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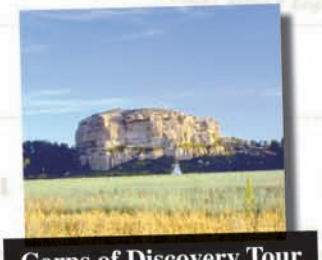
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Editorial

The youngest British casualty of World War II was one of many who lost their life and youth.

Duty in the British Merchant Navy was hazardous during World War II. Braving the stormy Atlantic, the expanse of the Pacific, and the daily rigors of life aboard ship were challenging enough during peacetime; however, during the dark days of the war a determined enemy, bent on bringing the island nation and its far-flung empire to their knees, unleashed a vicious campaign against Britain's merchant lifeline.

When the SS *North Devon*, en route to Tyneside, was attacked and sunk by German bombers off the Norfolk coast on July 6, 1941, the event in itself was not unusual. The mounting losses of merchant vessels to marauding German U-boats and aircraft were a condition—a symptom—of modern total warfare.

Among the six casualties aboard the SS *North Devon* was an unidentified cabin boy whose certificate of death estimated his age at about 15 years. Tragic enough, the boy was buried in an unmarked grave in Comely Bank Cemetery, Edinburgh. Actually, the youth had lied about his age.

The BBC reported recently that at 14 years, 152 days, Reginald Earnshaw was the youngest known Commonwealth service member to have died in action during World War II. Of course, there were many other young men who also lied about their age or creatively wrote the number "18" on a scrap of paper, placed it in their shoe, and stood before the recruiter, stating boldly that they were indeed "over 18."

The story of young Earnshaw's short life might well have continued without closure, his family members never sure of the final resting place of their loved one. Had it not been for the efforts of a former shipmate, Alf Tubb, only 18 years old himself at the time of the attack, Earnshaw's sister, Pauline Harvey, now 77, would not have known the complete story.

Tubbs, now age 86, had served as a gunner aboard the SS *North Devon*. He searched for his friend Earnshaw as the ship sank, but, says the BBC, was forced back by smoke and flames. Years later, Tubbs began researching the incident with the primary purpose of finding out where Earnshaw had been laid to rest. Although genealogical research proved a dead end because Earnshaw had supplied an incorrect date of birth when he enlisted, an Internet search revealed that the 14-year-old merchant sailor had been buried in Edinburgh.

In an interview with the *Daily Mail,* Tubbs reflected that Reggie "was always on my mind. I don't think he enjoyed the sea life too much. I remember him saying he was looking forward to going back home to see his mum."

While placing flowers on Earnshaw's grave, which today is marked by a granite headstone supplied by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Harvey, a retired teacher, remarked, "Reggie's death at such a young age and after just a few months at sea came as a great shock to the whole family. I am immensely grateful to so many people who helped research my brother's forgotten story, and to the War Graves Commission for providing his grave with a headstone."

The identification of Earnshaw, who was actually born on February 5, 1927, and joined the Merchant Navy in February 1941, rewrites the record of the Commonwealth war dead. Previously, another merchant seaman, Raymond Steed, only 14 years, 207 days old when he died, had been listed as the youngest war casualty.

The death and destruction of war are the greatest of human tragedies, and dying young simply, poignantly compounds those tragedies. For every Earnshaw, Steed, or others who remain nameless, there is a story of family, lost life, and unrealized potential. Such is the price of war.

Michael E. Haskew

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May Cover: Kelso C. Horne

Dear Editor:

With great pleasure I noted you have a photograph of my friend Kelso Horne, from Dublin, Georgia, on the May 2010 cover. Second Lieutenant Kelso Horne was the 1st Platoon leader in Item Company, 3rd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division. The occasion of the photograph was related to me by Kelso in the 1990s.

Several days after D-Day, while advancing with his platoon down a road in the Normandy area, they received distant small arms fire from the next village. The men were taking shelter in the roadside ditch when General Lawton Collins, the Seventh Corps commander, drove up. Collins asked Kelso if there were any Germans in the village. Kelso told him that the Germans were shooting at them a few minutes before. Collins told his driver to turn around. At that moment *Life* magazine photographer, Bob Landry, riding along with Collins, asked the general if he could take the lieutenant's photograph. Collins said to go ahead. Kelso knelt down beside the road and Bob Landry took the photograph. Afterward, this photo appeared on the August 14, 1944, cover of *Life*.

Kelso said he wasn't sure where he was, but French historians believe the photograph was taken near the city limits of Saint Sauveur le Vicomte. Kelso humorously related that when the photo came out, his fellow soldiers called him "Cover Boy."

Before the August 14 issue of *Life* made it to newsstands, Kelso was wounded in the chest by shellfire during the July 4 attack on Hill 95 near La Haye du Puits in the Normandy area and evacuated to a hospital in England. When he left the hospital and reported to his unit, the paratroopers were loading up for Operation Market-Garden. Kelso was ordered to remain behind. Later, because of his abscessed chest wound, Kelso was evacuated from the front lines during the Battle of the Bulge to a hospital in Liege, Belgium, and then to the United States for more surgery. After rehabilitation he was sent to Ft. Benning, Georgia. Kelso was discharged from the Army in October 1945.

In France, Kelso's photograph represents the French ideal of the American World War II paratrooper. During the D-Day 50th Anniversary Kelso's image was printed on numerous memorabilia. After visiting Normandy in 1994 I related all of this to Kelso. He was surprised to learn how famous his photo was in France.

Sadly, Kelso Horne passed away on November 25, 2000. He was 88 years old. After his death we learned that he wished to have his ashes scattered on Hill 95. It was my honor to help his family arrange this.

I contacted Philippe Jutras, the now deceased American Curator of the Ste. Mere Eglise Airborne Museum, for assistance in arranging a funeral service in the famous church located at St. Mere Eglise Square. I sent him a copy of the *Life* magazine photo. Philippe said the French were surprised and excited when they saw the soldier they were preparing to honor.

The Horne family reported a large number of French people attended the funeral service on April 4, 2001. When the procession traveled to Hill 95 to scatter Kelso's ashes, there was another large crowd waiting to pay their respects to Kelso. This second group of French citizens held an additional service on Hill 95.

On July 3, 2004, a committee of French veterans from the area of La Haye du Puits erected a monument to the 82nd Airborne soldiers at Hill 95. The text, written in both French and English, reads: "To the valiant soldiers of the 82nd Airborne for the capture of Hill 95. July 4/5/6 1944. Here lie the remains of Lt. Kelso C. Horne.

Thank you for your magazine's revival of Kelso Horne's photograph.

James R. Vann
Macon, Georgia

A Tail Gunner's Story

Dear Editor:

I have read that FW-190s were dangerous in low-altitude turns. In September 1944 I was an inmate at Stalag Luft IV. On a day of low 10/10 cloud cover we heard the sound of aircraft approaching from the east. I was in B-Compound, northeast; the aircraft were FW-190As—a Schwarm slow rolling in line. I thought, "These hot dogs are low for rolling heavy aircraft." They leveled off—there were red markings on the cowlings, victory scores? Then I think the number two man suddenly rolled left then did a wing over and dove into the forest, just north of B-Compound. That FW was not turning, was level, at only 300 feet altitude, I would say. Any *WWII History* readers at Luft IV Pomerania that day?

After the crash I think we all stood transfixed a moment, then a few idiots started to cheer. This was not *Hogan's Heroes,* no Sergeant Schultz—a guard had shot a POW in our compound for jumping out a window in the daytime! We all took cover after cheering.

I was a tail gunner on a B-17, 385th Group. After long missions I could not walk; crew members had to help me out of the small tail door, put me down on my back, and pump my legs. We were ordered to be in tail position hard-stand, to hard-stand at that time. I was a good candidate for DVT. Maybe we didn't get Deep Vein Thrombosis because we never heard of it???

When we were shot down on August 9, 1944, I had all the stuff we were not supposed to carry: wallet, letter from my wife, $150 worth of English pounds. I don't know why I had that much money with me (I may have won at black jack!); I sent all but $5 per month to my wife. The Germans took my wallet, of course, but returned it three days later, with my photos of my wife, car and driver's license. No cash. There was no fuss about the money. The U.S. gave me a refund on the $150.

Buell S. Martin
Unionville, Connecticut

The Fourth Service

Dear Editor:

It was with great interest that I read your article on the British Merchant Navy in the May 2010 issue. My Dad joined the Merchant Navy in Liverpool in August of 1939 at the age of 16. He first served aboard the RMS *Samaria* as a bridge messenger and was in New York when the war started in September of that year. He was later promoted to quartermaster. He served in every theater but the Pacific and participated in the relief effort of Malta, the North Atlantic convoys, the Murmansk convoys, and the evacuation of Australian nurses from Singapore. In early 1941 his ship, the SS *Memnon,* was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-Boat off the West coast of Africa. He and the rest of the surviving crew spent harrowing weeks in an open lifeboat before making port in British West Africa, where they were given medical aid and repatriated to England. In his pay book there is only the cryptic notation "vessel sunk." While it is true that the "4th service" didn't get the credit due after the war, it doesn't dampen the pride they have in their contribution to the war effort. Dad is 86 now and his memory isn't what it was, but he still remembers with the pride his service under the "Red Duster."

Les Brooks
Rogue River, Oregon

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By Christopher Miskimon

All photos: National Archives

A Fighting Foot Soldier of the 45th

Felix Sparks led elements of the 45th Division through heavy fighting and the liberation of Dachau.

THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 16, 1944, DAWNED FOGGY OVER THE VIA ANZIATE in Anzio, Italy. The 45th Infantry Division's 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment had advanced overnight to take positions on the west side of the roadway, assuming its place on the front line. Company E, commanded by Captain Felix Sparks, was assigned to one end of the battalion's line, where it bordered the division's 179th Regiment.

Looking out across the ground in front of his position, Sparks saw overcoat-clad figures moving but could not tell who they were. He called his headquarters and asked if the soldiers of the 179th had overcoats. When he was told they did not, Sparks realized the men were advancing Germans. It was not long before enemy artillery began to pound Company E's foxholes. Shells landed for 10 minutes, but the troops were well dug in so casualties were light.

When the barrage lifted, three German tanks, unsupported by infantry, came forward and attacked. "They made a mistake," Sparks said. Company E had an antitank gun and two M-10 tank destroyers supporting it. They opened fire at Sparks's order and quickly destroyed two of the tanks, while the third made a fast retreat. Within a few minutes, however, German infantry attacked. Sparks's men shot them down.

When American soldiers entered Dachau, vengeful prisoners pointed out the SS guards who had tormented them. As the Germans stood under guard, one of them broke and ran. All but three of the SS guards fell to the ground and faked death. When the three who remained standing were ordered forward, those on the ground got up again.

"We killed every damn one of them," he later recalled. The sound of firing could be heard coming from the 179th's lines; the enemy was attacking there as well.

Only a half hour passed before the third German wave came crashing at E Company. This time, the infantry came with armored support. "That's what killed us," Sparks said. The panzers moved up to point-blank range and opened fire. The fighting was intense; soon even more German troops were sent against Sparks's men. As the company fought to hold back the enemy assault, Sparks saw a crewman from one of the tank destroyers climb atop the vehicle and man its .50-caliber machine gun, exposing himself to enemy fire. He stopped part of the German attack but was killed by a burst. Sparks did not even know the soldier's name.

At midday, as the fight raged on, Sparks sent away his sole remaining tank destroyer, its ammunition depleted. It left at full speed with the Germans firing at it the entire way; Sparks watched rounds impact just behind it as it moved. Shortly afterward, yet

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another wave of Germans attacked. This time, Sparks saw only one way to stop the assault. He called in artillery on his own position, a tactic used only as a last resort to avoid being overrun. Company E's troops were still in their foxholes while the Germans advanced in the open. The attack was finally stopped.

As bad as this fight had been, it was just one engagement for Felix Sparks, one among many that would lead him and his men through Italy, France, and a final, hard-won victory in Germany. Three incidents would remain with him after the war. Two were of combat and one was of sheer horror. The fighting he and his men faced at Anzio was only the first.

ABOVE: On December 31, 1944, near Schonau, Germany, two soldiers of the 1st Battalion pioneer squad climb a hill with badly needed supplies on their backs. LEFT: Young Felix Sparks of the 45th Infantry Division posed for this portrait with his wife, Mary, on July 17, 1941. In less than a year, the United States was at war.

Felix L. Sparks was born August 2, 1917, in San Antonio, Texas, and spent his childhood around Miami, Arizona, where his father worked for a mining company. The Depression struck while he was in high school, and soon after graduation from high school he left home to relieve his family of the burden of supporting him. His first idea was to find work aboard a ship, so he hitched rides on trains, first heading to Corpus Christi. Having no luck there, he made his way to San Francisco and tried again. However, getting a job required union membership, and Sparks could not afford to join.

Out of money, sleeping in a park, he wondered what to do when, as he trod down Market Street pondering his fate, an Army recruiting sergeant walked by and asked him, "Hey buddy, you want to join the Army?" At first Sparks continued down the street. Suddenly, realizing he had run out of options, Sparks turned and told the sergeant, "Yes, I do."

Private Sparks selected the Coast Artillery and was given a choice of duty stations. He chose Hawaii and was sent to Fort Kamehameha, near Pearl Harbor. Since he could type, Sparks soon became the battery clerk and won promotion to corporal. The increased pay helped him save toward his goal of college and law school, but it was not enough. Noting that several soldiers were making extra money developing photographs at night in the latrines, Sparks convinced his battery commander to help him open a photography shop at the post exchange. Before long he was making more than his commander.

When his enlistment was up, Sparks took his discharge and enrolled in the University of Arizona. By the late 1930s, war clouds were looming, and he sensed the United States would be involved. He finished the remaining curriculum of a course called the Citizens Military Training Program, something he had started in high school, a contemporary version of today's ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps), which gained Sparks a commission as a second lieutenant. He had just finished his first semester of law school when he was instructed to report for duty in 1940. The officer processing his orders assigned him to a Colorado infantry regiment, the 157th, forming as part of the 45th Division at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

The 45th, or "Thunderbird" Division, was a National Guard outfit formed primarily of units from Oklahoma, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico. After a few months of training at Fort Sill, the division moved to Camp Barkeley, Texas, and then took part in the famed Louisiana Maneuvers in August 1941. In spring 1942, they moved again to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, where its regimen included amphibious training. After a few more moves, the division set sail for North Africa in June 1943. There, Sparks and the 157th prepared for their first action, the invasion of Sicily.

Now a captain, Sparks took part in the landing as the adjutant to the regimental commander, Colonel Charles Ankhorn. The landings went well against relatively light Italian resistance, but a number of soldiers drowned in the rough seas. Over the following days, the bodies began to wash up on shore. This greatly distressed Ankhorn, who, tears in his eyes, told Sparks to get them buried. The only group available was the regimental band. The young captain set to the grim task, identifying the dead where possible and transporting them inland to a burial site.

After Sicily came the bloody fighting at Salerno on the Italian mainland. Sparks was now the commander of E Company. He described the campaign there as a "nightmare of rain, mud, cold and numerous casualties."

On October 6, 1943, Sparks's company was advancing toward high ground near the Ponte area as part of a larger effort to trap the Germans. A heavy fog concealed their movement. Shortly, however, the fog lifted, exposing the company to enemy machine gunners. Under heavy fire, Sparks and his men withdrew and attempted to flank to the left. They had stopped partway to rest and send out patrols when German tanks appeared to their left only 400 yards away.

The regimental history recounts, "The screams of the wounded and dying filled the air," but Sparks remembers no screams but his own, ordering a retreat to a defensible ridge 1,500 yards to the rear. He described this action as "typical" of the Salerno fighting.

A few days later, an abdominal wound forced Sparks's evacuation to an Algiers hospital. After recuperation, the Army declared him unfit for further combat and assigned him to training duties. Sparks hated this work, and it was not long before he decided to return to his unit. He went to a nearby airfield where he found a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber going to Italy. The captain then hitchhiked back to the 45th Division headquarters. They returned him to command of Company E. He rejoined the unit just before Christmas near Venafro. Though Sparks had been listed as AWOL (absent without leave) in Africa, the charge was later dropped, not an unusual disposition for men who went AWOL to rejoin their original outfits.

The next battle for Sparks would be Anzio. The initial battle continued for a week. After being repulsed by Company E, the Germans bypassed them, moving around both flanks. Sparks thought he could hold if he had tank support. He was promised a full platoon, but only two tanks arrived. Still, between the armor and the artillery support directed by Sparks for the rest of the day the company remained in position though the tanks eventually fell back.

The next morning Sparks withdrew the few dozen men still left to a position 300 yards to the rear. By this time the Germans had advanced well past Sparks's tiny perimeter. Intent on their larger objective, they continued to bypass it. The captain used this relative respite to continually direct artillery fire. By February 22, the German attack had been broken, and the remains of Sparks's battalion were ordered to break out overnight.

Come morning, the two survivors of Company E, Felix Sparks and a platoon sergeant named Leon Siehr, were back in the American lines. The company was rebuilt with replacements and a few returning wounded, but Sparks's memories remain bitter. He led the unit during the breakout from Anzio and the advance toward Rome until it was withdrawn to prepare for its next task—Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France.

Promoted to major, Sparks was now the executive officer of the 157th's first battalion. The day before the invasion the commander contracted malaria, so Sparks assumed command. His unit was one of the assault battalions. Tension over the expected resistance was high. This time Sparks and his men got a break.

"Resistance was amazingly light," Sparks recalled. "We got about five miles inland the first day." Afterward, the advance was rapid. "It was a chase until we got to the Vosges Mountains. Then the war slowed down." Sparks was now a lieutenant colonel, in command of the regiment's 3rd Battalion.

Resistance grew steadily as the Americans approached Germany itself. On December 16, 1944, Sparks's battalion crossed into Germany. With the new year came a German offensive, launched as a counter to the failed Ardennes offensive to the north. The regiment occupied defensive positions around the town of Reipertswiller and dug in. The fighting here gave Sparks the second of his three worst recollections of the war.

On the morning of January 14, 1945, Sparks's battalion was ordered to launch a counterattack. Just as the attack got under way, his jeep struck a mine, dazing the occupants though causing no serious injuries. The executive officer, Captain John McGinnis, took over as the battalion began to be shelled heavily. It was not long before McGinnis was wounded himself. Sparks was sitting in the battalion aid station when McGinnis was brought in.

Realizing he was needed forward, Sparks returned and assumed command. Despite the artillery fire, around noon the next day the battalion reached advantageous terrain with the rifle companies occupying an 800-yard front. Unfortunately, neither of the units to Sparks's flanks had kept up with his men's progress. The 3rd Battalion was now exposed. Higher command ordered him to hold.

The Germans quickly took advantage of the situation. Company K, on the battalion's left, reported a strong enemy attack in the late afternoon. Sparks sent his reserve, the antitank platoon, to reinforce them. An hour later the attack was finally repulsed, and 50 German dead littered the ground in front of the American lines. The next morning SS mountain troops renewed the attack as other American units tried to close the gaps. Company C of the first battalion managed to close up on the right, but the SS troops again attacked on the left, infiltrating into the battalion's rear and encircling the rifle companies.

The fight to relieve the trapped riflemen went on for four more days before the remains of 3rd Battalion were ordered to "attack to the rear" and break the encirclement. During this time, Colonel Sparks led a rescue attempt that resulted in his recommendation for the Medal of Honor. He took two tanks up a steep trail toward his cut-off men, hoping to open a narrow lane for their extraction. In the icy condi-

An American mortar shell blasts German positions in the French town of Reipertswiller, located in the disputed province of Alsace; the French and Germans had fought over the territory for generations.

tions one tank became immobilized, then had its turret jammed by enemy fire. Both tanks laid down fire with their cannon and machine guns, with Sparks firing the .50-caliber on top of the lead tank himself.

Ahead he saw three of his men lying wounded. As he later reported, "I jumped from the lead tank and successively dragged each soldier to the tank, loading them … on the tank deck. The Germans did not fire at me … although I was an easy target. We then backed the tanks back down the trail into our rear positions."

The Battle of Reipertswiller resulted in the virtual destruction of Sparks's battalion. Later, standing before General Robert Frederick, the division commander, Sparks told him, "If I had to do it over, I'd go against your orders and pull the battalion out while I could."

The exchange became heated; Sparks admits he was never popular with his superiors. Some of Sparks's men believe this is why the Medal of Honor papers were later lost. He did, however, receive a Silver Star for his actions. Years later, a German soldier, Johann Voss, wrote of Sparks's heroism in his own memoirs entitled *Black Edelweiss*. Though he had no idea who Sparks was, he recalled watching an American officer expose himself to rescue his wounded men in circumstances that match Sparks's act in detail. He also said he and his fellow SS Mountain Troops could easily have shot Sparks down but held their fire out of respect for his courage.

As winter gave way to spring, Sparks's reconstituted battalion continued its advance into Germany. On March 15, his troops breached the Siegfried Line. They crossed the great Rhine River on March 26. At the end of March, the 45th Division fought one of its last major actions at Aschaffenburg. Sparks's battalion led the way into the city, and it was Sparks who accepted the surrender of its military commander, a Major Emil Lamberth, after a week of fighting. Within a few weeks, the war seemed all but over.

Still, one last trial remained for Sparks and his men, the grimmest of his three memories of the war—the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp. As Sparks's battalion, reinforced with tanks, artillery, and engineers, advanced toward Munich, the order came to divert and take the camp.

The Regimental S-3 radioed: "Upon capture, post air tight guard and allow no one to enter or leave."

Sparks assigned his reserve, Company I, to lead the way and went with them. First Lieutenant William P. Walsh commanded I Company, bolstered by a machine gun section from Company M, the battalion's heavy-weapons company.

The group crossed a railroad bridge and followed the tracks to the southwest corner of the Dachau complex. Sparks told Walsh to follow the tracks to the camp. As they approached the camp, their first discovery was a line of railroad cars filled with over 2,300 bodies, including women and children, victims of Nazi atrocity. The sight upset many of the men, and the mood became grim. Most of I Company entered the camp through a railroad gate at the southwest side, while Sparks took a small detachment a few hundred yards east and scaled the wall.

Sparks had decided to take this route because the camp's main gate looked too easily defended. At the gate, however, was a group of Germans waiting to surrender. Before long, a party from the 42nd Division would enter through this gate and contact these Germans.

Sparks's group advanced slowly through a group of houses, clearing them as they went. Suddenly, Sparks saw Lieutenant Walsh come from between two buildings chasing a German and screaming over and over, "You sons of bitches." Sparks assumed command of the company from the hysterical man. It reportedly took seven men to move Walsh away and calm him. The camp guards were rounded up and herded into an empty coal storage yard. A machine-gun team and several riflemen were posted to watch them.

By this time, some of Sparks's men were losing their composure, so he had to struggle to maintain order. A soldier approached Sparks and asked him to come away to show him something. As Sparks walked away from the coal storage area, the machine gunner watching the SS guards opened fire. Seventeen of the Germans were killed. Sparks ran back and stopped the gunner, a young private crying and out of control, who claimed the SS men had tried to escape. The young lieutenant colonel fired several shots in the air and ordered the shooting to stop. After putting an NCO on the machine gun, Sparks had the SS wounded moved to a nearby infirmary.

With discipline restored, he moved to the prisoner compound. He saw horrors such as a gas chamber, the crematorium, and the bodies of more dead inmates. The inmates, now aware of their rescue, were trying to get out. Sparks conveyed to them that they had to stay where they were because hospital units and food were en route. Men were posted at the gate to the prisoner compound.

Suddenly, several jeeps full of soldiers from the 42nd Division arrived. Among them was the assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. Henning Linden. With him were reporters, including a young woman named Marguerite Higgins. Dachau was not in the zone of action of the 42nd Division, but rather in that of the 45th Division. The reporters, eager to take part in the liberation of a concentration camp, had pressured the leadership of the 42nd to take them there. Linden was ordered to take a patrol to the camp along with the reporters.

Now, before the gate to the prisoner compound, Linden told Sparks the reporters wanted to go inside and interview the inmates. Informing Linden of his orders, Sparks refused to allow it. While the two men were talking, Higgins ran over to the gate and opened it. The inmates surged out in a tide. Sparks had to order his men to fire over their heads to get them contained again.

After this episode, Sparks told Linden to leave. To enforce this, he directed some riflemen to escort them out. Accounts vary, but Sparks reported that as a private approached Linden's jeep, the general hit the boy over the helmet with a riding crop or swagger stick. This infuriated Sparks, who drew his pistol and told the general that if he did that again Sparks would kill him. Linden left, promising a court-martial.

There was an investigation, and General Frederick tried to send Sparks back to the United States to let the incident blow over. He and a small party went to Le Havre, France, to await transport, but they were intercepted by military police with orders to arrest Sparks and send him back to Germany. Sparks and his still-armed escort "declined" to be arrested but agreed to return on their own.

Fate intervened.

During his absence, General George S. Patton had assumed command in the Dachau area, and the investigation was turned over to his command. Sparks was summoned into Patton's office. The terse general characteristically referred to the investigation as "a bunch of crap" and threw away the papers in front of Sparks. Afterward, no one ever questioned Sparks about the matter, and no charges were ever recommended against him.

Rushing for the cover of nearby woods, soldiers of the 45th Division's 3rd Battalion move swiftly toward the Dachau concentration camp as German resistance intensifies.

Shortly afterward, the war in Europe ended. Sparks went home, became a lawyer, and raised a family. He helped reorganize the Colorado National Guard in the late 1940s, became a district attorney, and served a term on the Colorado Supreme Court in the 1950s. After a brief return to active duty during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he was promoted to brigadier general and became the commander of the Colorado Army National Guard in 1968.

After retirement, Sparks helped run the 157th Infantry Association, even organizing reunion trips to the battlefields his regiment had fought and suffered over many years earlier. Felix Sparks passed away on September 25, 2007. □

Christopher Miskimon has spent time in both the infantry and artillery branches of the U.S. Army. He writes from Denver, Colorado.

By Sam McGowan

All photos: National Archives

Tale of the Biscuit Bomber

The Douglas C-47 was a workhorse of air transport during World War II.

EVEN THOUGH, TECHNICALLY AT LEAST, IT WAS NOT A COMBAT AIRPLANE, THE performance of the Douglas C-47 transport led General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower to label it as one of the most important weapons of World War II.

It carried no armament and was not designed to drop bombs, but the C-47 and other variations of the Douglas DC-3 twin-engine airliner quickly proved their worth both on and off the battlefield as they became a familiar sight all over the world. Eisenhower was not exaggerating with his accolade. The C-47 became crucial to the conduct of the war in at least three theaters and proved beneficial to military operations around the world in roles that varied from limited to indispensable. By the end of the war, the Army had purchased more than 10,000 of the Douglas twin-engine transports in several variants.

The C-47 is the most commonly known military designation for the airplane that revolutionized the civilian air transportation industry in the 1930s. Douglas Aircraft Company's DC-3 was a follow-on to the DC-2, the first modern American-built transport aircraft. By the outbreak of war in 1939, the DC-3 had proven to be a safe, reliable transport capable of operating from short, relatively unimproved airstrips. Although it had not been designed with military needs in mind, the DC-3 was the natural choice to be the first widely produced Allied military transport aircraft.

The Army purchased a number of DC-2s, giving them the military designation of C-39; the bomber derivative was the B-18. When the DC-3 came out, the Army ordered several built to military specifications and designated them as C-47s. The bomber version was designated as the B-23, but it was not much of a bomber, so the Air Corps converted most of them for transport use, including for dropping paratroops, and called them C-67s.

When the Army began experimenting with airborne forces, it turned to the 50th Transport Wing, which had been established at Wright Field under the Air Corps Maintenance Command, for the use of its C-39s and C-47s to drop the fledgling airborne troops. Activated on January 14, 1941, as the parent unit for the Air Corps transport squadrons, the wing transported more cargo during the first half of 1941 than the entire U.S. civilian airline industry. The new airborne mission placed a heavy additional burden on the wing, so the Army placed orders for more transports and began training crews to fly them.

The original DC-3 was designed to carry 21 passengers, although increased engine performance on later models allowed 28. Other designations were given to production DC-3s that were taken over by the military but lacked the reinforced cargo floor and other amenities of the basic C-47. When the Army decided to develop the airborne mission, it contracted for a number of DC-3s specially configured to carry troops, with bucket seats and a door designed for paratrooper exit, and called it the C-53 Sky Trooper. Shackles were attached under the fuselage of the C-53s to carry parapacks, special bundles that could be filled with items too large to be carried by individual troops during a parachute assault.

In addition to dropping paratroopers, C-53s were also used for supply drops and as glider tugs. Although thousands of C-53s were produced, as the war continued the C-47 designation became generic. A later modification with larger engines and a redesigned tail was designated as the C-117. Various versions of the Douglas transport would see service with Army, Navy, and Marine transport squadrons as well as in the air forces of most of the Allied nations.

Several Douglas transports entered service in North Africa

A sentry walks his post past a Douglas C-47 transport aircraft. The C-47, a military configuration of the DC-3 passenger airliner, proved to be an outstanding supply and logistic aircraft during World War II.

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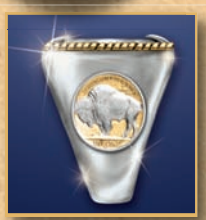

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ABOVE: On April 27, 1943, a formation of C-47 transport aircraft of the 6th Carrier Squadron based at Port Moresby, New Guinea, wings its way toward the distant base at Wau, across the large island. BELOW: The fabled C-47 transport proved as famous during wartime as its civilian predecessor, the Douglas DC-3, in times of peace. In retrospect, the C-47 has been recognized as one of the essential pieces of equipment that helped win World War II.

in 1941 when the U.S. Army Ferrying Command contracted with Pan American Airways to provide air transportation for British forces fighting Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps. The British had ordered their own Douglas transports, and the Royal Air Force (RAF) gave them a new name—Dakota. The Pan American DC-3s were sent to Africa to fill the gap until the RAF had received its own Dakotas and established air transport squadrons. The first British transports were DC-3s requisitioned from the airlines since the U.S. Army lacked the numbers to provide airplanes from its own stock.

The first Douglas transports to see operational duty were a trio of C-53s that arrived in Australia aboard ship in February. They joined an ad hoc group of transport aircraft and obsolete combat planes in the newly created Far East Air Forces Air Transport Command and went to work hauling cargo and personnel around Australia and northward to New Guinea—and even as far north as the southern Philippines, which were still in Allied hands. A reorganization of U.S. Army air transportation in June 1942 resulted in the redesignation of the air transport units as troop carriers, while a new Air Transport Command was created from the Army Ferry Command.

In early 1942, the Australia-based transports supported combat operations in the defense of Java. Until the American surrender of the Philippines, transports operated into airstrips on Mindanao, the southernmost of the Philippine islands, where American forces remained until their surrender in May 1942. A few weeks later, the transports proved their worth as the lifeline for Australian troops battling Japanese forces advancing southward toward Port Moresby over the rugged Kokoda Track in the Owen Stanley Range of Papua, New Guinea. The rough terrain ruled out resupply by truck, and the distances involved required hundreds of human porters. Air transportation allowed timely resupply as the transports landed on rude jungle strips when possible, and air-dropped ammunition and rations when no suitable landing strip lay close enough to the troops. A lack of suitable airdrop containers and parachutes led to the adaptation of cardboard ice cream containers packed with straw to deliver packets of ammunition and foodstuffs. The Australian infantrymen began referring to the transports of the 21st and 22nd Troop Carrier Squadrons as "Biscuit Bombers."

When Lieutenant General George C. Kenney arrived in Australia in mid-1942 to assume the role of chief of staff for air under General Douglas MacArthur, he brought many ideas with him, including the concept of using the airplane to move troops into battle and keep them supplied. An opportunity to prove his theories arose in September when MacArthur decided to move the U.S. 32nd Infantry Division northward to New Guinea. Kenney persuaded MacArthur to let him move a regiment by air; the event came off so well that he got permission to move a second regiment. The two regiments were in place in Port Moresby several days before the rest of the division arrived by ship.

Allied successes in New Guinea—thanks largely to the efforts of Kenney's Fifth Air Force—raised the value of Kenney's stock in Washington considerably. Part of the payoff for earlier successes was the assignment of an airborne regiment to the Southwest Pacific Area of Operations, and its arrival allowed Kenney to mount the attack on Nadzab he had been planning for several months. The 54th Troop Carrier Wing C-47s dropped the troops without a hitch, and the airfield was in Allied hands within a matter of minutes. MacArthur used the new installation to mount a two-pronged attack on Lae that led to the destruction of Japanese efforts in New Guinea.

The early successes of the C-47s and other transports in New Guinea led to the development of tactics built around the use of air transport to airlift troops into battle and also to move air units forward. Air evacuation of casualties made its debut in New Guinea during the battle for Buna. Young female flight nurses were assigned to troop carrier squadrons to care for wounded men who were brought from the forward airfields. Regularly scheduled air

evacuation flights were established between Port Moresby and rear area hospitals in Australia. The success of air evacuation in the Southwest Pacific led to it becoming part of the troop carrier mission throughout the world. Thanks to the use of the airplane to move the seriously wounded, the combat death rate was drastically reduced.

The dependable C-47s and C-53s soldiered on, racking up hundreds, then thousands of hours in combat operations. One of the C-53s that had arrived in Australia in early 1942 had amassed more than 10,000 hours by 1944. The efforts of the troop carrier C-47 crews did not go unappreciated by the senior officers in their chain of command. General Kenney recognized the efforts of his troop carriers and said so in dispatches to the War Department in Washington, D.C. In one request for additional troop carrier pilots, Kenney told General Henry "Hap" Arnold, chief of the U.S. Army Air Forces, that the life expectancy of his C-47 crew members was less than that of the P-39 fighter pilots in his command.

In the spring and summer of 1942, while the two troop carrier squadrons in New Guinea were making their mark, developing air transportation efforts in the China-Burma-India Theater began another chapter in the story of the Douglas transport. In early 1942, a small contingent of Pan American DC-3s was sent to India to airlift fuel and oil to Chinese bases in preparation for the arrival of the North American B-25 Mitchell bombers of the Doolittle mission against the Japanese home islands.

The civilian contingent was soon joined by a squadron of Army C-47s that arrived in India as part of Colonel Caleb Haynes's AQUILA project that was intended to serve as the nucleus of a heavy bomber effort against Japan from Chinese bases. A Japanese offensive in China in retaliation for the Doolittle mission deprived the Allies of the planned bomber bases, and the Army and civilian C-47/DC-3 crews soon found themselves in the middle of the battle for Burma. When it became apparent that the Japanese had gained the upper hand, the transports were put to work evacuating Allied troops.

Although combat operations in defense of India were requiring most of Tenth Air Force's efforts, it was imperative that supplies get to China, where the American Volunteer Group, popularly known as the Flying Tigers, was doing a good job of harassing the Japanese. Fortunately, there was another air transport organization in the theater. Before the war Pan American Airways had contracted with the Chinese government to operate a national air-

American paratroopers sit aboard their C-47 transport en route to Normandy and the beginning phase of Operation Overlord, June 6, 1944.

line. The China National Airways Corporation (CNAC) operated a fleet of DC-3s with civilian crews, mostly Americans.

Tenth Air Force contracted with CNAC to airlift supplies to China, beginning what came to be known as the Hump Airlift. Throughout 1942, DC-3s and C-47s operated the airlift, but the massive amounts of material requiring airlift dictated the use of larger airplanes with greater payloads. In late 1942 the airlift of supplies to China was taken over by the newly created Air Transport Command (ATC). ATC began the airlift with C-47s but switched to larger Curtiss C-46s and Consolidated C-87s, the cargo version of the B-24 Liberator bomber, as they became available.

Although the C-47 was replaced within the ATC airlift to China, the Douglas transports continued to play a major role. One of the conditions of the transfer of the China Air Ferry to the ATC was that Tenth Air Force would receive a troop carrier group equipped with C-47s. Additional Douglas transports came in the form of Royal Air Force Dakotas.

Air transport would be a feature of new tactics worked out by the eccentric British Brigadier Orde Wingate, the commander of a special force made up of British and Commonwealth troops known as Chindits. In the spring of 1944, Wingate's special force invaded Burma from the air. The entire Tenth Air Force effort was directed toward supporting the operation, which consisted of a glider assault onto landing zones in Burma that would be used as forward bases supported by troop carrier C-47s. The three C-47 squadrons of Tenth Air Force had been joined by a fourth squadron that came to India as part of Colonel Philip Cochran's air commando group, and had been further augmented by the temporary assignment of the 64th Troop Carrier Group from the Mediterranean.

The air commando C-47s were assigned to glider towing duty while the troop carrier command transports airlifted men and equipment into the hastily prepared landing zones. One troop carrier squadron was assigned to support the American provisional force under Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill, who walked into Burma in the north. Once again the C-47 proved its worth as the twin-engine transports operated into airstrips that had been constructed with small bulldozers and graders that had been landed by glider.

The role of the C-47 in Europe was initially primarily logistical. In the summer of 1942, the 51st Troop Carrier Wing and its three groups moved to England as part of the Eighth Air Force. Throughout the summer the wing's C-47s and C-53s supported the newly arrived bomber and fighter groups. Planning for the invasion of North Africa called for the wing to transfer to Africa. Several squadrons of C-47s left England carrying the paratroopers of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment, the first American paratroop unit to see combat.

There were a handful of limited airborne operations in North Africa, but the transport mission became support of air and ground combat units, particularly after the battle moved away from the coast. Military planners had not taken the troop carrier transports into consideration, but their presence proved highly beneficial as they were used to airlift bombs and supplies for combat squadrons to airfields in the desert and to support motorized columns. Troop carriers in North Africa borrowed a page from the Southwest Pacific as they began evacuating casualties from forward areas to rear area hospitals.

Plans for Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily, called for the use of paratroops and glider-borne forces. The airborne operations did not go well, thanks in part to high winds that blew the formations off course. Jittery antiaircraft gunners on ships offshore took the approaching C-47 formation under fire and shot down quite a few transports. Dozens of paratroopers fell into the sea and were drowned. Many gliders cut loose too early and failed to make the beaches, leaving their occupants to the same fate as the paratroopers who fell into the sea.

In spite of the numerous problems, the few paratroopers and glider troops who managed to arrive in one piece caused so much confusion among the German and Italian defenders that airborne operations were planned for future invasions. There was one paratroop drop in Italy when General Mark Clark decided to reinforce the beachhead at Salerno. Once Allied air units were established in Italy, the C-47s assumed a new mission, the resupply of partisans in Yugoslavia.

Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, included the massive use of American and British airborne forces. The D-Day airdrops have become famous and are perhaps the one World War II event most associated with C-47s. Unfortunately, the drops did not go well, while dozens of C-47s were shot down and hundreds were damaged by intense German fire. Once the beachhead had been established, landing strips were constructed for C-47s arriving on the continent from England.

The American breakout from the beaches in early August saw the C-47s in an important new role as they were called upon to support the rapidly moving armored columns of General George Patton's Third Army. Patton came to depend on the C-47s and other transports to bring in fuel for his tanks and trucks, and when they were taken away his rapid advance ground to a halt.

The Troop Carrier Command was dedicated

to the support of the First Allied Airborne Army when it was established in early August, and its squadrons were taken off combat operations to train for Operation Market-Garden, the upcoming airborne invasion of Holland. An additional 100 C-47s were taken off Air Transport Command domestic operations in the United States and sent to England to beef up the Service Command transport forces.

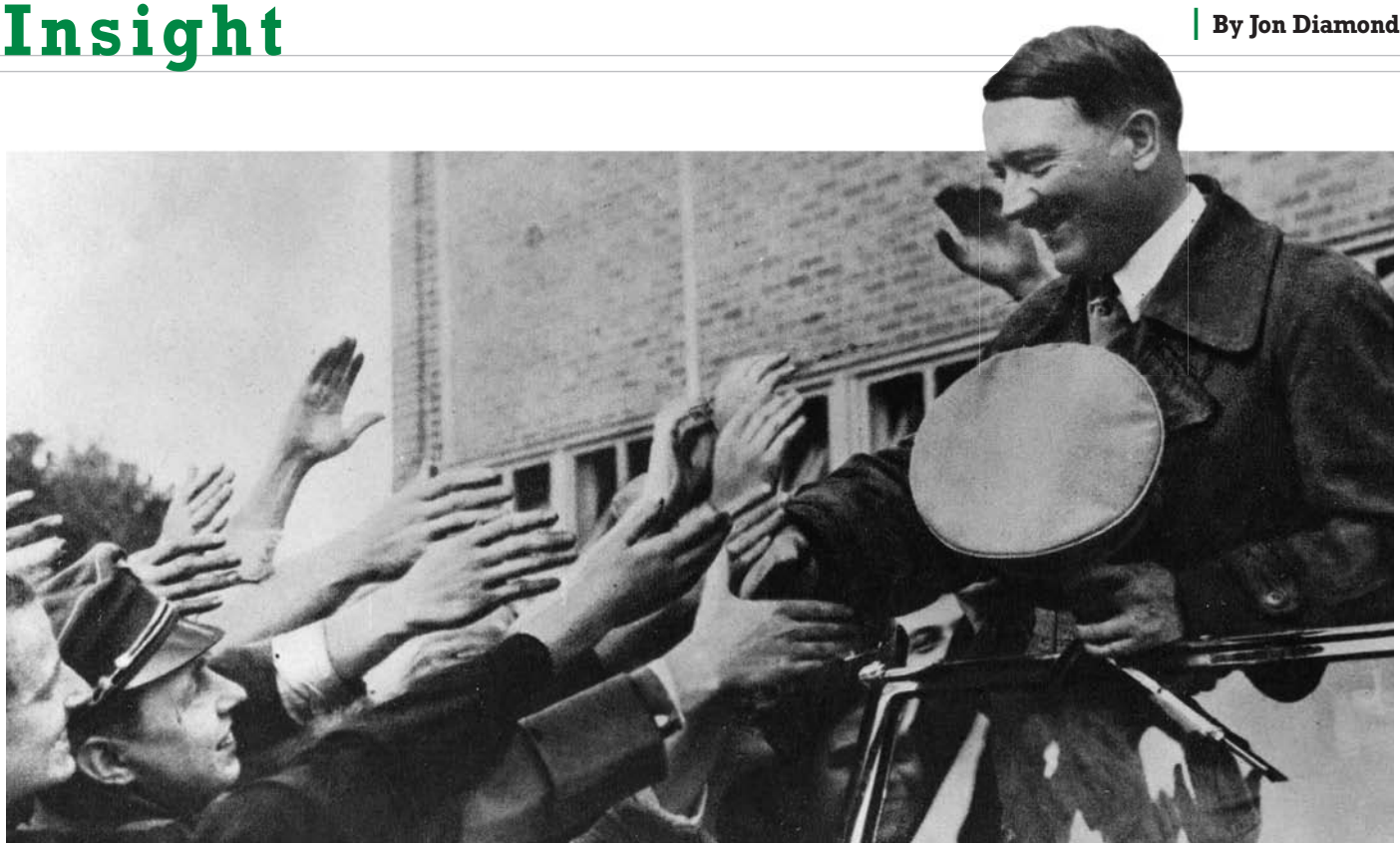
The drops in Holland saw the C-47 crews earn the respect of the paratroopers. While previous airborne operations had often been characterized by confusion, the drops in Holland were well organized and the crews were motivated to risk their own lives to ensure that the troops were dropped on target. Paratroopers returned from Holland to tell of courageous C-47 pilots were able to hold their course in burning airplanes so their troops could jump, and then went to fiery deaths as their stricken craft crashed. Troop Carrier Command C-47s, supplemented by B-24s detached from Eighth Air Force, kept the troops in Holland supplied until ground links were opened.

During the Battle of the Bulge paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division were sent to hold the town of Bastogne, where they soon found themselves surrounded by a determined enemy and cut off from all means of ground resupply. Terrible winter weather, with low clouds, fog, drizzle, and snow, prevented the C-47s from delivering supplies by air for several days. As their supplies dwindled, the Screaming Eagles held on. Finally, on December 23 the skies cleared and parachutes blossomed over Bastogne as C-47 crews braved German fire to deliver their loads of ammunition, rations, and medical supplies. By evening, 101st artillery crews were firing shells that had just been dropped in. The Bastogne relief was perhaps

Continued on page 78

Australian troops based at Wau, New Guinea, help unload supplies from the same C-47s previously pictured in flight on April 27, 1943. Resupply by air was critical to successful operations in the mountainous terrain of New Guinea.

By Jon Diamond



A Warning Against Appeasement

Britain's policy of dealing with the Nazis in the 1930s engendered stern warnings.

THE "MYTHOLOGY OF MUNICH" AND "WHAT WOULD WINSTON DO?" THESE were the feature story and the cover headline, respectively, for the June 23, 2008, issue of *Newsweek* magazine.

Yet, approximately 75 years removed from the beginning of Britain's appeasement policy, firsthand knowledge of the principal but less famous British diplomats and politicians in this tragedy becomes diluted by the repetition of certain names, such as Prime Minister Chamberlain, Lord Halifax, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, among others.

An awareness of the views of some of England's less famous participating elite, in their own words, requires a deeper examination of the contents of many of the nearly 75-year-old published memoirs, diaries, and letters, which, at times, have become subjected to the ravages of revisionism, distortion, lack of context, and frank omission.

The principal cast of important but lesser-known British politicians and diplomats during the 1930s either recognized the menace of Nazi Germany or were at odds with one another in regard to a central theme, namely, Britain's coexistence with Nazism as possible and perhaps even desirable.

Appeasement has been aptly summed up by William Manchester at the conclusion of his second volume of Winston Churchill's biography, *The Last Lion*: "Because their possessions were great, the appeasers had much to lose should the Red flag fly over Westminster. That was why they had felt threatened by the hunger riots of 1932. It was also the driving force behind their exorbitant fear and distrust of the new Russia. They had seen a strong Germany as a buffer against Bolshevism, had thought their security would be strengthened if they sidled up to the fierce, virile Third Reich. Nazi coarseness, anti-Semitism, the Reich's darker underside, were rationalized; time, they assured one another, would blur the jagged edges of Nazi Germany."

According to Ian Kershaw, one of Hitler's biographers, "Appeasement now seemed not an honest search to prevent a second Armageddon and avoid the collapse of Britain's power and prosperity as a nation but simply the purblind feebleness of politicians unwilling to stand up to an evil dictator, a badge of shame in the nation's history."

Another dark side of appeasement during the 1930s was that the government of King George VI believed that there were some things the country and its population ought not to know and that their policy of duplicity would be vindicated in the end. To foster this approach the reports from the British ambassadors in Berlin and their London-based Foreign Office counterparts were often ignored. This is in stark contrast to other private citizens or politicians who were quite zealous in creating informal conduits of communication between the Nazis and the London government in order

Adolf Hitler, Führer of the German Reich, greets an adoring crowd during the height of his popularity. Hitler restored German national pride but eventually led the nation to ruin.

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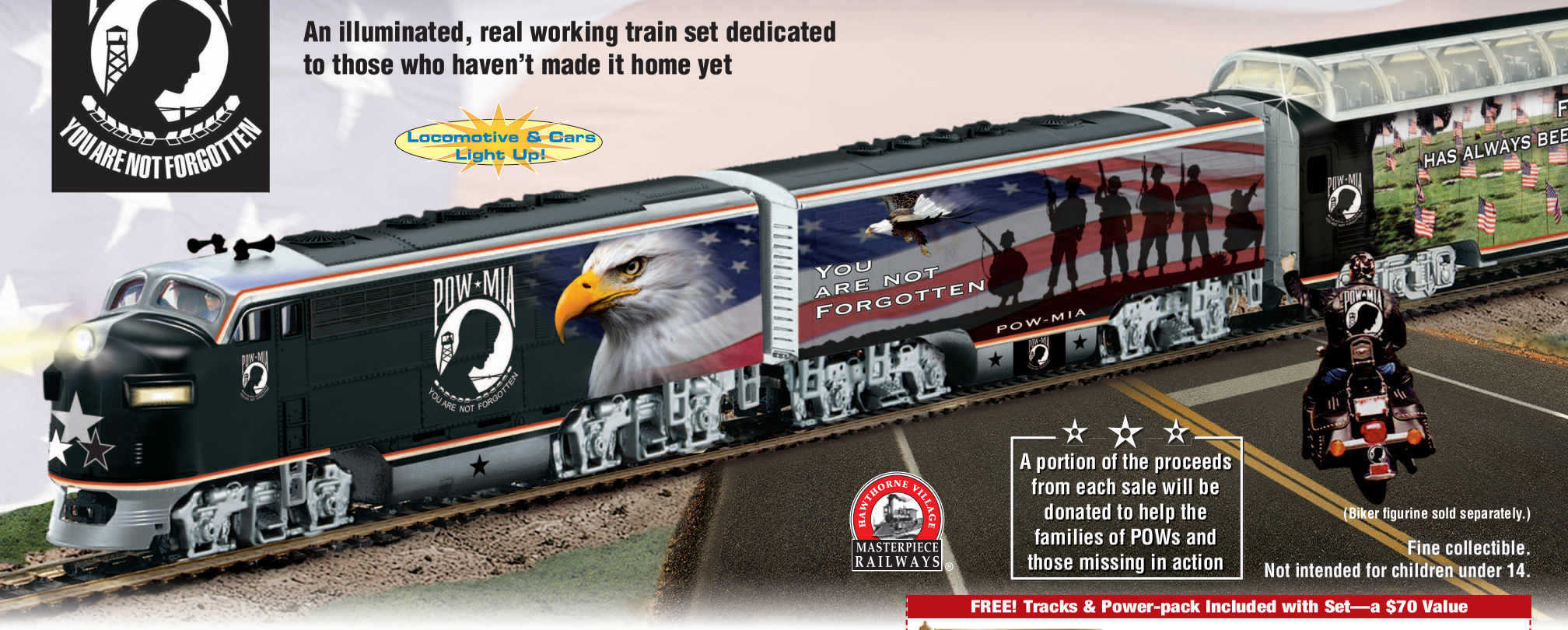

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ABOVE: More than 20,000 National Socialists protested the treaties of Versailles and St. Germaine in Vienna during a 1930s rally. Their signs vilified European Jewry, particularly alleging Jewish control of the press. RIGHT: British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and one of his appeasement supporters, British Ambassador to Germany Sir Nevile Henderson, betrayed Czechoslovakia in the name of peace during the 1938 Munich conference.

to tout the virtues of a revitalized Germany and in the process sincerely attempt to make themselves "friends with Hitler" and his henchmen.

A succession of three British prime ministers held the predominance of power: first Ramsay MacDonald, then Stanley Baldwin, and for the last two and one-half years of peace, Neville Chamberlain. At first, these prime ministers held a majority in the House of Commons and controlled their cabinet ministers so that warnings of looming danger were never made public. With each crisis from 1935 onward, this triumvirate in No. 10 Downing Street was unable to contemplate the possibility of war because of Britain's weakness in defense, especially in the air.

With the passage of each crisis, they and their ministers again convinced themselves that the danger was distant, and they failed to take measures that were being urged upon them, often by their own expert civil servant advisers in the Foreign Office. Put succinctly, this was a paramount failure of leadership because the government duped the British people into thinking that with the outbreak of war near and the country inadequately defended confronting Hitler with an antagonistic or militant posture was not an option. For the government to perpetrate this deceit, the few professionals in Britain's Berlin embassy and its Foreign Office sounding the warning bells about Hitler's motives and his open atrocities against certain elements of the German citizenry had to be silenced.

From 1933 to 1939, those who recognized and did not blind themselves to how near Britain was coming to destruction were few in number, and most of them constrained by their official positions. Sir Horace Rumbold, Sir Eric Phipps, Sir Robert Vansittart, Ralph Wigram, and others composed this small group in the Berlin embassy and at the Foreign Office. As an "anti-appeasement faction" within the Foreign Office and as individuals, this group provided Churchill with direct insight and keen information about the growing Nazi juggernaut.

However, as diplomats and civil servants, their job was to advise on policy, not to make it, nor to change it; and when their advice went unheeded, there was little they could do. Vansittart, as the permanent under-secretary of state, Foreign Office, struggled on until Chamberlain orchestrated his removal from that position. Wigram, who was Vansittart's immediate subordinate in the Central Department at the Foreign Office, was likewise powerless, although he used unorthodox methods, including direct and secret contact with Churchill, in order to galvanize public opinion. He later was overcome by severe depression and eventually committed suicide.

What Vansittart and Wigram, in alliance with their very public champion, Churchill, did finally achieve was a gradual and total acceptance by the British people that Hitlerism was evil and would ultimately have to be resisted. They also established that Churchill himself was the man whose personal authority, knowledge, and strength of character would be able to lead Britain through a most terrible and desperate war.

But what of the now almost forgotten British ambassadors to Berlin during the appeasement decade? Sir Horace Rumbold was born in 1866

and educated at Eton. Immediately before the outbreak of World War I, he served as an attaché in Berlin, and from 1928 through 1933 he was the British ambassador to Germany. Toward the end of his tenure as ambassador, in March 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor and Rumbold, having been in Berlin during the first five months of Hitler's rule, was one of the initial witnesses to the Nazi leader's prompt imposition of brutal policies on a Germany still reeling from years of civil unrest and the Weimar Republic.

German trade unions were made illegal in the spring of 1933, with imprisonment for many of their leaders. Rumbold was aware that "large concentration camps were being established in various parts of the country." Fervent, officially sanctioned anti-Semitism became publicly evident with a one-day boycott against Jewish shops and professions on April 1, 1933. Jews were threatened and often beaten in German streets.

The forceful tone of Rumbold's many dis-

patches echoed in the Foreign Office in London. On April 11, 1933, Rumbold wrote to a diplomatic colleague: "Everything shows that this Nazi revolution has brought out some of the worst characteristics in the German character, namely, a mean spirit of revenge, brutality amounting in many cases to bestiality, and complete ruthlessness. The atmosphere here is thoroughly unpleasant … Nobody feels himself safe or able to talk or write freely."

In England, the stories of brutality were listened to with incredulity. London refused to believe its own diplomatic eyewitnesses.

Rumbold lamented, "foreign opinion does not appear to have fully grasped the fact that the National-Socialist party program is intensely anti-Jewish. The imposition of further disabilities … must therefore be anticipated, for it is certainly Hitler's intention to degrade, and if possible expel the Jewish community from Germany."

Rumbold did not tolerate attempts to whitewash the regime. He had made up his mind that it was evil, and he repeated his views in every dispatch. He wrote: "One of the most inhuman features of the present campaign is the incarceration without trial of thousands of individuals whose political antecedents have rendered them obnoxious in the eyes of the new regime. The establishment of concentration camps … on a wholesale scale is a new departure in civilized countries."

By reading *Mein Kampf,* Rumbold, who was fluent in German, claimed that the evils of the regime were easily forecast in Hitler's manifesto. Hitler, he insisted, was not a moderate man. Rumbold was uncompromising on foreign policy. Even before he met Hitler, he wrote, "Germany's neighbors have reason to be vigilant."

Rumbold's attitude hardened even further after he met Hitler. He no longer doubted "that Herr Hitler is himself responsible for the anti-Jewish policy … It would be a mistake to believe that it is the policy of his wilder men whom he has difficulty in controlling."

Rumbold stressed the abnormality and probable permanence of Nazism. Hitler, Göring, and Goebbels were three "notoriously pathological cases … One looks in vain for any men of real worth" among the leaders.

Rumbold viewed the future, as he left his post at the age of retirement in June 1933, "with great uneasiness and apprehension.… It would be misleading to base any hopes on a return to sanity.… Unpleasant incidents and excesses are bound to occur during a revolution, but the deliberate ruthlessness and brutality which have been practiced during the last five months seem both excessive and unnecessary. I have the impression that the persons directing the policy of the Hitler Government are not normal. Many of us, indeed, have a feeling that we are living in a country where fantastic hooligans and eccentrics have got the upper hand."

Rumbold saw everything. Sir Robert Vansittart noted, "Little escaped him and his warnings were clearer than anything we got later."

On May 6, 1933, Vansittart commented on one of Rumbold's dispatches: "The present regime in Germany will, on past and present form, loose off another European war just as soon as it feels strong enough."

The British ambassadors in the Berlin embassy sadly disappointed the appeasers. Rumbold had reported details and convictions that the appeasers were unwilling to hear. In 1933, he had informed his government, "It would be misleading to base any hopes on a serious modification of the views of the Chancellor and his entourage. Herr Hitler's own record goes to show that he is a man of extraordinary obstinacy."

On June 13, 1936, the now former ambassador Rumbold wrote, "Now Hitler has quite consistently applied the principles of *Mein Kampf* in Germany herself. He has now got to apply them in his foreign policy and that's where the trouble is coming."

Sir Eric Phipps replaced Rumbold in the summer of 1933. He was born in 1875 and educated at Cambridge. Phipps, who had at first believed Hitler could be reasoned with, changed his views completely during the course of his four years as ambassador. Phipps had told an American diplomat, William Bullitt, that he considered Hitler "a fanatic who would be satisfied with nothing less than the dominance of Europe."

In 1935, Phipps told his American counterpart in Berlin, that Germany would not make war before 1938, but that "war is the purpose here."

After Phipps followed Rumbold as ambassador in Berlin and became an equally outspoken opponent of Nazism, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin on May 24, 1936, asked his close friend Thomas Jones: "What are we to do?"

Jones replied: "If it is our policy to get alongside Germany, then the sooner Phipps is transferred elsewhere the better. He should be replaced by a man … unhampered by professional diplomatic tradition, able of course to speak German, and to enter with sympathetic interest into Hitler's aspirations."

No truer words were spoken.

On June 1, 1937, Sir Nevile Henderson, who had become British ambassador to Berlin in May, spoke in Berlin of British attitudes to

LEFT: Sir Robert Vansittart was among the most vocal opponents of the appeasement policy of the Chamberlain faction during the mid-1930s. CENTER: Lord Londonderry was a foremost proponent of appeasement and openly attempted to persuade the British public to assume a more lenient stance toward the Nazis. RIGHT: Sir Horace Rumbold was another British diplomat who vehemently opposed the policy of appeasement of the Nazis pursued by his government.

Nazism: "Far too many people have an erroneous conception of what the National Socialist regime really stands for. Otherwise, they would lay less stress on Nazi dictatorship and much more emphasis on the great social experiment which is being tried out …."

Henderson was educated at Eton and joined the foreign service in 1905. He actually served under Rumbold in Constantinople in 1920. In 1937, he was recalled from Argentina to become ambassador to Germany, a post he held until the outbreak of war in September 1939.

A marked departure from standard communication channels between the British embassy in Berlin and London developed soon after Neville Chamberlain succeeded Stanley Baldwin as prime minister in 1937. Henderson openly circumvented the anti-appeasement civil servants at the Foreign Office and began to directly furnish the prime minister with letters and visits in order to render his personal views on how policy with Nazi Germany ought to be conducted.

At the Foreign Office, Vansittart noted, "I am afraid Sir Nevile's forecasts of the future are quite wrong and I am ready to bet him any sum that Germany will not settle down into a satisfied European."

In March 1938, Vansittart disagreed with Henderson's estimate that Hitler was ready to risk war over Austria. Vansittart thought the attitude of Hitler contained a great deal of bluff. Germany was in no condition to risk or endure general war. The risk was rather that Germany would bluff itself into big adventure and general conflagration by thinking that she could bluff everyone else.

According to Vansittart's memoirs, "Sir Nevile Henderson was an emotional man. Tall, lean, fastidiously dressed, he had the outward points of a British diplomat without any inner strength. His staff complained of him that he showed a bullying temper to his subordinates and he had left behind him an unpopular reputation in the Argentine. I had met him once or twice between November 1937 and the spring of 1938 when his main theme was that German aims were limited. His staff did not share his widespread opinion that as soon as Germany had obtained its demands on behalf of Germans abroad, Herr Hitler would settle down as a peaceable European. But such was the conviction that Henderson put forward to me before and after the invasion of Austria. Not one of the British and American journalists who then observed the Berlin scene shared the view of the Ambassador, and none of his staff supported it."

Another erroneous position taken by Henderson was in regard to rearmament. Henderson wrote from Berlin on March 9, 1939, well after the Munich crisis, "So long as we go quietly on with our own defense preparations all will, in my opinion, be well. I believe the Germans want peace very badly, but it is just as well to remove temptation. I wish we could rearm a little more quietly, but I suppose democracy is a bar to that. People in England are too much under the impression that Germany wants war."

Baldwin and Chamberlain were not the only prominent members of the British ruling class who tried to both alter the harsh criticism emanating from Rumbold and Phipps in their embassy in Berlin and to discredit the anti-appeasement faction in the Foreign Office by appointing Henderson as ambassador. Two powerful men, Lord Londonderry and Lord Lothian, personally attempted to solidify friendly relationships with Hitler and his henchmen in order to placate the British public into accepting a more tolerant approach to the brutal excesses of Nazi Germany. These individuals were, thus, de facto "unofficial ambassadors" to Hitler.

Appeasers such as Londonderry and Lothian rejected the alarms raised by Rumbold and his successor, Phipps. The appeasers believed that war was not inevitable. They faulted the hostility of men such as Phipps as a barrier blocking Anglo-German rapprochement. Hitler told Lord Londonderry that he "could not stand the looks of Sir Eric and would like nothing more than to see him replaced by a more modern diplomat who showed, at least, some understanding of the changes which had taken place in Germany."

Lord Londonderry (nee Charles Stewart Henry Vane-Tempest-Stuart) was born in 1878. He was educated at both Eton and Sandhurst. He was a Conservative member of Parliament from 1906 to 1915 and then secretary of state for air from 1931 to 1935. He had headed the British delegation to the disarmament conference in Geneva in 1932. As a private citizen, he began meeting with the Nazi leaders in 1936. He developed a strong friendship with Germany's ambassador to Great Britain, Joachim von Ribbentrop, who often stayed with him on his visits there.

Lord Londonderry wrote to Ribbentrop in 1936: "As I told you, I have no great affection for the Jews. It is possible to trace their participation in most of those international disturbances which have created so much havoc in different countries."

Among his English friends, Ribbentrop found Lord Londonderry one of the most appreciative of German fears of communism, and not without fears of his own. Londonderry had no objection to Ribbentrop's scheme of persuading Britain to "make common cause" with Germany "in fighting communism." He further stated, "the anti-communism platform was…invaluable; and I am quite sure that if we could have gone forward and made Germans understand that while we deprecated and in fact condemned a great deal of what they were doing, still they could rely on us to be wholeheartedly associated with them in their attitude towards communism."

In 1938, Lord Londonderry reflected on Hitler's coming to power: "Herr Hitler restored the sense of national pride and self-respect. He carried out his program in the face of tremen-

dous difficulties which had assailed his country —of being defeated, of suffering acute privation, of passing through various stages of political revolution, of having an army of occupation within the German frontiers for a decade, and finally of being disappointed and refused a fair hearing in the councils of Europe. On becoming Chancellor in 1933, Herr Hitler challenged these disabilities; and by his example and inspiration he inculcated in the people he was leading the spirit of self-respect and the desire for equality with other nations in their rights and responsibilities."

After Hitler's entry into the Rhineland, Londonderry and Lothian were reported to have sent a letter congratulating the Nazi leader on his success. In December 1937, Londonderry, who sympathized with German colonial claims, explained to a friend that even appeasement could be realistic when it cared to be: "I am very anxious lest by our conciliatory attitude and our desire to see justice done to Germany all the German desires will take the form of grievances, which when the Germans are strong enough, they will seek to enforce by force of arms.... I should like to see our Government undertaking a bold policy based on limitation of armaments and the according to Germany of the position ... she should occupy in international affairs."

After the signing of the Munich agreement in September 1938, Londonderry wrote, "Let us hope that the signing of this declaration not only opens up a prospect of more friendly and secure Anglo-German relations than have existed at any time since the War, but let us hope, too, that it also may rank merely as a prelude to the greater settlement of all the outstanding international differences in Europe."

The reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936 and the threat to Czechoslovakia in September 1938 were two occasions when Britain and France should have challenged Hitler. Instead, Londonderry supported and defended the German action on both occasions and would not have entertained the idea of British military intervention.

As noted by Kershaw, "Londonderry's own formula for handling Germany was misconceived, misguided, and mistaken on all counts. Londonderry was well intentioned and sincere in his attitude towards Nazi Germany. But it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that he was extremely naïve in his political views and gullible in his readiness for so long to place his trust in Hitler and in presumed German peaceful objectives."

Lord Lothian (nee Philip Henry Kerr) was born in 1882. After being educated at Oxford, he was private secretary to Prime Minister David Lloyd George from 1916 to 1921 and, thereby, very influential in the drafting of the Versailles Treaty.

In May 1935, Lord Lothian wrote, "National Socialism in its brutal aspects, both at home and abroad, is in considerable measure due to the fact that her neighbors were not able to make reasonable revisions in the treaties as war passions died down."

Lord Lothian regarded a disarmed Germany as one of the bad legacies of Versailles and saw no security, as far as Europe was concerned, in a weak Germany bordering upon a strong France. Lothian knew Anglo-German cooperation would annoy the anti-appeasement faction at the Foreign Office, since he correctly viewed Vansittart and his colleagues as Francophiles. Also, Lothian regarded Anglo-German friendship as necessary to balance Franco-Russian dominance in Europe.

Lothian first visited Hitler in 1935. He was given a lecture on the evils of communism. In return he informed Hitler that he "did not rule out" a change in the political status of Austria. Hitler spoke of Anglo-German cooperation as one of the things he had always hoped would come about. Lothian said he would tell Baldwin that Britain and Germany ought to begin conversations "with a plan designed to stabilize Europe for 10 years." Hitler thanked Lothian for his kindness.

On his return, Lothian reported that his chief impression had been that "here was a chance of a political settlement which would keep the peace for 10 years."

"The central fact today," Lothian wrote to *The Times* of London, "is that Germany does not want war and is prepared to renounce it absolutely as a method of settling her disputes with her neighbors."

Here was the trust in Hitler's word that the appeasers believed both necessary and wise. Behind it lay the feeling that Britain had been unfair to Germany in the past and would make a grave mistake if she persisted in her unfairness. Nazi brutality, Lothian told a friend, was "largely the reflex of the external persecution to which Germans have been subjected since the war."

Lothian met Hitler a second time in May 1937 and told him that "Britain had no primary interests in Eastern Europe."

The American ambassador to Berlin, William Dodd, wrote, "Lothian praised Hitler for saving Germany in 1933.... His hatred of France was revealed twice.... I could hardly make out just where he belonged in European alignments. He

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By Robert E. Cray, Jr.

National Archives

Pilar Goes Sub Chasing

Author Ernest Hemingway tracked German U-boats aboard his yacht in the Caribbean.

"WE ARE GOING TO HAVE CHRIST'S OWN BITTER TIME TO WIN IT, IF, WHEN, AND ever," commented Ernest Hemingway to his friend and editor, Charles Scribner, at the start of World War II. A celebrated author, Hemingway considered the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor reprehensible, at one point asserting that Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox should have been relieved of duty, while ranking Army and Navy commanders at Oahu deserved to be shot. Hemingway was nothing if not opinionated.

But the man who penned such well-received novels as *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* could wield a sword too, in this instance, his yacht, the *Pilar*. In 1942 and 1943 Hemingway, supplied with an assortment of machine guns, bazookas, and grenades courtesy of the United States government, patrolled the Caribbean Sea. If all went well, Hemingway hoped to lure a German U-boat close to *Pilar*, before disabling or sinking it with a fusillade of firepower. The marauding German submarines had roamed the Caribbean and sunk thousands of tons of Allied shipping. Hemingway intended to make the hunters the hunted. It was a daring, perhaps foolhardy, plan, in keeping with Hemingway's own outsized personality.

Ernest Hemingway began life far from the sea in America's heartland. Born in affluent Oak Park, Illinois, in 1899, Hemingway learned to hunt and fish in the Upper Midwest, his sailing restricted to small freshwater craft. In World War I Hemingway served in an American Red Cross unit on the Italian front, suffered injury from artillery shell fragments, and earned medals from the Italian government. Literary prominence came while he lived in France in the 1920s, with the publication of *In Our Time,* a collection of short stories, and even more with *The Sun Also Rises,* a novel about American expatriates in France and Spain. Hemingway's relocation to Key West, Florida, in 1928 introduced him to the Gulf Stream waters of the Caribbean, a venue that would figure prominently in his later fiction and mark the landsman's transformation into a sailor.

The *Pilar* provided the impetus. Hemingway purchased the cabin cruiser from the Wheeler Shipyard in Brooklyn, New York, in 1934 for $7,500. Named after Our Lady of the Pilar at Zarogoza in Spain as well as his second wife, Pauline, the ship arrived by rail in Miami that spring. The black hull built of American oak had a green roof and mahogany cockpit; it was 38 feet long with an 11-foot beam and a draft of three feet, two inches. Powered by a 75-horsepower Chrysler engine and a 40-horsepower Lycorying engine for trolling, the *Pilar* could reach a top speed of 16 knots and cruise to a range of 500 miles.

Hemingway customized *Pilar* by lowering the transom 12 inches to pull in fish and increasing the number of gas tanks. Sailing *Pilar* to Key West, he inspected the controls and checked the engines and was thoroughly pleased. The "boat is marvelous," he wrote a friend. As his son, Gregory, remarked, *Pilar* ranked among the great loves of Hemingway's life, just behind his children, wives, and cats.

The six-bunk vessel hosted numerous sports fishing parties, and the *New York Times* reported on the author and his guests. Writers and nonwriters, men and women could see the proud skipper show off his skills. Fishing occasionally became a blood sport. Once, while gaffing a shark in 1935, the gaff broke, striking Hemingway on the hand

Ernest Hemingway (right) enjoyed the risks of war. Here he poses with reporter Robert Capa (left) and their driver, Olin L. Tompkins, at Mont Bocard, France, July 30, 1944.

holding his pistol, which had been intended to dispatch the shark. Instead, the bullets bounced off the brass railing and through Hemingway's two calves, necessitating medical attention. A few days later Hemingway got his revenge. Sharks that descended upon a huge tuna caught by Hemingway started thrashing in blood-stained water, machine-gunned by an angry Hemingway. *Pilar* would become, in the words of a Hemingway biographer, a "kind of floating whore house and rum factory as well as a fishing boat."

Pilar's owner sought adventure, especially sports fishing, and was eager to try his luck. Anything from sailfish to marlin to tuna attracted Hemingway. From Key West it was a short hop to Bimini and Cuba, where even bigger fish swam. The run between Key West and Cuba took roughly four hours, and the trip provided Hemingway material for *To Have and Have Not*, a tale of a rum runner. The sea now colored his prose.

Hemingway relocated to Cuba by 1939. The following year he purchased Finca Vigia, a villa outside Havana that he had previously rented, and watched the world situation deteriorate. Having already covered the Spanish Civil War, at times exceeding his role as a wartime journalist by bearing arms, Hemingway seemingly relished risks. In war-torn China, assaulted by the invading Japanese, Hemingway passed along information in 1941 to the United States government, reporting to an Army Intelligence team in Manila. In May, the Office of Naval Intelligence debriefed Hemingway, and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau heard his report.

The U.S. entry into World War II prompted Hemingway to oversee an ad hoc intelligence operation in Havana in 1942, convinced that Falangists (Spanish Fascists) residing in Cuba represented a potential fifth column. The Finca's guest house became the headquarters of Hemingway's counterintelligence unit, the "crook factory" as he termed it, designed to keep tabs on suspects. The American ambassador, Spruille Braden, appreciative of Hemingway's efforts, asserted that he "built up an excellent organization and did an A-one job." Hemingway's third wife, Martha Gellhorn, was less convinced, critical of the crook factory's noisy nighttime parties and heavy drinking at the Finca. It seemed a strange way to conduct spying.

Offshore in the Caribbean Sea, U-boats were making even greater noise in a rich hunting ground that offered an array of pickings. Such cities as Galveston, New Orleans, and Hous-

National Archives

Hemingway was obsessed with locating German submarines. Here the *Pilar* is on the hunt in the Caribbean.

ton, all of them major oil ports, attracted German naval interest. Aruba was the site of the biggest oil refinery in the world, a prime source of diesel, aviation fuel, kerosene, gasoline, and fuel oil, all of them vital to the Allied war effort.

On February 16, 1942, U-boats descended on Aruba, sinking tankers and shelling the refinery. Merchant ships carrying bauxite—a critical component for aluminum production—from British and Dutch Guiana provided other tempting targets. Sub attacks in 1942 at the height of the German Caribbean campaign sank 263 ships, exceeding total losses on the North Atlantic convoy route.

In Cuba, a restless Hemingway decided to equip *Pilar* as a sub chaser. Fascinated by the exploits of Q-ships, disguised to deceive U-boats into surfacing and then attack them during World War I, Hemingway saw possibilities of a U-boat capture by *Pilar*. British mariners in the Great War had disguised and armed civilian vessels, luring U-boats by outright deceit before pouncing with quickly uncovered weaponry. A camouflaged *Pilar* posing as a fishing boat, while in reality armed to the teeth, could continue the tradition of naval deception.

The fact that U-boats sometimes surfaced to confiscate fish and water from civilian vessels gave the venture a thin veneer of plausibility. Once a U-boat was crippled, Hemingway could radio for naval assistance, finish the job, and perhaps secure valuable German codebooks.

Other motivations may have influenced Hemingway, too. Journalists back home wondered about his contribution, or perceived lack thereof, to the war effort. A man wounded in World War I who also bore arms during the Spanish Civil War appeared strangely inactive. Nor was Hemingway able to publicize his crook factory activities beyond a few intimates. Intelligence work ashore was lonely, often bereft of notice. By definition, if not always in reality, Hemingway's operation had to be kept quiet, at least to the press.

Yet the author eventually grew bored. Hemingway found typing reports tedious work. Where was the danger in such activity? Capturing a U-boat offered more excitement. It could even be trumpeted in a blaze of publicity loud enough to silence any critics. If not, Hemingway would still have the satisfaction of an independent command aboard his beloved *Pilar.*

Hemingway approached Ambassador Braden to help equip *Pilar.* According to Braden, Hemingway said, "I can really have myself a party provided you will get me a bazooka to punch holes in the side of a submarine, machine guns to mow down the people on the deck, and hand grenades to lob down the conning tower."

Braden could not say no. Hemingway was, after all, a famous American author. If Hemingway acquired hard-to-get rationed gasoline, naval equipment, guns, and supplies, it could all be chalked up to the war effort. Besides, Secretary Knox had asked East Coast yachtsmen to employ their vessels against the German Navy. Should not Hemingway be permitted to play his own role?

Pilar's wooden structure, too fragile to mount the .50-caliber machine guns Hemingway wanted, left the crew with light machine guns. Bazookas and grenades carefully hidden below deck complemented the arsenal. Hemingway recruited Cubans, Spaniards, and Americans, including for a time his two young sons, Patrick and Gregory, along with a Marine sergeant, Don Saxon, sent by the government to work the radio. Critics were airily swept aside. When the chief of naval intelligence for Central America, U.S. Marine Colonel John W. Thomason, certain that no German submarine would venture near *Pilar,* urged Hemingway to modify his plan, the famous author dismissed him as a "doubting Thomason."

So how would Hemingway proceed? The first task was to reconnoiter and patrol the sea-lanes in the Caribbean near Cuba, noting any surfaced U-boat and reporting it to the Navy. Listening to German naval chatter on the radio might give *Pilar*'s crew other clues to the enemy's activities. *Pilar* could also venture into isolated cays, searching for German munitions and armaments, or perhaps discover caches of food and water placed there by Axis sympathizers. Naturally, the coup de grace, the capture of a German submarine, remained foremost in Hemingway's thoughts. Several years after the war, he confidently informed his friend A.E. Hotchner, "A U-boat not on alert could have been taken by our plan of attack."

His enthusiasm was unshakable.

To facilitate the sub attack, the *Pilar* carried atop its flying bridge a specially made bomb. The coffin-shaped explosive had handles enabling two strong men to toss it into the U-boat's conning tower, presumably after gunfire had mowed down German crewmen on deck. It would certainly be a tricky operation. The submarine tower would be slightly higher than *Pilar*'s bridge, and the bomb barely small enough to fit down the narrow conning tower hatch. Once thrown, the explosive might well miss the hatch, sending fragments toward Hemingway and his crew, a point that a concerned Martha Gellhorn tried to impress upon her stubborn husband.

In 1942, Hemingway took short cruises, returning to Havana at night to deliver his reports. By 1943, he extended his range from a base camp on Cayo Confites, a flat sandy isle with a few palm trees where Hemingway anchored *Pilar*. Supplies of fuel, food, water, ice, and alcohol would be obtained from a naval facility. Daily patrols involved monitoring sea-lanes, spotting vessels, exploring tiny islands and cays, and watching for anything unusual. When exploring shallow waters, care had to be taken to avoid harming *Pilar*'s hull. Running aground might also leave them easy

prey for the enemy.

Actual results proved spotty. For instance, in December 1942, *Pilar* observed a Spanish vessel, the freighter *Marques de Comillas,* which appeared to have a smaller ship, possibly a submarine, in tow. Hemingway tried to follow the sub before it faded from sight, having radioed naval authorities about the suspicious transaction. In Havana, the ship was stopped, the crew and passengers questioned by FBI agents. No one admitted seeing a sub. Listening to U-boat chatter via radio became an exercise in futility. No one spoke fluent German, making the task all the more difficult.

Nevertheless, Gregory Hemingway, Ernest's youngest son, retained fond memories of life aboard *Pilar.* That Hemingway employed his sons in the operation says something about his parenting skills. At least one biographer, Kenneth Lynn, has suggested that Hemingway's sub chasing more resembled a lark than a serious naval patrol. Still, from 11-year-old Gregory's perspective the enterprise was a high seas adventure. Armed men took position in the stern and the bow, while he, the youngest member of a multinational crew, held a rifle.

Escapades ashore furnished additional excitement. At one point, while searching caves for German supplies, a crewman ordered Gregory and his older brother Patrick through a narrow passage. Gregory was at first overjoyed and later dejected to find that a few bottles of German beer had not been abandoned by a U-boat crew. It was likely that American tourists had tossed them away.

Gregory Hemingway's sea adventure reached a climax near the end of his holiday. *Pilar* had actually sighted a U-boat 1,000 yards away.

"Battle stations," roared his father.

The crew scrambled into position, with brother Patrick holding a .303 Lee-Enfield rifle and Gregory clutching his mother's old gun, a Mannlicher Schoenauer rifle. Crewmen unmoored the bomb from the flying bridge. However, the U-boat sped away uninterested in the disguised fishing boat. The angry crew hurled insults at the Germans. As for the phlegmatic Papa Hemingway, young Gregory distinctly remembered his mocking speech about the episode, capped by telling his son to fix him a gin and tonic.

Gellhorn developed a different perspective about her husband's adventure. She was a seasoned journalist who fell in love with Hemingway during the Spanish Civil War. Dangerous assignments rarely fazed her. Sheer foolishness was something else. She had cautioned Hemingway about the plan's shortcomings to no avail. Having seen the deterioration of Hemingway's crook-factory spy ring, Gellhorn's skepticism of the sub-chasing scheme mounted. She eventually concluded that Hemingway's adventure was an excuse to drink at sea and hurl grenades at buoys.

Hemingway never shared his third wife's opinion. To him, the *Pilar* patrols were serious business.

He informed Martha in early 1943: "I have so much to tell but have gotten so used to writing letters that will be censored that I have lost ability to put anything down."

Even so, certain issues, namely alcohol, appeared noteworthy enough to mention. Drinking remained a popular Hemingway pastime, and two open shelves down in *Pilar*'s cabin, referred to by Hemingway as "The Ethylic Department," housed his liquor supply. His shipmates drank freely when alcohol was available, but their skipper modestly made do with three and sometimes only two and a half drinks per day. He hoped to inspire Sergeant Saxon, their hard-drinking radio man, to cut back. Getting Saxon down to four drinks a day, instead of his usual 20, was a significant victory.

Too little booze could still rattle the normally hard-drinking author. By the summer of 1943, Hemingway complained to Martha that going without gin for a week and wine for six days was a wartime sacrifice. In response, he resorted to rum. When stirred with grapefruit juice, lime, and ice, he informed Martha, it made a decent cocktail, but a seven-day trip with only rum cocktails constituted a hardship.

Hemingway's crew felt the strain as well. Two of them muttered about the absence of spirits, according to young Gregory, threatening to seize the helm and turn the ship to the nearest bar. No mutiny occurred.

By July 1943, the U-boat war in the Caribbean Sea was winding down. A coded message ordered *Pilar* home. The men were worn, and the boat was in bad shape. *Pilar*'s drive shaft had to be realigned, and the engine gaskets and rings needed replacing. Although Hemingway took a repaired *Pilar* out for short cruises in the autumn, his role as a sub chaser was effectively over. Perhaps it was just as well. A growing sense of frustration gnawed at him.

In his only known letter written aboard *Pilar* at sea, Hemingway informed a friend on June 30, 1943: "I would have written you Old Mike many times but there is nothing that I know or that could be of interest that I can write. Been that way for a year or more and working like a bastard all the time. Wish I could see you though and that we could have a few drinks and talk things over."

Wartime censorship no doubt kept Hemingway from revealing *Pilar*'s covert mission, but the author's disgruntled tone was plain enough.

Did Hemingway's sub-chasing scheme really have a reasonable chance of success? The answer appears to be no. From the start, *Pilar* was overmatched; her crew, however determined, relied upon light machine guns, grenades, and bazookas, while German U-boats typically had an 88mm deck gun complemented by lighter weapons. Some U-boats carried 105mm deck guns. A single shell from either of these would have destroyed *Pilar.*

In addition, most U-boats stayed submerged during the day, surfacing to charge their batteries at night when *Pila*r was in port. *Pilar* lacked sonar and radar, useful implements for submarine warfare, making Hemingway's plan more of a long shot. He gambled that *Pilar* would attract a passing sub's curiosity, a slender straw of hope in the overall balance of Caribbean warfare.

Contemporaries remained divided over Hemingway's sub chasing. The only Cuban to capture a U-boat off his country's waters openly scoffed at the author's plan. Captain Mario Raminez Delgado dubbed Hemingway "a playboy who hunted submarines off the Cuban coast as a whim."

Raminez Delgado at least had action to back up his statement, Hemingway had none.

Yet, Hemingway had monitored the sea-lanes and sent in reports, much as any conscientious navy man might do, expending considerable time and effort. His contribution, if more well intentioned than substantive, convinced Ambassador Braden that the service rendered was important. In Hemingway's own mind, he had gathered valuable naval intelligence, with *Pilar* paying the price in hard usage and repairs.

We do know what Ernest Hemingway would have preferred. As a novelist whose personal experience colored his art, he mentally filed away the sub hunt experience in hopes of reproducing in print his World War II sea adventure. In his novel *Islands in the Stream,* published after his death, Hemingway's main character, Thomas Hudson, is an artist turned sub chaser patrolling the Caribbean. Word of a German crew escaped off a destroyed U-boat sends Hudson and his men in in pursuit. The two forces meet, leaving Hudson injured and dying, but the Germans have been killed.

Hemingway the novelist got the story he wanted, even if Hemingway the sub chaser failed to net his prey. □

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KING COMPANY AT BLOODY LINDERN

In their first combat experience, a handful of American soldiers accomplished its objective and held against powerful German counter-attacks.

National Archives

IN November 1944, an American infantry division underwent its baptism of fire in the worst conditions imaginable and acquitted itself with honor beyond anyone's expectation. The final outcome of the campaign, however, was determined by the heroic action of only 100 men who found themselves in a hopeless situation and simply would not give up.

The men of the 84th Division—the Railsplitters—were, to use the GIs' own language, "green as grass," fresh off the boat from the States, and they were not going to a quiet sector to get combat experience on the cheap. Their first combat mission was to assault and reduce the Geilenkirchen Salient, a chunk of the German Siegfried Line that featured dragon's teeth, minefields, and layer after layer of concrete pillboxes surrounded by trenches, foxholes, and barbed wire, which Lt. Gen. Brian Horrocks, commander of British XXX Corps, described as the most formidable fortifications on the entire German front.

If the GIs had been expecting their first sight of Germany to be picturesque, they were disappointed. The area around Geilenkirchen, the flood plain of the Wurm and Roer Rivers, was depressingly drab, worn, and ugly. Nondescript shabby little villages and gray industrial towns dotted a landscape unbroken by any terrain features likely to catch the eye. There were a few scattered woods and orchards, but the ground was mostly cabbage and sugar beet fields now turned to sticky brown mud by the autumn rains.

The flood plain boasted no major hills or ridges, but a series of rises on the south bank of the Wurm gradually joined to form a low plateau farther to the northeast. The low hills and rises were not obstacles to movement but did provide excellent observation posts for German artillery. Everything had an abandoned, desolate feel, made more pronounced by the absence of civilians. Most had been evacuated by the Germans before the fighting began.

There was another thing—the 84th Division would not be going into action under U.S. command. Its first offensive would be fought under British XXX Corps. Geilenkirchen was at the far northern end of the U.S. 9th Army's area of responsibility and the far southern end of the British 2nd Army's. The Wurm River formed the rough boundary line between U.S. General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group and British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's 21st. Despite that, cooperation between General William Simpson of the 9th Army and Horrocks of XXX Corps was good. Geilenkirchen needed taking, but XXX Corps did not have the

BY FRANK CHADWICK

Infantrymen of the U.S. 84th Division advance warily toward forward positions near Suggarth, Germany, on November 21, 1944. Soon, these soldiers were engaged in an attack on the German city of Wurm.

ullstein bild

ABOVE: This German Sturmgeschütz III self-propelled assault gun was photographed in the ruins of Hürtgen-Geilenkirchen near the city of Aachen. It has been camouflaged against air attack. OPPOSITE: A British tank unleashes machine-gun fire while American infantrymen fire their M1 rifles to dislodge a troublesome German sniper from his nest in a building inside Geilenkirchen.

strength on the ground to take it. So Simpson loaned Horrocks a U.S. division to get the job done. The operation would be called Clipper.

The Geilenkirchen Salient was a tough proposition—impressive fortifications, and deep—seven miles deep, all the way back to the Roer River with interlocking fields of fire and few covered routes of approach. Asking a green American division to tackle this as its first assignment was asking a lot. The fact that Simpson and Horrocks were willing to do so spoke volumes about their confidence in the ability of the U.S. training system to turn out combat-ready divisions capable of hitting the ground running. When it came to the Railsplitters of the 84th Division, they were right.

The plan for Operation Clipper was simple. Most good ones are. On November 18, the British 43rd Wessex Division would drive in the northern side of the salient, and the U.S. 334th Infantry Regiment, 84th Division would drive in the south, leaving Geilenkirchen exposed and cut off. The 333rd Infantry would then hit Geilenkirchen itself the next day.

The 334th attacked on the morning of the 18th with two battalions up, the key attack being by the 1st Battalion on the right through a heavily mined orchard and entrenched rail embankment, then two clusters of concrete pillboxes, and finally across 2,000 yards of open fields to seize the fortified village of Prummern. The attack bogged down almost at once under artillery and small arms fire at the rail embankment, but the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Lloyd H. Gomes, moved up and led the forward rifle companies and platoons himself.

This got the attack moving again, and it rolled forward, overwhelming all German resistance. The battalion paused to reorganize before attacking Prummern and then swept in and cleared the village house by house. The regiment's 2nd Battalion made similar progress on its left, but against lighter resistance.

Casualties in the two attacking battalions were moderate, 10 killed and 180 wounded, but by the end of the day the 334th had destroyed a battalion of the defending 183rd Volksgrenadier Division, inflicting 450 casualties, of which 330 were prisoners. Among the dazed German POWs was a veteran officer, stunned by what had happened. "We knew we were facing new troops and expected it to be easy," he said, "but these men fight better than any troops I saw in Africa, Russia and France."

The next day, the 333rd attacked and cleared Geilenkirchen with light casualties, and another battalion of the 183rd Volksgrenadiers was kaput. In the early morning hours of the same day, however, a new enemy appeared near Prummern—the veteran 9th Panzer Division. On the 19th it launched a counterattack, with the 1st Battalion, 10th Panzergrenadier Regiment and six tanks of the 2nd Battalion, 33rd Panzer Regiment, and retook much of the town.

The 1st Battalion, 333rd Infantry still held the surrounding orchards, and regimental committed its reserve battalion along with the M4 Sherman tanks of the attached British Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry. There followed several days of tough back-and-forth fighting for Prummern and the wooded hill behind it—dubbed Mahogany Hill—but Prummern was secure by the 20th and Mahogany Hill by the 22nd.

The division pressed forward to the northeast, closing on the villages of Muellendorf and Beeck, but the advance slowed to a crawl, in part because the Germans threw in more troops to halt the division. Both the 15th Panzergrenadier Division and elite 10th SS Panzer Division "Frundsberg," fresh from its fight at Arnhem during Operation Market-Garden, were committed to stop the Railsplitters and absorbed the remnants of the 183rd Volksgrenadier Division.

The SS division, which began entering the lines on November 23, relieved the battered 9th Panzer Division, which was pulled back to refit for the upcoming Ardennes Offensive. Neither German division was up to full strength, but they were on the defensive, held excellent positions, and had strong cadres of seasoned veterans.

And then there was the mud.

It rained almost every day that long November—a cold, steady rain, sometimes mixed with sleet. The floodplains of the Wurm and Roer were usually wet this time of year, but in November 1944 the region received over twice as much rain as the average, and it became a vast sea of mud. Roads were axle-deep canals of mud. Foxholes dug in the low-lying beet fields became waterlogged, and soldiers slept on the ground beside them instead of in the water. Some foxholes filled up to the very top, and to keep under cover when shells hit nearby, riflemen had to hold their breath and duck their heads under water.

Weapons became coated with mud and jammed. Trench foot reached epidemic proportions. Tracked vehicles could not leave the roads, wheeled vehicles often could not move even on the roads. Hot chow was a distant memory. Men fought and died for high ground just to get out of the mud. By November 28, the advance ground to a halt. It was time to try something different.

All of the advances of the 84th Division to date had been made by only two of its three infantry regiments. The third regiment, the 335th, had been detached to support another U.S. division farther south. Now it rejoined the Railsplitters and was available to get things moving again.

The main front had stalled in the face of strong German positions in Muellendorf and Beeck, and on Schlachen Hill. In addition, there was a fortified backstop position on Toad Hill and in the village of Lindern—held by the 1st Battalion, 21st SS Panzergrenadier Regiment,10th SS Panzer Division, giving the entire position depth. The attacks by the 84th Division's main body, however, had drawn the bulk of the German troops into this position, and its left, or southeastern, flank was open, covered only by miles of muddy fields and a long antitank ditch. Behind the antitank ditch was the town of Lindern, and it sat astride the main German supply route. If the Railsplitters could

get a firm hold on Lindern, the rest of the position would fall easily. Getting a hold on Lindern would be the job of the 335th Infantry.

The original plan was for the regiment to throw all three battalions at Lindern, one behind the other, but that was reduced to a two-battalion attack when the regiment's 2nd Battalion was switched west for an attack on Toad Hill. Then 1st Battalion was held back as a reserve, and the Lindern attack came down to a single infantry battalion.

Major Robert W. Wallace's 3rd Battalion, 335th Infantry would attack with two companies, Item and King, forward and one, Love, in reserve. They would make a long approach march at night and jump off before dawn. The approach march was from the southwest and would require a gentle left turn to make a head-on approach to the target. Navigating at night and in extended assault formation would be tricky, so a landmark was picked out. As the troops reached the north-south highway from Gereonsweiler to Lindern, they would wheel left and advance along its axis, with the highway becoming the boundary between the two assault companies. If they became disoriented, they could orient at first light on a tall church steeple in Lindern, or the brickyard on the southwest side of town.

After the wheel, the assault companies would cross the antitank ditch and press forward, ignoring any pockets of resistance, until they had crossed the railroad behind Lindern. They would dig in on the far side and await the inevitable German counterattacks. The reserve company would follow them and clear Lindern of any pockets of resistance and then reinforce them. The regiment's 1st Battalion in reserve would be available for additional strength as needed.

The attack was also to be supported by the 40th Tank Battalion, which was now attached to the division, but the tanks would not go in with the first wave. Surprise was believed to be more important, and so the tanks would wait for word from the infantry as to when they should advance. In order to communicate with the tanks, each of the leading rifle companies was given one heavy SCR 509 radio in addition to two SCR 300 backpack radios for communication with battalion and regiment. The SCR 509, with its longer range, was only barely man-portable, and in fact was carried in two loads: one man carried the radio itself, and the other the heavy battery pack that powered it, with a power cable connecting them.

Company K, which played such a remarkable role in the coming battle, was an unlikely candidate for the history books. It had not yet been in serious combat, but had already lost half of its officers—including its commander—in a jeep accident nine days earlier. First Lieutenant Leonard Carpenter, its unpopular executive officer, seen by the men as stuffy and distant, had assumed command, and three of the four platoon leaders were replacement officers who had arrived in the last few days. They hardly knew their men's names, let alone strengths and weaknesses. Morale was shaky, and the men had little confidence in their company commander or new platoon leaders.

Most rifle companies have one or two key noncommissioned officers to whom others look for leadership. In King Company, that man was Technical Sergeant George O. Prewitt, the platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon. One of his comrades remembered him as "a football hillbilly out of North Carolina with little learning, [but] he was a Phi Beta Kappa of soldiering." Almost alone among the soldiers of King Company, Prewitt accepted and worked with Lieutenant Carpenter, the new company commander, without reservation. Perhaps he saw something in Carpenter the other men had not yet noticed, but soon would.

The Attack 0630, 29 November

At 6:30 AM, still pitch black on November 29, both assault companies crossed the line of departure in the same formation, two rifle platoons up, one in reserve, and the weapons platoon split up to give support to the rifle companies. Each platoon advanced with two squads up and one back, and Staff Sergeant Jeff Parker, who led King Company's third squad of 1st Platoon, recalled, "We went out in a column of twos. The columns were about 25 yards apart with three yards between men because it was still dark and we wanted to stay pretty close."

King Company attacked with Lieutenant Pozyck's 3rd Platoon on the left, Lieutenant Romersberger's 1st Platoon on the right, and Lieutenant Smith's 2nd Platoon in support. Lieutenant Lockard's 4th (weapons) Platoon gave up one 60mm mortar squad to each of the three rifle platoons, and its two .30-caliber light machine gun squads to 3rd Platoon on the battalion's open left flank. Lockard, with his weapons platoon headquarters party and the company's spare SCR 300 radio, brought up the rear behind 2nd Platoon. Each man carried only the essentials: rifle, gas mask, three chocolate D-ration bars, one canteen of water, and two bandoliers of ammunition. The men left their overshoes behind. Speed meant more than keeping dry.

Lieutenant Carpenter and his small command group advanced with the two lead platoons. A rear company command group, led by the executive officer, Lieutenant Johns, and the company first sergeant, Julius Phagan, moved with the supporting platoon. Carpenter was up front to ensure that the lead platoons got their navigation right and pushed on, regardless of what they ran into. Johns and Phagan would do the same for the support elements.

Shortly after they crossed the line of departure, several German flares erupted in the night sky, illuminating King Company. Every man froze in place, as trained to do. As the flares drifted down on their parachutes and burned out, every man waited for the tearing sound of German MG-42 machine guns, but there was no German fire. They had not been spotted. As soon as the light flickered out, the advance resumed.

The plan started going wrong as soon as the attacking companies came to the "highway" to Lindern at 6:45. It was actually no more than

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a narrow dirt road. Fortunately, the men of King Company's 1st Platoon recognized it immediately as their landmark and alerted Carpenter, who ran over to 3rd Platoon to tell them to wheel. King Company's two assault platoons came on line with the road to their right and headed toward Lindern.

They crossed the antitank ditch with difficulty. It was partly flooded, and the soft banks collapsed in sheets of mud as the men tried to climb out, but 1st Platoon and most of 3rd stayed together as units. Then they encountered flanking fire from German machine guns, and a few mortar rounds landed among the soldiers of 3rd Platoon but, remarkably, caused no casualties. The troops went to ground, but Lieutenants Carpenter and Romersberger and several NCOs encouraged the men to crawl out from under the tracers of the blind grazing fire and keep advancing.

First Platoon's Sergeant George Prewitt recalled, "There were four machine guns firing at us. I began to yank the men up, and I kicked one in the ass. Sergeant Matuska did the same."

"They can't hit you if they can't see you," Lieutenant Carpenter shouted over and over, and the men followed him forward.

About this time, a German round clipped off the antenna of the SCR 300 radio carried by Private Paul North, Carpenter's radio man. A runner was sent back to 4th (weapons) Platoon to get the spare antenna from the company's other SCR 300, but the advance continued.

The two assault platoons sprinted forward and in moments were in Lindern, the outlines of the buildings growing visible as the sun rose. At first Carpenter was unsure they were in the right place, there was no church steeple visible anywhere, but then he caught sight of the brickyard and knew they were on the objective. Contrary to the pre-attack briefing, Lindern was one of the only towns in the area that did not have a standing church steeple, a mistake that would cost the battalion dearly in the next hour.

The assault platoons ran through Lindern, firing from the hip and throwing grenades at any sign of resistance, but never slowing up. They came out on the far side and sprinted across the open ground to the 20-foot-deep rail cut. Carpenter later reported, "We hit the railroad north side of Lindern. We went down a bank about 20 feet high and ran up the other side. We saw some long buildings that looked like barracks and turned out to be a German rest camp. Some men threw grenades into the buildings. Nothing happened. Fifty yards in front of the barracks we found a fence. There we started digging in—two-man foxholes. We stopped there because we knew we were going to dig in 50-100 yards the other side of Lindern. A long, sloping hill was in front of us. We dug in on the reverse slope of a very slight rise in the ground, the crest of which was 250 yards in front of us."

The 84th Division's history describes the rail line as sitting on top of a 20-foot-tall embankment, and the U.S. Army's official history, *The Siegfried Line Campaign,* also refers to the rail embankment. The eyewitness accounts from King Company, however, make it clear the railroad ran through a deep cut, not along the top of an embankment. Carpenter specifically mentions sliding down into the cut, then scrambling up the other side, while another soldier talks of tanks coming into the area across a highway overpass—not through an underpass tunnel. Equally telling, however, King Company continued to take scattered small arms fire from Lindern throughout the day, which would have been unlikely if there was a 20-foot-tall earthen berm between them and the enemy.

King Company began digging in at 7:45. Lieutenant Carpenter remembered someone had asked the time. Now there was nothing to do but report their success and wait for the rest of the company to show up. Unfortunately, it was going to be difficult to contact battalion headquarters that day.

"When we saw those tanks, we figured the whole German Army couldn't drive us out of there."

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German small arms fire had taken off the antenna of the company's forward SCR 300 radio, and the antenna of the big SCR 509 had been damaged as well. The heavy two-part radio had been abandoned at the base of the rail embankment so the two-man team could keep up with the advance. A runner had been sent back for a spare SCR 300 antenna, but he never returned and, as the sun rose, there was no sign of the rest of the company.

Carpenter conferred with Item Company to his right, and discovered a full company was not present there either—only 35 men of its 3rd Platoon, and a five-man mortar squad, all under Lieutenant Creswell Garlington. They did not have a working radio.

Carpenter had only 60 of his own men under his direct command, the four men of his forward company command group, 32 men of 1st Platoon under Lieutenant Romersberger and Technical Sergeant Prewitt, the 1st Platoon's attached 60mm mortar squad with six men, but only 18 men from Lieutenant Pozyck's 3rd Platoon.

Romersberger and Pozyck were both new replacements. Romersberger, even though he had been with the company only four days, had already displayed excellent leadership under fire during the advance and would continue to play a key role in the company's survival. Less is recorded of Pozyck's contribution, except for a report by one of his NCOs that a piece of shrapnel "went right through Lt. Pozyck's helmet," perhaps leaving him temporarily stunned or disoriented. It is more likely Pozyck's contributions were tangible and considerable, but simply never written down. Pozyck received one of the first Bronze Stars for the action afterward and was soon promoted to first lieutenant.

The only senior NCO who had made it forward was George Prewitt. Carpenter co-located his foxhole with Pruitt, who effectively became the company first sergeant for the balance of the action.

Pozyck's 3rd Platoon had a harder time moving forward than 1st Platoon, as it had been closer to the enfilading fire of the German machine guns on the left and had lost time engaging them. The artillery prep on the brickyard, through which they had to advance, had been late and so had delayed them another five minutes. The follow-on rifle squad remained pinned down near the antitank ditch for too long. When the sun rose they were still in the open in front of Lindern and the now alert SS defenders and were forced to surrender.

The left wing of 3rd Platoon's forward echelon, over 20 men, including the light machine gun section attached from weapons platoon, 3rd Platoon's attached 60mm mortar squad,

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ABOVE: Preparing for an assault on the town of Beeck, Germany, on November 29, 1944, American soldiers of the 333rd Infantry Regiment move into their pre-assigned positions. OPPOSITE: An American infantryman of the 334th Regiment reaches low to tie a wire to the leg of a dead German. The task was necessary to remove the body from the vicinity of an active teller mine so that it could be buried.

one complete rifle squad and four men from another, became separated from the rest of the company around 7:30 and crossed the railroad farther to the left. Although the company's main body could see them, they were too far away for Carpenter to control, and it is unclear who actually stepped up and assumed command of this group.

They started to dig in on a low hill, but then were hit by U.S. artillery fire, including white phosphorus rounds, and pulled back into an apple orchard. At about 9 or 10 AM, they were hit again by friendly artillery fire. Two men were killed and at least one wounded, and they withdrew across the rail line, carrying their wounded but leaving behind one light machine gun and the mortar. Shortly after noon the 18 or 20 survivors, of whom six were wounded, encountered a dug-in German infantry force that took them prisoner. Carpenter later sent runners over to the abandoned position in the apple orchard and recovered the light machine gun.

But what had happened to the rest of King and Item Companies?

The rear element of King Company, 2nd Platoon, the rear headquarters party, and the weapons platoon headquarters failed to keep closed up behind the lead platoons and lost contact in the dark. When they crossed the Lindern road, the officers did not recognize it as such, perhaps being confused by the reference to a "highway." The 2nd Platoon's senior NCO realized the mistake but was unable to convince his platoon leader of the error. The group was being led by Lieutenant Johns, the company executive officer. The company first sergeant was also with this group and had been ordered by Carpenter to maintain contact between the assault platoons and the follow-on echelon,; he failed to do so. The group continued north, well off its intended path, until it encountered entrenched German infantry, was pinned down by fire in the open, and forced to surrender at daybreak.

Nearly the same thing happened to the bulk of Item Company. It had farther to go than King Company (being on the outer arc of the wheeling maneuver), and had navigation problems of its own. Not only was there confusion at the road crossing, but the church steeple in a village to the north, combined with the absence of a steeple in Lindern, further slowed and misdirected the advance. Most of Item was caught in the open fields around Lindern at daybreak and either driven back or forced to surrender.

By 8 AM, the two assault companies of 3rd Battalion, 335th Infantry had effectively ceased to exist. There were only 100 men on the far side of the rail embankment, and they had no means of communicating their position to the rear. From the point of view of battalion headquarters, they had marched into the darkness and vanished in a storm of small arms and mortar fire.

As Love Company, the battalion follow-on echelon, tried to move forward to clear Lindern it was pinned down by heavy fire short of the line of the antitank ditch and forced to dig in. Elements of the 21st SS Panzergrenadiers in the entrenchments in front of Lindern were alert, full of fight, and not going anywhere. German artillery fire on the area forward of Lindern was accurate and intense. As far as 335th Regiment could tell, the attack had been a total disaster and both rifle companies had been wiped out.

For the men under Carpenter's command, the first real action after crossing the rail line came on King Company's left. About 20 minutes after they began digging in, three German medium tanks appeared on the road from Lindern, crossing the railroad at the single overpass in the area, and driving north almost through 3rd Platoon's position. Private First Class Morton Reuben remembered, "I grabbed a bazooka round and put it in Wolfenberger's bazooka. He fired and hit the middle of the tank but it bounced off…. The second round hit a tree and tore it up. The tanks passed out of sight."

Bazooka and small arms fire, while causing no visible damage, had nevertheless encouraged the tanks to leave the area, which is not surprising since they had no close infantry support and could not know how weak the U.S. position was.

Between 9 and 10 AM, the company began taking friendly artillery fire on the far left. This would eventually drive the isolated left wing of 3rd Platoon back. At about the same time, however, three different German tanks appeared from the north. Carpenter remembers them as Tigers, and the U.S. official history concurs. The majority of "Tiger tank" reports turned out to be Panthers or Panzer IVs, but elements of the 506th Schwere Panzer Abteilung (Heavy Tank Battalion) were in the area and were certainly committed against Lindern in the following days, so it is not improbable that three Tigers were present that morning. King Company had already identified the first group of three tanks as "mediums," so they knew the difference, and they would get a very close look at these new ones.

Two of the German Tigers halted about 300 yards away while the third continued to advance directly into the American position. There were several German-held pillboxes about 500 yards away in the same direction, and Carpenter could also see four more German tanks moving about 800 yards away. That made 10 German tanks sighted in quick succession, but the most immediate problem was the lead tank moving into 3rd Platoon's positions on the left.

Even though 1st Platoon still had a few bazooka rounds left, the U.S. infantry was nearly defenseless against heavy armor, and Carpenter had to make a quick decision: should they remain in place and risk getting overrun, or should they try to infiltrate back to their own lines through Lindern? He took a moment to confer with his senior NCO, Technical Sergeant Prewitt, "and we decided to hold our ground at all costs."

And they did hold—in part because of the cool-headed marksmanship of 3rd Platoon's Private Robert Nordli. He told the story a few days later without dramatics, as if it was just another day at the office. "The tank came up to our front right in our lines. The tank commander stood up from the turret to observe. We moved back about 100 yards to get a better defilade position as the tanks came up. Unfortunately we had run out of bazooka ammunition. I hit the tank commander with an M1. He slumped over. The tank continued past us into Lindern for about another 100 yards, then backed up and returned to the vicinity of the pillbox."

The death of the commander of the leading German tank—probably the platoon leader—deprived the German armor of leadership at a critical time and caused the tanks to pull off to a safer distance. Nevertheless, it now appeared the Germans were alert to the presence of the Americans in their rear. More German infantry began assembling around the pillboxes, and tanks moved back and forth along the road to the front.

One hundred infantry with a handful of 60mm mortar rounds and two or three bazooka rockets could not possibly hold out against the force assembling unless they got help, and getting help meant getting word back to battalion or regiment. Carpenter sent a party of four volunteers back to retrieve the abandoned SCR 509 radio set, but, although they recovered it and got it working, its antenna was sufficiently damaged that it could only receive faintly and not transmit.

The only other option was to send runners to try to get through. The odds of success did not seem high. In Carpenter's deceptively casual words, "We knew there were Germans in and around Lindern in back of us because we were always getting fire from our rear." Four soldiers volunteered anyway. They did not make it. One was killed and the other three captured.

By 1 PM, the situation was clearly desperate, but suddenly one of King Company's men had an inspiration. After working with the two disabled radios for several hours, Carpenter's radio man, Private Paul North, realized one antenna is pretty much like any other.

The company still had several small SCR 536 "handy talkies," although they did not have the range to carry back to battalion. North, however, unscrewed an antenna from a 536 set, tied it to a fence post to get maximum elevation, and jury-rigged a connection to the big SCR 509 using a length of signal corps telephone wire. At about 1 PM, Private James Calhoun of Love Company, the battalion reserve, heard his own SCR 509 come to life. The message was from King Company, and it was, "We made a Touchdown at 0745." Touchdown was the coded signal for King Company on its objective.

Two companies of M4 Shermans of the 40th Tank Battalion had been waiting to advance in support of the infantry but had never gotten word there was actually infantry left to support. As soon as the radio message was relayed to the commander of 40th Tank Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel John Brown, he ordered his Company A to "forget about bad roads, mine obstacles, and infantry support and get out to Lindern."

The tanks moved forward, passing south of Lindern, but lost one Sherman to German fire and stalled short of the rail cut. Lieutenant Romersberger of 1st Platoon and his runner, Private Howerton, volunteered to go back, find the tanks, and guide them to King Company's positions. Although Howerton is officially credited with volunteering, he does not remember doing so and believes Romersberger volunteered, and he simply accompanied him as his runner. Howerton had devel-

A Rifle Company's Radios

The United States Army had many more radios available than did any other army in World War II. They did not work all the time, but they were an invaluable supplement to runners and field telephones, the traditional means of communication in the infantry.

Each rifle company was authorized six SCR 536 radios. These were the small box-like radios with built-in earpiece and microphone, held like an oversized telephone receiver. Today we almost universally call this sort of radio a "walkie-talkie," but at the time they were called "handy-talkies." The six SCR 536 handy-talkies, when all were available, were nominally assigned to the six officers in the company: commander, executive officer, three rifle platoon leaders, and weapons platoon leader. In fact, they could be moved around at will to give, for example, a radio to a forward outpost.

The true "walkie-talkies" were the backpack-mounted SCR 300 radios officially held at battalion, but almost universally doled out one per rifle company. This was the radio the company commander used to communicate with battalion, regiment, and sometimes to attached artillery units. The normal allocation of one SCR 300 per company was doubled for the attack on Lindern.

With all the small radios at platoon level, there was the potential of local chatter interfering with radio communication between company and higher levels. This was avoided by making the small SCR 536 radios AM, while all other signal corps radios were FM. The disadvantage of this, of course, was that the 536 handy-talkies could not be used to contact any other network, even if it was within their limited range.

oped enormous respect for his new platoon leader during the hours of the Lindern battle, and in his own words, "I would have followed him anywhere."

The two men found six of the Shermans buttoned up on the outskirts of the village and had hand and did not let it go. Throughout the night of November 29, Love Company, all of 1st Battalion, and most of the 40th Tank Battalion moved forward, cleared Lindern, and formed a perimeter defense. No counterattacks came that evening, but German shelling became heavy.

The Railsplitters had taken everything four German divisions could throw at them … in the worst physical conditions imaginable and triumphed.

National Archives

American M4 Sherman tanks move yards ahead of supporting infantrymen of the 335th Regiment near the town of Beeck, Germany, on November 29, 1944. The tanks engaged Nazi SS troops manning pillboxes and machine-gun nests outside the town.

a hard time getting their attention. The field phones on the back decks were not working, and so Romersberger and Howerton were reduced to banging on the side of the hulls with their rifle butts. "If there had been any German snipers nearby we would have most certainly drawn their fire," Howerton recalled years later, "but nothing happened. Eventually we roused the tank commander, crawled on his tank and rode back through Lindern like Hannibal crossing the Alps."

At 2 PM, the six tanks crossed the overpass and deployed in support of King Company. The sense of elation among Carpenter's men was indescribable. One of the soldiers in King Company later remembered, "When we saw those tanks, we figured the whole German Army couldn't drive us out of there."

The fight was far from over, but from that point on the Railsplitters definitely had the upper

On the evening of the 30th, and again on the night of December 1, the Germans launched a series of strong counterattacks using battle groups formed from 10th SS Panzer Division and 506th Schwere Panzer Abteilung, as well as the 9th Panzer Division, hastily pulled back out of its rest and refit encampment. It was too little, too late, however. The 335th had paid a very high price for Lindern, and no one was ready to give it up. Within days the main German position began to crumble and the balance of the Railsplitters moved forward and secured the plateau overlooking the Wurm and Roer Rivers. After a week or so to rest and reorganize, the Railsplitters would conduct an assault crossing of the Roer.

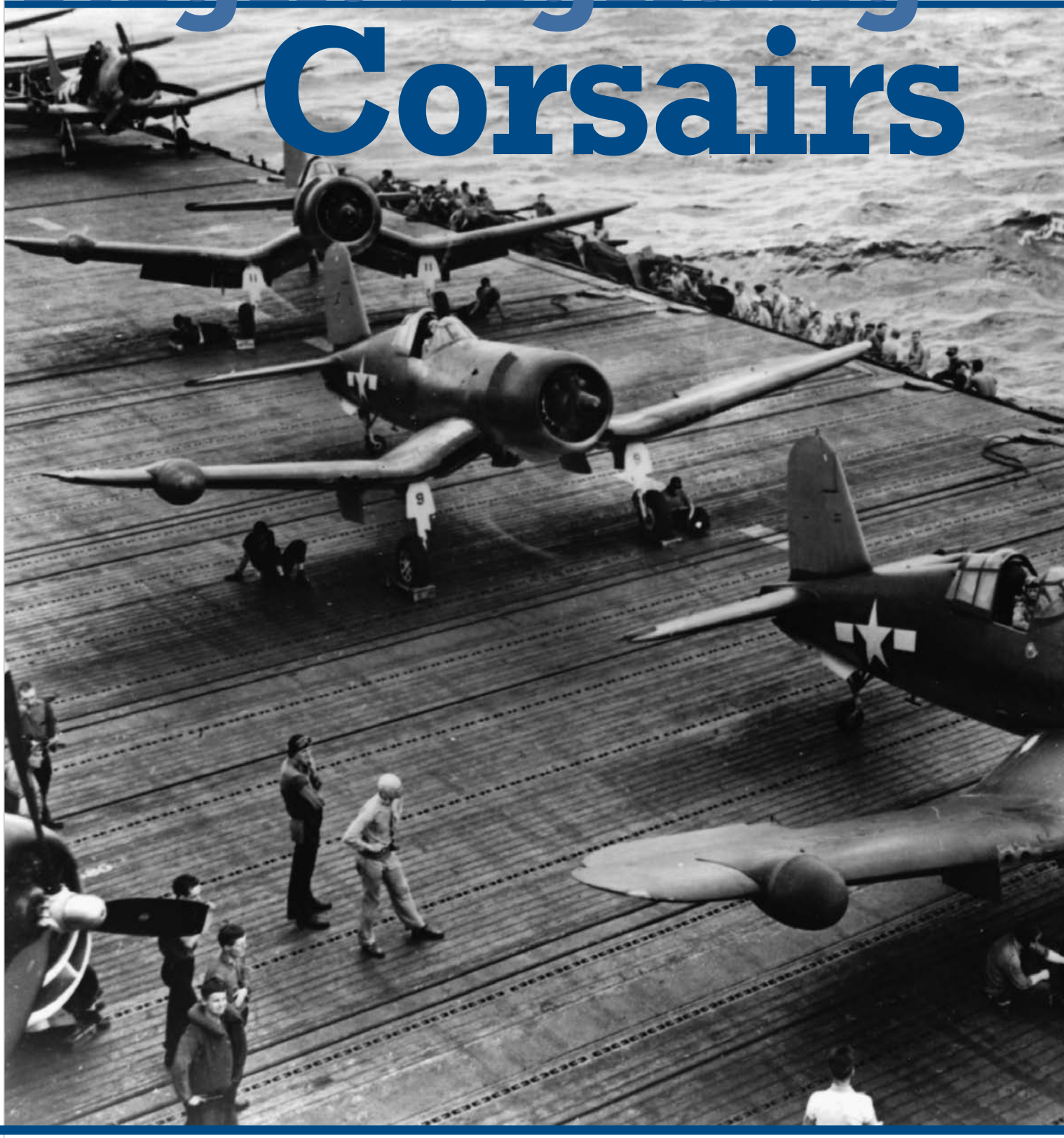
That, at least, was the plan, and the Railsplitters would indeed force the Roer River against tough German resistance, but they would not get around to it until the end of February 1945. Days before they were to hit the Roer in December, Hitler's Ardennes offensive, popularly known as the Battle of the Bulge, kicked off, and the 84th Division was shifted south. It played a key role in blunting the German northern offensive arm in the Ardennes.

What was important now was that the Railsplitters had taken everything four German divisions could throw at them, advanced through the strongest fixed defenses the Germans had anywhere, in the worst physical conditions imaginable, and triumphed. And in the end it was not numbers or firepower that made the difference; it was the courage and determination of just 100 infantrymen at Lindern.

After it was pulled out of the line, King Company received enough replacements to bring it close to full strength for the Ardennes. It needed quite a few. Of the 174 officers and enlisted men of King Company who crossed the line of departure at 6:30 AM, November 29, 1944, a total of 88 men were killed, wounded, or captured, almost exactly half the company's strength. The influx of new men,

Continued on page 78

Night Fighting Corsairs



Marine night fighter pilots used new tactics and techniques.

BY ROBERT F. DORR AND FRED L. BORCH

JUST BEFORE IT was drawn into World War II, the United States began developing a night fighter version of one of its most famous warplanes. The result was not pretty, but it was practical.

"Before the war, when night arrived, you stowed your planes inside the hangar," said retired Maj. Gen. Frank C. Lang, who was a first lieutenant when he flew the Vought F4U-2 Corsair. "The invention of radar changed all that. It also gave us a little-known version of the Corsair that at first looked a little odd."

Lang, who sat for a series of interviews for this article before he died at age 90 on December 29, 2008, was one of a handful of Marine Corps fighter pilots who flew the almost unknown "dash two" version of the Corsair, which had a thimble-shaped radome (radar dome) on the leading edge of its starboard wing. "Before the war I had never even heard of this invention," said Lang.

The term "radar" was an abbreviation for "radio detecting and ranging." In 1922, A. Hoyt Taylor and Leo C. Young at the Navy's Aircraft Radio Laboratory in Washington, D.C., were experimenting with radio transmissions between their station and a receiver located across the Anacostia River. During the test, a passing river steamer interrupted their signal. This suggested that radio waves might be used to detect the passage of a ship at night or in fog.

In 1936, R.C. Guthrie and R.M. Page of the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington tested a radar unit that could detect an aircraft 25 miles away. In 1940, the Navy and the Sperry Company developed an air-to-air radar unit that could be carried by a fighter.

Just after Pearl Harbor, the Naval Aircraft Factory at Philadelphia began fitting 34 F4U-1 Corsair fighters with an APS-4 radar using an 18-inch parabolic antenna inside a housing on the leading edge of the right wing of each aircraft. Because of the radar pod, the planes' armament was reduced from six wing-mounted .50-caliber machine guns to five.

With these changes, plus a small radarscope on the pilot's instrument panel and flame dampeners to conceal exhaust emissions during the hours of darkness, the planes became F4U-2 models. Later, two more were modified. Just 36 of the little-known F4U-2 night fighters were built. Had the Navy's own designation system been properly used, they would have been called F4U-2N models, but the term was not used.

"Believe it or not, having that fat radar installation out on the right wing actually improved the performance of the Corsair, so that the F4U-2 was in some ways easier to fly than the early F4U-1," said Lang. "The radome improved the stall characteristics considerably. There was a noteworthy improvement in left roll performance over the standard F4U-1."

Fighting at night was a new idea. "Marine night fighters got started at the beginning of 1943," said Lang. "I came out of flight school and went directly into night fighters at Cherry Point, North Carolina. Our first commander at squadron VMF (N)-532 was Major Ross Mickey. We received 18 of the 36 F4U-2 Corsairs made, while the Navy got the others to equip squadrons VF (N)-75 and VF (N)-76. VMF (N)-532 became the first outfit to shoot down an enemy aircraft at night using night fighting equipment.

"Our second commander, Major Everette H. Vaughan, was a guiding force in developing tac-

Revving their engines aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Intrepid,* F4U-2 Corsair night fighter pilots await orders to take off. The Corsair night fighters proved adept at intercepting Japanese aircraft and provided security against nocturnal attack. INSET: First Lieutenant Frank C. Lang flew Corsair night fighters during World War II and rose to the rank of major general before retiring from a long career in the military.

Both: Robert F. Dorr

tics and methods for taking advantage of the superb performance of the radar-equipped Corsair," said Lang. Vaughan arrived at Cherry Point in the spring of 1943. He was an experienced pilot who had flown in the reserves before the war. He had been an airline pilot at the time of Pearl Harbor.

He was "a real leader who rarely needed to use his powerful personality," said Lang.

The squadron's F4U-2 fighters had the distinctive, metal-brace canopy unique to early Corsairs and the APS-4 radar housed inside a dome on the right wing. Those first Corsairs really were not safe airplanes, as Lang recalled. They had a tendency to stall out unexpectedly.

Robert F. Dorr

The long fuselage, distinctive gull wings, and radar installation on the right wing of the Vought F4U-2 Corsair night fighter are visible in this photograph.

Marines overcame deficiencies by simply learning how to deal with the F4U-2's handling characteristics.

Lang, born in 1918 in New Rochelle, New York, worked for United Aircraft, the parent company of Corsair maker Vought, before the war and earned a private pilot's license. As a Marine, he found plenty of positive things to say about the Corsair, which had a roomy and comfortable cockpit.

"I'm a big guy, and I had lots of room in the cockpit," said Lang. "I had no difficulty whatever reaching the levers and buttons. The legroom was just fantastic in the Corsair. They had a hole in the bottom of the fuselage with a piece of Plexiglas there that you could look through. We had one gent in our squadron, 1st Lieutenant Don Fenton, who just made it into the service because he was five-foot-four-and-a-half. He had to use a pillow to fly the Corsair."

Flying in the tropical climes of the South Pacific, Lang said, "we wore just a flight suit with a pair of shorts underneath. It was pretty warm out there. We had our flying helmet with oxygen mask. We always put our oxygen mask on immediately on taking off."

Lang and his squadron arrived at Tarawa on January 13, 1944. A month later, the squadron moved up to Roi-Namur, part of Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands, where night intruder flights by Japanese bombers were a pesky and persistent problem. The Japanese were flying over Eniwetok atoll, and that is where VMF (N)-532 got its first kill, on April 14, 1944, when First Lieutenant Edward A. Sovik and Captain Howard W. Bollman each shot down a Japanese Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" bomber off Engebi Island, Eniwetok atoll.

These were important victories, but the cost was high. First Lieutenant Joel E. "Pete" Bonner scored hits on another "Betty" but sustained damage and had to bail out. First Lieutenant Donald A. Spatz was given an incorrect vector by ground controllers and went down in the ocean. A Navy destroyer eventually rescued Bonner, but Spatz was never seen again.

In an official report, Bollman described a night battle of a kind that had not taken place previously: "I'd just returned to my tent after flying combat air patrol from 2100-2400 and was getting ready to hit the sack when the command car driver came to pick up First Lieutenant Frank C. Lang. He told me that there was to be an alert. I rode to the line with Lang, not intending to fly but to help out on the ground. As we arrived at the flight line, Spatz took off (0025). Lang took off shortly afterward.

"The sirens sounded. The duty phone rang requesting another fighter. I ran out and scrambled in F4U-2 number 212 at about 0045, just in time to hear Bonner announce that he was ready to jump. I tested my gun after takeoff....

"I was vectored 270 degrees to Angels 20 [20,000 feet]. When I had reached 20 miles from base, I orbited once in my climb and reached Angels 20 immediately. As soon as I reported 'level,' I was given a customer, 'Vector 260.' A minute later, I picked up a contact at three and one-half miles ahead. It soon became obvious that we were on opposite courses, and at about two miles I commenced a hard starboard, 180-degree turn, informing controllers of my action. I turned a bit past 180 to get back on my original track and immediately picked up the bogey at two and a half miles, azimuth 30 left above."

Bollman's account does not say much about how he was stalking his adversary using air-to-air radar, peering down at the tiny scope in his cockpit. No Marine had ever located and attacked an enemy aircraft this way. Bollman slipped behind the "Betty" and was now in position to chase it.

"I closed rapidly to half a mile," Bollman wrote. "I slowed to the speed of the target to plan my attack. There was a white cloud base below, and I had no desire to be seen against it. The moon was between two o'clock and 15-20 degrees elevation and me. I played with the idea of getting above the target so as to see him against the clouds but was afraid he might be lost under a wing or nose of my plane so I decided to come in at his altitude and 5 or 10 degrees on his down-moon side.

"I added speed and crept up. At 300 yards, I looked up and saw the target exactly where he should have been—a twin-engined 'Betty' bomber.

"I immediately speeded up and closed very rapidly. I opened fire at 150 feet dead astern and 15 feet below, aiming at his right wing root.

"I was startled by the lack of tracers. I felt my bullets were going astray. I fired for less than two seconds, but his starboard engine began smoking. I then transferred my aim to the port side and after another two-second burst, I observed flame and smoke on his port engine.

"At first, I mistook white flashes from my incendiaries to be return fire. I instinctively ducked behind my engine. But I wasn't receiving return fire.

"The target was now in a 15-degree nose-down attitude. I nearly rammed him. Employing what might be termed an outside snap roll to avoid him, I pulled around to one side and above to observe. Now, it appeared the flames had blown out, so I gave him another burst from 20 degrees above and astern at 100 yards. Fifteen seconds later, he broke into two pieces and dropped in flames. At the time of the explosion, there were lights, which might have been flares or 'gizmos' [pieces of aluminum, or chaff, that the Japanese released from their aircraft as a decoy] dropped from the 'Betty.' I looked at my watch. It was about 0110, or 20 minutes after takeoff."

First Lieutenant Frank C. Lang's memory of that action came out in an interview for this article: "While Bollman and Sovik shot down Japanese bombers, I was flying around and my

radar was picking up fake returns, or 'gizmos.'

"Pete Bonner, who later became an assistant secretary of the Army, was too close to his 'Betty' bomber when he opened fire. When Bonner fired tracers, the tail gunner in the bomber saw him and shot out Bonner's engine. So he had to bail out.

"We spent a day looking for him. But it wasn't until a day and a half later that a B-25 Mitchell bomber spotted Pete in the water. A destroyer later rescued him. He was a man of very light complexion. He had no cover to protect him from the sun. After two days in that raft, he had blisters all over his body. We thought we were going to lose him for a while. Our doc did some miraculous things to treat him. We later made some modifications to the life raft based on his experience."

That same night, the squadron lost pilot Spatz. "The radar controller lost Don," said Lang. "The controller gave Don two vectors and then forgot what vector he'd given him. I was the last contact with Don. I was up at about 25 or 30,000 feet. His engine gave out. I tried to tell Don to bail out, but he wouldn't. So he went in."

As the war progressed, VMF (N)-532 moved up to Saipan in the Marianas Islands. At this point in the war, the squadron saw less night activity, although the presence of F4U-2 night fighters was a deterrent to the Japanese.

"I know we deterred them from operating effectively at night because as soon as we left they came out in swarms," said Lang. "They had to put Army Air Corps Northrop P-61 Black Widows in there to fight them at night. The P-61 wasn't available when we were doing our night work."

National Archives

A Japanese Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" bomber burns on the ground after an attack by American planes.

In July 1944, VMF (N)-532 flew from Saipan down to Guam to cover the invasion there so the fleet could have night fighter protection. The carriers in the fleet did not want to work their crews both day and night. For the night missions, Lang and his fellow Marines took off from Saipan, flew down to Guam, spent about an hour and a half providing coverage over the fleet, and then flew back to Saipan.

"This was one time when we really got a sense for the sheer magnitude of a Pacific island invasion. On a moonlit night, we could see vast numbers of our warships and troop ships at sea," said Lang. "On rare occasion, we could glimpse flashes from shooting. There was no doubt that our side was advancing across the Pacific and moving closer to Japan." □

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THE CORSAIR NIGHT FIGHTER SHARED THE OUTSTANDING CAPABILITIES OF THE FAMED VOUGHT DAYLIGHT AIRCRAFT.

Apart from its radar, the F4U-2 was indistinguishable from other Corsairs.

The larger story of the Corsair, with its inverted gull wings and powerful radial engine, began in 1938 when the U.S. Navy requested proposals for a single-seat, carrier-based fighter. Some perceive the Corsair as a backup to the superb Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter. In fact, design work on the Corsair began before the Hellcat came along.

Vought's Rex Beisel designed the smallest possible airframe that could be tailored to fit the most powerful engine then available, the Pratt & Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp, also used on the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. The result was the heaviest carrier-based aircraft up to that time. The Corsair was so big its propeller was one-third again the diameter of the German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter.

The Corsair's gull wing shape resulted from the choice of engine. The diameter of the propeller, 13 feet, 4 inches, meant the plane would have stalky landing gear, unsuitable for carrier operations. The highly cranked, inverted gull wing allowed the retractable main landing gear units to be located at the pinion joint of the wing, keeping them as short as possible. Apart from its unique wing shape, the Corsair was conventional and much like other fighters of the war.

The XF4U-1 first flew on May 29, 1940, piloted by Lyman Bullard. Vought pilot Boone Guyton did much of the early testing.

On its fifth flight, caught with almost empty fuel tanks amid gathering rainsqualls, Guyton made a courageous effort to save the XF4U-1 on the posh Norwich golf course, but wet grass caused the Corsair to slide into trees, halting with just enough space under the inverted fuselage for Guyton to climb out. The prototype flew again, and on one test flight reached 422 miles per hour—faster than any other fighter in the world.

The Corsair had the longest production runs of any propeller-driven fighter. Corsairs poured off production lines belonging to Vought (F4U), Goodyear (FG), and Brewster (F3A). Akron-based Goodyear built an advanced version called the F2G-1 with a more powerful engine. The 12,571st and final Corsair rolled off the Vought line in Dallas, Texas, in 1953.

In the Pacific, the Corsair was credited with 2,140 aerial victories against the Japanese, with only 189 air-to-air losses. Corsairs flew 64,051 combat sorties during World War II.

Most Corsairs were day fighters, among them the F4U-4 series, including the cannon-armed F4U-4B. But the scientific advance made by the F4U-2 with its radar and night fighting capability led eventually to the F4U-5N night fighter, which, along with the F4U-4 series, added to the Corsair legend during the Korean War.

Sorely Needed Naval

One large, two small vessels, one six miles from Savo off northern beach, Guadalcanal. Will investigate closer."

The message, from Lieutenant John A. Thomas, pilot of the cruiser USS *San Francisco*'s Vought OS2U Kingfisher scout plane, could not have come at a better time. Aboard his flagship, Admiral Norman Scott received the news with relief—his Task Force 64.2 had been looking for the approaching Japanese force for the past several hours.

Four Kingfishers were supposed to have been launched to find the enemy, but the cruiser *Salt Lake City*'s caught fire and crashed, and the cruiser *Helena*'s was not launched at all. Only the cruisers *Boise* and *San Francisco* managed to get their spotting planes into the air, and everyone aboard Admiral Scott's task force waited for word from one of them. At 10:50 PM, on October 11, 1942, contact was finally made.

What *San Francisco*'s scout plane had found was the Japanese Reinforcement Group, which was made up of the seaplane carriers *Chitose* and *Nisshin* and their escorting destroyers. These had left the Shortland Islands at eight o'clock that morning. Commanded by Rear Admiral Takaji Joshima, the seaplane carriers were on their way to the embattled island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons, which had been contested by Japanese and American troops since U.S. Marines had landed there on August 7 and seized its vital airstrip. The Japanese ships carried two field guns, four howitzers, six landing craft, ammu-

In this painting by combat artist John Hamilton, a Japanese cruiser is rocked by American shells during an attempt to bombard Henderson Field on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons on October 11, 1942.

nition, medical supplies, and 728 troops. Guarding their flanks were the fast and nimble destroyers *Akizuki, Asagumo, Natsugumo, Yamagumo, Murakumo,* and *Shirayuki.*

Another Japanese force was also on its way, although Admiral Scott did not know it at the time. The Bombardment Group, made up of the heavy cruisers *Aoba, Kinugasa,* and *Furutaka* and destroyers *Hatsuyuki* and *Fubuki,* was heading for Guadalcanal at 30 knots under the command of Rear Admiral Aritomo Goto. Because of its speed, Admiral Goto's fast cruisers and destroyers would reach Guadalcanal.

Admiral Scott's ships had already formed up in a battle line. Three destroyers, *Farenholt, Duncan,* and *Laffey,* led the way. The cruisers *San*

Victory

U.S. cruisers and destroyers defeated a Japanese naval contingent off Cape Esperance during the Guadalcanal campaign.

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON

Francisco, Boise, Salt Lake City, and *Helena* made up the center of the formation, and bringing up the rear were the destroyers *Buchanan* and *McCalla.* Each ship was separated by 500 to 700 yards. Because the moon had already set, the night was totally black without any ambient light. To the young officers of the deck aboard the cruisers and destroyers, the resulting lack of visibility made the distance between ships seem much shorter.

At 11:32 PM, Admiral Scott ordered his column to turn 180 degrees to course 230. He wanted to cover the passage between Savo Island and Cape Esperance and to be in position to intercept the approaching enemy force.

Because of the blackness of the tropical night, the maneuver did not go exactly as planned. The three leading destroyers were thrown out of formation during the turn. They made the 180-degree adjustment, but they now held a parallel course with the rest of the column, on the same heading but not in line. This would lead to confusion during the coming battle.

Rear Admiral Scott was a 53-year-old career naval officer who had also served in World War I. His ship had been torpedoed by a German U-boat in 1917. He had been stationed in Washington, D.C., during the months after Pearl Harbor but was given sea duty in June 1942. Scott had been at sea off Guadalcanal on August 9, during the Battle of Savo Island, but he had not been involved in the fighting. Because of the catastrophe suffered by the Allies at Savo, in which four cruisers were sunk by the Japanese, Scott saw to it that his gunners had training in night fighting—which is exactly what the Americans had lacked in the Guadalcanal campaign so far.

For three weeks, Admiral Scott drilled his task force in preparation for a night action. He kept his ships at battle stations from dusk until dawn, which simulated night battle conditions and allowed crews to acclimate themselves to a nighttime environment at sea. Scott planned to be fully prepared for the next encounter with the Japanese fleet, which he knew would not be long in coming.

Map © 2010 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Helena first made radar contact with the enemy at 11:25 PM. The target was 27,000 yards away, bearing 315 degrees. *Helena* was equipped with the new SG radar, which allowed its operators to detect the enemy at a longer range than the older SC model and also allowed for more accurate tracking of the enemy. But *San Francisco* was equipped with the older SC radar and did not find Goto's ships as readily. In fact, *San Francisco*'s radar did not detect any echo. The TBS (Talk Between Ships) shortly brought a message from *Boise*, which was also equipped with SG radar. *Boise* reported five bogeys at a bearing of 65 degrees. Again, Admiral Scott had to take another ship's word for it; *San Francisco*'s radar was not detecting anything.

What *Boise* had picked up were the ships of Admiral Goto's Bombardment Group, the heavy cruisers *Aoba, Kinugasa,* and *Furutaka,* and the destroyers *Hatsuyuki* and *Fubuki.* But her report only added to the confusion. In naval lingo, "bogeys" refers to unidentified aircraft, not enemy ships. And the bearing of 65 degrees did not specify whether this was a relative bearing or a true bearing. It was a vital difference: 65 degrees relative to *Boise* and the rest of the American formation would indicate that this was the same contact *Helena* had picked up. But 65 degrees true would mean that this was a different contact altogether. Admiral Scott, unable to draw any conclusions from *San Francisco*'s radar, did not know what to make of *Boise*'s contact.

In Scott's mind, there was also the possibility that either *Helena*'s contact or *Boise*'s, or possibly both, might be the destroyers *Duncan, Farenholt,* and *Laffey,* which had become detached from the column during the 180-degree turn. Scott called to Captain Robert G. Tobin aboard *Farenholt,* "Are you taking station ahead?" Tobin answered, "Affirmative. Coming up on your starboard side." Actually, only *Farenholt* and *Laffey* were on a parallel course with the main column. *Duncan* headed off on her own, charging straight toward Goto's cruisers and destroyers.

It would have come as small consolation to Scott if he had known that Goto was just as confused. He had no radar at all and had to rely upon the eyesight of his lookouts. At 11:43, lookouts aboard *Aoba* detected the silhouettes of three ships almost dead ahead, about 11,000 yards away. Goto was not concerned. He made the assumption that the ships were part of Admiral Joshima's Reinforcement Group.

At this stage of the Guadalcanal campaign, this was a fair assumption. The Americans were

not yet very adept when it came to fighting at night, as Admiral Goto was fully aware. After their resounding defeat at the Battle of Savo Island, which took place on the night of August 9, 1942, it was widely rumored that the Americans were afraid to come out after dark.

"The Americans ruled the waves from sunup to sundown," naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison noted. "But when the tropical twilight performed its quick fadeout and the pall of night fell on Ironbottom Sound, Allied ships cleared out like frightened children from a graveyard."

Goto had no reason to suspect that the ships ahead of his column were American. He reduced speed to 26 knots and ordered the day's recognition signal to be flashed at the three silhouettes.

When the range had diminished to about 7,500 yards, the lookouts called out that the ships were enemy. Action stations were sounded aboard *Aoba,* but Goto was not convinced that the ships were American. He ordered the recognition signal to be flashed again.

Scott was just as confused. Even with radar, he still did not know whether *Boise* and *Helena* had made contact with enemy ships or with his own destroyers. *Helena*'s gunners had no doubts at all. When the range was down to 5,000 yards, lookouts reported, "Ships visible to the naked eye." *Helena*'s captain, Gilbert C. Hoover, broadcast the signal, "Interrogatory Roger" to *San Francisco* via TBS.

Scott replied, "Roger!" meaning "Message received." Captain Hoover thought it meant "Open fire," or at least this is what he said. At 11:46, *Helena*'s main battery of six-inch guns and secondary five-inchers began shooting at Goto's column.

Scott was absolutely astonished. When *Helena* opened up, the other ships followed. The entire column seemed to erupt in explosions. As the warships began shooting all at once, the reports and muzzle flashes sometimes came simultaneously. The concussion from *San Francisco*'s gunfire literally took the admiral's breath away and nearly deafened him.

Aoba was hit by several shells while her crew was busy flashing the second recognition signal. Six-inch shells from *Helena* and *Boise,* along with eight-inch shells from *San Francisco* and *Salt Lake City* and five-inch shells from *Laffey,* all smashed into the Japanese heavy cruiser. Two of *Aoba*'s eight-inch turrets were knocked out as well as its fire control director, and communications were disrupted throughout the ship. Large-caliber shells hit the flag bridge without exploding, but their impact killed several officers and men. Goto was among the mortally wounded.

ABOVE: Japanese sailors practice gunnery skills during maneuvers early in World War II. For a time, the Japanese were masters of night naval fighting, and their Long Lance torpedoes proved deadly. TOP: Photographed from the deck of a U.S. Navy warship, the sleek form of a Japanese destroyer glides past as Japanese forces prepare to surrender, ending the Pacific War. OPPOSITE: During the Battle of Cape Esperance off Guadalcanal, warships of the U.S. Navy turned back a powerful Japanese squadron sent to shell the American positions at Henderson Field.

Scott did not know it, but when he made his 180-degree turn, he had inadvertently executed the classic naval maneuver of crossing the T. He had brought his own ships across the bows of the approaching Japanese column, which allowed his cruisers and destroyers to bring the maximum number of guns to bear, while the enemy could only respond with its forward-firing guns. He had also reversed the position of the Allied ships at the Battle of Savo Island two months earlier. He had caught the enemy unawares, hitting Goto's ships hard before the Japanese admiral knew that he was in a battle.

Scott, however, still was not certain that his ships were firing at the enemy. At 11:47, he ordered, "Cease firing our ships." Not all the captains heard the order—or else they decided to ignore it. Firing slackened, but did not entirely stop.

Via TBS, Scott asked Captain Tobin aboard *Laffey,* "How are you?" The question came as something of a surprise; Tobin responded that he was fine.

"Are we shooting at you?" Scott persisted. It was another surprise question. Tobin answered, "I do not know who you were firing at."

Scott did not know, either. He asked Tobin's destroyers to flash the recognition signal for the day: lights green over green over white, lined up vertically. All of the destroyers complied; Scott saw the lights glimmer briefly to starboard. Finally satisfied that he was not firing at his own ships, Scott ordered, "Resume firing!" at 11:51.

During the four-minute interval, the Japanese also finally came to the conclusion that they were facing enemy ships. Japanese gunners returned an ineffective fire. *Aoba* turned right 180 degrees and increased speed, but the cruiser was hit continually. Her foremast crashed to the deck, and several fires broke out. After about 40 hits, only one turret remained in action. Goto's senior staff officer, Captain Kikunori Kijima, was informed that

Goto had been badly wounded and that he was now in charge of the Bombardment Group. Captain Kijima already had more than enough problems without worrying about the rest of the group.

Communicating with the other ships in the now scattered column was all but impossible because most of *Aoba*'s communications equipment had been put out of action. It would not have been feasible to direct the movement of even one other ship from the damaged cruiser. At 11:50, *Aoba* began to make smoke and turned to the northwest, which was the most direct route of escape. *Aoba*'s captain hoped to get clear of the American column as quickly as possible, far enough to allow reestablishment of communications with the other Japanese ships. At this stage of the battle, staying close to Scott's force served no purpose at all.

The ship in line behind *Aoba* was the heavy cruiser *Furutaka*. Her commander, Captain Araki Tsutau, grasped the fact that his column had been surprised by an American force as soon as Scott's ships began shooting. His first impulse was to turn left, which was the quickest route away from the American gunfire. When *Aoba* turned right, Tsutau decided to follow Goto's flagship. This was an ill-advised decision. With *Aoba* retreating behind a smoke screen, gunners aboard *Helena, San Francisco,* and the other American ships shifted their fire to *Furutaka,* now the most convenient target.

Furutaka began taking hits at 11:49. About a minute later, a shell landed among the cruiser's torpedo tubes. The resulting explosion and fire became a focal point for American gunners, who concentrated their fire. Both *Boise* and *Helena* had five three-gun turrets mounting six-inch cannon and capable of firing 30 rounds per minute. Along with the other ships in the column, these rapid-firing cruisers put round after round into *Furutaka.* She was hit over 90 times, taking a number of hits below the waterline. Somehow she managed not only to stay afloat but also to keep up enough power to maintain headway.

While this was going on, gunners and lookouts aboard *San Francisco* spotted an unidentified ship about three-quarters of a mile away. The ship flashed strange recognition signals—a combination of red and white lights—and also signaled some mysterious words or characters at the American column. *San Francisco* turned her searchlight on the unknown ship, lighting up the latticework foremast and white-banded second funnel of a Japanese destroyer.

The destroyer *Fubuki* had been caught completely unawares. Flooded by *San Francisco*'s light, the ship came under the guns of Scott's entire column. After being hit numerous times, she stopped dead in the water and blew up. *Fubuki* was the first ship to sink that night.

The battle was not entirely one-sided. The destroyer *Duncan,* which had charged toward the enemy alone after becoming detached from her column, was the first American ship to be hit by enemy fire. She had just launched torpedoes at *Furutaka* and was firing her guns at the Japanese when shells knocked out her fire control director and mortally wounded the torpedo officer. The chief torpedoman took over and launched a second torpedo without benefit of the main control. Observers thought they saw the Japanese cruiser "crumple in the middle, then roll over and disappear." This was either an illusion or wishful thinking; *Furutaka* was still very much afloat and moving forward under her own power.

Both Japanese and American shells crashed into *Duncan.* The destroyer's forward funnel was blown over, and the same shell started a fire in No. 2 ammunition handling room. Because he realized that his ship was in as much danger from friendly fire as from the enemy, *Duncan*'s captain, Lt. Cmdr. Edmund

SCOTT WAS DETERMINED TO GO AFTER THE ENEMY, AND THE JAPANESE FORCE WAS READY TO RETURN THE COMPLIMENT BY GIVING HIM ALL THE FIGHT HE WANTED.

ABOVE: The Japanese heavy cruiser *Aoba* lies severely damaged and listing at the Kure naval base in Japan. OPPOSITE TOP: The destroyer USS *Laffey* hit the Japanese cruiser *Aoba* with a number of 5-inch shells during the Battle of Cape Esperance. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The guns of the light cruiser USS *Boise* blaze away during the night action off the coast of New Guinea. The warship was heavily damaged at Cape Esperance.

B. Taylor, ordered the recognition lights turned on. If anything, the lights only served as an aiming point. Four shells from the direction of Scott's column immediately put out all of the ship's power and jammed the rudder full left. With her rudder stuck, *Duncan* began spiraling out of the battle area.

Farenholt was also in an awkward position between the enemy and the American column. At about the same time that *Duncan* was going through her ordeal, shells struck *Farenholt*'s rigging. Jagged shrapnel fragments sprayed the decks, killing several of the crew. One of the fragments hit a torpedo tube that was just being swung out for firing. The shrapnel went right through the tube and penetrated the torpedo's air flask, which blew it partly out of its mounting and started its electric motor. The motor continued running inside the tube, but the torpedo did not explode and no further damage was done.

A second shell went through *Farenholt*'s port side just above the waterline, destroying communications wiring as well as the ship's fire control circuits. A third shell damaged the fire room. Scalding steam was released, which drove the crew up on deck. Both hull hits came on the port side and were listed as "apparently 6-inch," which makes it fairly certain that *Farenholt* was also the victim of American fire. The destroyer now had a five-degree list. Her captain, Lt. Cmdr. Eugene T. Seaward, took her across the bow of *San Francisco* and out of the battle.

Scott turned his column to the northwest at 11:55, bringing it parallel with the Japanese. All four cruisers, *Boise, Helena, San Francisco,* and *Salt Lake City,* tracked targets and fired round after round, but by this time it was impossible to tell which Japanese ships were being fired at. The two rear destroyers, *Buchanan* and *McCalla,* also kept up a steady rate of fire.

Lieutenant Commander Ralph E. Wilson, *Buchanan*'s captain, reported that he "shot the works," launching five torpedoes and letting loose with a nonstop barrage from his five-inch main battery. On board *McCalla,* Lt. Cmdr. William G. Cooper could see *Aoba* and *Furutaka* burning and was surprised that the guns of both ships were still trained fore and aft—further evidence that Goto had been taken completely by surprise.

Scott's column was no longer in any sort of formation at this stage of the battle; it had "fallen into very ragged shape," according to an American writer. Scott was still not certain of the strength of the enemy force, but he knew that he had hit it hard and that he was on the verge of victory. In the dead of night with no moon, determining the enemy strength was no simple task, although the SG radar aboard *Boise* and *Helena* did help.

"Despite radar," the same writer pointed out, "the battle was still a game of blind man's bluff."

Precisely at midnight, Scott ordered all ships to cease firing. His column was loosely strung together, and it was dangerously difficult to tell friend from foe. Again, some captains ignored the order and kept shooting. All ships were also called upon to flash their recognition lights and form up into a column. Every ship except the damaged destroyers *Duncan* and *Farenholt* complied.

Boise was the last ship to stop firing. Her radar gave her gunners a target that was also visible to everyone topside because of a fire. When this ship disappeared from view and from radar, *Boise* finally obeyed Admiral Scott's order and gave her gunners a rest. Captain Edward Moran could see *San Francisco*'s recognition lights ahead and brought *Boise* in line with the flagship.

Scott was determined to go after the enemy, and the Japanese force was ready to return the compliment by giving him all the fight he wanted. At 12:06 AM, both *Boise* and *Helena* received an urgent warning—"Torpedoes approaching."

Captain Moran ordered hard right rudder, and the cruiser turned sharply to run parallel with the two torpedoes. One just cleared the port bow; the second came up on the starboard side and missed the stern by about 90 feet. Everyone on board was relieved when *Boise* straightened her course and rejoined the column.

Both torpedoes had been fired by the cruiser *Kinugasa*. Three minutes after *Boise* and *Helena* received the torpedo warning, *Kinugasa* began shooting at the American cruisers from about 8,000 yards. *San Francisco* was her first target. A Japanese salvo landed in the flagship's wake, giving her crew a nasty surprise. After one salvo, *Kinugasa* shifted targets to *Boise*. Captain Moran grudgingly admitted that the cruiser was shooting beautifully.

When *Kinugasa* changed targets, *Boise* had her searchlight trained on a target on her starboard beam. The light offered an excellent aiming point for the enemy gunners. For the next three minutes, *Boise* was given a frightening demonstration of Japanese gunnery. An eight-inch shell hit her forward turret, jamming it and causing it to be abandoned. Another shell penetrated the hull nine feet below the waterline and exploded in the forward six-inch magazine. Handling and magazine crews were wiped out by the blast.

Moran gave the order to flood the forward magazines, but the men at the flood control panel had been killed. It looked as though *Boise* might blow up. But luck was with *Boise* and her crew. The shell that had caused the explosion also let tons of seawater into the forward area, flooding the magazines. Even though the men at the flooding panel were dead, the shell that killed them did what they were no longer able to do.

To escape any further damage, Moran turned *Boise* out of the column, bringing her sharply to port and increasing her speed to 30 knots. The next salvo landed short by 50 to 100 yards, where the cruiser would have been if she had not turned. As the cruiser left the fight, her after six-inch turrets continued to fire at the enemy for another two minutes.

Lieutenant John A. Thomas and his observer were still in the air. The two men in *San Francisco*'s Kingfisher scout plane were able to

watch the battle from a unique position circling several hundred feet above it. They saw the American column cross the T, watched the gunfire of the American ships take its toll on the enemy, and also saw the Japanese force begin to shoot back as tall splashes from *Kinugasa*'s guns landed in *San Francisco*'s wake. They saw *Boise*'s forecastle flare up in a massive orange explosion. Thomas reported his position to Scott aboard *San Francisco* at 12:12 and continued to circle above the battle.

ABOVE: The cruiser USS *Salt Lake City,* affectionately known as the Swayback Maru, fires in support of U.S. Marines landing on Iwo Jima in February 1945. *Salt Lake City* was a veteran of the fighting at Cape Esperance and of the Aleutian Campaign. OPPOSITE: Rear Admiral Norman Scott commanded the U.S. Navy squadron during the Battle of Cape Esperance and later lost his life in the fighting off Guadalcanal.

After *Boise* left the column, *San Francisco* began shooting at *Kinugasa* with radar-controlled gunfire. *Salt Lake City* also fired at the Japanese cruiser, hitting her once while being hit twice herself by Japanese gunners. One of the shells started a fire that killed several men and did considerable damage to the cruiser's electrical circuits.

Scott ordered a change of course to 330 degrees. His purpose was to press the enemy, but the night action had slackened. The admiral was not yet ready to break off action, but the Japanese were doing their best to get away from the battle area. Just after altering course, he told his captains, "Stand by for further action. The show may not be over."

But it was.

By 12:20, *Aoba, Kinugasa,* and *Hatsuyuki* were steaming off to the northwest, trying to put as much distance between themselves and the American force as possible. *Furutaka* was slowed by the damage she had received and lagged behind. The destroyer *Fubuki* had already gone down.

Of the American ships, *Boise* had suffered the most damage. Her forecastle fire had been put out by 12:19, but two turrets still burned. These fires were also put out, but the job was made much more difficult because of the bodies that blocked the hatches of one of the turrets. The cruiser's damage control teams kept working and managed to overcome every problem they encountered. By 2:40 AM, all fires were out, and the shell holes in her hull were plugged. *Boise* had lost 107 killed and 29 wounded, but she rejoined Scott's column at 3:05 at a speed of 20 knots.

Aboard *Aoba,* Captain Kikunori Kijima told the dying Goto that he could go to the next world "with an easy mind" because his task force had sunk two American cruisers. This might have been an attempt to lift the spirits of a dying man, or might just have been wishful thinking. But what Captain Kijima said was anything but the truth.

It is possible that he thought *Boise* had sunk and that he mistook *Farenholt* for a cruiser. Actually, although she was badly damaged and taking water, *Farenholt* did not sink. The crew managed to shift enough ballast to create a nine-degree list to starboard, which brought the shell holes below the waterline on the port side clear of the sea. Temporarily safe from flooding, *Farenholt* set a course to the southeast at a speed of 20 knots. Her escort, the newly arrived destroyer *Aaron Ward,* escorted her safely back to base at Noumea.

Duncan did not fare nearly as well. Fires proved impossible to put out, burning steadily enough to set off the 20mm ammunition in the gun mounts. Her captain, Lt. Cmdr. Taylor, gave the order to abandon ship. From life rafts, he and the other survivors watched as their ship moved steadily away from them, still on fire with ammunition exploding.

A small party remained aboard, and the senior officer there, Lieutenant Herbert R. Kabat, thought of beaching *Duncan* on Savo Island to keep her from sinking. When the fires began to die down, he changed his mind and decided to try to save the destroyer by putting out the fires. However, flames prevented anyone from entering the after fire room, which meant that there could be no steam, no power, and no pumps to make the ship dry. *Duncan* eventually slowed to a stop. At 2 AM, the destroyer was abandoned for the final time. The survivors—195 officers and men, watched their ship burning in the darkness. Forty-eight seamen had died.

A salvage team from *McCalla* later boarded *Duncan* and made another effort to save her but had no more success than *Duncan*'s own crew. Shortly before noon, the destroyer sank six miles north of Savo Island.

McCalla's crewmen found themselves playing the unexpected role of rescuer. But the men they rescued were survivors of *Fubuki,* who did not want to be rescued. Lines were thrown to the Japanese sailors, but the men would not grab them and refused to surrender. *McCalla*'s crew grabbed hold of three of the Japanese and forcibly hauled them aboard. The others preferred drowning or sharks to being saved by the enemy.

Furutaka also went down, and the destroyer *Hatsuyuki* rescued most of her survivors. She had been hit many times by gunfire from more than one American cruiser and had also been struck by one or more torpedoes from either

Duncan or *Buchanan*. *Furutaka* sank at 2:28 AM, 22 miles north of Savo Island.

Aoba did not sink. Even though she had been hit more than 40 times, she retired up New Georgia Sound under her own power. She made it to the Shortlands, arriving at about 10 AM, and was sent home for major repairs.

While Goto's Bombardment Group was being handled roughly by Scott's cruisers and destroyers, Joshima's Reinforcement Group was landing its troops, supplies, and 150mm howitzers on Guadalcanal, near Kokumbona. By 2:30, the Reinforcement Group had done its job and was steaming away from Guadalcanal. Joshima had been informed of the fighting off Cape Esperance and detached destroyers *Shirayuki* and *Murakumo* to rescue survivors from Goto's task force.

Between them, the two destroyers saved 400 Japanese from the sea. But 11 Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bombers from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal found them at 8:20 AM before they could get clear of the area. No direct hits were scored, but a near miss ruptured a fuel tank aboard *Murakumo*. A second, much larger, air strike soon followed. This group of aircraft consisted of 13 SBDs, six Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers, and 14 Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters. The SBDs caused minor damage from near misses, but one of the TBFs hit *Murakumo* with a torpedo, leaving her without power.

As soon as he heard about the air strike and its results, Joshima sent two other destroyers, *Asagumo* and *Natsugumo*, to rescue the rescuers. Another American air strike arrived at about 3:45 PM and included 11 SBDs and TBFs along with eight Wildcats and Bell P-39 Airacobra fighters. These planes found four destroyers instead of two. *Natsugumo* suffered one direct hit and eight near misses, which left her dead in the water along with *Murakumo*. The flooding caused by the near misses rapidly filled the engine rooms and other compartments. At 4:27, *Natsugumo* sank with 16 crew members and her captain still aboard. *Asagumo* took off survivors.

Murakumo was a stationary target for the SBDs and also suffered a direct hit. *Shirayuki* removed everyone from the badly damaged ship and scuttled her sister destroyer with a single Long Lance torpedo. *Asagumo* and *Shirayuki*, both jammed with survivors, set sail for their anchorage in the Shortland Islands. The remainder of both the Reinforcement and Bombardment Groups had already left for the Shortlands hours before.

Most of Task Group 64.2 had been on its way to Espiritu Santo by daylight. Repairs were already started aboard *Salt Lake City* and *Boise*. *Farenholt* was making good speed and

indicated that she did not require assistance. Thomas, who had witnessed the battle from *San Francisco*'s Kingfisher aircraft, had landed safely on the small island of Tulagi.

The Japanese lost a heavy cruiser and three destroyers in the fighting of October 12, 1942, and more than 450 killed. At first, Eighth Fleet Headquarters at Rabaul did not believe the losses, but Japanese senior commanders finally had no choice when *Furutaka, Fubuki, Natsugumo,* and *Murakumo* did not return. Captain Kijima, Admiral Goto's chief of staff and successor to the command of the Bombardment Group, claimed that his force had sunk two American cruisers and a destroyer in the night engagement. He was immediately relieved of command.

Admiral Tamaki Ugaki, chief of staff of the Combined Fleet, blamed overall carelessness as the prime culprit for Goto's undoing, however, and did not use Captain Kijima as a scapegoat. He certainly had a point. If Goto had not ignored his lookouts when they warned of enemy ships, his force would have been much better prepared for the coming action.

Scott was killed during the Naval Battle of

Continued on page 77

The Japanese used "diving shells" off Cape Esperance.

USS *Boise*'s near destruction at Cape Esperance by an underwater shell hit had not been a fluke. The eight-inch shell that penetrated the cruiser's hull and threatened to blow up her forward magazines was a Type 91 armor-piercing shell, which had been designed to continue through the water when it fell short of its target and penetrate the ship's hull below the waterline. The damage done by this type of projectile, sometimes called a "diving shell," was intended to be more like that inflicted by a torpedo than by a conventional shell.

The concept of the diving shell came about by accident. During gunnery trials in 1924, Japanese officers noticed that some "shorts" continued their trajectory through the water and pierced their targets below the waterline. Not only did these shells explode inside the target ship; they also caused considerable flooding. Because of their ability to inflict damage by both flooding and explosion, it was decided to investigate the possibility of introducing diving armor-piercing shells into the Japanese Navy's arsenal.

After much testing and study, it was discovered that making a shell with a very blunt or nearly flat nose eliminated any tumbling or lateral movement under the water, which had been a problem with conventional shells. The flat shell stayed on an even trajectory after it broke the surface. The projectile was given a pointed ballistic cap that broke away upon impact with the sea, allowing a good trajectory through the air as well as under the water.

An entire range of diving shells was created, eight-inch and larger. In spite of the confidence shown by Japanese officers, the only known instance of a Type 91 shell actually penetrating its target below the waterline was at Cape Esperance against USS *Boise*.

After a thorough inspection of *Boise* and the damage done to her hull, American ordnance and ballistics experts were able to work out the properties of the Type 91 shell. American tests of a diving shell similar to the Type 91 confirmed that it maintained a good underwater trajectory and that it had consistent success against lightly armored ships. Its effectiveness against heavier armor proved to be very poor. The U.S. Navy decided that a diving shell would not make a worthwhile addition to its inventory.

INFAMOUS MASS MURDERER

RUDOLPH HOESS, COMMANDANT OF AUSCHWITZ, WENT

Public Domain

At 10 AM on Wednesday April 16, 1947, the former commandant of Auschwitz extermination camp, SS Oberstürmbannführer (lieutenant colonel) Rudolph Hoess, briskly walked under armed escort toward the small wooden gallows specifically built for him inside the camp grounds. Witnesses were surprised that a man facing imminent execution would set such a rapid pace.

The 47-year-old Hoess had expected to be hanged from the moment he was captured in March 1946. Being arraigned before a Polish military tribunal a year later was, in his view, a mere formality. As Hoess stood above the gallows trap awaiting death, he was calm and collected—just as he had been when ordering the annihilation of millions in the gas chambers.

While Auschwitz is the most potent symbol of the Holocaust, its commandant, Rudolph Hoess, has remained largely unknown. How a seemingly decent solid family man could, without a trace of genuine remorse, become the most infamous mass murderer the world has


ullstein bild

TO THE GALLOWS FOR HIS WAR CRIMES. | BY RICHARD RULE

ever known is a story that is as remarkable as it is shocking.

Rudolph Hoess was born to devout Catholic parents in the German spa town of Baden-Baden in 1900. Throughout Hoess's lonely childhood, his father's dogmatic, overbearing influence instilled in his son the belief that it was virtuous to surrender all personal independence to those in authority. It was an enforced discipline that would define and shape Hoess's entire life.

At 15, the young man enlisted in the German Army during World War I and served with distinction on the Turkish Front, becoming at 17 the youngest infantry sergeant in the German armed forces and receiving the Iron Cross (First and Second Class) for bravery. Following Germany's capitulation in 1918, Hoess returned from the front harboring a desperate sense of betrayal over Germany's humiliating armistice only to find his nation on the brink of complete anarchy.

Lost and directionless, Hoess soon joined one of the national paramilitary groups fighting the perceived communist threat to Germany in the Baltic region. In 1922, he was drawn to the fledgling Nazi Party, but within 12 months he was sentenced to 10 years of hard labor for his involvement in a brutal, politically inspired murder. He was released under a general amnesty in 1928.

Hoess remained a committed Nazi but spent the next six years working peacefully on various farms and estates where he was remembered as a kindly, unselfish, but introverted man. In 1934, he accepted an invitation from SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler to become a member of the active SS. The uniform and pay were very appealing to the newly married Hoess, and as a member of the Totenkopfverbande (Death's Head Units) he was posted to the infamous Dachau concentration camp.

Hoess was a loner but a model SS man, and he excelled in his duties, leading to rapid promotion and higher responsibilities. He integrated easily into the protective custody service; the stern discipline, strict regulations, and esprit de corps of the SS provided him with order, stability, and a regimented sense of command and obedience.

ABOVE: Wearing the yellow Star of David symbolic of their Jewish faith, these Poles have just arrived at Auschwitz. The very young, the aged, and the infirm were often quickly sent to their deaths. Able-bodied men and women survived to work for a time. OPPOSITE TOP: Rudolph Hoess, the commandant of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, was eventually hanged for war crimes. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The electrified fence at the perimeter of the Auschwitz concentration camp in what is now Poland was charged with lethal voltage. Note the electrical insulators that housed the death-dealing current.

Outwardly at least, Hoess neither looked nor behaved like the stereotype SS thug—he was soft-spoken, modest, and rarely drank. Lacking the physical presence, arrogance, or haughty swagger of his SS comrades did not mean, however, that he was weak or capable of a lesser evil. Although he never wantonly harmed a prisoner, he was, in his own quiet understated way, as hard and as ruthless as any man in the SS.

This conscientious, self-disciplined automa-

ton would, without hesitation, carry out any command he was given, no matter how gruesome, no matter how monstrous. His unswerving obedience to his masters left him incapable of behaving in any other way.

Within months of the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the social and political fabric of the defeated nation was being systematically torn apart by the SS. In April 1940, SS Hauptstürmführer (Captain) Rudolph Hoess was ordered to establish a concentration camp in the newly annexed province of Upper Silesia in western Poland to deal with political dissidents and anyone else who opposed German rule. It was to be built around the 22 dilapidated brick barracks of a former Polish Army base outside the bleak industrial frontier town of Oswiecim, 60 kilometers west of Krakow.

The world would come to know this place better as Auschwitz.

Hoess had leapfrogged more senior candidates for the posting, and not even the gloomy, damp Polish countryside could dent his spirits. With immense energy, he quickly set to work constructing the camp, sparing no one in his relentless drive to get the job done. The Poles and local Jews press-ganged into building the facility would soon be exposed to the type of appalling SS terror for which Auschwitz would become notorious.

EXTERMINATING AN ENTIRE RACE OF PEOPLE WAS A TASK THAT WOULD REQUIRE ENORMOUS RESOURCES, DETAILED PLANNING, AND EVERY OUNCE OF INNOVATIVE SKILL HOESS POSSESSED.

In what later became common practice, the laborers learned that SS punishments for the slightest infraction were usually immediate, violent, and often fatal.

Three months after his promotion to commandant, Rudolph Hoess watched like a Nazi conqueror as the first transport of Polish prisoners shuffled miserably beneath the words "Arbeit macht frei" (Work is liberating). It was a cynical slogan used at Dachau, which Hoess adopted and had fashioned prominently over the new iron gates framing the entrance to the camp.

Nazi Germany's seventh concentration camp had risen from the ashes of a vermin-ridden Polish Army base like a monstrous black Phoenix. By March 1941, it would hold more than 10,000 inmates. No other camp in the German Reich held more.

During its "Polish phase," the sturdy two-story brick barracks of Auschwitz would serve primarily as a poorly resourced detention and quarantine camp for prisoners being sent to Germany. Cut off as the prisoners were from the outside world by electrified barbed wire and guard towers—a calculated and extremely effective method of breaking a man's will to resist—every vestige of the prisoners' humanity was deliberately trampled to dust by the SS. In stark contrast to the miserable existence of the inmates, Hoess and his family lived just outside the camp in a comfortable two-story stucco house adorned with custom-made leather furniture, plush carpet, and servants to attend their every need. As the first family in the SS hierarchy at Auschwitz, they would want for nothing.

While Hoess's rise to power had indeed been spectacular, cracks soon appeared in the loathsome SS foundations upon which the camp was built. It did not take long for widespread corruption and incompetence among the SS staff to surface everywhere Hoess looked. He may well have been in overall command of Auschwitz, but his SS officers, NCOs, and privileged German criminal prisoners called *kapos* controlled the day to day running of the camp itself. Inside the wire, these men were free to do as they pleased, and most clung to the brutal SS methods and principles learned over many years in Germany; new members to the Lager-SS followed the lead of the older hands. The men's fear of the ever vigilant Hoess was strong, but their insatiable greed was often stronger.

The endemic culture of mindless cruelty, unrestrained violence, and notorious corruption frustrated Hoess's sense of order. As the camp's prisoner population rapidly expanded, he appealed for better quality men than the dregs of the SS that he had been burdened with. The fastidious Hoess was bitterly disappointed to find that the additional guards that he did receive were not even German, but poorly trained SS auxiliaries from Slovakia, Croatia, and the Ukraine. These illiterate thugs soon proved themselves to be even more vicious and incompetent than the German and Volksdeutsche (ethnic German) guards he already had.

It was not only the poor quality of the SS guard units that angered Hoess. With astonishing hypocrisy, he claimed to have been disgusted by the conduct of the camp's autonomous SD personnel. The SD (Sicherheitsdienst or Security Police of the SS) were responsible for maintaining camp security, and they took their orders not from Hoess, but directly from the head of the camp's Politische Abteilung, or Political Department. The SD men tortured and summarily executed prisoners at will in the notorious punishment barrack known as Block 11, which was, in effect, a prison within a prison and the most feared building in the camp.

Hoess may have been scathing about the SD's sadistic excesses, but his own appalling methods were often just as brutal. When the number of escapes from Auschwitz reached epidemic proportions, Hoess ordered that all recaptured prisoners be executed. To increase the psychological impact, the SS turned the executions into a spectacle whereby the condemned men, beating drums, were slowly marched around the camp wearing placards that said "Hurra! Ich bin wieder da" (Hurrah! I am back again). They would be hanged from gallows alongside the front gate to act as a deterrent to other prisoners.

The families of successful escapees were rounded up in reprisal and taken as hostages in their place. If they could not be found, Hoess allowed 10 to 12 prisoners to be randomly selected from the escapee's work detail or barrack and starved to death in Block 11. SS ideology preached that harsh deterrents were the most effective deterrents, and in Hoess's mind these measures were completely justified and violently enforced.

Hoess was a perfectionist with an administrative zeal that did not go unnoticed by Himmler. He was impressed with Hoess and, during an inspection tour in March 1941, commanded him to triple the prison population to 30,000. In addition, he wanted a second camp built nearby to hold 100,000 Russian prisoners of war whom Himmler had earmarked as slave laborers for his SS-inspired construction projects. They could also be hired out to German companies like I.G. Farben, Krupp, Siemens, Bayer, and Buna Werke, which were soon to be establishing factories near Auschwitz.

The location for this new camp, personally selected by Himmler himself, was far from ideal. The waterlogged black soil and fetid marshes were breeding grounds for disease and prone to flooding. In spite of these obstacles, with nothing and from nothing, Himmler expected Hoess to build something vastly bigger and entirely different from any other concentration camp yet in existence.

In October 1941, as snow was falling, construction work began in the bitter cold two

Above: The Granger Collection, New York. Below: ullstein bild.

ABOVE: Under the watchful eyes of their sadistic Nazi captors, prisoners are shown milling about in the yard of the concentration camp at Auschwitz and forming into work details. TOP: With their heads shaved and wearing German-issued prison garb, these female inmates of Auschwitz were photographed on a train platform at the concentration camp in 1944, possibly en route to a work site.

miles from Auschwitz on a site the Poles called Brzezinka but that the Germans renamed Birkenau. More than 10,000 emaciated Soviet POWs were dragooned into building the facility, but progress was slow. Hoess was soon behind schedule. Ignoring the atrocious weather, he had the prisoners driven even harder to make up the lost time.

The consequences were disastrous. Treated worse than animals, nearly all these hapless Russians would die from starvation and savage SS abuse, but, of more importance, the SS camp was finally completed. About 20,000 acres of the surrounding country had been cleared of all former inhabitants, and the entire area could be entered only by SS personnel or civilian employees who had been issued special passes.

The vast expanse of Birkenau was never designed to sustain life but merely to delay a preordained death. It was not, however, to be filled with Russians as originally planned. Instead, tens of thousands of Jews would be crammed into the squalid horse stable barracks cobbled together with wood over dirt floors and furnished with tiered bunks. Despite being designed to hold 500 people, the SS crammed more than 1,000 people into each windowless barrack block.

Hoess considered the Jews to be the lowest category of prisoner in the camp, and in his memoirs he poured scorn on their inability to form a "homogeneous" community. He simply could not grasp that it was all but impossible for these Jewish prisoners, thrown together from all over Europe, to foster a common brotherhood in such a ferociously lawless environment; many did not even speak the same language.

By merely existing, they were branded enemies of the Reich, undeserving of pity or understanding. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, Hoess and his SS guards would ensure they received neither. Backbreaking labor, beatings, and disease would ensure that few of these starving people survived more than a few months.

When Birkenau became operational, Hoess was soon swamped by a torrent of grandiose schemes and directives dreamed up by the Reichsführer himself. Himmler's plans for his proposed SS utopia were insatiable and included fish-breeding ponds, cement plants, coal mines, and countless others. Hoess, who controlled the lucrative Jewish labor force that would build these enterprises, was soon to discover that a monstrous death-laden storm was about to break over Nazi-occupied Europe.

Until late 1941, the fate of the Jews under Nazi control had been at best improvised, at worst murderous. Having developed along an often disjointed and crooked path, the fragmented pieces of what was euphemistically termed the "final solution of the Jewish question" found concrete form in 1942.

At this time the Nazis set themselves on an inconceivable yet unalterable course to hunt down every Jew in occupied Europe and exterminate them to the last man, women, and child. Having given impetus to this unprecedented industrialized program of mass annihilation, the regime would soon call upon loyal Nazi family men like Rudolph Hoess to carry it out.

The overworked Hoess was apprehensive when summoned urgently to Berlin to receive personal orders from Himmler. It was unusual for a mere SS captain to be ushered into the presence of the Reichsführer without even his adjutant being present. Hoess would soon understand why.

"The Führer," Himmler began gravely, "has ordered that the Jewish question be solved once and for all [and we] the SS are to implement that order. Every Jew we can lay our hands on is to be destroyed now … without exception."

In his capacity as the supreme overseer of the Final Solution, Himmler had grown dissatisfied with the mass shooting of Jews by mobile SS murder units, or Einzatzgruppen. It was proving to be inefficient, sloppy, and too public. The inclusion of women and children had also made

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ABOVE: Years after their horrific work had ceased, the crematoria at Auschwitz have become a memorial to the millions of victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Auschwitz gained the reputation as the most infamous of the concentration camps. OPPOSITE: The I.G. Farben chemical plant at Auschwitz-Monowitz was the site of the manufacture of Zyklon-B, the lethal gas used in the concentration camp gas chambers during World War II. The Auschwitz inmates worked in the facility.

these wholesale murders too distressing for the executioners.

Despite his concern for the anguish and torment these shootings were causing his SS soldiers, there was never any question in Himmler's mind of discontinuing the killings—merely the manner in which they were carried out. After a period of consultation, the Reichsführer decided that the only practical alternative to shooting was the use of lethal gas. Himmler wasted no time explaining to Hoess that secret extermination centers were already operating in the East but they lacked the killing capacity to carry out the large actions that were anticipated. He had therefore earmarked Auschwitz for this purpose; the camp's geographic isolation, sparse population, and extensive rail connections made it an ideal choice.

Himmler ordered Hoess to prepare detailed plans for industrial-style gassing installations, capable of annihilation on a massive scale, to be built at Auschwitz. Such was the secrecy surrounding this matter that Hoess was not permitted to discuss his orders with anyone but the head of the Gestapo's Jewish office in Berlin, SS Stürmbannführer Adolf Eichmann.

While Hoess had little quarrel with individual Jews, he admitted that as an ardent Nazi he had no moral qualms about the command to exterminate them. A total subordination to authority left Hoess not only incapable of questioning the Reichsführer's judgment on the matter but also completely immunized him from any emotional connection or individual sense of responsibility for what was to follow. Hoess would admit after the war that the thought of disobeying Himmler never even entered his mind.

The express orders issued to the other death camp commandants in eastern Poland was for swift and ruthless extermination. Hoess, however, had a different mandate. He would be in command of a slave labor, penal, and now Vernichtunslager (mass-murder camp) spread across three separate camps but all rolled into one murderous 20,000-acre complex.

There would only ever be one camp like Auschwitz.

Exterminating an entire race of people was a task that would require enormous resources, detailed planning, and every ounce of organizational and innovative skill Hoess possessed. The technology of lethal gassing was still in its infancy, so Hoess inspected other camps that used carbon monoxide pumped from truck engines into chambers or fed back into sealed moving vans. He was unimpressed with what he saw. Most applications were lethal enough, but the methods were crude and inefficient and the numbers murdered too small.

To cope with the volume of people that Eichmann would soon be dispatching to him, Hoess would need much larger installations than those he had seen at Treblinka and Chelmno, and he fretted over the practical mechanics of fulfilling his dreadful assignment. His anxieties were eased when, over copious amounts of cognac, he and Eichmann outlined a sketched blueprint of the gas chambers and crematorium they would require.

Both were pleased with their design, but it still left the problem of finding a faster-acting killing agent than carbon monoxide. In what was a pivotal development, Hoess would soon discover that the instrument of mass annihilation he sought was actually in his possession all along.

Through a secret SS protocol, Russian commissars (communist political officers) were routinely combed out of POW camps and brought to Auschwitz to be shot. In an attempt to find an alternative to these bloodbaths, the deputy camp commandant, SS Hauptstürmführer Karl Fritzsch, herded 850 Russian POWs and other sick Polish prisoners into specially prepared underground cells in the basement of Block 11.

On his own initiative and without Hoess's knowledge, he successfully murdered them all using a pellet-type pesticide called Zyklon-B, which turned to lethal cyanide gas when exposed to air.

Following further trial and error to get the dosage correct, Hoess attended the gassing of another group of Russians. He admitted having little concern over their fate but was impressed by the lethal nature and efficiency of the pesticide.

He recalled: "Gassing [with Zyklon-B] set my mind at rest, for the extermination of the Jews was to start soon and … now we had the gas."

Hoess insulated himself from the horror of his orders by adopting the passionless mind-set of a petty bureaucrat, which remarkably allowed him to view the mechanics of genocide as a purely administrative procedure. In this respect, far from being an unwilling mindless functionary, he proved himself to be an active and in many respects ground-breaking innovator in the developing techniques of mass murder.

Although the enormous industrial type apparatus Himmler envisioned for the mass liquidation of the Jews was yet to be finalized at Auschwitz, the gassing of condemned Russian prisoners and Poles continued in the secluded basement cells of Block 11—but it proved to be impractical and labor-intensive. In an effort to improve the secrecy and speed of the killings, Hoess transferred the operation to the parent camp's large mortuary, which he had converted into a gas chamber. Within this concrete block the SS could effectively liquidate and incinerate 900 victims under one roof while trucks and motorbikes parked nearby revved their engines to stifle the victims' screams.

Over the ensuing months, thousands of Poles, Russians, and "unproductive" Jews from Auschwitz and the surrounding area would be put to death here. Secrecy was always difficult to maintain in the parent camp, so to camouflage the killings more effectively Hoess had the gassings shifted to two secluded farmhouses in an isolated wooded area in a remote corner of Birkenau. These shabby thatch-roofed cottages were crudely converted by the SS into killing installations they dubbed the Little Red House (Bunker 1) and the Little White House (Bunker 2). Capable of liquidating 800 and 1,200 people, respectively, they were far enough away from the barracks to ensure complete secrecy, and only SS personnel with special clearance were allowed to enter this prohibited zone.

With the ability to now kill 2,000 people a day, the murders of Jews officially commenced in earnest in July 1942, when an entire transport from Upper Silesia was gassed on arrival. Soon afterward, a formalized process of selection was instigated, whereby the SS casually examined each trainload of Jews to determine who would live and who would die. Separated by gender, the healthy, young, and strong were taken into Birkenau as laborers to be worked to death, but nearly 80 percent of the rest were marched or trucked directly to the gas chambers in the woods. Pregnant women, the old, the infirm, the handicapped, and children under 15 were marked for what the SS dubbed "special handling."

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At the Treblinka death camp northeast of Warsaw, many victims were already aware of their fate and often resisted. To avoid outbreaks of panic and riots, Hoess decided to use deception rather than brute force to fill the chambers at Auschwitz. He believed it was more expedient and less stressful for his men to have the Jews walk meekly into the gas chambers like unprotesting sheep rather than be driven in with kicks and blows.

The key for the whole ghastly process to work smoothly hinged on deceiving his victims to the very last moment. His plan was for the elaborate charade to begin during the two-kilometer walk from the train platform to the cottages. The SS guards were ordered not only to make polite small talk and joke with the people to keep them calm but also to discreetly weed out and dispose of potential troublemakers along the way.

To further allay suspicions, Hoess had signs which read "zur Disinfektion" (to Disinfection) or "zum Baden" (to the Baths) put on the buildings and even escorted the morbid procession with a Red Cross vehicle that actually carried the canisters of the lethal Zyklon-B.

Most of the disoriented Jews were successfully deceived, but Hoess recalled that some victims suspected the truth. "One woman approached me [and] pointing to her four chil-

dren whispered: 'How can you bring yourself to kill such beautiful, darling children? Have you no heart at all?'" he wrote.

An elderly man, his eyes burning with hatred, hissed at Hoess, "Germany will pay a heavy penance for this mass murder of the Jews." He then calmly walked into the chamber and perished with the rest.

These heart-wrenching scenes were common, but Hoess remained outwardly unmoved as some of his victims "would call down every imaginable curse upon [his head]." The riches these lost souls had hidden in their clothes could not buy their lives, their pleas for mercy were ignored, and their wailing prayers to the heavens were not to be answered. There really was no escape, and the SS often joked that the only way out of Birkenau was through the chimney.

Gassings were completed within 3 to 15 minutes, and, to spare his own men from the psychological stress of clearing the dead, Hoess had specially selected Jewish prisoners assigned to the gruesome task of removing the bodies from the death chambers. These Sonderkommandos were never to leave the place alive. They had seen too much, and on Hoess's direct orders they would be murdered after a few months and replaced by others.

Creating the corpses was not difficult for the SS; their most pressing problem was disposing of them. After their gold teeth were ripped out and valuables removed, the bodies were dumped in mass graves. In the summer, however, the more than 100,000 putrefying corpses contaminated Birkenau's water supply, forcing Hoess to have them exhumed and incinerated in enormous flaming trenches in the surrounding meadows. Future victims met the same fate in fire pits that were kept burning around the clock. The tons of ash were unceremoniously dumped into nearby rivers, spread as fertilizer, or used as insulation in camp buildings.

The scope and magnitude of the hideous murders increased beyond even Hoess's expectations as the number of sealed Jewish transports rolling in from all over Europe steadily climbed month after month. Trains loaded with terrified Jews arrived from Belgium, Holland, Yugoslavia, Finland, Greece, and many other countries. Even nations allied to Germany like Austria and Italy were combed from top to bottom for Jews, and a large percentage found their way to Hoess and his makeshift gas chambers.

Amid this period of unrestrained murder, one of the most appalling crimes to ever occur at Auschwitz unfolded when a transport from France carrying 4,000 small Jewish children was shunted to the platform. The parents of these children had already been deported to their deaths weeks or months earlier, and during that time most of these infants had been kept in a holding camp in Paris. Their fate was finally sealed when the SS sent them en masse to Auschwitz where, within hours of arrival, Hoess had them taken into the woods of Birkenau and murdered in the two gas chambers. No one was spared.

Himmler's prediction that Auschwitz would, in time, be the primary killing site of the Jews had become a reality as mass murder became a fixture of life at the camp. Despite the elaborate security measures, Hoess realized that secrecy about the killings would be impossible to maintain. He knew that the nauseating, acrid stench of burning flesh would confirm local rumors of the exterminations at Auschwitz. He also knew, however, that SS terror had taught the Poles to keep their mouths shut. The Nazis had prophesied that very few would lift a finger to save the Jews, and it seemed that even fewer would risk exposing their demise.

Gassing may have spared the SS the shooting bloodbaths that Himmler's men had found so distressing, but many of the SS men in the thick of the exterminations struggled to cope, particularly when dealing with Jews from the Reich who spoke to them in German. Hoess was constantly approached by his subordinates either wanting transfers or, more commonly, an explanation as to why the killing of thousands of women and small children was really necessary.

He tried to allay their anxieties by stating that it was done on Hitler's orders, which were to be obeyed without question. Hoess admitted that he himself often had secret doubts about the

THE RUDOLPH HOESS OF 1942 WHO HAD SECRETLY CRINGED AT THE SIGHT AND SOUND OF CHILDREN BEING EXTERMINATED HAD, BY THE SPRING OF 1944, BECOME AS SOULLESS AND HARDENED AS THE CONCRETE WALLS OF THE GAS CHAMBERS THEMSELVES.

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ABOVE: Hungarian Jews stand before an SS soldier who decides their fate immediately following their arrival at Auschwitz in the summer of 1944. Those unable to work were quickly sent to the gas chambers. OPPOSITE: Roused from their meager existence in the Lodz ghetto, Polish Jews board a train bound for Auschwitz and oblivion in July 1944. A Nazi officer stands in the center of the photo wearing a leather overcoat.

killings and confided to Eichmann that he became weak-kneed when sending children to their deaths. He was later ashamed of this weakness, especially after Eichmann explained that it was illogical to leave the children alive to one day act as avengers.

These words fortified Hoess and strengthened his resolve to set the standard in front of his men, and he later recalled that it was "essential that I myself appear ... cold and indifferent to events [and] watch coldly, while mothers [and] children went into the gas chambers."

Many high-ranking Nazi leaders and SS officers in their elegant uniforms came to Auschwitz to see the extermination process firsthand. More than a few were deeply affected when confronted by the stark and horrendous reality of what the annihilation of the Jews entailed.

Hoess recalled with disdain, "Some who had previously spoken most loudly about the necessity for this extermination fell silent once they had actually seen the final solution of the Jewish problem [in practice]."

The squeamish Himmler even arrived to witness the gassing procedure from beginning to end. For the purpose of the demonstration, Polish Jews were bundled into the gas chamber at 8:55 AM in readiness for gassing at 9 AM. For two hours the terrified souls, who knew what was about to happen, remained locked in the room while Himmler and Hoess decided to enjoy a late breakfast. Finally, at 11 AM, the official party arrived and Himmler watched the entire macabre spectacle through the peephole. He saw the lights extinguished in the chamber and heard the order for the lethal pellets to be thrown in. He then watched the agonized victims suffocate as they were enveloped by the rising gas fumes. Himmler was extremely impressed with the well-established system of production-line murder that Hoess had pioneered, and he promptly promoted Hoess to SS Oberstürmbannführer.

During the course of 1943, following the near-complete destruction of all Poland's Jews, the other death camps were dismantled, leaving Auschwitz to operate alone. At the epicenter of the Final Solution, Hoess was at his improvising best as he zealously pored over all aspects of the operation, including the size of transports, adherence to train timetables, gassing procedures, and countless other details of the process.

At its peak, the camp and its subcamps held more than 160,000 inmates, but these numbers placed impossible stresses on the already inadequate sanitation systems. Prisoners were ravaged by disease, and companies constantly complained to Hoess about the failing health of the laborers. No one in higher authority seemed to care.

As overcrowding reached catastrophic proportions, Hoess needed breathing space to reorganize and perform urgent maintenance, but his requests were ignored. Combating the atrocious conditions in the camp was to be subordinated to the demands of the exterminations, and the transports would not be eased or halted under any circumstances.

Hoess had been denied the resources to solve the sanitation problems, so he turned his focus toward the process of murdering the source of them. Jews were still dying in large numbers at Auschwitz, but as late as 1943 the method of their destruction was still, to a certain degree, improvised. That was all soon to change.

The construction of a number of large crematory/mortuaries had been planned for Birkenau, but Hoess radically modified their design to incorporate enormous custom-built gas chambers. In the spring of 1943, the provisional cottage death chambers were abandoned

when the first pair of these large underground gas chamber crematories became operational.

These brick buildings with their steeply pitched roofs, dormer windows, and sturdy chimneys housed the most incomprehensible murder installations ever created, and Hoess would ensure they fulfilled their task. Screened from the distant barracks by trees and hedges and cordoned off with wire fences, these state-of-the-art facilities, dubbed Krema II and Krema IV, were fitted with fake showerheads, a heating system to speed up the effects of Zyklon-B in winter, and electric lift systems to carry the bodies to the crematories. Leading Nazi personalities were invited from Berlin to witness the inaugural gassing and cremation of Jews from Krakow in these two new facilities.

Until this time, the killing facilities at Auschwitz had been "underutilized" and accounted for less than 11 percent of the total number of Jews murdered by the Nazis. When Hoess was handed two more similarly enormous gas chambers, Krema III and Krema V, in April and June 1943, he reported to Eichmann that at peak efficiency he would be able to collectively gas and cremate 10,000 people per day. On some occasions, though, he would ramp it up to 12,000. The unparalleled horror of the murder program at Auschwitz would soon rise to a level that was even beyond the comprehension of the SS.

There was never a consistent policy on anything to do with the administration of Auschwitz, not even the senseless killing. The arrival of transports packed with Jews was often haphazard, but Hoess labored tirelessly to maintain a balance between those spared for slave labor and those destined for the gas chambers. His efforts were often hampered by the conflicting and changing demands of his superiors, who seemed unable to agree on exactly how the exterminations were to be conducted.

Originally Himmler had wanted all Jews destroyed without exception, but now he wanted more able-bodied men and women directed to the labor-strapped munitions factories. Eichmann and his cohorts in Berlin, on the other hand, wanted every transport that arrived at Auschwitz completely annihilated.

The happy family life that Hoess cherished was also unravelling under the pressure of this monstrous work. When his wife confronted him about rumors she had heard of mass gassings, Hoess admitted it was true. She was the only person outside the program that he ever told. From that day, his horrified wife no longer wanted sexual relations with him, at which time he forced himself on a stunning Italian prisoner, Eleonore Hodys, whom he secretly kept in a dungeon cell of Block 11. When she became pregnant, he unsuccessfully tried to have her gassed. Hodys was eventually murdered in the last days of the war.

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ABOVE: Recently liberated survivors of Auschwitz walk beneath the cynical sign that reads "Work Brings Freedom" following their liberation by the Soviet Red Army in the spring of 1945. OPPOSITE: Escorted by Allied soldiers and shackled to prevent escape, former Auschwitz commandant Rudolph Hoess arrives at the airport in Nuremburg to serve as a witness at the war crimes tribunal on May 6, 1946. Hoess was later executed at Auschwitz.

Crippled by anxieties and stress, Hoess grew noticeably distant from those closest to him, and he often took long horse rides in the nearby woods in an attempt to clear the appalling images that flooded his mind. On the few occasions he could drag himself away from his work, he would sit with his wife and watch his two sons and three daughters swimming and frolicking in the nearby Sola River. To see his children so happy was in fact a torture for Hoess, for by now it was obvious that Germany was lurching inexorably toward catastrophic defeat. He was under no illusion about the fate that awaited men like him after the war.

Then, in December 1943, Hoess was suddenly relieved of command and replaced by SS Oberstürmbannführer Arthur Liebehenschel. The circumstances surrounding Hoess's transfer are still not clear, but some historians suspect that SS friends in high places were protecting him from a potential court-martial over widespread corruption and the unauthorized killing of prisoners. Another theory suggests his superiors feared he was close to a mental breakdown and needed to be rested.

Hoess reluctantly left Auschwitz and eventually became deputy to the inspector general of concentration camps located in Oranienburg, outside Berlin. He quickly busied himself with his new administrative duties, unaware that his absence from the camp would be short-lived.

In 1944, monstrous events far from Auschwitz would culminate in the most frenzied murder spree in the camp's abysmal history, and the SS was once again to call upon the abilities of Rudolph Hoess to complete the Final Solution.

Following the occupation of Hungary by the German Army in March 1944, Adolf Eichmann arrived to ruthlessly round up the last major Jewish community in Europe in preparation for its complete annihilation.

Miles away on May 8, 1944, a reinvigorated Hoess once again took over temporary command at Auschwitz. He was fully aware that the fury and sheer magnitude of the Hungarian operation, codenamed Aktion Hoess, would be apocalyptic, with trains expected to arrive without respite day after day, week after week.

The murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews presented no moral difficulties for Hoess. He was, by now, totally incapable of pity and no longer even acknowledged the victims as people at all, having long ago divorced himself from any such humane association. The Rudolph Hoess of 1942 that had secretly cringed at the sight and sound of children being exterminated had, by the spring of 1944, become as soulless and hardened as the con-

crete walls of the gas chambers themselves.

Hoess immediately set to work meticulously preparing himself, the facilities, and his men for what was to come. Leaving nothing to chance, the extermination program was reviewed and modifications, improvements, and new initiatives were undertaken.

The speed of the murders was identified as a critical factor to expedite the killings and avoid bottlenecks at the rail platform. A three-track spur line was run straight into Birkenau, ending almost at the doors of the gas chambers. To ease the problem of body disposal, the inactive cremation ovens in Krema V were repaired, the massive chimneys reinforced with steel bands, the old burning pits excavated, and an additional five gigantic pits dug.

The frantic SS preparations alerted the resident prisoners in Auschwitz-Birkenau that something unusual was occurring. Rumors of the imminent destruction of Hungary's Jews were confirmed when the first transports arrived on May 16, 1944. Coldly observing the incoming transports, Hoess would show them no mercy.

Everything had to move swiftly from the moment the deportees stumbled out of the cattle wagons. Unfettered by the need for deception, Hoess would rely on a cordon of heavily armed SS guards with slavering Alsatians to ensure the compliance of his victims.

The murder facilities could barely cope with the scale of the slaughter, and neither could many of the SS. Hoess, however, ignored the putrid stench to diligently attend many of the gassings himself to maintain control and order. With a cold, deadly detachment, he ensured that the gas chambers, crematories, and fire pits worked to their full capacity and beyond.

Some arrivals who were not gassed were shot at the pits and thrown into the fires—bullets were sometimes not wasted on the children. The funeral pyres belched columns of thick black smoke and flames that were visible for up to 30 miles and often blocked out the sun.

In mid-July 1944, Aktion Hoess was terminated, but in a murderous 56-day rampage Rudolph Hoess had dispassionately butchered more than 585,000 Jewish men, women, and children, including 430,000 from Hungary alone. This last murderous operation at Auschwitz confirmed the camp's status as the most notorious site of mass extermination in world history. Hoess was awarded the War Merit Cross (First and Second Class).

Hoess returned to his duties in Berlin, but at the end of the war, on Himmler's orders, he avoided arrest by disguising himself as a German sailor. For nine months he then eluded capture by posing as a humble farm laborer until his wife was coerced into revealing her husband's whereabouts.

A short time later, on March 2, 1946, Hoess was arrested in the middle of the night while he slept in a farm outhouse near Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. Surrounded by armed British Field Security Police, he claimed to be Franz Lang. It was not the answer the British wanted to hear. After a series of blows, Hoess finally confessed his true identity, whereupon he was nearly beaten to death by a number of Jewish soldiers in the arresting party.

Hoess was briefly transferred to Nuremberg as a defense witness before being extradited to Poland. Hoess's own trial began in Warsaw on March 11, 1947, where the irrefutable evidence of his crimes resonated through the court and around the world. Countless witnesses provided harrowing testimony of the gassings, torture, and cruelty that had occurred at Auschwitz, but the most horrifying witness of all would prove to be Rudolph Hoess himself.

The more than 500 people who packed the courtroom daily listened in stunned silence as Hoess offered, with a technician's pride, a precise and detailed account of the extermination process he conducted. Many were totally unprepared for what they heard.

Despite being one of three commandants at Auschwitz, Hoess was not only the longest serving but had also clearly exerted the most influence over the character and functions of the camp. The principles and techniques of mass murder he pioneered and perfected had transformed Auschwitz from an insignificant quarantine camp in the backwaters of Poland into the most efficient instrument of human extermination the world has ever known.

As a conduit between those in authority who issued the orders and the rank and file SS men who carried them out, Hoess held a unique position in the whole inconceivable operation and made no attempt to hide his guilt, nor the strength of his internal conviction to follow it through. In fact, far from being ashamed or revolted by the murders, he seemed to take pride in declaring Eichmann's estimate that 2.5 million predominantly Jewish men, women, and children had been gassed at Auschwitz.

Despite having been forbidden by Himmler to keep records on the exact numbers gassed, Hoess believed that the true figure was closer to 1.1 million. He estimated that a further 500,000 prisoners, including 300,000 Poles, succumbed to disease, forced labor, starvation, or summary execution.

In light of what had been revealed at his trial, Hoess had appeared to have committed these crimes against humanity with the equanimity of exterminating vermin, but he was not in fact an irrational, unhinged sadist. Such was the moral twilight he inhabited. Hoess never really believed that what he had done was fundamentally wrong. In his self-pitying memoirs written shortly before his death, Hoess drew the simplistic but flawed comparison between his duty to kill women and children by gassing with the duty of Allied air crews who had also killed women and children with bombs.

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The collective experience of many who dealt with Hoess in captivity after the war is possibly summed up by an American prosecutor, Whitney Harris, who in Nuremburg

Continued on page 77

National Archives

A Soviet airborne operation behind German lines on the Dnieper River went horribly wrong.

Night Jump

into Tragedy

BY VICTOR KAMENIR

IN AUGUST 1943, immediately after the Battle of Kursk, the Red Army launched a series of follow-up operations, resulting in the liberation of a large swath of Nazi-occupied Soviet territory. However, by the end of September, the Soviet offensive ground to a halt against the great Ukrainian river Dnieper.

This major river was the centerpiece of the Panther-Wotan Line, or Eastern Wall, a grandiose German scheme to halt the Red Army. Adolf Hitler, in his directive on August 11, 1943, ordered the creation of the Panther-Wotan Line as the last bulwark stopping the Soviet onslaught. He was echoed by Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda, who wrote in his diary on September 24: "We must try under all circumstances to hold the Dnieper line; in case we lose it, I wouldn't know where we might gain a new foothold."

The Panther section was the portion of the envisioned German line running north roughly from the area of Smolensk to the Baltic Sea. The Wotan portion, the larger segment, extended south from Smolensk to the Black Sea. Even though the Wehrmacht did not have the time, resources, or manpower to turn this into the impregnable wall envisioned by Hitler, it was a formidable natural obstacle, with the high western bank of the Dnieper River overlooking the other side.

Situated on the west bank of the Dnieper was the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, a major highway and railroad nexus. Rapid capture of this strategic objective would allow Soviet forces several options for further operations. The offensive in a northwesterly direction would threaten to cut the German front in two and drive a wedge between the German Army Groups Center and South. The advance southwest would position the Red Army at the Hungarian and Romanian borders. Turning south along the Dnieper River would threaten to cut off and destroy the bulk of the German forces in the Ukraine.

Two Soviet army groups, known as fronts, were advancing in the direction of Kiev. The Central Front, under General Konstantin K. Rokossovski, would brush north of Kiev with its extreme left flank. However, the bulk of operations against Kiev would be conducted by the Voronezh Front under General Nikolai F. Vatutin. The two fronts were renamed the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian, respectively, on September 20.

The Soviet offensive began on September 9, 1943, with the objective of reaching the Dnieper River by October 5. Unexpectedly, after securing Hitler's permission, the commander of Army Group South, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, gave orders on September 15 to retreat to the western side of the river.

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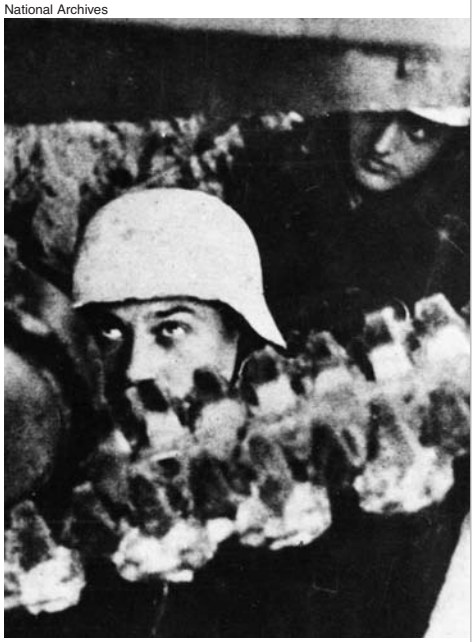

LEFT: Soviet airborne troops complete a practice jump prior to the opening of hostilities with the Germans. The Red Army pioneered the concept of paratroops in combat. ABOVE: Warily watching above, German soldiers take cover in a trench and await the arrival of enemy troops.

As the German forces rapidly pulled back, the dash to Dnieper became a race as both Soviet and German units attempted to reach the river first, with combatants often moving along parallel routes. Even falling back rapidly, the Germans fought a series of sharp rearguard actions. Still, the leading elements of the 1st Ukrainian Front began approach-

ing the river in the afternoon of September 21, ahead of schedule.

The jubilant but exhausted Red Army suffered heavy casualties during its summer offensive. Supply lines were overstretched, and many units were in dire need of refit and replacements. Skilled bridging units were lagging behind. Fuel was in such short supply that General Konstantin Malygin, commanding the IX Mechanized Corps in the Third Guards Tank Army, gave orders to take fuel from all nonessential vehicles, even artillery, to ensure that tanks and vehicles carrying motorized infantry had enough fuel to make the last jump to the Dnieper. Marshal Georgi Zhukov, representative of the Supreme Command overseeing operations of the 1st Ukrainian Front, wrote in his memoirs: "There was no opportunity for detailed preparation for the advance to the Dnieper. The forces ... were extremely fatigued by constant fighting."

The leading units of Soviet Fortieth Army and Third Guards Tank Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front approached the river in the area of the so-called Bukrin Bend, roughly 180 miles south of Kiev. This east-facing bend in the river, named after two villages, the Big Bukrin and the Little Bukrin, was one of the few areas allowing the Soviet artillery to dominate the opposing bank. However, the rugged terrain within the Bukrin Bend, intersected by a multitude of deep ravines, prohibited maneuvers by mechanized units and greatly impeded all others. Still, the Soviet command concentrated one of its major efforts at this location because the terrain on the eastern bank allowed them to stage large forces unobserved by the Germans.

Attempting to capitalize on their momentum, small units of Red Army soldiers began crossing to the western bank almost as soon as they arrived. Due to the availability of only a few boats, some of the first assault parties were as small as five or six men. The next morning, September 22, the soldiers located a sunken ferry. It was raised and quickly patched up, and platoon-sized groups began moving across. German forces in the area were no more than a few scattered pickets, and a battalion of Soviet motorized infantry was able to occupy the village of Zarubentsy, at the tip of the bend, practically without firing a shot.

However, the Germans reacted quickly to this development, and the 19th Panzer Division was rushed south from Kiev. At the same time, the German XXIV Panzer Corps was retreating in good order to the east side of the river in the vicinity of Kanev, south of Bukrin Bend. Its leading division, the 34th Infantry, also hurried to the Soviet beachhead. By the end of the day, they began probing Red Army positions around Zarubentsy.

The fighting began in earnest on the morning of September 23. The two German divisions were greatly aided by difficult terrain and Soviet logistical challenges. The lack of sufficient river craft slowed Soviet buildup on the beachhead, while the Germans rushed forward elements from the XXIV and XLVII Panzer Corps. By September 26, nine German divisions bottled up and stalemated the Soviet forces in the Bukrin Bend, preventing them from breaking out.

Chief of Red Army General Staff, Marshal S.M. Shtemenko, wrote in retrospect: "It wouldn't have been superfluous to plan an additional crossing of the Dnieper in the vicinity of Kiev in case of a setback of the offensive from Bukrin beachhead. However, neither the General Staff, nor Front command, unfortunately, prepared this in advance."

In mid-September, as the forces of the Voronezh Front were still hundreds of miles from the Dnieper, the Soviet Supreme Command ordered an airborne operation prepared in support of the ground forces. Three elite Guards airborne brigades, the 1st, 3rd, and 5th, from the Supreme Command reserve and totaling some 10,000 men, were grouped into a provisional corps under Major General Ivan Zatevakhin. A small number of staff officers was seconded from the Directorate of Airborne Troops to form Zatevakhin's command element.

Commander of the Voronezh Front, General

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The unmistakable silhouette of a Soviet T-34 medium tank rushes forward in a combined arms attack with Red Army soldiers. The T-34 helped turn the tide of the war in the East in favor of the Soviets.

Nikolai F. Vatutin, was given the operational control of the airborne corps. His political deputy was none other than the future Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Planning for this operation was shrouded in utmost secrecy, with Marshal Zhukov, who was present at the headquarters of the Voronezh Front, signing off on the finished product on September 19.

The plan was extremely ambitious, given the level of equipment, supplies, and capabilities of units tasked with carrying it out. Still, it was very thorough, with the smallest detail meticulously worked out. General Vatutin's task for the airborne corps was to drop during the night of September 23-24 and establish a defensive perimeter immediately west of the Bukrin Bend to prevent German reinforcements from reaching the beachhead.

Aerial reconnaissance was to locate German forces in the area of the drop zones. Immediately prior to the commencement of operations, the Second Air Army supporting the 1st Ukrainian Front was to attack and suppress ground targets. Immediately after the drop, the front air forces were to switch to close support of paratroopers on the ground. Teams of liaison officers with their own radios and dedicated and redundant radio frequencies were established to ensure cooperation among the paratroopers, supporting aviation, and artillery assets. The landing itself would be conducted during two nights, with the 1st and the 5th Guards Airborne Brigades dropping first, followed by the 3rd Brigade the next night. The first two brigades were to be dropped at night 15 miles west of the Dnieper River and establish a defensive perimeter roughly 10 miles long by 15 miles deep.

The Long-Range Aviation Command provided the bulk of the 180 aircraft required to transport men and equipment. They were mainly Lisunov Li-2 planes, a licensed copy of the American Douglas DC-3 plane, as well as 35 gliders. The aircraft would fly from a complex of five airfields near Lebedin, 110 to 140 miles from the proposed drop zones. To facilitate navigation and approaches to the target area, the aircraft were to utilize radio beacons that were already installed at the airfields. The reciprocal beacons were to be set up in the drop zones by the first elements of paratroopers to land.

To further assist navigation to the drop zones, upon landing, the designated paratroopers were to fire off prearranged sequences of multicolored flares and set up bonfires on the ground in certain configurations. In all, 500 sorties were to transport the two airborne brigades on the first night of operations. The heaviest weapons available to paratroopers, 45mm antitank guns, were to be delivered on the second night, with planes landing on rough runways laid out by men already on the ground. Paratroopers were to be on their own for two to three days until they linked up with ground forces.

ABOVE: Scanning the horizon from shoulder-deep entrenchments, German soldiers await an inevitable attack by the Soviets during the fighting along the Dnieper River in the autumn of 1943. This photo was snapped on October 4, prior to the onset of another brutal winter. TOP: Crossing the Dnieper River under fire from heavy German weapons and small arms during a 1943 offensive, Red Army soldiers quickly discard their long paddles and exit large boats to return fire.

The severe attrition of the first two years of war, with paratroopers often having to fight as regular infantry, whittled down the ranks of trained airborne soldiers. While the officer and NCO cadres of the three brigades contained some veterans of previous airborne operations, the majority of the rank and file had fewer than four practice jumps under their belts. Many of these men had never jumped from an aircraft before, having done their practice jumps from aerostats. Additionally, most of the men in the three airborne brigades were not volunteers and had been arbitrarily assigned to airborne units. Among thousands of men in each airborne brigade were also several dozen women, mainly doctors, nurses, and some radio operators. They jumped into combat alongside the men and shared all the dangers with them.

Discipline was strict. Any soldier found in

dereliction of duty, conduct unbecoming, or refusing to jump was quickly shipped off to a penal battalion. A veteran of the 3rd Guards Airborne Brigade, Matvey Likhterman, at that time a radio operator in the antitank battalion, remembered that the majority of men in his battalion were aged between 18 and 22. Many years after the war, an interview with Likhterman was published on a Russian-language website. His reminiscences, as well as the memoirs of another participant, Grigoriy Chukhrai, were invaluable in describing the human aspect of the events that unfolded.

The combat kit of paratroopers was heavy, sometimes adding more than 80 pounds, plus their PD-42 parachutes. Likhterman remembered being armed with a carbine, 200 rounds of ammunition, six grenades, a knife, and a packet with American C-rations: "We did not have any incendiary grenades, riser cutters, entrenching tools…. We, the common paratroopers, did not have pistols or explosive charges, flashlights, flare guns."

He ruefully remembered instructions to bury the parachutes once on the ground, which would be difficult to do since they did not have entrenching tools. Likhterman was part of the two-man crew of a radio station. Incredibly, carrying the spare batteries and code book, he was assigned to one aircraft, while his partner, carrying the radio, was assigned to another. As a radioman, Likhterman was instructed in case of imminent capture to destroy his codebook and then commit suicide, since he had to memorize the call signs and frequencies used by the brigade.

The very success of the Soviet ground offensive caused the plan to begin to unravel. Masses of men and matériel, all moving in pursuit of retreating Germans, created great traffic snarls along the railroad networks. Traveling by train and caught in endless delays, the three airborne brigades arrived late to their staging areas. The planes earmarked to carry the paratroopers were slow in gathering as well. Large numbers of trains and convoys carrying precious aircraft fuel did not arrive on time, further limiting the number of sorties to be flown during the crucial first day of the operation. Bad weather with ground-hugging fog limited the effectiveness of aerial reconnaissance, and the immediate vicinity of the drop zones was not scrutinized.

General Vatutin and his staff spent most of the day of September 24 amending the plan, also delaying the operation by a day, to the night of September 25-26, to allow more men and resources to arrive. The 1st Guards Airborne Brigade, under Colonel I.P. Krasovskiy, hopelessly late, was replaced by the 3rd Brigade to be dropped during the first night. The drop zones were adjusted as well. The 3rd Guards Airborne Brigade under Colonel P.A. Goncharov was to land in the area southeast of the town of Rzhischev, while the 5th Guards Airborne Brigade, under Colonel P.M. Sidorchuk, was to drop northwest of the town of Kanev.

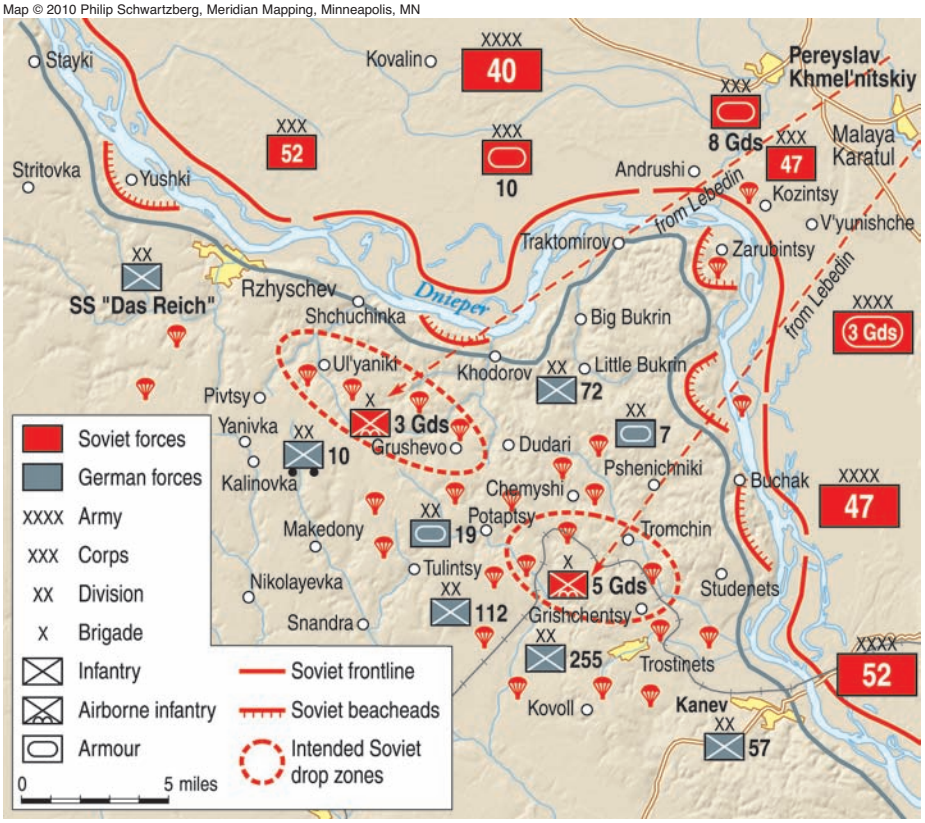
Brigade commanders received the amended orders on the morning of September 25, the day of the drop. As each command echelon passed down orders and instructions, each subsequent command level had less and less time to brief subordinates. Company commanders had 15 minutes before planes took off to brief platoon leaders, who, in turn, had to brief their soldiers while in flight.

At 6:30 PM on September 25, the planes carrying the leading elements of the 3rd Airborne Brigade took off from their airfields at 10-minute intervals. As the aircraft crossed to the west side of the Dnieper River, they encountered an unforeseen problem. The rain, which lasted most of the day, stopped around the time the operation started, but left behind a heavy haze, reducing visibility to less than three miles.

The first few aircraft carrying men of Likhterman's unit arrived over their assigned drop zones and dropped their planeloads of paratroopers without interference from German antiaircraft artillery. However, as more and more white parachutes blossomed overhead, German positions came alive. As the first Soviet pathfinders on the ground began firing off their prearranged sequences of flares, the Germans quickly caught on and began firing off multicolored flares of their own. Their trick had the desired effect, confusing many Soviet pilots overhead and causing them to drop their paratroopers in the wrong places.

Likhterman remembers: "Three flares went up. A minute later the same three flares went up to our left, then to our right, and five minutes later the flares in the same color sequences went up all around us, and it was impossible to figure out who was sending them up and where the rally point was."

Numerous German flak guns began firing, sending up a large volume of ordnance. Soviet pilots frantically maneuvered to gain altitude while continuing to drop their sticks of paratroopers. Instead of the planned 1,640 feet, many paratroopers were dropped from higher altitudes, further scattering the units. It took longer than planned to exit the aircraft as well, with so many green paratroopers making their first jump from a plane in combat



Ill-fated Soviet airborne operations resulted in heavy losses during the fighting around the great bend of the Dnieper River. Few Red Army paratroopers managed to survive weeks of fighting behind German lines.

conditions at night.

The slow-moving Soviet planes, caught in the beams of German search lights, were subjected to punishing flak. Likhterman and his few friends on the ground observed in horror.

"The drone of aircraft sounded overhead. And then it began!!! Hundreds of tracer bullets went up. It became light as day. The flak cannons coughed. A terrible tragedy unfolded over our heads. I don't know where to find the words to describe what happened. We saw the whole nightmare. The incendiary tracers pierced the parachutes, which were made from [nylon and] would immediately burst in flames. Tens of burning torches immediately appeared in the sky. Our comrades were dying, burning up in the sky, without a chance to fight on the ground. We saw everything. Two shot-down 'Douglases' were falling, without having a chance to unload their paratroopers. The lads were dropping like stones from their planes without having a chance to open their parachutes. An Li-2 hit the ground 200 meters from us. We raced to the plane, but there were no survivors.... The whole area around us was covered in white smears of the parachutes. And bodies, bodies, bodies: killed, burnt, smashed paratroopers."

Unknown to Likhterman, one of the planes he observed falling in flames carried the commander of the 3rd Guards Airborne Brigade, Colonel Goncharov, who perished along with his staff.

In one of the following planes was Lieutenant Grigoriy Chukhrai, who later became a famous Soviet movie director. He remembered: "The events of that night are still in front of my eyes. The closer our plane got to the front lines, the angrier the flak guns sounded, searchlights probed the sky, illumination flares were continuously being launched. We were unlucky: we were dropping right over the flak guns.... I was falling toward a gleaming stream of tracers, through the flames of burning parachutes of my comrades."

As mistake compounded on tragedy, the majority of paratroopers became scattered over an area 15 by 40 miles, with less than 10 percent of them actually landing within the designated drop zones. Over half of the Soviet soldiers landed within 10 miles of their targets, while some unfortunates were blown off course over 40 miles to the south. Dozens landed in the Dnieper River, and many drowned entangled in their parachutes. Incredibly, more than 100 men landed on the east bank, in friendly territory, and some landed inside the Soviet beachhead on the west side of the river.

Shooting skyward along the Dnieper River, this German 20mm flak gun, situated atop a Sdkfz. 10 towing vehicle, has spotted a Soviet target.

The train carrying the compass locator system, which was to be set up at the beginning of the final approaches of the transport planes over the river, did not arrive at its designated position until after the operation was canceled. Likewise, the first paratroopers on the ground, almost immediately fighting for their lives, did not have time or opportunity to set up beacons at the drop zones. Therefore, Soviet navigators only had the river itself as the reference mark for keeping track of flight time to their targets. Lacking a single common reference point, several aircraft approaching on different vectors from five different airfields arrived at the river at different locations.

Unknown to Soviet intelligence, on September 25, two German divisions, one panzer and one mechanized, were moving through the Soviet drop zones on their way to reinforce German units in the Bukrin Bend. Whole detachments of Soviet airborne soldiers found themselves landing right on top of German encampments, which were rapidly coming alive. The unfortunate airborne soldiers were decimated. Still, many brave souls fired their weapons and threw grenades on their way down to certain death.

Upon landing, Lieutenant Chukhrai hit the steep bank of a small ravine and tumbled down, wrapping himself in his parachute with his arms pinned to his sides. He temporarily lost consciousness, and when he came to he could hear "dogs barking and Germans' guttural shouts" nearby. Twisting and turning, Chukhrai managed to reach his knife, cut himself loose, and scurry to shelter.

He recalled: "Two Germans appeared at the lip of the ravine. I saw them outlined against the sky. One of them fired a long burst at my parachute. Apparently, he thought that the paratrooper was still there. Only then they carefully began to approach the pile of my parachute and rucksack. As soon as they were sideways to me, I opened fire and cut both of them down. Then I took off running."

The Soviet timetable was completely disrupted, and shuttling aircraft continued to drop paratroopers into the confusion. No longer needing to maintain radio silence, Soviet air crews radioed in reports of an operation gone terribly wrong, supplemented by their verbal accounts once back at their airfields. The discovery of enemy divisions already in the drop zones made the whole operation irrelevant, and the Soviet commanders cancelled the remainder.

By the time the operation was called off, just under 300 sorties had been flown instead of the 500 planned for the first night. Instead of two full brigades, slightly over 4,500 men were dropped. The 3rd Airborne Brigade was deployed in its entirety but without its 45mm guns. Roughly half the 5th Airborne Brigade was dropped before the mission was called off.

Almost 600 soft containers with equipment, supplies, and ammunition were parachuted as well.

In addition to frontline combat formations in transit through the area, several thousand German security troops were staged near the drop zones in preparation for an unrelated anti-partisan operation. Among these security troops was at least one battalion from the Turkestan Legion, formed by the Germans from Soviet Muslim POWs, natives of Central Asian republics. Several smaller detachments of local Ukrainian police were present as well. These security troops responded quickly and began sweeping the area for paratroopers.

Confused fighting raged on the ground as many Red Army men perished alone or in small groups and a number were captured. Still, the survivors fought on and began gathering in groups large enough to offer resistance. NCOs and junior officers took command of scattered units, while some commanders landed without any troops to lead. Colonel Sidorchuk, commander of the 5th Brigade, landed in the Kanev woods alone and did not find any of his men until daylight.

Paratroopers landing in the heavily wooded areas near Kanev and Cherkassy fared better than others, finding more cover and concealment. Their comrades who landed on the northern side of the drop zone near Rzhyschev found fewer defensible positions. Those soldiers who managed to reach their designated rally points often found no one to direct them further. As groups formed, they moved off in different directions without coordination.

It was absolutely vital for lightly armed paratroopers to find their air-dropped supply containers with equipment and ammunition. However, the Germans also actively hunted for them. In some instances, the Germans set up ambushes near discovered containers, inflicting heavy casualties on paratroopers attempting to retrieve them.

The next several days became a nightmare of running fights, as survivors attempted to organize. The Germans deployed spotter aircraft to attack larger groups of paratroopers from the air and to guide their ground forces.

Soviet partisans, though hard-pressed themselves, attempted to contact and bring in scattered paratroopers. Besides the physical danger, paratroopers were dropped without food. Many men, cautious about lighting fires or going into villages, gathered raw corn or dug up raw potatoes to dull their hunger pangs.

As the brutal sweep for paratroopers continued, many captured soldiers were executed immediately. Local villagers giving aid or shelter to paratroopers were killed as well. Paratroopers hiding in barns or houses were sometimes burned alive when the structures were torched. As groups of airborne soldiers maneuvered through the area, they often came across the mutilated bodies of their comrades. German authorities offered local residents monetary rewards for turning in paratroopers, and some Judases collected their pieces of silver.

Still, heroism was not in short supply, not only among soldiers but civilians as well. On the night of the drop, Captain Sapozhnikov wrapped the flag of his 5th Brigade around his body. While in the air on the way down, the captain was hit in the leg and shoulder. Several soldiers found the unconscious captain and hid him in a haystack. The next morning the soldiers were discovered by a 15-year-old villager, Anatoliy Ganenko. The brave teenager took the soldiers to his mother, Serafima Ganenko, and together they sheltered and aided the soldiers for several days. After the wounded captain regained some strength, the soldiers decided to attempt to break out and reach the Soviet lines.

To avoid risking the flag, they left it with the Ganenkos. When the victorious Red Army liberated the area two months later, the mother and son turned over the flag to authorities. In 1976, more than 30 years after the war, following a petition from the airborne soldiers, Serafima and Anatoliy Ganenko received medals "for bravery."

Paratroopers were not able to establish radio communications with their command elements back on the east bank of the river for several days. Aerial reconnaissance and partisans

THE RED ARMY PIONEERED AIRBORNE OPERATIONS BUT OFTEN FAILED TO EXECUTE MISSIONS SUCCESSFULLY.

The official history of Russian and Soviet airborne forces began on August 2, 1930, when 12 parachutists were dropped during maneuvers in the Moscow Military District. Prior to maneuvers, the volunteers conducted several practice jumps during their six days of training under the tutelage of Air Force pilot Leonid Minov. Minov himself had only three jumps under his belt, having received his training in the United States only a short time before.

This experiment created excitement among Soviet military theoreticians and commanders. The vertical dimension of airborne operations fit well within the overall framework of the Soviet "deep battle" concept, and the airborne forces expanded rapidly, numbering almost 10,000 men by 1935. That same year, during maneuvers in the Kiev Military District, 1,200 paratroopers were dropped in front of impressed foreign military observers. Airborne soldiers captured an airfield, allowing conventional infantry with light tanks and artillery to be flown in.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the Soviet airborne forces were an independent branch of the RKKA (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army), subordinated directly to the Supreme Command. There were 10 airborne corps of three brigades plus several small formations, with five more in various formation stages. Each brigade of 3,000 men consisted of four airborne battalions, a mortar battalion, antiaircraft machine-gun company, reconnaissance, sapper, and signal companies.

Combat deployment of airborne soldiers began soon after the German invasion; however, missions were small in scale, tactical in nature, and for most soldiers it was a one-way trip. For example, on July 14, 1941, a company of 64 men from the 214th Airborne Brigade was dropped near Mogilev. Their mission was to destroy a small German convoy, which was halted to refuel. After engaging the enemy, 34 paratroopers returned; the rest were killed or captured.

During 1941, airborne forces were often deployed in a regular infantry role. Only after the Germans were repulsed at Moscow and the Soviet forces went on the offensive at the end of the year did the airborne forces begin taking an offensive role.

The largest Soviet airborne operation of World War II took place during fighting around Vyazma in January and February 1942. German forces were partially surrounded, and the Soviet command developed a plan to cut them off. Over a period of nine days, more than 7,300 paratroopers were dropped under adverse weather conditions. The operation was a disaster, with the majority of airborne troopers becoming surrounded themselves. The depleted survivors fought their way out during the next several months.

After the Dnieper operation, there were further small-scale missions; however, the airborne forces continued fighting primarily in an infantry role. Airborne soldiers were dropped in actions against Japan in 1945 as well. In that theater of operations their missions were largely to secure territory rather than take it from the enemy. □

undoubtedly reported that there were still plenty of survivors, desperately fighting and out of touch with their headquarters. During the next week, three more groups of paratroopers with radios were dropped. Most sources reported that these men disappeared without checking in, doubtless victims of German sweeps. On September 27, the southern detachment of paratroopers finally established tenuous radio contact with 1st Ukrainian Front headquarters.

On the north side of the drop zone, Major Lev gathered almost 100 soldiers, including Lieutenant Chukhrai. After losing many men in running fights with the Germans, their detachment was soon found by partisans. Once they had a chance to catch their breath, Major Lev ordered Chukhrai and two soldiers to attempt to reach higher headquarters and receive orders. It is apparent that neither Major Lev's detachment nor the partisan band had radio communications with the higher echelons.

After several difficult days of travel, Chukhrai and his companions managed to cross the front lines, navigate the river, and report in. Chukhrai's two companions were sent back with orders for Major Lev, while the future film director was kept on the Soviet side to help identify paratrooper stragglers dribbling in. From these survivors Lieutenant Chukhrai eventually learned that Major Lev's group had been wiped out.

As the days wore on, more and more paratroopers banded together. In the south, Colonel Sidorchuk, commander of the 5th Airborne Brigade, gathered almost 1,200 men in the Cherkassy woods, and roughly 1,000 more men were still alive around the northern drop zone. Overall, more than 40 groups were scattered in the drop zones, some of them as small as a dozen men, others larger than 200.

The majority of these groups were too large to hide and too small to defend themselves, and most of the men who survived the first few days around the northern drop zone eventually perished or were taken prisoner. Likhterman recalled how his group was destroyed. Initially, they attempted to fight to the river, hoping either to link up with other Soviet soldiers or to swim across. However, the German cordon was too tight and the beleaguered paratroopers bounced from one firefight to the next. Casualties mounted, and ammunition was dwindling. A dozen survivors were finally bottled up in a small ravine and taken prisoner. They were out of grenades and had only a few rounds of ammunition. After almost six harrowing months of imprisonment, Likhterman managed to escape and rejoin the advancing Red Army.

Waffen SS troops man their MG-42 near the Dnieper River on October 8, 1943. The armed wing of the SS, these troops were often fanatical Nazis who fought to the death. A disabled Soviet tank lies in the background.

The few remaining officers, led by Colonel Sidorchuk, worked hard at reorganizing the survivors. By early October, his roughly 1,200 paratroopers were formed into a provisional brigade of three battalions, plus four specialist platoons—reconnaisance, communications, combat engineers, and antitank (recoilless rifle).

Once communications with the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front became firmly established, Sidorchuk's force started receiving combat missions. Often in conjunction with partisans, paratroopers attacked German infrastructure and small units, carried out ambushes and acts of sabotage, and conducted thorough reconnaissance. A rough landing strip was laid out in the woods, allowing planes from the Soviet side to land in the occupied territory, bringing in supplies and instructions and taking out small numbers of wounded.

Fighting in the Bukrin Bend stalemated during October. The Soviet Twenty-seventh and Fortieth Armies, plus the Third Guards Tank Army, were in firm control of the Bukrin Bend. However, they were unable to break through determined German defenses. After reevaluating the situation, Zhukov and Vatutin shifted the main axis of attack to beachheads closer to Kiev, especially the Lutezh beachhead just north of the city. In a feat of operational skill, the 3rd Guards Tank Army was secretly withdrawn from Bukrin Bend, transferred to the east side of the river, and shifted north to Lutezh.

On November 3, Soviet ground forces launched a massive pincer offensive at Kiev, supported by Second Air Army. After hard fighting, the Ukrainian capital was liberated; and on the morning of November 6, Zhukov, Khrushchev, and Vatutin sent Stalin a congratulatory telegram, announcing liberation of the city.

Surviving paratroopers under Colonel Sidorchuk continued fighting in Bukrin Bend. During the night of November 13, in a coordinated attack with other Army units, they broke through German defenses and linked up with Soviet troops. In late November, still over 1,000 men strong, survivors of the 3rd and 5th Guards Airborne Brigades were returned to Moscow.

Even though the airborne operation did not unfold as planned, the presence of paratroopers in the German rear had a significant effect on the fighting in Bukrin Bend. Their operations pinned down significant German forces that otherwise would have been used against the Red Army forces in the beachhead. Three Red Army soldiers—Major A. Bluvshtein, Senior Lieutenant S. Petrosyan, and Private I. Kondratyev—were awarded their country's highest combat decoration, Hero of the Soviet Union. □

Victor Kamenir, a former U.S. Army sergeant, was born in Ukraine. He is now a police officer in Oregon. Cathy, Victor's wife of 16 years, is a nurse. They have two sons, Nick and Sam. Victor's first book, The Bloody Triangle: Defeat of Soviet Armor in the Ukraine, June 1941, *was published in January 2009.*

By Joseph Luster

WAR ON DEMAND

Get your downloadable action, pipin' hot.

There are plenty of deployment options out there for full-price retail warriors; those who would gladly plunk down on the latest available war experience on the platform of their choosing. Perhaps a more immediate endeavor, though, is the ever-growing market of downloadable titles, something that's become no stranger to the realm of games based on historic wars, including but not limited to World War II. Services like Steam have made this a reality—one oozing with variety at that—for some time on the PC, but consoles have only been getting the love for a relatively short period.

Last year saw the release of a major downloadable blockbuster, so to speak, with the cross-platform debut of *Battlefield 1943*. Significant here is not only the pricing of the title—an accessible $15 tag that surely boosted enlistment—but the quality and bang-per-buck ratio that practically puts it on par with its big brothers on store shelves. Though no such restrictions have ever existed on Playstation Network, the removal of a file size limit on Xbox Live Arcade has paved the way for grander downloadable fare, a trend that will no doubt continue to rise.

That's not to say that this will become the rule rather than the exception. After all, titles like last October's *Panzer General: Allied Assault* from Ubisoft and Petroglyph Games prove that there's plenty of room for everything from smaller strategy fare to full-on multiplayer shooters on the downloadable circuit. Let's dig in to some of the recent additions to this budding library.

Call of Duty Classic

PUBLISHER Activision
DEVELOPER Aspyr
SYSTEM(S) Xbox 360, PS3
AVAILABLE Now

This one seems like a no-brainer, right? After all, Infinity Ward's 2003 shooter is the de facto template for many similar titles that followed in its deeply-tread footsteps. Activision recently made the modern classic available for download via Xbox Live Arcade and Playstation Network, allowing veterans of the series to revisit its roots, while newcomers weened on the fresher entries can see where it all began.

At this point, *Call of Duty* is admittedly a bit dated, even with the high-def facelift to aid it in blending with the current crop of games. The campaign is, as the previous paragraph would imply, more valuable as a contextual glimpse into a lot of the series' established bells and whistles, as well as the few annoyances that have managed to stick around since the beginning.

What's made *CoD* special is the way it thrusts the player right into the battle, peppering the field with elaborate and at times unexpected action set pieces. They're all as deliberate as the surroundings in a ride at Epcot Center, but that doesn't make them any less spectacular. If your first brush with *CoD* was anything beyond *CoD2* or Treyarch's *CoD3*, though, the window of potential enjoyment with the first drastically diminishes. Hell, just the fact that you can't click in the left thumbstick to sprint in this one will make most gamers chomping for blood-pumping battles feel like they've been hit with an uncontrollable bout of lethargy.

Another downside to *Classic* is the emaciated multiplayer, which only allows up to eight-player battles. To put it in perspective, 32 players battled it out on PC back when it debuted, and eight is even shy of console standards at this point. It's nice for a different set of gamers to finally get a glimpse at the start of a storied franchise, but in comparison to the PC original, the entire package is just a tad bit gimped. Pick it up for a quick history lesson ... in gaming, that is. Pick up a book for a real one.

Toy Soldiers

PUBLISHER Microsoft Game Studios
DEVELOPER Signal Studios
SYSTEM(S) Xbox 360
AVAILABLE Now

Alright, to be fair, Signal Studio's *Toy Soldiers* is modeled after World War I, but considering the comparative lack of games focusing on this rather than the more prominent WWII, it's certainly worthy of mention. It's also quite good.

For those unfamiliar with tower defense games, they're essentially a blight upon this Earth that must be contained before all of humanity is blasted into oblivion. It may not be that dire, but there are a lot of these games floating around, especially on the portable and downloadable market. The premise is simple: you have something to protect,

and a bold procession of ne'er-do-wells wish to do it harm. In order to stop them, objects—be they archer outposts, hacking goblins or, in this case, army artillery—must be placed along the path to impede their progress.

The setting for this particular brand of military defense is, appropriately, a child's toy collection. In this microcosm of war, plastic army men come from one end of the elaborate diorama to the other, passing through a customizable gauntlet of weaponry, with the sole purpose of invading and ultimately taking out the other player's Toy Box.

In the solo mode, the focus lies on protecting your own from the computer throughout both British and German campaigns. Microsoft, having published the title, sees it as something along the lines of *Battlefield,* albeit more accessible. In the end, that's going to be up to individual players and their tastes for strategy. For me, tower defense games can actually be pretty stressful affairs, with on-screen indicators reminding you that your Toy Box is in turmoil, while the approaching army gets more and more heavy duty; plastic soldiers making way for bigger units and greater numbers.

The variety of options within each game may be what makes or breaks the experience for some. It's nice to be able to build, upgrade, and oversee units one moment, and then zoom in for a more personal touch the next. *Toy Soldiers* allows you to take full control of individual units, from massive mounted guns to sniper towers to planes; soaring over combat and taking out infantry from above. This is where players familiar with third- and first-person shooters will feel most at home, as the AI takes over on the rest of the defense as you go all one-man-plastic-army on your foes.

Multiplayer games up the ante in almost every way, whether the battleground is online, or in the living room via split-screen presentation. The extra work involved comes in the form of managing an offensive while also holding a constant watch over your Toy Box; taking care of resources and deploying a sturdy defense.

The toy-based, plastic-loaded theme makes *Toy Soldiers* one of the few, if only, family friendly war games on the market. Keep that in mind next time you're looking to engage in militaristic combat with your closest of kin.

NEW FRONTS: UPCOMING BATTLES

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
Stainless Games

SYSTEM(S)
Xbox 360

AVAILABLE
June 30, 2010

Risk: Factions

Risk is commonly associated with Napoleonic-era politics and, first and foremost, world domination. It's also associated with tattered friendships, bitter grudges, and pure, burning hatred for your fellow man. Such is the power of the classic board game, and it's a power that Electronic Arts is hoping to wield and reshape with the upcoming downloadable title, *Risk: Factions.*

Developer Stainless Games has our world split up via five playable factions, each represented in a cartoony manner, on a quest for missile silos and control over the entire map. A roll of the dice in some instances will kick off Overkill moments, furthering advantages and unlocking awards throughout the flame-stoking grudge match.

Perhaps the injection of humor into the legendary game will soothe the ire it inevitably generates. Eh, probably not, but it's definitely something to look out for on the horizon.

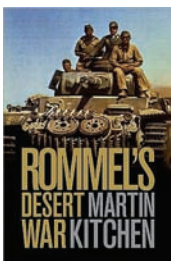
By Al Hemingway

The Desert Fox in North Africa

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel may have demonstrated exceptional skills on the battlefield, but on the political side, they were sorely lacking.

National Archives

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE BATTLEFIELD EXPLOITS OF GERMAN Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. His exemplary leadership skills, especially during the North Africa campaign, received unending praise from Adolf Hitler. Joseph Goebbels's propaganda machine transformed him into a god-like figure in the eyes of the German people. His sobriquet, "The Desert Fox," was certainly well earned.



Although Rommel was an exceptional military leader, he did not get along with many of his superiors; especially those within the Italian Army. He frequently ignored orders and proceeded with his own agenda, which infuriated both the Italians and the German high command.

In his new book ***Rommel's Desert War*** (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, 508 pp., photos, maps, notes, index, $40, hardcover), Canadian historian Martin Kitchen has done extensive research and revealed previously unused Italian sources to provide the reader an unbiased view of the North Africa campaign from all perspectives.

Rommel's first taste as an armored unit commander was not granted until February 1940, just months prior to the invasion of France. He performed well, despite the jealousy of other senior officers, during the campaign. Although he received kudos from the high command, some had doubts about his heading a corps in future battles until he had "greater experience and a better sense of judgment."

Despite the criticism from his fellow officers, Rommel was given command of the Afrika Korps in February 1941 by Hitler. He was sent to Libya to reinforce the Italian Army fighting the British there. The Führer was not keen on dispatching troops to North Africa because he was secretly planning Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union. As Kitchen points out, Hitler's motives were purely political. From the outset, he firmly believed that a pact with Italy "should be the cornerstone of German foreign policy."

For two long years, Rommel's men fought numerous battles and skirmishes in an attempt to conquer the region. He drove his troops beyond their limits. He even relieved battalion commanders on the spot if, in his opinion, they were not performing their duties to his high standards. His harsh command style did not make him popular with his army.

In spite of his stern behavior, Rommel did not fight a war of hate, as he called it. His command was never accused of any war crimes. He openly refused to execute Jews or deport them to France where they surely would have ended up in concentration camps. He treated Allied prisoners of war in an equal fashion, defying orders to shoot certain prisoners who participated in behind-the-line commando-style raids. He felt that they were military men performing their duties and did not deserve such inhumane treatment.

As a tactician and strategist, Rommel was superb. But he lacked administrative and logistical talents sorely needed if such a massive military campaign was to be successful. Often, he could not be located because he had driven miles to the front to oversee a battle firsthand. His absence proved to be detrimental on numerous occasions. His supply lines were stretched to their limit, causing a serious breach in his ability to carry out his mission. When approached with the problem, he would dismiss it.

Kitchen's excellent book delves into Rommel's behavior on the battlefield and, more importantly, his relationships with his superiors and subordinates. His

Rommel confers with General Ettore Bastico, commander in chief of Axis forces in North Africa. Rommel was sent to Libya to aid the Italians in their fight against the British.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Racism in the Islamic World

How can peace prevail in the Middle East in the face of Islamic bigotry and hate? When will moderate Muslims speak out?

For years, the U.N., led by Islamic and Arab nations and their sympathizers, has accused Israel of racism and "apartheid." That is nonsense, of course. But the world consistently turns a blind eye to open, seething anti-Semitism in Islamic society.

What are the facts?

In one of the most astonishing propaganda coups ever, a United Nations conference on racism, which took place in Durban South Africa, declared that Zionism is racism. No wonder the U.S. and Israel walked out of the meeting, which was dominated by representatives of Islamic and Arab states and other anti-Israel forces, and whose conclusions were predictable from the outset.

The supreme irony of this conference was that it accused no other nation of racism—only Israel. In truth, Israel is perhaps the most racially and ethnically diverse and tolerant country in the world. More than half of Israel's Jewish population consists of people of color—blacks from Ethiopia and Yemen, as well as brown-skinned people from Morocco, Iran, Syria, Egypt and Israel itself. In addition, Israel's population includes more than one million Arabs, who enjoy the same civil rights as Jewish Israelis. In Israel hate speech is banned, and it is against the law to discriminate based on race or religion.

> "Until Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force."

In contrast, anti-Semitism—a poisonous form of racism directed specifically against the Jewish people—is rampant in most all Islamic societies. Not only is anti-Semitism commonplace in Muslim nations, but it is propagated shamelessly by their leaders, in state-sponsored media, and by Muslim clergy.

For example, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed declared in a speech to the Organization of Islamic Conference that, "today Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them." Imagine if an American president had made a similarly sweeping and bigoted statement about blacks, Latinos or any other race—what a justifiable uproar, perhaps even an impeachment, would ensue. Yet there was no condemnation by the Muslim world of Mr. Mohamed's comments. Rather, virtually all of the conference's Muslim leaders actually voiced their approval.

In response to a terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia in May 2004, Crown Prince Abdullah declared that "Zionism is behind [these] terrorist actions in the kingdom." (Zionism is the code word often used by Islamic anti-Semites for Jews.) Tom Lantos, the late U.S. Congressman, called the Prince's assertion "an outrage . . . blatant hypocrisy," but Islamic leaders were silent. In fact, millions of Muslims still insist that Zionists were behind the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

Anti-Semitism is expressed so freely and ubiquitously in most Islamic societies that no citizen can escape it. During Ramadan a few years ago, Egypt's state-controlled TV aired "Horseman Without a Horse," a program based on the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, in which Jews allegedly use the blood of non-Jews to make Passover matzot. In Iran, a TV series, "Zahra's Blue Eyes," portrays "Zionists" kidnapping Palestinian children and harvesting their organs.

Perhaps nowhere is the hatred of Jews more virulent than among the Palestinians. Most perniciously, Palestinian children are taught in school that Jews are descended from apes and pigs and that the most noble thing they can do is to kill Jews. Muslim clerics like Imam Ibrahim Madiras, an employee of the Palestinian Authority, declared in a television sermon, "Jews are a cancer" and later that, "Muslims will kill the Jews . . . [and] rejoice in Allah's victory." No surprise, then, that the 1982 doctoral dissertation of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas makes the astounding claim that "Zionists" collaborated with the Nazis to annihilate the Jewish people in order to drive the survivors to Palestine.

Anti-Semitism and the prospects for peace. Islamic anti-Semitism permeates the Arab Middle East and creates an atmosphere in which Jews are reviled and represented as subhuman. How can the Palestinian people embrace peace with a people represented by their religious and political leaders as dehumanized, evil beings? Even more importantly, how can Israel be expected to trust a so-called peace partner who expresses abject hatred and murderous intent toward Jews on a daily basis? Yet the U.S. and many European nations continue to demand that Israel make one-sided sacrifices for peace with a people steeped in racism and committed to its destruction.

Until Islamic leaders muster the integrity to relentlessly condemn anti-Semitism (and its evil twin, anti-Zionism), we can't expect Israel to accept a forced peace with the Palestinians. Likewise, until moderate Muslims reject racism in all forms, they can't expect Islam to enjoy full respect as a political and spiritual force among the world's people.

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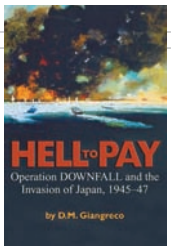
uncanny ability to appear at will when least expected instilled fear in his opponents. Some of the Allied commanders, although respecting his skills, were careful to point out that making Rommel an unbeatable iconic figure would hurt the war effort.

"There exists a real danger that our friend Rommel is becoming a kind of magical or bogey-man to our troops, who are talking far too much about him," wrote British General Claude Auchinleck. "He is by no means a superman, although he is undoubtedly very energetic and able. Even if he were a superman, it would still be highly undesirable that our men should credit him with supernatural powers … I am not jealous of Rommel."



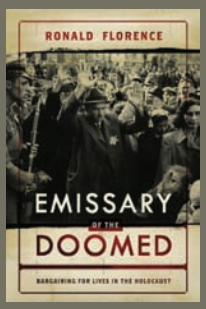
Hell to Pay: Operation DOWNFALL and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947 by D.M. Giangreco, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2009, 363 pp., photos, maps, index, $36.95, hardcover.

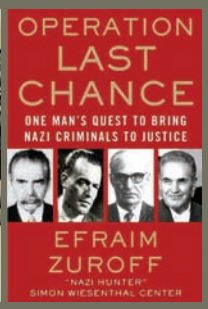
What if the Japanese had not surrendered after the U.S. dropped atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? What if the horrific blasts that produced horrendous casualties had

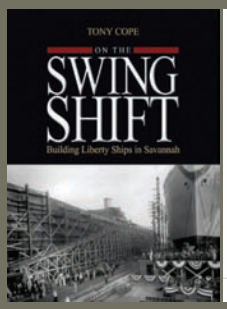
Short Burts

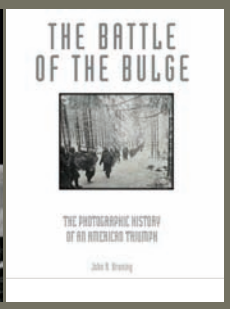
Emissary of the Doomed: Bargaining for Lives in the Holocaust by Ronald Florence, Viking Press, New York, 2010, 322 pp., notes, index, $27.95, hardcover.

Here is a captivating account of one of the saddest chapters of the conflict. The story revolves around Joel Brand, a Hungarian Jew who tried desperately to save his fellow countrymen from being transported









to the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp. He had aided the escapes of many to Hungary, but when the country was invaded by the Germans in March 1944, Brand looked for other methods to help them escape.

Brand was approached by the notorious SS officer Adolf Eichmann to help in making a deal with the Allies. Eichmann wanted to trade the lives of one million Jews for trucks and food supplies for the Germans. In the end, the deal never materialized because the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Allies would not agree to it. To his dying day Brand remained a very bitter man because of this.

Operation Last Chance: One Man's Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice by Efraim Zuroff, Palgrave McMillan, New York, 2009, 256 pp., notes, $25.00, hardcover.

Even after the passage of more than six decades, Nazi hunter Efraim Zuroff remains in relentless pursuit of Nazis who are known to have committed atrocities during the war. In 2002, he initiated Operation Last Chance, an all-out effort to track down, capture, and bring to justice those who have escaped his web.

Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Israel and an authority on the Holocaust, Zuroff has managed to amass a list of nearly 500 alleged ex-Nazis that are still alive. Many are living under aliases and have escaped detection through the years. Zuroff knows that many are older and may be in poor health, but his last-ditch attempt to snare these perpetrators is to honor the memory of those slaughtered in the Nazi death camps.

Diary of a War by W.A.P. Manser, Tommies Guides, United Kingdom, 2009, 192 pp., photos, $19.50, softcover.

This is an exciting book of one RAF pilot's experiences during the war. First-person memoirs can be an excellent source for the reader to obtain a feel for what was going on during that period. And Manser certainly was in the thick of it. He traveled to the United States to train as a flyer and eventually flew the Hawker Hurricane in Africa and the Mediterranean area. He was taken prisoner by the Germans when his aircraft crash-landed on the island of Crete during a raid. He was transported to Germany and was released at war's end. The author certainly does a marvelous job in describing the people and places he encountered during his time as a pilot and a POW.

On the Swing Shift: Building Liberty Ships in Savannah by Tony Cope, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2009, 238 pp., photos, notes, index, $26.95, hardcover.

Amazingly, 88 of the nearly 3,000 Liberty Ships built during World War II came out of Savannah, Georgia. These cargo vessels, approximately 45 feet long with a speed of between 11 and 15 knots, were extremely vital to the war effort. They symbolized America's industrial might as the sturdy boats made their way around the globe delivering much needed supplies to Allied troops overseas. The nearly 45,000 workers at the Southeastern Shipbuilding Corporation in Savannah, many of them female, can take justifiable pride in their accomplishment. Cope has gathered more than 100 taped interviews with shipyard employees, merchant seaman, and Navy and Coast Guard personnel, to pay tribute to these dedicated workers who assisted in defeating the Axis powers by building these vessels.

The Battle of the Bulge: The Photographic History of an American Triumph by John R. Bruning, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2009, 288 pp., photos, maps, notes, index, $50.00, hardcover.

Numerous books have been written about this subject. However, many World War II buffs just cannot get enough of the fighting that took place during the period from late December 1944 to early January 1945, commonly referred to as the Battle of the Bulge. This coffee table book is chock full of great photographs and richly detailed maps so the reader can follow along very easily. But rather than just concentrating on the siege of Bastogne, this book has chapters devoted to explaining the lesser known battles fought during this important period of World War II.

Despite the surprise and severity of the German blitzkrieg, U.S. forces held firm and, by doing so, created a legend that lives on in the minds of the American people today. Hitler's eleventh-hour strategy to punch a hole in the Allied lines failed miserably and drove another death nail into the Nazi coffin. □

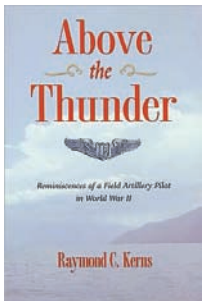
instead steeled the Japanese people and Emperor Hirohito hd ordered the Japanese homeland to be defended to the death?

Military historians have argued these very questions since the end of World War II. One controversial aspect was the projected number of American and Japanese deaths that would have occurred if such an invasion did, in fact, take place. Some have indicated that the dead and wounded were exaggerated to justify the unleashing of nuclear weapons and obtain revenge upon a foe that had caught the United States by surprise at Pearl Harbor.

For nearly two decades, editor and historian D.M. Giangreco has done an outstanding job in countering this theory. He has amassed a plethora of numbers and figures that support his conclusion: the Japanese were preparing to defend their country at all costs.

Japan did open secret negotiations with the Soviet Union in 1945 in hopes of ending the war early. But as the author points out: "The fanatical Japanese militarists retained their grip on the decision-making process until the simultaneous shocks of the atom bombs and Soviet entry into the war in August 1945 stampeded Japan's leaders into an early capitulation."

Despite this peace overture, Japan had secretly stockpiled ammunition, aviation fuel, and other supplies for the impending invasion. There were more than 18,000 Kamikaze pilots and nearly 13,000 aircraft poised to strike. Fortifications were built that would have dwarfed those confronted during any island campaign thus far in the Pacific. American deaths were estimated to be between 1.7 million and 4 million with another 5 to 10 million Japanese killed and wounded as well. It indeed would have been hell to pay.



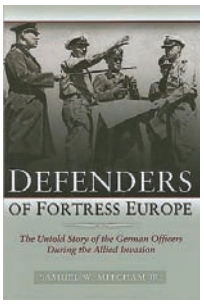
Above the Thunder: Reminiscences of a Field Artillery Pilot by Raymond C. Kerns, The Kent State University Press, Kent, OH, 2009, 305 pp., photos, index, $24.95, hardcover.

Here is a fascinating book written about a subject that has received scant attention over the years. The author, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, spent World War II flying the L-4 Piper Cub in the Pacific with the 33rd Infantry Division in New Guinea and the Philippines. Not only was Kerns an aviator, but he also fought at times as an infantryman if he had to make an emergency landing.

The author's story is a slice of the American dream. He was born in Kentucky, and his father was a struggling tobacco farmer. His parents divorced when he was 11 years old, and he quit school to help on the farm. He enlisted in the Army prior to World War II and was stationed at Schofield Barracks on Oahu when the Japanese attacked. Kerns quickly commandeered a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) and fired bursts at the passing Zeros.

Despite his lack of education, Kerns became an L-4 pilot. The aircraft, dubbed the grasshopper, proved to be a valuable asset during the conflict. Pilots such as Kerns flew in these slow-moving rickety planes as spotters and braved enemy fire to coordinate artillery operations.

This is a wonderful account of heroic men braving the elements and the enemy to perform an important role. Although Kerns would not consider himself a hero, he is one in the memory of all the infantrymen he served with.

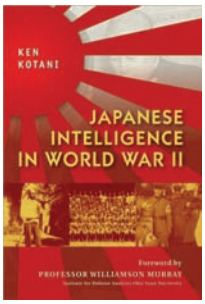


Defenders of Fortress Europe: The Untold Story of the German Officers During the Allied Invasion by Samuel W. Mitcham, Jr., Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2009, 256 pp., photos, maps, notes, index, $27.50, hardcover.

Just how good were the German commanders facing the Allies from June 6, 1944, from the D-Day invasion until Germany capitulated in May 1945? Because of their military mystique both the German high command and the ordinary foot soldier were often thought of as supermen who could not be defeated on the battlefield.

As military historian Samuel W. Mitcham points out, however, such was not the case. He carefully scrutinizes each of the top commanders at D-Day, the fight for the hedgerows, St. Lo, Caen, the Allied breakout, and the fall of the Third Reich itself. Much has been written about Erwin Rommel, Albert Kesselring, and Alfred Jodl, but the author also gives vital background information on their subordinates.

Another interesting aspect of the book is a chapter titled, "What Happened to the Defenders of Fortress Europe?" In it Mitcham gives a brief synopsis of their lives and what became of them at war's end. Some were executed as war criminals, and others, amazingly, lived well into their 80s or 90s. Mitcham's book is a must for any reader interested in this subject.



You'll Be Sor-ree! A Guadalcanal Marine Remembers the Pacific War by Sid Phillips, Valor Studios, Montoursville, PA, 2010, 205 pgs., photos, softcover.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Sidney Phillips of Mobile, Alabama, could not wait to enlist. Just 17 years old, he tried the Navy but settled on the Marine Corps after the recruiting sergeant told him that he would put him "eyeball to eyeball with the Japs."

The sergeant was not joking. After Boot Camp at Parris Island and infantry training, Phillips was sent to New River, North Carolina later to be renamed Camp LeJeune. From there he sailed to New Zealand and then, on August 7, 1942, landed on the main island of Guadalcanal. For the next four months, Phillips and his buddies from Co. H, 2nd Bn., 1st Marines endured starvation, constant shelling from enemy warships offshore and firefights, such as the Battle of the Tenaru on August 21, to defend Henderson Field.

Phillips's unit was then sent to New Zealand for rest and in December 1943 they invaded Cape Gloucester, situated on the western tip of New Britain. In addition to fighting the wily Japanese, the Marines had to contend with some of the most unforgiving climate in the entire Pacific Theater.

After the war, Phillips became a doctor in his hometown of Mobile. He was featured in the Ken Burns documentary *The War* and the upcoming HBO miniseries *The Pacific*.

"Of extreme importance as to what carried them through it all was they were Depression kids and had never had very much of anything as civilians, plus, in my opinion, American humor and the optimism of youth and pride in being an American. Added to this was the additional pride of being a United States Marine," he later wrote.

Japanese Intelligence in World War II by Ken Kotani, Osprey Publishing, New York, 2009, 224 pp., photos, notes, index, $24.95, hardcover.

Amazingly, little has been written about the Japanese intelligence network during World War II. And with good reason. There has been very little information forthcoming from the historical archives that had not been destroyed by Japanese officials at the end of the conflict.

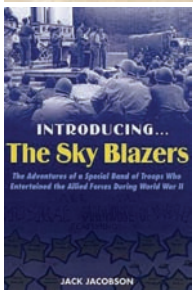
Here, at last, is a comprehensive account of

the secret inner sanctum of the Japanese intelligence community. Ken Kotani, a fellow at the National Institute for Defense Studies in Japan, has translated his work into English so historians and other interested readers can gain a firsthand knowledge of this clandestine group. Kotani provides a clear understanding of how the Japanese intelligence system worked or, in some cases, failed.

"It was not so much a failure of the intelligence organizations themselves as a massive failure of the culture and bureaucratic organization of the Japanese military from top to bottom," wrote Williamson Murray, professor emeritus at Ohio State University, in his foreword to the book.

Jealousies among the Army and Navy caused serious breaches in national security. When the Japanese Army learned that the Americans had broken their navy's code, they deliberately chose not to inform the Navy. This may be unfathomable to some, but understanding the extreme cultural differences between the two arms of the military, it does makes perfect sense.

Kotani reveals another fascinating tidbit in his book—present-day Japanese intelligence has many of the same faults that its World War II predecessors had. Things such as poor status, no centralized organization, and the processing of the information received are some examples of these shortfalls. This book is a real eye-opener and should be on every reader's bookshelf.



The Road to Big Week: The Struggle for Daylight Air Supremacy Over Western Europe, July 1942-February 1944 by Eric Hammel, Pacifica Military History, Pacifica, CA, 2009, 380 pp., index, notes, $34.50, softcover.

Noted military historian Eric Hammel has written another gem for those World War II buffs that have a keen interest in the air war over Europe. He traces the battle for air superiority during the conflict back to its infancy at the close of the World War I through the trials and tribulations of air pioneer Brig. Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell to the dark, early days following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, where the Japanese proved without a doubt that the mighty battleship could be sunk by bombers.

All of these events, coupled with the hard work and sacrifices of other military men who saw the advantages of controlling the skies culminated in what would be known as Big Week. This was a massive aerial bombardment that lasted a week to bring Nazi Germany to her knees. It started in late February 1944 and involved aircraft from the 8th, 9th, and 15th U.S. Air Forces. Together with the Royal Air Force's night-flying Bomber Command, the aircraft rained destruction upon Hitler's aircraft production plants and his fighter defense force.

"Big Week foreshadowed the incineration of both German industry and the Luftwaffe, and in itself justified the blending of the separate American bomber and fighter doctrines that had begun to emerge in the early 1920s, then progressed bloodily into 1942, and dramatically accommodated themselves to real war during the latter months of 1943," writes Hammel.

Introducing … The Sky Blazers: The Adventures of a Special Band of Troops That Entertained the Allied Forces During World War II by Jack Jacobson, Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2009, 224 pp., photos, $26.95, hardcover.

Ask any GI and they will tell you that USO shows and other live entertainment were a huge boost in morale. These singers, dancers, comedians, and other performers traveled everywhere, sometimes under hazardous conditions, to make sure the troops were entertained.

This book is about one such group and the two soldiers that started it. Jack "Jake" Jacobson, a comic, and his friend Murray "Duke" Davison, a jazz trumpet player, were intent upon having a career in show business. Then came December 7, 1941, and the dreams of stardom were dashed. Both enlisted in the Army and, while traveling to North Africa, somehow persuaded 9th Army Air Corps commander General Lewis Brereton to let them play for the troops.

The pair enjoyed so much success that Brereton decided to form a special unit strictly to entertain the men. It was called the Combat Special Services Entertainment Unit. Jacobson and Davison gathered a talented group of singers, musicians, and comedians and dubbed themselves the Sky Blazers.

Whether they were sleeping in foxholes, on the front lines, or playing at the Royal Albert Hall in London, the troupe spent more than two years playing for Allied audiences. Here is a good book about a completely different side of the war—and a subject that would probably bring a smile to all those who remember watching the Sky Blazers perform. □

insight

Continued from page 27

seemed to be more a Fascist than any other Englishman I have met. Recent English criticism of Italy and especially Germany with reference to their barbarism in Spain bothered him."

Although Lothian's country estates were often the meeting places for many prominent British appeasers, he began to see the folly of this strategy after Munich and admitted to Vansittart that he had been wrong in his assessment of German aims. Just prior to the outbreak of World War II, Lothian urged Halifax to bring Churchill into the government and to mobilize the Royal Navy as a show of British strength to the Nazis.

Unfortunately, Lothian's new approach, as well as his more serious opinion of Hitler, came too late. In May 1939, he wrote, "In the last few months I have been driven to the conclusion that the organization of resistance to Hitler is the necessary preliminary to a real settlement."

It is clear that during the appeasement decade British politicians wanted to see Germany once more an equal partner in Europe, perhaps, to be a sentinel against the spread of Bolshevism. For those Britons who desired an Anglo-German accord, the Nazi program of internal violence against Jews, Socialists, intellectuals, clergy, union leaders, and others could be justified. After all, had not Hitler preached that his foreign policy was one of friendship with Britain and peace in Europe?

The ruling British elite and their unofficial ambassadors were gullible as the warnings from men like Rumbold, Phipps, Wigram, and Vansittart became progressively muted by political pressure from both Baldwin and Chamberlain.

The end of the Chamberlain appeasement government came, according to Manchester in Churchill's biography, "when the House of Commons, in a revolt of conscience, wrenched power from them and summoned to the colors the one man who had foretold all that had passed, who had tried, year after year, alone and mocked, to prevent the war by urging the only policy which would have done the job. And now, in the desperate spring of 1940, with the reins of power at last firm in his grasp, worthy of all they had been and meant, to arm the nation, not only with weapons but also with the mace of honor, creating in every English breast a soul beneath the ribs of death." □

Jon Diamond practices medicine and lives in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *Currently, he is working on a book about Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell.*

naval victory

Continued from page 51

Guadalcanal on November 13, and, according to Morison, he "became the hero of the South Pacific during the short month that remained in his valiant life." His subordinates reported that they had combined to sink three Japanese cruisers and four destroyers. Scott was inclined to regard this evaluation as wishful thinking.

Although the Americans had inflicted much greater losses on the Japanese, the Battle of Cape Esperance cost them one destroyer, *Duncan,* sunk; another, *Farenholt,* damaged; and two cruisers, *Boise* and *Salt Lake City,* damaged. Also, Admiral Joshima's group had landed its men and equipment on Guadalcanal.

The headline of the October 13, 1942, edition of *The New York Times* announced, "30-MINUTE COMBAT; Our Ships sink Cruiser, Four Destroyers and Transport At Night. US DESTROYER IS LOST." The story went on to report, "In a midnight battle with Japanese warships in the Solomon Islands, United States warships sank one Japanese heavy cruiser, four destroyers and a transport, and repulsed an enemy attempt to land more troops on Guadalcanal, the Navy Department announced tonight."

The story was more accurate than the version given by Scott's subordinates but was also largely wishful thinking.

After the Battle of Cape Esperance, the sailors of the U.S. Navy now knew that they were capable not only of fighting the enemy at night but also of giving the Japanese a good drubbing. The Tokyo Express, as the Japanese reinforcement runs were nicknamed, was no longer completely safe in the darkness. The U.S. confidence that had been so badly damaged at Savo Island had now been restored.

The Americans also gained valuable experience in night tactics and in the use of radar. Still, Cape Esperance showed that a much more thorough knowledge of radar was needed, which led to new training courses in both radar and in night combat.

Luck, preparation, and technology had combined to give the Americans a much needed victory. Morison summed up the outcome of the fighting: "At the very depth of this winter of our discontent came the battle off Cape Esperance—which, if far short of glorious summer, gave the tired Americans a heartening victory and the proud Japanese a sound spanking." ■

Author David A. Johnson has written extensively for WWII History. *He resides in Union, New Jersey.*

ordnance

Continued from page 21

the C-47's finest hour.

While the airborne operations in the European theater, the Hump Airlift, and the New Guinea missions were their most important, the Douglas transports were a familiar sight all over the world. Army C-47s supported combat operations in the Aleutians, while the Navy and Marine Corps established transport squadrons for duty in the islands of the Central Pacific with their own C-47s, which were given the naval designation of R4D. It was probably the Navy and Marine crews who gave the DC-3 its most famous name—Gooney Bird. Nature's gooney birds are a species of albatross that are unique to Midway atoll, where sailors and Marines had been entertained by the ungainly creatures long before Midway became famous in mid-1942.

By 1943 the U.S. military was active all over the world as ferry and transport routes were developed over which young, inexperienced crews delivered bombers, fighters, and transports to combat squadrons overseas. Engine trouble, bad weather, and enemy action led to the loss of aircraft and crews who went down in the ocean or over hostile terrain. The Air Transport Command developed its own search and rescue units to look for downed airmen, and C-47s were equipped for the role. Some C-47s were equipped with skis to allow landings close to downed airmen in Arctic terrain. The C-47C was equipped with giant Edo floats to allow water landings. Tests were even conducted with a glider version of the C-47, when an early model was converted to become the XCG-17.

On May 5, 1945, the 10,000th DC-3 was delivered to the United States Army Air Forces; all but 500 were built after Pearl Harbor. By the end of 1944, all the DC-3s that had been procured from the airlines for military use had been returned. The airlines also benefited from the military production, as hundreds of C-47s and C-53s became surplus to the military's needs and were released for civilian purchase.

Immediately after the war, the C-47s were instrumental in airlifting supplies to areas that had been devastated by the conflict and providing support for occupying forces. Unlike most other U.S. military aircraft of World War II, the C-47 remained in active military service during both the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. □

A professional pilot, author Sam McGowan is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He resides in Missouri City, Texas.*

king company

Continued from page 39

however, did not change the essential character of the company. No matter how hard things got in the Bulge, the solid cadre of "Lindern men" always held the company together and kept it going.

There were some new officers. George Prewitt moved up to command a platoon, receiving his field commission on December 19. He refused to let any of his men salute him or call him sir, though. He still worked for a living.

There were medals, as well. A total of 21 Bronze Stars were awarded to King Company men for the action at Lindern. Lieutenants Romersberger and Pozyck both received the medal, as did Sergeants Prewitt, Matuska, and Humphrey. So did Private Robert Nordli, who stopped a Tiger tank with an M1. Two of the Bronze Stars were awarded posthumously.

Another posthumous Bronze Star went to First Lieutenant Garlington, who had brought forward the only platoon of Item Company to get through. He made it through the initial advance, and showed both courage and initiative in his actions covering King's right flank, but he was mortally wounded by German artillery fire the following day. Garlington was a graduate of The Citadel, had in fact been the class valedictorian, and great things were expected of him. He did not have long to make good on those expectations, but he made the most of the time he had.

First Lieutenant Leonard Reed Carpenter, the man who led King Company forward and held them together all through that long day, was awarded the Silver Star. He continued to lead King Company during the Bulge, the assault crossing of the Roer, and on into Germany, right up through March 1945, when he was rotated out for 30 days of R&R. The war ended before he returned. Some of the men felt the R&R saved his life; he continued to lead from the front, and, by March, many felt his luck had about run out.

They were wrong, however, and it was not the first time they had been wrong about him. A junior merchandizing executive before the war, a white-gloved, spit-and-polish martinet of an executive officer in stateside training, Carpenter had emerged as a calm, courageous, and resourceful leader in the crucible of combat. There had been a time when no one in the company—except perhaps George Prewitt—would have thought it possible. ■

First-time contributor Frank Chadwick resides in Macungie, Pennsylvania.

rudolph hoess

Continued from page 61

interrogated him at great length for three consecutive days. Harris was profoundly troubled to realize that the mass-murdering commandant of Auschwitz was not in fact touched by psychopathic lunacy at all. In reality he found Hoess to be an outwardly normal man with a demeanor not unlike that of a bland, ordinary grocery clerk.

It was perhaps the fact that he was so ordinary that made Hoess so extraordinary. That this seemingly ordinary person could ruthlessly murder thousands in cold blood day after day was horrific, but that he could so easily transform into a humble, middle-class husband and family man was positively terrifying.

Bernard Clarke, a British sergeant who initially interrogated Hoess after his capture, also had the job of censoring the beautiful letters he wrote to his wife and children. Some brought a lump to his throat.

"There was two different men in that one man" Clarke concluded. "One was brutal with no regard for human life. The other was soft and affectionate."

Following his arrest, Hoess never saw his wife and children again, but their fate in the years after the war has remained a mystery. Some believe Hedwig Hoess remarried and emigrated to America with her children. Others claim she lived out her life in Australia.

Hoess did not appeal his death sentence, and former Auschwitz prisoners successfully petitioned the court to have him hanged on the grounds of the parent camp, immediately adjacent to the gas chamber.

The authorities feared that Oswiecim residents would attempt to lynch Hoess when he was being transferred to the site and enlisted armed guards to ensure that no one was admitted to the grounds without a special pass. It was a fitting irony that the last official execution in the camp in which Hoess had murdered so many was in fact to be his own.

The Polish press barely mentioned the hanging, but one of the former prisoners who witnessed the execution, Stanislaw Hantz, recalled, "(I thought) he would say something ... make a statement to the glory of the Nazi ideology that he was dying for. But no. He didn't say a word. And during his execution you thought: One life for so many millions ... is that not too little." ■

Author Richard Rule resides in Australia and has written for WWII History *on numerous occasions.*

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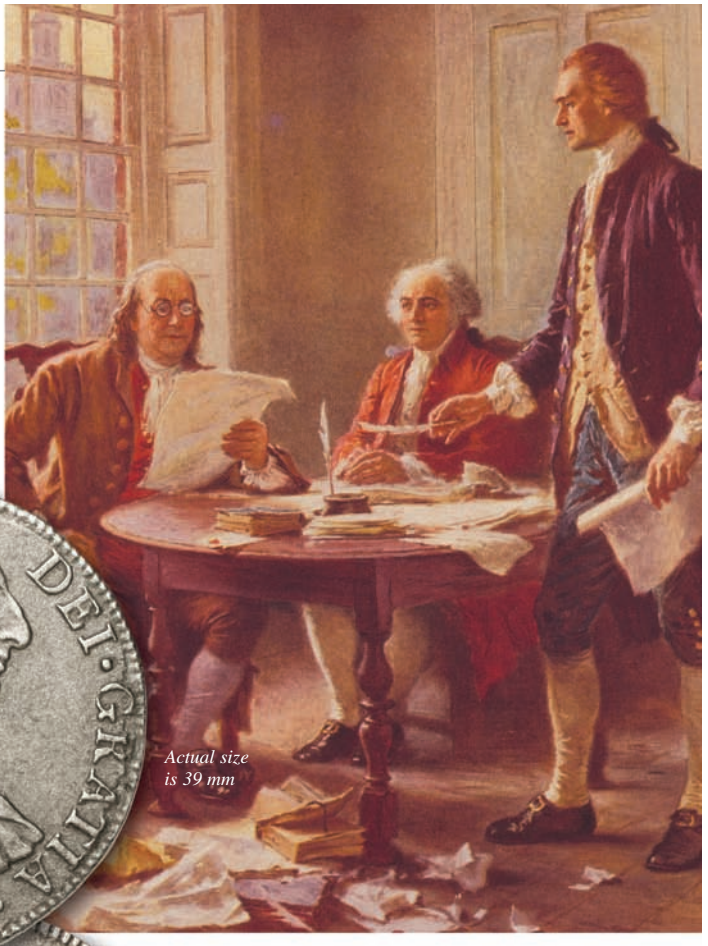

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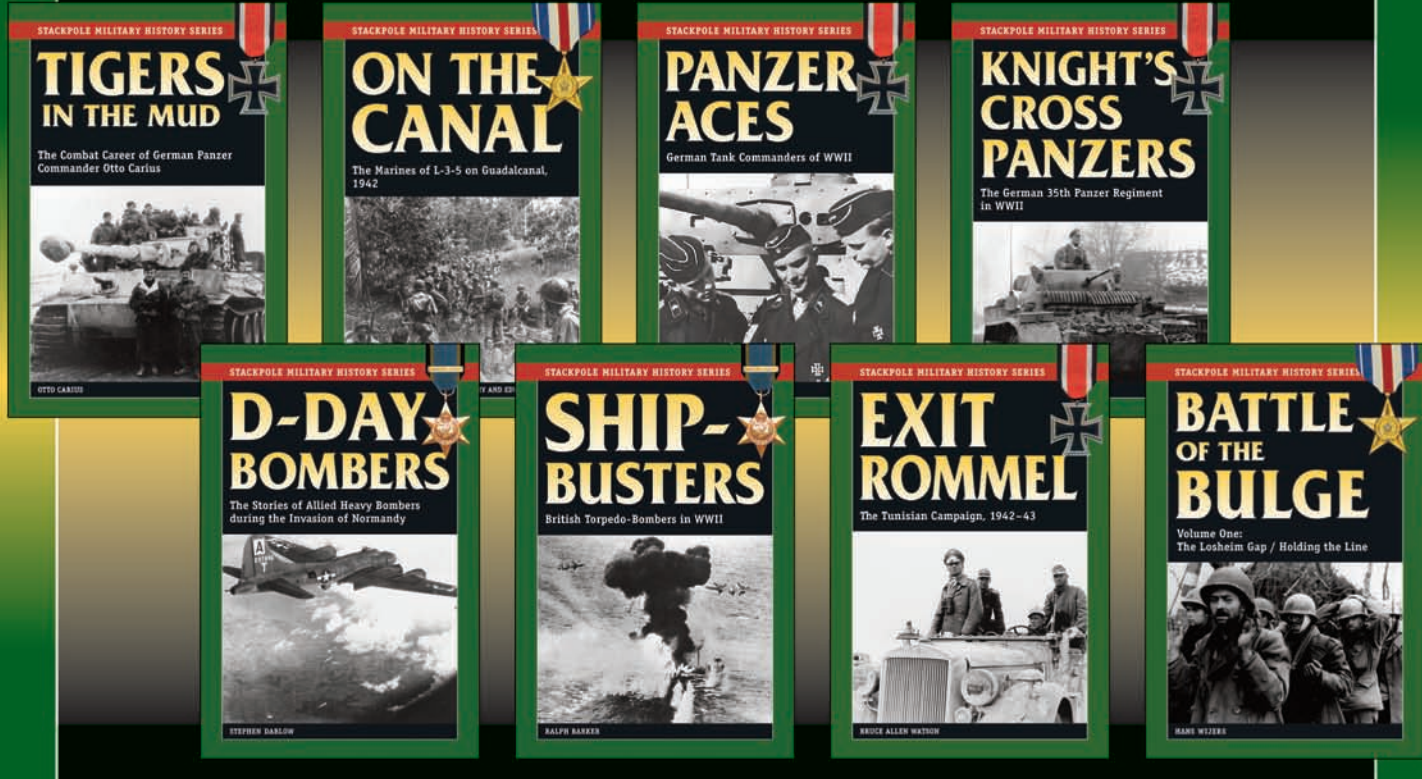

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