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COVER: Young Theodore Roosevelt is ready to lead the Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War. Photo © Bettmann/CORBIS.

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editorial

Doomed novelist Stephen Crane was no admirer of Theodore Roosevelt. The feeling was mutual.

AMONG THE SMALL BATTALION OF WAR CORRESPONDENTS on hand to witness the charge up San Juan Hill on July 1, 1898, was a slender, sallow young writer named Stephen Crane. Despite his unprepossessing appearance, Crane was regarded with something like awe by his fellow correspondents. He had recently published the greatest Civil War novel ever written, *The Red Badge of Courage,* and he wore about him an unmistakable aura of brilliance and doom. Suicidally careless in the face of gunfire, no one, perhaps not even Crane himself, expected him to live much longer.

That would have been fine with Colonel Theodore Roosevelt of the 1st Volunteer Cavalry, better known as the "Rough Riders." Besides being the romantic young writer's only real competition in the personal charisma sweepstakes in Cuba, Roosevelt had known Crane for several years and did not particularly like what he saw. Indeed, the two had an unhappy history going back to a much-publicized incident involving the writer, a pretty young prostitute, and a corrupt police officer destined to die on the electric chair.

The trouble started late one evening in September 1896, when Crane ran into a trio of "showgirls" at a saloon in New York's infamous Tenderloin district. He was researching, he said, a series of articles on the city's night life for William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*. Some time in the early morning hours of September 16, Crane and the women left the saloon and began walking down Broadway. While Crane was putting one of the women on a street car, a plainclothes policeman named Charles Becker approached the others and arrested one of them, Dora Clark, for soliciting. Crane loudly protested Clark's arrest and showed up in court the next morning to testify that she was innocent. Somewhat surprisingly—Clark was a well-known prostitute—the judge released her. She immediately sued Becker for false arrest.

The story was an instant media sensation. Newspapers defended or derided Crane for his involvement in the case, and the writer penned his own firsthand account of the incident, "The Adventures of a Novelist," for the *Journal*. He also sent a telegram to Police Commissioner Roosevelt, with whom he had corresponded amicably after Roosevelt sent him an admiring letter about *The Red Badge of Courage*. If Crane expected Roosevelt to take his side, he was sorely mistaken. Roosevelt had conducted a series of celebrated "night patrols" of his own in the Tenderloin, and he knew all too well the sordid nature of the district. He stood by Becker's version of the incident.

When Clark's suit came to trial, Crane was called again to testify. In an obvious case of police harassment, officers raided Crane's apartment beforehand and claimed to have found drug paraphernalia. Crane repeated his testimony against Becker, but fed up and frightened by the unwanted attention, the writer left New York for good a few weeks later. Becker subsequently was cleared of wrongdoing in the matter. A few years later, he was convicted of murdering a gambler for hire and thus became the first New York City policeman ever executed by the state.

The Clark incident fatally poisoned the Crane-Roosevelt relationship. When Crane arrived in Cuba to cover the Spanish-American War, the two men kept a careful distance from each other. In a way, it helped Crane's reporting, since he was forced to focus on the less-publicized Regulars, who had been shouldered aside by the glamorous Rough Riders. "Regulars Get No Glory," he entitled one of his dispatches. That was certainly not the case with Roosevelt, who at San Juan Hill gained glory enough for anyone, even if the most famous writer on the scene that day pointedly failed to mention him by name. □

Roy Morris Jr.

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By Ignacio Pullum

The UH-1 Iroquois helicopter, the "Huey," became an icon of the Vietnam War, ferrying troops to and from the battlefield.

AS AN ICON OF THE VIETNAM WAR AND AN ANGEL OF MERCY for American troops who fought there, the Bell UH-1 Iroquois, affectionately known as the "Huey," has gone on to become the most recognizable helicopter in the world. Fifty years after its birth, the Huey remains the only aircraft to be used by all branches of the United States military, including the Coast Guard. To American troops who were exposed to constant enemy fire, the Huey and those who flew them were angels from on high. To the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, they were angels of death.

For those who flew on it or actually flew it, the Hueys is embedded in their souls. In the eyes of the average 19-year-old ground soldier in Vietnam, the Huey represented nothing less than divine intervention. "The Huey was our best friend," says Freddie Clark, who fought in the legendary 1/9 "Walking Dead" Marine unit in Vietnam. "It was a big raggedy thing but it took you here and there. There's no way that we could have fought that war without it."

Pitted against an elusive enemy that utilized a complex network of underground tunnels to enable them to disappear into the jungle, American troops in Vietnam realized quickly that they would have to develop new tactics to gain the high ground, literally and figuratively. Gaining the high ground was exactly what the Huey was designed to do.

Helicopters were initially used in the Korean War to rescue downed pilots and provide reconnaissance and medical evacuation. The concept of rotary-wing aircraft being used for air assault had yet to be envisioned. Shortly after Korea, the Army realized that it needed a multipurpose aircraft whose primary function would be to evacuate the wounded from the battlefield. The Army tasked the Air Force with developing the new concept. On February 23, 1955, Bell Helicopter Company won the contract to build the 204 Series HU-1, nicknamed the "Huey." (The Department of Defense would later reverse the designation to the UH-1.) The Army initially ordered three prototypes. On October 22, 1956, the Huey made its maiden flight. A legend was born.

The United States Marine Corps initially used the H-34 helicopter, nicknamed the "Ugly Angel." After riding into battle aboard the rather awkward and bizarre-looking aircraft, Staff Sergeant Carl Christenson and 5,500 other Marines quickly found themselves fighting for life and limb in August 1965. Lt. Gen. Lewis Walt had launched an assault against the 1st Viet Cong Regiment; this was the first offensive military action

A UH-D "Huey" helicopter airlifts empty water cans from American-held Hill 742 northwest of Dak To in November 1967.

National Archives

conducted by a purely American military unit during the war. History would know it as Operation Starlite.

"We landed right next to the VC command post and we nearly got wiped out," Christenson recalled. "I remember the helicopters kept coming and coming and we had to get those guys out." The Marines immediately learned that destroying the enemy stronghold at Van Tuong would not be an easy task. Their opponents comprised the 60th and 80th Viet Cong Battalions and the 52nd Viet Cong Company.

Walt knew in the planning phase that to thwart and defeat the VC force, he would have to construct a definitive combined-arms force.

National Archives

Offshore were the USS *Galveston* and USS *Cabildo* to offer naval artillery support. The Marines from 3/3 conducted an amphibious landing. Under the command of Captain Paul Kelley, who would later become the commandant of the Marine Corps, Christenson and the rest of the 2/4 moved by airlift into a hot landing zone, where they met fierce opposition from the VC. The 2/4 were assisted by artillery fire support from a nearby artillery battery, the 3/12 Marines. Armed with the AK-47 assault rifle, a weapon superior to that of the M-14 rifle carried by the Marines, the Viet Cong unleashed a torrent of well-aimed fire.

The 1st Viet Cong Regiment was outnumbered by the Marines nearly 3 to 1. However, the AK-47 served as an equalizer in the face of the much larger Marine force. The Marines of India Company 3/3 learned of this as they were pinned down by the VC at Hill 30, while waiting for reinforcements that never arrived. Firepower from the AK-47s also managed to neutralize five Landing Vehicle Tracks and three flame tanks. As a result, what began as an assault mission by the 3/3 soon became a rescue mission. In the process, the 3/3 lost their company commander, Captain Bruce Webb. By the time the 3/7 Marines arrived at the position to launch a counteroffensive, the enemy was gone.

Operation Starlite was a bittersweet victory.

National Archives

ABOVE: Hueys prepare to pick up members of Company A, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry to airlift them to a reported enemy ammunition dump in Thang Binh province, 24 miles north of Chu Lai, Jan. 17, 1968. LEFT: Crew Chief Eddie Townley of the 20th Artillery shows SP4 William Love the proper way to load and arm aerial rockets on a UH-1B in July 1967. BELOW: Members of Joint Task Force Katrina load precious water supplies onto a UH-1N Huey in Gulfport, Mississippi, after the disastrous 2005 hurricane.

U.S. Army

Two Marines, Corporal Robert O'Malley and Lance Corporal Joe Paul, were awarded the Medal of Honor for their roles in the battle. A little over 600 Viet Cong were killed, while 45 Marines were killed in action. The battle taught the Marines several invaluable lessons about Vietnam: hydration was paramount in the intense heat, a more rapid-firing assault rifle was needed, and conventional vehicles such as personnel carriers, tanks, and other types of tracked vehicles were rendered useless in the thick jungle. Most of all, the Marines would need a rotary aircraft superior to the H-34.

Why the Marine Corps was slow to incorporate the Huey is open to debate. Some argue that the Marines, due to interservice rivalry, may have been reluctant to accept an aircraft designed for the Army. Others say that since the Navy was slow to procure the UH-1 in sufficient numbers, the aircraft was slow to trickle down to the Marines. Regardless of the reason, the inability to get the UH-1 to the Marines in massive quantities would come back to haunt them seven months later in the A Shau Valley.

Captain Norm Urban, a Marine H-34 pilot with the HMM-163 "Superchiefs," heard distress signals coming from an Army Special Forces camp in the A Shau Valley on March 11, 1966. The camp was completely surrounded by Viet Cong forces and the entire North Vietnamese Army's 235B Division. To further complicate matters, previous rescue attempts had failed as the enemy shot down a Marine A-4 Skyhawk, an Air Force AC-47, and an Army UH-1E. Upon hearing the calls for help, the pilots and crews of the Superchiefs sprang into action.

When the helicopters landed, they were immediately mobbed by panic-stricken soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), indigenous friendly personnel, and U.S. troops who rushed the aircraft. Because of the overwhelming weight loads, some of the H-34s were unable to take off. As Captain Urban would later relate, there were 20 soldiers in the helicopter's cabin and three or four on the struts. He ordered his crew to throw some of the ARVN troops off in order to gain lift capability. While his crew struggled with the frantic passengers, the enemy began "walking in" mortar rounds. Urban narrowly escaped, and his aircraft was riddled by bullets.

The next day, Urban was called in to rescue a downed Air Force pilot, Major "Buzz" Blaylock. Because of the H-34's inability to land at the location, the pilot would have to be extracted by cable. To prevent weight overload,

Urban had his crew throw all nonessential cargo overboard. Urban also had to burn up excess fuel and fly at high altitude, which caused extreme damage to the aircraft's engine. Blaylock was safely extracted, but it had now become apparent that the H-34 was not up to the task. The Huey would become the premier helicopter of the Marine Corps.

American strategists had long since concluded that the ground forces would need maximum firepower. With machine guns mounted on the aircraft, the Huey's future role in the war broadened. By hovering over the enemy, the door gunner had the ability to see what the troops on the ground could not and could subsequently rain lead down on the enemy, thus tipping the scale in favor of the American forces. Having flown 73 missions as a door gunner in Vietnam, retired Lt. Col. A. Michael Leahy said that a Huey with an M-60 barrel protruding from the bay door was the last thing an enemy soldier wanted to see. For some, it was literally the last thing they saw.

Going into a hot landing zone took nerves of steel. While the gunner sent rounds "down range," the enemy returned the favor at the highly visible and easy target. "When I went into a hot LZ, you just go on in and do it," said Leahy. "When you're behind an M-60 or a .50-caliber, there's not much that can stand up against you. God help a VC when he was in the open."

Leahy would later become a Huey pilot with the VMO-1, flying extensive, dangerous missions in some of the most volatile areas of the war. During Operation Foster in 1967, he narrowly escaped death when his aircraft crashed after receiving intense gunfire. "Several bullets hit the aircraft and cut the hydraulic line and the rotor," he recalled. "I could feel debris hitting my neck. If I had been standing, I wouldn't be here today." Now residing in Cary, North Carolina, the Philadelphia University of Art graduate operates his own studio and art gallery, where, through his artwork, the Huey is immortalized. His portrayals of the Huey in some of its most daring moments have won numerous awards and have appeared in several military publications.

In 1963, the UH-1 was being produced at approximately 20 per month. By the end of 1967, that figure had risen to 160, giving ample proof of its combat effectiveness. One of the immediate virtues of the aircraft was its durability. As Freddie Clark described it, "I rode on Hueys that looked liked someone had beaten all over it with a big hammer. Some were full of bullet holes and when we were in the air, you could see sparks flying out."

While serving in the Army as a part of a mechanized infantry unit, Private Nathaniel Walker was wounded when his armored personnel carrier hit a mine during a Viet Cong ambush. He was later evacuated on a Huey. "When you heard the rotors of the Huey coming you knew that you were alright," he said. "To see it was a sigh of relief. Hell was over, you were going home." Walker, who is now a sergeant first class in the Alabama Army National Guard with over 30 years of service, would receive the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his actions. By war's end, he would be one of the many thousands of American wounded who were extracted by the helicopter.

National Archives

UH-1Ds extract troops of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry during a search and destroy mission in October 1967.

In previous wars, many combat wounded died because of they could not get life-saving medical attention in time. The Huey as an ambulance drastically reduced combat deaths during Vietnam. "There's no doubt that the Huey changed the tide of the war," says retired Captain Alan Barbour. According to the former Huey pilot, the revolutionary aircraft provided immediate close air support for the troops on the ground and it brought in reinforcement troops much faster. "As a result, troop insertion was expedited. Troop extraction was expedited and then you had the medevac. You could get the troops out of bad situations really fast."

Four months in-country, Barbour went into a landing zone to conduct an emergency medevac. "We all had to go in because things had gotten so critical," he recalled. A company of Marines had been surrounded and caught in a fierce firefight. Barbour and his fellow pilots went into what survivors would later call "Death Valley."

Barbour recalls seeing Marines under intense fire charging the hill while carrying their wounded brothers to be evacuated. Maintaining discipline, Barbour never flinched as rounds pierced his helicopter. It was not until all the Marines were loaded that Barbour took off. Moments after liftoff, Barbour's tail rotor was shot off—death seemed inevitable. "Luckily, because I had enough speed, I was able to keep it from spinning and kept it in the air for the next seven miles until I reached the hospital and got our boys to safety," he recalled. Barbour's heroic efforts and skill that day were captured in the painting, *Emergency Medevac*, by artist Leahy.

In modern warfare, fixed-winged jet pilots are somewhat removed from direct ground engagement. In Vietnam, a helicopter pilot actually saw, sometimes face-to-face, who was shooting at him. As Christenson observes admiringly, "It took a certain breed of individuals to do what those pilots did." Master Sergeant Lester Reasor, who served multiple tours in Vietnam as a part of the 1st Air Cavalry, describes how the Huey engrained a deep sense of fear and loathing in the enemy. "The Huey was invaluable in Vietnam," he says. "When Charlie heard us coming, he knew that

Continued on page 72

By Charles Hilbert

Castaway priest-turned-slave Jeronimo Aguilar helped Hernándo Cortés and his conquistadors defeat the Aztecs in Mexico.

IN MARCH 1519, A SMALL SQUARE OF 400 SPANISH ADVENTURERS UNDER the command of Hernándo Cortés stood at bay on the plain of Cintla in Tabasco, Mexico. The conquistadors were surrounded by thousands of Indian warriors whose hunger for human sacrifices was equaled only by that of their gods. With no avenue of retreat, the Spaniards faced death in battle or an even more horrible death on the sacrificial altars of the Indians' strange, blood-nourished gods. As their enemies advanced, shooting clouds of sharp arrows and slinging deadly stones, the invaders replied with muskets, cannons, and heavy bolts from their European crossbows. Fighting for his life among the beleaguered Spaniards was a castaway priest-turned-conquistador named Jeronimo Aguilar.

Eight years before Cortés set foot in Yucatan, Aguilar had been a passenger sailing from Panama to Santo Domingo on a ship, captained by Enciso y Valdivia, that struck a reef near Jamaica. Aguilar boarded the ship's lifeboat along with 15 other men and two women, hoping that the currents would take them to Cuba or Jamaica. The boat had no sails, water, or food, and half the men died of starvation as they drifted helplessly toward the Yucatan peninsula.

After two weeks at sea, the survivors reached land. Upon arrival they were quickly rounded up by the locals, who immediately sacrificed Valdivia and five of his men. The Indians then butchered the bodies and cooked and ate their victims. Aguilar and six others were imprisoned in a wooden cage so that they could be fattened up for the next round of sacrifices. Somehow they managed to escape. Stumbling through the thick, tropical jungle, Aguilar was recaptured by the tribesmen of Xamanzana, who brought him to their chief,

Cortés, wielding his sword beneath his red battle flag, leads an attack against Mexican coastal Indians at Tabasco. The Indians were horrified by their first sight of men on horseback.

The Art Archive/Private Collection/Eileen Tweedy

Aquinouz. Aguilar spent the next three years at hard labor. When he wasn't working in the fields, he was hauling wood, water, and fish on his back.

Aguilar was a good worker and an obedient servant. Possibly to reward him for his diligence, Aquinouz's successor, Taxmar, offered the Spaniard a wife. But Aguilar had taken holy orders back in Spain and was not about to cohabitate with an infidel. Amused, Taxmar arranged many temptations for his unusual slave, even sending him to fish with an attractive young girl as his overnight companion. Aguilar

Library of Congress

Portrait of Cortés as a proper Spanish gentleman, with armor, coast of arms and all the regalia of a marquis.

put his faith in God and his tattered *Book of Hours,* his only possession to survive the shipwreck, and he remained celibate. This impressed Taxmar even more, and he placed Aguilar in charge of his household, including his wives.

No less bellicose than the average conquistador, Aguilar asked to be allowed to fight his master's many enemies. Aguilar's prowess as a warrior must have been formidable. Taxmar's chief enemy, unable to defeat him in battle, sent a message complaining that Aguilar's presence on the battlefield was an impious insult to their gods; he suggested that to make amends Aguilar should be sacrificed. Taxmar refused, but his council advised him to comply with their enemy's demand. Taxmar was reluctant to order the death of such a valuable and honorable servant, and he asked Aguilar what he would do in his place. Aguilar, of course, was not about to countenance his own death, and he promised Taxmar victory if he would follow his battle plan.

The two warring camps advanced on each another with a shower of arrows and stones. As Aguilar had advised, Taxmar fell back. Eager to exploit their victory, Taxmar's rivals rushed forward in pursuit, but their overconfidence was fatal. Concealed in the tall grass, Aguilar and a small unit of his Indian compatriots let their enemies pass, then fell on their rear. Taxmar and the main body of troops renewed the attack. Caught between hammer and anvil, as it were, Taxmar's surprised enemies were crushed in a bloody vise.

In 1518 the governor of Cuba, Diego Velasquez, sent Juan de Grijalva with four ships and 240 men back to Yucatan to trade for gold and silver, and if possible, to found a settlement. They touched land briefly at Cozumel, but all the inhabitants fled at their approach. They then sailed to Champoton, where the Indian inhabitants began to shoot arrows at them. So thick was the storm of missiles that every other man in the Spanish force was wounded, even though they had adopted the Indians' own type of padded armor, it being impossible to wear metal

Library of Congress

Library of Congress

ABOVE: An Aztec lookout concealed in a palm tree spies the approach of Cortés's ships off the Mexican coast. LEFT: The Florentine Codex depicts Cortés's men disembarking from their ships. They reached the coast of Veracruz on April 21, 1519.

armor in the equatorial heat. The Europeans fought their way ashore and easily hacked through the Indians' wicker shields and cotton armor. The Indians fought back fiercely enough to kill seven Spaniards, but they were finally driven into the swamps that bordered the town.

After three days the expedition set sail up the coast. Tacking close to shore, they reached a wide river that the Indians called Tabasco and decided to rename it Rio de Grijalva. Indians from the nearby town of Tabasco lined the river banks in canoes, armed for war. Denied passage upriver, the Spaniards landed on a palm-covered headland a mile or so from town. No sooner had they touched solid ground than a fleet of 50 well-armed canoes glided into view. After a few tense moments hostilities were avoided, and the local chiefs were placated by the gift of green beads that the Indians thought were jade. The locals seem to have figured out the Spaniards' purpose. Pointing to the sunset, they kept repeating, "Mexico, Mexico." None of the Spaniards knew what Mexico meant, but they knew what gold was, and they immediately set sail.

They had better luck with the next tribes they encountered, managing to bring back a substantial quantity of gold to Cuba. Impressed by the precious metals, Velasquez appointed Hernando Cortés to command another, even larger expedition. The governor of Cuba had heard rumors of Spanish captives, and in addition to gold, he ordered Cortés to bring back any Castilian castaways. In February 1519 Cortés set sail for Cozumel with 11 ships, 550 soldiers, 16 horses, and 12 field pieces. Along the way, he was held up by a lost rudder and his henchman, Pedro de Alvarado, landed at the island two days before his commander. At his approach, the Indians left their villages and fled to the interior. Alvarado followed them and quickly appropriated their food and any items of gold that he could find. He captured two men and a woman. As he was making his way

back to the coast, Cortés landed. Upon learning of Alvarado's actions, he upbraided his captain, gave the captured Indians some glass beads, and sent them off to tell their chief that he had nothing to fear from the Spaniards.

The Indians returned the next day. Cortés asked the local leaders if they knew of any Spaniards living in the vicinity. They replied that there were bearded men living as slaves in Yucatan, two days' journey to the west. Cortés immediately decided to attempt a rescue. His pilots advised against a landing on the rocky coast, and the Indians told him that the prisoners would probably be killed as soon as he attacked. They suggested that he ransom the captives. Cortés induced three Indians to take a letter to the tribe in question. The messengers set off inland, and two days later handed Aguilar the letter and the beads. When he read the letter and received the ransom, he carried the beads delightedly to his master and begged leave to depart. Taxmar gave him permission to go wherever he wished. Aguilar left with the two Indians who had brought him the letter and followed them to Cape Cartouche. But his would-be rescuers had gotten tired of waiting and sailed back to Cozumel. Aguilar returned unhappily to Taxmar.

Cortés was less than satisfied with the way things had turned out and, after spending some time forcibly converting the locals to Christianity, he resumed his voyage of conquest. Not far from Cozumel, Juan de Escalante's ship sprang a leak and headed back to the island. It took the Spaniards four days to recaulk Escalante's ship. During that time Aguilar, learning of their unexpected return, hired a canoe and sailed for Cozumel.

While hunting for wild pigs, some of Cortés's men spotted Indians in a canoe approaching from Cape Cartouche. Cortés sent Andres de Tapia and two men to intercept them. They concealed themselves among the lush, tropical foliage and watched while the Indians walked up the beach. Suddenly they appeared with drawn swords. Aguilar's companions were struck with fear, but the Castilian castaway ran forward, crying, "Dios y Santa Maria de Sevilla." After eight years among the Maya, his words were ill pronounced, but the conquistadors understood them. Tapia embraced him and led him to Cortés.

Aguilar was burned brown by the sun, and his hair and dress were those of an Indian. As the group reached him, Cortés asked, "Where is the Spaniard?" Aguilar replied, "I am." Cortés took off his cloak and wrapped it around Aguilar's shoulders. A few days later the conquistadors sailed from Cozumel, but the

ships' pilots advised against landing in the shallow harbor, so the conquistadors continued their voyage, heading toward Tabasco, where Grijalva had successfully traded beads for gold and silver.

Unable to navigate the Rio de Grijalva with their ships, Cortés and his men took the ships' boats and landed on the headland a mile northeast of Tabasco. Soon the river and the surrounding area were covered with hundreds of hostile Indians girded for war. As a large canoe coasted past his position, Cortés put Aguilar to work. He learned that the locals, having been accused of cowardice by the Indians of Champoton because they had traded with Grijalva, were now determined to resist all invaders. They threatened to kill Cortés and his men if they did not leave. After further fruitless attempts to reach a peaceful understanding, the Indians left with a final threat to kill the Spaniards if they progressed beyond the palm trees on the beach.

Library of Congress

Cortes meets with four ranking Indian spokesmen at Tlaxcalteca. The woman beside him, Malinali, served as his translator. The Spanish called her Dona Marina.

Cortés planned accordingly, outfitting each boat with three cannons, crossbowmen, and arquebusiers. Some of Grijalva's former companions remembered that there was a narrow path that led from the palmed headland to the town of Tabasco. Cortés sent some men to reconnoiter and, upon their return, ordered an attack for the following day. The next morning, after Mass, Alonso de Avila and a hundred men set off through the palms for Tabasco. Cortés and the rest boarded the armed boats and sailed upriver toward the town. When the Indians saw the small Castilian flotilla heading for their village, they manned their canoes and lined the riverbanks with warriors. Cortés tried one more time to effect a peaceful settlement, but the Indians continued their threats, then began to shoot clouds of arrows at the Spaniards in their boats. Surrounded by canoes full of warriors firing at them, Cortés and his men made for shore.

The banks of the river were bordered by mangrove swamps, and the Spaniards, jumping into the waist-deep water, struggled through the mud as arrows flew thick around them and the Indians on the bank thrust at them with long obsidian-bladed lances. The Spanish at last fought their way ashore and forced the Indians to retire to the wooden barricade they had erected around their town. Under fire, the conquistadors ripped their way through this obstacle and forced the Indians back down the streets of their city, fighting every step of the way. At this point, Avila showed up behind the Indians, and the combined forces of the Spaniards put the Tabascans to flight. Cortés camped in the city square among the temples of the Indian gods.

In the morning, Cortés sent out 200 men to reconnoiter, but they were driven back to Tabasco by multitudes of Indians. Cortés and Aguilar interrogated two prisoners taken in the fighting and learned that the neighboring tribes were gathering for an all-out attack on the invaders. Cortés immediately ordered the horses to be brought ashore and the men to prepare themselves for battle.

The next morning, the conquistadors heard Mass, and with Cortés commanding the cavalry, the Castilians set out for the treeless plain where his men had been attacked the day before. Nearby was the town of Cintla. Cortés and the horsemen were forced to detour around some swampy ground, and the Spanish infantry lost sight of them. As they reached the plain of Cintla, the conquistadors encountered thousands of Indians on their way to retake Tabasco. All the men wore great feather crests, carried drums and trumpets, and were armed with large bows and arrows, spears and shields, swords, stones, and fire-toughened darts. The Indians rushed the conquistadors, bombarding them with a rain of arrows, darts, and stones and wounding 70 in the first attack. As the missiles fell thick among the Spaniards, they returned fire with their matchlocks, crossbows, and field pieces. The Indians were tightly packed, and the fire of the cannons mowed them down by the dozens.

After the initial long-range fighting, the Indians closed and sought to wound the invaders with their obsidian blades, but the Spanish soldiers fought back with their merciless Toledo steel. They cut and stabbed the Indians through their cotton armor and formed a defensive square. Cortés and his small band of horsemen, having circumnavigated the swamps and irrigation ditches that crisscrossed the area, attacked the Indians' rear. Since the plain was covered with Indians, it took a while for the

Spanish infantry to realize that Cortés had arrived at last. When they saw the horsemen in the distance, they redoubled their efforts, hacking and stabbing until the Indians, caught between the swords of the foot soldiers and the lances of the horsemen, broke formation and fled in all directions.

Although they had fought bravely, the Indians were shocked at the sight of the horses and riders, something they had never seen before, and as they ran about in confusion, the Spanish horsemen speared them without mercy. Most of the Spaniards were wounded, but only two had been killed. Two high-ranking Tabascans had been taken captive, and Aguilar advised Cortés to give them beads and send them off to negotiate a peace with their fellows. They left, and the next day 15 slaves came to Cortés, bringing gifts of food. Cortés received them respectfully, but Aguilar, who was familiar with the Indians' customs, berated them and sent them away, ordering them to send a more dignified delegation. In the following days, 30 important caciques came to Cortés, bearing gifts of gold and 20 women. Cortés also asked the Indians where they had gotten the gold. They pointed to the west and said, "Mexico." Cortés wasted no time hoisting sail.

A few days later, approaching their next landfall, the Spaniards spotted some large canoes coming toward them. The Indians headed for Cortés's flagship. Coming aboard, they asked to speak with the expedition's leader. They were representatives of Moctezuma, and no one, not even Aguilar, could understand their speech. Then one of the Indian women pointed out Cortés. She was a Mexican princess named Malinali, and had been sold by her Aztec mother and stepfather to the Maya of Yucatan. Cortés spoke Spanish to Aguilar, who translated his words into Mayan for Malinali, who then spoke to the visitors in Nahuatl.

The Spanish changed Malinali's name to Marina and, because of her noble birth, called her Dona Marina. For the next two years, she and Aguilar helped Cortés negotiate, interrogate, and gather intelligence, while the conquistadors slowly, methodically, and bloodily conquered the Aztecs. Aguilar was last heard from in 1529, when he testified against his former commander at an inquiry regarding the death of Cortés's wife, Catalina. By then, many of the conquistadors had turned against the conqueror of Mexico, who had managed to cheat them, the king of Spain, and his Indian allies out of most of the spoils of war. Shortly after his court appearance Aguilar died of paralysis, an oddly peaceful death for so adventurous a life. □

By Adam Lynch

Could Custer have been saved at Little Bighorn? A number of people thought so—but not the two men who could have tried.

All images: Library of Congress

Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and his men rode to their deaths at the Battle of Little Bighorn on June 15, 1876. Painting by C.M. Russell, 1903.

WE CAN NEVER KNOW WHAT FRANTIC THOUGHTS RACED through George Armstrong Custer's mind in the last hour of his life. But surely, as ever-growing numbers of angry, well-armed Plains Indians closed in on his 210 troopers of the 7th Cavalry, he must have realized that he had fatally misjudged the size of the hostile force now surrounding him. His plan to subdue a large Indian village had completely broken down. He had been warned repeatedly by his scouts that his target, an Indian encampment on Montana's Little Bighorn River, was far larger than he had imagined. Now, on this very hot June day in 1876, he must have known that he was going to die.

Even to the very end of what is now known as Custer's Last Stand, we can picture the desperate, dust-covered Custer looking hopefully to the southeast for expected help from the rest of his command. He died not knowing why Major Marcus Reno and Captain Frederick Benteen never came up in support.

But we know. It is not a story of great valor, although certain moments of extraordinary bravery shine through. Benteen and Reno spent the rest of their lives defending their leadership and action—or lack of action—that day. An examination of the known facts reveals that they had a lot to defend.

The growing presence and power of the white man, backed by overwhelming military strength, had gradually forced many of the Plains tribes onto reservations. However, some militant Indians still defied the United States government and chose to continue their nomadic lifestyle in the Unceded Territory. That huge expanse stretched from the Bighorn and Rocky Mountains on the west to the Great Sioux Reservation along the Missouri River to the east. It was there that the final battles of the Indian wars were fought.

On November 3, 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant and a few carefully selected cabinet members and Army generals met in secret session. The decision was made to launch a decisive war against the Indians and cripple their ability to further disrupt western expansion. Although no one knew it at the

time, Custer's fate had been sealed.

On December 6, the government issued an ultimatum. All roaming Indians would have to return to the reservations by January 31, 1876, or risk being considered "hostile." In early February, Lt. Gen. Philip Sheridan, commanding the Division of Missouri, ordered his forces to prepare for operations against the hostiles. The military plan was a three-pronged affair. One force under Brig. Gen. George Crook moved out from Fort Fetterman in Wyoming. Colonel John Gibbon marched from Fort Ellis in Montana. The third unit, led by Brig. Gen. Alfred Terry, advanced from the Dakota Territory. Terry released Custer and his 7th Cavalry as a mobile strike force to track and locate the Sioux and Cheyenne tribesmen thought to be in Montana Territory in the Little Bighorn Valley.

Captain Frederick Benteen.

By late June, however, the plan to link up and trap the hostiles was falling apart. Crook was defeated by an Indian force on the Rosebud River. Terry and Gibbon got temporarily lost. Custer was essentially on his own. In fact, Terry had given Custer unusual freedom. One part of his orders read, "We place too much confidence in your zeal, energy and ability to impose precise orders upon you which might hamper your action when nearly in contact with the enemy." That was all the ambitious, headstrong Custer needed to hear. It triggered the inevitable chain of events that led to his death.

Counting 35 Indian scouts and civilians, Custer led 12 companies, 680 men, seemingly a substantial strike force. But by the time he headed out from Fort Abraham Lincoln on June 22, the number of Indians camped along the Little Bighorn had swelled to 7,000. Between 1,000 and 1,500 of these were warriors. Custer's scouts found numerous trails leading to the Little Bighorn, and soon discovered the massive encampment that now held seven different Indian bands in a straight line stretching almost three miles. Even then, Custer did not seem to understand how many armed warriors he was facing.

On June 25, as the main cavalry body drew closer, Custer feared that his force had been detected, and instead of waiting for a surprise assault at dawn, he decided to attack that afternoon. Although his scouts continued to offer strong warnings, Custer discounted their advice. Lieutenant Edward Godfrey recalled Ree scout Bloody Knife saying, "We'll find enough Sioux to keep us fighting for two or three days." But, Godfrey said, "Custer remarked laughingly that he thought we could get through in one day." Lieutenant Charles Varnum overheard Custer's chief scout, the mixed-blood Mitch Boyer, tell Custer, "General, if you don't find more Indians in that valley than you ever saw before, you can hang me." Custer testily replied, "Well, a lot of good that would do me."

Not only did Custer reject the warnings, he divided his force into four groups. He ordered Benteen to take three companies of 120 men, scout a series of ridges to the southeast to spot any Indians trying to flee, and then rejoin him. Private Charles Windolph later reported that he heard Benteen protest, "Hadn't we better keep the regiment together General? If this is as big a camp as they say, we'll need every man we have." Custer curtly replied, "You have your orders." Custer then ordered Reno to take three companies of 140 troopers and 35 scouts and launch an attack from the south end of the village. The slow pack train, under Captain Thomas McDougall, was given another 175 men. Custer retained five companies with 210 mounted soldiers and civilians. He promised to support Reno in the attack. To say the least, the plan was impulsive and uncoordinated.

A few minutes after 3 PM, Reno forded the Little Bighorn River, which the Indians called "Greasy Grass," and raced his mounted troopers into the southern end of the village. Custer mistakenly believed that the Indians were trying to escape. But the Indians were not fleeing. Instead, Reno quickly rode into a growing number of counterattacking warriors. The troopers halted, dismounted, and formed a skirmish line, then watched in dismay as hundreds of Indians, some mounted and others on foot, began to outflank them. In less than an hour of heavy fighting, the soldiers were in danger of being surrounded. Bloody Knife, standing next to Reno, was struck in the head, spraying the major with blood and brains. In shock, Reno panicked, issued wildly confusing orders, and ran for it. No retreat order was passed to the troopers, but as he desperately mounted his horse to flee, Reno shouted, "Any of you men who wish to live, make your escape—follow me!"

The uncoordinated rush back to the river was total chaos. The soldiers drove their horses into the water, crossed the river, and clawed their way up the steep 100-foot bluffs on the other

side. The Indians, riding on their flanks, poured a withering fire into the wildly retreating soldiers. Some 80 troopers, including 13 wounded, managed to get to the top. Seventeen others were left in the woods. Thirty of Reno's men were killed initially, and another 27 died in the fighting. Reno insisted later that his retreat was actually a charge.

Custer never crossed the river. Instead, he led his men north on the near or east side along high bluffs above the valley, apparently hoping to block any Indians from getting away in that direction. Although a clear view of the valley bottom was difficult, he briefly spotted Reno fighting and saw for the first time, with his own eyes, the immense size of the enemy encampment. He quickly sent Sergeant Daniel Kanipe to find Benteen. Fifteen minutes later he dispatched trumpeter John Martin to carry another urgent message to the captain. Custer's famous written order read: "Benteen—Come on—Big village—Be quick—bring packs. PS—Bring [ammunition] packs."

Major Marcus Reno.

Crow Indian "Curly" avoided being killed at Little Bighorn, but many questioned just how he managed to escape.

Historian Walter Camp, who interviewed many of the participants soon after the battle, cited Benteen's reply upon receiving the message: "After he read the message handed to him by Martin, he was heard to remark, 'Well, if he wants me to hurry how does he expect that I can bring the packs? If I'm going to be of service to him I think I had better not wait for the packs.'" As Benteen rode closer, he suddenly saw Reno's men scrambling to the top of the hill as Indian warriors swarmed in front. It was now 4:10 PM. A few minutes later, Benteen's force joined Reno's position. Martin, who stayed with Benteen, told historian Colonel W.A. Graham that he heard Reno exclaim, "For God's sake, Benteen, halt your command and help me. I've lost half my men!" Benteen immediately distributed his extra ammunition to Reno's men.

At almost the same time, heavy firing was heard coming from a few miles downstream. This was the critical moment. The Indians had spotted Custer's cavalrymen approaching from the other end. Almost all the Indians now rushed off to meet the new threat. Although many troopers urged them to ride to the sound of the guns, neither Reno nor Benteen made any effort to move in that direction. They later denied even hearing any firing. Benteen told an army court of inquiry in Chicago in 1879, "I have heard officers disputing about hearing volleys. I heard no volleys." At the same hearing, Reno blandly testified, "I heard no firing from down river."

It has long been maintained that the Reno-Benteen forces were trapped on the hilltop by hundreds of Indians. In fact, Benteen told the court of inquiry, "The 900 Indians I saw in the valley remained there perhaps a half an hour then most of them went down the river." In truth, the Indians were gone within minutes of Benteen's arrival. Letters, memoirs, and subsequent interviews with both Indians and army troopers refute his sworn testimony.

Godfrey, in an 1892 interview, said, "At this time [4:20] there were a large number of mounted Indians in the valley. Heavy firing was heard down river. Suddenly, they all started down the valley and in a few minutes scarcely a horseman was to be seen. During this time questions were being asked. 'What are we staying here for?'" William Taylor, a private with Benteen at the time, in a first-person narrative published after his death, wrote, "We heard firing off in the direction Custer was supposed to have gone. 'Why don't we move?' was a question asked by more than one. The troops that were engaged in the valley were somewhat demoralized but that was no excuse for the whole command to remain inactive."

In an interview with Camp, Martin said, "We heard a lot of firing down the river. It kept up for half an hour. It sounded like a big fight was going on. We wanted to hurry and join them but they wouldn't let us go." The great Sioux medicine man Sitting Bull was asked in an 1887 interview, "Did your war chiefs not think it necessary to keep some of the young men there to fight the troops in the entrenchments?" He answered, "No, only a few soldiers were left on those bluffs. There were none but squaws and children in front of them." Cheyenne warrior Wooden Leg, in an interview when he was 70, said, "In the hills to the north there was another force of soldiers. The Indians shooting at the first soldiers began to leave and ride toward those on the northward hills."

Lieutenant Charles DeRudio, one of those who remained hiding below in the valley, said, "Soon after Major Reno left the timber, firing commenced at the other end of the village. I heard immense volleys and more than half the Indians left." In a 1916 interview, Crow scout Hairy Moccasin said he saw Reno's fight in the valley, which he described as "a big scramble with lots of Sioux." Later, Custer asked him, "How is it going?" He replied, "Reno's men are fighting hard." Boyer then sent him back south, where he met Benteen on the hilltop. Hairy Moccasin said to him, "Do you hear that shooting back where we came from? They're fighting Custer there now." This was specific information on Custer's location that Benteen later denied knowing.

Similar information was given to Reno. At the Chicago court of inquiry, McDougall testified, "The firing I heard was to the north on my right as I went toward the Little Big Horn. It was just two volleys. I told Major Reno about it."

At 5:05 PM, Captain Thomas Weir, who had been seen arguing strongly with Reno and pointing excitedly downstream, took his company, on his own, in that direction. From what is now known as Weir's Point, he saw the end of the Custer battle, then returned to the top of the hill. He reported that he had seen Indians firing at troopers' bodies already inert on the ground.

The critical 10 to 15 minutes after Benteen joined Reno was the time in which a more determined leader might have taken charge. Admittedly, trying to mount an immediate relief force would have been difficult; the slow pack train with more ammunition had not yet come up. Perhaps it wouldn't have made a difference and would have only resulted in more dead soldiers, but to refuse to try violated Custer's order to "Come on—Come quick."

Perhaps the most revealing testimony came from Benteen himself. He told the Chicago court, "A movement could have been made down the river in the direction Custer had gone upon my arrival on the hill, but we would have all been there yet." Apparently, Benteen didn't like the odds and figured that any soldiers who went that way also would have been killed. His sworn testimony that he and Reno heard no shooting, that they were tied down by 900 Indians, and that they didn't really know where Custer was is not convincing.

Through the years, both Reno and Benteen tried to improve their version of what happened. They wrote letters and gave interviews in which they maintained that shortly after linking up on the hilltop, the ammunition pack

train arrived and a movement was made in Custer's direction. However, John Gray, in his 1991 book, *Custer's Last Campaign,* convincingly shows that it was at least an hour before any such movement was launched, and that was only after continued prodding by Weir and others. Even then, it was a half-hearted advance. Benteen and Reno took only three companies down toward Custer's position. By then, the window of opportunity had closed. Custer's 220 men had been annihilated in a little less than an hour, and the victorious Sioux and Cheyenne were now coming back upstream. Quickly, the companies were forced to retreat to their position on the hilltop with the rest of the survivors.

Over the next several hours the Indians made repeated charges against the soldiers' line. By all accounts, Benteen rallied the men, took control of the defense, and was responsible for preventing a rout. In later years, even his critics—and there were many—admitted that Benteen had held the force together. By evening, the shooting diminished and the companies remained through the night, listening to the shouts and loud victory whoops coming from the Indian encampment below.

In fairness, some participants believed that an attempted linkup would have been doomed. Varnum, Custer's chief of scouts, told Camp that he never thought Benteen and Reno had any real chance of rescuing Custer. The same opinion was expressed later in a 1923 letter from General W.S. Edgerly, who had been a lieutenant with Benteen on the hilltop. Edgerly wrote, "In my opinion there was no chance to have saved Custer's command or any considerable part of it from destruction [even] if Reno had advanced at once upon Benteen's junction with him and without waiting for the ammunition." He told Camp the same thing, adding significantly, "With the information they had at the time there was no reason not to have tried it."

After a nervous night on the bluff, the troopers strengthened their position for an expected attack in the morning. Although the Indians resumed sniping and harassing, they made no serious attempt to drive the soldiers off the hill. Writer David Humphreys Miller, who in the 1930s interviewed aged Indian participants, said that Sitting Bull told him that he believed the issue was settled, that the white soldiers had taken a drubbing, and he was willing to let it go at that. Numerous Native American accounts contend that it was only after a direct order from Sitting Bull that they were not allowed to attack and overwhelm the Reno-Benteen force as they had done earlier with Custer.

To the relief of the surviving troopers, in the late afternoon of the 26th the huge Indian camp began to pack up and move out. They had been warned by their scouts of the approach of Terry's force. Fewer than 100 of their warriors had been killed in the fighting on the bluff and in action against Custer's force to the north.

The next day Terry's column arrived. Fighting at the Little Bighorn was over. Terry found the bodies of Custer and his men scattered above the river in various separate places where different companies had tried to make a stand. The dead bodies had been stripped and mutilated. Custer's body was one of the few that had not been scalped. Grisly newspaper accounts of the battle and its aftermath outraged Americans across the country. They demanded retribution. From that time on, the Indians' freedom to migrate, hunt buffalo, and celebrate their spirited lifestyle was running out. The military stepped up efforts to bring any still-roaming Indians under control. Western migration increased, new train tracks were laid, fortune seekers poured in for gold, and the traditional world of the Plains Indians soon disappeared. Custer's Last Stand was also theirs.

The question remains: Could at least part of Custer's five companies have been saved? Whether Reno and Benteen might have pulled it off can never be known. That they didn't even try, and then grossly misrepresented the reasons why they didn't, is no longer open to dispute. □

CIVIL WAR-ERA TREASURES IN GETTYSBURG AUCTION

Two of the most significant Civil War-era military items will be offered in a public auction in June in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: the personal battle flag of General George Armstrong Custer and the diamond-adorned, gold and silver sword of General, and later President, Ulysses S. Grant.

Both items are expected to sell for more than $1 million each, according to the auctioneer, Heritage Auction Galleries of Dallas, Texas.

Custer's silk swallow-tailed battle flag measures 36 by 68 inches. It depicts two white, crossed cavalry sabers and decorations of red and blue bars. The flag was at General Custer's side at the Appomattox Courthouse when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to end the Civil War.

"Custer's silk flag was handmade by his wife, Elizabeth, and carried with him during the final days of the Civil War battles in 1865. It was at his headquarters at Fort Abraham Lincoln in the Dakota Territory on June 25, 1876, when Custer led his 7th Cavalry troops to their final battle against the Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians at the Little Big Horn in the Montana Territory. The flag was then passed down through several generations of the Custer family, and is consigned from the collection of Thomas Minckler of New York City," explained Gary Hendershott, Director of Civil War auctions for Heritage.

"General Grant's Civil War sword is a national treasure, a one-of-a-kind example of precious craftsmanship and historical significance. It was presented to him in 1864 on behalf of the citizens of Kentucky. There are 28 diamonds that spell out his initials, U.S.G., and the 33-inch blade is intricately engraved with battle scenes," explains Hendershott.

"Kentucky patriots raised money in 1864 to create and purchase the gold and silver sword for General Grant to honor his promotion by President Lincoln to be General-in-Chief of the entire United States Armies. That's a rank no one had held since George Washington was appointed to it during the Revolutionary War. The sword is from the Donald Tharpe Collection of American Military History," Hendershott says.

The auction will be conducted by Heritage Auction Galleries in Gettysburg and online, June 24, 2007. The presale estimate for Custer's battle flag is $1.8 million or more, and the estimate for Grant's sword is $2 million or more.

Last December the personal battle flag of General JEB Stuart was sold at auction by Heritage for $956,000.00. Like the Custer flag, Stuart's flag was made by his wife, Flora.

For additional information about the flag, sword, and other items in the June 24, 2007 auction, contact Heritage Auction Galleries at (800) 872-6467 x 272, or online at: www.HA.com. □

By Robert Whiter

"Old Bill," English cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather's creation, was one of the best-loved characters of World War I.

"YOU SHOULD SEND THAT INTO ONE OF THE ILLUSTRATED PAPERS or magazines," said a young subaltern, looking over the shoulder of an officer who was sitting in front of a makeshift table finishing a pen-and-ink drawing. "That's what I've been telling him about all those other drawings he's been doing these last few weeks," chimed in another officer. The drawing in question depicted a group of men huddling together in a dugout with a shell exploding on the roof. The caption read: "Where Did That One Go To?"

ABOVE: Watercolor impression of Bruce Bairnsfather's character Old Bill by author Robert Whiter. RIGHT: Wary British soldiers huddle in a bombproof in the drawing, "Where Did That One Go To?"

The artist in question was Lieutenant Bruce Bairnsfather, stationed with his regiment, the 1st Warwicks, in front of Ploegsteert, Belgium, facetiously known to the British Army as Plugstreet Wood, barely 200 yards from the German trenches. The date was December 1914. Bairnsfather and his brother officers were billeted in a ramshackle old house, its roof and walls offering little shelter from the winter weather—let alone the enemy's fire.

All Images: Author's Collection

To create some form of protection, Bairnsfather and another lieutenant started to dig a cellar under the floor of the old house. He alternated this backbreaking task with drawing pictures on the walls and on any piece of paper he could find. Ever since he could hold a pencil, Bairnsfather had aspired to be an artist, but apart from selling a couple of designs for posters, he had been forced to rely on his salary as an electrical engineer. Although he came from a military family (his father was an officer in the British Army) and had served a stint in the peacetime army, Bairnsfather wasn't really a soldier at heart. But returning from an electrical job in Canada, he found his country at war with Germany and enlisted in his old regiment in August 1914.

In January 1915, when his battalion was taken out of the line and sent for a rest to a farm near Neuve Eglise, Bairnsfather finally had the chance to make a wash drawing of "Where Did That One Go To?" Sorting through a pile of old magazines lying about at the transport farm, the artist came across a copy of *Bystander.* Its contents and presentation convinced Bairnsfather that it was the periodical most likely to accept his work. He carefully rolled up the drawing in a protective sheet of paper and put it in the mail.

Not long after that, Bairnsfather's unit was ordered to Wulverghen,

In "Another Maxim Maxim," a woozy German soldier neglects to provide machine-gun support to the infantry.

which was located near Messines Ridge, made famous later in the war when the British Army exploded a large mine under the German trenches. After a few weeks in line, Bairnsfather's unit came out and rested at a farmhouse on the Momerin Road. The battalion arrived at the billet in pitch darkness and pouring rain. Once under cover, Bairnsfather saw an NCO sorting through the mail by the light of a flickering candle. Among the pieces was a letter from the editor of *Bystander* saying that Bairnsfather's drawing had been accepted and that he would be pleased to see others.

Bairnsfather's cartoons began appearing regularly in the magazine under the title "Fragments from France." Not only did they make the British and their allies laugh, they even found an appreciative audience with the enemy. Many of Bairnsfather's drawings were found pinned up in German dugouts, and on one occasion a letter of appreciation written by an officer of the vaunted Uhlans was received at *Bystander*'s offices.

Bairnsfather returned to doing poster work. One poster in particular hit the mark—a tough-looking British Hercules behind a machine gun bearing the legend, "Beecham's Keep You Fit." Unfortunately, the young lieutenant was neither mentally nor physically fit himself, even after a fortnight's rest at the farm. He was depressed and overwhelmed by the horror of

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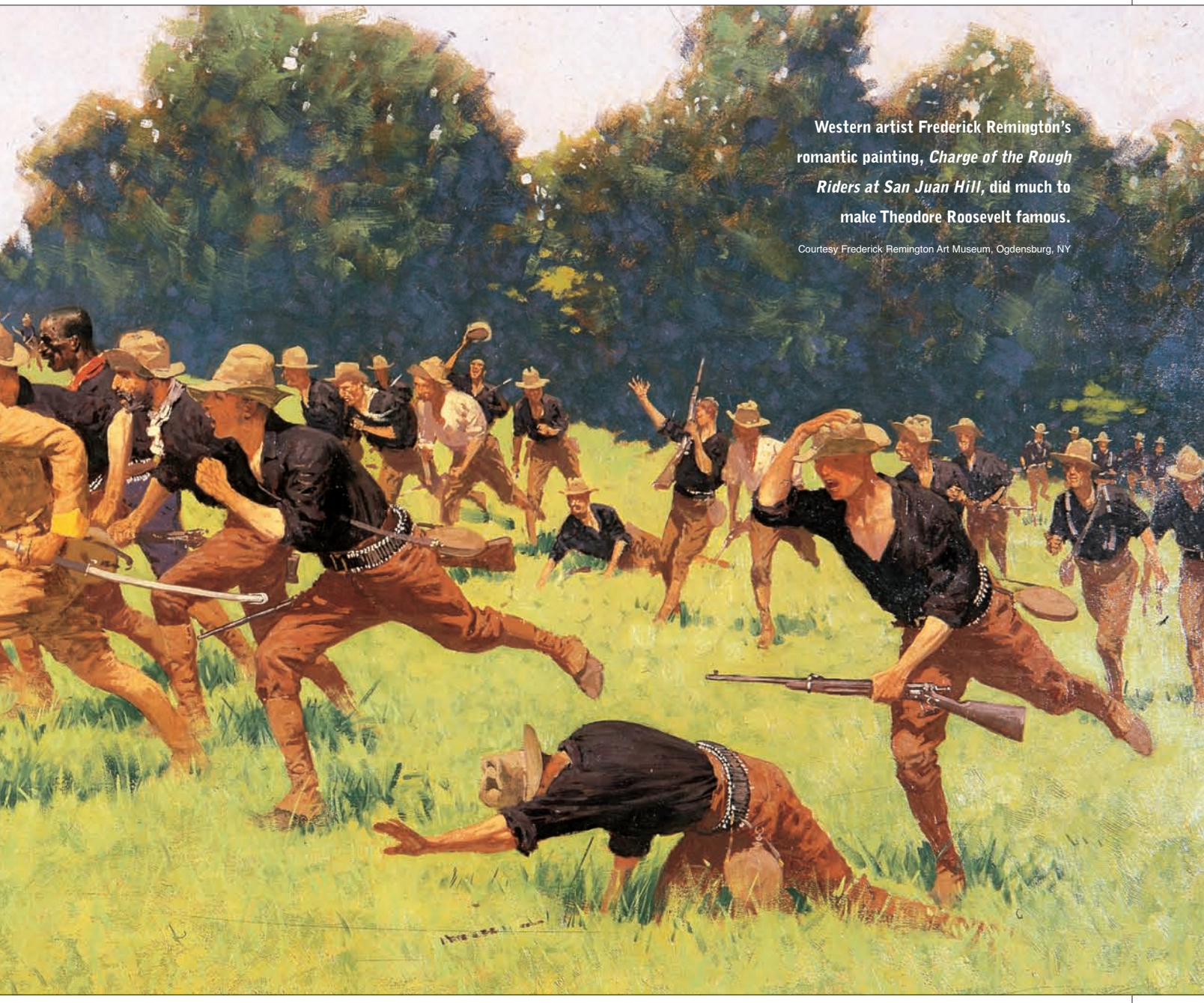
ROOSEVELT'S CROWDED

At a steamy river crossing in the middle of the Cuban jungle, Theodore Roosevelt came to the literal crossroads of his life. He would lead his men to victory, or die trying. **BY JOHN WUKOVITS**

BY MID-JUNE 1898, A POTENT AMERICAN military conglomeration had assembled off the extreme southeastern coast of Cuba. Thirty-two troop transports brought 819 officers and 15,058 enlisted men to Cuba from Florida, along with 89 newspaper correspondents, 11 foreign military observers, and 10 million pounds of rations. Most of the young American soldiers eagerly sought battle with the Spanish,

HOUR THE ROUGH RIDERS AT SAN JUAN HILL



Western artist Frederick Remington's romantic painting, *Charge of the Rough Riders at San Juan Hill*, did much to make Theodore Roosevelt famous.

Courtesy Frederick Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, NY

boasting that the war would end swiftly. One group of officers raised their whiskey glasses and toasted, "To the officers—May they get killed, wounded, or promoted!"

On the other side of the lines, the Spanish forces seemed equally confident. The battle-tested troops waited in well-fortified trenches and guardhouses shielded by barbed wire. A newspaper in Spain informed its readers, with more than a touch of exaggeration, "The average height among the Americans is five feet two inches. This is due to their living almost entirely upon vegetables as they ship all their beef out of the country, so eager are they to make money. There is no doubt that one full-grown Spaniard can defeat any three men in America." They would soon get the chance to try.

The root causes of the Spanish-American War lay with imperialism. The United States desired overseas colonies, which many European nations had possessed for years in Africa and Asia. "A new consciousness seems to have come upon us," editorialized the *Washington Post* in 1898, "the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength, ambition, interest, land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it may be, we are ani-

National Archives

ABOVE: The 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, better known as the Rough Riders, was part of "Fighting Joe" Wheeler's mounted division in Cuba. BELOW: *New York Herald* correspondent Richard Harding Davis was a personal friend of Roosevelt's.

mated by a new sensation. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle. It means an Imperial policy, the republic, renascent, taking her place with the armed nations."

Cuba, where Spain's dying empire retained a fragile hold over the island's population and resources, offered a golden opportunity. From a mixture of wishing to help free the Cubans from Spanish oppression and desiring new lands, President William McKinley warned Spain that she must grant independence to Cuba or face international sanctions. American newspapers, especially William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal,* printed inflammatory and misleading articles depicting the Spanish as cruel overseers who were wantonly killing people and ravaging the country. When the American battleship USS *Maine,* sent to Cuban waters to monitor the situation, exploded in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, killing 260 American sailors, sentiment soared for a war with Spain.

Library of Congress

"No national life is worth having if the nation is not willing, when the need shall arise, to stake everything on the supreme arbitrament of war," wrote Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, "and to pour out its blood, its treasures, its tears like water rather than to submit to the loss of honor and renown." Fueled by such emotions, on April 25 Congress declared war on Spain.

Convinced that the United States would handily defeat a weary European nation desperately clinging to the last vestiges of its once-proud empire, war fever spread across the land. Famed western scout Buffalo Bill Cody boasted that 30,000 Indian fighters would force Spain out of Cuba in eight weeks. Frank James, brother of the notorious bank robber and murderer Jesse James, offered to command a company of marksmen raised in the West. Hearst's *Journal* stated that a regiment of American athletes would frighten the Spanish simply by showing up for battle.

In early June, Maj. Gen. William R. Shafter, an immense man weighing close to 300 pounds, received orders from Secretary of War Russell A. Alger to proceed to Santiago, on Cuba's southeastern coast, and capture or destroy the enemy garrison there. Among the soldiers under Shafter's command was Theodore Roosevelt. The well-born New Yorker had left his government post to assemble a regiment of volunteer troops drawn from a fascinating array of figures. The 1st Volunteer Cavalry, popularly known as the Rough Riders, painted a microcosm of the aggressive young nation. It carried on its roster New York City police officers, Ivy League quarterbacks, Native Americans, cowboys, sheriffs and outlaws, clergy and scoundrels.

"It is as typical an American regiment as ever marched or fought," wrote Roosevelt to a friend, "including a score of Indians, and about as many of Mexican origin from New Mexico; then there are some fifty Easterners—almost all graduates of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, etc.—and almost as many Southerners; the rest are men of the plains and the Rocky Mountains. Three-fourths of our men have at one time or another been cowboys or else are small stockmen; certainly two- thirds have fathers who fought on one side or the other in the Civil War." Although authorities offered Roosevelt command of the regiment, the neophyte soldier worried that his military inexperience might adversely affect the men. He suggested that Colonel Leonard Wood be the commander instead, with Roosevelt serving as his second in command.

Roosevelt's refusal to accept command was admirable, but other politicians worried that in heading to Cuba he was thinking first of his own ambitions. A rousing show in a brief encounter might cement Roosevelt's name as a man to watch for the presidency. One administration official in Washington concluded that Roosevelt, inexperienced in the rigors of combat, would emerge with a sullied reputation, but hedged, "How absurd all this [criticism] will sound if, by some turn of fortune, he should accomplish some great thing."

The ships departed from Florida on June 14 for the six-day voyage to Cuba. Shafter landed the men 15 miles east of Santiago at Daiquiri.

Once ashore, his men started to advance to Siboney, seven miles from Santiago, in preparation for an assault on Santiago itself. The Spanish commander in Cuba, General Arsenio Linares, had 36,500 soldiers at his disposal in Santiago, but he immediately tossed away the advantage of numbers by dispersing the men in a series of strongpoints instead of concentrating them along the only jungle route available to the Americans. Linares hoped to delay the enemy long enough for Cuba's natural allies—yellow fever and dysentery—to take their toll. He also hoped that help would arrive before the Americans. A relief column led by Colonel Frederico Escario had departed Manzanillo and started toward Santiago through 160 miles of thick jungle. The 3,752 soldiers in his column could swing the scales toward Spain—if they arrived in time.

Shafter, worrying about Spanish reinforcements, was eager to get his men going as quickly as possible. Cuba's rainy season, frequently interrupted with ferocious hurricanes and lashing winds, was due to start any day, and he knew that it was only a matter of time before tropical disease reduced his numbers. On June 23, two regiments under the command of Brig. Gen. Henry W. Lawton left the beaches and headed toward Siboney. On June 24, American units advanced in single file toward the crossroads of Las Guasimas, where information indicated that 1,500 Spaniards waited. The Spanish commander on the scene, General Antero Rubin, had orders to mount a minor delaying action to harass the advancing American forces, then fall back to Santiago to avoid being cut off from the bulk of Linares's troops. Linares intended to stall his opponent at Las Guasimas, not stage an open clash.

Newspaper correspondent Richard Harding Davis of the *New York Herald* described Las Guasimas as "not a village, nor even a collection of houses; it is the meeting-place of two trails which join at the apex of a V." The Spanish defenders, dug in along the crest of a hill, peered down on the road below as the Americans assembled before them. Roosevelt and the Rough Riders were to attack along a trail one mile to the left while the 1st Cavalry and 10th Cavalry charged up the main road.

As the Americans neared Las Guasimas, the Spanish defenders unleashed a thunderous volley. Bullets whizzed through leaves and thudded into trees and the ground. Sergeant Hamilton Fish, the son of a prominent politician, dropped dead in the opening seconds, and bullets felled six other Rough Riders in the next few moments as men scurried for cover. The Rough Riders took cover so hastily among the thick

Map © 2007 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: The American Army landed at Daiquiri, on the southern coast of Cuba, then moved west toward Santiago, where the main Spanish forces were centered. BELOW: The Battle of Guasimas, near Santiago, on June 24, 1898. The 9th and 10th Cavalry had to help rescue the badly surprised Rough Riders.

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jungle covering that Roosevelt feared that he would lose touch with his men. Davis wrote that entering the foreboding canopy was "like forcing the walls of a maze. If each trooper had not kept in touch with the man on either hand he would have been lost in the thicket."

The Rough Riders tried to locate the origin of the firing, but the Spaniards, buttressed by their knowledge of the terrain, kept well out of sight. They also enjoyed the advantage of using smokeless powder, which left no lingering white trace in the air to indicate where they were hidden. Roosevelt courageously stood erect in the midst of the action, directing return fire and somehow avoiding the deadly steel bullets, although one struck a tree only inches from his cheek and splattered bark splinters into his face.

Finally, Davis spotted a line of Spaniards crouched along the summit of a nearby hill. Roosevelt directed the Rough Riders to concentrate their fire at that point, and a barrage of American bullets soon forced the defenders to flee. At that moment, 900 American soldiers, including the Rough

The Granger Collection, New York

Riders and the black troops of the 10th Cavalry (the famous Buffalo Soldiers), charged the Spanish positions. The Rough Riders swerved to the right flank and rear while the other soldiers charged directly at the Spanish lines, now beginning to fall back as Rubin had intended. The 10th Cavalry mounted a deadly enfilading fire as American units scrambled up the hill, crashed the line of defense, and gained the top of the hill. Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, a former Confederate cavalry officer, was caught up in the enthusiasm of the moment. "Come on, boys!" he shouted. "We've got the damn Yankees on the run!"

THE AMERICAN PRESS HAILED LAS GUASIMAS AS A GLORIOUS VICTORY, EVEN THOUGH THE SPANISH HAD inflicted the greater number of casualties. The Americans lost 16 dead and 52 wounded at Las Guasimas, against Spanish losses of 10 dead and 25 wounded. Had Rubin held his ground and fought, the tally could have been far higher. The American advance would have been delayed, which in turn would have given reinforcements time to reach Santiago. Spanish confidence would have soared. As it was, American optimism, rife before Las Guasimas, had received a sobering shock. The Cuban campaign was not going to be as simple as most had predicted. A growing number of American troops realized that they faced a professional foe. "Some of these fellows will find out sometime or other that a handful of Americans cannot clean out the whole Spanish Army," wrote one officer to his wife after Las Guasimas. His words would prove prophetic.

Following the encounter at Las Guasimas, the Americans paused for a few days to regroup

"It was as though fifteen regiments were encamped along the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue...."

and allow time for needed supplies to reach them. The supply system, however, could not rapidly move equipment along the solitary path, which was little more than a crude trail hacked out of the jungle. Food and ammunition piled up on the beaches, while only a trickle of material arrived at the front. "It was simply impossible to get the bare necessities of life to those men," complained Shafter.

The American commander could hardly have selected worse terrain upon which to stage a battle. The road running through the jungle and leading to the San Juan heights crossed water four times, the final time at the San Juan River. Several hundred yards beyond lay two rises—125-foot-high San Juan Hill and the smaller Kettle Hill to its right. To reach the hills, Shafter's forces would have to cross the San Juan River under fire, move along the narrow jungle road for 400 yards, then advance toward the heights across an open meadow with waist-high grass. Three and a half miles to the northeast stood the village of El Caney, defended by another group of Spaniards.

Shafter opted for a three-pronged attack. The battle would begin with Lawton's division of infantry, backed by an artillery battery, charging the defenses at El Caney to eliminate the threat to Shafter's right flank. Two hours later, the main force, including Roosevelt and the Rough Riders, would move against San Juan and Kettle Hills. By the time this force crossed the river and reached the meadow, Lawton's

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ABOVE: The famous African-American "Buffalo Soldiers" on the march during the Spanish-American War. LEFT: Troops of the 16th Infantry take fire in the perilous San Juan River bottom. Most American casualties were suffered here prior to the charge on Kettle and San Juan Hills.

men presumably would have arrived to reinforce the attackers. In the meantime, a group of Cuban insurgents would block the road west of Santiago to prevent the reinforcements from reaching Linares.

The terrain favored the defenders. The road disappeared into thick jungle one mile before the meadow, forcing the Americans into a laborious advance before reaching their jumping-off points. A second trail, not discovered by Shafter until the advance had started, split from the main track and broke into the clearing 1,000 feet to the southwest. Knowing that these two routes offered the only avenue for the Americans, the Spanish trained their rifles and artillery on the area. One American officer warned, "The enemy knows where those two trails leave the wood. They have their guns trained on the openings. If our men leave the cover and reach the plain from those trails alone they will be piled up so high that they will block the road." Despite the risks, Shafter felt that he had no choice but to mount a frontal assault on the heights. Any other tactic would take too long, exposing his men to both the Spanish reinforcements heading in from the

west and the main, if invisible, enemy already on the ground—disease.

While Shafter formulated his plans, his soldiers waited impatiently for the supplies to slowly reach the front from the ships back at Daiquiri. Few men wanted to wait any longer. Correspondent Davis wrote that the soldiers could see the enemy strengthening their defenses, a spectacle that caused many to wonder why they did not attack immediately. "For four days before the Americans captured the same rifle-pits at El Caney and San Juan, with a loss of two thousand men," Davis wrote, "they watched these men diligently preparing for their coming, and wondered why there was no order to embarrass or to end these preparations."

Roosevelt wondered along with the troops. The enforced inertia frustrated the vigorous New Yorker, who wished that someone—anyone—would step to the forefront and take control. When he finally received orders late on June 30 to move up to the advance positions, Roosevelt and the Rough Riders could only proceed at a snail's pace. "The heat was intense as we passed through the still, close jungle, which formed a wall on either hand," wrote Roosevelt. According to Davis, few trails could have offered a worse approach: "The trail was a sunken wagon road, where it was possible, in a few places, for two wagons to pass at one time, but the greater distances were so narrow that there was but just room for a wagon, or a loaded mule-train, to make its way. The banks of the trail were three or four feet high, and when it rained it was converted into a huge gutter, with sides of mud, and with a liquid mud a foot deep between them."

The slow progress prevented men from arriving at their designated positions until after midnight, which meant that few troops got adequate rest the night before the assault. After seeing that the men were encamped, Roosevelt and Wood sat quietly in their tent, pondering what the next dawn would bring. "We did not talk much," wrote Roosevelt, "for though we were in ignorance as to precisely what the day would bring forth, we knew that we should see fighting and I suppose that, excepting among hardened veterans, there is always a certain feeling of uneasy excitement the night before the battle."

The restless night was broken when orders arrived stating that the units should begin moving to their lines at 4 AM. The massive camp came suddenly to life. Soldiers washed down hardtack and beef jerky with lukewarm coffee, then gathered with their units and started filtering along the narrow path. Their actions reminded Davis of the cramped confines of a New York setting. "It was as though fifteen regiments were encamped along the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue," he wrote, "and were all ordered at the same moment to move into it and march downtown."

One man remained in his tent a mile back. General Shafter's immense size, combined with Cuba's weltering heat and humidity, had brought on a debilitating attack of gout. In his place, the commander dispatched Colonel Edward J. McClernand to an observation post at El Pozo. McClernand would then relay Shafter's orders, transmitted via a telephone line, to Lieutenant John D. Miley, who waited near the front on horseback to rush the orders to the appropriate officer. The cumbersome arrangement would impede the attack in the opening hours, causing unnecessary casualties among the waiting soldiers.

Shafter turned his attention to the second of Linares's three defensive lines. This one ran through the village of El Caney and the ridges of two hills in front of Santiago—San Juan Hill and Kettle

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ABOVE: Captain Allyn Capron's battery fires at the Spanish stone fort at El Caney. Capron lost a son at Las Guasimas. BELOW LEFT: The ruins of El Caney's stone fort on the day at the battle. BELOW RIGHT: Members of the Cuban army pose with machetes at Manzanillo. They had been fighting the Spanish for years.

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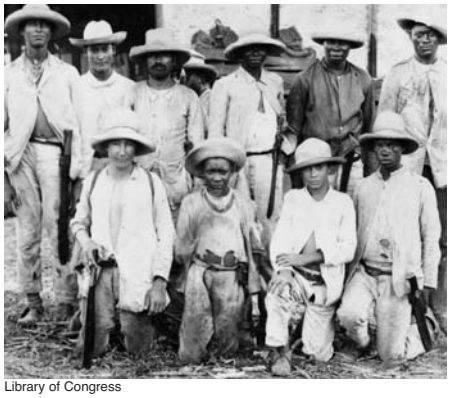

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Hill. Six miles northeast of Santiago, El Caney featured six wooden blockhouses and one stone fort, held by 521 Spaniards under General Joaquin del Rey and ringed with trenches and barbed wire. Before Shafter could seize San Juan and Kettle Hills, the last obstacles before Santiago, he would have to eliminate El Caney and remove the threat to his right flank and rear. Shafter estimated that Lawton's 5,400 men could take the village in two hours, after which time Lawton's men could turn to their left and join the subsequent attack against San Juan and Kettle Hills.

American infantry had reached a ridge 1,500 yards distant from the stone fort when they saw a handful of Spanish guards. The invaders, afraid that their presence would be detected too soon, quickly took cover to avoid being spotted. "I remember so vividly how concerned we all were lest the Spaniards get wind of our approach and run," wrote correspondent Caspar Whitney. "Later in the day, we began to wonder if they were ever going to run."

National Archives

ABOVE: A view of San Juan Hill, taken from the crest of Kettle Hill, which Roosevelt took with his Rough Riders. BELOW: Lieutenant Jules Ord fell mortally wounded while leading the 71st Infantry up San Juan Hill. Drawing by Private Charles J. Post.

U.S. Army Art

American artillery opened the fighting at 6:35 AM. Correspondent John Fox, Jr., wrote of the first shell, "You could hear that awful hiss so plainly that you seemed to be following the shell with your naked eye; you could hear it above the reverberating roar of the gun up and down the coast mountain; hear it until six seconds later a puff of smoke answered beyond the Spanish column where the shell burst." Hundreds of white hats suddenly appeared just above the trench line, indicating that Spanish soldiers were ready to repel any advance. At 7 AM, American infantry moved forward and opened a heavy fire from 600 yards away. The Spaniards replied with their own volleys, creating a sound that echoed through the area. "It began as corn begins to pop, irregularly and with pauses," wrote correspondent Frank Norris. "Then it gathered volume and rippled and rolled and spread till it awoke to a great echo somewhere in a little gully of the hills."

THE FURIOUS AMERICAN FIRE HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON THE SPANISH REPLY, WHICH SLOWED THE AMERICAN advance to a few yards at a time. Accurate Spanish fire, especially from snipers in trees and sheltered in cottages and blockhouses, forced Lawton's infantry to crawl along the ground through tall grass and bushes. "They knew every range perfectly and picked off our men with distressing accuracy if they showed as much as a head," wrote an infantry officer. The Americans fired back, but as they rarely could see their targets, their bullets had little effect.

At 7 AM on the day that Roosevelt later labeled "the great day of my life," American infantry started moving through the dense foliage toward the San Juan River. Once in position, they were to await orders from Shafter to cross the river, charge across the meadow beyond, push through the barbed-wire barricades, and attack the Spanish trenches and blockhouses atop San Juan and Kettle Hills. An already oppressive heat that would register 100 degrees later in the morning made their task even more difficult.

American artillery in front of San Juan Hill opened fire at 8 AM, producing a thunderous reply from the Spanish. As Roosevelt watched with Wood, a shell exploded above, sprinkling the Rough Riders with shrapnel. One piece struck Roosevelt on the wrist and raised a bump the size of a hickory nut. Roosevelt moved his men off the high ground near the artillery to the hill's far side to avoid another such occurrence. As the artillery duel raged, American infantry continued to move toward the river. The narrow trail, shrouded by the dense jungle foliage, slowed their movement.

While the Americans had little knowledge of the terrain—Shafter had declined to send out reconnaissance patrols ahead of the battle—the Spanish knew every turn in the trail. Riflemen from the heights and snipers in trees mounted a deadly fire on the Americans simply by shooting blindly into the jungle. "Overhead the clicking and buzzing noises had become more definite," recalled one soldier. "The Spaniards were firing blindly through the jungle and going high. The first high bullets had been a thrill. Now the bullets were proof that someone was trying to kill us, each one of us individually, and in a highly personal way."

A large observation balloon, manned by daredevil Lt. Col. George Derby, served as an excellent target for Spanish marksmen, whose bullets quickly whizzed through the air in its direction and sprayed the American troops below, including Roosevelt's, with spent rounds. Lieutenant John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, who would later rise to top command during World War I, quickly moved his 10th Cavalry out of harm's way. Little seemed to be going right, and when the American troops could not reach their proper positions by 10 AM, the assigned time to start storming the hills, the attack had to be postponed.

Brigade commanders futilely tried to reach Shafter, ill in his tent far from the scene. Miley waited for word from McClernand, but none came along the congested trail. Confusion

marked the moments immediately before the assault, hardly a comforting notion for officers and infantry about to stake their lives on a massed assault. "Our orders had been of the vaguest kind," Roosevelt wrote later, "being simply to march to the right and connect with Lawton—with whom, of course, there was no chance of our connecting. No reconnaissance had been made, and the exact position and strength of the Spaniards were not known. A captive balloon was up in the air at this moment, but it was worse than useless."

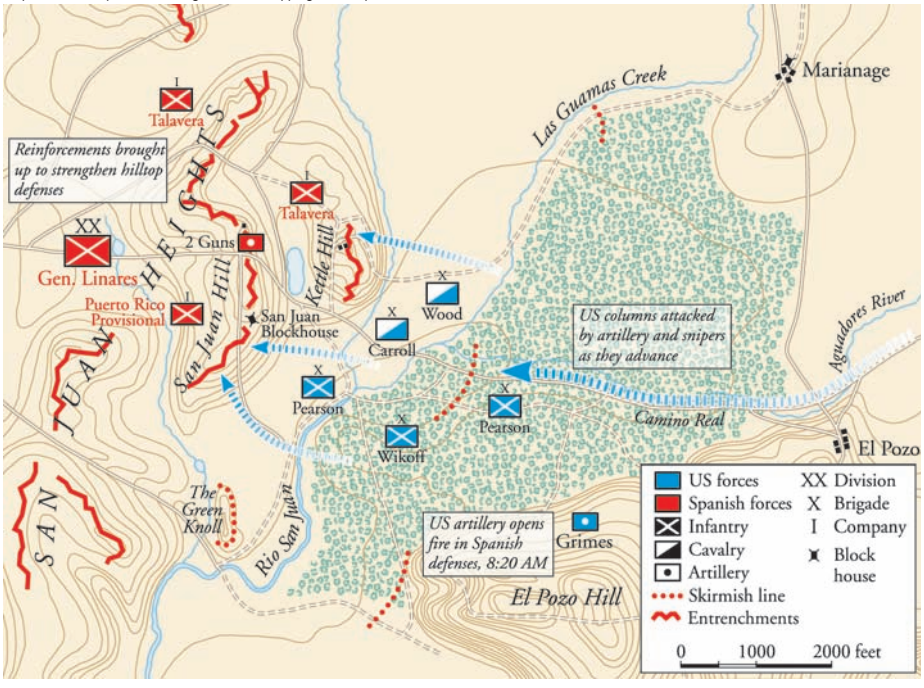
Back at El Caney, the American attack remained stalled. Infantry advanced slowly through the tall grass, but accurate Spanish fire forced them to keep their distance from the trenches and barbed wire. A fight that Lawton believed would last two hours had now taken four, with little progress to show for it. Frustration confounded the Americans facing San Juan Hill. They had orders to seek cover wherever they could and hold their fire, despite the casualties suffered from Spanish riflemen. The soldiers impatiently remained in their positions along the river and on the trail, wondering when the command to cross the meadow would relieve them from the agonizing delay. Heavy congestion along the path backed up the line of soldiers filtering to the front for one mile.

"It was during this period of waiting that the greater number of our men were killed," reported Davis. "For one hour they lay on their rifles staring at the waving green stuff around them, while the bullets drove past incessantly, with savage insistence, cutting the grass again and again in hundreds of fresh places." Spanish riflemen hidden in trees fired at will, their bullets tearing into the Americans from all sides.

The men could not fall back along the crowded road, but to remain where they were for much longer meant death or injury. To Davis, the Americans were trapped in "a chute of death from which there was no escape except by taking the enemy who held it by the throat and driving him out and beating him down." The soldiers labeled the junction where the road crossed the river "Bloody Bend" because so many of them were shot at the crossing.

At 11 AM, Roosevelt finally received orders to take his Rough Riders across the river, march half a mile to the right, and then wait for further orders. Roosevelt, eager to move as far away from the balloon as possible—it was still drawing intense fire—quickly led his men to a sunken lane at the far right end of the American line. He and his men settled in for another long wait. Although the lane offered some protection, the Rough Riders were still at risk. A popular officer, Captain William O. "Bucky" O'Neill, who believed that an officer should never take cover or show fear, casually strolled about exhorting the men. The other Americans begged him to get down—one sergeant warned, "Captain, a bullet is sure to hit you." O'Neill, who had been a western sheriff, mayor, and scout, laughed off the warning. Puffing on a cigarette, he replied, "Sergeant, the Spanish bullet isn't made that will kill me." As O'Neill turned, a bullet struck him squarely in the mouth and exited the back of his head, killing him instantly.

RELIEF ARRIVED WHEN THE OFFICER IN THE BALLOON SPOTTED A SECOND TRAIL MEANDERING THROUGH the jungle to the left of the main path. Blocked by vines and deep undergrowth, the second path nevertheless relieved the congestion that had cost the Americans precious time and soldiers. With two avenues to the river and meadow, Shafter's units could move a bit faster, but the narrow roads still became clogged with men and equipment. Spanish fire killed Brig. Gen. Charles A. Wikoff as he led his brigade across Bloody Bend and deployed to the left. The next in command, Lt. Col. William S. Worth, took over, but he too fell from wounds five minutes later. A third officer, Lt. Col. Emerson S. Liscum, stepped up, but he was shot down within five minutes. Finally, an officer from a nearby unit, Lt. Col. Ezra P. Ewers, led them into line.



Kettle Hill, on the Spanish left, was mistakenly identified as San Juan Hill in the first reports of the battle. San Juan Hill had a better ring to it, anyway.

In all, 400 Americans were killed or wounded crossing the river and moving forward. The wounded lay in the tropical sun, suffering from heat and thirst as well as pain. To no avail, a frustrated Roosevelt sent a stream of messengers back to locate Miley and see if he could start to advance. He was about ready to take matters into his own hands when, around 1 PM, the command finally arrived to start the attack. Miley, who had heard nothing from Shafter, had sent the order on his own initiative.

Roosevelt immediately leaped onto his horse, Little Texas, and began what he later termed his "crowded hour" by moving the Rough Riders toward Kettle Hill on the American right. He reached a line of Regular Army cavalry in front, whose officer seemed unwilling to go forward. Seeing the hesitation, Roosevelt remarked that if the cavalry was just going to stay where they were, they at least should step aside and let his men through.

Roosevelt moved to the head of the Rough Riders and, riding back and forth along their line, shouted encouragement to the men as they stepped forward. Stunned newspaper correspondents and foreign military observers watching the charges against San Juan and Kettle Hills doubted the maneuver would succeed. "It is very gallant," said one observer, "but very foolish." Another added, "By God, it's plucky! But they can't do it! It will simply be a hell of a slaughter with no good coming out of it."

Library of Congress

Richard Harding Davis later wrote that the charge up Kettle Hill bore little resemblance to paintings that later heralded the action. Rather than an entire unit advancing in unison, flags snapping in the breeze and bayonets glistening in the sun, "they were so few. It seemed as if someone had made an awful and terrible mistake. One's instinct was to call to them to come back. You felt that someone had blundered and that these few men were blindly following out some madman's mad order. It was not heroic then, it seemed merely terribly pathetic. The pity of it, the folly of such a sacrifice was what held you."

A few small groups of soldiers marked the advance, and behind them followed single lines of men, moving slowly through the high grass. When Roosevelt spotted one man cowering in a bush, he peered down and asked, "Are you afraid to stand up when I am on horseback?" Before the man could reply, a bullet passed through him lengthwise and killed him. To Roosevelt's left charged the 9th and 10th Cavalry, including Pershing. Gradually, the men rose and headed toward Kettle Hill, halting only to shoot as they ran forward cheering.

Spanish defenders started falling back toward the lines closer to Santiago in the face of the impetuous charge. Forty yards from the summit, Roosevelt encountered barbed wire and leaped off his horse. He and his orderly, Private Henry Bardshar, ran ahead of the others, shooting and yelling. Roosevelt watched as Bardshar fired at two Spaniards, who fell to the ground. As a handful of remaining Spanish soldiers fled, the two men reached Kettle Hill's summit, then turned to see the rest of the Rough Riders and the 9th Cavalry swarming up the slopes.

"There was the stuff of which heroes are made in the bespectacled volunteer officer ..."

The defenders, seeing waves of Americans rushing toward them rather than resting like sitting ducks along the river, quickly abandoned their positions. The American correspondents watching from the rear caught the excitement of the moment, depicting the charge in glorious terms and painting Roosevelt as the day's savior. Davis, a personal friend, stated that Roosevelt "was, without doubt, the most conspicuous figure in the charge." He added that "Roosevelt, mounted high on horseback, and charging the rifle-pits at a gallop and quite alone, made you feel that you would like to cheer." Another correspondent claimed, "There was the stuff of which heroes are made in the bespectacled volunteer officer, charging the Spanish earthworks at a gallop, with a blue polka-dotted handkerchief floating like a guidon from his sombrero."

In the meantime, the American forces battling at El Caney still struggled to gain yards. One shell knocked the Spanish flag from atop the stone fort, but otherwise the men had little to cheer about. Flies buzzed around dead bodies and land crabs waited for movement to cease before crawling in for a feast. By 2 PM, hours after the assault was to have ended, Lawton's attack remained stalled, the bulk of his 5,000 men stymied by accurate Spanish fire. "I was fearful I had made a terrible mistake," Shafter wrote later.

The charge up San Juan Hill was similar to Kettle Hill, consisting of small groups of soldiers advancing a few yards at a time against heavy Spanish fire from snipers and men in trenches. Officers and men fell from gunshot wounds or the debilitating effects of the sun. In an effort to alleviate the situation, Roosevelt ordered his men on Kettle Hill to direct their fire in support of Brig. Gen. Hamilton S. Hawkins, who led his brigade across the grassy open ground toward the heights. Lieutenant Jules Ord, brandishing a saber in one hand and a revolver in the other, exhorted the men of the 6th Infantry as they reached the hill. Running at the head of the group, Ord alternately ran forward a few yards, fired his pistol, and shouted encouragement to the soldiers behind. Gradually, they inched toward the crest.

The Americans made little progress against

the defenders at San Juan Hill until 1:15, when three Gatling guns commanded by Lieutenant John Parker were brought forward and opened fire from 600 to 800 yards. The guns pumped 2,400 bullets per minute toward the Spanish trenches, pinning down the defenders and punching holes in their lines. As American infantry reached the crest of San Juan Hill, Parker and Roosevelt lifted their covering fire. The Americans halted at the top and fired into the trenches, then dashed across and headed toward the blockhouse. The attack quickly turned into a rout, with the surviving Spaniards fleeing toward Santiago.

The Rough Riders poured across the interval to join their cohorts at San Juan. As Roosevelt and another soldier reached the trenches, two Spaniards suddenly leaped up and shot at them from close range. The bullets missed, but as they turned to flee Roosevelt shot and killed one of the defenders. Roosevelt continued forward until he arrived at the crest, from where he could look below and see the city of Santiago. Other Americans, realizing that victory was theirs, drove the Stars and Stripes and their yellow silk cavalry flags into the ground and waved their hats in triumph. A few Spaniards attempted to reform for a counterattack, but fell back when they saw more Americans reach the crest. Davis, who had watched the Americans rush across the meadow, storm up the hill, and plant their flags along the crest, observed, "From these few figures perched on the Spanish rifle-pits, came, faintly, the sound of a tired, broken cheer."

Victory had been attained at San Juan Heights, but fighting still engulfed the opponents at El Caney for another three hours.

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U.S. Army Art

ABOVE: A field hospital behind the American lines. Painting by Charles J. Post. OPPOSITE: Roosevelt and his Rough Riders atop the hill they captured on July 1, 1898. This photo by William Dinwiddie made them all famous.

Finally, at 4:15 PM, more than six hours after Shafter expected Lawton to have taken the village, the Spanish yielded the site after gallantly delaying the numerically superior Americans. The retreating Spanish left many dead and wounded behind. Bodies littered the trenches and filled the stone fort, blood covered the inside walls. "The dead were everywhere," wrote Norris. "The air was full of smells—the smell of stale powder, of smoke, of a horse's carcass two days unburied, of shattered lime and plaster in the blockhouse, and the strange, acrid, salty smell of blood."

THE AMERICANS HAD PAID DEARLY FOR BREACHING THE SPANISH DEFENSES BLOCKING THE WAY TO Santiago. The actions cost the United States 205 dead and 1,180 wounded, while the Spanish suffered 215 dead and 376 wounded. Part of the reason for the heavy casualties lay in the unbearably hot conditions in which the battle was fought, but a large portion of blame rested at Shafter's feet. Rather than trying to seize El Caney from the front, he could have tied up the Spanish defenders with a small force, which would have allowed him to place more men at San Juan and Kettle Hills. Adequate reconnaissance before the battle could have detected the second path through the jungle and relieved the heavy congestion that stacked up the American infantry and made them easy targets for Spanish snipers. In his weakened condition, Shafter should have relinquished command to a senior officer on the scene.

The Americans who seized San Juan and Kettle Hills gained great recognition from the citizens back home, who eagerly devoured news accounts of the fighting submitted by Davis and other correspondents. When the armies returned to the country after the Cuban campaign ended in total American victory a few weeks later, they enjoyed a heroes' welcome. To a lesser extent, the African American soldiers received adulation as well. Pershing stated proudly that his black soldiers "had fought their way into the hearts of the American people." Unfortunately, once back on American soil, the soldiers again faced the racial bigotry that still marked American society.

Since the action at San Juan Hill involved more troops than Kettle Hill, the two actions were frequently combined in the public mind into one assault. Consequently, Roosevelt became known as the hero of San Juan Hill, even though he had performed his most courageous acts of leadership at Kettle Hill. Whichever hill he had captured, Roosevelt astutely parlayed his newfound fighting reputation into a political career that began as governor of New York and culminated in the presidency of the United States. July 1, 1898, had proved, indeed, to be a great day for Theodore Roosevelt. □

Leading from the front, Arthur wades into combat in this 14th-century painting by Robert de Barron in the *Histoire de Merlin.* Despite his reputation, Arthur was never a true king.

The Bridgeman Art Library

With savage invaders flooding Britain in the wake of the Roman withdrawal, a legendary figure stepped forward to lead the hard-pressed Britons against the Teutonic surge. His name was Arthur.

KING ARTHUR SAVES BRITAIN

BY ROBERT BARR SMITH

BRITAIN WAS A BATTLEGROUND IN THE LAST YEARS OF THE fifth century. The occupying, and in some sense stabilizing, Roman legions long since had gone, never to return, and the native Britons found themselves locked in a long, heartbreaking struggle against waves of brutal North German invaders—Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—who delighted in bloodshed, rape, and murder. In the long run of history, the Britons were doomed. But before the final Saxon triumph, there would be a last shining hour of victory for the Britons. That triumph would brighten the fading sunset and give the tribes another few decades of life as a free people. It would also engender a heroic legend that still lives today. Like all legends, it is equal parts myth and history. It is the legend of Arthur, the once and future king of Britain.

The principal man of the Britons at the time was not Arthur, but Ambrosius Aurelianus, the son of a Roman consul who had risen to become the Dux Brittanniarum, or commander in chief, of the Britons. But Ambrosius was old, the veteran of innumerable battles with the Saxon invaders, and he had delegated effective conduct of the war to Arthur, who may have been his nephew. Arthur was a soldier, an experienced war leader, but never a king. He was, however, a remarkable man, a charismatic commander and thoughtful tactician who undoubtedly led from the front.

Such leadership was badly needed by the Britons. When its empire began to crumble, Rome called its legions home in about AD 410. That left all military matters in Britain in the hands of the inhabitants, who by then considered themselves Romans as well. Just when the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons first came to Britain is not certain, but it is probable that initially they were invited guests and were offered East Anglia as their own for settlement. Some may even have cooperated with the Britons in defending their homeland before the last of the Roman legions left. In time, these fierce men from the east brought their families over to England. All went well at the beginning. However, as more and more Germans arrived in Britain, they began to grab for what was not theirs. The Britons, understandably, fought back, and the long twilight agony of Britain began.

Following the death of Ambrosius in the last decade of the fifth century, Arthur assumed command of the severely depleted Britons. He was a man of many names—Arthur, Arturus, or Lucius Artorius Castus being those most frequently attributed to him—but his advancement remains shrouded in legend. The scattering of oral and written accounts of his rise places Arthur in northern Britain, where he first came to power as the Comes Brittaniarum, or under chief, of Ambrosius. As such, he would have led the mounted troops patrolling the border, in charge of resisting the constant encroachment of invading tribesmen from the south.

THE FIRST REPORTED MENTION OF Arthur—although not by name—is contained in the poem "Gododdin," written about AD 600 by Welsh poet Aneirin. The epic poem describes a battle between the Britons and the Saxons involving 300 mounted warriors led by a "reaper in combat" who fought at the front and "gave no quarter to the Saxons." The battle described by Aneirin appears to have taken place on high ground, lending credence to the notion that it was in actuality the Battle of Mount Badon (Mons Badonicus in Latin), which was fought around the year 518. (Some date it as much as two decades earlier.) That was the date given in the *Easter Annals,* the most reliable source of history for those misty times. Easter being a moveable feast, the Christian church kept records of when it fell each year. It became the custom of church chroniclers to include on their calendars a little secular history as well, notations of important events that took place each year. The annals for 518 record: "The Battle of Badon in which

The Art Archive/British Library

Crowned and armored, Arthur stands among the names of Britain's 30 far-flung kingdoms. For a brief time, under Arthur, they stood united against the Saxon threat.

Arthur carried the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ three days and three nights on his shoulders and the Britons were victors."

The reference to the cross probably does not refer to the literal carrying of a cross, but to a cloth cross sewn on Arthur's outer garment, a medallion hanging from his neck, or an emblem painted on his shield. Whatever the case, Arthur and his men were undoubtedly Christians. Three days and nights may be a literal description of the length of the Battle of Mount Badon, but probably it is no more than the church's attempt to describe the exhausting length of a ferocious hand-to-hand fight.

The earliest account of the battle, a scant few decades later, was by the Celtic monk Gildas, who described the followers of Ambrosius taking up arms "that they might not be brought to utter destruction." According to Gildas, who died in AD 570, "Sometimes our countrymen, sometimes the enemy, won the field … until the year of the siege of Bath-hill, when took place also the last almost, though not the least slaughter of our cruel foes." Gildas, the only eyewitness to leave behind an account of Britain in the Dark Ages, was scarcely impartial. "To hold back the northern peoples," he observes, the Britons "introduced into the island the vile unspeakable Saxons, hated of God and man alike."

Just where Arthur fought the Saxons is also lost in the chilly mists of time. Britain is covered with sites that might fit the descriptions of Arthur's battles. According to the eighth-century historian Nennius, Arthur fought some 12 battles in all against the Saxons. The first six took place along the rivers Gleni, Duglas, and Bassas, the seventh in a forest called Celidon. The eighth was near Gurnion Castle, the ninth at the City of Legion, the tenth on the banks of the river Trat Reuroit, the eleventh on the mountain Breguoin, and the twelfth at Mount Badon. The locations of some of the more obscure engagements are wholly undiscoverable; there are no similar names to be found anywhere in the British landscape. Most of the possible sites of Arthur's battles are in the West Country, which seems logical, but others are located far away.

There are at least five places in England called Badbury, and one, Badbury Rings, includes a likely hill fort of the proper antiquity. There is also the city of Bath, a perennial choice for the location of Mount Badon, and even a place in far-off Scotland. The most probable site, however, is a place called Liddington Castle in Wiltshire, not far from the pleasant town of Swindon, and hard by Badbury, only a mile northwest. Liddington Castle was not a castle in the medieval sense, but rather an Iron Age earthwork. Its size was approximately 200 by 150 yards, a hill fort used as a defensive work long before the days of Arthur. Below it runs an ancient track, the Ridgeway, which once was a road for the Roman legions and more peaceful travelers. It is a natural route the Saxons might well have used in their invasion west into Somerset.

The Britain of the period was heavily forested, and there was much swampland. A large army would surely have followed a major, well-used path, and the Ridgeway fills that requirement perfectly. Moreover, the Saxons were a large war band, probably an army composed of detachments from three or even four Saxon areas of southern England. The ancient roads from the east would have brought most of them together just a few miles to the east of Swindon. The route for any contingent from East Anglia joined the track to the west just below Liddington Castle itself.

The hill on which Liddington Castle stands rises some 900 feet above the surrounding

countryside. Its summit is about 400 feet higher than the ancient Ridgeway road, which ran across its shoulders time out of mind, making it a formidable piece of defensive high ground. Recent excavation has revealed that the top rampart of the old hill fort was rebuilt and repaired in the fifth century. Period chroniclers refer to it as Mons Badonicus—"mons" being Latin for "mountain"—so it is reasonably certain that a battle was fought on high ground. Mount Badon fits the physical description of the battle site very well indeed.

ARTHUR'S OUTNUMBERED MEN WERE probably cavalry, or at least mounted infantry. That gave him a considerable advantage of mobility over his foot-slogging enemy. Nobody knows whether his men used stirrups, that simple innovation that gave the horse soldier the stability and leverage to fight effectively from the saddle with sword and spear. Stirrups were in use by some of the Germanic tribes at least as early as the late fourth century, so Arthur's men may well have used them also. Arthur's men no doubt fought with much the same weapons as their Saxon enemy: the axe, the heavy spear, and the double-edged sword. They may have used a smaller axe as well, one designed for throwing instead of chopping, and perhaps light throwing-spears. Some would surely have used Roman weapons, remnants of the more stable days before the legions departed forever over the sea.

Their defensive armament was probably sparse: wooden shields covered with hide, iron caps, leather jerkins. Many would have worn Roman armor, for that had been the equipment of the legions in Britain for centuries. Whether they made great use of the bow is lost in history; it is highly likely that they would have done so, even though the weapon would not have been the great long bow of later days. Some footmen may have used slings at long range, perhaps even casting their own sling ammunition, lead slugs of identical size for consistency in delivery. The Roman light troops had done so, and tin mines had been operating for a long time in Cornwall.

The fight at Mount Badon probably began either as a large ambush or a meeting-engagement. Arthur and his men approached from the north or northwest, perhaps sheltering in the woods until the Saxons came close enough to strike. Then Arthur's horsemen charged the long column of Saxons marching west to harrow, murder, rape and rob. Since Arthur's enemies were using the old Roman road lying north of Mount Badon itself, the first clash of weapons echoed along the edge of the road.

Library of Congress

A view of Tintagel Castle in Cornwall. Popular legend links it with Arthur, and it was also the site of a Celtic stronghold in the 5th and 6th centuries.

Much of what we know about Mount Badon comes from a 12th-century manuscript by a cleric, Geoffrey of Monmouth. Although Geoffrey was not above inventing what he could not gather from other works and tales, what he wrote about the Battle of Mount Badon has the ring of truth. The Saxons fought in wedge-shaped formations, he says, a sort of phalanx bristling with spears. That description sounds very much like the shield-wall, the close-order hedge of spears that was a long-standing Norse tradition. Or it may refer to the so-called boar's head formation, a sort of flying wedge often used by the Norse enemy, a massed arrowhead of warriors, tipped by wild berserkers or other notable axemen.

Arthur's men charged the Saxons again and again, closing to sword-length when they could, hurling javelins and axes at close range when they could not penetrate the hedge of spears. The bowmen and slingers accompanying Arthur's cavalry would cover them with a flight of missiles as the horsemen thundered in to smash against the wall of shields. According to Geoffrey, Arthur exhorted his men to "fight for your fatherland, and if you are killed suffer death willingly. That in itself is victory and a cleaning of the souls."

Meanwhile, the Saxon commander, an experienced fighting man called Aelle, formed his men in an easily defensible position about 1,000 yards long, facing north. The Saxon line followed a line of higher ground just south of the road, its right flank anchored on a deep gully that ran southward behind them, then up the flank of Mount Badon. It was a reasonably strong position, since the gully would have protected their flank from any Briton cavalry charge. The Saxons' line probably paralleled the line of the ancient Roman road they had been tramping along when Arthur struck.

The fight raged all day, and the carnage must have been awful. The Saxons were doughty fighters, some swinging two-handed axes that could carve a man from scalp to breastbone in a single stroke. One chronicler says that Arthur's cavalry charged the Saxons repeatedly. In the poem "Gododdin," the Britons "went in a battalion, with a war cry; the force of horses with dark blue armor and shields. You did not see the great fury of the horsemen; they slew, they gave no quarter to the Saxons." The riders did terrible execution, but they could not break the wall of spears. Arthur's men also suffered heavy casualties and lost many horses to the wall of spears and the axemen.

AS NIGHT FELL AND IT BECAME TOO dark to see clearly, the two forces broke contact. Under cover of darkness, the Saxons fell back uphill to the protection of Mount Badon, which even then had ancient Iron Age earthworks cut into its grassy top. It was very steep, a fine defense against cavalry. Over a stretch of some 300 yards, the ground rose at a 20-degree angle: one foot upward for every three feet forward. Mounted men could approach the hilltop only from the east, and then only with difficulty. Much of the bloody work would have to be done by men on foot.

For his part, Arthur pulled back far enough

ullstein bild/KPA-TopF

This 13th-century painting depicts Arthur at the Battle of Camlann, where he was slain by one of his own rebellious knights, Medrautus Lancerius, who ran off with Arthur's wife, Guinevere.

to find ample water, tended his wounded, and rested his weary men and animals. And always he kept his eye on the Saxons high above him, a watch fire flickering behind him. Arthur watched and waited through the long hours of darkness, making his plans for dawn. Somewhere deep in the West Country night, Arthur made his choice: he would attack. He might have left the Saxons to fester on the hillside. In spite of the hill's fine defensive attributes—it was the highest point for miles in every direction—the Saxons could not stay there indefinitely. When morning dawned the next day, the Saxons would have had to choose to stay on their hilltop and eat themselves out of provisions, or come down and face that terrible cavalry that waited grimly below.

Arthur could have waited, but he was not content to loosen his grip on his enemy. One explanation of his decision is to remember that the fighting between Britons and Saxons was vicious and unforgiving—war to the knife, without quarter or pity on either side. To Arthur and his men, the only safe Saxon was a dead one, and Arthur was taking no chances on any of his enemies escaping. There may also have been another Saxon force somewhere in the vicinity, or at least Arthur thought there might be. In that case, Arthur would have felt it necessary to exterminate the host on Mount Badon before they could summon help by beacon or messenger.

ARTHUR'S MEN WERE VETERAN SOLDIERS with immense confidence in their commander. They had fought hard through most of the day. Many of the men still in the ranks were wounded; others had lost their horses. All had lost friends. They had to know that attacking up the steep slopes of Mount Badon in the morning would be a bloody task, with no assurance of victory at the end. Yet they were ready to follow their magnetic leader, whatever might lie at the end of the next long day.

The next morning, at the break of dawn, Arthur's men started uphill, their weapons glimmering faintly in the first pale light of the coming morning. Most of his men advanced on foot, grimly slogging their way uphill toward the waiting hedge of spears. As they came up the steep north slope of the hill, they were repeatedly charged by groups of Saxons, whose wild dashes struck all the harder by reason of the speed of their downhill run.

The Britons left the ground behind them studded with the still forms of their dead and the writhing bodies of their wounded. The forays from the hilltop spilled much Briton blood as the Saxons hurled every stone they could find. But still Arthur's men came on grimly, until they got within arm's reach of their blood-enemies, and then the fighting went hand-to-hand. Still the Britons fought at a disadvantage, trying to keep their footing on the steep slope and find leverage to hew and slash at burly enemies who towered above them.

Arthur now clutched his enemy tightly to him, and the infantry struggle went on throughout the day, swaying back and forth along the edge of the hilltop. Arthur was patient, waiting while his sweating, panting men struggled and died, pulling into the melee more and more Saxons from other parts of the hilltop. Then, late in the day, when the Saxons were deeply committed to the ferocious infantry battle along

the northern lip of the hill, Arthur struck. According to a contemporary account, "Arthur waxed wroth at the stubbornness of their [the Saxons] resistance, and the slowness of his own advance, and drawing forth Caliburn, his sword, cried out aloud the name of Holy Mary, and thrusteth himself forward with a swift on set into the thickest press of the enemy's ranks."

The Britons' charge, which Arthur led himself, thundered over the eastern edge of Mount Badon's flat top, the horsemen shouting "Holy cross!" and their own personal war cries, spear points down and forward, knocking aside those Saxons who still manned the eastern edge of the perimeter. The charge slammed into the mass of the Saxons from the flank and rear, and the top of Mount Badon became soaked with blood. The shock was tremendous. The Britons' horses were bulky and strong, the result of generations of breeding between native English ponies and the heavier horses of Rome. Many of the Saxons were knocked down and trampled to death by the frantic horses. Arthur's shouting horsemen crashed into the Saxons, the riders stabbing overhand at their enemies with their short, heavy spears, clutching the reins with their shield-hands or gripping them in their teeth. When spears were lost or broken, the Britons rose in their stirrups for leverage to hack at the desperate Saxons with axes or swords, slashing down through iron caps and leather jerkins, scattering blood and brains across themselves and their plunging horses.

Cornered, the Saxons fought back desperately, trying to pull their enemies from the saddle, dropping to the earth to stab at the horses' bellies and hamstrings. Those who did so perished under the hooves and heavy bodies of the horses. The survivors were exhausted, many wounded in the melee of the previous day. There could have been little food to spread among that tired host the night before, and perhaps no water at all. As the shield wall disintegrated, the Saxons' tired hearts began to fail as well.

Submerged by the relentless pressure of the cavalry, crushed against the anvil of the infantry assault over the northern lip of the hill, the Saxon resistance began to fragment, and fugitives started to break away in ones and twos and threes, seeking refuge in flight, looking anywhere for life and safety. But there was no safety on that hill—and none below it, either. For most of the Saxons there was only a last spasm of whistling steel and a bloody end to life. Arthur's men were paying back 50 years of blood, 50 years of rape and kidnapping and ruthless burning. They rode down every Saxon they could catch, killing and killing until their own exhaustion stopped them and there were no more living Saxons to cut down. Gildas credits Arthur alone with killing 470 men; Nennius puts his total at 940. Probably, this was the total account of Saxon dead, attributed conveniently to the leader of the Britons.

THE BATTLE OF MOUNT BADON WAS over. Because no historian or poet was present to write down what happened there, Mount Badon is little known. It deserves better. For on that bloody hill, Arthur won a victory that bought his people another half-century of life. And at Mount Badon the legend of Arthur took deep root and grew. It is still very much alive today, in spite of all manner of skeptical attempts to debunk the Arthurian legend. Arthur still sleeps, some believe, beneath the green earth somewhere in the West Country of England, or in Wales. He is surrounded by his men, like Barbarossa in the German legends. And like that fabled Teutonic king, Arthur will ride out again, Excalibur in hand, when his country needs him the most. For centuries men refused to believe the great soldier was dead. He was only sleeping, they said, and would come again in time of need.

The places associated with Arthur are still visited today by people who half believe in dimly mailed shades, even at noon. There are still places in the West Country where it is easy to see such things. The ancient hill fort at South Cadbury in Somerset is often identified as the legendary Camelot, and indeed it was the seat of an important commander during the final years of Arthur's life.

Arthur was killed at the Battle of Camlann, a few years after Mount Badon, by one of his own knights, Medrautus Lancerius, who then made off with Arthur's wife, Guinevere. The love triangle, if that's what it was, gave rise to a number of epic poems, including the Welsh collection *Mabinogion* and the Arthurian romances of Chretien de Troyes. In actuality, there were no soaring towers, no knights clanking in and out in full plate armor at Cadbury. But a notable war leader did live there at about the proper time in history, and his fort was large enough to hold a formidable army and its horses. Not far away lies the sleepy town of Glastonbury, with the

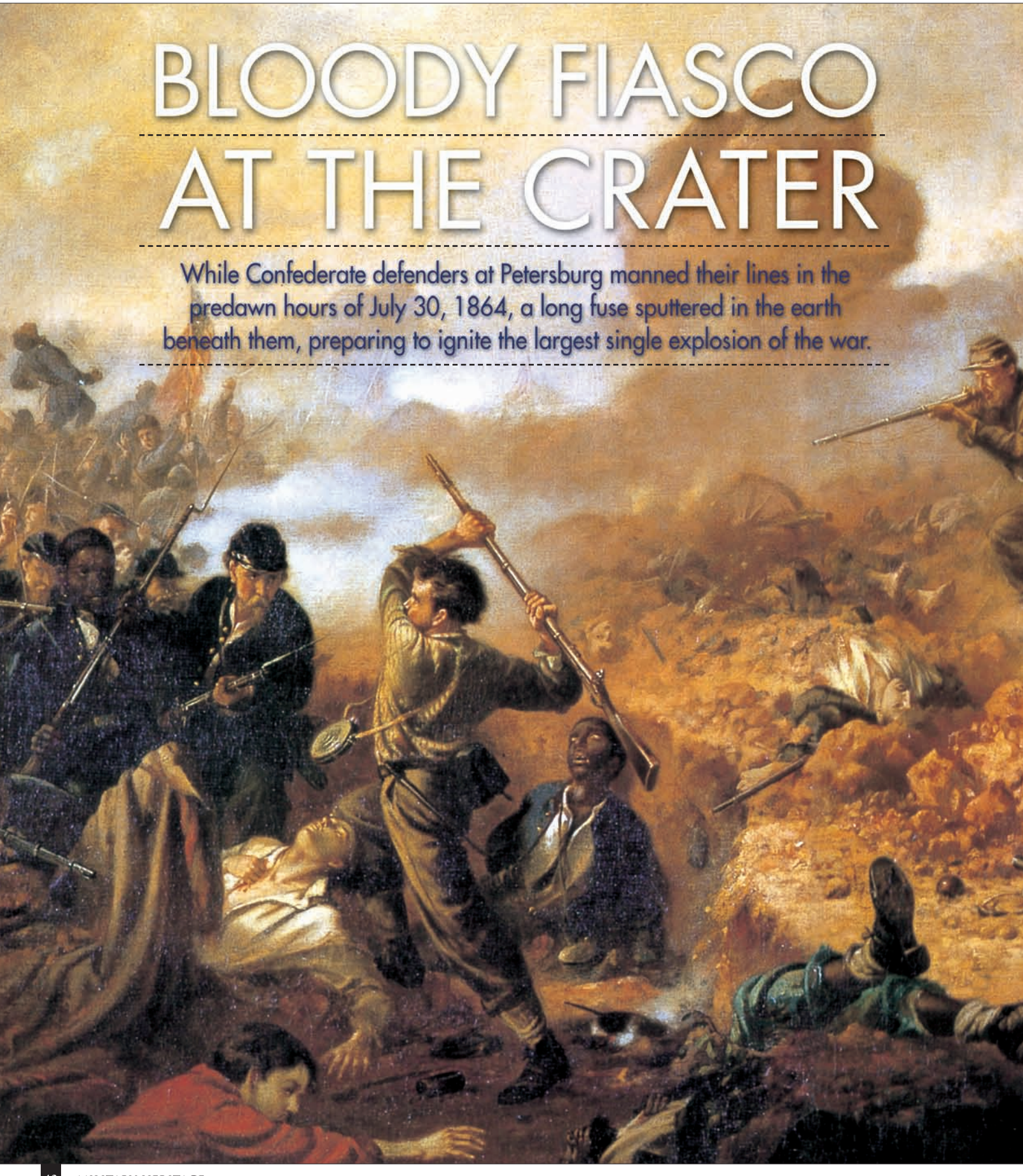
Continued on page 71

The Bridgeman Art Library

Arthur fighting again, this time with a Roman general, in a 15th-century manuscript by the master Boucicault.

BLOODY FIASCO AT THE CRATER

While Confederate defenders at Petersburg manned their lines in the predawn hours of July 30, 1864, a long fuse sputtered in the earth beneath them, preparing to ignite the largest single explosion of the war.



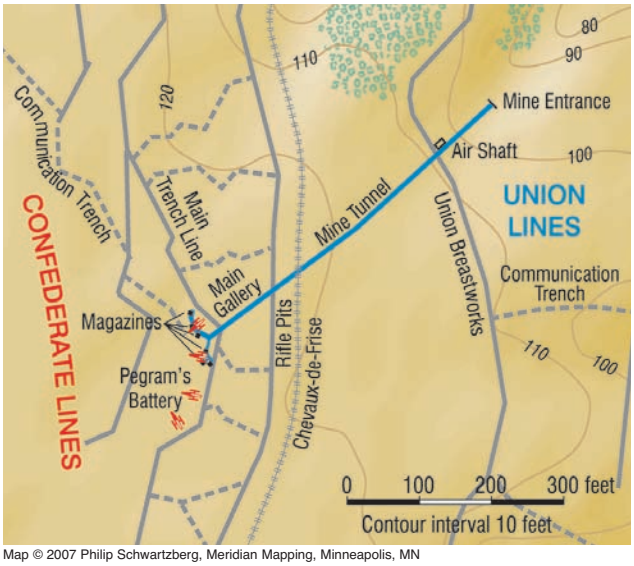
BY ARNOLD BLUMBERG

In the summer of 1864, after six weeks of virtually constant combat in the Wilderness area of northern Virginia, the Union and Confederate armies of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee settled into an uneasy siege around the city of Petersburg, 23 miles southeast of Richmond. With a population of 18,000, Petersburg was the second largest city in Virginia and the seventh largest in the entire Confederacy. Lead works used for manufacturing bullets, as well as numerous warehouses located within its confines, gave the city a manufacturing value central to the Southern war effort.

The five rail lines radiating out from the town gave it added strategic significance. The Richmond and Petersburg Railroad connected Petersburg with the capital. The Petersburg Railroad, commonly called the Weldon Railroad, ran between Petersburg and Weldon, North Carolina. Together, these two lines provided the only direct rail link between Richmond and the rich resources of the coastal regions of the Carolinas and Georgia. In addition, the South Side Railroad connected Petersburg with East Tennessee, and the Deep South via the Richmond and Danville Railroad. The City Point branch of the South Side line gave the Confederates access to the deep-river port at City Point. Finally, the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad ran through the fertile Blackwater River country before reaching enemy-held Suffolk. Petersburg thus linked Richmond with the rest of the Confederacy, and control of the critical rail hub was vital if Richmond was to be held successfully.

Rallying around their tattered flag, the 12th Virginia Infantry crashes into the Federal vanguard of Brigadier General Edward Ferrero at the edge of the Crater. Painting by John Adams Elder.
Petersburg National Battlefield

National Archives



Map © 2007 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: Deep trenches like this one, across from Elliott's Salient, helped conceal Union miners from Confederate eyes as they tunneled under enemy lines. LEFT: The tunnel Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants and his men dug ran for 510 feet.

The first direct Union threat to Petersburg was mounted in May 1864, when Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler advanced south of the James River from Bermuda Hundred. Butler's Army of the James, operating where the Appomattox River entered the James, could have occupied the town in early May, but bad luck and poor leadership prevented its capture at the time. A concerted attempt to take Petersburg occurred on June 15 when the Federals assaulted the town's outer defenses. The effort lasted for three days and proved another costly Union failure. The missed opportunities of May and June convinced Grant that more frontal attacks on the entrenched positions defending Petersburg would not succeed. He embarked instead on a series of flanking movements to his left and south designed to take the enemy bastion from the rear.

June 22 saw the first Union slide around the Confederate right at Petersburg. That day the Union II Corps was surprised and routed by Brig. Gen. William Mahone's gray-clad infantry. The next day a Federal try at breaking the Weldon Railroad due south of the city was shattered, again by Mahone and his men. The opposing armies, exhausted and bloodied, began to dig in, and the siege of Petersburg commenced in earnest. It was not a siege in the classical sense; the Confederates were never completely surrounded. From its fortified lines to the east and south of the enemy stronghold, the Union Army would launch repeated expeditions toward the sparsely defended regions to the southwest in an effort to cut the Weldon and South Side Railroads—Richmond's last links to the outside world. In response, Lee would counter the enemy thrusts with blocking movements and counterattacks of his own.

During July, active operations shifted north of the James River as the Federals attempted to take Richmond by delivering an assault from the Union bridgehead at Deep Bottom on the north shore of the James River. Although another failure, the effort did have one promising result. To counter the enemy thrust at Richmond from Deep Bottom, Lee withdrew four infantry divisions from south of the James, leaving only four weak infantry divisions to guard the vital Weldon and South Side Railroads. Realizing that the Petersburg front had been weakened, at least temporarily, the relentless Grant looked for a way to exploit the new situation.

THE DEFENSES GRANT SOUGHT TO BREACH stretched along high ground for 10 miles around Petersburg, beginning and ending on the Appomattox River and protecting all but the northern approaches to the city. Fifty-five partially enclosed artillery batteries, consecutively numbered from east to west, were linked together by trenches. The cannons and crews manning the line were protected by earth and log forts, while large pits were dug for the placement of mortars. Communication trenches leading to the rear allowed for relatively safe passage to and from the front, while earthen bomb-proofs afforded shelter for troops stationed behind the main line of resistance. Officially called the "Dimmock Line" after Confederate engineer Captain Charles Dimmock, who had supervised the construction of the Richmond defenses, the works around Petersburg had been built up and improved upon over the past two years.

As formidable as the Dimmock Line appeared to be, it had some serious weaknesses. Between Batteries 7 and 8 a deep ravine provided a route of penetration for an attacker. Near the Jerusalem Plank Road, between Batteries 24 and 25, south of the city, a second ravine along Taylor's Creek created a gap in the Confederate site that made for a potential breakthrough point. Furthermore, many of the artillery pieces ringing the town were placed above the parapets, exposing them to enemy fire, while their own fields of fire were obstructed by wooded areas to the front. The log and earthen forts housing the cannons could be attacked easily from the rear since none was fully enclosed. Lastly, the entire complex never had enough men to properly garrison it. This was underscored when the outnumbered Confederates had to give up the line's outer works and retreat to the inner defenses following the enemy attacks on June 19-20.

Facing the Confederate fortifications surrounding Petersburg, the Army of the Potomac built its own strong, static siege lines. Thirty-one forts, some as large as five acres, were created. The forts could hold 10 to 30 guns and 300 men, while additional field works could accommodate four to six pieces of artillery and as many as 200 troops. Most of these sites were fully enclosed and strengthened by gabions, abatis, and chevaux-de-frise and built close enough to each other to provide mutual fire support. Bomb-proofs were laid out every 20 yards. High parapets for infantry to hide behind, with obstacles such as ditches to their front, connected the entire line. For good measure, a reverse line facing to the rear was created a short distance from the front works. The architect of the Union field engineering effort at Petersburg was Major James C. Duane, chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac.

After the failed assault on the town during the second half of June, the Army of the Potomac was arranged around Petersburg with XVIII Corps (part of Butler's Army of the James) resting on the Appomattox River and stretching south to link with the right wing of IX Corps, followed by V Corps, which connected with IX Corps' left. II Corps was held in the immediate rear as a ready reserve. IX Corps was closest to the enemy works, about 100 yards to the west, and occupied sloping ground that fell off to a ravine in the rear. Through the ravine passed Taylor's Creek and part of the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad.

Life in the trenches was both hard and dangerous. Troops would usually spend a 24-hour shift on the picket line, where they observed the enemy and engaged in frequent skirmishes. Within short rifle range of the opposing lines, soldiers had to keep low, and could only be relieved during the hours of darkness. Deadly Confederate marksmen, armed with English-made Whitworth rifles, were especially adept at picking off unwary targets. One sniper dropped two Union soldiers at a well, several thousand yards away, with a single shot—they were dead before the shot was heard. Enemy trench raids, usually conducted just prior to dawn, added to the tension. As if the threat of sniper fire was not enough, life in the trenches at Petersburg also brought with it lice, swarms of flies, summer heat, lack of water, and cramped quarters. The stench of decaying bodies that could not be removed to the rear due to enemy fire was, as one New York infantryman remarked, "constantly in our nostrils and settled in our clothes."

Library of Congress

ABOVE: Sharpshooters from the Union's XVIII Corps take aim in this illustration by Alfred R. Waud, originally published in *Harper's Weekly* in August 1864. BELOW LEFT: Brigadier General William Mahon. BELOW RIGHT: Brigadier General Edward Ferrero.

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From late June on, IX Corps found itself under the guns of the Rebel fortifications protecting Petersburg. The corps was the smallest in the Army of the Potomac, with a complement of only 39 regiments, about half of the number in other corps (II Corps, for example, had 83 regiments). Along with II Corps, IX Corps had suffered the majority of the 10,000 losses sustained by the army in the assaults on Petersburg between June 15 and 18. During the battles of May and June, five brigade leaders had been lost to wounds, and many experienced staff officers had been killed or disabled. By early July it was common to see regiments led by captains, while many colonels now commanded brigades.

If IX Corps was bled white and exhausted as it settled in for the siege of Petersburg, the same could be said of its commander, Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside. Burnside was 40 years old in 1864, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Class of 1847. After serving in the Mexican War and on the southwestern frontier, Burnside retired from the Army in 1853 to engage in the gun-manufacturing business. He later took a management position with the Illinois Central Railroad. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he raised the 1st Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry Regiment, led an infantry brigade at First Manassas, and was soon promoted to brigadier general of volunteers. For a string of minor successes on the coast of North Carolina in 1862, Burnside was promoted to major general.

Following the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, where his performance as head of IX Corps was mediocre, Burnside was placed in command of the Army of the Potomac that November. The next month he led the army to a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Replaced as army commander, Burnside was transferred to the Department of the Ohio in March 1863. His successful defense of Knoxville, Tennessee, during the winter of that year paved the way for his reassignment back to the eastern theater and command of his old IX Corps the next spring.

Burnside's second tenure with the Army of the Potomac was a difficult one. Both officers and enlisted men resented him for his bloody failure at Fredericksburg the year before and viewed him (rightly) as a critic of deposed Maj. Gen. George McClellan, a man whom many in the Army of the Potomac still revered. By the conclusion of the Overland Campaign, Grant's confidence in Burnside and his IX Corps was all but exhausted. The Union commander felt that Burnside and his men were slow to execute orders, sluggish on the march, and unreliable in combat. And then there was the issue of the black troops in Burnside's command.

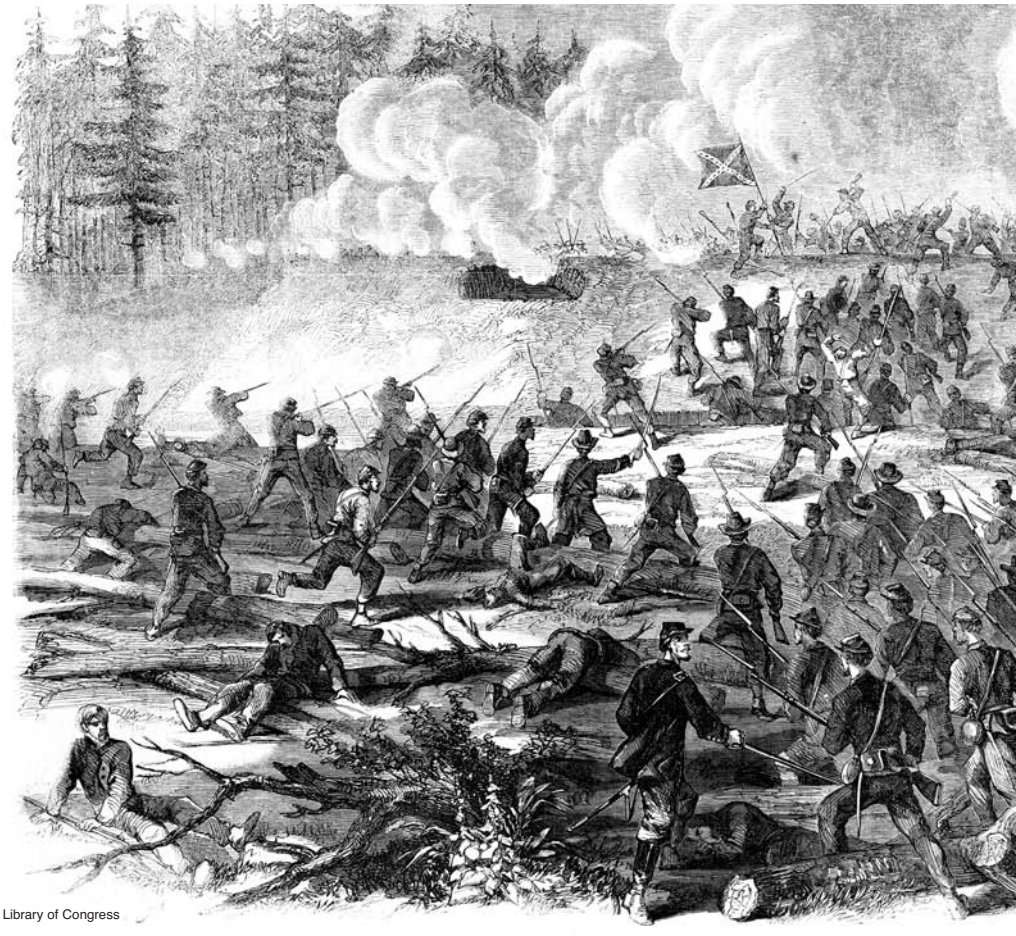
At the start of the Virginia campaign of 1864, there were 18 infantry and two cavalry regiments, as well one artillery battery, of United States Colored Troops (USCT). Commanded by white officers at the company, regimental, and brigade level, none of the African American soldiers had performed any duty other than mundane camp work, engineering and fatigue details. Northern racism fueled the supposition

that the former slaves could never be trained to fight effectively. The creation of two all-black infantry divisions, one in IX Corps, was looked upon by the military as a politically motivated experiment. The Army was never sure what role the black troops should play in the war, and thus watched their activities with a critical and judgmental eye.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN INFANTRY IN THE ARMY of the Potomac, nine regiments grouped into the 4th Division, had not been given a chance to prove itself during the Overland Campaign. The full-strength formation did little more than guard the vast wagon trains supporting Grant's move from the Rappahannock River to south of the James. By mid-July, with the army stalemated at Petersburg, the men of the division spent their days providing fatigue parties for other corps facing the Confederates. No time was allowed for them to train or engage the enemy. The army's titular commander, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade (Grant commanded all the armies in the East), felt that he could not rely on the colored troops to guard the trenches or skirmish with the enemy. He preferred to keep them employed in work details.

The leader of the 4th Division, Brig. Gen. Edward Ferrero, spent much of July attempting to get his rapidly tiring troops off these work details. His reasons for doing so were twofold: first, division morale and cohesion were breaking down due to the fragmentation of his unit resulting from constant detachment as laborers; second, he had been informed by Burnside early in the month that his men might have to lead the assault on Petersburg's works after the successful completion of a top-secret mining operation that was then being conducted in IX Corps' sector. Unfortunately, Ferrero's pleas to his superiors for time to gather his division and prepare it for the coming action were ignored. Little respect for his black troops, and even less for him, made Ferrero's requests fall on deaf ears.

The 33-year-old Ferrero had been a successful dancing instructor in New York City and a lieutenant colonel of militia. He participated in Burnside's North Carolina expedition in 1862 as colonel of the 51st New York Infantry. At that rank, he led a brigade in the IX Corps at Second Manassas, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. His performance was lackluster. His leadership of a division at the siege of Knoxville was passable at best and did nothing to engender respect from his superior officers when he came East. To top it off, there was bad blood between Ferrero and his corps commander. After the debacle of Fredericksburg and the embarrassment of the Mud March that followed, Burnside demanded that a number of officers he deemed insubordinate be removed from their posts. One of them was Ferrero.



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The plan to explode a mine under the Confederate lines, thus opening a breach in the town's defenses, was first proposed by Brig. Gen. Robert G. Potter, leader of the 2nd Division, IX Army Corps. Since late June his command had held the Union trench works west of Taylor's Creek. From this vantage point he observed a bulge in the enemy line, 100 yards to his front. Dubbed Elliott's Salient after Confederate Brig. Gen. Stephen Elliott, Jr., whose South Carolina troops occupied it, the salient contained a small redoubt guarded by a four-gun artillery battery. The brigadier surmised that an underground mine set off beneath the fortification could create a gap in the enemy lines that might lead to the capture of Petersburg itself. Potter sent his proposal to his corps commander, Burnside.

Unknown to Potter, Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants of the 48th Pennsylvania Regiment had come to the same conclusion about the feasibility of mining under the Confederate position. A trained railroad engineer who had participated in drilling a 4,200-foot tunnel through the Alleghenies in the 1850s, Pleasants had both the personal experience and the skilled coal miners in his own regiment to do the job. He and Potter went to discuss the project with Burnside on June 25. Despite the corps commander's initial doubts, Pleasants obtained permission to begin the tunnel the next day.

WITHIN 72 HOURS OF OPENING THE MINE, Pleasants and his men had burrowed 130 feet—a quarter of the distance to the enemy fort. While Pleasants' men toiled, Meade and Duane looked on with skepticism. Both felt certain that the project would fail and did their part to make that prediction come true by withholding all material aid. Pleasants had to scour the rear areas of the army to find the necessary wood and tools required for the job. By mid-July, the tunnel was almost completed. Pleasants requested from the artillery chief eight tons of black powder and 1,000 yards of safety fuse. What he got was only four tons of powder and a blasting fuse—not the requested safety fuse. Nevertheless, on July 28, Pleasants reported that the mine was ready to be activated. Some 320 kegs of gunpowder, weighing a total of 8,000 pounds, had been placed at intervals inside the 510-foot tunnel, primed for explosion with a 98-foot-long fuse.

ABOVE: Battlefield artist E.F. Mullen contributed this sketch of the XVIII Corps overrunning a portion of the Confederate lines at Petersburg. Originally published in Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper*. RIGHT: Union sappers carry powder into the mine in another sketch by Alfred A. Waud for *Harper's Weekly*.

While Pleasants' men dug, Burnside finalized a plan for the follow-up assault. As he envisioned it, the attack would take place before dawn with the lead units in column formation and engineers at the head of each formation to clear away any obstacles in their path. Grant, in turn, ordered a diversionary move by Maj. Gen. Winfield Hancock's II Corps and a few thousand cavalry north of the James River in the hopes of drawing off enemy forces from Burnside's front. Grant also ordered Maj. Gen. Gouverneur Warren's V Corps and Maj. Gen. Edward Ord's XVIII Corps to ready themselves to support IX Corps' effort.

The key to Burnside's plan was getting to the high ground 400 yards northeast and behind the Confederate lines near the town of Blandford, just east of Petersburg. Running parallel to the enemy works was the Jerusalem Plank Road, heading north. Topping the summit was a small brick church and cemetery that gave the hill its mordant name—Cemetery Hill—in subsequent reports. Burnside envisioned his black troops conducting a lighting thrust through the hole created by the mine, supported on the left flank by the 3rd Division and on the right flank by the 1st Division, with the 2nd Division following closely behind.

Ferrero's division was chosen to lead the attack. Burnside picked the troops for a number of reasons. First, although lacking combat experience, they were relatively fresh and up to strength with 4,300 men, something that could not be said of IX Corps' three white divisions, which were low in numbers as well as morale. Second, unlike the battle-wise troops of the white units, who Burnside felt would go to ground as soon as they advanced beyond friendly entrenchments, the black soldiers would be eager to prove themselves and would attack

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without hesitation. Ferrero was ordered to detach a regiment from each of his two brigades to clear the enemy trenches to the left and right of the breach made by the exploding mine.

On July 26, Burnside presented his plan to Meade, who in no uncertain terms forbade the colored troops from leading the assault. Furthermore, Meade ordered the attack to be a straight drive for Cemetery Hill, with no forces being spared for clearing the adjacent Confederate works. Meade went to Grant and convinced him that to allow black troops to head the attack would bring down a political firestorm from radical abolitionists in the Lincoln administration if the operation failed and the black division incurred great loss of life. Grant agreed and gave his approval for Meade's revised attack plan.

With his carefully thought-out scheme for the advance on the Petersburg fortifications rejected, Burnside had to construct a new one from scratch. He sent for the commanders of his three white divisions—Brig. Gens. James H. Ledlie, Robert B. Potter, and Orlando B. Wilcox—and told them to decide among themselves which one of their formations would now lead the attack. (Ferrero was not at the conference, having been granted leave on July 21 to travel to Washington to lobby Congress in person for his yet unconfirmed brigadier rank. He would not return to the front until the late afternoon of the 29th, barely eight hours before the mine was set to go off.) Several hours of unproductive discussion followed, with no one volunteering for the dangerous assignment. Frustrated by the proceedings, Burnside finally had the generals pick lots. Ledlie drew the dubious honor of leading the attack, which was to commence barely 12 hours hence.

BURNSIDE WAS LIKELY DISAPPOINTED WITH fortune's choice of Ledlie and his men to spearhead the assault. Burnside had previously expressed his opinion that the unit's soldiers "are worthless. They didn't enlist to fight." His opinion of Ledlie was no better. Ledlie was a 32-year-old civil engineer who had worked on railroads before the start of the war. He was appointed a brigadier general in 1863 after unexceptional service on the Carolina coast and as post commander at various locations in the Department of Virginia and North Carolina. Rising from brigade to division command by June 1864, he had spent the better part of the summer attempting to resign from the army. His notorious lack of personal bravery, barely masked by his addiction to drink, made him an object of scorn by officers and enlisted men alike.

During the evening of July 29, Burnside issued written orders to his divisions, setting down their precise responsibilities for the coming attack. Ledlie's division was to press through the gap created by the mine and seize Cemetery Hill. Wilcox's men were to follow on the heels of Ledlie, then turn left to form a protective shoulder, while Potter's command, following Wilcox, created a blocking position to the right of the penetration. Ferrero's men would pass through the 1st Division and occupy the Petersburg suburb of Blandford. Burnside hoped the attack still would have the element of surprise on its side—for the last several weeks the frontline troops and the Petersburg newspapers speculated about a Yankee mine being planted, and the Confederates had dug countermines to discover its location—without success.

The mine was scheduled to go off at 3:30 AM; its eruption was the signal for the all-out Union attack. The designated time came and went and no explosion occurred. The three spliced-together fuses that were supposed to spark the gunpowder had gone out. Lieutenant Jacob

Douty and Sergeant Harry Reese volunteered to enter the mine and relight the fuse. Impatient at the delay, Meade asked Burnside repeatedly what had gone wrong. His last query ordered the corps commander to commence the attack immediately, whether or not the mine went off. Finally, at 4:44 AM, the planned explosion occurred.

THE ENSUING BLAST "WOULD HAVE DONE CREDIT to several thunderstorms," a Union soldier remembered. The explosion set off ground tremors that were felt for several hundred yards in all directions. Followed by a muffled rumbling noise, almost in slow motion, the fort, its cannons, and garrison were lifted 100 feet into the air by a mushroom-shaped cloud. Debris did not stop falling to earth for a full five minutes, and observers said "a heavy veil of smoke stood for a moment over the wreck [crater] as if reluctant to reveal the destruction." As the sound of the explosion died away, it was replaced by the blasts of 164 Union cannons and mortars directed at the Confederate lines.

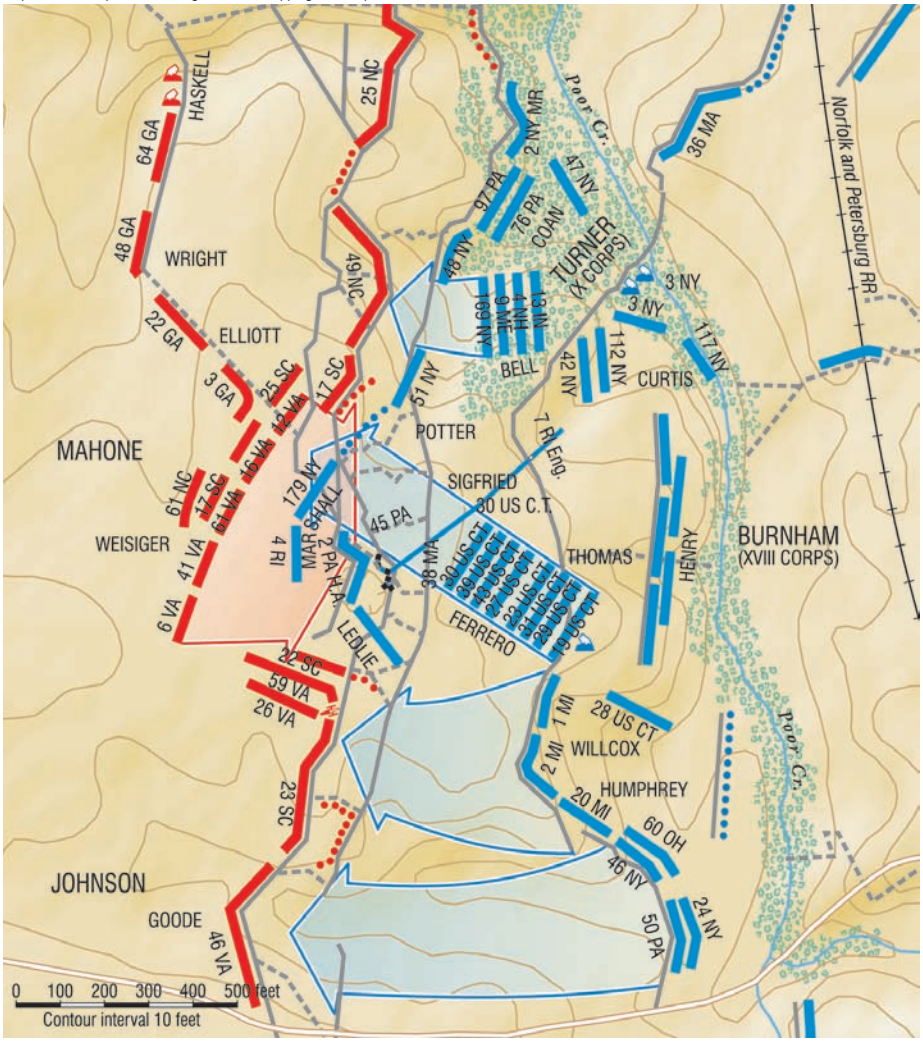
Awed by the noise and the apparent devastation caused by the mine, the first wave of Federal troops did not leave their trenches for a full five minutes, their eyes and mouths wide open in disbelief. But within 10 minutes, their officers roused them to the attack. They followed the axe-wielding sappers, whose task it was to knock down the man-made obstacles implanted in the no-man's-land between the Union and Confederate lines. After sprinting about 130 yards, the blue columns of Ledlie's division poured into the exploded fort, preceded by engineers who began reversing the face of the enemy trenches and digging a covered way from the Crater back to their own works.

Elliott's Salient was now a chasm 135 feet in length, 97 feet in breadth, and 30 feet in depth, with a rim 12 feet high. The huge blast had annihilated Captain John Pegram's battery and many of the men in the 19th and 22nd South Carolina Infantry Regiments, about 250 in all. Into the hole swarmed the Union brigades of Colonel Elisha G. Marshall and Brig. Gen. William F. Bartlett. Picking their way through the debris, the men attempted to climb the pit's outer lip, but found the going difficult because of the loose sand and clay that made up the pit's sides. Scattered fire from Confederate trenches adjacent to the Crater drove many of the Bluecoats to ground before they could move forward. Meanwhile, Colonel John F. Hartranft's 1st Brigade went forward into the enemy trenches to the left of the blasted ground while Colonel Simon G. Griffin's 2nd Brigade did the same on the right. Brig. Gen. Zenas Bliss's brigade followed in support. Sweeping the enemy positions with musketry and bayonets, the Federals cleared the Confederate emplacements for 100 feet in both directions.

It was now about 5:30 AM and small-arms fire from the dirt-encrusted survivors of Elliot's command, in concert with artillery concentrations from Cemetery Hill, prevented any Union forward movement. Many of the Union troops began spilling back into the Crater to avoid the enemy fire. There they found the huddled masses of Bartlett's and Marshall's men, who would not budge. They had lost all unit cohesion and could hardly move within the confines of the smoking hole and the surrounding trenches. The arrival of Bliss's brigade only made the situation more chaotic. Along the 1,000-foot front confusion reigned—no one seemed to be in charge.

The one officer who should have been on hand to sort out the mess was Ledlie, but he had ensconced himself in a bomb-proof shelter not far from the fighting. Fortifying himself with rum supplied by an army surgeon and complaining constantly of ill health, Ledlie from time to time would send orders to his commanders to take the high ground north of the Crater. He never left the shelter to see for himself if his directives were being carried out.

Meade, furious with the lack of progress by IX Corps, sent Burnside a peremptory order at 6:30 AM that the attack must get moving and that Burnside should commit all his strength to the assault. For the next hour, fragments of Griffin's, Bartlett's, and Marshall's brigades attempted vainly to capture Cemetery Hill. Supported by Colonel William Humphrey's brigade, the attack was repulsed by Confederate flanking fire and stiffening enemy resistance north of the Crater. Meanwhile, just behind the Union trench system, Ferrero's division had been waiting since 5:30 for the order to join the battle. That order finally came at 7:15. Ferrero received it in the same dugout that Ledlie had been calling home since the battle began three hours before. Ferrero wanted to wait for Ledlie's command to make his own advance, but further instructions from Burnside forced him



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Union soldiers advance into the Crater after the explosion. In the middle distance are mounds of dirt thrown up by the literally ground-shaking explosion. Beyond are Cemetery Hill and the Confederate inner works. Also by Waud.

to move sooner than he wanted. Gulping down a fortifying cup of rum, Ferrero left the bunker to get his men moving.

At 7:30 Ferrero's 1st Brigade, with Colonel Joshua K. Sigfried leading the way, plunged into the Crater, closely followed by Colonel Henry G. Thomas and the 2nd Brigade. Somehow, Sigfried and his men were able emerge from the gaping hole into the maze of trenches and traverses behind it. Thomas's regiments moved to the right of the Crater and found themselves in a warren of trenches, crowded between units from other divisions. While attempting to sort out his regiments, the colonel received a message from Ferrero to attack Cemetery Hill. Forming in the open as best they could, the Union troops made a valiant charge, but collapsed in the face of a Confederate counterattack. The beaten men ran for safety back into the Crater and the trenches adjoining it. It was 8:30 AM and the last Union offensive of the Battle of the Crater already was over.

Not long after the mine went off, Lee was notified of the situation by General P.G.T. Beauregard. Bypassing the usual army chain of command, Lee immediately contacted Mahone, whose 3,000-man division was located two miles south of the raging battle near Lieutenant Creek. Lee needed a man of action capable of dealing with the current crisis—he knew Mahone fit the bill. A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and a railroad engineer before the war, Mahone's first command was the 6th Virginia Volunteer Infantry Regiment. During the Peninsula Campaign he had led an all-Virginia brigade of infantry. After his sterling performance in the Wilderness battles, he was given Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson's division when Anderson took over I Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia after Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's wounding on May 6. "Little Billy," as the 100-pound, short and wiry Mahone was dubbed by his comrades, had sharpened his command into seasoned shock troops by the fourth summer of the war.

MAHONE HAD HEARD THE MINE EXPLOSION BUT was not aware what it meant until Lee's order reached him at his headquarters near the Wilcox Farm. Told to send two of his five brigades to the scene, Mahone decided to lead them himself. He quickly got Colonel David Weisiger's Old Dominion Brigade and Brig. Gen. Ambrose R. Wright's Georgia Brigade (temporarily commanded by Colonel Matthew R. Hall) into marching order. These units started on their journey around 6 AM, taking a roundabout route through ravines to conceal them from Federal observation.

Racing ahead of his moving formations, Mahone found Beauregard, who gave the Virginian the authority to conduct the operations against the Union threat at the Crater as he saw fit. Leaving Beauregard, Mahone made his way down the Jerusalem Plank Road, passed Cemetery Hill, and traversed a covered way a few hundred yards from the Confederate front. Following the covered way, the general entered a shallow ravine that ran parallel to the main trench line. Mahone climbed a slight rise and observed firsthand the chaotic situation at the Crater. He determined that he would need as much of his division as possible to deal with the mob of Union forces in and around the smoldering breach. He called for Colonel John C. Sanders's Alabama Brigade to join him immediately.

As Mahone scouted the Federal position, Weisiger's and Wright's men cautiously approached, their progress hampered by heavy artillery fire. The 800 Virginians passed the cemetery and entered a ravine that lay directly opposite the Crater. They were ordered to lie down, fix bayonets, and prepare to attack. Seeing Thomas's black regiments preparing to come forward, the Confederates moved against them. The Virginians, followed by several North Carolina regiments, struck the Federals' front and flank just north of the Crater. Suffering heavy losses, the black troops were thrown back amid angry Confederate cries of "No quarter, no quarter!" Several black soldiers

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WHEN THE EARTH

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"The Crater" and the shaft leading to it still exist to tell the story for generations.

PHOTO ESSAY BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

The crater that punched a hole in the Confederate lines and threw a 200-foot umbrella of dirt, men, and guns into the air on July 30, 1864, could today be mistaken for a gentle dip in the rolling, slight hills of the Petersburg countryside. In fact, the tunnel itself is still intact as are the surrounding Union batteries that supported the attack.

There is no smoke emanating from the crater today—much to the disappointment of many a visitor—but the hole is still impressive, measuring 152 feet in length, 60 feet wide, and 30 feet deep. The crater, formed from the detonation of 320 kegs of gunpowder, is uneven and lacks the symmetry of a hole blasted by modern heavy artillery or bombs.

The Union tunnel, which leads to the crater, belies the privations with which the Pennsylvania soldiers who dug it had to contend. It is only four and a half feet high with a width of four feet at the bottom and two feet at the top. Most of its 510-foot length still leads to the crater, though several spots have caved in. The Park Service has rebuilt a section of the square tube that provided fresh air and can be seen in the tunnel entrance.

Nearby, the Taylor Farm gives an excellent view of the crater from the Union lines. It was here that the Union artillery batteries opened up on the Confederate line as the men in blue rushed forward, and later, when the rebels counterattacked. Across the road from the farm, a gun battery of four cannons still points in the direction of the crater.

The true measurement of the Crater's cost can be found approximately eight miles away at the Poplar Grove Cemetery where most of the 504 Union soldiers are buried. Most of the 361 Confederates who fell during the fight are buried in the Blanford Cemetery inside Petersburg.

Over a century and a half ago, the Yankees thought they could enter Petersburg with a thunderclap, but it was not to be. Despite the destruction wrought and the viciousness of the fighting, nothing changed and the battle for Petersburg became a siege that would last nine months. The crater will always stand for Union ingenuity and Confederate tenacity. □

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1. The crater is not a perfect hole and seems to be a natural part of the terrain at the National Battlefield Park.
2. Three cave-ins can be seen immediately beyond the tunnel entrance. A replica of the square air tunnel, which looks more like a small bench, is in the bottom right of the opening.
3. Nearly 200 Union guns at the Taylor Farm were concentrated on the area of the crater's detonation.
4. The rebels had an idea of what the miners were up to. These two holes were made by Confederates who countermined in an attempt to head off the diggers' efforts.
5. The chimney is the only structure left of any of the farmhouses along the entire battle line.
6. The entrance to the tunnel was boarded up for years, but today visitors can look inside the cramped space. Its height is only about four and a half feet and the air tunnel runs along the floor.
7. The tunnel the Union troops dug still exists, though several spots have caved in.

7

BRIDGING THE RHINE AT REMAGEN

After Adolf Hitler ordered all bridges across the Rhine River blown up to prevent the Allies from crossing into Germany, one span remained intact. The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen was a gem beyond value.

BY GEORGE A. LARSON

As Allied troops advanced along a broad front toward Nazi Germany in the winter of 1945, the United States Army was eager to capture an intact bridge over the Rhine River to allow its troops and heavy equipment to advance rapidly into Germany. The Rhine was the last major obstacle to Allied forces on their nine-month-long offensive, which had begun on D-Day, June 6, 1944, at Normandy. U.S. aerial reconnaissance identified two bridges still standing over the Rhine. One was at Oberkassel, near Dusseldorf, and the 83rd Division moved forward to seize it. As the American troops approached, German engineers blew up the bridge. The second was just south of Urdingen, and units of the 2nd Armored and 95th Infantry Divisions pushed toward the bridge. The American troops reached and crossed the bridge, but a German counterattack drove them back, allowing their engineers enough time to blow up the bridge. This near loss caused great concern in Berlin, and Adolf Hitler ordered that all remaining bridges over the Rhine be blown up, even if German forces fighting west of the river were cut off from making a last-second escape.

German troops following Hitler's orders blew up all remaining bridges over the Rhine—except one. Inexplicably, the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, an ancient, Roman-built town located between Bonn and Koblenz, was left standing. The 1,000-foot-long railroad bridge had been built by German engineers during World War I to move supplies and troops to the Western Front from the armament factories in the Ruhr Valley. After the war, France occupied the area and took control of the bridge. French engineers filled in the demolition chambers with cement, making the bridge very difficult to

GIs in the 9th Armored Division rush across the still-intact Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen on March 7, 1945 in a painting by H. Charles McBarron.

Courtesy of the Army Art Collection, U.S. Army Center of Military History

destroy and increasing its strength.

Remagen, which had been fought over and occupied at one time or another by soldiers from France, Spain, Sweden, and Russia, was a noted resort town. Fine restaurants, cafés, and shops lined the old section of town, which surrounded the four-towered Gothic Church of St. Apollinaris and the remains of the saint, who was martyred in Italy in AD 79. Behind the town rose a 600-foot cliff known as the Erpeler Ley.

The Rhine, flowing swiftly past Remagen, is 300 yards wide; a tributary of the Ahr River adds its turbulent waters to the river's course a mile above the town. The Ludendorff Bridge, which residents of Remagen resented for ruining the fine view down the Rhine, passed through a 1,200-foot tunnel in the Erpeler Ley before continuing eastward into the Ruhr Valley. The Allies had mounted repeated air attacks against the bridge after the Battle of the Bulge in an effort to slow the movement of German supplies and troops toward Belgium. U.S. air attacks damaged the bridge, but German engineers were able to repair it The bridge was scheduled to be attacked again on the morning of March 7, but the bombing raid was canceled on account of bad weather.

That morning, a reconnaissance unit assigned to the U.S. 9th Armored Division reached Remagen and reported the unbelievable news that the Ludendorff Bridge was still intact and was being used by the Germans. Second Lieutenant Karl Timmermann of the 27th Armored Infantry Regiment, commanding the unit, was half-German himself, the son of an American doughboy from World War I and a German mother. He had been born less than 100 miles from Remagen, at Frankfurt am Main, and emigrated to the United States with his parents as an infant. Leading the scouting party in a jeep,

Timmermann rounded a hillside north of Remagen and saw a panorama below that made him blink. The two white-stone supports of the Ludendorff Bridge spanning the blue-green Rhine River were intact. German troops had laid wooden support planks across the bridge's widely spaced railroad tracks to allow tanks and trucks to cross the bridge to safety. Troops and civilians also jammed the bridge, making it a tempting target for Allied warplanes. Timmermann sent a hasty message back to his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Leonard Engeman, reporting what he had seen.

AT NOON, BRIG. GEN. WILLIAM M. HOGE, COMMANDING COMBAT GROUP B, 9TH Armored Division, III Corps, First Army, received verification from Engeman that the Ludendorff Bridge had not been destroyed by the Germans. Against standing orders not to deviate from his planned objective—the town of Ahrweiler—Hoge ordered the bridge to be seized at once. "Get those men moving into town," he radioed Engeman. "Already on their way," Engeman answered. He had already ordered Timmermann to take a platoon of Pershing tanks from the 14th Tank Battalion, each equipped with a 90mm main gun, and head straight down the hillside toward the town. Said Engeman, "Go down into town. Get through it as quickly as possible and reach the bridge. The infantry will follow on foot. Their half-tracks will bring up the rear. Let's make it snappy."

The Pershing tanks clattered down the winding road into Remagen followed by the infantry. The Americans moved rapidly against spotty resistance from scattered German snipers. German prisoners taken from houses on the outskirts of Remagen were asked about the defenses in the town and on the bridge. One German soldier told the Americans that the Ludendorff Bridge was to be blown up at 4 pm. Similar intelligence had been obtained earlier by troops assigned to the 52nd Armored Infantry Battalion at Sinzig, several miles away from Remagen. These reports were relayed to Hoge, who told Engeman at 3:15 PM, "You've got 45 minutes to take the bridge." Engeman radioed the leading Pershing tank commander, Lieutenant John Grimball: "Get to the bridge as quickly as possible." Grimball radioed back: "Sir, I am already there." The Pershing tanks turned to firing positions near the west end of the bridge. One of the first targets they found was a long string of freight cars along the east bank. The Pershings quickly destroyed the train.

All photos National Archives

A column of American M4 tanks from the First Army rumbles across the bridge to establish a viable bridgehead east of the Rhine River.

German defenders at Remagen were under the command of Captain Willi Bratge, a former schoolteacher who had been given the unenviable task of guarding the vital bridge with a mere handful of wounded, elderly, or conscripted soldiers, some of whom were Russian "volunteers" who had been captured on the Russian front. Bratge had constructed an elaborate system of foxholes and bunkers, but he had only 36 men of mostly low combat efficiency to man them. The bridge itself had been wired with an electric ignition fuse system connected to a control switch inside the entrance to the Erpeler Ley tunnel. Sixty boxes of high explosives had been placed along the structure's length, ready to be set off at the proper time by combat engineers.

On the morning of the 7th, German Major Hans Scheller was sent to take over the last-ditch defense of Remagen and the destruction of the Ludendorff Bridge. Scheller was totally unfamiliar with the town, the troops, and the bridge itself. He had scarcely arrived in Remagen and presented himself to Bratge when word came that German units on the hill above the town had been attacked by American tanks and infantry. A short while later an artillery captain dashed up to say that his battalion was on its way to the bridge; he pleaded with the other officers not to blow up the bridge before his troops had crossed it. Scheller agreed. He and Bratge established their headquarters inside the mouth of the tunnel on the far side of the bridge and waited for the Americans to show themselves. Precious time was lost. Soon, none was left. The Americans appeared on the opposite bank and began blasting away.

Even though the German defenders of the bridge had waited dangerously long to blow it up, there was no assurance that American troops could make it safely across the bridge before the demolition charges were finally set off. Engeman reasoned that the Germans would probably wait until the American tanks roared onto the bridge before they set off the demolition charges. Infantrymen led by Timmermann moved through the town of Remagen toward the bridge. Meanwhile, Grimball's Pershing tanks took up firing positions at the bridge's west end. When the 27th Armored Infantry Regiment's Company A reached at the west end of the bridge at 3:50 PM, the Germans set off a demolition charge, creating a large crater at the bridge's approach, preventing the tanks from crossing the bridge. The second detonation went off when Company A was approximately two-thirds across the bridge. The resulting explosion knocked out the main steel diagonal supports located on the upstream side of the bridge and destroyed a section of the wooden planking and flooring, resulting in a six-inch sag to the bridge, but did not destroy the bridge. The Americans, although shaken, continued across.

One of the first infantrymen to cross the bridge was Paul Priest of Flint, Michigan. He recalled many years later, "I almost did not make it to the Rhine River, being involuntarily assigned as a replacement crewman in a Sherman tank. I did not like it and after one day asked the captain of the tank unit to let me out, which he did. I was assigned to the division's headquarters company, performing reconnais-

sance patrols for the division. On March 5, 1945, two days before we reached the Rhine River, I was detached from the lead division's reconnaissance group, dropped off at a road checkpoint to guide the division's vehicles as to which one of three roads to take. I took up my guard post at 2:30 PM. I was told the division should reach my position by 4 to 4:30 PM. The vehicles did not reach me by that time. It kept getting later and later. I went out and picked up all the guns I could locate, creating a large pile near the gas station I decided to use as cover for the evening. These weapons were all over the ground. I recovered them from dead German soldiers in the area, fearing that someone may pick one up and turn it on me.

"I was in the building until 9:30 PM. At that time, I heard the sound of tank tracks coming toward my location. It was the lead column of the 9th Armored Division. I showed the lead tank which road to follow. I climbed onto the lead tank, rejoining my reconnaissance unit in time to make the historic dash across the Ludendorff railway bridge over the Rhine River. On the morning of March 7, I was in the group heading toward the bridge. Not with the lead group of soldiers, but farther back in the reconnaissance column. Our tanks quickly knocked out the German train on the eastern bank. There were many secondary explosions. The tanks first knocked out the engine, bringing the train to a stop in a large cloud of steam released from the destroyed engine.

"I was in the lead group of infantry attacking across the bridge when the tanks had to stop because of the large crater at the west end of the bridge. The demolition charge was set off in front of me. We were taking machine gun fire from the two bridge towers at the east end of the bridge. I was not thinking about anything other than making it safely to the other side of the Rhine River."

ABOVE: An American M15A1 multiple-gun carriage stands guard over the Rhine from a railroad embankment north of Remagen on March 17. The bridge, seen in background, collapsed a few hours later. LEFT: Sergeant Alexander Drabik was the first American across the bridge into Germany. FAR LEFT: View from the "dwarf's hole" at the mouth of the Epeler Ley tunnel, where German defenders crouched in wait. LOWER LEFT: American Second Lieutenant Karl Timmermann, the first enemy officer to cross the bridge and set foot in German territory since Napoleon.

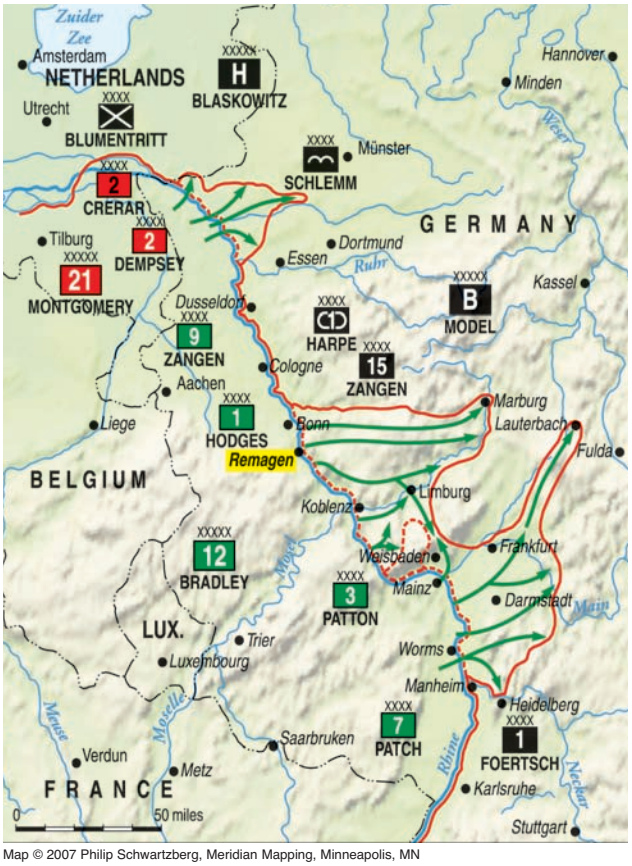
The Pershing tanks provided covering fire for the advancing Company A, 1st Platoon, which was quickly followed by the 2nd and 3rd Platoons. At about the same time, three 9th Armored Division engineers were on the bridge, cutting wires to four-pound demolition charges that had not yet been set off. The engineers were led by Lieutenant Hugh Mott and supported by Staff Sgt. John Reynolds and Sergeant Eugene Dorland. They located the main demolition cable, only to discover that the cable was too thick to be cut with pliers. Mott used his carbine to fire three shots to cut and destroy the demolition cable. Sergeant Joseph DeLisio knocked out the enemy machine gun in one of the east bridge towers and Tech. Sgt. Mike Chinchar knocked out the other. The troops dashed across the bridge. The first U.S. infantryman to make it to the east bank of the Rhine River was Sergeant Alexander Drabik of Toledo, Ohio. He was joined a few seconds later by Timmermann, who thus became the first officer of an invading army to set foot on German soil since Napoleon's Grande Armée in the early 19th century.

PRIEST RECALLED THE NEXT PART OF THE CROSSING: "ONE OF OUR PERSHING tanks, fitted with a bulldozer blade, filled in the crater at the west end of the bridge to allow tanks to move across the bridge. Engineers also were on the bridge to repair the hole in the flooring about two-thirds across the bridge. Once the east bridge tower machine guns were silenced, we cleaned out the tunnel of scattered German troops, young kids, and older men. I helped paint a sign on a piece of wooden planking, nailing it up on the east bank of the bridge: 'Cross the Rhine with dry feet/courtesy of 9th Armd Div.' We moved through the railway tunnel, into the cliffs beyond, attacking remaining German 88mm and four 20mm flak guns in that location. Our Pershing tanks destroyed some of the 88mm guns, and the others were abandoned by the German troops, which we destroyed with grenades. We did not encounter any real organized German resistance, for one day, until the Germans brought in more troops."

With the American infantry dog-trotting across the bridge, the German defenders hunkered inside the darkened railroad tunnel. Scheller attempted to rally the men for a counterattack, but the troops, most of whom did not know who he was, refused to budge. No one wanted to be the

last man to die contesting the American entry into Germany. Frustrated, Scheller hopped aboard a bicycle and set off for the rear to get new orders. It was a fatal decision. A few days later, having made his way back to LXVII Corps headquarters at Altwied, Scheller was arrested and court-martialed for deserting his post. Along with three other officers—two engineers and an antiaircraft commander—who had failed to blow up the bridge at Remagen, he was handcuffed, led into the nearby woods, and shot in the back of the neck—four scapegoats for Adolf Hitler's raging anger at the American bridgehead.

Back at the tunnel, Bratge and the others attempted to exit the opening from the rear, only to find it blocked by enemy GIs. Bratge noticed another group of soldiers and civilians leaving through the front entrance beneath a waving white flag. It gave him the necessary cover to save his honor. "That white flag was raised against our will," he told the remaining troops. "To continue fighting now would constitute a brazen violation of the Geneva Convention and would make us responsible for the deaths of innocent women and children. For this reason, I order that all fighting cease immediately. Please disable your weapons and, soldiers, be the last to leave the tunnel." The erstwhile defenders now became captives.



Map © 2007 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

The full exploitation of the bridgehead almost did not take place because of a command failure at the highest levels of the American Army. Overall operational planning for offensive troop operations east of the Rhine was under control of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces. Maj. Gen. Harold "Pinky" Bull, in charge of G-3 intelligence, did not want the broad-front plan of advancement to be discontinued. General Omar Bradley, commander of the Twelfth Army Group, telephoned General Dwight Eisenhower, the overall commander of the Allied war effort, with the news that the 9th Armored Division had captured intact the Ludendorff Bridge across the Rhine River and had established a bridgehead on the east bank. Eisenhower told Bradley, "Brad, that's wonderful. Sure, get right across with everything you've got. It's the best break we've had. To hell with the planners."

WITHIN 24 HOURS AFTER THE GERMANS FAILED TO DESTROY THE LUDENDORFF Bridge, 8,000 U.S. troops, large numbers of tanks, self-propelled artillery, and trucks had crossed the Rhine into Nazi-held territory. Everything did not go smoothly. Tanks assigned to Company A, 14th Tank Battalion, made it safely across the bridge, but a tank destroyer assigned to the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion broke through the wood planking, blocking following vehicles. U.S. troops riding in half-tracks behind the tank climbed out and walked across the bridge. It took some time to clear the stuck vehicle and resume the movement of heavy equipment across the bridge. After the first 24 hours, the German 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions were repositioned around the bridgehead the American forces had established, attempting to isolated the U.S. 9th Armored Division.

On March 9, 10 German Air Force aircraft, eight of which were Stuka dive-bombers, attacked the bridge, scoring two hits. On March 15, a larger force of 20 turbojet aircraft—a mixture of twin turbojet engine Messerchmitt ME-262 fighters and twin turbojet engine Arado AR-234 B-1 bombers—attacked the bridge. They scored no hits. The ubiquitous Priest witnessed the air attacks against the bridge by German aircraft. "This was the first time I saw turbojet aircraft," he recalled. "At first, I thought the aircraft had been hit from our antiaircraft fire, but the smoke was coming from their twin turbojet engines. They dived from altitude, attacking at a high rate of speed. They were very fast and dropped bombs on the bridge. None of these bombs hit the bridge; [they were] splashing all around the bridge. The Germans were desperately trying to knock out the bridge."

After Eisenhower ordered the bridgehead to be exploited, American military police on the west bank of the Rhine dealt with a large traffic jam of military vehicles and thousands of infantry. All roads leading to the bridge were crowded, slowing movement across the river. To protect the bridge from German aircraft, flak vehicles were lined up side by side on the west bank, supported by artillery firing across the river at German troops attempting to isolate the 1.5-mile-deep, 1.5-mile-wide American bridgehead. Beginning on March 9, German artillery shelled the bridge and the engineers assigned to the 51st and 291st Engineer Battalions working to repair the bridge. These engineers also constructed pontoon and treadway bridges across the river on either side of the Ludendorff Bridge to increase vehicular traffic and tonnage moving into Germany. They were also a backup against the possibility that the Germans would be able to destroy the main bridge.

The engineers continued to work during heavy German field artillery shelling. Meanwhile, German civilians were removed from Remagen to eliminate the possibility of German troops receiving clandestine reports on what was happening on the west bank and the accuracy of their artillery shelling. American engineer teams worked 24 hours a day to keep the Ludendorff Bridge operational.

The Germans made persistent efforts to destroy the Ludendorff Bridge. They floated a barge containing explosives downstream to blow up the bridge. This was done at night but was not a very well hidden attempt to destroy the bridge. U.S. troops intercepted the barge, preventing it from traveling close enough to the bridge to be ignited and destroy the structure. Mines were floated downstream to blow up the bridge, but American sharpshooters fired at them, blowing them up before they could reach the bridge. Volunteer German troops, putting on rubber suits, entered the icy water upstream, towing explosives behind them to blow up the bridge, but they were detected by American

troops on the river's east bank and killed or captured before they could place the charges.

The Germans tried to make do with the troops and weapons they had along the east bank of the Rhine. The capture of the bridge cut off 300,000 German troops and their equipment west of the river. The German secret weapon, the V-2 rocket, was used against the Ludendorff Bridge. German troops opposite the U.S. east bridgehead pulled back approximately nine miles to get out of possible impact zones. The unit assigned to fire the V-2s against bridge was located at Hellendorn, Netherlands, 130 miles north of Remagen, positioned at that location on March 8. Because of Allied air attacks on its supply lines, the rocket unit suffered fuel and supply problems. Hitler wanted to fire 50 to100 V-2s against the bridge to destroy it over a two-day span, but the rocket troops were only able to fire 11 V-2s against the bridge on March 17. The rockets came dangerously close to the bridge. One struck the ground near the Apollinaris church in the town of Remagen, one mile from the bridge. The rocket destroyed several buildings around the church, with blast damage reaching out approximately 3,000 feet. The resulting ground and air shock wave was felt throughout the town. Another V-2 splashed into the Rhine, one mile from the bridge. A third landed inside the town of Remagen, destroying a building where 12 U.S. troops were billeted, killing three. A fourth V-2 struck the command post of the U.S. Army 1159 Engineer Combat Group, killing three and injuring 31.

National Archives

ABOVE: American troops survey the wreckage of the collapsed bridge at Remagen. RIGHT: The pontoon bridge in the foreground was one of two that the U.S. Army built to ferry troops and supplies across the Rhine. The collapsed bridge is in background. OPPOSITE: Under Adolf Hitler's plan, the German Army was to blow up all bridges across the Rhine, even if it meant trapping German forces west of the river.

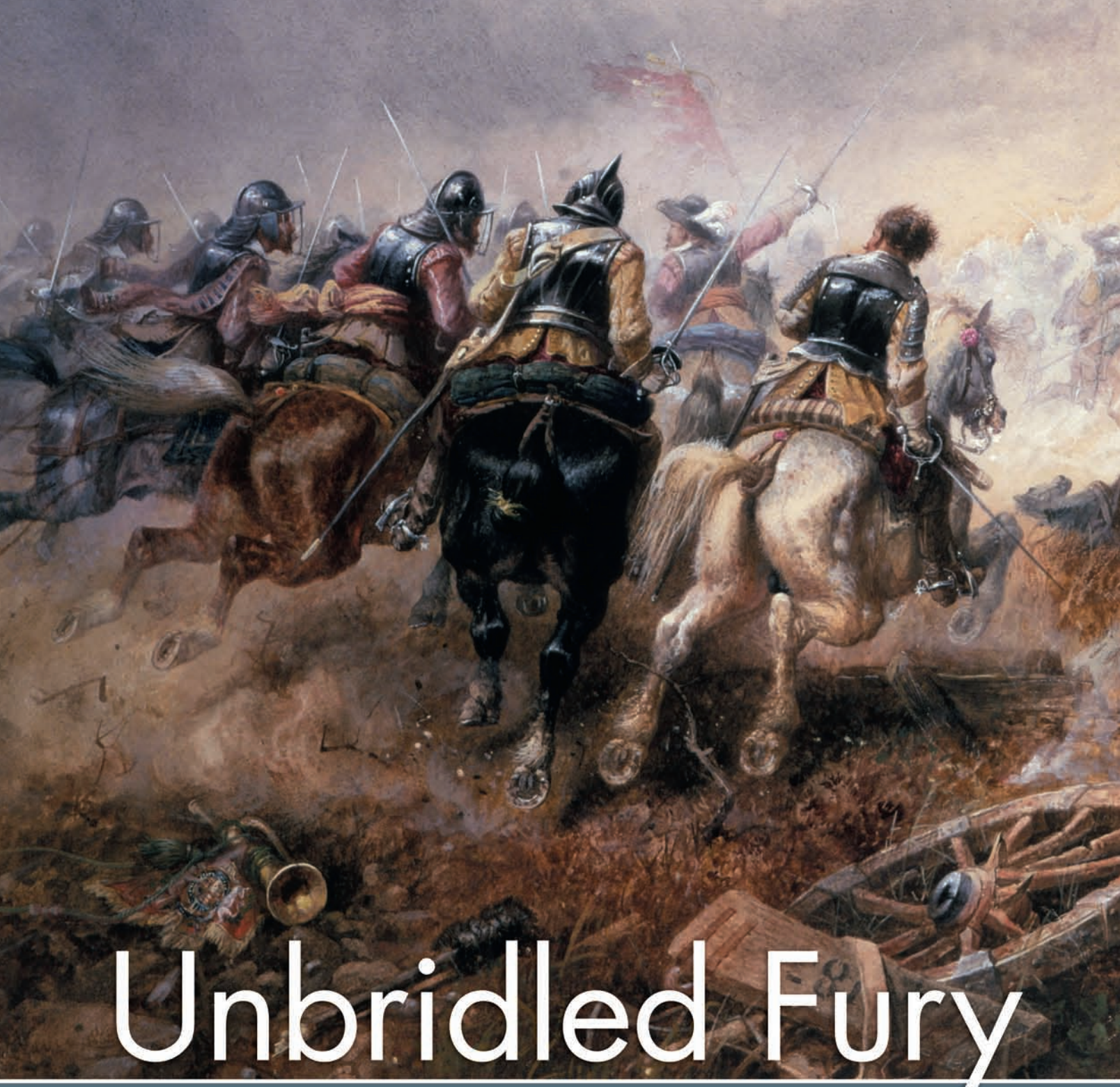
Even though none of the rockets hit the bridge, the ground shock wave effects, along with the demolition explosion and constant U.S. military traffic on the bridge, eventually caused it to collapse. At 3 pm on March 17, the bridge fell into the Rhine River, killing 28 American engineers who were working on the bridge. Recalled Priest, "I was not in the area when the bridge collapsed from the volley of V-2 rockets. We had moved up into the hills, up through a gully. This was where I was shot by a German using a wooden bullet. The impact took my helmet off. I was kept in the line, the wound considered only a flesh wound. Fortunately, by the time the bridge collapsed, the pontoon bridges took up the burden of moving men and equipment across the Rhine. The bridge was a mass of twisted metal, visible near both the west and east banks of the Rhine River. When I left the United States, I brought with me a small foldout camera, [and I took] photographs as we moved from place to place. I also took photographs from German troops we encountered and disarmed during the search.

"AS WE MOVED AWAY FROM THE RHINE RIVER, MANY GERMAN TROOPS surrendered to us. They threw their weapons onto the ground, raised their hands into the air, and surrendered. I did not take part in any large actions after crossing the Rhine River. German troops gave up, surrendering to U.S. or British troops rather than to the Soviet Army troops farther to the east. It was at this time I found out my parents had received a telegram reporting my death in Germany. It was another Paul Priest. But things like that happen in war. It was a great relief to my parents when they heard I was still alive when they got a letter from me."

Priest survived the war and returned to Flint, where he married his prewar sweetheart, Joan. The couple had three children. After the war, Priest worked as a carpet and tile installer, eventually moving to Deadwood and then to Box Elder, South Dakota. As for his fellow GIs at Remagen, a shower of medals fell on their chests. Thirteen soldiers, including Timmermann, DeLisio, Drabik, Grimball, Mott, and Chinchar, received the Distinguished Service Cross. Another 152 received the Silver Star. The units that composed Combat Command B of the 9th Armored Division were awarded Presidential Unit Citations. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall summed up the significance of Remagen: "The prompt seizure and exploitation of the crossing demonstrated American initiative and adaptability at its best, from the daring action of the platoon leader to the Army commander who quickly directed all his moving columns," said Marshall. "The bridgehead provided a serious threat to the heart of Germany, a diversion of incalculable value. It became a springboard for the final offensive to come."

National Archives

Karl Timmermann, the first Allied officer across the Rhine, returned to his hometown of West Point, Nebraska, after the war. He arrived without fanfare, alighting from a train and walking into town with his barracks bag slung across his shoulder. His welcoming committee consisted of one small dog that nipped at his heels. Timmermann ignored the dog. He had seen far worse at Remagen. □



Unbridled Fury

AN ALL-OUT RACE TO LONDON BETWEEN KING CHARLES I AND HIS ROUNDHEAD ENEMY CAME TO A HALT AT EDGEHILL, A SODDEN HILLSIDE IN WARWICKSHIRE. "MATTERS NOW ARE TO BE DECLARED WITH SWORDS, NOT WORDS," SAID THE KING.

BY WILLIAM E. WELSH

At the Battle of Edgehill, Cavalier horsemen broke off their attack to loot the Roundhead wagon train, fatally stalling their own momentum. Painting by Richard Beavis.

The Art Archive/Private Collection

ROBERT DEVEREUX, the third Earl of Essex, was on his way to church in the small village of Kineton in Warwickshire on the morning of October 23, 1642, when he received word that the enemy was at hand. Royalist cavalry had been spotted that morning riding back and forth atop Edgehill, a ridge that dominated the surrounding countryside and lay astride Essex's supply route to London. Placing Parliament's cause against King Charles I above his religious devotion, Essex ordered his forces to concentrate immediately at Kineton.

The sun had finally broken through the clouds after weeks of interminable rainfall had slowed the eastward march of both armies in their race east toward London. Essex rode out to scout the terrain himself. A competent commander with a face as round as a gold sovereign and a Vandyke beard and moustache that made him look more like a shrewd merchant than a professional soldier, Essex had extensive military experience both in England and on the Continent. Viewed by many of his fellow officers as ill-tempered, he nevertheless was well-liked by the common men he led.

At the base of Edgehill on its western side lay a great meadow, devoid of trees, known as the Vale of the Red Horse. With a sweep of his eye, Essex took in the low-lying ground, noting the

location of streams, hedges, and small patches of farmland. Fortunately for his army, a half mile opposite Edgehill was a small rise. It was on that knoll that his army would await the king's assembled wrath. Satisfied that he had chosen a good position, Essex ordered his cannons to open fire at 2 PM to induce the Royalists to attack. Long-range guns atop Edgehill barked an immediate response, but their solid shot had little effect as they dropped harmlessly into the soft earth of a cultivated field in front of Essex's position. It seemed that Essex had chosen his ground well. The first major battle in the English Civil War had begun.

With its roots in the monarchy of James I, the war came to a head over the question of whether the king or Parliament was the real sovereign of the English people. Charles's father, James I, had clashed repeatedly over the matter with Parliament during his 22-year reign. Like his father before him, Charles insisted that the English sovereign ruled by divine right, while Parliament asserted that it was the final arbiter on domestic and foreign policies. When Charles assumed the throne in 1625, he proved even more unwilling than his father to compromise with Parliament on volatile matters related to religion and taxes.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR CHARLES, THE LACK OF A STANDING ARMY MEANT THAT HE DID NOT HAVE A strong body with which to enforce his will. After disbanding Parliament for the third time in 1629, Charles sought to rule alone without either its approval or support. But he made a grave error by trying to impose English-style prayer books on the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1639. Urban riots soon gave way to open rebellion, and Charles's armies were defeated in the First and Second Bishops' Wars. When the victorious Scots overran and occupied northern England, Charles was left with no other recourse than to call on Parliament to pay an indemnity to the Scots.

Library of Congress

King Charles I.

The more radical members of Parliament moved immediately to destroy the man they considered to be nothing more than a despot. Charles's nemesis, John Pym, led Parliament in issuing the Grand Remonstrance, which called for immediate religious reform as well as control over the army and all royal appointments. Unwilling to consider such measures, Charles stormed into Parliament on January 4, 1642, with a large body of armed men in an unsuccessful attempt to seize Pym and four other key leaders of the opposition. The members, who had been alerted that the king was on his way, avoided arrest by slipping out before he arrived. Infuriated by the king's breach of privilege, his opponents introduced measures giving Parliament control of the armed forces. Sensing that he and his family were in personal danger by remaining in London, Charles fled the city on January 10 for York, where he reestablished his court.

From the beginning of the conflict, Parliament had a decisive advantage in both manpower and resources. London and most of the other major cities in the realm declared their support for Parliament, and in July the fleet pledged its allegiance to Parliament as well. This gave the Parliamentarians, or Roundheads as they were called because of their short-cropped hair, control of most of the major arsenals of the land, including the Tower of London, as well as access to weapons and ammunition arriving from overseas. In the following months Parliament assembled an army from the populous counties of the southeast where it had substantial support, while Charles recruited from the less- populated areas in the north and west of England.

In June, Charles issued commissions to the gentry and authorities in each county to recruit men to his cause. He shifted his base to Nottingham, where on August 22 he raised his standard in a formal ceremony held on a stark hill in the shadow of the historic old castle. By September, Charles had raised five regiments of foot soldiers and about 500 horsemen from the surrounding counties. To further increase his numbers, he marched this force west to Shrewsbury on the Welsh border. The small army arrived on September 20 and continued drilling as additional recruits arrived in camp from the towns and villages of the Midlands and North Wales.

While Charles was en route to Nottingham, Essex left London for Northampton, where he reviewed Parliament's main army at Dunsmore Heath on September 14. The Lord General, as he was known, left Northampton five days later for Worcester in an effort to keep himself between the king and London. On September 23, Royalist cavalry under the king's nephew, Crown Prince Rupert of Germany, defeated the Parliamentary cavalry in a sharp clash at Powick Bridge south of Worcester.

Charles left Shrewsbury on October 12 at the head of an army with a 20-gun artillery train. Although some of his generals favored attacking Essex at Worcester, the king preferred an advance on London, where the terrain was more open and Rupert's cavalry would be able to operate to maximum effect. Essex remained stationary at Worcester for an entire week before he realized that the king was closer to London than he was.

Essex set out for Warwick on October 19, trailing a 29-gun artillery train. Neither army traveled more than 10 miles a day. A shortage of tents forced men and officers from both armies to search for billets in the towns and villages along the way. The artillery trains, which neither army allowed to separate from the main column for fear they would be captured, slowed their advance considerably, and heavy rains turned the roads into muck. "Before I had marched one mile I was wet to the skin," wrote Lord Wharton, a colonel in the Parliamentary cavalry. "The rain continued the whole day, and the way was so base that we went up to the ankles in thick clay."

The king essentially had stolen a march on Essex. His location at Kenilworth put him within a short distance of the town. But rather than occupying Warwick, Charles ordered his troops to continue marching southeast toward Banbury, where the king planned to force the surrender of the town's Parliamentary garrison.

ullstein bild

ABOVE: Well-equipped arquebusier of the English Civil War period, sporting a pot helmet, buff coat, mortuary sword, leather baldric, flintlock carbine, and powder flask. BELOW: Crown Prince Rupert in an 1641 oil painting attributed to Gerard Honthorst.

Library of Congress

By October 21 the Royalists, who were called Cavaliers for their lifelong experience in hunting and riding, were a short distance north of Edgehill, at Southam, and closing rapidly on their objective.

Essex was completely unaware of the location of the king's army. His cavalry, which clung to the main body of the army after its defeat at Powick Bridge, was no help in locating the enemy. Essex directed his army across the Avon River at Stratford-Upon-Avon and Evesham, with instructions to concentrate at Kineton. The following night a group of quartermasters from Essex's army ran headlong into some of their counterparts in the king's army at the village of Wormleighton, where both were seeking shelter for the night.

Charles learned around midnight on October 22 that his soldiers had made contact with the enemy. The Royalist horse began taking up positions on Edgehill at 10 AM the following morning. The king held a council of war during which he and his generals, after some discussion, decided to attack the Roundheads. Sixty-year-old Robert Bertie, Earl of Lindsey, a veteran with four decades of military experience, quarreled with Prince Rupert over the best tactics to employ in the coming battle. Lindsey favored the heavier Dutch style with which he and his soldiers were most familiar, while Rupert favored the more maneuverable Swedish style crafted by the late King Gustavus Adolphus.

Upon Rupert's arrival in England, Charles had given him control of the cavalry with instructions to report to the king himself. The idea of Rupert having an independent command did not sit well with Lindsey. When the king agreed on the day of battle to follow Rupert's advice and use Swedish tactics in the pending battle, Lindsey resigned his post in disgust and walked off to take command of his own regiment from Lincolnshire. The king subsequently appointed Patrick Ruthven, Earl of Forth, to replace Lindsey. A 69-year-old Scottish professional soldier (and a heavy drinker), Ruthven had no more than nominal command of the army that day. By forcing Lindsey to step down, Rupert had cleared the way to lead the army into battle himself.

While the Royalists were debating their tactics, Essex and his officers were moving their men into defensive positions to defend against a Royalist attack. Because some of his troops were garrisoning nearby strongpoints in the region, not all of Essex's troops would arrive in time to participate in the battle. Even so, Essex managed to field about 15,000 men to face the enemy.

His 12,000 foot soldiers were organized into three large brigades. For his front line, Essex placed Sir John Meldrum's brigade on the right and Charles Essex's brigade on the left. He placed Thomas Ballard's brigade directly behind Essex in the second line. In keeping with the Dutch style of tactics, the infantry stood in files eight rows deep. Sir James Ramsey commanded six cavalry regiments on the left wing. The Roundheads, correctly deducing that the opening attack would come from the Cavaliers' right wing, the position of honor on the battlefield, placed two-thirds of their heavy cavalry on their left under Ramsey. The cavalry formed up in files six deep. To boost his firepower, Ramsey borrowed 700 musketeers from Ballard's brigade. He positioned 400 men from Colonel Denzil Holles's regiment behind a hedge at a right angle to his main line and another 300 from Ballard's own regiment at intervals amid his first line of cavalry.

The Granger Collection, New York

Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex. English engraving, 1829.

On the Parliamentary left wing, Essex positioned two regiments of dragoons in marshy ground along a stream that ran perpendicular to his line of battle, with Lord Basil Fielding's horse regiment behind them. Two other horse regiments, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sir William Balfour and Sir Philip Stapleton, initially drew up on the left, but when the battle began they redeployed behind the Parliamentary foot. Although nominally under the Earl of Bedford, Balfour assumed overall command of the horse on the Parliamentary right wing. The Roundheads deployed 16 of their 29 artillery pieces to support their army.

The Royalists descended Edgehill around 1 PM. They numbered slightly more than 14,000 men in all. The Royalist infantry brigades, which totaled about 11,000 men altogether, deployed in two lines. In the front line, from left to right, were the brigades of Henry Wentworth, Richard Fielding, and Charles Gerard, while in the second line were the brigades of Sir Nicholas Byron and John Belasyse. Byron's brigade not only contained Lindsey's unit (the Lord General's Regiment), but also was home to the Royalist's main battle flag was situated. Sir Edmund Verney, knight marshal of the king's palace, would carry the royal banner into battle.

AS SOON AS THE CAVALRY ADVANCED, THE 11,000-STRONG ROYALIST INFANTRY WOULD MOVE ACROSS the open ground. In contrast with the well-armed Roundheads, who controlled England's largest arsenals, many of the Royalist foot soldiers were armed with inferior weapons. A number of the Cavalier musketeers had outdated guns, and several hundred of the Cavalier pikemen were armed only with cudgels.

The Royalist cavalry was charged with clearing the enemy flanks. Rupert, who had about 1,700 men, deployed on the right flank. His frontline units, left to right, were Prince Maurice's regiment, Rupert's own regiment, and the Prince of Wales's regiment. Sir John Byron's horse

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

King Charles and his commanders, bottom left, look across the field at Edgehill toward the enemy Roundheads.

regiment was placed behind the front line as a reserve. One troop of the King's Life Guard was in the front line with Rupert, the other was in the reserve with Byron. The job of clearing the musketeers from the hedges before Rupert's wing advanced fell to Colonel James Usher's 500-man-strong regiment of dragoons.

On the Royalist left flank, Lord Wilmot, who had extensive experience fighting alongside the Dutch against the Spanish, led a force of 1,055 men. Sir Arthur Ashton commanded the dragoons assigned to that flank. To supplement their attack, the Royalists deployed 14 light field pieces in front of the infantry and six heavy guns in a battery atop Bullet Hill, on the north end of Edgehill. The king's personal safety and that of his two sons, 9-year-old James and 12-year-old Charles, rested squarely on the shoulders of a small bodyguard of 50 men known as the Gentlemen Pensioners stationed behind Rupert.

Led by a rider bearing a brilliant red cornet, Charles and his entourage rode down the line to offer words of encouragement to each horse and foot brigade. In lofty language, Charles told each unit, "Matters are now to be declared with swords, not words." Showing more courage than wisdom, Charles wanted to personally lead the troops into battle. Since his death would have immediately ended the war, his advisers persuaded him against doing so and removed him to the relative safety of Bullet Hill.

The cavalry advanced at a measured pace, the troopers packed so tightly that their boots were almost touching.

The largely ineffective artillery duel, which began about 2 PM, lasted for an hour before Rupert gave the signal for his cavalry to attack. Usher's dragoons engaged the Roundhead muskets poised to enfilade the attack. The dragoons, armed with muskets, did not fight on horseback like heavy cavalry, but instead used their horses to maneuver and fought dismounted. They worked in small groups, often trading point-blank fire with the enemy. Rupert rode to each of his brigades and instructed them to advance with their swords drawn, in the Swedish style, and to refrain from using their pistols until they were among the enemy.

A trumpet sounded the attack at 3 PM. The cavalry advanced at a measured pace, the troopers packed so tightly that their boots were almost touching. In the front ranks rode the best-equipped troopers, outfitted with helmet, breast, and back plates, and armed with flintlock pistols, swords, and poleaxes. As Rupert's horsemen drew closer to the enemy, a second trumpet sounded, and the riders increased their pace from a trot to a canter. They slammed into the front rank of the enemy formation.

As the Royalists neared, a group of Parliamentarian cavalry abruptly switched sides. The troopers belonged to the command of Sir Faithful Fortesque, an odd name for one whose loyalty was so changeable. The unit had been raised before the war to suppress the Irish rebellion, but once war broke out it was incorporated into the Parliamentary army. Fortesque, who harbored serious reservations about fighting against the king, sent word to Rupert through a trusted subordinate requesting that the Cavaliers refrain from attacking his men. When the Royalist cavalry had crossed halfway toward its objective, Fortesque fired his pistol into the ground as a signal to his men to ride forward and join the Royalists. The development unnerved some of the Parliamentary horsemen, who witnessed a group of their comrades switching sides in the heat of battle.

Ramsey's cavalry, shaken by Fortesque's betrayal and by its previous unhappy encounter with the Royalists at Powick Bridge, wavered once the Cavaliers were among them swinging their swords and firing their pistols at point-blank range. Ramsey's men managed one pistol volley at the Cavaliers as they approached and another as they closed, but neither their fire nor that of the remaining musketeers inter-

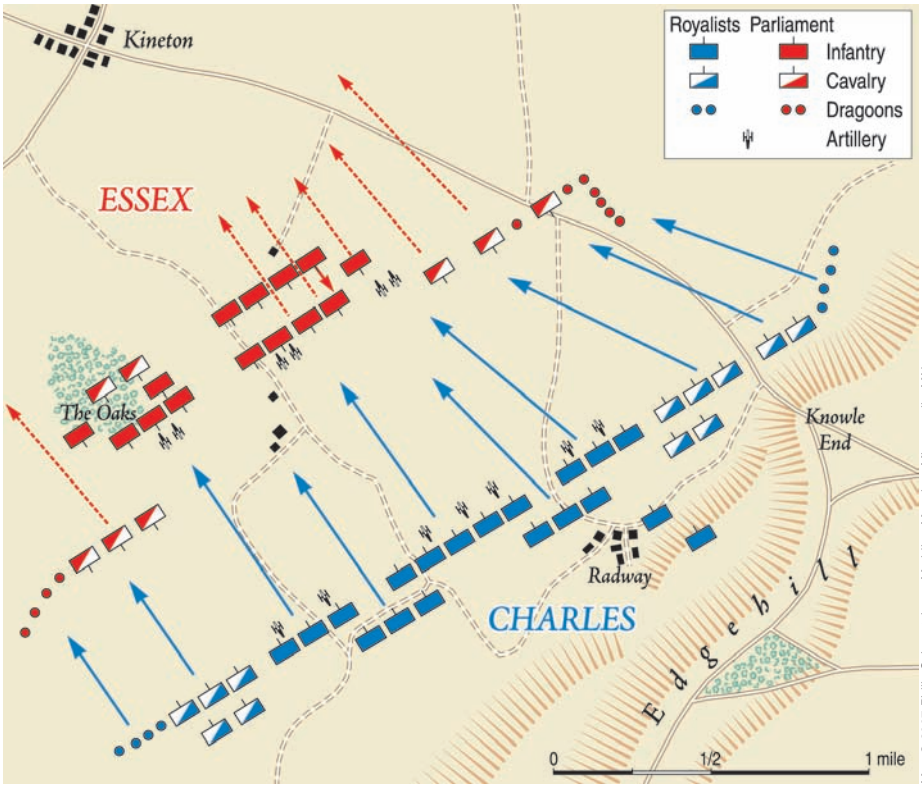
spersed among Ramsey's front rank offset the damage inflicted by Rupert's cuirassiers. A large number of Ramsey's men fled immediately once the Cavalier tide crashed into them, but a small minority stayed and fought until it became obvious that they would be killed or captured if they stayed. "Our left wing, upon the second firing, fled basely," scorned Reverend Steven Marshall, chaplain for the Lord General's Regiment of Foot.

The blow struck by Rupert had a devastating effect on the entire left wing of the Parliamentary army. Holles's regiment of Ballard's brigade was closest to the rout of Balfour's horse regiments. Seeing his musketeers running for their lives, Holles strode defiantly into the swirling mass of men and horses and tried to rally the horsemen. In response to his efforts, three troops of Roundhead horse rallied long enough to allow the musketeers to take shelter behind the pikes.

Over on the Cavalier left, Ashton's dragoons faced myriad obstacles in the form of ditches and hedges, but still managed to force the Roundhead cavalry to retreat. The regiments of Balfour and the Lord General withdrew from the Parliamentary flank and redeployed behind the center. This left Lord Fielding's regiment to face Wilmot's troopers alone, and the small force of about 300 horsemen was no match for one more than three times its size. Wilmot's troopers encountered little resistance when they crashed into the enemy's position. Fielding's men gave ground and ultimately fled north toward Kineton.

The skill of the Royalist cavalry was offset to a significant degree by its lack of discipline. Neither Byron's regiment on the Royalist right wing nor Digby's regiment on the left remained on the field to support the infantry advance. While Rupert said he gave orders for the second line of cavalry to remain on the battlefield, no record of such orders exists. Unfortunately for the Cavaliers, neither Byron nor Digby had the tactical experience to realize that their regiments could have performed better service on the battlefield than deep in the Parliamentary rear. On the Royalist left wing, Lt. Col. Sir Charles Lucas's regiment succeeded in halting and rallying about 200 troopers from the regiments that participated in the attack.

Ramsey and his troops rode for Kineton, where they hoped to make a stand. A professional soldier from Scotland, Ramsey was a mercenary who was unwilling to fight to the death and quite willing to save his own hide when things went wrong. The Cavaliers chasing the fleeing Roundheads found plenty of opportunity for plunder in Kineton. They stopped fighting long enough to sack the Parliamentary officers' coaches and carriages, as well as the carts and wagons of individual units. Many promptly quit the battle with their pockets stuffed full of whatever goods they could carry away on horseback. Some of the greatest spoils were gained by those who ransacked Essex's personal coach.



Map © 2007 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: Although holding the high ground between the Roundheads and London, King Charles decided to take the offensive at Edgehill. It was a fateful decision. BELOW: This detail of a period painting shows artillery in action in 1649. Artillery fire on both sides was largely ineffective.


The Art Archive

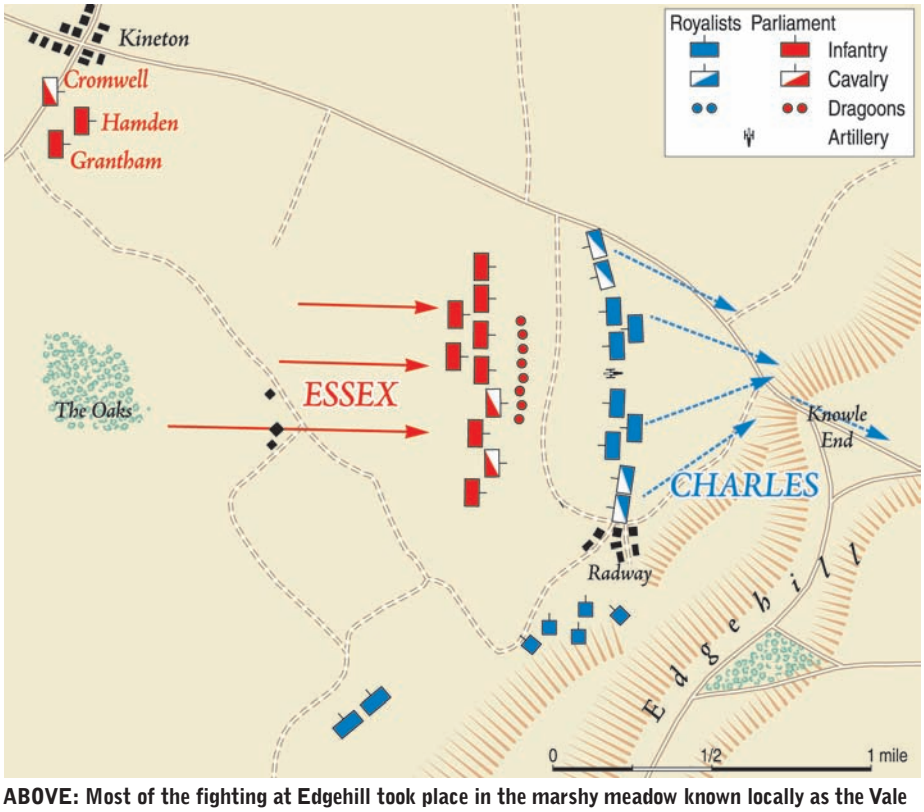
A troop of horse in Balfour's regiment commanded by Captain John Fiennes was not present when the battle began. Left behind to guard the lower crossing of the Avon at Evesham, Fiennes arrived too late to form on the battlefield, but did arrive in time to stabilize the chaotic situation in the Parliamentary rear at Kineton. He quickly rallied a retreating troop of horse to augment his own, and was further strengthened by the subsequent arrival in mid-afternoon of two addi-

tional horse troops commanded by Captains Oliver Cromwell and Edward Kightley. Having successfully prevented the Cavalier horse from going any further west than Kineton, Fiennes led his ad hoc force to join Essex in the late afternoon.

From their position, the Roundhead infantry could see the king's royal banner with its vibrant blue, red, and yellow colors floating above the men marching in Byron's brigade just left of the Royalist center. They watched calmly as the sea of enemy soldiers advanced slowly from the base of Edgehill into the middle of the plain. Placing a great emphasis on tight order, the Royalist officers deliberately slowed the pace when it got too fast. About 100 yards from the enemy, just out of musket range, the three brigades in the front line halted and the two rear brigades advanced to form one long battle line. As the Royalists resumed their advance, the Roundheads unleashed a wall of fire at the Cavaliers.

BEFORE THE ROYALISTS MADE CONTACT, ESSEX'S BRIGADE ABRUPTLY QUIT THE FIELD AND HEADED FOR the rear. Rupert's cavalry attack had driven back the soldiers of Ballard's and Holles's regiments upon the other two regiments in the brigade. No degree of berating from their officers could check their withdrawal, and Essex's brigade plodded off away from the fight. Unable to rally his command, Essex joined Meldrum's forces. Swearing loudly at his men, Ballard drove them from their position on the reverse slope of the ridge and into line next to Meldrum's brigade. The

Map © 2007 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: Most of the fighting at Edgehill took place in the marshy meadow known locally as the Vale of the Red Horse. OPPOSITE: Prince Rupert's cavalry rolled up the Roundheads' left at Edgehill, giving the Cavaliers momentary dreams of victory.

advance under fire was no simple matter—Ballard's men had to first wheel right toward the gap created by the departure of Essex's brigade, and then wheel again left into line.

When the Royalist infantry resumed its advance, it moved slowly forward, with musketeers from both sides exchanging increasingly effective salvos. While the pikemen had some protection against the one-ounce musket balls, the musketeers for the most part had no protection whatsoever. Once the Cavaliers had closed to within 20 yards of the Roundheads, they rushed forward, with the front ranks of the pikes holding their weapons aloft and the musketeers swinging their weapons as clubs.

The first three ranks of Parliamentary pikemen held their 16-foot, steel-tipped weapons in the advance position and took aim at areas not protected by helmets or breastplates, such as the face, arm, and thigh. Those in the rear ranks leaned forward on the backs of those in front of them, using their weight to bring added pressure on the enemy force, hence the term "push of pike." The pike blocks could not maintain such strenuous activity for much more than 20 to 30 minutes at a time, so some groups would be engaged while others fell back to regroup before resuming their push.

While the pikes on each side struggled for supremacy, the muskets flashed, causing substantial casualties. Each musketeer fired and moved to the rear to hastily reload in an effort to maintain a rate of fire that might force the enemy to retire. The gunshots shattered bones and tore gaping holes in heads and abdomens.

Fielding's brigade, in the center of the Cavalier line, was facing a gap in the Parliamentary line that it could not fully exploit because of the presence of the Roundhead cavalry reserve. Rather than stand by idly, Fielding's musketeers added their firepower to that of the brigades nearest to them. For a time it seemed as if the king's foot was gaining an advantage over the Roundheads. The Parliamentary right under Meldrum was forced to give ground and retreat a short distance up the rise behind them. But the deeper ranks of the Parliamentarians and the proximity of their musketeers enabled the Roundheads to sustain their rate of fire for a longer period of time, and Meldrum soon regained the ground he had lost. When the Royalist pikes found they could not break either Parliamentary brigade, they broke off the fight and withdrew. It was at that opportune moment that the Roundhead cavalry advanced.

Balfour had shifted his regiment and that of the Lord General's under Stapleton to the rear of the ridge to serve as a mobile reserve. Stapleton, positioned on Balfour's right, had about 100 cuirassiers and 50 arquebusiers, while Balfour had 200 cuirassiers. Stapleton's target was Byron's brigade, and Balfour's was Fielding's brigade. Stapleton's heavily armored cuirassiers crested the ridge first and rolled down onto the plain, sending Byron's startled musketeers rushing for the safety of their pike blocks.

Byron's brigade contained the Life Guard and the Lord General's elite regiments and was the best-drilled and -armed brigade in the king's army. By wheeling slightly left to attack Meldrum's brigade, Byron had left his right flank exposed. Despite the shock effect, Stapleton's first charge failed to roll up Byron's flank. Fielding's brigade was not so fortunate. His brigade had become overstretched trying to connect to Byron on his left and to Belasyse on his right. Balfour, seeing gaps in Fielding's line, ordered his men to exploit them. Balfour singled out one of Fielding's regiments and cut it off from the others.

All along that section of the Cavaliers' line, pikemen formed squares or circles into which the musketeers rushed for protection from Roundhead cuirassiers. Balfour's bold attack sent Fielding's brigade, the largest of the king's five foot brigades, reeling back. The men of Fielding's brigade who were not captured or cut down by enemy swords threw down their weapons and streamed toward Edgehill. Following the destruction of Fielding's brigade, Byron's and Belasyse's brigades also gave ground, precipitating a general withdrawal by the Royalists toward Edgehill. Boosted by the success of their horsemen, Meldrum's musketeers harassed the retreating enemy all the way.

Balfour was not content simply with disrupting Byron's brigade. After bringing about a general retreat by the Royalist foot, he rode for the king's battery of heavy guns on the Royalist right flank. An unequal race ensued in which the Royalist infantry tried to reach the guns before the Parliamentary cavalry. The latter easily won the race and scattered Sgt. Maj. William Legge's company of firelocks, whose responsibility it was to guard the guns. Having either killed or driven off the firelocks, Balfour dismounted and shouted for nails to drive through the touchholes to disable the guns. Finding that his men had not brought any nails with them, Balfour ordered his men to cut the tow ropes so that the enemy could not withdraw the guns.

Seeing that the right flank of Byron's brigade was now completely exposed following the rout of Fielding's brigade, Stapleton launched a second assault on the beleaguered infantry. With the Royalist foot brigades in various stages of withdrawal, Essex took the opportunity to order two regiments from Ballard's brigade—his own regiment and that of Lord Brooke—to assist in the fresh attack on Byron. Pinned in front by fresh attacks from the Parliamentary foot and assailed in flank by cavalry, Byron's brigade became a disorganized mass of soldiers, each man thinking only of his own survival.

The Bridgeman Art Library

During the fierce melee, Verney swung the royal banner high above the fray in a vain attempt to rally the shaken Royalists. As the enemy crowded around him, he used the banner's staff like a pike to fend off enemy foot soldiers who grabbed at it. After he seriously wounded two of them, a Parliamentary cuirassier leaned over in his saddle and hacked off Verney's hand with one powerful stroke.

As Verney fell lifeless to the ground, Roundhead foot soldiers snatched up the banner and carried it to Essex, who was present in the thick of the action with his own foot regiment. Essex instructed his assistant, Roberts Chambers, to convey it to the rear. What happened to the royal banner from that point is the subject of continuing controversy. The official Parliamentary account holds that the banner was subsequently lost, but several Royalist sources claim that Sir Charles Lucas single-handedly took it away from a party of six troopers carrying it to the rear. The latter account, while it makes for good reading, strains credulity.

Byron's brigade, like Fielding's, was finished for the day. The destruction was so severe that the King's Life Guard lost 11 of its 13 colors in the action. With Byron and Fielding routed, Wentworth, the last cohesive unit on the Royalist left, was forced to retire to the safety of Edgehill. From his position atop the hillside, Charles watched his infantry stream back toward where he stood with his entourage. Seeing Roundhead cavalry ranging freely through his army's rear, he ordered Sir William Howard, commander of the King's Pensioners, to locate his two sons and remove them to safety. Charles then rode forward to meet the retreating troops and try to rally them.

Rupert eventually managed to rally between three and five troops of cavalry on the Royalist right flank, which he used to temporarily delay Parliamentary reinforcements converging on the battlefield. Meanwhile, Lucas's ad hoc force on the Royalist left flank continued to disrupt the Parliamentarian rear. Lucas's first charge occurred early in the battle when Essex's brigade was withdrawing from the battlefield. His troopers charged them and captured nearly all of their regimental and company colors. Lucas then launched an attack on the rear of Stapleton's cavalry, assailing Byron's brigade and relieving pressure on the beleaguered Royalist infantry.

Belasyse's brigade counterattacked on the Parliamentary left to buy time for the army to establish a new line along the stream that flowed diagonally from Edgehill toward the Parliamentary left flank. Belasyse, who led the charge himself wielding a pike, was wounded in the head as a result, but his counterattack saved the army from complete destruction. Meanwhile, the king conferred with his advisers. Despite suggestions that he abandon the infantry to its own fate and flee

Continued on page 71

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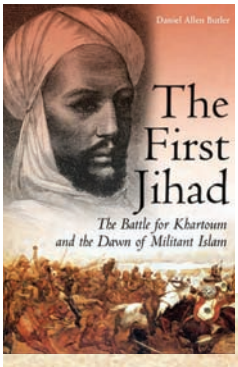
By Al Hemingway

From Khartoum to the Twin Towers, the ghost of the Mahdi still lives on, spreading terror in its wake.

HE WAS KNOWN AS MOHAMMED AHMED AND HE WAS BORN IN 1844 at Dirar, a small island near the Third Cataract of the Nile River, in the Sudanese village of Dongala. He became a religious instructor and embraced a radical sect of Islam known as Wahhabism. It taught that all personal wealth, the worship of holy people, and the "rituals and religious trappings" were bogus and must be forsaken by the truly faithful.

The Mahdi's Ansar attacked the British Nile Expeditionary Force at Abu Klea. The battle delayed the British troops' rescue of Gordon at Khartoum.



The Mahdi's followers mushroomed, and soon the son of a Nile shipbuilder had an army of thousands. He felt that he had been chosen by Allah to lead his supporters on a holy mission to cleanse the Islamic faith of all its vices. He declared a jihad, or holy war, to oust the Egyptians and British from the Sudan. Before long, the landscape of the desert would run red with the blood of thousands.

In his new book, ***The First Jihad: The Battle for Khartoum and the Dawn of Militant Islam*** (Casemate, Philadelphia, PA, 2006, 256 pp., photos, index, notes, bibliography, $32.95, hardcover), author Daniel Allen Butler takes a close look at the turbulent life of Ahmed, the Mahdi, or Expected One, the long-awaited savior of the Islamic people. Butler also examines the life of the Mahdi's chief rival during the siege of Khartoum, Maj. Gen. Charles "Chinese" Gordon, one of Great Britain's legendary military figures. Although they came from entirely different walks of life, the two had a common denominator—both were religious zealots who held firmly to their beliefs with a fierce determination.

Gordon refused to abandon Khartoum, and by April 1884 the city was surrounded and there was no hope of evacuating anyone. The beleaguered garrison held on, and soon Khartoum was the top news in the British press. It became a rallying cry, much like the siege of the Alamo, and the public clamored for the government to come to their countrymen's aid. The relief expedition, unfortunately, took months to organize. Meanwhile, Gordon was dangerously low on food and ammunition, and morale was nonexistent. To make matters worse, the Mahdi's men had severed the telegraph line going to Cairo and stopped much of the river traffic on the Nile.

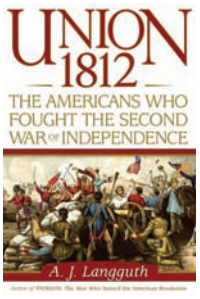
On January 28, 1885, a British

National Army Museum, London

relief column finally fought its way through and entered Khartoum, only to discover that the Mahdi's forces had overrun the city several days earlier. Over 4,000 citizens were slaughtered and all the young boys and girls were taken as slaves. Although he had ordered that no harm come to Gordon, the Mahdi's overzealous soldiers hacked the general to death on the stairway to the palace and beheaded him. The head was presented to the Mahdi, who overlooked his earlier orders and had the grisly trophy placed on a tree branch "where all who passed it could look in disdain, children could throw stones at it and the hawks of the desert could sweep and circle above."

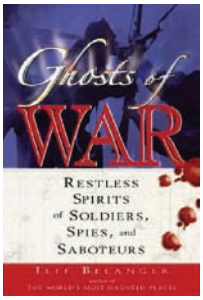
The Mahdi's life came to an abrupt end in 1885 when he contracted typhus and died. His army was finally defeated at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898 by a British force under the leadership of Lord Horatio Kitchener. A young lieutenant named Winston Churchill took part that day in the final cavalry charge in British history.

Today, the beliefs of the Mahdi live on. Like him, those in the Al Qaeda terrorist organization are Sunni Muslims, and many are devout Wahhabis. They feel, as did the Mahdi, that the Islamic faith has become morally lax and corrupt. His spirit is alive and well in modern terrorist organizations screaming for the blood of the infidels. A new jihad has been proclaimed, and the new Mahdists are making every attempt to see that they are successful. "Only when Islam itself chooses to make a determined effort to purge itself of its modern fanatics and ceases to glorify their spiritual forebears can civilized peoples from every continent hope to live in peace," writes Butler. "Until then, the ghost of the Mahdi will still haunt the world."



Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence by A.J. Langguth, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2006, 482 pp., illustrations, maps, index, $30.00, hardcover.

On June 18, 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain in what has been called America's second war of independence. Since freeing herself from England's tyrannical yoke, the newly formed nation had received little respect from her former master. The constant impressment of American sailors to serve aboard His Majesty's ships, together with ongoing quarrels over the Northwest Territory and other border disputes with Canada, induced President James Madison to lead the young country into conflict with the much-stronger Britons.

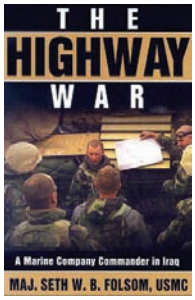


The War of 1812 is arguably the least understood conflict in American history. Historian A.J. Langguth does a masterful job of sorting out the primary characters involved in the military and political aspects of the war. From the beginning, little went well for the United States. Despite being fewer in numbers, the Redcoats defeated American forces at various set-piece battles, including Raisin River and Fort Mackinac, and eventually razed Washington, D.C., while Madison and his first lady, Dolley, fled the city mere hours earlier. American troops also bungled several attempts at invading Canada and were soundly defeated along the border between the two countries.

America's navy, however, delivered impressive victories during the war. Commodore Oliver Perry defeated a British fleet on Lake Erie and was hailed a hero when he delivered his now classic line, "We have met the enemy and they are ours." The USS *Constitution* outgunned the HMS *Guerriere* off the coast of Nova Scotia and earned the nickname of "Old Ironsides" when it appeared as though British cannonballs could not damage to the ship's oak hull.

Soon the tide of war turned on land for the United States as well when General Andrew Jackson won decisive battles against the pro-British Creek Indians in Alabama. He then defeated a larger enemy army at the Battle of New Orleans and saved the city from an incipient British invasion. Ironically, a peace treaty between the two counties had already been signed, and the bloodshed could have been avoided with better communications from the two capitals to the front.

Union 1812 is an engrossing book. Because of Langguth's careful attention to detail, the reader comes away with a clearer understanding of a long-forgotten war where America secured her independence once again and earned a newfound respect on the world scene. If not exactly a total victory, the War of 1812 nevertheless established the United States as a proud nation fully capable of defending herself against the mightiest power in the world. It is no coincidence that the two English-speaking nations have not fought each other since.



Ghosts of War: Restless Spirits of Soldiers, Spies and Saboteurs by Jeff Belanger, Career Press, Franklin Lakes, NJ, 2006, 233 pp., index, bibliography, $14.99, softcover.

Do ghosts haunt some of the battle sites around the world? Author Jeff Belanger gives convincing, if not necessarily conclusive, evidence in his new book that restless spirits still walk among us. Combining his love of history and the supernatural, the author has amassed a collection of stories concentrating on some of the battlefields and dwellings supposedly visited by ghostly specters who participated in historic events at the locations.

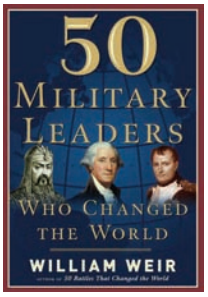
The story about the Alamo is the most intriguing. Everyone knows that nearly 200 defenders of the old mission were slaughtered to the man by the Mexican Army under General Santa Anna in March 1836. Park rangers who provide security for the building have professed to seeing the apparition of a Mexican soldier at the site. Also, the ghost of what appears to be a Texan has been spotted as well. (No Tennesseans seem to have made a reappearance, although David Crockett and his volunteers comprised a strong contingent of defenders at the Alamo—something many Texans conveniently forget.)

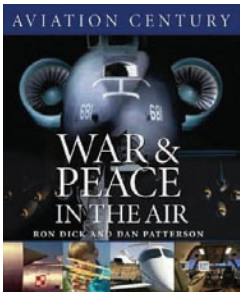
From the Ottoman Wars of the 14th century to the present-day fighting in Bosnia, Belanger's vignettes will send chills up and down your spine. There are certainly more than enough battles to supply restless ghosts by the regiment.

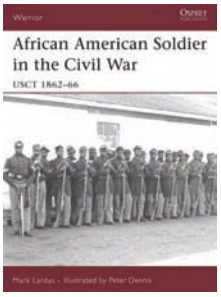
The Highway War: A Marine Company Commander in Iraq by Major Seth W.B. Folsom, USMC, Potomac Books, Dulles, VA, 2006, 426 pp., photos, maps, index, $29.95, hardcover.

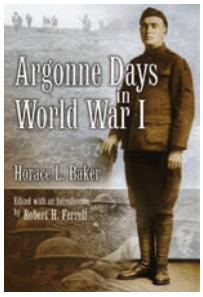
Since the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, there have been numerous firsthand accounts by individuals who have served there. The main reason why Marine Major Seth Folsom's story is so fascinating is that he kept a day-to-day diary of events. The entries in his "battered notebook" give his book a gritty realism. It is filled with comprehensive details of his tour of duty in that needlessly wartorn country and how he dealt with the daily strain of combat.

Folsom was the commander of Delta Company, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division. His LAR unit was at the vanguard of the invasion of Iraq and provided timely information to RCT-5 (Regimental Combat Team) during the drive on Baghdad.









The author's journal provides insight into the tremendous responsibility of leading men into battle. The stress of ordering men into harm's way that cannot be overstated. Folsom rises to the challenge, despite his inner fears, and emerges a better man for it. "The burden I had carried on my shoulders for so long was finally lifted," he observes. "I realized that whatever it was I had carried back with me had been left behind somewhere in the swirling wind and shifting sands of Iraq."

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50 Military Leaders Who Changed the World by William Weir, Career Press, Franklin Lakes, NJ, 2007, 259 pp., illustrations, index, $24.99, hardcover.

Author William Weir has undertaken a monumental task, selecting 50 military leaders that have made an impact upon world history. Besides well-known figures such as George Washington, Genghis Khan, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Ulysses S. Grant, he also spotlights some of the lesser-known individuals who have made important military contributions that have altered the course of historic events.

One such character was Maurice of Nassau, who was born in 1567 and died in 1625. After the death of his father during a revolt in the Netherlands, Maurice took command and performed admirably despite his young age. In addition to his military skills, Maurice was an innovative organizer of his army. He divided his men into battalions, companies, and platoons and developed a clear chain of command that vastly improved communications. He also restructured his battle formations so that his musketeers could fire their weapons, then step back to reload while the next rank of riflemen moved forward to discharge their muskets. This procedure allowed his men to pour continuous fire into the enemy ranks. These imaginative developments have withstood the test of time, and some are still in use today.

My Father IL Duce: A Memoir by Mussolini's Son by Romano Mussolini, Kales Press, 2006, 163 pp., illustrations, $27.95, hardcover.

Romano Mussolini was an accomplished jazz musician during his lifetime. Before his death, he penned his memoirs, describing what it was like growing up as the son of Benito Mussolini, the ill-fated leader of fascist Italy during World War II. Despite his father's bungled attempt at leading Italy during the war and his ultimate inglorious demise (he was shot, along with his mistress, as a traitor, then strung up like a side of beef from a pole), Romano Mussolini wrote a poignant book that reflected a son's undying love for his father.

The reader should beware, however, as some of the younger Mussolini's observations about world events during that turbulent period in history are grossly inaccurate. As historian Alexander Stille writes in his introduction to the book, "While Romano's narration of historical facts is highly suspect and often flat-out wrong, the feelings of filial affection and love are real and entirely comprehensible."

In spite of his shortcomings as a historian, Romano Mussolini's book is a good place to start for anyone desiring to learn more about the private life of Il Duce, in all his vainglorious glory.

Aviation Century: War & Peace in the Air by Ron Dick & Dan Patterson, The Boston Mills Press, 2006, 352 pp., illustrations, $49.95, hardcover.

Ever since the Wright brothers recorded mankind's first epochal flight on the sandy beaches of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, over 100 years ago, man has continually reached for the stars. This is the fifth and final book in a series that commemorates how that earth-shattering event and subsequent flights have reshaped the modern world.

The authors discuss the various aircraft, their designs, and the talented pilots who have flown them. This coffee table book is rich with numerous photographs depicting the course aviation history has traveled through the past century.

"Forewords rarely provide investment advice," writes Walter Boyne, former director of the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, "but a canny investor might just buy four or five sets of these books, get them autographed, and then put them away as a nest egg for his or her grandchildren. They are that good."

African American Soldier in the Civil War, USCT 1862-66 by Mark Lardas, Osprey Publishing, 2007, 64 pp., illustrations, $17.95, softcover.

At the outset of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to bring an end to the rebellion. Inspired by the promise that the conflict would put an end to slavery, many free blacks attempted to enlist in the Union Army. At first they were denied. As the war dragged on, however, the Lincoln administration realized that the large pool of black recruits could prove beneficial to the war effort.

Black units sprang up, and soon the United States Colored Troops were fighting in all theaters of the war. The book traces the discrimination, from both Northern and Southern soldiers, that the black troops had to tolerate until they could prove themselves in battle. After units such as the famed 54th Massachusetts Infantry behaved gallantly under fire at Fort Wagner, South Carolina, the black soldier began to gain a newfound respect from his fellow comrades.

This book is full of wonderfully detailed color prints and rare photographs depicting life as a soldier in a black unit during the Civil War. Osprey Publishing has produced another little gem for anyone interested in this divisive and convulsive period of American history.

Argonne Days in World War I by Horace Baker, edited by Robert H. Ferrell, University of Missouri Press, 2007, 184 pp., illustrations, index, $29.95, hardcover.

Although the strategy for the Meuse-Argonne campaign looked fine on paper, the overall results were dismal. Attempting to sever the German supply lines, the American Expeditionary Force ran headlong into a determined enemy willing to fight to the death. The offensive mercifully ended when the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

Private Harold Baker kept a journal of his time with Company M, 128th Infantry, 32nd Infantry Division, beginning in September

1918. Reminiscent of Erich Maria Remarque's classic novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front,* Baker's diary relays the fears and trepidations of the common foot soldier during the bloody Meuse-Argonne campaign.

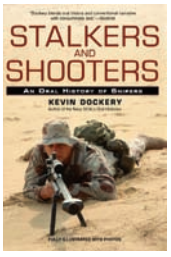
Baker expanded on his notes immediately after the war and wrote a full account of his experiences as a Doughboy. It was first published in 1927, but few copies survived. Eventually, one copy was discovered in the University of Michigan library. Luckily, it is now being reissued so that everyone can read about the near-death experiences men like Baker had to endure while serving on the Western Front in the Great War.

One Day in History: July 4, 1776 edited by Dr. Rodney P. Carlisle, HarperCollins/Smithsonian, 2006, 272 pp., illustrations, index, $24.95, hardcover.

Probably no other day in American history was more important than July 4, 1776. On that day the newly formed Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence authored by the young man from Virginia, Thomas Jefferson. When this document was ratified, it started the United States of America on the long road to freedom from Great Britain that would culminate at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781.

This book is first in a series of "individual encyclopedias" designed to explain crucial dates that helped form our country into the nation she has become today. Various authors have compiled 100 short essays to include background into the people, places, and events on pivotal days in American history.

Included in the book are over 250 photographs to accompany the text, touching upon Revolutionary War commanders and leaders, commerce and trade, Independence Hall, the contributions of the individual states to the war effort, and England's reaction and subsequent strategy to regain her colonies, to name just a few topics.



AK-47: The Weapon That Changed the Face of War by Larry Kahaner, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007, 258 pp., illustrations, index, $25.95, hardcover.

While Russian soldier Mikhail Timofeevich Kalashnikov was recuperating from wounds suffered during World War II, he drew a model for a simple assault rifle that could be operated in any climate with minimal service. He didn't realize at the time that he would revolutionize warfare with his simple concept.

What emerged was the Avtomat (Automatic) Kalashnikov 1947, or AK-47. The weapon is the favorite of every army and terrorist group in the world today. It has been in every conflict worldwide since the end of World War II. There are an estimated 75 million of the weapons in use today.

From the rice paddies of Vietnam to the cities of Iraq, the American fighting man has had to listen to the distinctive sound of the AK-47 for the past 40 years. It is one of the most reliable rifles ever manufactured because it rarely jams and can use "imperfect ammunition." It has been dubbed the "$10 weapon of mass destruction," and as Kahaner states, "It has shifted the balance of power in warfare by allowing small determined factions, not just armies, to overthrow entire governments."

Stalkers and Shooters: A History of Snipers by Kevin Dockery, Berkley Publishing Group, 2006, 372 pp., illustrations, index, $24.95, hardcover.

Ever since warfare first began, men have hid-

den behind rocks and trees to take aim at their adversaries and kill them in battle. Everything from the bow and arrow, to the musket, to the modern-day M21 rifle has been used by the sniper to eliminate the enemy. In modern times, sniping has evolved into a science—a science with deadly, effective results.

Every branch of the service has a cadre of well-trained snipers. Using his ability to quietly position himself, the sniper can deliver nerve-wracking fear to any soldier on the battlefield. Such was the case of Carlos Hathcock, a Marine sniper who served in Vietnam and amassed an incredible 93 confirmed kills during his tour of duty. Hathcock was so proficient the enemy had a price on his head. His exploits during the war are still legendary.

Author Kevin Dockery tells Hathcock's story and also traces the roots of snipers in the field of law enforcement. He has gathered some fascinating firsthand accounts from snipers in both the civilian and military communities to further delineate the shadowy and deadly world of the trained marksman and manhunter.

The Crash of Little Eva: The Ultimate World War II Survivor Story by Barry Ralph, Pelican Publishing Company, 2006, 209 pp., illustrations, index, $16.95, softcover.

On December 3, 1942, a B-24D Liberator named "Little Eva" from the 321st Bomber Squadron, 90th Bomber Group, encountered a tropical storm while returning from a bombing mission over Buna, New Guinea. Veering off course, the aircraft eventually began to run out of fuel, and the crew members had no choice but to bail out. In the end, only three would survive their terrible ordeal in the rugged Australian Outback.

The pilot, 1st Lt. Norman Crosson, and his crewmate, Lt. John Wilson, were rescued nearly two weeks later as they were making their way to Escott Station, an old cattle ranch that stretched for nearly 250,000 acres. Staff Sergeant Grady Gaston, the other surviving crewman, was picked up in a hut on Seven Emus Station, a homestead that covered over 750 square miles, over three months later. He could barely stand and weighed a mere 80 pounds. His hair had turned completely gray.

The Crash of Little Eva is an astonishing adventure tale. It also demonstrates the tenacity of the human spirit to withstand any test, no matter how harrowing, in order to survive. □

crater

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captured during the melee were killed on the spot by their captors.

The retreating Federals were driven back to the Crater and the surviving trenches on either side. The Union troops were packed together so tightly, said one Federal officer, that "it was impossible for any to use their muskets, and when the enemy, in overwhelming numbers charged down upon us, they found us in this defenseless condition. Surrender or death were the only alternatives present." Another Union officer remembered how his men found it almost impossible to move their arms or legs—let alone fire their weapons.

Fear spread quickly among the troops inside the Crater. As soon as Confederate rifle barrels were seen pointing over the Crater's rim and discharging into the milling masses, fear turned to abject panic. Some men tried to shoot their guns, others tumbled out of the hole and ran headlong for the Union lines. The white soldiers attempted to keep the black troops in front of them as human shields.

The fight continued in full flood, and the Confederate defenders paid in blood as well. Captain John E. Laughton, with the Virginia Brigade, recalled that his unit of over 100 men was almost wiped out. Another Confederate officer described the combat as taking place at "close quarters with the bayonet and rifle butt freely used." Despite the fury of their attack, Weisiger's men could not clear the Crater of the dense throngs of enemy troops inside it. They had lost half their strength because of fire coming from the Crater and the nearby trenches. Mahone sent Wright's brigade to the south of the Crater to take some of the pressure off the Virginians. The Georgians swung to the rear of the Federals, only to meet determined resistance from Hartranft's and Humphrey's commands, which occupied part of the fort not demolished by the explosion. The Bluecoats were supported by two captured artillery pieces. A Confederate officer remarked that as "soon as the Georgians got near enough the enemy opened fire, and they [the Confederates] fell like autumn leaves." Wright's men had to retreat.

Confederate small-arms fire was joined by increasing numbers of cannon and mortar rounds. The exhausted Union forces inside the Crater realized that no help would be forthcoming—the Union high command had not even considered it. Their only salvation lay in retreating over the shell-swept ground. A message from Burnside to the brigade leaders in the Crater sanctioned a withdrawal. Word passed down the line to the respective units to prepare to make a dash for safety. An officer was sent back to the Federal trench line to arrange covering fire by friendly artillery. Just as the movement to the rear was about to commence, the Confederates launched another counterattack. Mahone hoped to pin down the enemy left while he administered the coup de grace. Mahone told Sanders and his men to advance to the Crater without firing and make for that part of the fort that had not been shattered by the mine blast. Once under its cover they were to shoot into the Crater and capture or drive out its defenders.

The final Confederate attack started at 2 PM, preceded by the opposing artillery pounding each other. Arms shouldered, the Alabamans moved out immediately, raised a yell, and made a beeline for the fort's walls. Union musket fire proved ineffectual because of the speed and surprise of the southern attack. The Confederates approached within 100 feet of their target before they were even seen. With little enemy rifle fire directed at them, Sanders's brigade reached the crest of the Crater and poured volley after volley into the stunned Union troops. Not only bullets but chunks of wood, clods of dirt, spent cannon balls, and discarded bayonet-tipped muskets were hurled at the huddled and demoralized enemy. Then the Confederates surged in to the Crater itself using clubbed muskets and bayonets with great execution. In a matter of minutes the Federal defense fell apart; some soldiers surrendered, others attempted to flee back to the main Union lines through an intense gauntlet of fire. Many of the black troops were cut down by Sanders's men as they tried to surrender.

The Battle of the Crater cost the Union army 504 men killed, 1,881 wounded, and 1,413 captured—a total of 3,475. Of this total, Ferrero's African American division suffered 1,327 losses, including 209 killed. Confederate losses were about half those of their Union opponents. The greatest loss, 677 men, came from Elliot's command, which had been standing on the ground above the mine.

The battle ended Burnside's military career; Ledlie resigned his commission in early 1865. Ferrero, although roundly criticized for his poor performance, somehow retained his division command and later was promoted to brevet major general. Mahone, for his part, was made a major general immediately after the battle. The Crater was a painful Union disaster, a great opportunity carelessly executed and quickly forfeited. The final judgment belonged to Grant, who called the battle "a stupendous failure ... the saddest affair I have seen in this war." □

king arthur

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haunted ruins of its beautiful abbey, its legends of the chalice called the Holy Grail. Glastonbury may well be the fabled Isle of Avalon, for in other days the sea inundated much of the surrounding country, and the area was called Ynis Witrin, the Isle of Glass. On the green and placid grounds of the ancient abbey there is a grave, empty now, where legend says Arthur lay in peace for centuries.

It is easy to believe in Arthur at Glastonbury, for it is a mystic place, closely linked to tales of Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Grail. One tale holds that Jesus came to Britain as a boy with Joseph and stayed for a time in the West Country. Legend says that a thorn tree growing in Glastonbury, a tree whose distant ancestor grew from Joseph's staff, was planted in the earth. This legend, too, has been the subject of much scoffing except that the tree grows no place else in England, and is distinctly Mediterranean in ancestry.

And then there is Dozmary Pool, a desolate lake on Bodmin Moor where Excalibur may still lie sleeping beneath the glassy surface. It is an otherworldly place on the right kind of day. When the lonely wind of the moor stirs the surface of the pool, one may wonder whether the ripple of wind on water could be caused by the slim white hand of the Lady of the Lake.

In AD 1190 the monks of Glastonbury Abbey dug up Arthur's bones—or at least what they said were his bones. They were re-interred with great ceremony in a black marble tomb before the abbey's high altar. The bones are gone now, but for centuries the monks showed a lead cross that they said came from the grave. On the cross was carved in Latin: "Here lies buried the renowned King Arthur in the Isle of Avalon." The cross is now lost—conveniently, some say. Still, many people saw it, wrote of it, and even drew pictures of it as recently as 200 years ago. Perhaps the legend was faked by the monks to make Glastonbury more attractive as a goal for pilgrims.

Modern archaeology has established that there was in fact a grave where the monks said they found Arthur's bones, and the grave may indeed have been as old as the fifth or sixth century. However much of Arthur's legend may be invention or imagination, the fight at Mount Badon was real. Precisely what happened there, nobody can say with total accuracy. No matter. The victory Arthur won at Mount Badon was one of the most significant victories in British history. It still deserves to be remembered today. □

fury

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west with Rupert's cavalry, Charles decided to remain on the field and observe the final outcome of the battle.

Belasyse's and Gerard's brigades, which retained their morale, succeeded in holding the new position as darkness approached. By using the terrain to their advantage and employing a number of smaller field guns, the Royalists made a final stand. The arrival of additional Roundhead forces in Kineton throughout the afternoon put a stop to the Royalist plunder of the Parliamentary wagon train. In the late afternoon, Fiennes arrived at the battlefield with the first group of reinforcements. He was followed by two fresh foot regiments and about 10 more horse troops.

The opponents remained on the battlefield the next day to see whether either side would renew the fight. The Royalists redeployed the bulk of their forces in a strong position atop Edgehill. Despite having received substantial reinforcements, Essex was reluctant to renew the battle against an enemy in such a strong position. As for the king, he had no fresh forces with which to reinforce his army.

Two days after the battle, Essex withdrew his army northeast toward Warwick. Upon learning that the Parliamentarians were marching away, Rupert attacked their rear guard and managed to capture some arms and ammunition as the Roundheads withdrew from Kineton. Meanwhile, the king's army returned to its old quarters at Edgecote, 10 miles east of Radway. The Parliamentarians had driven the Cavaliers from the battlefield, but the Royalists still controlled the road to London. As for casualties, the number buried by local villagers or treated in hospitals revealed about 4,000 total casualties for both sides. Of these, the Royalists probably suffered 2,500 and the Parliamentarians about 1,500.

Rupert's failure to control his horsemen had lost the battle for the king. Without Rupert's help, Lucas's small force could not blunt the Parliamentary counterattack. The first battle of the war was a both a harbinger and a paradigm of things to come. When facing the enemy's combined arms, the less-well-trained Royalist infantry was driven from the field. The discipline shown by the Roundheads in shunning individual heroics for the good of the common cause was sorely lacking among the Cavaliers, who fought as individuals rather than as a tightly disciplined army. At Edgehill, the Roundheads had shown a cohesion that would serve them well in the battles to come. □

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it was the end of the big ball game for him. All he could do was shoot and scoot because he knew that we were coming to put the hammer down and clean his clock."

Eventually, enemy forces learned effective means to shoot down the helicopters. During the height of the war, the enemy paid cash rewards to NVA and VC troops who shot them down and issued even greater bounties for capturing a live pilot who flew them. A total of 4,869 helicopters fell from the skies over Vietnam. The Huey UH-1 bore the brunt of these losses, some 2,591 in all.

According to Steve Maxham, director of the U.S. Army Aviation Museum at Fort Rucker, Alabama, "With the creation of the UH-1 Huey, there was a quantum leap in rotorcraft. After the invention of the turbine engine, it changed rotary wing aircraft forever and it allowed the helicopter to go higher, farther, and faster." Maxham concludes that Vietnam was "the helicopter war." Without the advent of the Huey, he says, the war would have been impossible to fight. "It changed how we conducted the war," Maxham observes. "It was used as a troop carrier, medevac platform, gunship, command and control, and the first TOW missile platform."

Since that time, the Huey has gone on to become a symbol of the American fighting spirit and technological development. The UH-1 gave birth to the AH-1 Cobra, which in turn birthed the AH-64. The H-60 and CH-53 are also based on the UH-1 concept. The oldest rotary-wing aircraft still in use by the United States is currently in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Utilized by over 100 foreign militaries around the globe, it is also used by law enforcement, hospitals, media outlets, and civil search and rescue.

From the skies of Vietnam to Grenada, Operation Desert Storm, Bosnia, and now the global war on terrorism, the Huey has been relied upon to protect the United States from enemies both foreign and domestic. When troops needed crucial supplies and ammunition during the Vietnam War, it was the Huey they saw. When Marines needed to be evacuated in the aftermath of the Beirut bombing in Lebanon, it was the Huey that transported them. When troops went into the Sunni Triangle in Iraq, the Huey was the last thing some insurgents saw. And when stranded residents of New Orleans needed rescuing after the wrath of Hurricane Katrina, it was the Huey that plucked them from their rooftops. Not bad for a 50-year-old. □

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the war. Every day saw fresh corpses being brought back to the graveyard. Still, he managed to draw a new picture entitled "They've Evidently Seen Me." A certain Major Lancaster saw it and asked Bairnsfather to draw him a copy. The artist was only too happy to oblige. A third drawing of the picture, made at a small farm between Wulverghen and the Messines Ridge, was sent off to *Bystander.* By this time, news of Bairnsfather's artistic prowess was spreading throughout the Army, and he was in constant demand to decorate the soldiers' billets. This was facilitated by the persistent shelling by the Germans, which compelled the British to take cover during daytime.

Under the less than ideal circumstances, Bairnsfather was able to accept a commission from an officer of the Dublin Fusiliers who wanted him to draw some "colonel pictures" on the white plaster walls of his room. Soon the artist found another letter from *Bystander*'s editor accepting "They've Evidently Seen Me." The relative calm before the storm helped restore Bairnsfather's shattered nerves. But soon the whole of the 10th Brigade was sent away under sealed orders to Ypres, known far and wide as the worst spot on the Western Front. The pouring rain and constant German shelling contributed to Bairnsfather's miserable existence. In later years, he remembered how, as a young lieutenant, he sat in the middle of a field, a waterproof sheet covering his head, watching the beautiful Cloth Hall go up in flames.

When word came that the Germans had breached the line at the St. Julian, the brigade was sent to help stem the enemy's advance. It was a thankless task, and Bairnsfather's company was right in the thick of it. There the Germans launched the first gas attack of the war, and its effect on the unprepared British and French troops were terrible. Bairnsfather would remember the gas attack simply as "a nightmare of horror."

In his case, the nightmare was brought to a close by a bursting shell that blew him into the air. When he regained consciousness, Bairnsfather found himself in a hospital in Boulogne. After a short spell, he ended up in the Kings College Hospital, London. His days as a front-line soldier were over. As soon as he left the hospital as a convalescent, Bairnsfather gathered his art materials together and returned home to Bishopton, near Stratford, where he spent his recuperation working on more pictures for *Bystander*. A representative of the magazine called. Apparently they had received shoals of congratulations from readers, several even wanting to buy the originals. They upped Bairnsfather's fee from £2 to £4 a week. After a month at home, the artist's health improved tremendously. During a visit to the Crown Hotel in Warwick, the barmaid showed him a newspaper containing the list of promotions—he was now a captain.

Despite damage to his eardrum, the Medical Board pronounced Bairnsfather fit for light duties, and he was sent to the Royal Warwickshire Depot on the Isle of Wight. There he was put in command of 200 men, mostly from the Midlands. They were the colorful rural types he had served with previously, and a new character began to emerge in his work—a crusty figure in a balaclava helmet with a walrus moustache. When a fellow officer asked him who the figure was, Bairnsfather replied without thinking, "Oh, that's Old Bill." Thus was born his most famous character. Over the years there would be many claimants professing to have been the original Old Bill. In reality, Bairnsfather first had drawn Old Bill's likeness

Bairnsfather's drawing, "The Things That Matter," during the fighting at Loos. Colonel Fitz-Shrapnel receives a message from headquarters: "Please let us know, as soon as possible, the number of tins of raspberry jam issued to you last Friday."

on the walls of Stratford Technical College during his school days.

The new character proved so great a morale booster that the War Office was besieged with requests from France, Belgium, Italy, and eventually the United States to allow Bairnsfather to tour the various war fronts. The British brass suddenly woke up to the fact that they had a winner in the artist-captain and made him an "officer cartoonist" in the Intelligence Department. Subsequent tours were a great success. During a visit to Verdun, Bairnsfather was personally welcomed and shown around the battered example of French resistance by General Charles Mangin himself. From 1916 until the armistice in 1918, Bairnsfather rode a crest of popularity. *Bystander* published reproductions of his work in a variety of shapes and sizes—even packets of postcards.

Captain Bruce Bairnsfather.

Bairnsfather contributed a scene based on his cartoons entitled "Flying Colors" to a revue at the London Hippodrome. This was followed by another show called "Bairnsfatherland," with actor-singer Ivor Novello of "Keep the Home Fires Burning" fame doing the music. Bairnsfather also wrote a script for a stage show called "The Better 'Ole." It was a great success, but Bairnsfather was not a good businessman. In spite of his fame, he received only a token of the profits.

With the American troops now on the Continent, the U.S. propaganda unit wanted Bairnsfather to do what he had done for the British, French, and Italians. He set off for France again, this time the American sector, arriving at Neufchateau to a great welcome. The American commander, General Clarence Edwards, already had a collection of the artist's cartoons and at once invited Bairnsfather to dinner. The artist immediately felt at home among the friendly Americans and resolved to visit their country at his earliest opportunity. Following the success of Bairnsfather's tour of the American front and "The Better 'Ole," arrangements were made for the play to open in the United States.

Bairnsfather arrived in New York aboard the White Star Liner *Adriatic* to a tremendous welcome. Accompanied by Hugh MacIntosh, an Australian businessman, he booked into the Astor Hotel on Times Square. But the busy round of talks and lectures, meeting famous people, signing programs, attending rehearsals, and making drawings for the various organizations to sell or raffle soon played havoc with his delicate health. Bairnsfather's damaged left ear began bothering him again, and a doctor advised him to take the next ship home. Following the doctor's advice, he boarded the troopship *Ordnance* with a contingent of American troops bound for France. In spite of his indisposition, Bairnsfather did his best to join in the fun aboard ship, drawing a picture that raised £100 for the seamen's orphanage and completing the final chapters of his book, *From Mud to Mufti*. As the ship approached Mersey, rumors of the armistice were already in the air.

During World War II, Bairnsfather again put his artistic talents to good use for the Allies, contributing comic drawings to the American Armed Forces newspaper, *Stars and Stripes,* as well as *Life* and *Collins* magazines. In 1942 he was appointed official cartoonist for the American forces in Europe. Wearing an American captain's uniform, he was stationed in Northern Ireland, where he drew murals on the mess and billet walls. When visiting the base, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's wife, Eleanor, enjoyed a hearty laugh over one of the artist's cartoons drawn on the wall of the lounge.

In 1943 Bairnsfather was attached to the 305th Bomber Group of the American 8th Air Force, stationed at Chelveston. Many U.S. bombers left on runs with their noses decorated with the artist's designs. He became friendly with squadron commander Colonel Curtis LeMay. When Bairnsfather died on September 29, 1959, from acute renal failure following the removal of his bladder, LeMay, now a general, stepped in and helped the artist's daughter, Barbara, with expenses so that she could attend her father's funeral in England. "It would not be accurate to say that Bruce Bairnsfather was the Bill Mauldin of World War I," said LeMay. "He was a lot more than that."

Bairnsfather's memorial plaque in the Gardens of Remembrance reads, "In loving memory of Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, 1st Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Creator of Old Bill." Two other famous people served in the same regiment: British Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery and A.A. Milne, creator of Winnie the Pooh. □

G5 Software brings a Russian viewpoint to the Vietnam War.

One of the odd joys of the 21st century is being able to see ourselves as others see us via the games they make about us. So it is with G5 Software, a Russian game company that has created **Whirlwind Over Vietnam**, an action combat game set in the la Drang Valley in November1965. While the game models various soldiers and vehicles, as well as trees and other terrain, what really interests the gamemakers is the Huey helicopters. For the entire game, the player will be in an attack Huey. All the major American helicopters are in the game, including those modified for use by the Marines. This is the archetypical combat from that war that interests the Russian designers.

Various sliders let the player set the realism in *WOV* at whatever level he or she likes. At the highest level, gauges will register dynamically as the player trims the controls. The pitch and speed of the rotors will visibly change out the cockpit windows. Game play reflects the challenges of executing the various missions (fire support, fire coordination, seek and destroy of the enemy) from the three different stations inside the helicopter: pilot, co-pilot, and door gunner. On the other hand, players who want a more arcade experience can shift the sliders the other way for a game that will run smoother on their computer and be more focused on hitting home.

Despite having the most famous sea battle of the 20th century in its name, **Great War at Sea: Jutland** actually has more to do with its subtitle, *War in the North Sea and Baltic, 1914-1918.* There are two scenarios (one for the opening moves, one for the battle itself) included in the scenario book, but there are also 42 others. The game divides between the German Navy's attempts to score a decisive victory against a fragment of the British Fleet in the North Sea (they didn't have the numbers to battle the whole of it), and the reverse situation in the Baltic where it was the Russian Navy against the Germans' overwhelming numbers.

Tactical in form, *GWaS:J* is not an attempt to portray the intricacies of supply and politics that framed the conflicts. Neither does it attempt to model each gun and sailor of the navies involved. Players roll dice based on each ship's strength and, if they hit, apply damage off a chart. What this system lacks in historical precision it makes up for in ease and quickness of play. It includes all the ships that fought in the battles, including those of lesser combatants like Sweden and Denmark. Even Zepplins are allowed to have role in scenarios where they might have participated, but mostly the game is about the ships of the line and battles they fought.

Meanwhile, back in combat in the modern day, there comes **ArmA: Combat Operations** from Atari. This is a first-person action that is much more of a simulation that the usual first-person shooters. There are no magic healing bags lying around the battlefield, and there is no programmed path for the player to take. Instead the player finds his or her character on the fictional Atlantic island of Sahrani. As so often happens on made-up islands, there is a Southern, pro-American country, the Kingdom of Sahrani, and a Northern, pro-Communist country, the Democratic Republic of Sahrani. In no time at all, war has broken out and the player is in midst of it.

The initial combat puts the player in the middle of a convoy ambush. After surviving that, the player is presented with a map of the island and various scenarios. Only the main scenarios advance the plot, but there are also auxiliary scenarios that impact the main one. For instance, a midnight commando-style raid on an enemy camp can result in there being fewer armored elements on the enemy's side in the main scenario. Players get a quick save that they can use as often as they like, but their character only gets one life, and it can be ended by a single bullet. Players will spend a lot of time keeping their character in cover, and firing down sights of their weapons, just as they would in real combat.

In addition to the single-player mode, *ArmA* also has a multiplayer mode that lets over a hundred players loose on the same battefield. There are 30 modern vehicles in the game, all of which can be driven and, where appropriate, have their guns manned. These vehicles include helicopters and boats as well as trucks and tanks. The larger vehicles can have multiple riders and gunners. There is, of course, a big variety of weapons and ordnance, including the grenades and night-fighting gear. □