. Nobody noticed that the torpedo had sliced open an aviation fuel storage tank, which leaked into the flooded elevator well.

Worried about accumulated gasoline vapors, a damage control officer on *Taiho* ordered the carrier's ventilation system opened to dissipate the fumes. Instead, the unstable Borneo crude oil vapors spread throughout the carrier.

It only took four hours for the inevitable to happen. At about 3:30 PM, Japan's newest carrier exploded. An interior blast sent the flight deck buckling upward, and the huge carrier blazed, slowly sinking by the head. Ozawa, on the bridge, stared down at the wreckage and said he would die with the flagship. However,

Lieutenant Alexander Vraciu celebrates six air-to-air victories during a single day of combat in the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot. A pilot of USS *Lexington*'s VF-16 squadron, Vraciu finished the war with 19 confirmed aerial victories.

he was later convinced not to go down with the carrier and shifted his colors and command to the destroyer *Wakatsuki.*

Three hours after *Albacore*'s torpedoes hit *Taiho,* Herman Kossler aboard *Cavalla* spotted a carrier group. Not knowing where Mitscher was, Kossler needed to positively identify the contact. He and his executive officer and torpedo officer pored over recognition charts.

Kossler looked through his scope again and finally got what he needed. He saw the Japanese flag flying from the carrier's signal block. "There was the rising sun, big as hell," he said later. It was *Shokaku*.

KOSSLER SLAMMED down his scope and used radar to plot a course to fire six torpedoes at the carrier. *Cavalla*'s TDC worked perfectly, and all six tubes fired from 1,200 yards at eight-second intervals. Torpedoes raced toward *Shokaku.* After the fifth fish launched, *Cavalla* began diving. *Shokaku* went hard to starboard, seeking to comb the spread of torpedoes so that they would pass on her sides, but it was too late. Four torpedoes slammed home. They blasted holes forward to amidships near the aviation fuel tanks, which were in use refueling aircraft.

An aviation gas main and its unstable Borneo crude exploded, showering burning gasoline onto the flight deck, which also blew the forward elevator nearly three feet up. Then the elevator collapsed into its well, killing men below. The carrier began listing to starboard.

Captain Hiroshi Matsubara ordered counterflooding to port, but the damage control men overdid it. Soon *Shokaku* was listing to port. For four hours, the great carrier burned. At 3 PM a bomb exploded, setting off fuel vapors trapped on the hangar deck. A terrific explosion resulted, and the carrier began to sink, water flooding her forward elevator well. In minutes, the big ship stood vertically on her bows, and then *Shokaku* disappeared, taking with her 1,263 men, including 376 from Air Group 609.

The second raid was now approaching the Americans. Some 53 dive-bombers and 27 torpedo bombers swarmed in behind the *giman-shi.* USS *Lexington*'s radar picked up the Japanese at 11:07 AM. Once again, the Japanese regrouped before heading in, giving the Americans time to scramble their fighters. McCampbell's *Essex* aviators got there first, 72 miles out, at 11:39 AM, an hour after the first raid had ended.

This battle was fought over a 30-mile space for several minutes. The *Essex* fighters jumped on the Japanese with four Hellcats tying up the Zero top cover and McCampbell taking his other six planes into the Judys, shredding five almost immediately. The rest of VF-15 charged in, bagging nine more bombers and five Zeros. American pilots watched as Japanese planes spiraled into the ocean, but the Japanese regrouped and kept flying in. The Americans sent in 43 more F6Fs from *Lexington.*

Meanwhile, *Lexington*'s fighters went to work, with Lieutenant (j.g.) Alex Vraciu, an ace with 12 kills, seeing a "once-in-a-lifetime fighter pilot's dream." Vraciu swooped in and flamed a Japanese bomber. Then he spotted two more and blasted them both. Three kills. Another Judy broke formation, and Vraciu fired .50-caliber rounds "right into the sweet spot at the root of his wing tanks." The plane fell, burning, into the ocean.

As the Japanese entered the American flak zone, Vraciu chased three more Judys. He lined one up, opened fire, and the nearest Judy exploded—then another one. The third one, trying to flee, flew into American flak and exploded. Vraciu had six kills in eight minutes, giving him a total of 18. He headed back to *Lexington,* where he smiled for photographers, holding up six fingers for his wild eight minutes. He finished the war with 19 kills.

Meanwhile, the battle raged on. Next up was *Yorktown*'s VF-1, which piled in with 13 F6Fs, claiming eight kills. Ensign Cyrus R. Garman was shot down, and Lieutenant William C. Moseley could not make it back to the *Yorktown* in his damaged Hellcat, so he landed on the *Hornet.* After Moseley exited gratefully, the

maintenance men studied his battered airplane, decided it was finished, and hurled the wreck over the side.

The *Bataan* air group was next in the parade, and her F6Fs had the longest trip to the battle area, answering the fighter director's message: "Your signal: Buster." That meant *Bataan*'s aviators had to go full throttle, and they charged in, among the last aircraft on the scene.

Despite appalling losses, the Japanese flew on with samurai bravery, nearing the American battleships by 11:45 AM. The Japanese bombers began swooping down on the battleships—two Jills went for *South Dakota* and were shot down by *Alabama*. Another turned kamikaze and splattered into the hull of USS *Indiana,* but to no avail—its torpedo was not armed. Another dive-bomber missed *Alabama*.

Only six Japanese bombers passed up the battle wagons in favor of the carriers, and they pressed in on Task Group 58.2 and USS *Wasp,* arriving at high noon. *Wasp* spotted the Japanese 10 miles off the starboard bow. When the Japanese passed by, *Wasp*'s gunners thought the planes were American, but suddenly one peeled off and dived. The Americans opened up, but the Japanese plane dropped a phosphorous bomb, which went off over the flight deck, killing one sailor and injuring 12. Then the Japanese plane exploded.

Meanwhile, other Japanese planes slipped through the defense. Two Judys headed for *Bunker Hill* and managed to drop bombs that killed 76 Americans and damaged the carrier's portside elevator. Even so, *Bunker Hill*'s damage control team kept the ship in action.

FIGHTING 10 from *Enterprise* took on the Japanese over Task Group 58.3 amid shell fragments and blazing aircraft. Six more Judys headed for *Enterprise* and *Princeton,* and the American carriers maneuvered to avoid bombs and torpedoes. A Judy swooped in on *Enterprise*'s starboard quarter at 3,000 feet, dropped its bomb at 1,500 feet, pulled up, and was blasted apart. The bomb missed.

At 12:03, Japanese torpedo planes finally were able to release their deadly loads. *Enterprise* was the primary target, which annoyed her veteran crew. The torpedoes missed, and when a second group of Jills flew in, hammering antiaircraft guns shredded the attackers. Only one torpedo headed for *Enterprise,* exploding in the carrier's wake, causing no damage. *Enterprise*'s 40mm guns had splashed two Jills and her 5-inchers a third.

Princeton was last to be attacked, facing three torpedo planes, and her Captain William Buracker relied on maneuvering and antiaircraft fire to avoid his enemies.

Last up, oddly enough, was the *Taiho*'s *giman-shi* plane, which released its chaff and pulled 14 *Cowpens* fighters from the inbound strike to attack the tinfoil. They found the flying metal paper and the plane dropping it, but the D4Y Judy escaped its attackers.

And then it was all over, after six minutes of heavy antiaircraft fire, with the radar operators reporting the survivors fleeing. *Monterey*'s fighters were sent to attack the retreating bandits, and Lt. Cmdr. Roger Mehle, a decorated veteran of Midway, led his fighters in. They tagged six Jills and a Zero. Two went to Mehle.

Then the fighters all headed home, pilots eager to tell their stories of victories. Task Force 58 had sent 162 fighters to cope with 119 raiders. The Americans claimed 80 kills. Of the 119 raiders, a bare 31 returned to Guam or the surviving Japanese carriers. Twenty-three of the 27 Jills were shot down (85 percent), 42 of 53 Judys (79 percent), and 32 of 48 Zeros (66 percent).

The 20 Japanese planes that returned to their carriers reported damage to three American carriers and 25 kills. In actuality, they had done moderate damage to *Bunker Hill,* slight damage to *Wasp,* and the armor belt impact to *Indiana*. American air losses were a mere four planes and three pilots.

The victory was crushing, but the battle was far from over. The third raid was hurtling in with 47 planes—just seven torpedo planes, 15 Zero fighters, and the rest Zero fighter bombers—coming from the light carriers. They were to hit the American carriers but got lost. American radar operators and fighter directors watched their screens with amazement as the

A Japanese plane, hit by anti-aircraft fire from USS *Bunker Hill* and USS *Cabot,* falls toward the water in flames.

Japanese wandered around, finally coming into range of Task Group 58.1.

USS *Hornet* shot off eight F6Fs and *Yorktown* four more, joining 12 from *Langley.* They found the Japanese 50 miles away and jumped straight in. It took the Americans only minutes to splash nine Japanese planes. At 1:20, a gaggle of Zero bombers pushed through the fighter cordon and attacked *Essex*. Only one pilot reached attack distance, but his bomb fell 600 yards away from the carrier. Two American pilots, Lieutenant (j.g.) Jerome D. Keyser and his wingman, both from *Langley,* bracketed the Japanese pilot, and Keyser flamed him.

Raid three was yet another failure, but the Japanese were not done yet. Carrier Division Two hurled 27 Val dive-bombers, nine Judys, 10 Zero bombers, and 18 escorts. They hooked up with 14 Zero fighters from *Zuikaku* and six Jill orphans from *Taiho*. Eighty-four planes would make up the second largest Japanese strike of the day. Orders were to attack the Americans, then land on Guam. However, with U.S. troops invading that island the orders meant they should make kamikaze attacks on the Americans on shore.

The Japanese planes thundered down the flight decks, seamen standing by, waving their white caps, as they had at Pearl Harbor. Leading the bombers from *Junyo* was a Pearl Harbor and Midway veteran, Lieutenant Zenji Abe. He had not flown for 40 days and felt rusty. As his planes flew on, two element leaders had to return home when their landing gear would not fold up. A Zero developed engine trouble. A dive-bomber and three fighters disappeared. Abe recalled that he "wondered whether they retired ... due to mechanical trouble or dove into the sea from mental confusion."

Taken by a U.S. Navy combat photographer aboard the cruiser USS *Mobile,* this image captures a Japanese dive-bomber attacking the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp.* Several U.S. carriers, including *Wasp,* were named for predecessors that had been sunk in action against the Japanese in 1942. Two years later during the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the U.S. Navy was the strongest in the world.

ABE REACHED THE intercept point and found only ocean. He swooped low beneath the clouds and realized that his briefing information was faulty. He played a hunch and headed northeast. Sure enough, Task Force 58 turned up at 10 o'clock low, all turning to starboard with huge wakes. Abe ordered his men to attack.

As Abe's pilots swooped in, *Monterey*'s radar picked them out, but the fighter director could not contact his own pilots. He called *Wasp*. For once, the American response was not rapid. Abe's planes closed to within 50 miles of the carrier group. An hour after the Japanese were spotted, American interceptors from *Monterey* and *Wasp* finally plunged into battle. Wasp's Fighting 14 punched out two Zeke bombers and a Jill, but it was too late—a Japanese attack was actually going to hit its target in strength.

Abe swung in on *Bunker Hill* and came under heavy antiaircraft fire. "That was dreadful for me," he remembered. The flak did not knock down too many planes, but it did spoil their aim. Abe dropped his bomb, pulled out, and headed away.

The bombing accuracy was not good. Three bombs splashed into the ocean near *Bunker Hill,* but the carrier's maneuvering sent one of her F6Fs and its plane captain (or chief mechanic) over the side and into the drink. The plane captain was rescued.

Finally, the antiaircraft gunners got the range and splashed one Judy, then ripped the tail off another, then caught a Judy just after dropping its bomb and both fell into the sea. A Japanese plane crashed so close to *Wasp* that four men of a 20mm gun were knocked off their feet.

Near-misses cascaded water all over *Wasp,* drenching her crewmen on weather decks. A phosphorous bomb went off 300 yards above the carrier's deck but only wounded one sailor—the ship's sole casualty. Then the Japanese pulled out, with Abe hitting the firewall on his engine, gulping fuel. There was not enough to head for Guam or his carrier, *Junyo,* so he steered back to nearby Rota.

Ozawa now knew that regardless of the battle's outcome he was out of planes and running short of flight decks. At 5 PM, he shifted his flag to the heavy cruiser *Haguro,* which at least offered an operations room and flag space, and tried to figure out what was going on. As he reached the cruiser's bridge, everyone heard a low, rumbling sound. *Taiho*'s battered hull was giving up the ghost at last and going to the bottom 2,500 fathoms below with 660 of her men, 13 planes, and the only coding machine that could handle Ozawa's high-priority traffic. He would have to use the low-level coding machines on *Haguro,* which the Americans could read, for the rest of the day.

The Carrier Division Two squadrons that got lost from Abe's group were told to head for Guam but to get rid of their ammunition before doing so. *Cowpens*' radar picked out about 50 Japanese planes circling Orote Field on Guam, preparing to land. *Cowpens* hurled 41 Hellcats into attack, and they shot down 30 of the Japanese planes and damaged another 19 beyond repair, some as they landed on the cratered runway.

Suddenly, the greatest air battle of the Pacific War was over. All the American radar screens went clear, and the American planes, gulping gas, ammo trays empty, began circling their carriers to land. It was time to start counting casualties and planning new moves.

The first portion was a staggeringly one-sided assessment. The U.S. forces had lost a mere 31 planes, 21 of them Hellcats, and sustained

minor damage to *Bunker Hill, Wasp, South Dakota, Indiana,* and the heavy cruiser *Minneapolis*. Some 30 Americans had been killed.

The Japanese had lost two carriers to submarines. Out of 373 planes hurled into battle, a bare 130 had returned to the remaining Japanese carrier decks or islands. By day's end, Ozawa had only 102 operational planes of the 450 he had sailed with. And 50 more shore-based planes had been destroyed. It was one of the most one-sided air battles in the history of warfare—314 Japanese planes and most of their pilots lost.

But the Philippine Sea battle was not yet over. While American airmen and antiaircraft gunners celebrated victory with secret liquor stashes and debriefings, their bosses planned the continued destruction of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

On the Japanese side, Ozawa had to figure out what to do. The Americans were still heading east, being sure to stay far away from his battleships and cruisers. Tokyo ordered Ozawa to keep attacking, working with land-based air units. Ozawa, however, was more realistic. He ordered his ships to take a northwest course, away from the Americans and toward his refueling tankers. Battleship boss Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita recommended complete withdrawal. Ozawa, knowing Kurita's tendency toward timidity, ignored the suggestion.

Mitscher's Task Force 58 turned west, ready to attack as long as the ground battle on Saipan was not jeopardized, but the Americans were still not used to night flying, so they held off launching scouts until the 20th at 5:30 AM.

The Japanese were observing strict radio silence, so there were no transmissions to home in on. It would take the Americans until 4 PM to find their enemies. Once again, the Japanese had the weather gauge, and Mitscher had to steam east to launch his aircraft.

AS THE DAY and the search planes droned along on both sides, Japanese Jake reconnaissance planes hooked up in battle with F6Fs on the same mission, which led to three splashed Jakes, and the Americans believing that a damaged Japanese carrier was near the search planes. On *Lexington,* Commander Gus Widhelm suggested to Spruance that 12 Hellcats, lugging 500-pound bombs, could fly to the limit of their 475-mile range, and sink the reported cripple. Mitscher mulled the idea over and suggested they take along an Avenger torpedo bomber to handle navigation and provide radar support. Commander Ernest Snowden, who led *Lexington*'s fighters, called for volunteers, telling his aviators, "Chances are less than 50-50 you'll get back." He wrote down 12 numbers for slots on the big blackboard and put himself down in the top spot. Thirty minutes later, all 12 slots had been taken.

Snowden and his teammates, escorted by eight F6Fs from *San Jacinto,* headed out on the longest carrier-based search of the war to date.

The Japanese had been busy, too, regrouping their battered fleet. With two carriers lost, Ozawa switched to the *Zuikaku* around 1 PM and started learning just how horrific was the previous day's casualty bill, but an optimistic message from Guam led Ozawa to believe he still had land-based planes and the battle could still be won.

Meanwhile, the rest of Task Force 58's search planes ranged on. *Enterprise* sent out four search teams, and at 3:30 PM. Lieutenant (j.g.) Robert R. Jones's team spotted what the U.S. carriers had been seeking for the past two years, Japan's carriers at sea, their wakes frothing. The scouts reported the location, and on the American carriers pilots and navigators pulled out their navigation boards and wrote down the courses to answer the message: "Enemy fleet sighted. Latitude 15-00, longitude 135-24. Course 270, speed 20."

Japanese radio monitors picked up the American transmissions, and Ozawa cranked up his speed to 24 knots to get away from the Americans.

On *Lexington,* Widhelm and Mitscher stared down at their maps and plotting tables. Time was short before dusk. At length, Widhelm said, "We can make it, but it's going to be tight." Mitscher merely said, "Launch 'em."

A late afternoon full-deck load air strike was a hefty thing to launch, and the distance to target was 230 miles and increasing. Pilots manned their planes at 4:10 PM, and within minutes 240 aircraft were warmed up and ready to fly, all bearing 115 tons of ordnance, either bombs or torpedoes.

A photographer aboard the USS *Lexington* took this photo of 20mm and 40mm antiaircraft fire striking home against an attacking Japanese plane. The aircraft had initiated a run against an American carrier of Task Force 58.3 in the foreground, but it can be seen trailing thick, black smoke in the distance.

Launch commenced at 4:24. Of the 240 planes launched, 14 aborted, but 95 Hellcats, 54 Avengers, and 77 dive-bombers, 26 of them Douglas SBD Dauntlesses, were en route to pummel the Japanese. The big carriers provided most of the bombers while the light carriers provided the fighters. The airmen averaged 24 years of age with extremes of 19 to 43. *Lexington*'s 57 aviators alone represented 25 of the Union's 48 states.

Once the planes were up, Mitscher began to worry that his planes and pilots might not get home by dark. He ordered his brilliant chief of staff, Rear Admiral Arleigh Burke, to work out a plan for illuminating the task force to assist

homing pilots in the dark.

The planes roared along into the sun, working to conserve fuel, on course 290. Fighter escorts flew in lazy S-turns to avoid outrunning their bombers. At 260 miles, they spotted the first enemy ships, three of Ozawa's oilers. The *Wasp*'s air group pounced on them and sank two right away, *Seiyo Maru* and *Genyo Maru*. The carriers were 35 miles beyond the oilers, partially hidden beneath scudding clouds.

The Americans knew they had to attack immediately, and so did the Japanese. Ozawa had scrambled 40 Zero fighters for combat air patrol, and 28 fighter bombers, along with six Vals. It was a good number of aircraft, but not enough against the Americans.

First to feel the teeth of American dive bombing was the weakened Carrier Division One, down to *Zuikaku*. Bugles blared on the Japanese ships, and antiaircraft guns opened up as bombers from *Hornet, Yorktown,* and *Bataan* plunged down on the Japanese carrier.

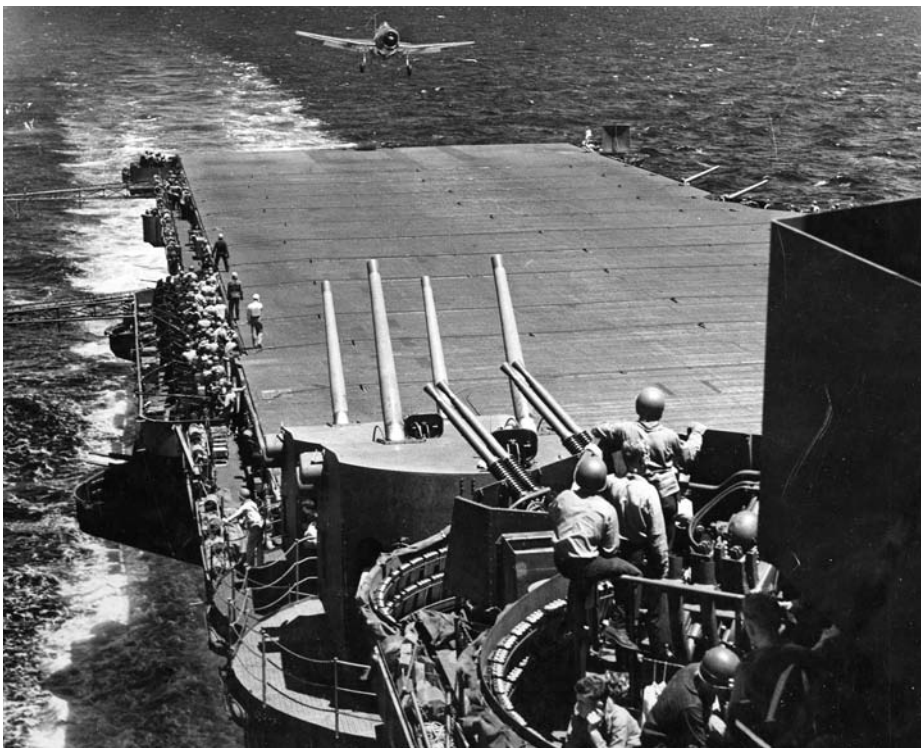
Lieutenant Harold E. Buell of *Hornet* swooped down to 6,000 feet, then placed the dive-brake selector back to "open," and the wing brakes did just that, even though the manufacturing specifications on his Helldiver said they could not. No matter, at the point-blank range of 2,000 feet Buell dropped his payload and simultaneously took a heavy-caliber round that set his starboard wing afire and put a shell splinter in his back. Buell punched the fire extinguisher button, pulled his plane out of the dive, and began heading for home.

Dive-bombers and torpedo bombers pounded *Zuikaku*. The big carrier gushed smoke, and the next wave figured *Zuikaku* was doomed and left the blazing carrier alone, seeking other prey. Eight *Zuikaku* Zero pilots found themselves without a home and had to ditch in the water.

On *Zuikaku*'s flag bridge, Ozawa studied the Americans with professional interest. He was impressed by their valor but unnerved when strafing fighters wounded a staff officer with a .50-caliber round.

Zuikaku was luckier than her sisters. She dodged two torpedoes and took a lot of near-misses, but one hit split open her aviation fuel system and covered the hangar deck with 80-octane aviation fuel, which promptly cooked off. *Zuikaku* had recently installed a foam fire-fighting system like the Americac carriers, but it did not work. Captain Takeo Kaizuka ordered his men to abandon ship, but nobody below got the word. Instead they reported back upstairs that they were getting the fire under control. Kaizuka belayed his original order, and *Zuikaku* was saved.

Not saved were most of her remaining airmen, who had few places to go. One pilot had flown off *Hiyo* the day before, landed on *Taiho,* high-lined to a destroyer, then to *Zuikaku,* and now had to recover his plane aboard the light carrier *Ryuho*.



Low on fuel, a Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter lands on the deck of the USS *Lexington* during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Antiaircraft gunners are seen at battle stations aboard the carrier.

Carrier Division Two, with *Hiyo, Junyo,* and *Ryuho,* also took it in the teeth, with *Enterprise, Lexington,* and *San Jacinto* air groups pounding them. Lieutenant Charles W. Nelson led his torpedo bombers against *Ryuho,* dropping his fish at 1,000 yards. The Japanese antiaircraft guns riddled his Avenger with automatic fire, and Nelson and his crew crashed fatally. *Ryuho* evaded all five torpedoes flung at her.

ANOTHER GROUP was led by *Lexington*'s Lt. Cmdr. Ralph Weymouth, a Guadalcanal veteran who had flown off the *Saratoga*. At age 27, he was an old timer. Assessing the targets, he attacked the *Hiyo,* escorted by Alex Vraciu's Hellcats. Japanese fighters charged through clouds to take Vraciu's planes by surprise, knocking down Lieutenant (j.g.) Warren E. McLellan's TBF before Vraciu realized he was under attack.

Three Hellcats faced eight Zero fighters, but Vraciu was an ace and immediately shot down a Zero that in turn was shooting down his wingman, Ensign Homer W. Brockmeyer. The wingman's plane spiraled toward the sea, and Vraciu tried to follow him. But two Zeros came in, and Vraciu had to shoot down one of them and lost track of Brockmeyer.

Meanwhile, the Avengers fought off the angry Zeros. McLellan himself was lucky—he and his crew bailed out of their cripple and were able to splash into the drink safely, where they inflated their raft and Mae West jackets. The young Arkansan pondered the great distance between his location and home as the sun began to set.

Torpedo 16 from *Lexington* fought back against their attackers. AMM1c Jack W. Webb in Lieutenant Norman A. Sterrie's Avenger shot down a Zero that got too close, earning Webb a Distinguished Flying Cross for his accurate gunnery. The Japanese were determined, but not too effective—three SBDs were hit by Japanese gunfire but not damaged severely.

At 7:04 PM, VB-16, the Minutemen, plunged in on *Hiyo,* dropping 1,000- and 500-pound bombs on the converted liner. Weymouth had scored a near-miss on *Hiyo*'s sister, *Junyo,* two years ago at the Battle of the Eastern Solomons. Weymouth plunged down to 1,500 feet and hit the red button atop his stick. He and his crew looked back as they pulled out to see a smoke puff erupt beside the carrier's island.

Other *Lexington* pilots roared down on the two carriers, finding *Hiyo* obscured by clouds but *Junyo* easy to see. Lieutenant Cook Cleland, a cheery Ohioan with three Air Medals and a Purple Heart, flew his SBD Dauntless through heavy flak, taking shell hits, and scored

a hit on *Junyo* just forward of the carrier's stern. As he pulled out, a Zero leaped at them. Gunner William J. Hisler opened fire with his .30-caliber Browning and put 60 rounds into the Zero's bottom. The Japanese plane spun off, trailing smoke, dropped a wheel, and ditched near a destroyer.

Lexington's airmen claimed seven half-ton hits on both carriers, but *Hiyo* took one bomb hit and *Junyo* two from all the attackers. Fading light, noise, youthful excitement, and high speed, as usual, counted for exaggerated claims.

Next up was *Enterprise*'s group, and they poured into the three carriers with determination and near-vertical attacks. Commander Jim Ramage led his planes in on *Ryuho*'s bow, but his bomb missed, dropping in the ship's wake. As it exploded, shaking Ramage's plane, a Zero stormed in. Ramage pulled out. Three of Ramage's other five pilots dropped close aboard; one claimed a minor hit.

Four VT-10 Avengers also went after *Ryuho* with fighters covering the approach. Heavy flak from the veteran battleship *Nagato* and *Ryuho* herself filled the air, but the TBFs from the Buzzard Brigade dropped their torpedoes anyway. They claimed eight hits. The Japanese reported slight damage from near misses.

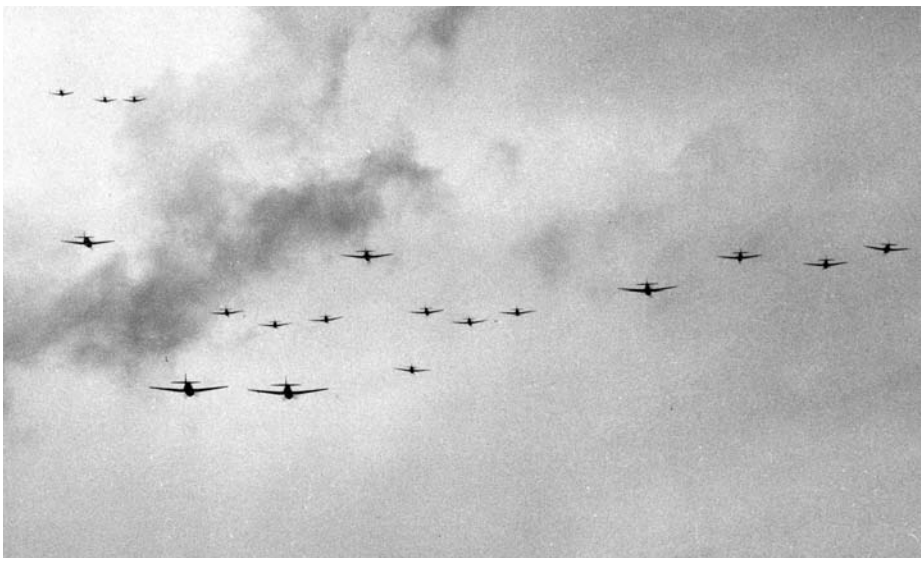
San Jacinto had bad luck, too. Lt. Cmdr. Donald J. Melvin could not release his torpedoes. He pulled up from his target, *Hiyo,* and tried again, this time on a destroyer, and claimed a hit. He was wrong.

Belleau Wood's group showed ample determination, with Lieutenant George Brown splitting his torpedo bombing division into an anvil attack on *Hiyo,* which worked perfectly. The Japanese carrier had nowhere to go to avoid incoming torpedo bombers, but Brown himself paid for the attack. His plane was hit, and while his two crewmen were able to escape, Brown was trapped in the burning aircraft, last seen struggling to bring his crippled plane back home.

TWO TORPEDOES hit *Hiyo*'s starboard quarter, and the carrier was torn open and began flooding, her steering gear wrecked. *Hiyo* was fatally damaged.

Carrier Division Three, *Chitose, Chiyoda,* and *Zuiho,* faced *Bunker Hill, Cabot,* and *Monterey. Bunker Hill*'s Bombing 8 took on *Chiyoda* and claimed six hits on the carrier and three more on two escorts. In actuality, the carrier took two hits, which killed 20 men and wrecked two planes, but *Chiyoda* stayed in business.

VT-31 from *Cabot* went after the legendary battleship *Haruna*. One bomb hit the battleship's aft turret, killing 15 men and threatening a magazine. Captain Shigenaga Katazuke flooded the magazine, and the battle wagon kept station.



U.S. carrier-based aircraft set off to find Japanese targets during the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Experienced American fighter pilots broke the back of Japanese naval air capability in the June 1944 battle.

Torpedo 8 came in next, to hit *Chiyoda,* and Captain Eiichiro Joh went hard to starboard, putting his stern to the attackers, and escaped the torpedoes.

Eight minutes after the attack began, it was over. The Americans, having expended their ordnance loads and ammo, began pulling out. Incredibly, the Japanese thought they had been attacked by 140 to 150 aircraft, when the Americans had sent in twice that number.

All eyes were on the blazing *Hiyo,* where explosions were tearing her apart steadily. It took her only six minutes to go to the bottom. Destroyers rescued 1,000 men, and 250 went down with the ship.

The other carriers were not in much better shape. *Zuikaku* was damaged by a bomb hit, *Junyo* by two near the smokestack, which utterly crushed it. *Chiyoda* had taken a hit on her after flight deck, and *Haruna* took two hits that left her hull warped and a magazine flooded. *Junyo* would survive, but her battle damage took her out of the war. She would be found relatively intact at Sasebo on V-J Day. Two oilers had been sunk, and 19 more planes had been lost.

Ozawa was stunned. He had now lost three carriers, three more were damaged, and most of his planes were gone. The decisive battle for the Empire was turning into a decisive disaster.

But now, as the sun set, the 209 planes of the American strike force had to find their way home in the dark, to blacked-out carriers. And the Americans were at the edge of their range, short on fuel. As they headed back on course 090, they began splashing into the sea. To make flying worse, it was the first night of a new moon, with no moonlight.

By 8:15, the radar operators on the American carriers had their planes, mostly gaggling to the west. At 8:30, Mitscher's carriers turned into the easterly wind to prepare to recover planes.

There was little controversy on Mitscher's flag bridge. The planes had to be recovered. At 8:30, Mitscher gave the order, "Turn on the lights!" As Burke had planned, the fleet went on full illumination: powerful searchlights from the carriers, starshells rocketing high from cruisers, destroyers aiming their searchlights at the flattops. The pilots were amazed, delighted—and confused. They did not need to see every ship in the task force, just their carriers.

Discipline broke down as the gulping planes returned. Pilots slapped their fuel-exhausted machines on the first decks they could find. Sometimes two or three planes tried to land at once. Even so, some 70 carrier planes went into the drink, most of them from *Wasp*.

The pilots who ditched faced grim ordeals. *Wasp* bomber leader Commander Jack Blitch ditched 25 miles from the nearest searchlight, passing out during the crash. He regained consciousness underwater in a closed cockpit. He did not remember getting out, but found himself standing on the plane's sinking wing, searching for his absent gunner. He was just able to haul his life raft out of the plane. Blitch spent the next 40 hours waiting for pickup, hauled in by a floatplane from the cruiser USS *Canberra,* named for the Australian capital and cruiser lost at Savo Island.

One of Blitch's subordinates made his landing on *Enterprise*. It was his first night "trap."

Other pilots who splashed in the water near the carriers rejoiced at the fact that the American radars watched them go down, and destroyers raced over to rescue them, lights blazing.

Enterprise's night-fighter detachment of Chance-Vought F4U Corsairs helped out, too, with the radar-equipped planes searching through the sky for loose and lost aircraft and guiding them home. Pilots did not bother with standard call-signs or jargon. Wearied from long flights, they left gun switches on and tried to land in twos and threes.

Torpedo 24's Lieutenant (j.g.) Warren Omark landed on the carrier *Lexington* instead of his own *Belleau Wood*. He and his crewmen bent down and kissed the flight deck anyway. They were down to two gallons in their tanks. For two hours recovery operations continued.

A plane crashed on *Enterprise*'s deck, forcing her lost planes to land on other carriers. An F6F ignored a wave-off signal and slammed onto *Yorktown*'s deck anyway, wrecking another F6F on the deck and killing the pilot, Lieutenant (j.g.) M.M. Thomme, Jr. *Yorktown* had to douse its lights and stop recovery operations while the flight deck crews cleared the wreckage.

Three *Monterey* planes had landed when Ensign R.W. "Pappy" Burnett's Avenger swooped in, damaged by *Chiyoda*'s flak. After three failed attempts to find a clear deck, Burnett's engine quit, out of fuel, and the plane ditched. The crew escaped onto the wing, pushing their three-man raft out, and just got into it as the plane sank into the ocean. Fortunately, the destroyer *Owen* had its searchlight on them the whole time.

Alex Vraciu, who had scored so many kills that day, also landed on the wrong carrier, *Enterprise,* with only drops of fuel to spare.

Eventually the sun rose, and the Americans counted the cost: out of 226 planes launched, 146 had been recovered. Some 172 pilots and aircrew were missing. Immediately the fleet went on search-and-rescue missions, finding numerous exhausted pilots. Some 90 were hauled in during the night. Orbiting aircraft hunted for the mirror flashes, yellow dye, and rubber rafts that denoted missing pilots, but it was tough. A Hellcat's one-man raft was difficult to spot on that slate gray sea.

EVEN SO, Task Force 58 claimed 67 kills. Vraciu himself was up to 19, which would make him the leading Navy ace for another three months. The Japanese pilots would not come back—their planes lacked self-sealing fuel tanks and armor, and their air-rescue system was rudimentary compared to the comprehensive American plans.

Meanwhile, the Japanese coped with yet another round of disaster. *Hiyo* was going down. The crew found time to remove the Emperor's portrait from the bridge and the battle flag, and survivors mustered on the flight deck in an orderly manner to abandon ship and sing the usual battle songs. Captain Toshiyuki Yokoi made sure his men went over the side, saluting each in turn. Then he sat down on an empty ammo box and waited to die, 126 days after taking command.

At 7:26 PM, the inevitable combination of lethal gasoline vapors from the unstable Borneo crude and 80-octane aviation fuel ignited within the carrier's hull, and *Hiyo*'s bulkheads began to collapse, sending Yokoi and *Hiyo*'s 20,000 tons to the bottom of the Pacific. The Mobile Fleet had lost three fleet carriers in less than 30 hours. The Japanese were whipped. They headed for home.

Task Force 58 was whipped, too, but with the fatigue of victory and a very hard day and night. Crewmen cut loose from flight and general quarters collapsed in their bunks, in corners, passageways, wherever they could find a little sleep. Those who could or had to stay awake worked to get the lost and stray pilots back to their home ships or toss damaged aircraft over the side.

Some of the aviators wanted to make one more strike on the Japanese, but Spruance vetoed that. He saw the Japanese had lost all their planes and were retreating. At the same time, he had no idea of what the actual Japanese casualty bill was. As far as he knew, all three carriers actually sunk were still afloat.

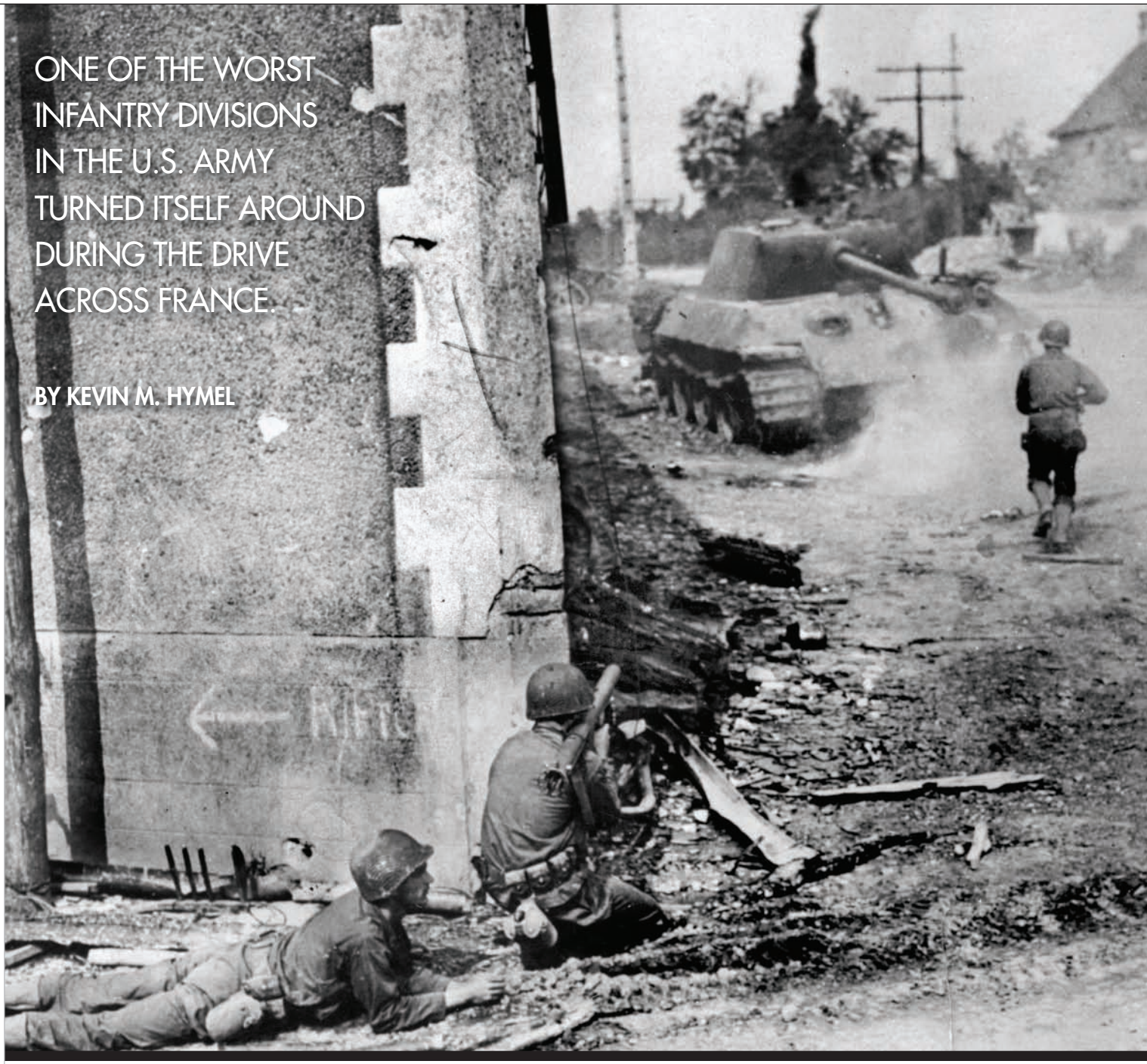
Spruance always made his decisions on the side of caution. His job was to protect the invasion of Saipan, and the Marines needed air cover. At 8:30 that evening, Spruance called off any pursuit. Except for picking up the missing aviators, the Battle of the Philippine Sea was over.

The Japanese reported for a certainty that they had sunk or damaged four or five carriers and a battleship or large cruiser, and made 160

Continued on page 69

Taking evasive action against American dive-bombers and torpedo planes, a Japanese heavy cruiser turns in a clockwise circle. In the distance the plumes of two bomb hits on a Kongo-class battleship are visible, while the stricken vessel narrowly averts a collision with an aircraft carrier also caught in the relentless air attack. Note the thick antiaircraft fire from the Japanese warships and the telltale patterns of their frantic maneuvers in the water.

The 90th Division



ONE OF THE WORST INFANTRY DIVISIONS IN THE U.S. ARMY TURNED ITSELF AROUND DURING THE DRIVE ACROSS FRANCE.

BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

Lieutenant General Omar Bradley, commander of the U.S. First Army, considered his 90th Infantry Division a problem unit. Its performance in the first part of the Normandy campaign was so poor, its leadership so bad, and its morale so low that Bradley's exasperated staff recommended breaking up the division and using its soldiers as replacements. Bradley, however, believed that proper leadership could save the division and make it a fighting machine.

The 90th had landed on Utah Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and attacked a veteran German division four days later. In the tight hedgerow country, the inexperienced Americans made little progress but took heavy casualties. The unit's poor fighting ability was noticed by more than senior American commanders. The Germans also took note. An American paratrooper, making his way back into the American lines one night, walked right through the 90th's front line and was neither shot at nor challenged. He noticed infantrymen digging foxholes in the middle of open fields and piling up the dirt on the sides of their holes; he tripped over a number of trip wires without drawing any attention, and he kept walking until he reached the division's artillery, where he

American infantrymen rush a German Panther medium tank that has just been knocked out by the soldier firing the bazooka at lower left. The smoke from the direct hit is beginning to swirl as the U.S. troops advance to dispatch any surviving enemy crewmen.

Comes of Age

was finally challenged.

The unit's crest, T and O, stood for Texas and Oklahoma, the home of the division's officers in World War I. The men, however, preferred the letters to stand for Tough Hombres. But the division's leadership failed to live up to the aggressive title. Brig. Gen. Jay W. MacKelvie had taken command of the unit two months prior to the Normandy invasion. After the first failed attack, Maj. Gen. J. Lawton Collins, the division's corps commander, replaced MacKelvie with his deputy corps commander, Maj. Gen. Eugene Landrum, who had fought in the Aleutians and captured Attu.

Landrum promised to clean house and get the division moving, going so far as to promise Bradley a "saltwater cocktail" from the other side of the Cherbourg Peninsula. But Landrum failed to get results. His July 22 attack on St. Germain-Sur-Seves was thrown back by fewer than 30 German paratroopers, and 250 Tough Hombres surrendered, the largest surrender of Americans in Normandy. An unsatisfied Bradley relieved Landrum after only two weeks in command.

Bradley next picked Brig. Gen. Teddy Roosevelt to revive the division. Roosevelt, the tough-fighting son of former President Theodore Roosevelt, had fought in North Africa and Sicily. He returned to the war with the 4th Infantry Division, landing with the assault troops at Utah Beach on D-Day, personally exposing himself to fire and leading men forward. Unfortunately, President Frankin D. Roosevelt died on July 12, two days before Bradley's request reached General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied commander.

Bradley finally found a solid leader on July 30. Brig. Gen. Raymond S. McLain made a name for himself with the National Guard serving on the Mexican border and in Europe during World War I. He proved his leadership abilities in Sicily as the artillery commander of the 45th Infantry Division, where he spurned his command post in favor of spending time with the troops. McLain quickly proved himself to the Tough Hombres. When returning from a visit to his frontline troops, he and his jeep driver blasted through a German roadblock with McLain firing his mounted .50-caliber machine gun at the enemy. The 90th had found its leader.

To aid McLain, Bradley sent Brig. Gen. William Weaver to serve as assistant division commander. Weaver had been the chief of staff for Services of Supply. Despite his seemingly inconsequential position, Weaver was a no-nonsense warrior who led by example. McLain and Weaver went to work immediately. McLain would introduce himself to the troops and then yank Weaver over to him and say: "This is Wild Bill Weaver, with a rugged face and a rugged character." Within two days, they had relieved 16 field officers.

Things were beginning to change for the 90th. McLain also had a fresh set of commanders to answer to. The 90th was placed under Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip's XV Corps in General George S. Patton, Jr.'s newly activated Third Army. One of the first messages sent from Patton read: "Put on your neckties."

The terrain also changed. With the capture of Avranches the 90th was out of the hedgerows and fighting on open land. Additionally, Avranches's capture ripped open the German left flank, resulting in an opportunity to prosecute Patton's style of mobile warfare. Patton put the foot soldiers into trucks racing eastward, and the 90th had yet to prove itself in a fight.

Change was not instantaneous. On August 1, the day Third Army became operational, Patton came across some 90th men lying in a ditch and asked, "Who's in charge of this recon?"

A shaken sergeant spoke up: "I am, sir." Patton then impatiently asked, "Can you tell me, sergeant, why you're stopped here, sunning yourself in a ditch?"

The nervous sergeant stumbled over his words, "To reload and regroup, sir." Patton was not satisfied. "Bullshit!" he snapped, and laid into the NCO with a string of curse words. Finished, Patton climbed into his jeep and sped away.

Things did not go much better the next day. Patton visited the division along a road east of Avranches. He yelled at officers who jumped from their vehicles at the sight of high-flying German planes. He walked two miles down the road, talking to the Tough Hombres as they passed. He called men riding on tanks babies and waited as they dismounted.

That night he confided to his diary, "The division is bad, the discipline poor, the men filthy, and the officers apathetic, many of them

All photos: National Archives

ABOVE: American troops work their way cautiously along a country lane flanked by hedgerows. One of their comrades, lower left, has already been killed by enemy fire. The hedgerows were characteristic of the Norman countryside and presented significant obstacles to advancing troops. RIGHT: Major General Raymond McLain was the third commander of the 90th Infantry Division since D-Day. The fighting at Mayenne proved that he had developed his command into an effective combat unit.

removing their insignia and covering the markings on their helmets." He concluded: "They seemed normal but are not in hard condition." But Patton did see some positives. The next day, while visiting McLain's headquarters, he monitored General Weaver's attack on St. Hillaire, which was soon captured.

With St. Hillaire in American hands, the 90th attacked toward Mayenne, a town 30 miles southeast of Avranches and a key objective for the encirclement of the German Seventh Army. With most of Patton's armor heading west into Brittany, the capture of the town and its three vital bridges over the Mayenne River would give Patton an excellent location to begin the western encirclement once Bradley consented. McLain put Weaver in charge of a special task force to advance quickly to seize the town.

TASK FORCE WEAVER was composed around the 357th Infantry Regiment, with the 712th Tank Battalion, a company from the 607th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 345th Field Artillery Battalion providing fire support. The 90th Recon Troop acted as the task force's eyes, and the 315th Engineer Battalion cleared mines and obstacles. A squadron of Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter-bombers provided air support, and a company from the 315th Medical Battalion cared for the wounded.

As the sun rose on August 5, the task force headed out from St. Hillaire with the armor and reconnaissance cars up front, acting as a screen, while the infantry-laden trucks followed close behind. Other elements followed, averaging 20 miles an hour. People lining the streets threw flowers at the advancing soldiers. When the columns slowed, the locals ran forward and offered bottles of wine. Members of the French Resistance offered information on enemy positions.

"The men seemed to sense the fact that something big was in the wind—an undercurrent of excitement seemed to go down the column and you could almost see the men's spirits rise," reported Colonel George B. Barth, the regiment's commander. "Morale was on the way up."

Around 2:30 PM, the task force reached the outskirts of Mayenne where two reconnaissance vehicles blew up at a mined roadblock. German infantry opened fire with machine guns and antitank weapons from the woods on either side of the road. Barth rushed forward through enemy fire to direct his mortar teams, then followed with a company-strength assault. The men quickly took the roadblock. The battle to capture Mayenne was on.

Weaver, scouting up front with carbine in hand, decided on a two-pronged attack, sending a battalion under Major Edward Hamilton to attack the only remaining bridge in the center of the city, while two other battalions under Colonel Barth headed south to cut off the routes leading out of the city to the east.

Hamilton pushed his men and tanks forward, encountering only slight resistance. To ensure no surprises, his artillery and tanks blasted the suspicious-looking high ground on the western edge of the city. Hamilton's men captured the western section and discovered the Germans had destroyed two of the three bridges spanning the Mayenne River.

To get a better view of the remaining bridge, a lieutenant set up an observation post in the attic of a house fronting the river. He found the position by shooting the locks off the doors leading upstairs. From this vantage point, he could see that the bridge was rigged for destruction with eight 500-pound aerial bombs. On its eastern edge the Germans had posted two 88mm guns, a 20mm weapon, and a few tanks.

As the Americans pondered the best way to capture the bridge, they came under fire from the Germans on the east bank. On the west bank, a German tank rolled south, heading for the Americans. Hamilton called artillery on the tank and ordered his antitank platoon north to block any other attempts to flank his left. As the men rolled their weapon across the street, German artillery opened up, killing one man and wounding two others. The German tank was quickly dispatched.

Sherman tanks then took up positions along the river and began firing at the Germans. Behind Hamilton, a lone German vehicle rolled up, intending to cross the bridge. The occupants did not realize they were now in American territory. A single blast from a tank destroyer at point-blank range ended the vehicle's journey.

"The result," reported Hamilton, "was carnage." When a French civilian was hit by the exchange of fire, Staff Sergeant Charlie Lancaster broke cover, raced over to him, and carried him to safety.

Hamilton's men readied for their assault. He planned to hit the far bank with a 10-minute artillery barrage. As soon as it ended, infantry would rush across the bridge, followed by a squad of mine-detecting engineers who would precede the tanks, making sure the bridge was safe for the tanks' advance. Machine gunners firing from buildings lining the river and a wall along the west bank would provide covering fire.

The plan soon broke down. The artillery pieces began pounding away at the German positions at 5:50 PM. One round hit the 88mm ammunition, sending a huge blast into the air and a pall of smoke over the attack route. When the artillery fire lifted, the lead infantry platoon froze and would not move. The first tank, commanded by Lieutenant Charley Lombardi, had already cornered the road paralleling the river and was heading over the bridge, cannon firing.

SEEING THIS DISASTER in the making, Lieutenant Burrows Stevens called, "Follow me!" and ran out behind Lombardi's tank. He followed it over the bridge, emptying his only weapon, a German Walther P-38 pistol.

Inspired by Stevens's courage, the platoon and two engineers followed. Along with the hail of machine-gun and small-arms fire, the enemy also fired a few rounds from the 20mm down the length of the bridge. One shell tore into engineer James McCracken, and he "momentarily seemed to disappear," Hamilton recalled. The round that killed McCracken also tore the leg off the other engineer.

The infantry was left to cut the wires leading to the bombs while the tank reached the opposite bank. Led by Staff Sergeant Raymon Lopez, the men then began tossing grenades into cellars and shooting at every window they saw. Lombardi's tank rolled off the bridge and into a side street, where it blasted a German gun and its crew, and then churned up the high ground at the far eastern side of the town.

Lieutenant Stevens's men found themselves alone. The follow-up platoon also froze, scrambling into doorways along the street for protection. As Major Hamilton charged down the street, ordering the men to fire their weapons, a lieutenant began pushing men out of their hiding places. As this was going on, Stevens appeared, having recrossed the bridge in search of his reinforcements. Finding the platoon's lieutenant paralyzed with fear, Stevens ordered the platoon sergeant to get the men moving. Stevens then assured the cowering men that the first platoon had made it with no casualties (a lie since he had passed McCracken's lifeless body on his return trip) and that all the Germans next to the river had been cleared out.

With Stevens's convincing and other officers and NCOs pushing and cajoling, the second platoon moved out. A platoon of tanks followed. As the men began their charge, a German vehicle drove down the road toward them. A bazooka man halted it with a single shot from his weapon. It turned out to be an ambulance packed with 12 wounded men. Miraculously, none were hurt from the round.

ABOVE: During heavy fighting for control of the bridge at Mayenne, two soldiers of the U.S. 90th Infantry Division, the Tough Hombres, exchange fire with German troops from a second-story window. In urban combat, houses served as protection from the enemy and often caused such battles to devolve into a harrowing game of cat and mouse. BELOW: German pioneers had already destroyed two of the three bridges across the Mayenne River when soldiers of the American 90th Infantry Division charged across the last span standing and secured it.

The men, under fire, then stormed the bridge. An enemy bullet bounced off a sergeant's helmet and killed the soldier beside him. Stevens stopped along the way and picked up the M-1 rifle lying next to McCracken's body. "Had to wipe the blood off it," Stevens recalled.

Meanwhile, to the south Barth led the maneuver force down to the river's edge, encountering only sporadic rifle fire. The men found a skiff and a large, leaky boat for their amphibious assault. For oars, the men tore down a nearby fence. Barth crossed with the first flotilla at 7:20, then went back to manage the other shifts. The rest of the men climbed out of the boats on the east bank and up the wooded hillside.

One of the men, Captain Max Kocour, spotted a French farmer, who put his finger to his mouth to make the "quiet" sign and pointed to

ABOVE: A U.S. M4 Sherman tank speeds through the cobblestone streets of a Norman town en route to the fighting. A Sherman, packing a 75mm main gun, led the assault on the bridge at Mayenne. RIGHT: A German vehicle burns furiously after taking heavy fire from soldiers of the U.S. 90th Infantry Division, who have just gained control of an important bridge across the Mayenne River.

a certain door on his farmhouse. Kocour cocked both his M3 "grease gun" and his .45-caliber pistol and moved along the wall to the door. Peering inside, he spied three Germans sitting around a table eating lunch. Their rifles were stacked near the door.

Kocour stepped in, between the Germans and their weapons, and ordered "Hande hoch!" The Germans only half-heartedly began to obey. Kocour, furious, shouted, "Patton, ser gross panzer! Erschiesen sie!" [Patton has large tanks. They will shoot you!] It worked. The Germans threw their hands up. The Frenchman and four of his friends collected the rifles and helped Kocour escort the prisoners down to the river. Kocour sang "The Star Spangled Banner" while the Frenchmen cheered "Vive Americain!" as they went.

While Kocour was capturing his quarry, inflatable rafts arrived on the west bank and more men crossed. By 8:30, two battalions were safely across and making their way east to block the roads. "We took a chance and were lucky," remembered Barth.

BACK AT THE BRIDGE, Lieutenant Stevens reorganized his scrambled units and sent them out to protect the bridgehead. Lieutenant Lombardi, who had led the attack in his lone tank, went back to replenish his ammunition. More men, tanks, and tank destroyers rolled over the bridge and spread out, expanding the position.

They reached some railroad tracks where they spied a German tank. But before the men could engage, the tank turned and rushed out of the city. Stevens's men pushed through the town until they made contact with Barth's men. The linkup was complete. Mayenne and its bridge were safely in American hands. The Americans immediately began setting up a defensive perimeter east of the city.

MAYENNE IS AN ANCIENT TOWN THAT HAS CHANGED LITTLE.

The town of Mayenne has changed little since the 90th Infantry Division captured its vital bridge. Today, all three bridges still connect the east and west banks of the town. The vital northern bridge, the only one intact in August 1944, serves as the main road connecting Avranches with Le Mans. The bridge is now known as the McCracken Bridge, for the engineer killed during the assault. About halfway across the bridge, a stone memorial pays tribute his sacrifice.

The east side of town contains the tourist bureau as well as a number of shops and stores, leading up the high ground where Sergeant Lombardi drove his tank. The west side is much more interesting. Beside the town square, where most local residents congregate near a statue of David, a church and castle dominate the town's skyline. The Church of Notre-Dame, the tallest structure in the town, dates to the 12th century. A statue of Joan of Arc stands at its entrance.

The castle, with its embattlements and conical tower, dates back to the 9th and 10th centuries. Built by Juhel, the Baron of Mayenne, it was the first structure built in the area and today serves as a prison. A museum explains the history of the castle and exhibits its relics. □

The picturesque town of Mayenne today looks very much like it did in 1944. A visitors center stands to the left on the river bank, and a stone bridge spans the river in the distance.

ABOVE: Following the battle for Mayenne, a French boy presents a crude American flag to victorious soldiers of the 90th Division. The flag had actually been made during World War I to greet American troops of a generation earlier. It was hidden from the Nazis for four years. RIGHT: Using debris from a damaged home to camouflage its position, the crew of an American antitank gun prepares to face the enemy. Note the soldier peering through binoculars downrange from the weapon in the direction from which the Germans were expected to approach.

As it grew dark, General Weaver ordered a halt and organized an all-around defense of the city. All night long, Germans stumbled into the 90th's positions. The Americans bagged large numbers of Germans who were bewildered to find their enemy so far forward. When four German vehicles drove into La Ferichard Hotel, which was serving as Colonel Barth's command post, an American platoon knocked out each vehicle and rounded up the prisoners outside the hotel's front door. "The Germans apparently had no idea where we were and stray vehicles kept barging into the town," explained Barth.

Hamilton, too, found himself face-to-face with confused Germans. Just after 11 PM, two German vehicles rolled up to his command post and three men got out of the first car. They were immediately fired on, and the Germans surrendered.

"Suddenly," recalled Hamilton, "we were fired on from behind the two vehicles."

The two German officers from the second vehicle had been ducking behind the first, hoping to escape. At that moment, a jeep mounting a .50-caliber machine gun buzzed around a corner and blasted the second vehicle, setting it on fire. Two captains, wielding Tommy guns, then ran around one side of the vehicles, firing at the Germans, killing or wounding them all. The fire Hamilton encountered had been from his own troops, but their work had been accurate and intense.

"The dead officer was so full of holes that he grotesquely resembled a sieve," explained Hamilton.

The tally of German vehicles destroyed included seven cars, two motorcycles, and one truck. Two 88mm artillery pieces were also destroyed. The Germans were dazed and confused. Well west of the town German bombers dropped flares, unaware of how far east the Americans had advanced.

The next morning, August 6, the citizens of Mayenne emerged from their hiding places. One group unfurled a special flag. It was a homemade Stars and Stripes the local residents had sewn to welcome American soldiers during World War I. They had hidden the flag for the last four years until they were sure the Germans were gone. The flag represented the town's official liberation.

MORE GOOD NEWS arrived that night with a German disguised as a French civilian. The German, captured close to midnight, told an American lieutenant that he had deserted the German Army on the Eastern Front and had been sentenced to death before escaping authorities. He explained that the Germans had at least 50 tanks and assault guns along the road 10 kilometers east of Mayenne, but that American fighter planes had attacked the German vehicles, leaving some wrecked or on fire. He also explained to his American captors that when he told the German commander that he was on his way to see wife in Mayenne, the officer told him: "You had better wait a day or two, overnight at least, because by that time we will have Mayenne again."

The Tough Hombres soon left Mayenne, replaced by the 1st Infantry Division. Flushed with confidence at their ability to maneuver and defeat the Germans, the men of the 90th would continue their drive to Le Mans as part of Patton's encircling movement against the German left flank. While the victory at Mayenne was not perfect, officers and NCOs proved capable of inspiring their men to achieve the unit's goals. The bridge over the Mayenne River proved vital for the drive surrounding the Germans in Falaise.

On August 19, the 90th helped seal the Falaise Pocket when the division closed on Chambois and linked up with Polish forces pushing south. The job had originally gone to the 80th Infantry Division, but when the green unit encountered difficulties it was up to the veteran Tough Hombres to complete the mission. The division went on to spearhead the crossings of the Moselle and Saar Rivers as well as help crush the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge. It also held the distinction of being one of the few divisions to remain with Patton's Third Army through the war.

Bradley easily admitted that his problem division had become "one of our best divisions." His decision to keep the unit intact and not break it up was proven correct. "We stayed with the Division," he wrote in his memoirs, "and in the end, the 90th became one of the most outstanding in the European Theater." □

Frequent contributor Kevin M. Hymel is the research director for Sovereign Media and author of Patton's Photographs: War as He Saw It. *He also leads tours of Patton's battlefields for Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours.*

By Joseph Luster

RED ORCHESTRA 2: HEROES OF STALINGRAD

Tripwire brings high production values and realism to the WWII first-person shooter genre.

PUBLISHER
Tripwire Interactive, 1C Company

DEVELOPER
Tripwire Interactive

SYSTEM(S)
PC

AVAILABLE
Q1 2011

Things were a little bit different in 2006, when developer Tripwire Interactive released the first of their *Red Orchestra* series, *Red Orchestra: Ostfront 41-45*. Though the world of World War II first-person shooters wasn't quite as crowded as it had been in years past, there was still some hefty competition that delved into the same subject matter and time period. Just a cursory glance at the landscape today shows drastically different formations across the frontlines of the genre. "Modern Warfare" took over consoles, while historical outings have been increasingly relegated to personal computers.

One of a few things that makes this such an enticing prospect for developers is a community-based portal like Steam. Thanks to the ease of operation on both ends, releasing games digitally through Valve's service tends to make a lot more sense than doing the same through, say, Xbox Live Arcade or Playstation Network. Well, Tripwire is sticking to PCs exclusively with the follow-up to *Ostfront,* and World War II shooter fans might want to turn their attention toward retailers and Steam when *Red Orchestra 2: Heroes of Stalingrad* makes its debut.

Heroes of Stalingrad, while still focusing heavily on the multiplayer aspect like its predecessor, adds in a bunch of modes to satisfy players that aren't always itching to take their skills head-to-head against others. One of these offline challenges is a Stalingrad campaign which puts the multiplayer maps to use in a layout that recreates the famous battle from both the German and Russian sides. Without the kind of explosive scripted events seen in other games—story is delivered via bookend intros and cinematics—in-game thrills are going to depend on the dynamics of your own experience.

One of Tripwire's primary goals in this was to provide a scenario far separated from the kind we've all experienced time and time again in World War II shooters. How many times have we stormed Normandy? How many times will we storm Normandy in the future?

That's not to say that lacks excitement, but it's nice to see what could prove to be a relatively fresh take on the genre as far as campaigns are concerned.

What really serves to distance the series from its contemporaries are the more realistic aspects. *Red Orchestra* offers prime opportunity for strategy in combat that can come right down to the nitty gritty of things. *Ostfront* was especially notable in this regard, with everything from bullet drop to time of flight factoring into whether or not your shot would be on the mark. Shooting in general is a more thoughtful affair; breathing comes into play, and you can't just depend on a virtual crosshair to ensure you've got someone in your sights. It may sound a little intense to those weaned on more arcade-like, twitchy affairs, but it's a refreshingly specialized way of tackling firefights, and lining something up just right becomes a more satisfying accomplishment.

Realism carries over to other aspects, as well,

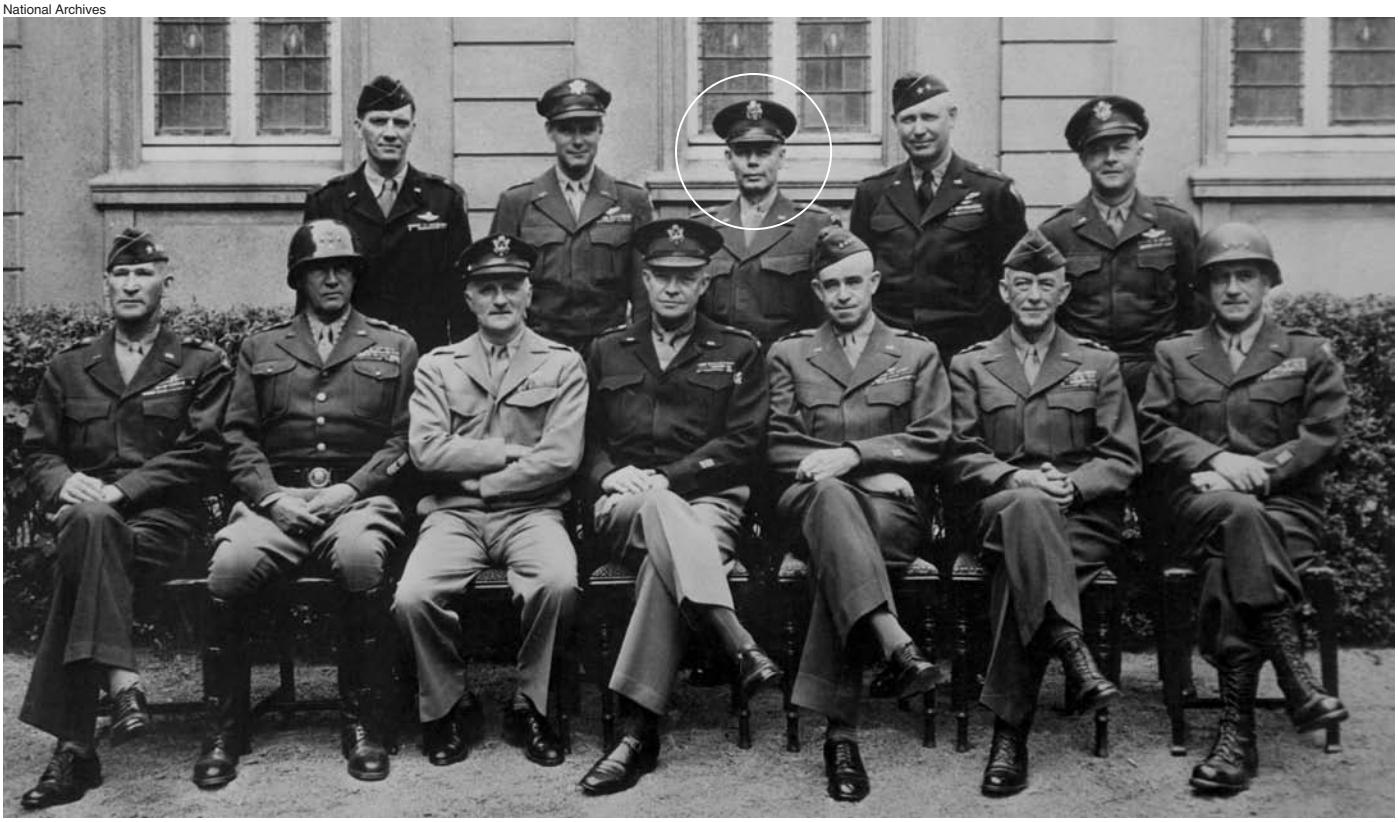
including the way the player sustains damage. While games like *Call of Duty* have taught us that staying out of combat for a brief period of time will eventually replenish health and heal wounds (like in real life!), the world of *Red Orchestra* isn't quite so forgiving. It's mortal threats like these that make hopping into the protective shell of a tank that much more enticing a prospect. *Heroes of Stalingrad* keeps traditions like these alive, but very little from the first title has made the transition without at least some form of tweaking.

In addition to the aspects that molded the series into what it is in the first place, new mechanics have also been woven into the mix. Chief among these is a first-person cover system, something that's almost become a necessity in the world of shooters. This isn't likely to play out as it does in other games, though, where the player can use cover as a crutch for safe, incremental movement (and an opportunity to replenish health). Still, having the ability to blind fire from behind protection—however fleeting a relief it may be—is a welcome change of pace.

From early looks at the game, it appears Tripwire have their minds and skills in the right place to deliver a product that could stick around for some time. It all comes down to the little details in the end. The way Russian soldiers run and grip their weapons differently than German soldiers, for instance, per their unique methods of training. And, lest it be neglected, it should be said that *Heroes of Stalingrad* is quite the looker. Like similarly handsome games, it uses an enhanced version of Unreal Engine 3, a decision that's really paid off for the title aesthetically. Anyone that's invested their fair share of time in the first *Red Orchestra* likely has this lined up for purchase already, but everyone else should definitely keep their eyes on *Heroes of Stalingrad* for a nice mix of high production values and realistic, strategic shooting action. □

By Al Hemingway

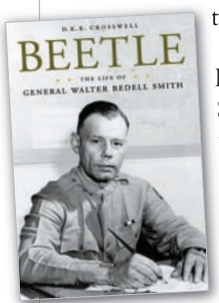
National Archives



Eisenhower's Hatchet Man

General Walter Bedell Smith was an extraordinary chief of staff for Ike during the war.

THEY CALLED HIM "BEETLE." HE COULD BE GRUFF AND DOWNRIGHT INSULTING at times to his subordinates. New officers joining his staff cringed when they had to go in and "meet the old man." Despite his shortcomings, Walter Bedell Smith was just the kind of officer General Dwight David Eisenhower sorely needed to run his command staff. Smith was also the perfect choice to run interference between Ike and the British, who did not always see eye to eye on the numerous issues during the conflict. Eisenhower could be indecisive at times. But Smith was his voice of confidence in dealing with the seemingly endless matters that confronted him from their association in the Mediterranean Theater in 1942 until war's end in 1945.



In his new book, ***Beetle: The Life of General Walter Bedell Smith*** (University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2010, 1,070 pp., photos, maps, notes, index, $39.95. hardcover), author D.K.R. Cresswell leaves no stone unturned in recapturing the spirit of the man who stood behind Eisenhower to offer him hope and encouragement during his darkest hours in the war.

Born in Indiana in 1895, Smith wanted to be a professional soldier from an early age. He joined the Indiana National Guard in 1911. Little did he realize that he would not hang up his uniform until 42 years later. He received his commission in 1917, departed for France with Company A, 1st Battalion, 39th Infantry Regiment, where he saw action in the Aisne-Marne Offensive, and was wounded.

While Smith recuperated in the hospital, a decision was rendered by the senior staff that would alter his career in a positive manner. The high command ordered General John J. Pershing to send 30 officers for staff duty in Washington, D.C. Infuriated because he did not want to break up his inner circle, he ordered that a records search be made of any junior officer with staff duty experience and that they be sent instead. Smith's name came up because he had done some staff work with the National Guard. Before long, the newly promoted 1st lieutenant was U.S. bound.

From there, Smith was transferred to the 2nd Infantry Regiment, which relocated to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, in 1921. The following year was a turning point for Smith. He became aide-de-camp to Brig. Gen. George Van Horn Moseley, the commander of the 12th Infantry Brigade. Moseley was impressed with the young officer and gave him excellent fitness reports. He saw firsthand Smith's unique style of operating a staff and having it run smoothly. "They don't make 'em any better than Smith," Moseley said.

General Walter Bedell Smith (circled) stands behind Eisenhower in this photo of senior American officers.

During the Depression years, Smith was an instructor at the U.S. Army Infantry School and then attended the Command and General Staff School. After nine years as a lieutenant and several more as a

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Myths About Israel and the Middle East (1)

Do the media feed us fiction instead of fact?

We all know that, by dint of constant repetition, white can be made to appear black, good can get transformed into evil, and myth may take the place of reality. Israel, with roughly one-thousandth of the world's population and with a similar fraction of the territory of this planet, seems to engage a totally disproportionate attention of the print and broadcast media of the world. Unfortunately, much of what the media tell us — in reporting, editorializing in columns, and in analysis — are endlessly repeated myths.

What are the facts?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

Reality: The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War (1967), when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs living in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

> "Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!"

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip are/were "occupied Arab territory."

Reality: All of "Palestine" — east and west of the Jordan River — was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration, all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people." In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan River — about 75% of Palestine — and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians (now renamed "Jordanians") were the occupiers for nineteen years. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has returned the entire Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. The final status of the "West Bank" will be decided if and when the Palestinians will finally be able to sit down and seriously talk peace with Israel.

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace."

Reality: This is simply not correct, although it has been repeated so often that many have come to believe it. The greatest obstacle to peace is the intransigence and the irreconcilable hostility of the Arabs. Not more than 400,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why shouldn't they live there? Over 2 million Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace. Neither the Israelis nor they themselves consider them as such.

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace."

Reality: The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one. Israel, victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs, has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it: the vast Sinai Peninsula, which contained some of the most advanced military installations, prosperous cities and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of petroleum imports. For the return of Gaza, Israel was "rewarded" with constant rocket attacks. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. But, so far, no responsible Palestinian representation has been available to seriously negotiate with Israel about this.

All these myths (and others we shall talk about) have poisoned the atmosphere for decades. The root cause of the never-ending conflict is the unwillingness of the Arabs (and not just the Palestinians) to accept the reality of Israel. What a pity that those of the Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens have lived and continue to live in poverty, misery and ignorance. They could have chosen to accept the proposed partition of the country in 1947, would now have had their state alongside Israel for over sixty years and could have lived in peace and prosperity. They could have kept hundreds of thousands of refugees in their homes and could have saved tens of thousands of lives. Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!

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captain and a major, Smith received his silver oak leaves in 1939. As lieutenant colonel, he returned to Washington to be Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall's assistant to the secretary of the general staff. Marshall and Smith had also become friends while at the Infantry School and, like the others, Marshall was impressed with Smith's abilities as a chief of staff.

Smith was on the fast track, and, by February 1942, he had earned his first star and set out to organize a combined chiefs of staff group. Not long afterward, Smith was promoted to major general, and in September 1942, he took charge of the Allied Forces Headquarters, as its chief of staff.

From 1942-1945, Smith work tirelessly for Eisenhower. He represented Ike on many diplomatic missions, one which included meetings with Italian officials to draw up an armistice between the two countries. Smith traveled to America and represented Eisenhower in conferences with President Franklin Roosevelt as well.

Smith also was the go-between, smoothing the waters of controversy that continually arose in Allied headquarters. Disagreements surrounding the invasion of Sicily, the Normandy invasion with its myriad of problems from supply to manpower, and the landings in southern France several months after D-Day were just a few of the quarrels Smith diffused.

Smith's penchant for hard work and driving himself past his physical limits took its toll. He constantly suffered with bleeding ulcers and once even disobeyed Ike and left the hospital before being properly discharged.

When Germany surrendered, it was Walter Bedell Smith, representing the United States, who signed the surrender document. After the war, Smith held a variety of posts in the Truman administration, including Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Director of Central Intelligence. He was also the Undersecretary of State when his former boss, Eisenhower, was elected president in 1952.

When Smith passed away in 1961, Eisenhower said this: "A very good soldier of France [de Lattre de Tassigny] once assured me that my place in military history was secure since the only requisite for an enduring spot in the history of battles was wisdom in selecting a Chief of Staff. He went on to say that no one in World War II was quite as wise, or at least as fortunate, as I in this regard. And of this circumstance I would of course be forever the beneficiary."

Orde Wingate: A Man of Genius 1903-1944 by Trevor Royle, Frontline Books, London, UK, 2010, 384 pp., photos, notes, index, $32.95, paperback.

To say Orde Charles Wingate was a unique individual is an understatement. Lauded by some, such as Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who called him a "man of genius," and despised by others, such as Lt. Gen. Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, the American commander in the China-Burma-India Theater, Wingate had unorthodox ideas.

Wingate was born to be a soldier. He spent his early years in India until his father retired from the British Army, when he was just two years old. The family relocated to Great Britain and the children were raised in an extremely regimented lifestyle that included long hours of studying the Bible. As a child, Wingate did not play with other children, which may account for his antisocial behavior and odd manners when dealing with subordinates and superiors throughout his military career.

In 1923, Wingate graduated from the Royal Military Academy, where he was trained as an artillery officer. Because of his horsemanship skills, he was then sent to the Military School

Short Bursts

My New Guinea Diary by Staff Sergeant Ernest C. Ford, White Stag Press, Roseville, CA, 2010, 364 pp., photos, $17.95, softcover.

Ernest C. Ford's life reads like a slice of the American dream. After running away from his home in New Mexico, he enlisted in the Army because he had always wanted to learn to fly.

And fly he did. When World War II broke out, he was assigned to the 6th Troop Carrier Squadron in New Guinea in the fall of 1942. By conflict's end, it would be the most highly decorated unit in the Army Air Corps. Armed with no technological tools such as maps or radios, the 6th TCS proved invaluable in defeating the enemy.

Ford remained in the military and flew 385 combat missions in World War II and Korea, earning six Distinguished Flying Crosses and the Air Medal. His diary served as the material for this book. Ford died in March 2010. He was indeed an American hero.

Best Little Stories from World War II by C. Brian Kelly with Ingrid Smyer, Cumberland House, Naperville, IL, 2010, 448 pp., photos, $18.99, softcover.

Literally a million stories have come out of World War II, from the infantryman in the field to the diplomatic scene, to espionage, in every theater of operation. Award-winning journalist C. Brian Kelly and his wife and co-author, Ingrid Smyer, who was also a journalist, have served on several historical commissions in Virginia, where they reside.

The two have collected numerous anecdotes from a multitude of sources and assembled them into another book of their *Best Little Stories* collection. These vignettes relate powerful tales of heroism, nostalgia, escape from captivity, tragedy, and even accounts of cowardice during the conflict.

One such fascinating story tells of destroyer exercises simulating an attack on the battleship USS *Iowa*. However, one such destroyer, the *William D. Porter,* accidentally let loose a live torpedo, which headed straight for the *Iowa*. After evading the "fish" and watching it discharge harmlessly a half mile away, much radio communication was exchanged between the parties involved because of the very important person on board—President Franklin D. Roosevelt—en route to Tehran, Iran, for his conference with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin in 1943.

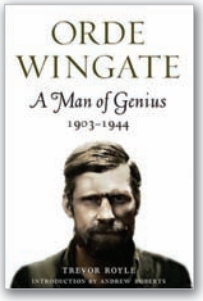
Cobbers in WWII: Memoirs from the Greatest Generation edited by James B. Hofrenning, Lutheran University Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2010, 238 pp., photos, $28.00, softcover.

Of the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, who saw duty during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "This generation has a rendezvous with history." FDR was certainly correct. These men and women went on to perform various tasks, some involving risk to their lives, to prevent the spread of Japanese and German aggression.

Author James B. Hofrenning, himself a veteran of the conflict, has written a book to honor those individuals who attended Moorhead College in Concordia, Minnesota, also known as the Cobbers. He has collected short stories from 17 individuals dealing with their wartime experiences in Europe and the Pacific.

In the back of the book the names of 32 Cobbers that were killed in the war or served and returned are listed. Today, more than ever, it is so impor-

of Equitation. Although he excelled in riding, his rebellious nature did not make him a favorite with his fellow officers. His combative style of conversation and incessant arguing infuriated many.



Wingate did have help. His uncle, General Sir Reginald Wingate, had been Governor General of Sudan and assisted the young Wingate in his career. His Uncle Rex's duty in the Sudan intrigued him, and soon he mastered the Arabic language. He was granted a leave of absence from the British Army and served with the Sudan Defence Force. He served in the East Arab Corps and patrolled with the SDF in an attempt to snag slave traders and ivory poachers. It was here that the young officer learned to set up ambushes, endure the harsh climates, and go behind the lines to seek out and kill the enemy, traits he would bring with him to Burma.

During his time in the Sudan, Wingate also experienced his first bouts with severe depression. He met Lorna Patterson on his voyage home in 1933 and immediately fell in love with her. He broke off his five-year engagement to Enid Margaret Jelley to marry Patterson in 1935. Jelley was heartbroken and carried a torch for Wingate the rest of her life, never marrying.

In 1936, Wingate was ordered to Palestine. Here he was transformed into a staunch Zionist and saw the importance of creating a Jewish state in the Middle East. When Arab guerrillas began attacking Jewish settlements, Wingate was granted permission to create the Special Night Squads. Once again, Wingate was happiest when in the field with his men. Unfortunately, his outspoken criticism for not creating a Jewish state did not bode well with his superior officers, who relieved him of command.

With the outbreak of World War II, Wingate found himself in command of guerrilla-type units in Ethiopia. He created the Gideon Force, which harassed the Italian supply lines. With less than 2,000 men, he defeated a 20,000-man army and helped put Ethiopian leader Haile Selassie back on the throne.

After contracting malaria, Wingate was given heavy doses of atabrine, which can produce severe depression, and he attempted suicide. After his recovery, he was dispatched to the Far East where he was once again reunited with General Archibald Wavell, who liked the unconventional commander. Soon, Wingate was doing what he did best—leading a guerrilla force, the famed Chindits, against the Japanese.

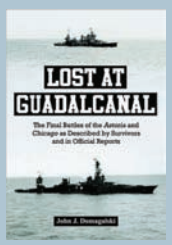
Wingate saw the importance of radio communications and air power to destroy enemy positions. He proved that through the proper leadership and training the Japanese soldier, viewed by many as invincible, could be beaten at his own game. His prior service in the Sudan and Palestine had certainly reaped benefits.

Unfortunately, there was a dark side to Wingate. His ability to make enemies by his constant arguing with superior officers, eating raw onions, holding press conferences in the nude, his violent outbursts at junior officers, and his bouts with depression did not endear him to many.

But, as Royle writes, "For him there could be no middle way and no compromise and throughout his brief life he was always found at the place where the extremes met."

Axis Sally: The American Voice of Nazi Germany by Richard Lucas, Casemate, Havertown, PA, 2010, 322 pp., notes, index, photos, $29.95, hardcover.

tant that those remaining veterans of World War II relate their stories for their families and future generations. This book is a fitting tribute to them all.



Lost at Guadalcanal: The Final Battles of the Astoria and Chicago as Described by Survivors and in Official Reports by John J. Domagalski, McFarland Publishers, 2010, 224 pp., notes, index, photos, $38.00, softcover.

The majority of the crews who served aboard the U.S. naval armada that sailed to Guadalcanal during the early days of the war had never even heard of the Solomon Islands. However, after becoming involved in the many sea battles in and around the island they would surely never forget them.

This book deals with the fate of two of the ships, the American heavy cruisers *Astoria* and *Chicago,* constructed more than 10 years prior to the war. Unfortunately, neither vessel would survive the six months of fighting in the waters off Guadalcanal. The author has combined tales from survivors, official reports, and other historical accounts to tell the story of the last days of each vessel.

Hitler's Engineers: Fritz Todt and Albert Speer, Master Builders of the Third Reich by Blaine Taylor, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2010, 272 pp., bibliography, notes, $39.95, hardcover.

Here is an intriguing account of two of Nazi Germany's top architects—Fritz Todt and Albert Speer—who designed many of the buildings and roadways in the country during the reign of Adolf Hitler. Both men's invaluable contributions to the German war machine prolonged the war by at least a year, according to military historians.

Todt, who was the mastermind behind the Autobahn and the West Wall, commonly referred to as the Siegfried Line, was killed in an unexplained airplane crash, which may have been engineered by his adversaries. Nonetheless, his successor, Albert Speer, continued designing structures such as the Nuremberg Nazi Party Congress buildings. Many of his other works withstood the constant Allied aerial bombardment. Speer also served as Hitler's Minister of Armaments. He died in 1981 after serving 20 years in Spandau Prison.

War in Pacific Skies by Charlie and Ann Cooper, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2010, 192 pp., notes, index, photos, $27.99, softcover.

This coffee table book skillfully blends photography and military history to illustrate the war in the Pacific from 1941-1945. Noted aviation artist Jack Fellows has contributed many historical paintings depicting aerial combat that complement the accompanying text of this book. The authors begin by describing the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor and trace the numerous campaigns, culminating in the battle of Okinawa and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The final two Fellows paintings are particularly poignant. Fellows portrays a U.S. Navy Blue Angels F-18 Hornet fighter bomber flying over the USS *Arizona* Memorial at Pearl Harbor to honor the memory of the nearly 1,200 men who perished when she sank on that fateful morning of December 7, 1941. The final illustration depicts an F-14 Tomcat fighter of VF-84, or the Jolly Roger squadron, to commemorate the service of Lt. Cmdr. John T. Blackburn of the original Jolly Rogers in World War II, whose groundbreaking air tactics are still in use today. □

There is no doubt that propaganda plays a pivotal role in wartime. Leaflets, rumors, and false intelligence reports have influenced the outcomes of numerous conflicts. However, with the advent of film and radio, propagandists discovered a whole new world in which to disseminate information, accurate or not, preying on the psyches of enemy soldiers.

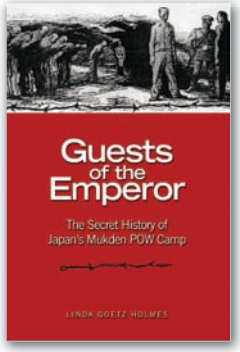
During World War II, two infamous names emerged. "Tokyo Rose," who spoke to U.S. troops in the Pacific, and "Axis Sally," who did the same in the European Theater. Sally, however, was no German national. In reality, she was American-born Mildred Gillars, an out-of-work actress who was swept up in the Nazi movement in Germany prior to the U.S. entry into the war.

Gillars's broadcasts were full of anti-American, anti-British, and anti-Semitic remarks. Her upbringing may be the reason she despised the English. Her Irish Nationalist father disliked the British rule and there is no doubt she adopted his views.

After her parents' divorce, Gillars did not see her natural father again. She became an actress but did not achieve the stardom she eagerly sought. Once she went to a newspaper posing as a pregnant woman who was searching for her lover. The ruse was concocted by producers of a silent film she and her "lover" were starring in. When it was discovered that it was all false, she and her male co-star were arrested and brought to court. Fortunately, she was released.

During the early 1930s, Gillars went to Berlin with her mother. She taught English to support herself. After Hitler's rise to power, Gillars's mother left Germany, but she remained and her career in radio soon began. At war's end, Gillars attempted to flee the country as a refugee but was caught and repatriated to the United States. She stood trial and was found guilty of treason. She served 12 years in prison and another 30 on parole. She died in 1988 asking, "Am I a citizen again?"

Whether she was naive or just an attention-starved actress, Mildred Gillars will always be remembered as the infamous "Axis Sally." She began to believe the Nazi propaganda she was spewing over the radio and, as the author states, "paid a heavy price for that delusion."

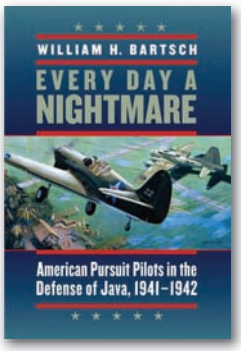


Guests of the Emperor: The Secret History of Japan's Mukden POW Camp by Linda Goetz Holmes, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2010, 148 pp., index, notes, photos, $29.95, hardcover.

It is common knowledge that being held as a prisoner of war by the Japanese during World War II was, by most accounts, a horrific ordeal. There have been numerous books that have described the Spartan conditions that these POWs had to endure. The inmates at Mukden in Manchuria were not only subjected to long hours of forced labor at Mitsubishi's huge factory complex located nearby. The author has uncovered undeniable proof that as many as 300 POWs became guinea pigs in medical experiments.

This evidence was discovered by Shoji Kondo, a Japanese television producer who was doing extensive research on the camp for a documentary. Kondo found an order issued in 1943 by General Yoshijiro Umezu to send physicians, medical orderlies, and other key personnel to Mukden. These contingents were from Ping Fan, home of the infamous Unit 731, created under the pretext of caring for the prisoners. In reality, the medical teams were exposing the men to various contagious diseases by injection or inhalation, and watching their progress. Many knew that an invasion of Japan was imminent. If the invading troops could be exposed to these ailments, it could cause numerous casualties among the invaders.

Holmes's book reveals the horrendous living conditions, meager diet, and brutal torture that the POWs at Mukden were forced to bear. She interviewed survivors of the infamous death camp and scoured official documents to tell their unbelievable story.



Every Day a Nightmare: American Pursuit Pilots in the Defense of Java, 1941-1942 by William H. Bartsch, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 2010, 506 pp., notes, index, photos, $40.00, hardcover.

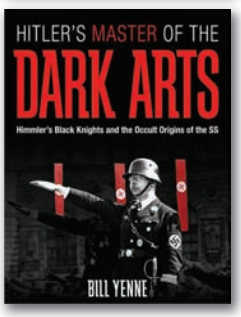
At the outset of World War II, events in the Pacific Theater looked bleak. The Japanese were succeeding in completing their Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. One such country high on their list for invasion was Java—a Dutch territory—rich with oil that Japan so desperately needed to fuel its war machine.

After the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, a pair of transports and a freighter set sail from San Francisco en route to the Philippines to reinforce General Douglas MacArthur's troops defending that country. Instead, the convoy was diverted from its original destination and dispatched to Australia. Aboard the vessels were 73 Curtiss P-40 Warhawks, single-engine fighter planes, destined to assist the Dutch in the Battle of Java.

Although there was a small core of experienced pilots, 14 of the designated fliers had very little flying in the P-40. Of the 101 pilots, only 43 arrived safely on Java to take the fight to the Japanese in the air. With the Allied loss at the Battle of the Java Sea, the country was doomed and plans were made to evacuate the men and planes from the island.

Bartsch spent 16 years researching his account of the 17th Pursuit Squadron (Provisional). He was able to track down many of the unit's members or their families and gained access to many of the diaries and journals they kept during the war. Very little had been written about these airmen who entered the conflict at such an early date in an attempt to stem the Japanese tide.

The author was indeed fortunate to make the acquaintance of Pulitzer Prize-winning war correspondent George Weller, who spent the entire month of February 1942 in Java. Writing for the *Chicago Daily News,* Weller described the valiant but hopeless efforts of these brave Americans. Sadly, Weller passed away before the book was published. He had said, "Someone must speak for them." Bartsch certainly has.



Hitler's Master of the Dark Arts: Heinrich Himmler and the Black Knights of the SS by Bill Yenne, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2010, 320 pp., bibliography, index, $33.00, hardcover.

Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the dreaded SS, grew up fantasizing about a world of knights, warriors, and nobility that had stretched back for centuries in Germany. Although embarrassed about his slight stature and poor eyesight, the meek little son of a schoolteacher would eventually become involved with Nazism, fall under the hypnotic spell of Adolf Hitler, and develop into a shadowy, evil figure within the Nazi leadership.

Himmler founded his infamous group with a mere 200 members.

However, by the mid-1930s there were more than 50,000 within its ranks. He was obsessed with producing a master race and sent parties around the world to unearth ancient religious artifacts that, he believed, rightfully belonged to Germany. As the "top cop" of the Third Reich, he envisioned a world ruled by the SS, his personal band of Black Knights.

Himmler engaged in bizarre scientific pursuits and ascribed to strange theories regarding the Earth, its atmosphere and even the possibility of subterranean-dwelling humans.

The evil head of the Gestapo and SS unceremoniously met his end on May 23, 1945, by biting down on a cyanide capsule he had hidden in his mouth in a British interrogation room. The maniacal Nazi leader's dreams of world conquest, Black Knights, and Aryan superiority, were gone forever.

The Envoy: The Epic Rescue of the Last Jews of Europe in the Desperate Closing Months of World War II by Alex Kershaw, Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010, 294 pp., notes, index, photos, $26.00, hardcover.

To many Jews during World War II, Swedish statesman Raoul Wallenberg is an angel. On numerous occasions, the 32-year-old diplomat risked his own life to rescue thousands of Jewish refugees from the clutches of the SS and Lt. Col. Adolf Eichmann, who assisted in devising and later sending thousands of them to the Nazi death camps. Noted author Alex Kershaw has penned a fascinating book focusing on the heroic exploits of Wallenberg and the escape and eventual capture of Eichmann years later when he was hiding in South America.

From July to December 1944, Wallenberg traveled to Budapest, Hungary, and provided passports and safe houses for Jews to help them escape the Nazis. He continually ignored the threats of the SS and the Arrow Cross Party, pro-Nazi Hungarians, and handed out passports to Jews, even while they were boarding trains to Auschwitz, and procured their freedom. Sadly, when the Soviets entered Budapest at the end of the war, Wallenberg was taken into custody and, despite repeated efforts to discover his whereabouts, he was never heard from again.

Kershaw has found survivors who knew Wallenberg and interviewed them at length for his book. As one told him, "He is with me all the time." □

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airplane and its use would drastically reduce the accident rate on the Hump airlift.

Tunner's initial goal was for a force of 272 Skymasters on the airlift, but the war ended before it was met. Most of the India-China Wing's C-46s were replaced, but the larger C-87s and their sister C-109 tankers continued in service through the end of the war.

A few months after his arrival in India, Tunner received a sudden windfall. General Henry "Hap" Arnold, chief of the Army Air Forces, decided that the cost of airlifting fuel and other supplies for B-29s from India to China was prohibitive and ordered the bomber force transferred to the Marianas, which had recently fallen into Allied hands.

Since the new bases in the Marianas were on islands, the massive numbers of transport forces that had deployed to India with them were not needed, so Arnold transferred them to Tunner's command. Tunner immediately began making plans to replace the C-87s and C-109s with C-54s, but his plan was never fulfilled.

Even though the C-54 had not become the prime transport in the airlift to China, it had become a familiar around the rest of the world. The Douglas transport had also captured the attention of high-ranking officers in the War and Navy Departments, and several C-54s were assigned to provide transport for VIPs. General Douglas MacArthur, who had been given overall command of the Pacific War, replaced the B-17 that served as his personal transport with an ATC C-54. He named it "Bataan," in recognition of the men who had fallen into Japanese hands after he was ordered out of the Philippines to Australia in the spring of 1942.

Perhaps the most famous Skymaster was a specially built C-54C that was ordered as a presidential support aircraft for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The presidential airplane was unique in that it included a number of features not present on other models. An elevator was added to accommodate the crippled president's wheelchair.

Roosevelt used the airplane only one time, flying to the Soviet Union in February 1945 for the Yalta Conference. The ailing president died less than two months later, and the airplane passed to his successor, Harry Truman, who used the airplane, which had been dubbed "The Sacred Cow" by the media, for 27 months before it was replaced by a militarized DC-6.

Unlike the C-47, C-46, and the transport versions of the C-87, the Skymaster was never used in the troop carrier or direct combat support role during the war. This was largely due to its assignment to the Air Transport Command, which carried only behind-the-lines logistical and passenger-carrying flights.

C-54s were also limited in forward field operations. Their wheel loading was such that the weight of the airplanes tore up the pierced steel planking runways that were laid down by engineers at forward locations. In fact, during the first weeks of the Korean War, C-54 operations into the Pusan Peninsula had to be suspended because of extensive damage to the runways.

Air evacuation of casualties became a C-54 mission, particularly in the Pacific where five Skymasters configured for patient transport were placed into operation in mid-1944. Troop carrier C-47s had begun transporting patients in New Guinea in 1942, but the advent of the C-54 allowed movement of wounded soldiers, sailors, and airmen from overseas combat zones to hospitals in the United States.

As the war began winding down, the C-54s that had originally been contracted by the airlines were released from the military and placed in commercial service. By 1945, there was an abundance of military pilots, and the military's aircraft needs were being met with new deliveries, which allowed the airlines to return to their commercial role. The DC-4 had proven itself in military service, and the type was seen as the vehicle to open up international routes to Europe and South America and across the Pacific to Hawaii and Australia. The airplane had only one competitor at the time. Howard Hughes had designed a pressurized four-engine transport called the Constellation, but the military version had seen only limited use before the war ended.

When the war in the Pacific ended, the 54th Troop Carrier Wing, the premier air transportation unit in the Far East, was assigned to supervise the airlift of the occupation troops to Japan. On August 28, 1945, the first flights took place as 30 troop carrier C-47s and 15 C-54s flew into Atsugi Air Base near Tokyo carrying aviation gasoline, oil, and a contingent of Far East Air Forces (FEAF) communication personnel.

Two days later the combined force of FEAF troop carriers and ATC C-54s began landing the 11th Airborne Division, along with General Douglas MacArthur and his headquarters, as the victorious Allies occupied Japan. The war was over, but a new era in air transportation was beginning as the world took notice of the air transportation capabilities offered by the Douglas Skymaster. □

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the bow gunner was stunned and blinded. Daubin was blown out of the commander's hatch and thrown clear, alive but seriously wounded. The loader scrambled out of the tank as it erupted into flame, only to be cut down by machine-gun fire as he tried to find some cover from the panzer. The Germans turned their machine gun against Daubin next. He scrambled into the wadi. His flaming tank eerily continued to back away as Daubin watched, waiting for the enemy tank to come and finish him.

The Germans were not going to get their chance, however. Turning to face the attack by A Company, the Germans had exposed the thinner rear armor of their tanks to the fire of B Company, sitting in their hull-down positions on the ridge. They pumped cannon fire into the enemy. One of Tuck's tankers reported a hit on one of the German tanks that quickly started a fire. Tuck asked where the gunner had aimed and was told to aim right behind the tank's drive sprocket.

Other members of the company did so and began knocking out German tanks. Accounts vary, but between four and nine of the 13 German tanks were knocked out. No matter the number, it was enough. The rest of the German armor fled back in the direction from which it had come. Tuck attributed the amazing precision of the B Company fire to the accuracy of the 37mm gun, weak though it was in penetrating power. Half the A Company tanks were destroyed in the engagement. B Company, springing its ambush, had escaped unscathed.

The two companies now combined their tanks and moved toward the enemy-held farm. German infantry had been spotted dismounting from trucks there. The infantry had moved into the vineyards near the farm, where the American tankers hunted them down. All but two of the remaining German tanks had fled, exposing the German troops to the American attack.

The last two German tanks took refuge in the farmyard. It would be to no avail. With momentum, the Americans forced open the gates of the farm and rampaged through the grounds, shooting Germans off the parapets. Tragically, during this fight Major Siglin was killed, an enemy cannon round piercing his turret. Iron Horse's sergeant, an Apache Indian named Guierro, brought Siglin's body back to Saint Joseph's Farm. Without saying a word, tears streaming down his face, he deposited his commander's body, reloaded his tank with ammunition, and returned to the battle.

As the fight continued, Dr. Benjamin Cohen,

the battalion surgeon, cruised the battlefield in his medical half-track searching for the wounded. Accompanying him was the unit's chaplain, Father Brock. Ignoring the enemy fire, they went from tank to tank, rescuing their wounded crewmen and picking up others wherever they lay. After shooting up the farm complex, the tankers withdrew, lacking the infantry needed to hold it. That night, the remaining Germans withdrew to Mateur, eight miles north. Later, their commanding officer would be court-martialed for withdrawing without orders.

A Company was turned over to Lieutenant Deck, and he was later promoted to captain. Daubin was evacuated by ambulance to a British hospital some 100 miles to the rear. On the litter below his was a captured German lieutenant, a crewman from one of the destroyed Mark IVs. Both the German and a British medic spoke French, and the medic translated so the two officers could speak. The German haughtily told Daubin that America would lose the war because its tanks were so inferior. The American pointed out the German's status as a prisoner, and the enemy officer cursed and went silent.

Twice during the trip Luftwaffe aircraft strafed the ambulance and its convoy. Each time the German soldier laughed. Daubin asked what he was laughing at; his own air force was trying to shoot him. The German said in response that since Daubin was in the litter above, the American would die first. Daubin conceded that he had a point. Later, he discovered why his unit's 37mm weapons had performed so poorly even at point-blank range. In the chaos of its first operation, his battalion had been issued training ammunition instead of the newer armor-piercing rounds, which were still sitting in the supply depots of Algiers.

The first major combat between American and German tankers was over. Both sides had sustained losses, and the battle is perhaps best considered a draw. However, one should consider that the relatively inexperienced Americans had repulsed an assault by veteran German tankers in superior machines and still held the pass at the end of the day. In addition, they had ravaged a German airfield, destroying precious aircraft and stocks of supplies.

The 1st Battalion missed the debacle of the Kasserine Pass while refitting in Oran. Although much hard fighting lay ahead, the Americans had started down the long road that would lead to Sicily, Italy, France, and eventually to Germany itself. □

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turkey shoot

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kills. In actuality, the Americans lost no ships and 42 aircraft. American dead: 14 pilots killed in combat, 13 over Guam and on searches, 31 sailors killed on the ships in the airstrikes. With the difficult recovery operations on the 20th, it added up to 76 American fliers dead.

The defeat was catastrophic for the Empire: three carriers, 476 planes, and 445 pilots and airmen killed. Total sailors might never be figured out: between 2,000 and 3,000 went down with their sunken carriers, on top of the 445 dead airmen.

The American reaction was also harsh. Spruance was blamed by his superiors for not finishing off the crippled Japanese fleet, noting that headlines such as "375 Jap Planes Killed" did not play as well back home as headlines that said "Jap Fleet Sunk." Aviators complained that the more aggressive Halsey would have pursued the Japanese and sunk all their ships.

Just as important, the U.S. Navy had demonstrated for the first time its absolute mastery of aero-naval warfare. Spruance's fleet took very little damage at the hands of the Japanese and showed the ability to coordinate massive forces to achieve crushing victory for little loss. Even the planes lost to mishaps and the night landings were easily replaced, and few of the pilots and airmen were lost. The U.S. Navy had demonstrated how to wage modern naval war. Every other navy in the world, including the vaunted Royal Navy, would follow the American lead.

Lastly, the defeat of the Imperial Navy broke the back of the Japanese strategy to defend the homeland. A month after the Marianas disaster, Japan's Prime Minister, Hideki Tojo—the architect for and scapegoat of Japan's failed policies—was forced to resign. For the first time, the Japanese general staff recognized that its nation was losing the war, and the Empire faced two choices: destruction or surrender.

The coda was left to a defeated Japanese admiral, Matome Ugaki, who commanded Japan's battleships at Philippine Sea. He wrote some poetry in his diary on June 21:

"Utterly awakened from the dream of victory,
Found the sky rainy and gloomy.
Rainy clouds will not clear up,
My heart is the same
When the time for the battle's up." □

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to prevent them from attacking Frost and his troops at Lone House. Frost's prisoner revealed the Germans had picked up the incoming planes on radar just before they disgorged the paratroopers.

Worried that there might not be sufficient time to dismantle Henry before hostile reinforcements arrived, Lieutenant Dennis Vernon pulled out his camera and commenced taking pictures of the set but had to stop because the flash bulbs drew enemy fire. Sergeant Charles Cox started sketching the radar, and when he finished his drawing he composed a written description of it. Then he and Vernon used screwdrivers and a crowbar to force the set loose from its base while doing as little damage to it as possible.

By this point the fighting around Lone House was growing in intensity and becoming confused as Germans and Britons closed with each other. So far, however, only one commando had been killed. Frost noted to his dismay that the shooting from the direction of the beach, his escape route, was particularly intense.

Captain John Ross's 10-man section was assigned to the center of the donnybrook as a reserve to rush wherever they were most needed, but he and his men were pinned down by heavy machine-gun fire from the southeast. This was the sector supposed to have been secured by Charteris and his men, but with them missing there was no one to hamper the defenders.

By this time Frost and his section had collected most of the radar, loaded it onto a two-wheel dolly, and were cautiously moving toward the beach. Naumoff and his men, who had withdrawn from the vicinity of Rectangle, joined them. As they reached the wide gully leading to the shore, Naumoff made it over the edge, but the Germans in a casemate on the gully's north side saw him as he reached the rim.

They were ready when Frost and his radar-toting squad arrived. The defenders fired a long burst, and Sgt. Maj. C.S.M. Strachan screamed as three bullets tore into his midsection. At this point Ross bellowed up from below. "Don't come down! The beach is not taken yet!"

The Germans from Rectangle reached and briefly occupied Lone House, but true to their inclinations as noncombat communications men they quickly withdrew to Rectangle. After bandaging Strachan and giving him a morphine injection, Frost and his men stumbled down the icy path to the beach. By then Naumoff had reached the bottom of the slope, and as he and Ross's men prepared to rush the German machine-gun nest they were astounded to hear shooting and shouts from the southeast. The voices had Scottish accents! Charteris and his 20 men had zeroed in on the sounds of combat from their off-target landing spot outside L'Enfer and double-timed it to the combat zone. Their unexpected appearance behind the defenders panicked the Germans into abandoning their position.

Charteris's appearance had thoroughly confused and frightened the Germans who occupied Lone House after Frost and his men had left it. As the missing commandos began shooting their way into the engagement, the defenders overestimated the number of soldiers they were facing and fled to Rectangle. At one point during Charteris's run, a German soldier had mistaken the Scots for his own people and joined their file. The Scotsmen had to stop and silently bayonet him.

Charteris's charge, by pure coincidence, came at the same time as Naumoff's from the other side of the valley. Charteris's, Naumoff's, and Ross's sections stampeded onto the beach as the Germans manning the machine-gun nest, understandably thinking they were under a coordinated assault from multiple directions, took to their heels. Sergeant Jimmy Sharp managed to capture a German telephonist, tell him he was taking a trip "nach England," and marched him to the beach.

Ross's two radiomen could not raise the landing craft on their wireless, so he had two of his sappers activate an experimental radio beacon that had a companion set in one of the landing craft. Frost then had Ross fire a green flare from the north end of the beach, and then another from the south end.

By now it was 2:35 AM and the weather was closing in, but fortunately for the raiders the Royal Navy crews had seen white flares fired by the Germans as well as Ross's green flares and had already closed to just 300 yards offshore.

Frost, despairing after the unsuccessful attempts to contact the Navy and receiving reports of headlights approaching from the east and southeast, had positioned his men in a defensive perimeter with their backs to the sea. He suddenly heard one of his men bellow, "Sir, the boats are coming in! God bless the ruddy Navy!" The landing craft bore down on the shore as their Bren gunners swept the cliff top with automatic fire. It took until 3:30 to load his men, his wounded, the two who had been killed, the prisoners, and their priceless Wurzberg onto the vessels.

Frost was last to board, hoping in vain that six missing men might show up at the last moment. Long after the commandos had departed, two of the MIAs used their radio to contact the small convoy headed west at full speed. They were two of Charteris's wireless operators who had gotten lost and reached the beach too late. They were told to try to reach Switzerland or Spain.

After the raiders returned to Britain and the press trumpeted their exploits, the war-battered Allies took heart in a success while around the world the Axis powers seemed unstoppable. The English Nazi and propagandist Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce) derisively described Frost and his commandos in his nightly radio broadcast as a mere "handful of redskins."

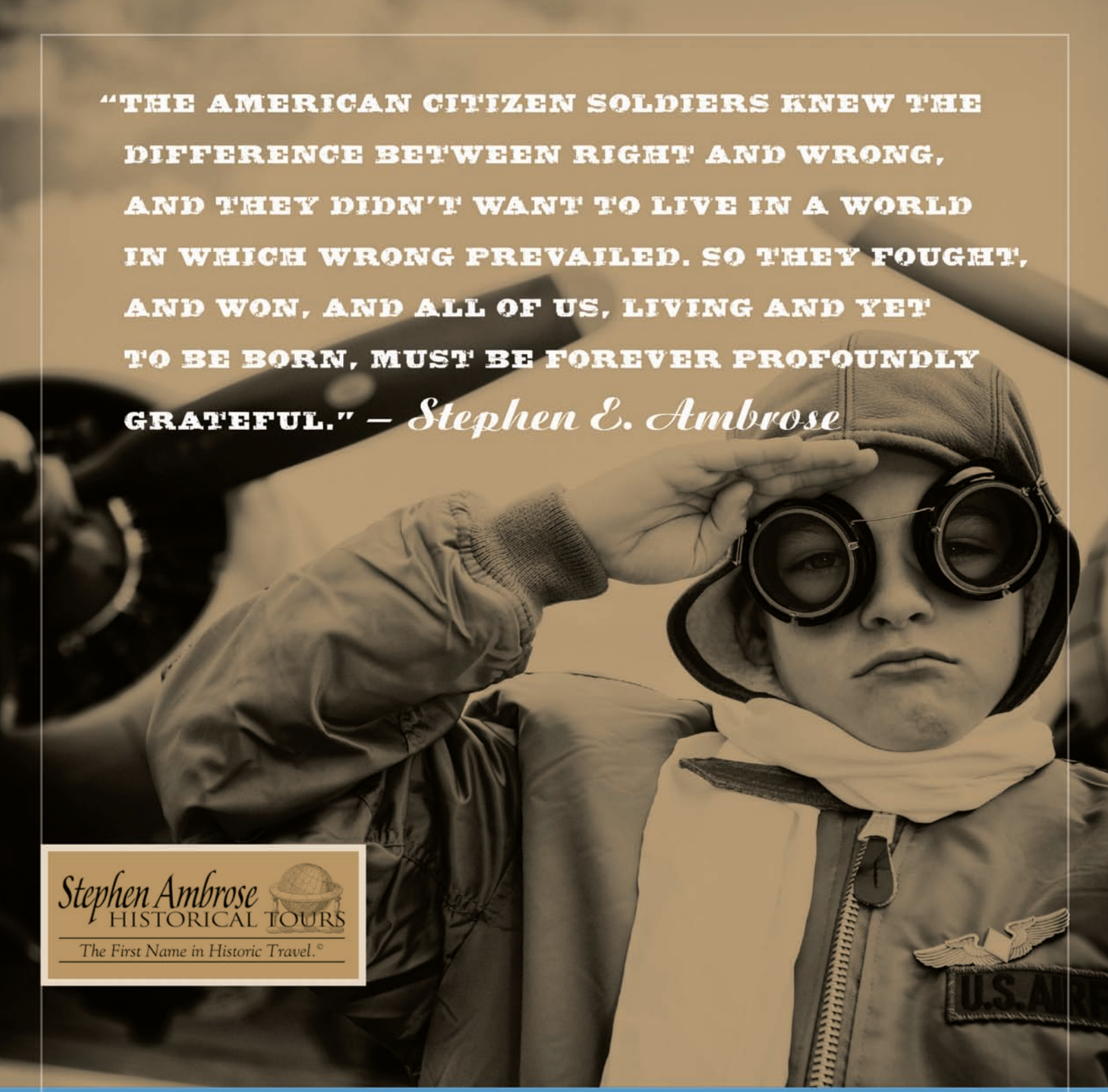
Some felt the British themselves were somehow castigating their heroes when the 120-man squad received a total of just six medals for their magnificent exploit. Yet the high command was actually acting out of regard for the soldiers' future well-being. There was still obviously a lot of war ahead, and if any of these men should be captured by the Nazis they likely would be executed in retaliation for stealing the Wurzburg, unless the Germans never learned their identities.

British technicians from the Telecommunications Research Establishment quickly went to work on the captured Bruneval equipment and noted that the lowest serial number on any of the device's parts was 40,144 and the highest was 41,093. Jones accurately calculated that 100 Wurzburg sets were being manufactured per month. Testing of the apparatus also revealed that it was immune to standard radio jamming.

The alternative was a system both sides independently discovered and used extensively. By dumping clouds of reflective ribbons cut to the precise length of the radar wavelengths, bombers created multitudes of false echoes on radar sets tracking them. By mid-1942 the Luftwaffe in occupied Europe, realizing it was lagging in radar technology, was already thinking defensively.

Identified by the Allied code-name Window, this metal-strip strategy was effective. While the Germans still tried to perfect the system, the RAF was already modifying its own radar system to see through the enemy's attempts to jam radar with this method. With the Luftwaffe increasingly overburdened, it could spare fewer resources for research and never caught up with the Allies' proliferating radar technology. □

Working from his home in Tyler, Texas, author Kelly Bell has been writing professionally since 1981. Specializing in military history, he has contributed to a number of publications. He is a former newspaper staff writer.



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