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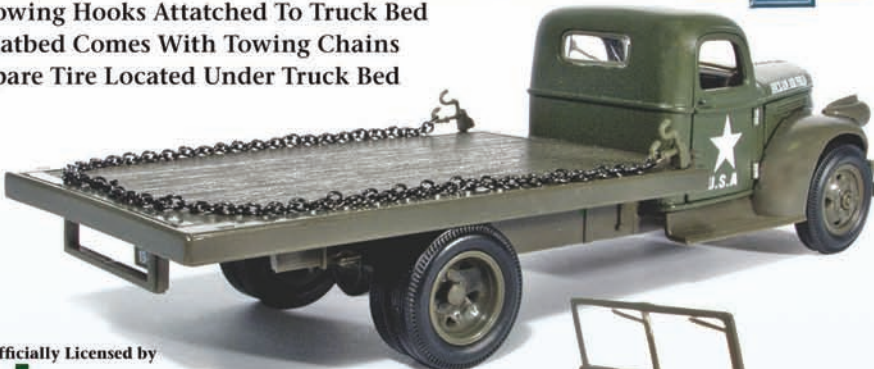
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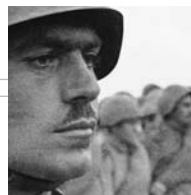
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Cover: A Soviet officer of the Black Sea Fleet stands in formation with his Russian troops in 1942. © Yevgeny Khaldei/CORBIS.



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The death of Paul Tibbets truly signifies the end of an era.

WHEN COLONEL PAUL TIBBETS AND HIS CREW DEPARTED THEIR BASE ON the island of Tinian in the Marianas on the morning of August 6, 1945, their Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber carried with it a weapon that would change the world. Christened *Enola Gay* by the pilot, in honor of his mother, the plane was to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Tibbets saw the mission as his duty. In his eyes, it was that basic. In a flash, an estimated 80,000 people died. Thousands more would perish later from the effects of radiation.

"If Dante had been on the plane with us, he would have been terrified," the pilot said in a 2005 interview with reporter Mike Harden of the *Columbus Dispatch*. "At the 60th anniversary, Tibbets said of his notoriety, 'It's kind of getting old, but then so am I.' He waved off other requests to be interviewed, in part because of his health and for weariness of suffering a new crop of reporters thinking they are the first to ask, 'Any regrets?' His answer always has been a resounding 'Hell, no,' lately modified to lament, 'The guys who appreciated that I saved their asses are mostly dead now.' He is, today, a man untroubled with the certainty of joining their ranks ... As soon as the death certificate is signed, I want to be cremated. I don't want a funeral. I don't want to be eulogized. I don't want any monuments or plaques."

During a 1970s interview, Tibbets stated bluntly, "I'm not proud that I killed 80,000 people, but I'm proud that I was able to start with nothing, plan it and have it work as perfectly as it did. I sleep clearly every night."

After more than 60 years of asserting that he had no regrets about the nature of the mission, the loss of life, or his place in history, Paul Tibbets passed away at his home in Columbus, Ohio, on November 1, 2007. He was 92 years old. Requesting that there be no headstone to mark a final resting place because he did not want protesters to have a focal point for their political agendas, Tibbets instead asked to have his ashes scattered over the waters of the English Channel.

Perhaps, as much as anyone, Tibbets is an example of a military man who carried out his orders. Prior to his selection for the atomic bomb mission, he had already distinguished himself as a leader and combat pilot. On August 17, 1942, he flew the lead bomber in the first mission of the U.S. Eighth Air Force against a target on the continent of Europe. He also flew missions in the Mediterranean Theater and was a test pilot during the development of the B-29. After the war, he remained in the Air Force until 1966 and retired with the rank of brigadier general. He served as military attaché in India and later with Columbus-based Executive Jet Aviation Company.

Those who served with Tibbets remembered him as well-respected, tough, and one of the most capable pilots in the Army Air Forces. He was also a man of character when it came to weathering the storm of controversy that followed him for the rest of his life after Hiroshima. Several salient points must be considered. First, Tibbets was in the military and did as he was ordered. Second, the decision to drop the atomic bomb rested with President Harry Truman, not with Tibbets. Third, there is no question that an invasion of Japan would have been far more costly in lives, both Japanese and American, than the casualties suffered as a result of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. Many of those who read these lines would, in fact, not be here today had their fathers died during an invasion of Japan.

It is indeed a tragedy that lives, civilian or military, are lost in war. However, such is the nature of armed conflict. As General William T. Sherman so aptly stated, "War is hell, and you cannot refine it."

Since that fateful mission was executed in 1945, the political, philosophical, and moral debate over the atomic bomb, and the role of Paul Tibbets in its delivery, has continued. Undoubtedly, it will continue long into the future. □

Michael E. Haskew

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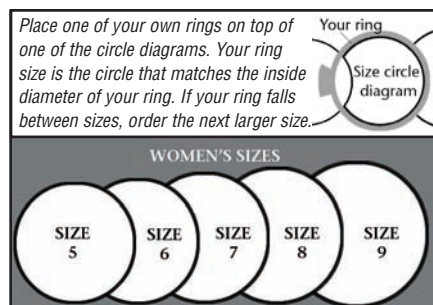
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Dispatches

Breaking New Ground

Dear Sir,

I have not subscribed to your magazine so far, and the reason is simple: heading down to the local magazine racks on a weekend to find out what is in store in the forthcoming issue, and being pleasantly surprised with my new find, is not a pleasure I want to deny myself. And the November 2007 issue illustrates the point.

The articles published relating to John Birch, and the Greek Civil War arising out of the conclusion of European hostilities, are not at all what one would expect from a popular magazine covering World War II. The choice of these subjects demonstrates an awareness that the history of this conflict is much more than one of just revisiting well-known battles and republishing photos of German armor, as interesting as that is. Both articles broke new ground for a popular magazine covering the conflict and offer a new dimension to understanding the war, its participants, and the affect it had on all nations. The fact that both articles were well written and detailed doesn't hurt at all either.

Finally, I want to thank you for your past articles touching on the Canadian military in World War II. As Canada emerges from years of officially sanctioned slighting of its lengthy military history, and in particular the contribution that our soldiers and sailors made in the last two world wars, your articles are being read in this country. I make sure my sons see them. We hope that you will continue to publish such articles as the opportunity arises.

So, you will forgive me perhaps if I continue to make my trip to the magazine store an event to look forward to.

Brian J. Konst
via e-mail

Betrayal of the Prosper Circle

Dear Editor,

In reference to Top Secret (September 2007), Inyat Noor Khan aka Madeleine who was murdered in Natzweiler on July 6, 1944, was one of the few members of the Prosper Circuit to remain free and was only captured by the Germans when she was betrayed to them in the fall of 1943 out of jealousy by Renee Garry, sister of her organizer Emile Garry, who was in love with France Antelme, and considered her as a rival for his affections.

Material collected post-World War II by Vera Atkins in her search for the ultimate fate of SOE agents led her to conclude that Dericourt was responsible for the betrayal of the Prosper Circuit and according to Kieffer, who she inter-

viewed before he was executed for ordering the murder of five British commandos, Dericourt was a double agent working for Beomelberg and allowed him to see all the outward bound mail for London, copies of which were passed to Kieffer. This revelation was also confirmed by Dr. Goertz and Hugo Bleicher and Atkins wanted to see Dericourt prosecuted for treachery by the British but this never happened, though a French trial collapsed in 1948 when Bodington appeared for the defense and Dericourt was acquitted.

Whether Dericourt betrayed the Prosper Circuit to the Germans on the orders of Buckmaster's superiors or was a double agent is still unclear but Sara Helm's biography of Vera Atkins, *A Life in Secrets: The Story of Vera Atkins and the Lost Agents of SOE*, gives a remarkable insight into what Vera Atkins uncovered and retained in files in her personal possession until her death.

James Scannell
Dublin, Ireland

FDR and Pearl Harbor: A Response

Dear Editor,

In response to reader Wayne Costigan's diatribe against his own government in "FDR and Pearl Harbor" (Dispatches, September 2007 issue), are you kidding me? Somehow he missed the fact that the Japanese government spent years preparing an offensive weapon, i.e., a carrier strike force, in order to use it. The fact that they did utilize it with brutal efficiency is blamed on our own president by Mr. Costigan. Indeed, he implies blame for just about everything on our "all powerful" government when said entity can't keep a single secret! Talk about blaming the victim. He seems to miss the existence of Al Queda's training for years to strike us on September 11 instead of blaming the tragedy on ourselves. The human purposes behind events are most often very obvious. Evil people do attack the more righteous all the time, "conspiring" to catch them off guard. Mr. Costigan's all-knowing arrogance is the kind of nonsense that will get us all killed while blaming ourselves for the act!

Doug Kuhn
Dryden, Michigan

Tanks in the Philippines

Dear Editor:

The world knows of the courage and sacrifice of the Marines, Navy, and pilots that served in the Pacific, but little is ever said of the tanks and

crews. My grandpa was in the Philippines during WWII driving a Sherman. He told his family he was on Mondoro, Mindanao, and Leyte, among others. He talked of the war and his service very little, stating he did not want to relive the horrors of that time. He told us he had spent his 21st birthday under a burnt-out tank. He was in Company C of the 716th Tank Battalion. I have tried every search I can think of and cannot find out any information on the tanks that served in the Philippines. I believe their story should be told. If not for the tanks, the Marines would not have been able to succeed in Mac Arthur's return to the Philippines.

Jennifer Hudson
Hernshaw, West Virginia

Patton's Dyslexia

Dear Editor:

I would respectfully disagree with Professor Glen Jeanson's theory regarding General George S. Patton Jr.'s possible affliction with dyslexia (Insight, "A Life Shaped by Dyslexia," January 2008 issue). I am currently writing a World War II novel with Patton as one of the main characters. After my extensive research as a military historian, I am more inclined to attribute the general's personality traits to the "dash and elan" of the sort uniquely found in other great tactical pursuit commanders such as Rommel. These inherent qualities are commonplace among this type of gifted soldier. A better case could possibly be argued for bipolar disorder instead, if anything. Violent mood swings are not uncommon in persons subjected to such tremendous stress and responsibility as they were. In any event, such personality traits can result in fantastic victories or great failures, as in Rommel's case in Africa and Normandy or Patton's in the Ardennes and his calamitous raid to rescue his son-in-law from a POW camp. It is my opinion that neither of these brilliant soldiers should have been promoted above corps command in the first place, as that is where such temperaments make the best use of their gifts.

John Morgan
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

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Service Cross for gallantry in action during the Meuse-Argonne offensive. At Meade, Patton commanded the light tanks of the 304th Brigade, while Eisenhower was second in command of the 305th Brigade, composed of newly manufactured Mark VIII Liberty tanks.

It was through Patton that Eisenhower met his mentor, General Fox Conner, who asked for the young Eisenhower to serve as his executive officer in Panama. Patton later bragged that, by sharing his notes with Eisenhower in 1925, Eisenhower graduated number one in his class at Fort Leavenworth the following year. Patton and Eisenhower maintained a lively correspondence between the wars, but much of the original correspondence was lost in transit when Eisenhower shipped to the Philippines in 1935.

On the eve of World War II, Lt. Col. Eisenhower, tired of desk duty, wrote his old friend, soon to be promoted to brigadier general commanding the 2nd Armored Brigade at Fort Benning, Georgia, and requested command of one of Patton's armored regiments. Patton responded that it seemed highly probable that he [Patton] would be selected for command of one of the next two armored divisions that



were being created and that Eisenhower should transfer immediately to the Armored Corps and request assignment with Patton. Patton preferred Ike as his division chief of staff but would support Eisenhower for immediate reassignment if the latter "wanted to take a chance." Instead of working for Patton, Eisenhower was assigned elsewhere, but their paths crossed briefly in 1941 during the Texas-Louisiana maneuvers of early autumn. One year later, Patton was commanding the Western Task Force that landed at Casablanca during the invasion of North Africa.

Second to Patton in Eisenhower's esteem before the war was Mark Clark, known to his closest friends as Wayne. Clark was two years Eisenhower's junior at West Point, but the small size of the corps of cadets allowed familiarity among the classes. Like Patton, Clark was a decorated veteran of the Great War. The two had no contact

Ike's Indispensable Lieutenant

General Omar Bradley proved a capable subordinate to the Allied supreme commander in Europe.

GREAT COMMANDERS NEED GREAT SUBORDINATES. IN THE CAMPAIGNS IN THE

Mediterranean and European Theaters of World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was ably served by a number of extraordinary officers, including Mark W. Clark, George S. Patton Jr., and Omar Bradley. Each of Ike's subordinates contributed mightily to Allied victory, but in the final analysis it was the unheralded Bradley who proved to be Ike's indispensable lieutenant.

Of the four commanders destined to play a leading role in Europe, Eisenhower was the relative newcomer, but by mid-1942, he had surpassed Clark, Patton, and Bradley in Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall's estimation. According to historian Martin Blumenson, within six months of Eisenhower's assumption of command of the European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army, known as ETOUSA, the remaining three settled in as "satellites of Ike."

Although six years Eisenhower's senior at the United States Military Academy, Patton was Eisenhower's oldest friend. While Patton captured headlines for his frontline leadership in World War I, Eisenhower was confined to Camp Colt, Pennsylvania, where he trained the fledgling tank corps. Following the war, he and Patton crossed paths at Camp Meade in 1919, where the two developed a lasting friendship. At the time, Eisenhower was an untested warrior, while Patton was a legitimate war hero, having received the Distinguished

General Omar Bradley, the G.I. General, often watched his soldiers train in England as they prepared for the D-Day invasion. Here, he observes a 60mm mortar team servicing its weapon. INSET: Bradley stood for this formal portrait at the height of his military career. His even temperament and concern for his troops characterized his tenure in high command.

(All photos: National Archives)

until 1938 when Eisenhower came to the United States from the Philippines. In October, while en route to his home station, Ike stopped at Fort Lewis, Washington, and saw Clark. The following year, Clark was instrumental in having Eisenhower reassigned to Lewis. Eisenhower reported for duty on New Year's Day. Two years later, at the conclusion of a series of war games, Clark, now serving on the General Staff, recommended Eisenhower's assignment to the War Plans Division in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor. Clark's and Eisenhower's careers would be inexorably linked for the remainder of the war.

When Eisenhower arrived in London in June 1942, he was accompanied by Clark, now in command of II Corps and responsible for training the American divisions now arriving in the United Kingdom. When Patton was designated commander of the western invasion force in North Africa in August, Clark reluctantly accepted Eisenhower's invitation to relinquish command of his corps and to serve as Ike's second in command in the capacity of Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. In that role, Clark would be the chief planner for Operation Torch.

Bradley, in turn, had the longest relationship with Eisenhower, dating back to their days on the Hudson. Both entered West Point in the summer of 1911, although Bradley was a late arrival. Like Eisenhower, Bradley was a distinguished athlete. While Ike favored football, Bradley excelled in baseball. Both selected infantry as their branch of choice. Prior to graduation, Ike wrote a brief portrait of Bradley in West Point's yearbook, *Howitzer*. Ever prescient, even at this early age, Eisenhower opined that Bradley's most "promising characteristic is 'getting there,' and if he keeps up the clip he's started, some of us will someday be bragging to our grandchildren that, 'Sure, General Bradley was a classmate of mine.'" Oddly enough, the two future commanders had little, if any, contact in the interwar years.

Their orbits finally came together in the aftermath of the Casablanca Conference of January 1943. By that time, Marshall had already designated Clark as Fifth Army commander on December 1, 1942, a personal blow to Patton, who coveted army-level command himself. Eisenhower had endorsed Marshall's selection but noted that even though Patton came "the closest to meeting every requirement made of a commander," Clark would deliver since Fifth Army was temporarily a training command and the "job was one largely of organization and training and in these fields Clark had no superior."

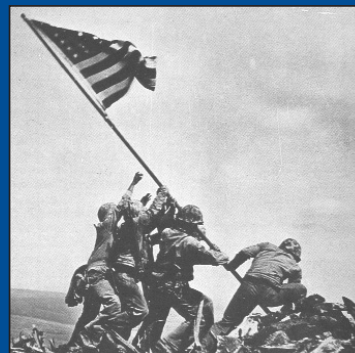
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During the fighting in North Africa, General Omar Bradley (right) confers with Lieutenant General Kenneth Andersen, commander of the British First Army, as they inspect positions in Tunisia.

Eisenhower's problems worsened in February when Field Marshal Erwin Rommel inflicted a devastating defeat on U.S. forces at Kasserine Pass. Relieving the American corps commander, Eisenhower installed Patton in command of II Corps on March 5, 1943. Patton went to work on rehabilitating II Corps and rectifying the operational situation. To assist Eisenhower, General Marshall dispatched Bradley to North Africa to act as Ike's "eyes and ears." Ike immediately made Bradley available to Patton for any duty Patton desired. Not content to have "a spy" in his headquarters, Patton made Bradley his deputy commander.

Within weeks, Patton led II Corps to its first significant victory in Tunisia. Now that the first offensive phase was completed, Eisenhower nominated Bradley to command II Corps, while Patton returned to his job of preparing the Western Task Force for the invasion of Sicily, now scheduled for July. On July 10, the date of the amphibious landing, Patton's command was upgraded to army level, and he assumed command of the Seventh Army. Bradley remained in command of II Corps and slogged it up the middle of Sicily while Patton garnered the headlines with his dash to Palermo, then to Messina. It was a brutal campaign that lasted a month, but the Allied victory restored the prestige of the U.S. Army. At the conclusion of Operation Husky, Ike had three lieutenant generals in theater: Clark, Patton, and Bradley in that order of seniority.

Sicily marked the emergence of Bradley as Eisenhower's most valued subordinate. Both Bradley and Patton had performed well, and

Ike was quick to complement each on his respective performance. In the midst of the recent campaign, Eisenhower had instructed war correspondent Ernie Pyle to "go and discover Bradley." In a number of subsequent dispatches, Pyle characterized the less flamboyant Bradley as "the G.I.'s general," making "no bones about the fact that he was a tremendous admirer" of the II Corps commander. On the eve of the invasion of France in 1944, Pyle recollected that he had spent three days with Bradley in Sicily and did not "believe he had ever known a person to be so unanimously loved and respected by the men around and under him."

Bradley's ascent mirrored Patton's fall. In August 1943, the publicity surrounding Patton's slapping of two soldiers in a field hospital severely tarnished his reputation as a field commander. On August 24, Eisenhower praised Patton's recent conduct of the campaign, noting that "the operations of the Seventh Army in Sicily are going to be classed as a model of swift conquest by future classes in the War College in Leavenworth." Then came the caveat. "Now in spite of this, George Patton continues to exhibit some of those unfortunate personal traits of which you and I have always known and which during this campaign caused me some most uncomfortable days."

Recognizing Patton's future potential, Ike informed Marshall that Patton "possesses qualities that we cannot afford to lose unless he ruins himself." Patton was, in Ike's opinion, a

preeminent combat commander. Never slowed by caution, fatigue, or doubt, Patton drove his subordinates ruthlessly, and they in turn "turned in magnificent performances in the late show." Despite this drive, Patton was apt at times "to display exceedingly poor judgment and unjustified temper."

In spite of these character flaws, Eisenhower remained determined to keep Patton on the team. Two weeks later, Eisenhower backed up his assessment by submitting his list for promotion to permanent major general. Describing Patton, Ike noted that, based on his performance to date, Patton's leadership of the Seventh Army was "close to the best of our classic examples." In short, Patton was undoubtedly the "best rounded combat leader in our service."

In the aftermath of the slapping incidents, however, Ike informed Marshall that under no conditions would he recommend Patton be elevated beyond army-level command. What's more, Ike assured his chief that "the volatile offensive-minded Patton would always serve under the more even-handed Bradley."

Writing to Marshall, Eisenhower also addressed Clark's recent performance. Although Clark had not participated in the conquest of Sicily, he remained the "ablest and most experienced officer we have in planning of amphibious operations.... In preparing the minute details of requisitions, landing craft, training of troops and so on, he has no equal in our Army." Still, Clark was untested in combat and until he received "battle test in high command," Eisenhower would suspend final judgment.

Ike's endorsement of Clark's potential was a far cry from his ringing endorsement of Clark on the eve of Operation Torch, when Ike had nominated Clark for the Distinguished Service Medal for his role in a secret mission to negotiate Vichy French support during the upcoming invasion. If Clark was destined for a larger role in the war, he would have to prove it on the battlefield, or those commanders who had experienced combat command [Patton and Bradley] would surely eclipse him.

Clark would have his opportunity in September when the Fifth Army invaded the Italian mainland at Salerno. Ike would have the opportunity to observe him there, and nothing indicated that Clark rose to the potential that Ike had anticipated in the early stages of the war. Part of the reason lay in Eisenhower's subsequent reassignment to command the Allied invasion of France. Despite his close ties to the Mediterranean Theater where he had earned his combat spurs, Ike soon became preoccupied

with the greater challenge of planning Operation Overlord.

Bradley, on the other hand, was "running absolutely true to form ... possessing brains, a fine capacity for leadership, and a thorough understanding of the requirements of battle." More important, Bradley "has never caused me one moment of worry." Summing up his assessment of Bradley, Ike stated that although Bradley lacked some of the extraordinary and ruthless driving power that Patton could exert at critical moments, he still had "such force and determination that even in this characteristic, he was among our best.... He is a jewel to have around." He informed Marshall that he preferred to keep Bradley in theater, at least temporarily, but Eisenhower soon relented.

Putting personal preferences aside, on August 28, Ike gave Bradley a ringing endorsement and strongly recommended Bradley to head the American army designated for the upcoming invasion of France in 1944. "The truth of the matter," he informed Marshall, "is that you should take Bradley and, moreover, I will make him available on any date you say." Bradley received his orders on September 3 and left for England on the 8th. Bradley's selection over his former chief from North Africa and Sicily was



On July 24, 1944, Lieutenant General Omar Bradley receives the oak leaves to his Distinguished Service Medal from his commanding officer, General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

a bitter blow to Patton, almost as bad as when he was informed that Clark would receive command of the Fifth Army.

For Patton, the fall of 1943 was a period of

terrible uncertainty. "I seem to be third choice," he lamented in his diary, "but I will end up on top." Perhaps, but Patton owed his diminished status to his temper and lack of control. Had he not slapped those soldiers, it would have been difficult for Eisenhower not to have named him as chief American planner for Overlord, the invasion of France, now scheduled for spring 1944.

Just how far Patton had fallen was evident in Ike's secret cable to General Marshall on December 23. Having been named supreme commander for the invasion of Northwest Europe two weeks earlier, Eisenhower expressed his opinion that when army group commanders became necessary in France he profoundly hoped to designate an officer who had had combat experience in this war. His preference for army group commander, when more than one American army was operating in Overlord, was Bradley. One of Bradley's army commanders should be Patton, Ike opined, as "we should not repeat not lose Patton's services somewhere as an army commander."

As for Clark, he remained far detached from the scene. Even before the Overlord commander had been named, the Mediterranean, and

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ABOVE: Near the town of South Caterina, Sicily, General Omar Bradley (right) confers with Major General Terry Allen, commander of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division. In Sicily, Bradley served as a corps commander in General George Patton's Seventh Army. **RIGHT:** During the difficult early hours of D-Day, General Bradley gazes toward the coast of France. The situation on Omaha Beach was in doubt to such an extent that Bradley considered withdrawing those ashore and diverting later waves to Utah Beach.

were excessive, particularly at Omaha Beach, owing in some part to inadequate aerial and naval bombardment. Bradley deserved some of the blame, for he had dismissed several reports from commanders, chiefly Maj. Gen. Charles Corlett, who had amphibious experience in the Pacific. In spite of the setbacks, Ike's forces were ashore and they meant to stay.

The subsequent battle of the lodgment area and the stalemate in Normandy found Eisenhower frustrated with his principal land subordinates, Bernard Montgomery and Omar Bradley. Ike reserved his harshest criticism for Monty, whose failure to take Caen on D-Day,



Clark by extension, became a secondary theater in the European war. Clark did not help himself by his inept supervision of the amphibious attack at Salerno. The mismanagement of the exploitation phase led Ike to replace the American corps commander on the scene, Maj. Gen. Ernest J. Dawley, in whom neither Ike nor Clark had confidence. Many observers felt Clark should also have been relieved.

Ike, too, was dissatisfied with his friend Clark, but firing Clark would have been a public relations disaster. And so, Ike compromised, giving Clark nominal support, but informing Marshall that Clark was "not as good as Bradley in winning, almost without effort, the complete confidence of everyone around him, including his British associates." Nor was Clark "the equal of Patton in his refusal to see anything but victory ... but he is carrying his full weight and, so far, has fully justified his selection for his present important post." It did not take Marshall long to read between the lines.

To make matters worse, Clark lacked the thorough understanding of working with allies, an absolute requirement in Eisenhower's book. In mid-December, Ike chastised Clark for not informing his superior, British General Harold Alexander, of his recent visit to Sicily. Such an oversight, said Eisenhower, gave the perception of discourtesy to Alexander. These "little points of courtesy must be observed with far greater

care in an Allied command than in a purely nationalistic one," cautioned Ike.

Ike soon followed Bradley to England in January 1944 and immediately assumed his duties as supreme commander. Also arriving later in the month was George Patton, who received command of Third Army. Not destined as the initial assault army, which Bradley was to command, Third Army was designated the follow-up force once the lodgment area reached sufficient size to accommodate two American field armies. At that time, Bradley would be elevated to army group commander.

In mid-February, Eisenhower received his directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff to "enter the continent of Europe and to undertake operations, in conjunction with the United Nations, aimed at the heartland of Germany and the destruction of its armed forces." February through early June marked intense preparations for D-Day. During that period, Ike increasingly depended on Bradley to plan the American portion of the invasion, while Patton was restricted to public appearances in support of Fortitude, the Allied deception plan designed to convince the Germans that Patton would spearhead the real invasion at Calais.

D-Day was one of the most important dates in military history as forces under command of General Eisenhower landed 130,000 soldiers and nearly 15,000 airborne troops. Casualties

a highly unrealistic objective, soon led to stalemate on the eastern flank of the invasion area. Bradley, too, was stymied until late July, when his brilliantly conceived Operation Cobra ruptured the German defense at St. Lo and led to the American breakthrough in Normandy. One week later, Ike activated Third Army headquarters in France, and Patton spearheaded the breakout that eventually reached the French capital on August 25.

From Normandy to the German border, Eisenhower had nothing but praise for Bradley and Patton. Bradley, ever cautious but utterly dependable in Ike's opinion, directed the American portion of Ike's broad front advance to the German frontier. That campaign contributed to the continued dissolution of his relationship with Patton. Bradley and Patton were never close friends, but both realized that they owed much of their respective success to the other. Historian Blumenson characterized their rela-

tionship as "World War II's Odd Couple." He was undoubtedly correct, for neither commander liked the other.

Had Bradley had his way, Patton would not have commanded an army in the European Theater. Bradley considered Patton profane, vulgar, too independent, and not a team player. For his part, Patton thought Bradley was overly cautious, indecisive at critical moments, and lacking the resolve to follow through when the operational opportunity presented itself. Moreover, Bradley did his best to publicize the efforts of his other army-level commanders to the detriment of Patton. Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges, who succeeded Bradley in command of First U.S. Army, received the highest praise from Bradley, who always considered Patton not much more than a publicity hound.

By mid-December, the Allied advance approached the Rhine River. The German counteroffensive in the Ardennes on December 16 produced Bradley's worst moment and Patton's most brilliant campaign. The massive enemy attack caught Eisenhower's headquarters by complete surprise. In an effort to coordinate the Allied response, Ike transferred all forces north of the bulge to Montgomery's command, a move that Bradley interpreted as "the worst possible mistake Ike could have made." It was the right move on the supreme commander's part, but Bradley's feelings were hurt. Fortunately, George Patton's brilliant turn north relieved the pressure on the southern side of the Bulge and broke the encirclement of Bastogne.

To assuage Bradley's feeling of demotion, Ike cabled Marshall on December 21 and requested that the chief of staff consider elevating Bradley to four-star rank. Despite internal criticism of Bradley's delayed reaction to the enemy's attack, Ike noted that "Bradley has kept his head magnificently and has proceeded methodically and energetically to meet the situation." Knowing that Marshall had heard of inter-Allied criticism, Ike assured his chief, "In no quarter is there any tendency to place any blame upon Bradley. I retain all my former confidence in him." Since Congress was not currently in session, Bradley's promotion was delayed until March 1945.

At the conclusion of the Battle of the Bulge, Eisenhower took stock of the relative merits of each of his American commanders to that point of the war. Confiding in his personal diary, the supreme commander compiled an order of merit for 38 officers based primarily upon his conclusions as to the value of services each officer had rendered in the war and only secondarily upon his opinion as to his qualifications for future usefulness. It was apparent that Ike



On an inspection flight along the Western Front on September 9, 1944, General George S. Patton, Jr. (left) and General Omar Bradley reveal their strain and fatigue during the campaign to liberate Western Europe from the Nazis.

still valued the services of his three principal subordinates at the beginning of the war.

Even prior to the final push into the heartland of Germany, Eisenhower confirmed that Bradley had eclipsed both Patton and Clark. Bradley's other army-level commanders ranked farther down the list. Ike rated Bradley first, listing his outstanding characteristics as "quiet, but magnetic leader; able, rounded field commander; determined and resourceful; modest." Patton appeared fourth on Eisenhower's order of merit, with his principal qualifications being "dashing fighter, shrewd, courageous." Next was Clark, as "clever, shrewd, capable; splendid organizer." The officers whom Bradley sought to advance in Ike's estimation at Patton's expense were far distant from the flamboyant Third Army commander.

How much did Eisenhower value Bradley by the end of the war? Following the official deactivation of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force at midnight, July 13, 1945, Ike penned a rather formal letter of appreciation of their services to all his former principal subordinates in the Allied organization.

To Bradley he wrote, "In my opinion, you are pre-eminent among the Commanders of major battle units in this war. Your leadership, forcefulness, professional capacity, selflessness, high sense of duty and sympathetic understanding of human beings, combine to stamp you as one of America's great leaders and soldiers." The former supreme commander signed the message "From your old friend." No greater tribute could be paid to the "G.I. General." □

Cole Kingseed is a retired United States Army colonel. He resides in New Windsor, New York.

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A flight of famed North American P-51 Mustang fighters flies in tight formation.

(All photos: National Archives)



The Untamed Mustang

Marrying an American dive-bomber design and a British engine, the North American P-51 Mustang became one of the greatest fighters of World War II.

IF A SINGLE AIRPLANE HAS CAPTURED THE PUBLIC IMAGINATION MORE THAN

any other, it is undoubtedly the North American P-51 Mustang fighter. In the minds of many, including the young fighter pilots who flew it during the final year of combat in Europe, it was the P-51 that allowed the Allies to attain complete air superiority over Europe.

Many of the accolades bestowed upon the Mustang are not quite in tune with the facts, however. The airplane truly did develop into an outstanding fighter—but it did not start out that way. Oddly enough, the design of the Mustang came about completely by accident and was more the result of corporate pride than military necessity. Its subsequent development also was more accidental than by design. The U.S. Army never even wanted the airplane, and the British were not happy with it when they got theirs.

Before America entered the war, the British Purchasing Commission placed orders for a variety of American-produced military aircraft, including Curtiss fighters powered by Allison engines, which had been designated as the P-40 Tomahawk by the U.S. Army Air Corps. Curtiss lacked the facilities to meet the British orders and made an offer to North American Aircraft to have them

manufacture some planes under license. North American's president, West Virginian James S. "Dutch" Kindelberger, was not happy with the offer. He proposed instead that his company produce an entirely new fighter that would be built around the same Allison V-1710 engine that powered the P-40. Kindelberger believed his company could produce an aerodynamically superior airplane that could utilize new mass production methods that were just coming into use in the American aircraft industry.

The British asked for a preliminary design study. North American promised that a prototype would be ready to fly in an amazing four months! The North American management convinced Curtiss to furnish them data from the design of their P-40, thus cutting several months of preliminary design from the new fighter project. The company promised the British that they would begin deliveries in January 1941 and would produce 50 airplanes a month through the end of 1941. The British gave the airplane its name—Mustang—apparently adopting the name of the wild ponies that roamed the American West, although no reason for the choice is known. To cut down on production time, North

American elected to use a non-turbocharged version of the Allison V-1710 engine, a move that would reduce the airplane's high-altitude performance.

When the first Mustangs arrived in England, Royal Air Force test pilots quickly discovered that although the new fighter was very agile and fast its performance began to degrade at altitudes above 15,000 feet as the normally aspirated Allison engines lost power. Consequently, the RAF decided to assign the Mustangs to its Army Cooperation Command, which had previously used the light and maneuverable Westland Lysander as its primary aircraft.

The Mustangs were equipped with cameras and assigned to the tactical reconnaissance role, in which the airplane continued for the duration of the war. The first operational use of the RAF Mustangs was in support of the disastrous Dieppe raid in August 1942. It was also in the support role that the U.S. Army Air Corps assigned its first Mustangs, a batch of 57 airplanes that was diverted from the British production immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Perhaps prompted by the RAF's use of the Mustang in the Cooperation Command, the U.S. Army decided to adapt the Mustang as a dive-bomber. At the time, the Army's standard dive-bomber was the Douglas Dauntless, which the Army designated as the A-24. Unfortunately, their lack of defensive capabilities led to heavy losses among the A-24s in the Southwest Pacific in early 1942, a factor that no doubt influenced the decision to seek a more maneuverable and better armed design for dive-bombing.

Dive brakes and hard points to carry bombs up to 1,000 pounds were added to the basic design to convert the plane into a dive-bomber, which was designated as the A-36. The 27th and 86th Bombardment Groups (Light) were equipped with A-36s and sent into combat in North Africa in the spring of 1943. RAF Mustangs also saw combat duty in North Africa, although the primary tactical fighters used by the British in North Africa were Curtiss Kittyhawks and Hawker Hurricanes. The 311th Bombardment Group, also equipped with A-36s, was sent to China. Over time, the U.S. Army came to believe that the value of the dive-bomber had been overestimated, and even though more than 300 A-36s were built, they were all eventually replaced either by fighters or light and medium bombers. Dive-bombing would remain popular in the Navy and Marine Corps, but the Army abandoned the practice.

With the decision to assign its new Mustangs

to the Cooperation Command, the Royal Air Force elected to continue the development of the already famous Supermarine Spitfire as its primary interceptor. Still, some of the RAF test pilots believed that with a high-altitude engine the Mustang would be suitable for air-to-air combat at the altitudes where combat usually took place in European skies. The turbocharged Rolls Royce Merlin was the ideal candidate, but the entire production of the Merlin-61 was

slated for Spitfires.

To increase Merlin production, Rolls Royce contracted with the Packard automobile company in the United States to produce their engines under license. Although famous for its luxury automobiles, Packard had designed and produced the Liberty engine that came into use during the Great War, and which powered U.S.-built aircraft into the 1920s. The first flight by a Merlin-powered British Mustang took place

Virtually Intact P-38 Lightning Discovered

Known to its adversaries as the "Fork-Tailed Devil," the Lockheed P-38 Lightning was one of the most recognizable and successful Allied fighter aircraft of World War II.

Only 27 of the nearly 10,000 produced from 1937 to 1945 survived. In July of last year, the ghostly image of a long-lost P-38 Lightning was seen for the first time in 65 years amid the sand and surf of Harlech Beach, Wales, when a vacationing family happened upon its crash site. Eventually buried by time and the tides, the plane had apparently run out of fuel and its pilot was forced to make an emergency landing. Unusual weather patterns had caused erosion and greater than usual shifting of the sand. The discovery was made public in November.

According to its serial number and other information, Ric Gillespie of the International Group for Historic Aviation Recovery told the Associated Press, "The fighter is arguably the oldest P-38 in existence, and the oldest surviving Eighth Air Force combat aircraft of any type. In that respect it's a major find, of



exceptional interest to British and American aviation historians."

A joint effort between Gillespie's organization and such institutions as the Royal Air Force Museum and the Imperial War Museum Duxford is expected to produce a plan for the recovery and potential restoration of the aircraft. Preliminary concerns include keeping the exact location of the crash site confidential and protecting the plane, which is largely intact but quite fragile, from the elements.

"The difficult part is to keep such a dramatic discovery secret," added Gillespie. "Looting of historic wrecks, aircraft or ships, is a major problem in Britain as it is worldwide. American officers had the guns removed, and the records say the aircraft was salvaged, but it wasn't. It was gradually covered with sand, and there it sat for 65 years.

With censorship in force and British beaches closed to the public during the war, nobody knew it was there."

According to official records, the recently discovered Lightning was produced in 1941 and delivered to Great Britain the following year. During its brief tenure in the war zone, the plane was flown on combat missions over the English Channel, the North Sea, and the coasts of Belgium and the Netherlands. The aircraft was reported lost on September 27, 1942, when its pilot, 24-year-old Second Lieutenant Robert F. "Fred" Elliott, was forced to crash-land due to an error involving his fuel supply. Elliott survived the crash unhurt but was shot down and killed in North Africa three months later.

While officials from the United States have visited the crash site, the position of the U.S. Air Force is that any aircraft lost prior to November 19, 1961, is "formally abandoned" due to the fact that a fire on that date destroyed a large number of records. Official involvement by the U.S. military would apparently occur only in the event that human remains had been found.

Mike Haskew



ABOVE: On January 12, 1944, a row of Mustangs fills an assembly line at the Consolidated Vultee aircraft manufacturing plant in Tucson, Arizona. The Mustang served in both the European and Pacific Theaters during World War II. **RIGHT:** A Fifteenth Air Force armorer loads a belt of ammunition for one of a Mustang's six .50-caliber machine guns. Flying from its base in Italy, this fighter plane was being readied for a mission over Germany. Often, when escort duties were completed, the Mustangs were allowed to seek targets of opportunity.

been shown to be highly maneuverable, with some restrictions, mainly owing to weight and balance considerations.

Increasing the airplane's effective range was the primary problem. The Air Corps engineering facilities at Wright Field began working on modifications to increase the Mustang's fuel capacity and thus increase its effective combat range. Additional fuselage tanks were added to complement the droppable external fuel tanks that had been previously developed for other types.

Ironically, the decision to adopt the Mustang as the primary escort fighter did not come immediately after the adoption of the Merlin engine. Initially, the Merlin-powered P-51Bs were allocated to the tactical air forces that were being formed to support ground forces in



in October 1942. A month later a Mustang powered by a Packard-built Merlin had been produced for the U.S. Army, and it took to the air for the first time.

With the Merlin engine, the Mustang was transformed. Comparisons between Mustangs and Spitfires revealed that the North American design had significantly greater range, while the Mustang's high-altitude performance had been greatly improved. It was a combination that came about at the right time, as the U.S. Army Air Forces' experience in Europe had demonstrated the need for a high-performance, long-range fighter.

Throughout 1942 and most of 1943, the Mustang fighters sat out the war, although the A-36 and RAF Cooperation versions were seeing combat, particularly in North Africa. But events in Europe were leading toward the further development of the Mustang into the airplane that is so often referred to as the best Allied fighter of the war. By the summer of 1942, the U.S. Eighth Air Force had been waging a steadily mounting strategic bombing campaign against Axis targets in France and the other occupied countries from bases in England. In early 1943, the daylight bombing campaign expanded into German airspace. The B-17 groups that constituted the bulk of VIII Bomber Command strength at the time began taking very heavy losses from German fighter attacks. The Eighth Air Force leadership had

gone to war believing that their four-engine Flying Fortresses were properly named, but soon found otherwise when the B-17s began encountering Luftwaffe fighters. Especially heavy losses in the late summer and early fall of 1943 led to the cancellation of further daylight deep-penetration raids into Germany until a long-range escort fighter could be developed.

Throughout 1943, the primary escort fighters available in Europe were RAF Spitfires and USAAF Lockheed P-38 Lightnings and Republic P-47 Thunderbolts. While the P-38 had the range to go all the way to Berlin, the P-47s were limited owing to the higher fuel consumption of their radial engines, and there were not enough available P-38s for the job. All of the P-38s in England had been transferred to North Africa early in the year and were not replaced until late summer, leaving Spitfires as the only escorts available until April, when the first P-47s became operational in the theater. It was not until September that P-38s returned to English skies. Meanwhile, the bombers were left without escorts once they reached the operational range of the Spitfires.

The USAAF engineers at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, began looking around for a suitable escort fighter that could be mass-produced in a hurry, and their attention soon settled on the Mustang. The adoption of the Merlin engine had solved the Mustang's high-altitude performance problems, and the Mustang had

Europe. The first P-51-equipped fighter group to see combat in Europe was the 354th Fighter Group, which arrived in England in October 1943 and was immediately assigned to the newly organized Ninth Air Force. The Ninth had previously been assigned to the Mediterranean, but the Allied victory in North Africa led to the unit's transfer to England to become a tactical air force, with the mission of supporting the Allied ground forces when the invasion of Western Europe took place in mid-1944. Since the Ninth was scheduled to include a large number of fighter groups, the Eighth Air Force pressed for Ninth fighters to be temporarily assigned as bomber escorts.

In November 1943, Lt. Col. Donald Blakeslee, deputy commander of the 4th Fighter Group and one of the most experienced American fighter pilots in Europe, was sent to fly with the 354th Fighter Group. Blakeslee was a former RAF Eagle Squadron Spitfire pilot who had been flying Thunderbolts, and his lack of love for the P-47 was no secret. Whether he engineered the assignment to the 354th or was selected to evaluate the group's P-51Bs is

unclear; his enthusiasm for the highly maneuverable airplane is not. The main advantage of the new P-51 was the reduced fuel consumption of the Merlin engine compared with the radial engine P-47, which was then the primary escort fighter. The first Mustangs to arrive in England were fitted only with 184-gallon wing tanks, but the reduced fuel consumption of the Merlin engines increased their range substantially over similarly equipped P-47s. Plans were under way for the installation of an additional 85 gallons in a fuselage tank, while the hard points under the wings allowed an additional 150 gallons when two 75-gallon drop tanks were carried. Blakeslee believed the Mustang was the solution to the long-range escort problem, but all of the Mustangs were slated to go to the Ninth Air Force.

In the winter of 1943, Allied military planners in Europe were preparing for the invasion of Western Europe, followed by an advance toward Germany. Experiences in North Africa and New Guinea had revealed that air power served as what would come to be known as a "force multiplier," an element that could aid ground commanders in the age-old endeavor of capturing territory.

The Ninth Air Force was a tactical unit, with the primary mission of supporting the theater commander, and a massive effort was under way to build up its force of fighter-bombers and light and medium bombers to support the ground forces. Once the troops were ashore in France, the war in Europe would turn from what had primarily been an air war against the Luftwaffe to a ground war, with the objective being the ultimate capture of Berlin and the defeat of Germany. The new Mustangs were seen as an ideal weapon for securing and maintaining air superiority over the battlefield and for taking the war to the enemy rear areas.

At this point military politics reared its ugly head, as Blakeslee and the leaders of VIII Fighter Command began maneuvering to have the Mustangs transferred to the Eighth. They saw the Eighth Air Force mission as strategic bombardment and recognized that if this mission was to succeed it was important to have a long-range escort fighter that could go with the bombers to their targets deep in Germany and fight at high altitude. Much of Western Europe was still in German hands at the time, and aerial bombardment of strategic targets was still seen as the primary mission for the air forces.

Their arguments fell on receptive minds in the Army Air Forces headquarters in England and won out. Preparations were begun to equip nearly all of the VIII Fighter Command squadrons with new Mustangs. In the mean-

time, IX Fighter Command P-51s (and other fighters) flew under the operational control of the Eighth Air Force and were used in the escort role. Three P-51 groups were scheduled to go to Ninth, but a compromise led to the assignment of one of these groups to the Eighth in return for the transfer of the recently arrived 358th Fighter Group and its P-47s to Ninth Air Force. VIII Fighter Command received the Mustang-equipped 357th and began making plans to convert all of its P-47 and P-38 groups to Mustangs.

There was one exception—the 56th Fighter Group was the first group to fly P-47s, and it remained with the Thunderbolt until the end of the war. The 56th, which had been nicknamed the Wolfpack because of the group's reputation for hunting Germans like a pack of wolves, was the highest scoring American fighter group in the European Theater. The 56th finished the war with a total of 674 enemy aircraft claimed in the air and 311 on the ground. By contrast, Blakeslee's 4th Fighter Group, which was the first Eighth group to convert to P-51s and was the longest in combat of any American fighter group in Europe, finished the war with 583 air-to-air kills and 469 strafing claims.

Although the 4th—which flew Spitfires and P-47s before making the transition to P-51s—was credited with a few more total aircraft destroyed, the P-47-equipped 56th was credited with almost 100 more air-to-air kills. So much for the oft-stated assertion that the fabulous P-51 was the "superior" fighter! The third highest scoring group, however, flew only Mustangs. The 357th Fighter Group was the first P-51 group in VIII Fighter Command. The group put in claims for 609 air-to-air kills and 106 destroyed on the ground.

Many writers mistakenly advance the proposition that it was the appearance of the Mustang as an escort fighter that signaled the gaining of Allied air superiority in the skies over Europe. In fact, this was not the case. The advantage of the P-51 was that the later models had the range to go deeper into Germany than the P-47s, but the longer range Mustangs did not make their appearance in England until mid-spring of 1944. By this time the effectiveness of the Luftwaffe was already beginning to decline owing to a number of factors. Not the least of these was the interruption of petroleum supplies from refineries in Eastern Europe, prompted in large part by the advance of Soviet forces into the oil-rich Balkans, and the air campaign on transportation, including railroads and bridges. The first U.S. Army Mustangs used in Europe lacked the additional fuel

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ABOVE: On a muddy airfield in England, P-51 Mustangs sit ready for their pilots to climb aboard as two ground crewmen make a final check of an external drop tank. The extra range provided by the drop tanks allowed the fighters to escort bomber formations deeper into Germany.

RIGHT: During a fighter bomber mission, Lieutenant Colonel Wallace Hopkins of 8th Fighter Command releases his bomb load from his P-51 Mustang nicknamed "Ferocious Frankie." The Mustang proved capable in both the escort and ground attack roles.

moved down, as providing close air support for ground troops became the primary Army Air Forces mission.

While the Mustang became the primary escort fighter with VIII Fighter Command, P-51s were not absent from the tactical air commands of the Ninth Air Force. Brig. Gen. O.P. Weyland's XIX Tactical Air Command included one group of Mustangs when it went operational on July 31, 1944, to support General George S. Patton's Third Army, and other Mustang groups transferred in and out as operational needs changed. The Mustang faced a major drawback when it came to low-altitude attack. The liquid-cooled Merlin engines made the P-51s more vulnerable to ground fire than



tanks that gave the later models the range to go deep into Germany.

There was also another reason for the decline of the Luftwaffe. Throughout 1942 and 1943 German fighter pilots had pretty much steered clear of the Allied fighters, waiting just beyond their effective range and then going after the bombers as soon as their escorts reached their fuel limits and turned back. By the spring of 1944, the VIII Fighter Command had managed to extend the range of the P-38s and P-47s significantly through the addition of suitable external fuel tanks, and the escorts were able to go much deeper into German territory with the bombers. In fact, the twin-engine P-38s were able to accompany them all the way to Berlin. With the increased range of the fighters, VIII Fighter Command authorized them to drop down on the deck and attack the Luftwaffe airfields to destroy the German fighters on the ground as well as in the air. By the time P-51s were available in Europe in large numbers, the Allies were already gaining air superiority.

The modifications to the Mustangs to turn them into long-range fighters were not without problems. When the 85-gallon internal fuel tanks were added, test pilots discovered that full tanks affected the airplane's control during combat maneuvers. To take advantage of the increased range, VIII Fighter Command was forced to fuel the fighters so that the tanks would have no more than 35 gallons in them when they reached the areas of likely combat.

Since external tanks caused drag and were normally burned off first so they could be dropped, the stability problem reduced the effective range of the Mustangs. The stability problem was not the only problem with the Mustangs. They also experienced a lack of heating at high altitude, which had plagued the twin-engine P-38s during their early months in combat.

It is commonly believed that once the P-51s arrived in the European Theater, the P-47s were assigned solely to the fighter-bomber role while the Mustangs flew only escort. Such is not the case. With the appearance of the Mustangs, VIII Fighter Command adopted a strategy of assigning the more experienced P-47 groups to patrol the areas where the Luftwaffe fighters were most likely to hit the bomber stream while the longer legged P-38s and P-51s went all the way to the targets.

Mustangs were also used as fighter-bombers, especially after the Luftwaffe's fighter squadrons were practically grounded because of lack of gasoline and oil. Thunderbolts and Lightnings continued flying escort missions until Mustangs replaced them in most VIII Fighter Command squadrons in the latter part of 1944. But the conversion did not take place until comparatively late in the war as more Mustangs became available. Thunderbolts and Lightnings continued to be the primary escort fighters in Europe until mid-1944. Ironically, at about the same time that Mustangs started appearing in European skies in large numbers, the air war

the radial-engine P-47s, so they were often assigned to fly fighter cover over the battlefield to protect against German aircraft.

Thunderbolts were equipped with two more machine guns than Mustangs and were thus more suited for attacks on German armor and other ground targets. Still, the P-51s flew their share of ground attack missions, using their six .50-caliber machine guns to strafe and fire rockets and drop bombs and napalm. Eighth Air Force Mustangs often transferred to Ninth Air Force control, particularly during the battle to regain the Allied initiative during the German Ardennes offensive in the winter of 1944-1945.

Mustang-equipped groups entered combat with the Fifteenth Air Force from Italian bases in the late spring of 1944 when three groups that had been flying P-40s received P-51s. The 52nd Fighter Group of the Twelfth Air Force traded in Spitfires for Mustangs as well. A fourth Fifteenth Air Force group that received P-51s was the controversial 332nd Fighter Group, an all-black unit popularly associated with the Tuskegee Airmen, that had most recently flown P-47s. Group pilots painted their airplane tails red, making them easily identifiable to both friend and foe. Group members would later claim that they "never lost a bomber" while flying escort missions, although the qualifications for such a claim are somewhat murky.

With the appearance and acceptance of the Merlin-powered Mustangs, the Army Air Forces began making plans to eliminate production of other types in an effort to standardize maintenance and supply roles. But all of the combat commanders were not as enthusiastic about the Mustang as was VIII Fighter Command's Brig. Gen. William Kepner. When notified by Headquarters, U.S. Army Air Forces that his command's P-38s and P-47s were slated to be replaced by P-51s, Far East Air Forces commander Lt. Gen. George C. Kenney flatly said "No!" Early in the war, Kenney had told General Henry H. Arnold that he really did not care what kind of airplanes he received in his theater, but as the war continued he developed a preference for the twin-engine P-38.

Kenney commanded a theater that included a great expanse of water, and he felt that the second engine on the P-38 gave his pilots a chance at returning home that the P-51 failed to offer. Furthermore, Fifth and Thirteenth Air Force P-38s in the Pacific had been doing a pretty good job of shooting down Japanese airplanes since they made their combat debut at the end of 1942. By mid-1944, Far East Air Forces P-38s were flying 700-mile missions, distances far greater than any encountered in Europe. The P-38 remained the fighter of choice in Far East Air Forces until the end of the war.

In spite of General Kenney's initial refusal to accept Mustangs as replacements in his veteran fighter squadrons, some newly arriving units were equipped with the P-51. In early 1945, the 460th Fighter Squadron joined the P-47-equipped 348th Fighter Group with P-51s, and the rest of the group began making the transition to the more maneuverable fighter. The first Mustangs in the Southwest Pacific were actually F-6D reconnaissance airplanes that began operations in late 1944 with the 82nd Reconnaissance Squadron.

A few days after entering combat, Captain William Shomo, the squadron commander, was on a photography flight when he and his wingman encountered a formation of 13 Japanese aircraft, a bomber and 12 fighter escorts. Although both Shomo and his wingman, Lieutenant Paul Libscomb, were rookies with no combat experience, they managed to shoot down the bomber and 10 of its escorts. For their actions, Shomo received the Medal of Honor and Libscomb the Distinguished Service Cross. Other Mustangs operated in the Southwest Pacific with the 3rd Air Commando Group.

Air Commandos also brought Mustang fighters to the China-Burma-India Theater, where the P-51 played a major role with the Fourteenth Air Force during the final year of

the war. After initially supporting British long-range ground operations in Burma, the Air Commando Mustangs were used primarily for ground attack, particularly against Japanese airfields and supply routes. The Air Commando Mustangs were not the first in the CBI, however. The agile fighters entered service in the theater in mid-1943 when the 311th Bombardment Group arrived with two squadrons of A-36s and one of early model Allison-equipped P-51As. They were joined by the 8th Photo-Reconnaissance Group, which flew the F-6 version of the airplane. Mustangs later replaced Curtiss P-40s in the famed 23rd Fighter Group, the Army Air Corps unit that replaced the American Volunteer Group known as the Flying Tigers, in early 1942 after the United States entered the war.

During the final months of the war, the Army Air Forces also began assigning P-51s to the Central Pacific to provide escort for Boeing B-29 Superfortresses flying long-range bombing missions over the Japanese home islands from their bases in the Marianas. To secure a forward base for the P-51s, U.S. Marines landed on Iwo Jima, an island 660 miles southeast of the Japanese home islands. The first mission over Japan took place on April 29, 1945, when 108 P-51s escorted B-29s. Mustangs were also based on Okinawa, whence they joined other American fighters and ground attack aircraft on sweeps over Japan.

As the first customer for the Mustang, the British Royal Air Force continued to use the type in a variety of roles throughout the war. After their initial use as reconnaissance aircraft, RAF Mustangs served as escort fighters and ground attack aircraft in Asia as well as Europe and the Mediterranean. Mustangs also served with the Royal Australian Air Force, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Netherlands East Indies Air Force, and the South African Air Force, although the SAAF was operational only in the final weeks of the war.

Ironically, the feature that made the Lockheed P-38 the favored fighter in the Southwest Pacific led North American to propose the development of a twin-engine version of the Mustang. North American carried its design a bit further than Lockheed and added a second pilot. Essentially, the Twin Mustang, designated by the U.S. Army as the F-82, was two P-51 fuselages joined together with a short wing and single stabilizer connecting the two. Production began in early 1945, but only 20 had been produced by war's end. □

Author Sam McGowan is also a pilot. He resides in the Houston, Texas, area.

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British and Indian troops that could, escaped to India. A Chinese army, under the command of American General Joseph Stilwell, was also forced to retreat. Stilwell himself barely escaped capture by the rapidly advancing Japanese forces.

Many of the lowland Burmese populace aided the invaders. They helped the Japanese by supporting their fifth-column activities during ambushes, night attacks, and demolition work. These Burmese hoped that their country, with the departure of the British, would achieve independence for the first time in eight centuries. The Japanese propagandists had preached the doctrine of “Asia for the Asians.” Unfortunately for the Burmese, they experienced an even a greater degree of social, economic, and political oppression under the country’s new occupiers.

Burma represented a key factor in the progress of the war in Southeast Asia. The Burma Road, through the country’s northern highlands, represented a major link in the shipment of war material to Chinese forces from Allied bases in India. After the Japanese captured Burma, the Allies had to supply the Chinese by air, over the forbidding Himalayas. The hazardous air route was nicknamed “the Hump.” It was a much less efficient—and more costly—transfer of critical goods. Burma also represented a key staging area for any Japanese plan for the invasion of India. It became critical for the Americans and the British to retake Burma to reduce these threats to the successful pursuit of the war in Southeast Asia.

The U.S. government, meanwhile, was working on plans for combating the Japanese. These strategists reached the conclusion that espionage and subversion would have to be employed in any successful attempt to liberate those countries now under Japanese control. American President Franklin D. Roosevelt admired the well-established programs of this nature employed by the British, whose Special Operations Executive (SOE) Roosevelt sought to emulate.

Roosevelt selected General William J. “Wild Bill” Donovan, who had been a classmate

of the president at Columbia Law School, to set up a program similar to that operated by the British. Originally called the Office of the Coordinator of Information, the designation would soon be changed to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the

Yankee Guerrillas in Burma

Detachment 101 harassed the Japanese throughout its tenure in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

A SMALL GROUP OF AMERICANS, OPERATING BEHIND THE JAPANESE LINES IN

Burma from 1942 until mid-1945, played a major role in neutralizing a large enemy force. Ultimately, the Japanese had to give up control of Burma, ending Japan’s threat to invade India. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Detachment 101 consisted of a handful of Americans who trained and led a powerful guerrilla contingent that harassed the Japanese Army continuously as the Japanese sought to use Burma as a major base for their military domination of Southeast Asia.

Following the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, the Japanese invaded Malaya, Borneo, and Burma as well as the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines. They also invaded a number of smaller islands in the South and Central Pacific, securing most of these targets with little opposition. After five months of war, the Japanese were poised to threaten both Australia and India.

The Japanese conquered Burma with little difficulty in the spring of 1942. The principal cities of Rangoon and Mandalay quickly fell to the invaders. Those

Chinese engineers, briefly halting their construction project, assist Americans as they cross a river in Burma. An American C-46 Commando transport aircraft can be seen in the background. This type of plane routinely resupplied Detachment 101.

(All Photos: National Archives)

forerunner of the modern Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). At the time a Wall Street lawyer and a former assistant U.S. attorney general, “Wild Bill” Donovan had been the commanding officer of the U.S. Army’s famed Fighting 69th Regiment of the Rainbow Division during World War I. He and General Douglas MacArthur were the only two soldiers who held three of the nation’s top medals: the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, and the Distinguished Service Medal.

Burma was certainly an area where a program of subversion and sabotage could be used to great advantage by the Allies. The country’s north was covered largely with a dense jungle—a perfect cover for guerrilla warfare. Soon after his appointment, Donovan got in touch with General Stilwell to map out such a program. The task of establishing units capable of such work had to be started from scratch, since the Army had no such agenda in existence.

Fortunately, Stilwell had a candidate to lead this unit for the planned incursions into Burma. Captain Carl Eifler commanded a company of the 35th Infantry Regiment in Hawaii. Eifler cut an imposing figure. Standing over six feet, two inches tall, weighing more than 250 pounds, and skilled in jujitsu, Eifler, Stilwell believed, possessed the characteristics needed to lead such a demanding program. Eifler, for his part, immediately began recruiting a group of officers and noncommissioned officers that he felt could aid in developing a team for the mission ahead.

The new mission’s chief traveled to Washington, D.C., met with General Donovan, and listened to the latter’s rather vague ideas on organization and training. Following the meeting, Eifler established a series of training facilities in Maryland. Chief among these was Area B, some 70 miles from Washington. The site later became Camp David, a vacation retreat for American presidents.

The unit, officially designated as OSS Detachment 101, consisting initially of 21 members, began an intensive training program in early April 1942. William A. Peers, who later succeeded Eifler as commander of Detachment 101, said in his memoirs that the designation for the group was chosen to give the impression that the unit was well established and had been activated for a considerable length of time.

The curriculum included learning the use of high explosives, cryptography, methods for search and rescue, and many other specialties associated with subversion and sabotage behind enemy lines. Members of the group also

received intensive training in techniques of unarmed combat to prepare them for face-to-face contact with the enemy.

The combat training involved brutal, destructive, and aggressive methods of dealing with the enemy. Capture could mean torture and even death. OSS participants carried lethal capsules that would allow the agents to commit suicide, if they chose, rather than endure torture in the event of their capture by the enemy.

Parachute jumping represented a critical element of OSS training. Operatives would be expected to land behind enemy lines if they were to successfully execute sabotage missions. The training also involved techniques for land-

acquire on short notice in preparation for deployment.

The detachment arrived at Karachi, now part of Pakistan, on July 4, 1942. The men then traveled across India to Nazira, Assam, in the country’s northeast, close to the Burmese border. The U.S. Air Transport Command (ATC), responsible for flying supplies to China, maintained several airfields in the vicinity of the town. The Americans quickly established contact with local British authorities, who had extensive knowledge of Burma and Japanese activities in the country.

Detachment 101 set up a program for its first recruits and began instruction on demolition



A triumphant group of American soldiers displays trophies of war taken from the vanquished Japanese during a recent engagement near Kamaing, Burma.

ing on enemy beaches with small craft launched from submarines. The training was made as realistic as possible.

In late 1943, a program specifically designed for the Pacific Theater was established. An OSS training center was established at Toyon Bay, the site of a prewar boys’ school on Catalina Island, off of the coast of Southern California. The site was chosen because of its isolation and relative inaccessibility.

The training period turned out to be quite brief for those scheduled for the China-Burma-India Theater. The new team left for Asia in late May 1942. Travel to the unit’s new assignment was by slow freighter. The ship also carried what limited supplies Detachment 101 could

techniques and methods for the destruction of a wide variety of targets critical to Japanese military operations. The American instructors learned almost as much from their pupils, initially mostly British and Anglo-Burmese, as they taught them. This first group of potential saboteurs knew a great deal more than its American teachers about the Burmese people and territory.

The Americans also realized that the long-range success of their mission would require the assistance of a large number of indigenous Burmese. The accomplishments of the Japanese during their invasion of the country were due in no small part to the assistance of lowland Burmese people who had believed that their fel-

low Asians would be their liberators. Ultimately, such proved not to be the case, and the Burmese soon became disillusioned because of the treatment they received at Japanese hands.

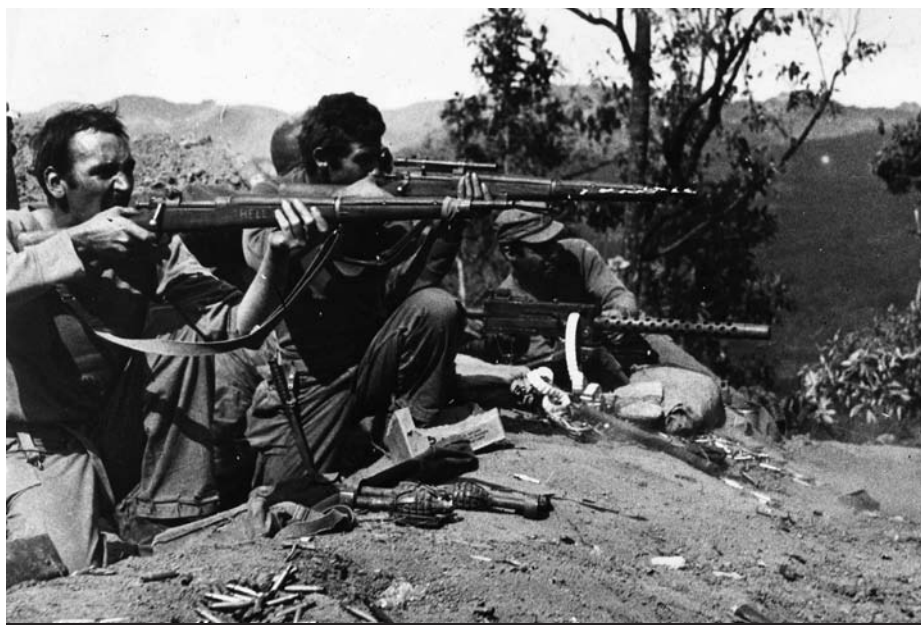
Burma has a mixture of a number of different ethnic groups, often speaking different languages and dialects. Separate from the Burmese peoples living in the arable lowlands are the hill tribes in the country's mountainous north. These peoples, the Karens, Shans, Papaung, Chins, and especially the Kachins, were much more warlike and aggressive than their southern neighbors. During the 1940s, they lived in isolated villages located in dense forest areas. These tribes had developed a working rela-



tionship with the British and had made up the majority of the native troops trained and officered by the Europeans before the war began. The hill people made superb jungle fighters and, as such, were potential candidates for a guerrilla force capable of seriously impacting the ability of the Japanese to control the country's mountainous areas. The Americans sought to win these fighters quickly to the Allied side.

The strategy of Detachment 101 designed for the Burma campaign consisted of the following: (1) the destruction of targets of opportunity such as bridges, railways, and mines used by the Japanese in controlling the country and in shipping supplies and equipment throughout the countryside, (2) the ambush of enemy personnel where practical, as well as spying on their movements, and (3) the recovery of airmen downed in Japanese territory.

The detachment planned to parachute small teams of men into remote jungle areas as close as possible to their intended targets. Each unit would contain some Kachin natives to act as guides as well as saboteurs. The Kachins knew the country and could act as translators when the teams encountered their fellow tribesmen in the hill villages.



ABOVE: Approximately 80 miles north of Lashio, Burma, American infantrymen engage Japanese troops in a fight for control of a section of the Old Burma Road. The overland link was a vital supply connection for Allied troops fighting in the China-Burma-India Theater. **LEFT:** After being lost in the jungle of northern Burma for 45 days, a wounded and fatigued American pilot is carried to safety. Detachment 101 regularly assisted in the rescue of Allied airmen who had crashed or been shot down in the skies over Burma.

Guerrilla tactics involved a sudden strike on an unsuspecting target, its destruction, and then a quick retreat to safety. No prolonged engagements were contemplated. The advantage lay with the attackers as long as they struck quickly and then vanished. The detachment and its Kachin recruits proved to be adept at this type of warfare. The jungle, despite all of its problems and hazards, furnished ideal camouflage for its hit-and-run tactics. The Kachins took advantage of the undergrowth to plant *pungis*, two-foot strips of bamboo shaped like spears and hardened over fire until they were as sharp as steel. These were placed alongside the jungle trails and caused serious injury to unsuspecting Japanese troops.

The ATC agreed to furnish C-87 aircraft to carry the teams and their equipment into enemy territory. The Air Corps had converted these cargo planes from B-24 Liberator heavy bombers. The aircraft also had to be rigged to permit the exit of parachutists. These planes were also used for supply missions and to pick up team members after they had completed a mission. The ATC furnished the necessary aircraft whenever possible. Often, it was downed ATC personnel that the teams would be seeking to return to the safety of their bases. The teams sometimes had to extract themselves from enemy territory on foot if rescue by air proved to be impractical.

To take Burma back from the Japanese, General Stilwell was compelled to keep open both

a major road and a rail line between Calcutta, India, and his Chinese troops in the field. A loss of these vital routes would allow resupply of these troops by airlift only and materially reduce the effectiveness of the Chinese forces as a result. Detachment 101 operated behind Japanese lines, ambushing isolated Japanese units when possible, seriously interdicting enemy supply lines, and reporting Japanese troop movements by radio.

In April 1944, Stilwell launched his coordinated attack on the main Japanese base in northern Burma—Myitkyina. Japanese aircraft based at Myitkyina harassed Allied supply lines connecting the Ledo Road with the Burma Road, the major supply line on the ground to the Chinese troops in eastern Burma and beyond. Stilwell's three-pronged strike force consisted of 3,000 recently recruited American volunteers who came to be known as Merrill's Marauders, a mixed but experienced British force called the Chindits (a combination of British, Gurkha, Nigerian, Chinese, and Burmese troops), and two Chinese divisions, the 22nd and the 38th. The Chinese troops had been trained in India by a team of U.S. Army instructors under the supervision of Stilwell himself.

Stilwell directed the Chinese to begin a direct frontal assault on the Japanese stronghold, the Americans to attack from the east around the Japanese right flank, and the Chindits, moving west from India, to infiltrate the area behind

Japanese lines from that direction. During the advance of Stilwell's main forces, Detachment 101 continued to disrupt Japanese communications and supply operations behind enemy lines and acted as guides for the advancing Allied troops.

By May 17, the Allies had captured the city's critical airstrip, and the battle for control of Myitkyina appeared to be over. Then disaster struck. Stilwell decided to give the honor of completing the capture of the city to some of his Chinese units. However, the two Chinese battalions ordered to take the city were relatively inexperienced. They attacked one another by mistake and had to be withdrawn after the friendly fire had exacted heavy casualties.

The Japanese rallied quickly and even managed to send some reinforcements and supplies to their beleaguered defenders. It was not until August that Allied troops finally managed to force the Japanese out of Myitkyina, requiring the enemy to retreat to their bases in Burma's southern reaches. The loss of Myitkyina ended the threat of Japanese aircraft against the Ledo and Burma Roads.

Detachment 101 continued to harry the enemy during its retreat southward. Only a relative few enemy soldiers managed to reach the Japanese base at Bhamo. However, Stilwell's strike force—the Marauders, the Chindits, and the Chinese—also suffered substantial battle casualties. The attacking troops had been subjected to a variety of debilitating tropical diseases in the lengthy process of capturing Myitkyina. After being relieved by occupation troops, those combatants that had taken the town required extensive rest and rehabilitation. The Marauders' losses proved to be so severe that they virtually ceased to function as a unit after the battle. The Chindits suffered the same fate within a few months as they continued to suffer severe losses in their accelerated movement southward in pursuit of the Japanese.

The leaders of both the Marauders and the Chindits also met with personal disaster. General Frank Merrill, for whom the Marauders were named, suffered three disabling heart attacks and had to be replaced during the Myitkyina campaign. Brigadier Orde Wingate, the charismatic leader of the Chindits, died in an airplane crash on March 24, 1944.

The loss of Myitkyina was the first of a continuous series of defeats for the desperate, slowly retreating Japanese infantry. They now faced a constantly expanding, well-supplied Allied army that also controlled the air. The Japanese, on the other hand, no longer received reinforcements to replace their dwindling manpower and found that their now greatly dimin-

ished supply lines faced constant harassment by Detachment 101's Kachin Rangers. Detachment 101 also received orders to expand the training program for the Burmese fighters, which now included many southerners, Shans, and other lowland Burmese, who had initially supported the Japanese. By this time, the guerrilla forces under Detachment 101's leadership were numbered in the thousands.

Toward the end of the fighting in Burma, Detachment 101 also launched an intensive propaganda campaign, dropping leaflets written in Japanese and purportedly issued by the Japanese high command, ordering their troops to surrender. The leaflets further lowered the morale of the hard-pressed, retreating Japanese. Although the enemy troops continued to fight fiercely, they lost town after town. Finally, both Mandalay and Rangoon, the country's principal cities, were liberated.

By mid-July 1945, orders from Washington deactivated the OSS Burma operation. The remarkable success of Detachment 101's guerrilla activities was borne out by an impressive set of statistics. At its peak, the detachment numbered only 689 Americans, 131 officers and 558 enlisted men. During the course of its operations, the unit was able to train more than 10,000 native troops, mostly Kachins, in the techniques of guerrilla warfare.

The Northern Combat Area Command's (NCAC) statistics indicated that Detachment 101 had killed or wounded an estimated 10,000 Japanese, captured 75, taken down 51 bridges, derailed nine trains, and destroyed 277 enemy vehicles. Of paramount importance to their operations, too, was the rescue of some 232 downed U.S. airmen, whose planes had been lost in the airlifts over the Hump to China.

The NCAC stated that the great majority of the intelligence provided to the command came from Detachment 101. Yet, the cost in American lives proved to be surprisingly small. The enemy succeeded in killing only three Americans from Detachment 101. Another 19 were lost in air crashes. Ultimately, on January 17, 1946, the War Department awarded the members of the detachment a Distinguished Unit Citation for their accomplishments in the China-Burma-India Theater.

Major General William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan, creator of the OSS and chief architect of successful covert operations in Burma during World War II, died February 8, 1959. □

Dr. Carl H. Marcoux is a World War II veteran of the U.S. Merchant Marine and a Korean War veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He resides in Newport Beach, California.

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The Madman of the Mountain

The personal side of Hitler was both surprising and quite disturbing.

ADOLF HITLER LOVED CHILDREN. BEFORE THE WAR CONSUMED ALL HIS energies he entertained children at his holiday home on the “mountain” all the time. Over the years, his court photographer, Professor Heinrich Hoffmann, filled whole albums with pictures of the Master and children.

Naturally, it is clear, they had to be blond and smile winningly when he took their hands for a walk, bent down to talk to the very small ones, and patted their bright yellow hair. Although the Master and most of his admiring court were dark-haired, their ideal was the blond Aryan race.

He loved dogs, too, especially German shepherds. Some of his court maintained that he loved dogs more than he did human beings. Even at the height of his power

when he ruled virtually all of Europe from North Africa to Norway and from the English Channel to the Caucasus, he personally trained his own dogs. The most powerful man on the Continent apparently did not find it demeaning to be seen running in front of one of his puppies, carrying a stick in his mouth to demonstrate to the young dog how it should carry such an object.

Indeed, despite his status as one of the four most powerful men in the world, he remained the simple man of the people. He slept on a spartan cot, not much better than those of his soldiers. He wore a white cotton nightshirt, used a chamber pot for his needs during the night, and when it was very cold on the mountain, he donned an old-fashioned nightcap to keep his head warm.

He abhorred strong waters, but on occasion he might drink a glass of champagne or on hot days a beer. It was the same with food. Again, he did not indulge in the rich foods and exotic foreign dishes that many in his exalted position enjoyed. Instead, he was a vegetarian, sticking to the homely vegetables grown in his own greenhouses on the mountain—carrots, peas, leeks and the like. But if forced, he would eat a stew made with the cheapest cuts of meat or a slice of ham cut straight from the shank in the peasant fashion.

Some said he had sexual problems. Malicious tongues maintained he was inadequate both physically and psychologically. But he had at least two known mistresses, and the servants who spied on him and his last mistress, Eva Braun, on the mountain and examined their bed in the morning after they had slept there always stated they had evidence enough from the sheets to prove the relationship was perfectly normal.

Those who saw the Master naked testified he was quite adequate in the nether region. When the Master went on picnics from the mountain, one of his greatest pleasures, he would urinate against the trees with the rest of the male entourage, who were naturally interested in the Master’s physical endowments. None of them ever reported that he was lacking in that quarter.

It was noted, however, that he worried greatly about his own health—he was something of a hypochondriac. He suffered from dizziness, flatulence, gastric and chest pains, neck pustules, and restrictive palsy, and, in the end, was taking up to 60 pills a day. At the

Adolf Hitler greets the family of Reich Minister of Armaments Albert Speer late in 1942. Two of the three children are young Albert and Hilde Speer.

(ullstein bild)



ABOVE: A throng of mesmerized children attempts to squeeze between smiling SS guards to deliver the Nazi salute during a party rally. Children were intensely indoctrinated in the Third Reich and made to practice the salute along with a "Heil Hitler!" to increase their devotion to the regime. RIGHT: In a photograph released for propaganda purposes, Hitler prepares to throw a stick during a session with Muck, one of his German Shepherds.

(Both: National Archives)

same time, he was also very concerned about the health of his subjects.

The result was that he instituted measures that are strangely contemporary. He introduced cancer registries, the first to note new cases of the disease (incidence and not just fatal cases as was customary in other countries). Pesticides containing arsenic, which can cause cancer, were banned. Naturally, smoking was frowned upon, and Germany was the first to introduce antismoking campaigns.

The Master's ideology promoted diets with less sugar, fat, and meat and fewer canned foods. By law, that great German staple, bread, had to contain a minimum percentage of whole grain flour. Lead-lined toothpaste tubes were banned. Hitler was basically vegetarian, as was his SS chief, Heinrich Himmler, who even had his own vegetable garden.

By 1941, the hazards of smoking were taught in schools, and 60 cities were banning smoking in their public transport systems. One year later, in the midst of total war, the Master was worrying about whales, writing, "The increasing consumption of whale oil is diminishing the



population of whales." How environmentally friendly can you get?

What can one make of such a man, so modern in his thinking, embodying in many ways the traits that we are taught to admire in our own time—the vegetarian, who instituted campaigns against radiation hazards and tobacco (Hitler's Germany had the world's first Institute of "Tobacco Hazards Research" at the University of Jena); who used his state offices and research facilities to protect the national "germ plasma," the forerunner of our own genetic heritage?

Was this the same man who forced a great war on Europe, which resulted in some 30 million deaths? Could this lover of dogs and young blond children really institute a wave of mass anti-Semitism, which ended in the Holocaust?



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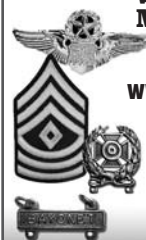


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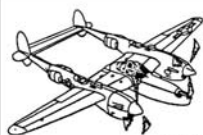
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Hitler stoops to greet a wide-eyed German boy wearing native lederhosen in this propaganda photo, which was widely distributed in Germany and abroad. Note the approving adults seated in the background.

(National Archives)

How could Hitler, who abhorred hunting and criticized his own followers, in particular Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring, for indulging in the shooting of birds and the killing of wild pigs, ship off men, women, and children by the thousands, and in the end by the hundreds of thousands, to be liquidated in the ovens of his concentration camps?

Could such forward-looking, benevolent modernity go hand in hand with this medieval, almost pathological cruelty? In the case of Adolf Hitler, the new master of Germany since 1933, it could. And it is, in reality, not all that difficult to comprehend. Hitler, like so many of his generation, had been brutalized by four years in the trenches in World War I. Wounded and temporarily blinded in that war, he was released from a beaten German Army, which had been his first real home, into a chaotic new German Republic. Like so many others of that "Front Generation" the "stubble-hoppers," as they called themselves, he felt he had been betrayed by the Socialists and the Jewish plutocrats he believed now ran this new decadent Germany.

Thus, it was while he absorbed the new ideas current in the 1920s (and it must be remembered that the Germany of that time was a forerunner of modernity in virtually every field), that Hitler and many others fell back into the cruel culture of an older Germany. By the time

Hitler and his followers came to power, there was a kind of polarity of two extremes that many foreigners found puzzling, and then repelling. How could the Nazi guards in concentration camps give some of the kids in their charge a typical German Christmas, filled with all its sentimentality and kitsch, and then consign those same children to the ovens a day or so later?

It was little different when Hitler built his holiday home in the Bavarian Alps, which later became the site of his court. Haus Wachenfeld, later called the Berghof after Hitler remodeled it, was a bizarre blend of the grandiose—a natural stage set for one of Wagner's pompous operas—and the mundane. Its great windows provided breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding peaks. But its architecture was Bavarian suburban: checked tablecloths, wooden chairs with hearts carved in them, pewter plates and drinking mugs on the shelves. The décor might have been lavish, but the overall effect was not palatial but bourgeois.

At the Berghof where his court was mostly held, the Führer's lifestyle was similarly contradictory. There he might receive famous politicians, heads of state, even an ex-king of Britain; yet between affairs of state, Hitler's days at the Berghof were a monotonous round of boring meals, silly Hollywood movies (the Master's favorites were Charles Laughton in *The Private Life of Henry VIII* and Gary Cooper in *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*) and tedious hour-long monologues.

But there was another secret side to Adolf

Hitler, discovered in 2003. Back in 1943, General William "Wild Bill" Donovan, head of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the modern Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), commissioned a top secret report on Hitler. Thirty copies of the report compiled by Dr. Henry Murray were found at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, nearly 60 years later.

The report was titled "Analysis of the Personality of Adolph Hitler." Murray presents a picture of Hitler different from the kind, simple dog-loving persona that he presented to the prewar world. Based on psychoanalysis and statements of Hitler's former intimates such as "Putzi" Hanfstaengl and Otto Strasser, who had fled to the United States, Murray stated that Hitler suffered from neurosis, hysteria, paranoia, oedipal tendencies, and schizophrenia.

Two years before Hitler's suicide Murray concluded with amazing foresight, "There is a powerful compulsion in him to sacrifice himself and all of Germany to the revengeful annihilation of Western culture, to die, dragging all of Europe with him into the abyss."

Murray speculated that Hitler might arrange for himself to be assassinated or would retreat to his bunker and shoot himself. The German generals' plot to assassinate Hitler in July 1944

failed. In the end Hitler, as is well known, committed suicide in 1945. Murray's task was also to propose ways of "converting the Germans into a peace-loving nation" after the war. He does not disguise his belief that the German people shared Hitler's guilt. He wrote, "This demigod almost exactly met the needs, longings and sentiments of the majority of Germans."

This was the Master, who assembled a kind of Nazi Mafia around him on the mountain. In due course, he and they would conquer most of Europe from the English Channel to the Ural Mountains. Their soldiers would achieve tremendous victories, fighting the British, the Americans, the Russians, and a score of smaller nations. In an indirect way, they would break the British, French, and Dutch empires and start the Cold War, from which the United States would emerge as the world superpower. But this Nazi Mafia, "The Mountain People" as they called themselves, dominated by the megalomaniac Hitler, remained essentially a group of second-rate toadies. Once Hitler was dead, his followers melted away as if they had never existed. □

The late Charles Whiting was himself a veteran of World War II and, subsequently, the author of numerous acclaimed books on the subject.



Hitler relaxes on the terrace at Berchtesgaden with his most famous pet, Blondi. The German Shepherd was later poisoned during a test of the potency of the Führer's cyanide. (ullstein bild)



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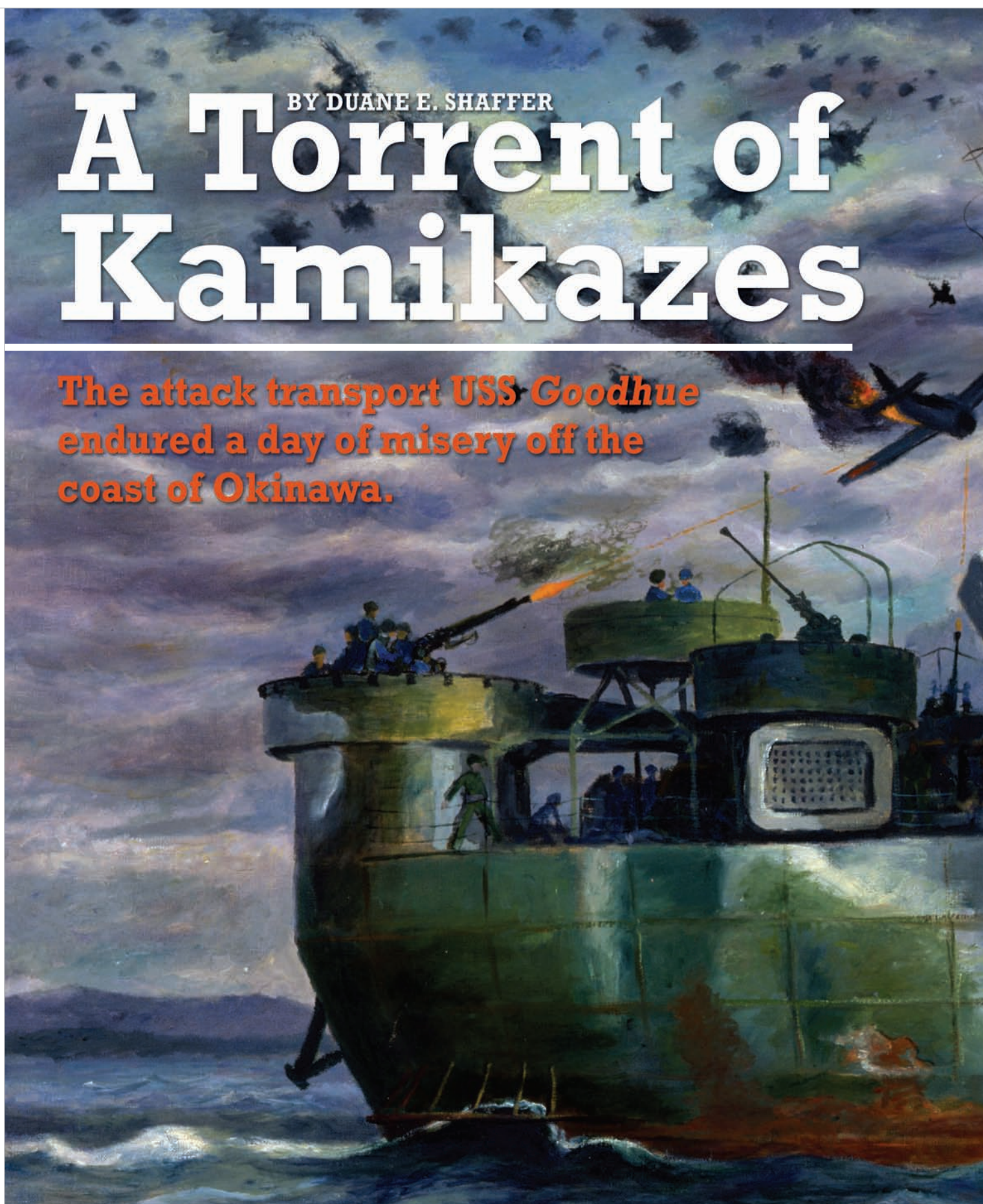
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A Torrent of Kamikazes

BY DUANE E. SHAFFER

The attack transport USS Goodhue endured a day of misery off the coast of Okinawa.

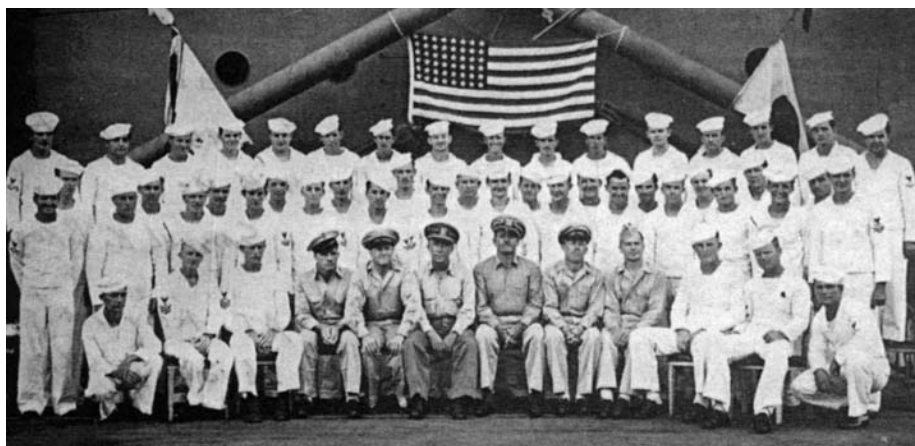




In his painting *Suicide in Pairs*, artist James Turnbull depicts a flaming Japanese kamikaze diving toward a stricken U.S. Navy transport vessel. Off Okinawa, the U.S. Navy endured the full fury of the desperate kamikaze attacks. (Naval Historical Foundation)



ABOVE: The destroyer USS *Howard* comes alongside the attack transport USS *Goodhue*, which lies at anchor. The *Goodhue* was among hundreds of U.S. Navy ships that were assailed by Japanese kamikazes off Okinawa in April 1945. **BELOW:** During a quiet period, the crew of the USS *Goodhue* poses for a portrait. Twenty-one crewmen were killed in action and more than 100 wounded off Okinawa. (Both photos: National Archives)



More than 60 years ago, in April 1945, the war in Europe was winding down to its inevitable conclusion. Prospects for victory in the Pacific were looking brighter, but the war was far from decided. The Americans had the Japanese on the ropes and the ever-shrinking Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was now limited to the Ryukyus and the home islands of Japan. However, for the American sailors aboard the Bayfield-class attack transport USS *Goodhue*, the war had yet to begin.

This is the story of one eventful day in the life of the *Goodhue* during the Pacific War. The officers and ratings of the ship were about to participate in the last great campaign of World War II, the capture of the strategically important island of Okinawa. This sanguinary campaign cost the United States 36 ships sunk, with the loss of nearly 10,000 sailors dead or wounded. The Army lost 4,675 dead and nearly 19,000 wounded. The Marine Corps, which bore the brunt of the fighting on the island, lost almost 19,000 dead and wounded.

This was the price that America paid for taking a small piece of real estate that would serve as a springboard for an invasion of the Japanese home islands. If the Japanese resistance was this intense on and around Okinawa, what would it be like in the invasion of the Japanese mainland?

Planning for the campaign that would be known as Operation Iceberg began in the fall of 1944, about the same time as the commissioning of the USS *Goodhue*. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had evaluated all of the plans that had been discussed to bring about the final Japanese defeat. Which plan was better: bypass the Philippines, advance in China, or occupy Formosa? The Joint Chiefs adopted a strategy involving a landing in the Philippines as well as on the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Following the costly victory on Iwo Jima, and while operations in the Philippines were ongoing, U.S. forces landed on Okinawa on April 1, 1945. Thoughts of hope for the future would be on the minds of the American servicemen in

the Pacific that Sunday, but the only thing that was on the minds of the Japanese was to stop the American advance at any cost. Countless thousands of Japanese sailors and airmen would die in the attempt to halt the American juggernaut.

Japanese strategists discussed the best way to defend Okinawa. It was first argued that an aggressive attack against the Americans after they landed was the best strategy. Then, the idea was put forward that it might be better to let the Americans land and then grind them down in a battle of attrition. Then there was the darker alternative: that of the massed waves of suicide planes and boats known as the kamikaze. It was the latter two options in combination that American soldiers and sailors would confront at Okinawa.

Scattered kamikaze attacks on American warships had occurred as early as 1943. Vice Admiral Takajiro Onishi had developed the concept of the kamikaze as a desperate suicidal effort to inflict serious damage on warships of the U.S. Navy, particularly its aircraft carriers. In doing so, it was hoped that the American tide would be slowed or even stopped. Although the kamikaze were not unknown to the Americans, the fury of the massed attacks thrown at the fleet off Okinawa was something that had not been previously experienced.

Ward McDonald, a 17-year-old signalman from Seattle, Washington, described the *Goodhue*'s shakedown cruise off San Pedro, California, in December 1944. "One early morning we got underway for our shakedown cruise ... down the coast of California. A gunnery practice at a towed target proved our ability to have a shell from the ship's 5-inch guns get within a quarter mile of the target. We swung compass, did a few maneuvers as well as swab the decks of vomit as the boys from Nebraska would leave go of their breakfasts. What a sight. I was wondering if they would even allow us to join other ships for a wartime effort. Somehow we made a successful shakedown."

The *Goodhue* had two 5-inch dual-purpose gun mounts fore and aft, two single and two twin 40mm antiaircraft guns, and 18 20mm guns with which to protect the 51 officers and 524 enlisted men aboard. The ship was able to carry all the equipment necessary for an amphibious landing, including 1,200 troops and 15 landing craft. Powering everything was one General Electric geared drive turbine that could raise 8,500 horsepower.

"A day or so later during the loading of ammunition, food stuffs, fuel and the like, I noticed large boxes of foul weather gear com-

ing aboard,” remembered McDonald of the days immediately following the shakedown cruise. “It appeared we were headed for a cold climate.” Days later, when the *Goodhue* was steaming southwest instead of north, McDonald observed, “The foul weather gear had been a ploy.... The military needed to make it appear obvious that we were heading north.”

The *Goodhue* had loaded her cargo in California and sailed away from the West Coast on January 4, 1945. She arrived at her first destination in the Admiralty Islands on January 21, where the ship picked up more cargo and passengers. Reaching Hollandia, New Guinea, on February 4, the *Goodhue* received her new commander, Captain J.L. Allen. Under Allen’s command, the ship took its place as the flagship of Transport Division 51. This meant that in any action they would be encountering, the *Goodhue* would be at the head of the column and most vulnerable to attack.

The *Goodhue* sailed to Leyte Gulf in the Philippines from February 4 to 12, carrying supplies to bases in the area. The officers and men underwent vigorous amphibious training exercises until February 25. By the end of the month, the *Goodhue* was loading troops and supplies for the coming campaign against Okinawa. There were more practice landings, and

then it was time for the real thing. The ship got underway for Okinawa on March 21, but there would be one more stop along the way.

The small islands of Kerama Retto, just south of Okinawa, were to be secured to serve as a staging area for the invasion of Okinawa itself. A mighty American armada, which included the *Goodhue*, put troops ashore on March 26 to secure the island group. Compared with what was in store for them, the landings at Kerama Retto were a cakewalk.

Even so, McDonald voiced the opinion of many American servicemen in the area when he said, “March 26, 1945. Hell was upon us in every fashion. From the water we had the dreaded suicide boats, from the air the deadly kamikaze and on the beaches we had the fanatics. There was not to be a breather for anyone.... We encountered 82 air attacks in the next 30 days alone, most of them kamikaze. The reason for all this attention was we were getting very close to the main Japan-



ABOVE: Ward McDonald served as a 17-year-old signalman aboard the *Goodhue*. **BELOW:** Radioman 3rd Class Howard G. Hobbs participated in the damage control efforts aboard the *Goodhue*.



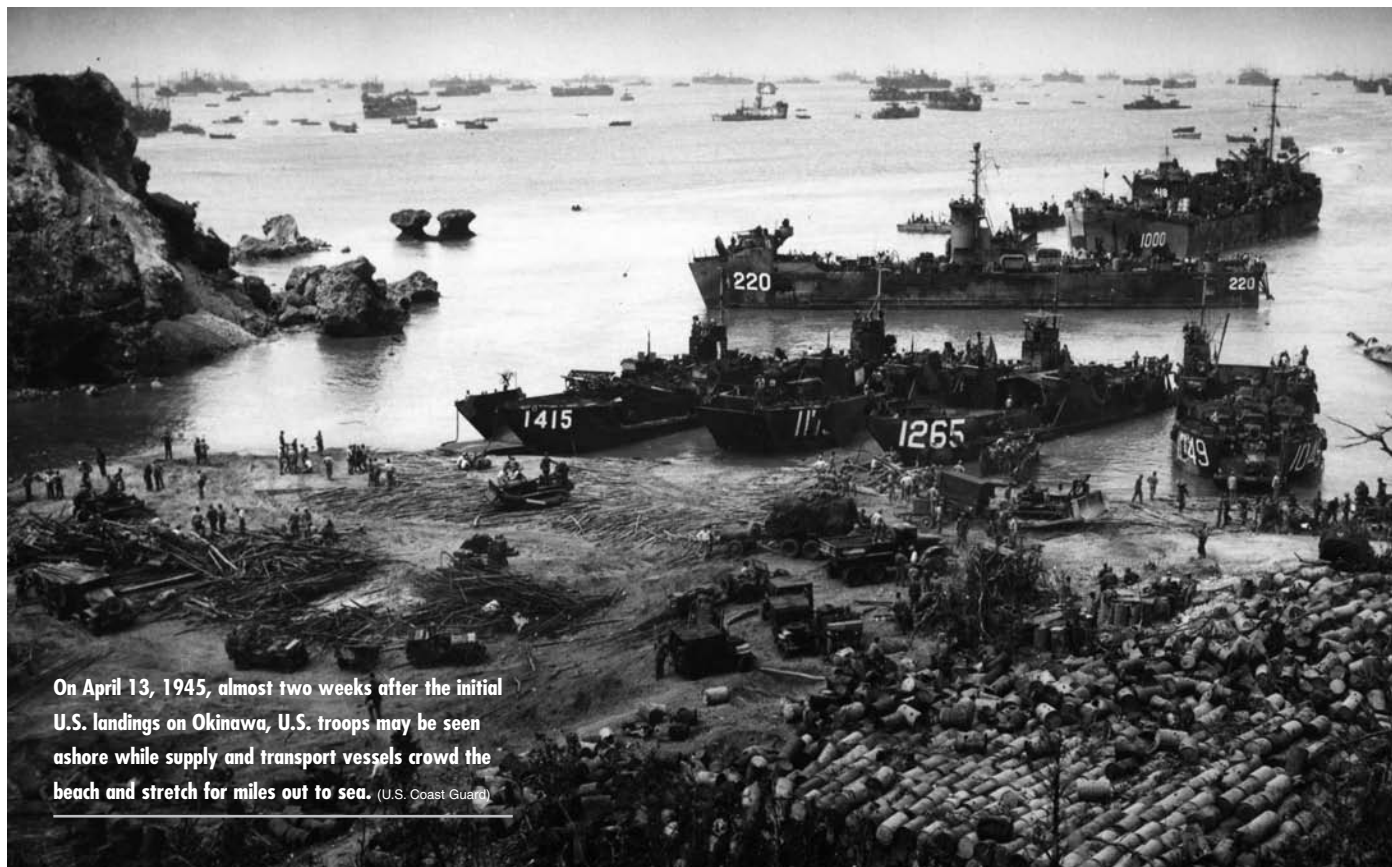
(Both: Duane E. Shaffer)

ese strongholds.... They would throw everything they had at us.”

As the kamikaze attacks against the American fleet intensified, the sailors aboard the *Goodhue* improved their defenses by bringing up on deck several of the Army’s field guns that they were transporting. “They just seemed to appear out of nowhere,” said McDonald of the suicide boats, “and if you weren’t alert they would get beneath your gunnery field and ... the charge would blow a sizeable hole in the side of the vessel at the waterline.”

The *Goodhue* was anchored off Kuba Shima when the main landings against Okinawa went in on April 1. More than 1,300 vessels had assembled off the island, and the landing craft had been lowered and were circling in the water while the prelanding barrage softened up the beaches beginning at 5:30 AM. Sixty-four American aircraft from the nearby carrier group also attacked the island before the landing craft hit the beach. By the end of the day, a 15,000-yard beachhead was secured and thousands of troops had landed.

At 4:15 PM on April 2, the *Goodhue* was



On April 13, 1945, almost two weeks after the initial U.S. landings on Okinawa, U.S. troops may be seen ashore while supply and transport vessels crowd the beach and stretch for miles out to sea. (U.S. Coast Guard)



A Japanese dive-bomber, its pilot bent on a suicide crash into the aircraft carrier USS *Essex*, streams thick smoke during its final plunge. (National Archives)

underway from its anchorage at Kuba Shima to deliver the 307th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. 77th Division to its destination on Okinawa. Cruising in a three-column formation of transports, the *Goodhue* led the right column with the transports *Telfair*, *Mountrail*, *Drew*, and *Montrose* falling in behind at 1,200-yard intervals. The distance between the columns was 600 yards. The *Goodhue* kept pace with the guide ship *Chilton*, which was leading the center column, and *Henrico*, which led the left column. As the vessels approached the combat zone, they began to zigzag to avoid enemy submarines.

At approximately 6:30 PM, a dozen kamikazes attacked the small armada of transports and supporting destroyers. The *Goodhue*'s log noted, "1837 [we] commenced firing with after starboard 20 millimeter guns and 40 millimeter guns on enemy aircraft attacking the convoy from abaft the starboard beam ... 1840 ... *Henrico* seen to be hit in midship section ... 1842 ... *Telfair* seen to be grazed by suicide plane."

The *Goodhue* and her sister ship *Telfair* were attacked by three planes. The *Telfair* gunners combined with the firing from the *Goodhue* to destroy one of the attackers in midair. A second plane rammed into the starboard and port kingposts of the *Telfair*, then fell over the side of the ship. The third plane was headed straight for the *Goodhue*.

Radioman Second Class Jack Kenewell recalled the result of the third Japanese aircraft's attack against the *Goodhue*: "After knocking one Betty [Mitsubishi G4M bomber] out of the air with a salvo from our 5-inch aft,

a Jap suicide plane came in over our bow only seconds later. We didn't have a chance. He hit our crow's nest and did some damage ... I was bleeding badly with a wound on my chest, neck and feet."

The *Goodhue*'s log recorded, "1848 ... one enemy plane observed paralleling our course to starboard at 3,000 yds. Plane was seen to change to an approach course at ... 1,000 ft. The plane was taken under fire by the forward 5"/38 gun at a range of 1,500 yds."

The aircraft attacking the *Goodhue* was a Kawasaki KI-45 Toryu, known as a "Nick" to the Allies. This was a twin-engine, long-range escort and reconnaissance fighter. It was most likely armed with two fragmentation bombs carried under the wings.

The combined fire from the *Goodhue* and the other transports hit the Nick in the port engine and cockpit area, setting it on fire. The *Goodhue*'s log reads, "1850 ... suicide Japanese plane crashed into the mainmast at the cross trees level. One part continued and exploded over the fantail, the other containing cockpit

and at least one bomb, swung over the port side and exploded at about deck level ... most of the plane fell flaming into the water."

McDonald vividly recalled the attack of the kamikazes: "As soon as I stepped out onto the

main deck I looked right into the cockpit of a kamikaze approaching us on the starboard side ... I watched wide-eyed as the Jap plowed into the starboard side of the USS *Henrico* ... blowing a hell of a hole completely through the superstructure ... I was looking at the crew [of a 5-inch gun] about 10 feet away when their eyes grew huge and an expression of fear struck them all.... From the corner of my eye, I caught sight of a huge ball of fire and mass descending upon me.... I instinctively turned to my left and was ducking."

In the brief moments described by the ship's log and the narratives of Kenewell and McDonald, 27 men were killed and 117 wounded. Although the impact of the kamikaze had struck and knocked down the *Goodhue*'s 30-ton cargo boom, the majority of the dead and wounded were hit when bomb fragments and shrapnel rained down on them as the plane disintegrated. The *Telfair*, *Henrico*, and *Chilton* had also sustained major damage. The destroyer *Dickenson* had taken a direct hit on its bridge, killing 53 sailors, including the captain. The ship was so seriously damaged that it later had to be scuttled.

The *Henrico* had also taken a direct hit from a suicide plane, later identified as a Frances (twin-engine bomber). This kamikaze had plowed into the superstructure, killing the captain, a colonel of the 77th Division, and scores of Navy and Army personnel.

Stunned but not wounded, McDonald was taken below for a time. When he came to his senses, he went back out on the deck. "When I stepped out on the after deck, I found death and destruction everywhere I turned," he recalled. "The first thing I noticed was the after 5-inch gun placement was out of kilter and there were no identifiable body parts of any of the gun crew. They were just gone ... screams, moaning, orders being given and bodies everywhere.... As I peered over the top of a ladder onto the deck, I saw a finger with a gold ring still on it ... just a mass of flesh everywhere."

Radarman Third Class Samuel Keels Brockington was drafted into the Navy from Kingstree, South Carolina, in March 1944. He was assigned to the *Goodhue* that summer. "The man in the crow's nest where the plane hit

The *Goodhue*'s loss had been severe. With 21 dead and more than a hundred sailors wounded, the transport had lost one-quarter of its crew.

was just wrapped in metal,” he remembered, “and pieces of the plane were on the boat.”

Damage control parties extinguished several fires and then began the grim task of collecting the dead and wounded. Radarman Third Class Howard G. Hobbs was assigned to this detail, and the memories of the sights and sounds of that evening haunted him for his entire life. Motor Machinist Mate Third Class Francis “Red” Nagle was in charge of piloting one of the landing craft used to ferry troops and supplies to Okinawa. On the day the *Goodhue* was attacked, he recalled looking into the sky and seeing “hundreds of kamikaze planes.”

The *Goodhue*’s loss had been severe. With 21 dead and more than a hundred sailors wounded, the transport had lost one-quarter of its crew. Twenty-four soldiers from the 307th Regiment also became casualties. At least five of the 15 attack transports that left Kerama Retto that evening sustained damage from kamikaze attacks. During the Okinawa campaign, 27 of the 36 U.S. ships sunk had been attacked by suicide planes. A total of 371 U.S. ships were damaged at Okinawa. Of that total, kamikaze attacks were estimated to have accounted for 164.

After the attack of April 2, the *Goodhue* withdrew with a destroyer escort back to the Kerama Retto anchorage for repairs. Along the way the dead were buried on the small island of Zamami Shima, and the wounded were loaded onto hospital ships for treatment.

“That night I worked on the injured doing



Caught in the gun camera of an attacking American fighter plane, this Japanese dive-bomber was one of hundreds of kamikazes that assaulted the U.S. fleet off Okinawa. A relative few got through the curtain of antiaircraft fire and covering fighters but managed to inflict heavy damage. (National Archives)

everything I could,” said Brockington. “The next day they were sent to the hospital ships. I helped sew canvas bags for those who were dead. The evening before the attack on our ship, which was the evening of the invasion on Okinawa, I was talking to a guy from Tennessee. He said, ‘Brock, if we get home let’s do so and so.’ I told him that the invasion that morning had gone well and instead of saying ‘if we get home’ let’s say when we get home. He said that sounded like a good idea. I sewed his body bag the next day.”

Kenewell, who had received some serious wounds when the Japanese plane struck the

ship, recalled the condition of the sailors on the hospital ship around him. “I saw some horribly mutilated men, some with shrapnel all over their bodies, others with burns. Undoubtedly these were the worst cases, some with no chance of recovery, dying by inches ... some with their eyes burned right out of the sockets. They would never really recover.” After several days of rest at the anchorage, the troops aboard the *Goodhue* eventually splashed ashore on Okinawa.

The USS *Goodhue* received one battle star for its participation in the Okinawa campaign. The ship was decommissioned on April 5, 1946, and sold to the U.S. Maritime Commission for commercial service in 1947. Renamed the *Hawaiian Citizen*, she plied the Pacific Ocean for another 34 years, 21 of those as a container ship. The *Hawaiian Citizen* was finally scrapped in Taiwan in 1982. The ship is gone, but many of her veterans are still around. They gather every year for a reunion and mourn the shipmates lost in the previous year.

The ordeal of the USS *Goodhue* is not unique among the U.S. Navy warships subjected to the ferocious kamikaze assaults off Okinawa. However, it is representative of the battle that took place there and of the carnage that could well have been expected if an invasion of the Japanese home islands had been necessary. □

Duane E. Shaffer is a library director in New Durham, New Hampshire. His late father-in-law served aboard the USS Goodhue.

Smoke billows from a U.S. vessel that has just sustained a bomb hit during a Japanese air raid off Okinawa. This photograph was taken from the deck of the transport USS *Chandeleur*. (National Archives)





All Photos National Archives unless otherwise noted.

Voyages *to* Victory

BY ERIC NIDEROST

The war service of the RMS *Queen Mary* made a vital contribution to the success of the Allies.

The late summer of 1939 saw Great Britain teetering on the brink of war with Hitler's Germany. The years of appeasement and vacillation, of meekly acquiescing to Hitler's insatiable territorial demands, were over at last. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's government pledged to come to Poland's aid if it was attacked. It was clear that if the Polish crisis could not be settled amicably Europe would be at war within a matter of days.

Southampton became a magnet for thousands of people seeking to escape the Continent before hostilities began. Many were Americans, who cut their holidays short for fear of being trapped on the wrong side of the Atlantic. One such "refugee" was entertainer Bob Hope and his wife, Dolores, who booked passage on the RMS *Queen Mary*. The Hopes were not alone, and in fact *Queen Mary* had a record 2,332 passengers aboard when she left Southampton on August 30, 1939.

The *Queen Mary* had survived the Great Depression, an economic hurricane that had once threatened her very existence. The great liner was designed to resist the fury of nature, but could the *Queen Mary* also weather the storms of war? Only time would tell.

RMS *Queen Mary* was Britain's entry in the fierce transatlantic passenger trade. Commercial aviation was in its infancy in the

1920s and 1930s, leaving passenger liners the only viable way to get to Europe. Before World War I, most shipping companies made their money in steerage, transporting thousands of poor immigrants to new and hopefully better lives in America. But when Congress curtailed immigration in the early 1920s, steamship companies like Cunard faced serious financial difficulties.

The solution was to build one or two huge liners that would gradually replace older, smaller steamships on the transatlantic routes. It would be much more cost-effective. The spartan accommodations of steerage would be upgraded to a much more comfortable "third class" in order to attract middle-income passengers. The ships themselves would be the main attraction of the journey, or, as the old saying put it, "Getting there is half the fun."

Cunard would build the first of its great new ships in the Clydeside region of Scotland. Clydeside is a stretch of the Clyde River that reaches west of Glasgow toward Gourock and the Western Approaches. John Brown and Co., Ltd., a shipbuilder of great experience and skill, was selected for the task, but the work was hardly put in hand before the Great Depression deepened and severely weakened the British economy. On December 11, 1931, all work was suspended indefinitely and 3,500 workers were laid off.

The British government stepped in, offering subsidies if Cunard merged with its great shipping rival, White Star. All parties agreed, and work resumed in April 1934, after a hiatus of a little over two years. Shipyard hull no. 534 became the *Queen Mary*, hailed as the largest and "stateliest" liner ever built. The

In this photo taken on June 20, 1945, from a hovering U.S. Coast Guard helicopter, the decks of the *Queen Mary* are packed with 14,000 American soldiers straining to gain a glimpse of the New York City skyline upon their return home from Europe. OPPOSITE: The officers of the *Queen Mary* pose for a photograph in November 1944. Standing fourth from the right is Captain James C. Bisset. (© Bettmann/CORBIS)



ship was named after the wife of Britain's reigning monarch, King George V. The royal couple was on hand when the ship was launched

RMS *Queen Mary* was an instant success, a legend in its own time. Passengers were awed by its great size, measuring 1,019 feet long and displacing 80,677 tons. In peacetime, it was designed to carry 2,119 passengers and 1,035 crew. *Queen Mary* may have been large, but it was also incredibly fast. The ship could average around 29 knots, even faster if pushed a little.

The great steamship was the physical embodiment of Britain, an amalgam of British taste and 1930s refinement. The Art Deco style may have had its origins in France, but on *Queen Mary* it epitomized the British liner's elegance and sophistication. Mahogany and other exotic woods, many from Britain's own colonies, were used in the interior. In a very real sense *Queen Mary* was an expression of the island nation's far-flung empire.

Ocean, Europe, and America. Diners could follow the ship's daily progress by observing a small crystal ship that was frequently repositioned on the map.

The ship's last peacetime voyage in August 1939 was anything but routine. *Queen Mary's* captain was ordered to sail about 100 miles south of her normal route as a precaution against lurking German submarines. On September 1, the German Army invaded Poland, and shortly before midnight on September 2, just a few hours after Britain's ultimatum was delivered to Germany, *Queen Mary* received an urgent dispatch from the Admiralty. The ship was ordered to "take all necessary precautions" to guard against submarine attack.

The crew worked with a will, painting over portholes and rigging blackout curtains on doorways. Extra lookouts kept eyes peeled for periscopes or the telltale white streak of a torpedo wake. Tension grew, and the fear among

exclusive, My room had "Gents" above the door..."

Queen Mary arrived safely at Cunard's Pier 90 in New York City on September 5, and was ordered to stay put for the foreseeable future. Most of the crew went back to Britain to serve in the war, leaving only a small maintenance crew aboard. The liner was well guarded against sabotage, even though the United States was neutral at the time. There was a fear—real or imagined—that German spies might try to damage the mighty vessel.

In March 1940, the *Queen Elizabeth* joined her sister ship, *Queen Mary*, in New York. The newer ship was unfinished and less vulnerable in the United States. Both vessels would perform a vital service in carrying thousands of troops to far-flung battlefronts around the world.

The *Queen Mary* stayed in New York for the next seven months, idle and seemingly forgotten. But this neglect was more apparent than real. Back home in Britain a debate raged in the highest circles of government over what to do with the two *Queens*. Some suggested that they were "white elephants," and one member of Parliament seriously suggested they be sold. Besides being vulnerable to attack—or so it seemed at the time—the *Queen Mary* and her sister ship would eat up tons of fuel oil that might be better used in warships.

Saner heads prevailed, and on March 1, 1940, *Queen Mary* was officially called up for the duration. As a first step, her prewar livery of white, black, and Cunard red was replaced by a drab coat of what the Royal Navy called "Light Sea Gray." This camouflage, together with her great speed, would be *Queen Mary's* principal defense against marauding German U-boats.

Queen Mary left New York on March 21, 1940, bound for Australia via the Cape of Good Hope. Once down under, the ship would undergo a major refit to turn her into a troopship. The liner reached Sydney on April 17, a voyage of some 14,000 miles made at an average speed of 27.2 knots. Once in Australia, *Queen Mary* was taken to the Cockatoo Docks and Engineering Co. pier to undergo its transformation. When the workmen were finished, *Queen Mary* could take 5,500 passengers.

On May 4, 1940, *Queen Mary* left Sydney with 5,000 Aussie troops aboard. The great liner joined other "drafted" passenger ships similarly loaded with equipment and men, forming a huge convoy protected by the Royal Australian Navy. This first maiden troopship voyage was completed successfully, but the *Queen's* arrival back in Britain coincided with the war's darkest days. That spring, Hitler



A veteran of the *Queen Mary* since her maiden voyage, Quartermaster William Hilton stands at one of the ship's two wheels inside the large wheelhouse.

The ship went into service in 1936, and in August of that year it captured the fabled "Blue Ribband" prize for the fastest transatlantic passage. *Queen Mary* had traveled from Southampton to New York in a record three days, 23 hours, and 57 minutes, averaging over 30 knots.

Queen Mary's growing fame attracted many celebrities of the period. Hollywood stars like Cary Grant could be seen in the Cabin (First) Class Dining Saloon, which featured a large intricately carved wooden map of the Atlantic

passengers was palpable. The liner *Athena* had been torpedoed a short time earlier, which did nothing to lighten the mood. In an effort to calm nerves, the captain asked Bob Hope to do a show for his fellow travelers.

The comedian rose to the occasion, and soon had passengers roaring with laughter. Noting the crowded conditions, Hope did a parody of his signature tune, "Thanks for the Memory." While his audience laughed, Hope sang, "Thanks for the memory, Some folks slept on the floor, Some in the corridor, But I was more

unleashed the blitzkrieg on Western Europe, overrunning Holland, Belgium, and ultimately France in a matter of weeks.

The British Expeditionary Force was pushed to the coast and barely escaped annihilation in the celebrated “Miracle of Dunkirk.” The British Army had escaped destruction but was forced to leave all its vehicles and heavy weapons behind. The island nation, now truly alone, braced itself for a possible invasion. There was only one bright spot in this litany of gloom: Winston Churchill had replaced the inept Neville Chamberlain as prime minister. Churchill was a man who truly appreciated the importance of *Queen Mary* and her sister ship.

Queen Mary’s primary mission would be to ferry troops to battlefronts where they were most needed, but she needed additional modifications. The ship was dispatched to Singapore, Britain’s great eastern bastion, where the transformations could take place. Japan, already embroiled in a major land war in China, soon occupied French Indochina. Tokyo’s ambitions knew no bounds, and its clear goal was nothing less than the control of East Asia.

The Japanese were careful to maintain peaceful relations with Britain and the United States, but war with the western powers was clearly on the horizon. In the meantime, the *Queen Mary*’s focus was the worsening crisis in the Middle East. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini hoped to carve out a new Roman Empire in the Middle East by invading British-held Egypt, which was the site of the Suez Canal, Britain’s lifeline to India and the Far East, a jugular vein of communications that had to be held at all costs. Mussolini’s badly led forces were easily routed, but Hitler upped the ante by sending the German Afrika Korps to aid his ally.

Queen Mary arrived in Singapore on August 5, 1940, and slipped into a huge Admiralty drydock for the scheduled modifications. A degaussing coil was wrapped lengthwise around the liner’s exposed hull as protection against German magnetic mines. The coil consisted of five miles of copper wire that, when charged with electric current, effectively neutralized the ship’s magnetic field.

After the extensive refit, Sydney became *Queen Mary*’s main base throughout 1941. In this period the liner shuttled troops from Australia to the Middle East, although she did not make the complete journey to the battlefronts. The ship usually stopped at Bombay, where the troops would transfer to smaller vessels that took them to Egypt.

The open ocean is one thing, but the rela-



Painted in dull wartime colors, the *Queen Mary* looks every bit the troop ship she was reconditioned to be in this December 1944 photo. During the war, the luxury liner transported thousands of troops from North America to Europe.

tively narrow confines of the Red Sea exposed the ship to too much risk. If the liner was sunk, the psychological blow to morale—not to mention the loss of life—would have been devastating. On a strategic level, Britain would lose almost 20 percent of its troop-carrying capacity during the war. It was the kind of percentage that might tip the scales in Germany’s favor.

Australian troops were tough and hearty, with a sense of humor that delighted in poking fun at the pretensions of themselves and others. They needed this irreverent wit because tedious weeks aboard the *Queen Mary* could try the patience of a saint. The war with Japan was still months into the future, and the chance of encountering a “rogue” German U-boat was remote indeed. Unfortunately, the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* were designed for the cold North Atlantic, not the blistering heat of the tropics.

Torrid temperatures, not German torpedoes, became the chief threat in the summer months of 1941. Extra fans were jerry-rigged all around the ship, and saltwater showers were installed above decks. Awnings also were spread in an effort to deflect the sun’s burning rays. Unfortunately, these stopgap measures could not prevent temperatures rising well past the 100-degree range. Cases of heatstroke and heat exhaustion were multiplied, and on occasion there were one or two deaths from the oven-like temperatures.

The December 7, 1941, Japanese attack on

Pearl Harbor widened the war and brought the United States into the conflict on the Allied side. Churchill hurried across the Atlantic to confer with his new partners, although in truth the British and Americans had been cooperating with each other long before the formal declarations of war.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his advisers cordially welcomed Churchill that grim December, then set to work devising a strategy to deal with a two-front, two-ocean war. The Anglo-Americans agreed on a Germany-first policy, but where would the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* fit into the new realities of war? Their services as troopships were more needed than ever, but obviously the United States far outstripped Great Britain in terms of resources and manpower.

It was agreed that the *Queens* would be turned over to the Americans in a kind of reverse Lend-Lease, but that British Cunard crews would continue to run the ships under American operational control. But now that America was in the war, its troops were urgently needed, especially in the Far East. The Japanese were sweeping through Asia almost unchecked, and Australia was almost defenseless against Japanese aggression.

U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall met with Churchill to discuss how many people the *Queens* could carry effectively. Marshall had the idea of shipping at least



ABOVE: The peacetime opulence of the *Queen Mary* could not be hidden during the war. Here, the finery of the main dining room is apparent. Known to the troops the ship carried as the main “mess hall,” the area could accommodate 2,000 men at a single sitting. **RIGHT:** Manning a twin Bofors antiaircraft gun on the deck of the *Queen Mary*, a crew is put through its paces by an officer during gunnery training at sea.



10,000 men, perhaps even 15,000, aboard one vessel. The figure is significant because a single division could number 15,000 troops.

Queen Mary’s lifeboats could carry a maximum of about 3,000 souls. Add all available rafts and floats, and the number might boost to 8,000. The liner often was unescorted because her speed was considered her best defense. But if the *Queen Mary* was torpedoed, roughly half of her passengers might meet the same fate as those aboard the ill-fated *Titanic*—death by drowning or hypothermia.

Churchill was a complete romantic who loved pageantry, tradition, and the past. Churchill was also a hard-headed realist who did not shrink from difficult and even controversial decisions if the need arose. The prime minister’s reply to Marshall was unequivocal: “I can only tell you what WE would do. You must judge for yourselves the risks you will run. If it were the direct part of an actual operation, we should put all on board they could carry.... It is for you to decide.”

In the end, the *Queen Mary* would carry 15,000 passengers, but not right away. In January 1942, the ship was in Boston undergoing another refit that would boost her passenger load from 5,000 to 8,500. The ship needed to upgrade her defensive capabilities as well.

Before 1942, she had been protected by a single 4-inch gun and a few scattered Vickers and Lewis machine guns.

Now, she was to have the armaments roughly equivalent to a light cruiser. The list included 40mm cannon in five double mounts sited fore and aft and 24 single-barrel cannon emplaced in steel tub mounts along the ship’s upper structure. Six 3-inch guns were also aboard, as well as two antiaircraft rocket launchers near the aft funnel.

When the job was complete, the *Queen Mary* embarked 8,398 American soldiers, most of them artillerymen or ordnance troops of one kind or another. Her destination was Sydney via Trinidad, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, and Freemantle. The liner left Boston on February 18, 1942, under bright blue skies that seemed to augur a safe passage. In fact, this trip was one of the most dangerous of the *Queen Mary*’s entire wartime service.

The period from January to August 1942 was fondly remembered by German submariners as “the happy time,” a period when they were winning the vital Battle of the Atlantic. In these eight months no less than 609

Allied ships went to the bottom, a staggering 3.1 million tons in all. The *Queen Mary* would have been the greatest prize of all. Adolf Hitler offered a million reichsmarks, about \$250,000, and the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves to any submarine captain who could successfully torpedo the *Queen Mary*.

Increased U-boat activity around Trinidad forced a slight change in plans. The *Queen Mary* was diverted to Key West, and it was there that Captain James Bisset took command of the vessel. A 35-year veteran of the sea, he was nevertheless amazed by the *Queen Mary*’s great size. “Gazing up at her,” he later recalled, “I felt overawed at the responsibility soon to be mine....”

Once on the bridge, Bisset had little time for such reflections. The *Queen Mary* sailed on the westward side of Cuba, then east into the Caribbean, finally breaking into the wide Atlantic via the Anegada Passage. Bisset had no idea that two German submarines, *U-161* and *U-129*, were not far behind following the same route.

The *Queen Mary*’s radio operator picked up a distress signal from a torpedoed tanker only 10 miles astern of the giant liner. In fact, this same tanker had passed the *Queen Mary* only 45 minutes earlier. Captain Bisset ordered full speed ahead, and the liner safely reached Rio on March 6, 1942.

The *Queen Mary* was in even greater danger in Rio. Count Edmondo di Robilant headed an Italian spy ring in South America, and according to some versions of the story had actually obtained a copy of the ship’s sailing schedule. Robilant or one of his confederates secretly radioed German submarines with the intelligence that the great ship was anchored at Rio, but luckily the message was intercepted by Allied intelligence.

Captain Bisset was told to refuel quickly and leave port as soon as possible. Forewarned, the ship left Rio several hours before its scheduled departure. The *Queen Mary* escaped in the nick of time. An oil tanker that left port about the time of the liner’s original sailing was torpedoed a few miles out to sea. It looked as if a German submarine had been lurking in ambush.

The Germans refused to believe that the *Queen Mary* had slipped the net; in fact they proudly announced the sinking of the great ship. Hearing this, Captain Bisset remarked to his communications officer, “Keep this news under your hat. Don’t let the troops know we’ve been sunk. It might worry them!”

The rest of the trip was uneventful, and the *Queen Mary* successfully reached Australia, where the Americans disembarked safely. The

Yanks had behaved themselves but left distinctively American “calling cards”—wads of chewing gum stuck from stem to stern. Captain Bisset quickly revised the rules, adding chewing gum to the list of banned substances.

By 1943, planning for Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of occupied France, was well underway. Earlier refitted to accommodate 15,000 men, the *Queen Mary* made a significant contribution to the Allied build-up that preceded the invasion. In essence, the ship could carry an entire division across the ocean in less than six days.

Now permanently assigned to the European Theater, the giant vessel became a “GI shuttle” that ferried thousands upon thousands of American and Canadian troops across the Atlantic to Great Britain. It was decided that the *Queen Mary* could take 15,000 men only during the summer months, when the seas were calmer. The ship might weather choppy seas or a raging winter storm, but the packed men would be so tossed about that broken arms and other injuries could result. The idea was to deliver the men in one piece!

Gourock, Scotland, not far from where she was launched, was slated to be the *Queen Mary*’s home port for the duration. Southampton was the liner’s normal base in peacetime, but it was too near German-occupied France and subject to enemy air raids. Liverpool was another alternative, but it had also experienced German bombing. Gourock was beyond reach to all but a handful of German long-range aircraft types.

It was quickly realized that new rules and new procedures had to be adopted for the 15,000-man voyages, or all would dissolve into chaos. The ship was divided into three vertical sections—Red, White, and Blue—and every soldier coming aboard was given a colored button corresponding to the section where his unit was assigned. Visiting other sections was strictly forbidden. The Red section stretched from the bow of the ship aft to the number three stairway, excluding the sun deck. White covered everything between number three and number four stairways, and included the sun deck. Blue was from the number four stairway to the stern.

This overcrowding was feasible thanks in part to the standee bunks, which had replaced the ship’s earlier hammocks. Standee bunks were tiered sleeping spaces stacked up as high as six feet. There was only an 18-inch clearance between each standee, which did not help any soldiers who might be claustrophobic. Sleeping was done on a rotation basis, with each bunk

shared by the men. In addition, at any given time one-third of the troops would sleep “topside” on the open deck.

The rotation system assured that each man slept inside two nights and then outside two nights. Sleeping topside was feasible only in the summer months because winters on the North Atlantic are too cold. Most GIs actually preferred outside, which was less dank and claustrophobic. Besides, the men reasoned rightly that those topside would have a better chance for survival if the ship was torpedoed.

Sergeant Jerry Cerrachio got some good advice during one of the *Queen Mary*’s outbound voyages to Britain. Since the upper standees were fairly high, it was only natural to select a lower bunk for convenience. “Don’t

The former first-class dining saloon was the main enlisted men’s mess hall. It had been stripped of its prewar finery, but the great world map of earlier days was still in place, a reminder of happier times. Officers ate in the former tourist class lounge. Rank did have some privileges. Officers dined on regular tables and had food served by stewards. However, there was literally no “free lunch.” At the end of the crossing, it was expected that an officer would give the stewards a generous tip.

On such a crowded ship, rules and regulations assumed even greater importance. The *Queen Mary* officially was declared a “dry” ship—no alcoholic beverages allowed. Some rules were almost impossible to enforce. There was to be no swearing, no obscene or profane



The crews of numerous U.S. Army Air Corps heavy bombers occupy a first-class cabin aboard the *Queen Mary* in November 1944. During the war, 12 bunks occupied the space normally allotted to one bed aboard the great ship.

take that one, Sarge,” a friend cautioned. “If one of the guys above you throws up, it’ll wind up all over you!” Cerrachio immediately changed his mind and picked an upper bunk.

Feeding such a multitude was no easy task. There were two main meals a day in six staggered sittings. Breakfast was available from 6:30 AM to 11:00 AM, and dinner from 3:00 PM to 7:30 PM. Soldiers could take as much as they wanted but were allotted only 45 minutes to complete their meals. As one group was exiting, another group would be queueing up to be served. Sandwiches were available for the men to take with them as they exited, to snack on between meals.

language, and above all no gambling of any kind. The GIs ignored the gambling ban, and probably drove the MP’s to distraction. Poker, blackjack, and crap games were a major form of amusement during the long six-day passage.

Some rules were rigidly enforced. There was a standing order that all personnel had to wear their life jackets and helmets when topside. Any person caught without these items had to forfeit his shoes. The story is told of an American admiral who must have thought his exalted rank put him above these things. He was caught without a life jacket and forced to surrender his shoes. He padded off in his stocking feet, thoroughly chastened.



Troops crowd the deck during a lifeboat drill aboard the *Queen Mary* in December 1944. The luxury liner churns the sea swiftly, her captain and crew wary of the threat of German U-boats. OPPOSITE: Seen from the bridge of the escorting British cruiser *HMS Scylla*, the *Queen Mary* slices through the waters of the Atlantic. During an unfortunate accident, the great liner collided with a Royal Navy warship, which quickly sank.

Clandestine gambling apart, there was little to do on these long, cramped voyages. There was an occasional work detail, and some officers arranged exercise workouts. Movies were shown, but the *Queen Mary*'s film library was limited. At least the GLs were aboard for only six days. Cunard crew members had even less choice. It was said that one crewmember saw the Laurence Olivier film, *Pride and Prejudice*, 120 times!

Other soldiers passed the time by reading, writing letters, or simply talking to buddies. Those seeking religious solace could attend services in the Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish chapels. Mandatory lifeboat drills, ironic in that there were not enough lifeboats to accommodate all, also provided some breaks in the monotony.

Life may have been tolerable, but it was anything but a pleasure cruise. The *Queen Mary* was a legendary ship in any guise, even a troopship, but even before the war it had a tendency to roll in heavy seas. This was an unfortunate trait in the North Atlantic, well known for cen-

turies as one of the most treacherous, even capricious, oceans in the world.

Seasickness was common, and the men rarely washed. There was always a lurking fear that one would be caught in the shower when the ship was torpedoed. Rather be dirty and safe than be clean and sorry. The net result was an atmosphere of cigarette smoke, sweat, vomit, and diesel oil that cannot be imagined by merely looking at period photographs.

In spite of the problems and discomforts, the *Queen Mary* was succeeding in its mission. During August 2 through 7, 1942, the ship carried a complete division, the First Armored, across the Atlantic. On that voyage, 15,125 troops and 863 crewmen were aboard. The ship reached a milestone on the July 25-30, 1943, passage. On that voyage she transported 15,740 troops and 943 crewmen, for a grand total of 16,683. It was the largest number of people ever carried by a steamship.

The *Queen Mary* also transported Axis POWs during her years of active service. Early

in the war, the ship transported Italian prisoners to Australia. After the tide turned in North Africa, thousands of Germans also found themselves involuntary passengers aboard the great liner. Winston Churchill was aboard the *Queen Mary* for three trips, and during one of these voyages the liner also carried 5,000 German POWs.

On the whole, the Axis prisoners caused little trouble, but occasionally there were some minor flareups. In June 1942, some German prisoners scrawled anti-British slogans on a bulkhead. They were confined to the brig for a few days on bread and water. When some British personnel tried to counter with "Rule Britannia" graffiti, they too were thrown in the brig to cool off for a few days. One did not mark the *Queen Mary*'s walls, and the captain was determined not to play favorites!

The Germans would claim to have sunk the *Queen Mary* from time to time, partly in an effort to locate it. The Germans hoped that the false reports would prompt the *Queen Mary* or the Admiralty to break radio silence. If they did

so, then the Germans could get a fix on the vessel. The British never fell for such a transparent ruse, and throughout the war the *Queen Mary* led a charmed life.

One tragedy did mar the *Queen's* otherwise sterling wartime career. It occurred off the coast of Ireland on October 2, 1942, at about 2 PM. Captain Cyril Illingsworth was the ship's master on this voyage, and at the time he was in the chartroom in the back of the bridge. Navigating officer Stanley Wright remarked to the captain that he felt unhappy that the escorting vessel, HMS *Curacao*, was getting too close. Illingsworth dismissed Wright's worries, saying the light cruiser was used to escort duties and she "will keep out of your way."

At the moment, the *Queen Mary* was executing a zigzag pattern, standard procedure



for protection against submarines. The HMS *Curacao* was a light cruiser of World War I vintage, 450 feet long and 4,200 tons, commanded by Captain John Boutwood, a regular Royal Navy officer.

Suddenly, the *Curacao* moved close to the

Queen Mary—too close. Recognizing the danger, the *Queen Mary's* senior first officer, Noel Robinson, ordered, "Hard a port!" The horrified officer knew they had only two minutes to rectify the course and heading and to ward off disaster.

It was not enough. The *Queen Mary* struck the *Curacao* a glancing blow at an acute angle about 11 feet from her stern, which spun the smaller vessel around 90 degrees and left her vulnerable for a second, more devastating collision. The *Queen Mary* sliced through the *Curacao's* hull like a knife through butter, cutting the unfortunate cruiser in two amid the sounds of escaping steam and tearing metal. The *Curacao's* stern momentarily half capsized, its propellers spinning in the empty air, before

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The Prime Minister and the Queen

British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill traveled on the *Queen Mary* on three separate occasions during the course of World War II. The first trip took place on May 5-11, 1943, when Churchill was on his way to discuss urgent matters with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, including the Sicilian campaign and events in Burma.

When Churchill was aboard, the strictest security was observed. The prime minister and his entourage boarded at night and were listed as "Colonel Warden and party" to waylay any suspicions. Sometimes Churchill was identified as "239 and party," though no one has ever explained the significance of the number. Churchill was usually accompanied by various government ministers, intelligence and staff officers, cipher clerks, secretaries, detectives, and a guard of Royal Marines.

The prime minister's portions of the ship had to be modified to accommodate what was, in effect, the British government at sea, a kind of "floating Whitehall." The staterooms occupied by Churchill and his suite were brought up to prewar standards with furniture brought out of storage for the occasion.

The Churchill portions of the ship were a little world unto themselves, exempt from the usual rules and regulations. When the prime minister found out the *Queen Mary* was a "dry ship" for the duration, he gave one of his bulldog frowns of defiance until assured the rules did not apply to him. The great man loved his liquor, and on these voyages he was served by red-coated Royal Marines instead of Cunard stewards. On occasion, his wife Clementine and daughter Mary accompanied him. Mary was a subaltern (junior officer) seconded to her father's service as aide-de-camp.

Churchill kept in constant touch with Britain and the various battlefronts, but it was important for the *Queen Mary* not to break radio silence and give her position away to the Germans. The solution was to flash messages to escort destroyers using an Aldis lamp. Once the signals were received, the destroyer would break away and sail as much as 150 miles away from the *Queen Mary* before finally transmitting them.

Winston Churchill had every confidence in the *Queen Mary's* speed and ability to evade Ger-

man submarines. W. Averell Harriman, U.S. ambassador to Great Britain and special representative to the prime minister, accompanied Churchill on the first voyage. Harriman was playing bezique (a card game) with the prime minister when a duty officer came by with an urgent message. A German submarine was likely to cross the *Queen Mary's* course 15 miles ahead.

Churchill took the news nonchalantly, explaining, "We are just as likely to ram the submarine as it is to see us first." But just in case they were forced to abandon ship, Churchill arranged to have a .303 Vickers machine gun be mounted in his lifeboat.

"I won't be captured," Churchill declared. "The finest way to die is in the excitement of fighting the enemy." He paused, as if considering another possibility, then added, "It might not be so nice if one were in the water and they tried to pick me up." Still, Churchill was ready to take on the Germans, inviting Harriman to "come with me in the boat and see the fun."

The first really detailed plan of the Normandy invasion was presented to Churchill while he was lying in bed in his stateroom on M

deck. Brigadier General K.G. MacLean and two other officers from the planning staff gave him a thorough briefing.

The bed anecdote is misleading because Churchill and his staff worked hard, very hard, on these trips. There were map rooms and conference rooms for the purpose, and the prime minister and his staff used them frequently. The typing pool also kept fingers busy with a flurry of letters, memos, and other documents. Churchill sometimes did not call it a day until around 10 in the evening. Then, and only then, could the staff relax a bit.

On Churchill's second voyage, he was accompanied by the entire Imperial General Staff. On August 5-9, 1943, the prime minister was on his way to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he would disembark and proceed to Quebec for the Quadrant Conference.

Churchill's final wartime trip took place in September 1944, and once again the ship deposited the prime minister in Halifax, en route to Quebec and the Octagon Conference. Churchill had just come back from a trip to Italy and was battling a bout of pneumonia and a temperature of 104 degrees. The sea voyage worked wonders, and he was soon his old self. □

Ralph Coyne fought across the South Pacific with the Australian 2/4 Commando.

"We shall not be content with a defensive war," stated British Prime Minister Winston Churchill during his speech to the House of Commons immediately after the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Forces from Dunkirk on June 4, 1940. That same afternoon, he wrote to General Sir Hastings Ismay, his right-hand man in the War Cabinet Secretariat, "We should immediately set to



BY KEN WRIGHT

The Dark Blue Double DIAMOND

work to organize self contained, thoroughly equipped raiding units. Enterprises must be prepared with specially trained troops of the hunter class who can develop a reign of terror down the enemy coasts leaving a trail of German corpses behind them." With pressure from Churchill, the famous British Commando units were born.

Negotiations began secretly between Australia and Britain to establish special units similar to the British Commando model. A British military mission arrived in Australia in November 1940 to set up a training scheme in secret. The training was to be conducted by Australian and New Zealand officers specially detailed for the task. Each soldier had to be a volunteer, be physically fit, possess individual initiative, and be of above average intelligence. They were trained to accept responsibility far in excess of their rank and to be able to fend for themselves under the most severe conditions. British Commandos were trained to carry out sudden sneak attacks and then withdraw back to their bases, whereas the Australians were taught to stay behind, live off the land, and carry out guerrilla warfare against an attacking enemy. They were called Independent Companies and were not officially known as Commandos until 1943.

Twenty-year-old Ralph Coyne was training in the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) to be a signaller during March 1941 and was expecting to be posted to the Middle East. "One day on parade, a Major asked for volunteers to serve in a small group to operate in enemy territory," he remembered. "Of the 500 on parade, 12 of us

stepped forward. We were immediately put on a truck and taken to a secret training area at Wilsons Promontory in Victoria. The next morning we were told we were going to receive very tough training and at the end of a month, those who are not suitable or didn't wish to stay could return to their original units without shame. At the month's end, one third had returned to their units and those of us who completed the course were issued British uniforms. And, as I was in the 2/4 Independent Company, I proudly attached the dark blue double blue diamond colour shoulder patch to my new uniform. We had three infantry platoons, each of 67 men, a signals section of 36, 20 engineers, 11 medical and a company HQ of 12. We were transferred to the top part of Western Australia and split up into platoons so we could patrol the major rivers of the Northern Territory stretching from the Western Australian border to the Gulf of Carpentaria."

Before the war, the island of Timor, about 300 miles from the northwest corner of Australia, had been politically divided by two colonial powers. The western half of Timor was part of the Dutch East Indies with Koepang the capital. The eastern half, with Dili as its capital, was a Portuguese colony. The island was of strategic interest to the Japanese.

Pearl Harbor was only the beginning of Japanese military expansion in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The Japanese Army invaded Hong Kong and the Philippines and landed troops on the northeast coast of Malaya on December 8, 1941, sweeping all before



Lieutenant K. McKittrick hoists the Australian flag on Sadau Island, Borneo, April 30, 1945. The battle hardened soldiers of the 2/4 Commando Squadron look on during the impromptu ceremony. **OPPOSITE:** Veteran commando Ralph Coyne (standing second from right) is shown with other members of 2/4 Commando Squadron, which saw heavy action in several battles against the Japanese.

(Australian War Memorial/Opposite: Courtesy of Ralph Coyne)

them and capturing Singapore, the last bastion of British rule and prestige in Asia.

Fearing possible Japanese activity in the region, Australia sent to Timor on December 12, 1941, the 2/40 Battalion AIF with supporting units of the newly trained 2/2 Independent Company and Lockheed Hudson bombers from No. 2 Squadron RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) to bolster the Dutch forces around Koepang. An arrangement was made with the neutral Portuguese to unofficially allow most of the 2/2 to be stationed near Dili. Code-named Sparrow Force, the troops were soon to see action.

Japanese forces continued their seemingly unstoppable advance and on January 23, 1942, overwhelmed the small Australian garrison at Rabaul on the island of New Britain, which was the capital of the Australian-controlled territory of New Guinea. In early February 1942, Australian and Dutch forces surrendered the island of Ambon, another Dutch East Indies possession. Control of the nearby island of Timor by the Japanese would bring them within easy striking distance of Australia.

From Admiral Chuichi Nagumos's aircraft carriers in the Timor Sea and from the 21st Air Flotilla base at Kendari in the Celebes, 188 Japanese aircraft struck a crippling blow against the major northern Australian port of Darwin in early February. Shortly afterward, the Japanese began their invasion of Timor on February 19-20, with landings on the northern coast of Portuguese territory and the southern coast of Dutch territory. Sparrow Force defended Koepang as best it could but was soon out of supplies and ammunition. With many wounded, most of the troops were forced to surrender on February 23.

Most of those who survived the battles and surrendered died from brutal treatment in Japanese POW camps. In Dili, the 2/2 and some Dutch troops along with remnants of the 2/4 were given the equally impossible task of overcoming a large, well-equipped Japanese force. The outcome was inevitable, forcing the survivors to retreat into the mountains with approximately 8,000 Japanese searching for them. The survivors of Sparrow Force were limited to carrying out hit-and-run ambushes, and as time passed their health suffered through lack of decent food, exhaustion, and sickness. They had to rely on whatever food they could get from the natives. During the fighting, they lost their only radio. Unable to communicate with Australia, they were presumed captured or dead.

"One night in mid-April 1942, two months

after the rumored loss of Sparrow Force on Timor, our signalers were told to listen for radio calls claiming to be Australian coming from Timor," remembered Coyne. "Although weak, we were able to pick up their signal, and after they answered a lot of personal questions we were able to identify them as the remnants of the 2/2 Independent Company in Timor. Their signal was being transmitted by a radio pieced



"Voyager was now stuck fast and left with no alternative. The decision was made to abandon ship and destroy her using demolition charges."

together from scrap material and powered by an old car battery. The battery was being charged by a generator driven by a rope connected to a wheel turned by a native. The radio became known as 'Winnie the War Winner' after the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. HQ realized it was most imperative a reliable transmitter/receiver be sent to them as soon as possible."

The Royal Australian Navy landed a party at night at a prearranged rendezvous, and several small vessels followed, landing ammunition, weapons, medical supplies, food, clothing, and radio equipment. They also evacuated the sick and wounded.

With the Japanese capture of New Britain, it was now even more vital that Allied HQ in Australia be informed of the enemy movements in Timor, and urgent arrangements were made for the 2/4 Independent Company to be withdrawn from its existing patrol areas. They were re-equipped with rifles, submachine guns, grenades, ammunition, sleeping bags, new uni-

forms, and other assorted stores that were being sent to reinforce the 2/2 Company on Timor. Late on the afternoon of September 22, 1942, Corporal Coyne and the men of the dark blue double diamond 2/4 Company boarded the World War I-vintage destroyer HMAS *Voyager* for the 30-hour trip to Timor. She was a small ship, and with approximately 14 tons of stores on her deck there was barely enough room for the 250 soldiers. They made themselves as comfortable as possible. It was a dark, moonless tropical night and most tried to sleep, as soldiers throughout the centuries have done when given the opportunity.

"At some point during the night," said Coyne, "everyone on board became aware the engines had stopped and the main gun was being trained. The ship's forward movement also stopped, and she began to roll listlessly with the waves. The dreaded word 'submarine' was quietly whispered amongst sailors and soldiers alike. The silence was eerie as the ship drifted in the darkness for about 20 minutes before the throb of the engines resumed and *Voyager* was underway again.

"We reached the south coast of East Timor at a beach called Betano in late evening on 23 September," he continued, "and the *Voyager's* captain, knowing the men had to scramble down nets slung over the side heavily loaded with equipment, tried to get as close to shore as possible. Each soldier carried a pack weighing approximately 80 pounds plus his rifle or machine gun, belts or magazines of ammunition, grenades, and a water bottle. Clambering down nets on the side of a swaying ship and stepping into a canvas boat in heaving surf was no easy task. Boxes of ammunition, grenades, heavy long-range radio sets, car batteries (to power the sets), battery chargers the size of a small car engine, gasoline, medical supplies, demolition charges, and Australian silver currency to pay the natives who were able to sell food.

"The destroyer lay with her port side parallel to the beach, and some of the soldiers were disembarking into the boats just above the ship's port propeller. Suddenly, the alarm was raised as the heavy surf had caused the ship to swing on her anchor and was in danger of running aground hard ashore. The captain, Lieutenant Commander R.C. Robison, could have saved his ship with the use of both his engines, but it would have meant a horrible death for many of the soldiers above the port propeller. With no time to lose, the captain opted to leave the port propeller idle and went astern on the starboard screw, but unfortunately *Voyager* hit the beach. Once the soldiers and their stores had disembarked safely, the ship's company



ABOVE: Manning a Bren gun position along the forward line of C Troop, 2/4 Commando Squadron covering an area known as Snags Track, troopers McGowan, Sherring, and McDonald cast a wary eye toward Japanese positions. These Australian commandos were ashore near Tarakan, Borneo, on May 13, 1945. **LEFT:** Heavy bomb damage inflicted during a Japanese air raid on September 4, 1943, is evident aboard the LST 473, which carried Australian commandos to the shore of New Guinea at Lae. **OPPOSITE:** The elderly World War I-vintage destroyer HMAS *Voyager* lies forlornly aground at Betano Bay on the island of Timor. The ship was later ravaged by Japanese bombers. (Above: Australian War; Left and Opposite: Courtesy of Ralph Coyne)

worked desperately to free the ship embedded in the sand. To make matters worse, a strong southeast wind created large waves that forced the ship further ashore. *Voyager* was now stuck fast and left with no alternative. The decision was made to abandon the ship and destroy her using demolition charges.”

The next day, the *Voyager* was sighted by a Japanese reconnaissance bomber escorted by a Zero fighter and, defiant to the end, the destroyer’s crew shot the bomber down. By mid-afternoon, a series of Japanese bombing raids completed the *Voyager*’s destruction. Two days later, the stranded officers and crew were safely evacuated by two Australian Navy ships and returned to Australia.

The 2/4 Company quickly moved inland and

joined the remainder of the 2/2. The combined force totaled 500 men, and they began frequent and effective ambushes against the Japanese. Two observation posts were established overlooking Dili, so the arrival of enemy convoys could be reported to HQ in Australia. Reports such as the number of ships and naval escorts, troops and military equipment being unloaded, and where the troops were being quartered were transmitted to Australia. This information allowed General Douglas MacArthur at General Headquarters South West Pacific Area (GHQ, SWPA) in Australia to allocate RAAF bombers to strike specific targets identified by the Commandos.

“We traveled single file away from the beach in the darkness,” recalled Coyne. “No one spoke. Around 1400 hours, word was passed down the line we were to camp, as it turned out, at an abandoned Portuguese military quarters at Hata Udu. Our platoon lieutenant wanted to send a coded message to HQ, so I unpacked our transmitter and took it into a nearby native grass hut and set up the radio

(about the size of a large loaf of bread), put up the antenna and made contact with HQ in cipher and Morse code. A few minutes later, I could hear a Jap fighter in the vicinity. Moments later, there was the harsh rattle of machine gun fire, the bullets stitching a straight line across the hut floor and across the wooden table I was using, just missing the radio. I completed the message after the fighter had gone.

“Shortly after, the platoon moved westward to a small town called Ainaro nestled near high mountains,” he related. “There was a small simple church there, and we were told that the two Portuguese priests, Fathers Roberto and Peres, had been murdered by the Japanese for supplying the Australians with information. One had been doused with petrol and set on fire at his altar. For those of us new to war, this information gave us an insight into the type of enemy we were fighting. We followed a native track up into the mountains, and it was here we met native boys who approached the soldiers asking if we would take ‘criados,’ mean-

On July 11, 1944, soldiers of 2/10 Commando Squadron are shown hitching rides aboard American-built amphibious DUKW craft as they deploy to Babiang, New Guinea.

(Australian War Memorial)



ing a native servant for each soldier. We looked at the mountains and our heavy packs and agreed with enthusiasm. By late afternoon we all had a criados freeing us of our packs and allowing us to cope with the heavier military equipment. My criados was a young lad who I called Dicky.

“As time passed, we found it risky using other natives or mountain ponies. If we were attacked, the horses would bolt and the natives would drop the equipment and run away. We couldn’t afford to lose anything. Because most of our cross country walking was over mountain ranges up to 9,000 feet high, we had to discard some unnecessary equipment. Each native village we came to was thickly infested with fleas, and as we walked through the village, they rose up in a cloud smothering our legs and clothes. Initially, they drove us crazy, but after a while we got used to it just as the natives had. The beards we had grown were a haven for them.”

Allied military commanders expected the Commandos to live off the land and had no idea that the primitive native farmers were accustomed to barely meeting their own food requirements and that supplying others was almost beyond their capacity. The local staple diet consisted of maize, some rice, and wild pig, which had excessive fat and little meat. To the Australian palate, the pig tasted revolting. The situation was made even more difficult as the Japanese placed a ruthless and heavy demand on the natives for food as well. They paid for it in a special printed currency, which was quite worthless. The natives knew it was worthless, but refusal risked punishment and possibly death.

The Commandos paid in Australian silver currency for what they could get; the money was prized by the natives. The Timorese feared

the Japanese because of their brutality but liked the Aussie soldier, who was always friendly, and admired the Aussies’ fighting ability. They seemed to suddenly rise up out of the grass, and in usually short, sharp exchanges ambush the Japanese and disappear, leaving a trail of death behind them. In nearby Papua, New Guinea, the Imperial Japanese Army suffered another setback from November 1942, to January 1943, when Australian and American troops attacked and defeated them at Buna and Gona.

For almost four months, the 2/2 and 2/4 Independent Companies were able to engage two Japanese divisions. The combined effect of bombing by the RAAF and the constant ambushing by the small force of Australian soldiers hit the Japanese hard. In response, they increased their strength to approximately 20,000. Outnumbered and outgunned, the net began to close on the Australians. The Japanese launched a massive campaign against Sparrow Force, combining bribery and savage butchery of natives who were, or were thought to be, the major source of intelligence and suppliers of food to the Australian soldiers. This tactic proved successful, and in early December 1942, the 2/2 Company, deprived of the resources necessary to carry on effectively, had to finally be evacuated by the Dutch destroyer *Tjerk Hiddes*. This also forced 2/4 Company to abandon its coast watch, which greatly reduced the intelligence information available to GHQ, SWPA in Australia. The men of 2/4 retired to the mountains to carry out guerrilla warfare.

“We were fighting for our lives just to survive,” Coyne remembered. “The natives had been wonderful, frequently risking their lives to supply us with what they could in food, information and shelter. Unfortunately, the food was irregular and of such poor quality,

our health began to deteriorate. In the limited time we had been here, a strong bond of friendship and mutual respect had developed between the Australians and the Timorese. Late one afternoon my section stayed in a deserted mountain village. As usual, we went to sleep in our sleeping bags fully dressed, boots and weapons beside us. At daybreak we awoke to find all the other huts occupied by native men, women and children. Our section was not even aware they had arrived.

“It was established the village had a curse or hoodoo on it and the fact we stayed there lifted the curse and they could come back to their village,” he said. “This was a great event for them, and a celebration feast in their traditional style was organized. We were asked to shoot four water buffalo for the feast. We argued against this as shots could be heard by the enemy and our position would be compromised. After much discussion, we agreed to shoot only two. To the primitive Timorese, sacrificing these valuable animals was meant as a great honour. The unfortunate creatures were led into the village and shot, but strangely, the villagers just left the dead buffalo in the hot tropical sun. The next day they began to bloat. We had expected a feast almost straight away but it wasn’t until midday on the fourth day the villagers plunged their knives into the carcasses. The stench was awful. Then, something occurred we least expected. The entrails were removed and brought to us with much bowing and gesturing. The soldardos (soldiers) were being honored. Everything was being passed by hand. We were trapped. We were each given a piece of the revolting mess and watched with expectancy. We couldn’t refuse without offending them. My stomach churned, but I smiled and ate my piece. Satisfied, the villagers turned their attention to the animals and began their feast while our stomachs turned cartwheels.”

Coyne saw his share of combat during his time on Timor, as evidenced by one encounter with the Japanese. “One day we ambushed a group of 30 Jap soldiers, killing a number of them,” he commented. “Invariably, our ambushes were watched by natives hiding in the scrub. After the clash was over, natives rushed out with machetes and decapitated the dead or wounded Japanese. The heads were taken back to their village and placed on totem poles. I remember thinking those heads could quite easily have been Australian. After another ambush, a native came up to me holding two Japanese heads by the hair and offered them to me as presents. Naturally, I refused. A few minutes later, the men and boys formed a large circle in the village and began clapping and chanting while the women and girls

began playing football with the two heads for about 20 minutes.

"We were constantly on the move, patrolling, ambushing or being ambushed. We practiced 'Tetum,' the native language which was spoken by half the population of East Timor and understood by a quarter of the remaining people. Our criados tried speaking English."

As Corporal Coyne and the men of his section harassed the Japanese in short, sharp, and bloody ambushes, the military situation for the various sections of 2/4 operating in East Timor was fast becoming untenable owing to pressure from the Japanese forces and their native sympathizers. It was decided by HQ in Australia to evacuate all the 2/4, and a secret order was issued to every section leader to assemble at Quicras beach approximately 16 miles east of the original landing beach at Betano. All movement was to be in complete secrecy.

"After days of marching east, our criados began to suspect something was wrong," said Coyne. "Somehow they suspected we were going back to Australia. They pleaded with us to take them with us when we left. We couldn't answer them as we didn't know what was happening ourselves. All we knew was we had to get to a rendezvous point by a certain date. Some time on 9 January, the sky began to darken, indicating a storm was brewing. We came to a large jungle swamp and waded across single file with water up to our waist. On the other side was the beach at Quicras. Waiting there were other sections of the 2/4. Once we were all assembled, the commanding officer, Major Mac Walker, announced that even before the evacuation of the 2/2 Company a month earlier all our sections had been under increasing attack. Our ops over Dili had to be abandoned, and our strength was now down to 250 men. And, as we were slowly being surrounded it was time to leave Timor. He also explained that General Douglas MacArthur had asked for a small volunteer force to remain behind to continue sending whatever intelligence they could to HQ in Australia. Thirteen men responded and moved back into the jungle to continue sending information. They were code named S-Force.

"Also on the beach were a group of Portuguese women, children and two men who were to be evacuated as well. The criados appealed to us to take them with us, but we were told by Major Walker this was not possible. We built a bonfire, and we lit it at 2230 hours as prearranged. The destroyer HMAS *Arunta* sent two boats through the raging surf to begin the evacuation. Imagine our feelings.

We were glad to be leaving Timor, but to leave our faithful criados behind was very emotional and distressing. Many tough soldiers had tears in their eyes when they said goodbye. I gave Dicky my army pullover and any money I had. It was all I had to give."

The women and children went in the boats first, and they were assisted beyond the strong surf. The night was passing quickly, but eventually all the civilians were aboard except the two Portuguese men. The storm was making it too dangerous to attempt further landings, and the ship's captain signalled, "Am sending final lot of boats with orders to stand-to outside



During a patrol on Tarakan Island, Borneo, on May 27, 1945, members of 2/4 Commando traverse a flimsy bridge constructed of logs. (Australian War Memorial)

breakers. Swim for it. Time does not permit sending any more boats." The captain had to leave before it was light enough for any Japanese reconnaissance aircraft to spot the ship. As it was, the last of the soldiers boarded just 45 minutes before daylight.

"We were ordered to throw our weapons into the swamp, and section by section we waded into the ocean and swam out to the waiting navy boats beyond the surf," recalled Coyne. "They pulled us aboard and took us to the ship. We discovered later the two Portuguese men had shot themselves instead of coming with us. The sailors gave us clothing and as much food as we could eat but not being used to decent food and with the rising and falling of the ship as she raced through the waves towards Australia, most of us became

seasick. Even sailors with many years experience at sea were sick."

Below deck, the crockery was crashing down, toilets were blocked, and vomit was everywhere but somehow the crew managed to get the ship cleaned up before arriving back in Darwin in the late afternoon. A welcoming committee of approximately 200 smartly uniformed Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel waited at the wharf. They were shocked at the sight of virtually naked, bearded, unkempt, thin, and wild-eyed soldiers disembarking. To the men, all that mattered was they were back home in Australia and alive.

The members of 2/4, who had so proudly worn the dark blue double diamond shoulder patch, began a month of rehabilitation. Some were hospitalized, and all were given a month leave and then reassembled for training for service in New Guinea.

The members of S-Force were only able to remain in East Timor for a short while. Japanese forces had finally made it too difficult for them to operate, and on February 10 the remaining soldiers were evacuated by the American submarine USS *Gudgeon*. With the departure of S-Force, the Australian campaign in Timor ended. For almost 12 months the Australian soldiers had harassed the Japanese, killing an estimated 1,500 with a loss of 48 of their own. Most importantly, their activities led the Japanese to believe that Allied forces were going to attempt to retake the island. Battle-hardened troops from the 48th Division were diverted to defend Timor against possible invasion. The Timorese were to pay a heavy price for their support of the Australians. Many criados were murdered by pro-Japanese natives. Hundreds of loyal natives were imprisoned, tortured, or killed.

In Australia, General MacArthur was still anxious for more information about Japanese activity on Timor, so it was decided that small groups of three or four men would be dropped by air onto the island as required. Radio contact was arranged in Melbourne, and a special cipher was to be used. No message would be regarded as authentic unless it was first preceded by a code word. Over a two-year period between 1943 and 1945, nine parties were dropped by air or put ashore by submarine. The first party was captured complete with radio and cipher. The signaler was tortured and forced to send messages prepared by the Japanese. To warn those in Australia that the operation had been compromised, the signaler omitted the code word.

Unbelievably, this was ignored by the recipients and another drop date was made. This

gross negligence was to cost the lives of many brave men. The second party was met by the Japanese at the drop zone and killed. Six more parties were sent and lost, but when the ninth one was being arranged, the team leader, Captain Arthur Stevenson, who had been a 2/4 corporal on Timor in 1942, received a warning about a possible Japanese ambush at the drop zone. He arrived a day earlier than arranged and approached the area to check if the information they had received was correct. He found

Queensland, where we joined 9 Division, recently returned from North Africa, and commenced jungle training. We didn't know it at the time, but we were going to be attached to 9 Division, 26 Brigade. It would be seven months before we were back in action again."

While the Timor survivors were training in Australia, the Japanese had turned their military might toward New Guinea and had originally planned a two pronged attack, one by sea



On May 2, 1945, a tank attached to 13 Troop, 2/9 Armed Regiment advances toward Horseshoe Knoll during the fighting for Tarakan Hill and neighboring oil fields. Fatigued members of 2/4 Commando Squadron press forward along with the armor in support of D Company, 2/23 Infantry Battalion. (Australian War Memorial)

the Japanese were waiting in ambush.

The Australian presence was soon discovered by the Japanese, and the Australians had to be evacuated by submarine. Timor remained under Japanese control until the war ended.

In 1973, Ralph Coyne and a party of former 2/4 members and their wives returned to Timor to meet their criados. News had been broadcast by Radio Dili that the Solardo Australie were returning. Some criados walked for three days to reach the towns the Australians were to visit. Sadly, Coyne's criados, Dicky, was not among them.

After returning from Timor, Corporal Coyne and his fellow 2/4 members enjoyed their leave. "It was so good to be home away from the war and amongst friends and relatives but like all good things, it had to end," he said. "There was still a war on so we were eventually recalled to duty, reformed, and sent to Canungra in

attacking the Port Moresby area, and the second over the Owen Stanley Mountains and along the Kokoda Track. Japanese losses at the Battle of the Coral Sea ended plans for the seaborne invasion of Port Moresby, but the overland attack began on July 21, 1942, when the first 2,000 Japanese troops, including Maj. Gen. Tomitaro Horii's battle-hardened elite South Seas Detachment and engineers, began landing at Buna and Gona at the northern end of the Kokoda Track, a rugged mountainous jungle path covered in barely penetrable rain forest and kunai, a tall bladed grass.

Some of the mountain ridges soar to heights of 1,640 feet before plunging sharply back down to sea level. The humidity is oppressive, and sudden tropical downpours can turn jungle streams into raging torrents within a few minutes. Dangerous animals, reptiles, and insects, especially malaria-carrying mosquitoes,

teem in the lush growth of the jungle. It is one of the most inhospitable places on earth. The actual track winds its way approximately 186 miles over the Owen Stanley Range and connects the north coast of New Guinea with Port Moresby on the south coast. If New Guinea fell, a direct invasion of Australia was possible.

The defense of this nightmarish track initially fell to the poorly equipped and trained militia of the Australian 39 Battalion, whose soldiers averaged only 18 years of age and had just finished basic training. They were derisively called "chocos" by the regular soldier, meaning they were like chocolate and would melt in the sun. However, these young soldiers, after a series of battles and through their sustained gallantry, held on long enough for units of the battle-hardened 7 Division just returned from the Middle East to join them.

The militia had been weakened by the jungle, the Japanese, malaria, and hunger. Many of them looked gray, old, and ill as they stood wearily in their stinking waterlogged foxholes, expressionless eyes deep in their sockets. They could hardly walk, let alone fight, but they and the 7 Division had taken on an invading Japanese force vastly superior in both numbers and firepower. Forty years later, one regular soldier remarked, "We were the real soldiers and they were just the bloody choccos, but Christ, they were brave."

"The lethargic flow of the brackish water had also borne the incomplete, maggot-infested Japanese corpses to softly nudge them or float slowly past," remembered another soldier. "You took your socks off only when clean socks arrived. And hungry! Just one feed a day. To all who fought here, this was a bastard of a place."

The battle flowed back and forth with brutal savagery, the Japanese slowly forcing the Australians into what could loosely be described as a series of small offensives during the course of a withdrawal. Many times, the combat was

Eichelberger's orders were chillingly simple. MacArthur said in part, "Bob, I want you to go out there and take Buna or don't come back alive."

hand to hand. Rifle butts smashed skulls, entrenching tools sliced open throats, and bayonets were rammed into stomachs with violent thrusts, twisted, and withdrawn. Men fought to stay alive or died gouging, clawing, and hacking at each other. Very rarely were prisoners taken by either side. Eventually, bolstered by reinforcements, the Australians dug in at Imita Ridge and waited for the Japanese to attack. A Japanese victory here would bring them within sight of their objective, Port Moresby.

While the fighting was taking place along the Kokoda Track, a Japanese naval convoy landed 2,700 troops supported by several tanks at Milne Bay on the northernmost tip of New Guinea. Facing them were 8,824 combined Australian and American troops. This was the first time Australian militia, regular AIF, and Americans fought together. After 11 days of heavy fighting, they beat a common enemy. On September 5, Japanese ships evacuated what remained of their troops. They had suffered their first defeat, losing 311 dead and wounded, with 700 missing. The victory bolstered the confidence of the Allies and shattered the myth of Japanese invincibility.

Unfortunately, any jubilation was tempered by evidence of unparalleled brutality by the Japanese against the local natives and prisoners. These atrocities hardened the Australian and American attitudes toward taking any prisoners themselves. This was embodied in the phrase, "The only good Jap is a dead one."

At Imita Ridge, the Australians waited 10 days, but the Japanese seemed unwilling or unable to attack. Tired of waiting, the Australians cautiously advanced on September 27, across a valley to Ioribaiwa where the enemy had reportedly dug in. All they found was an abandoned camp. On the very doorstep of the town they had fought so hard to reach, the Japanese had abandoned their position and were withdrawing over the Owen Stanley Mountains. Owing to their losses during the Battle of the Coral Sea, the Japanese Navy could no longer resupply the troops, and to make matters worse, the high command in Tokyo had decided to concentrate supplies and men on defending Guadalcanal in the Solomons against attacking U.S. forces at a time when the outcome of the battle on New Guinea hung in the balance. Maj. Gen. Horii was ordered to take what remained of his troops and return to Buna. It was a crushing psychological blow to the Japanese, but the order had to be obeyed. Horii died along with many of his troops during the retreat.

On November 2, the Australian flag was hoisted above the Kokoda plateau, but three



The island of Timor, about 300 miles from the northwest corner of Australia, was of strategic interest to the Japanese. If taken, it would put the Japanese within easy striking distance of Australia.

(Map © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN)

more months of bloody fighting lay ahead before the Australians, joined at last by American troops, pushed on toward Buna and Gona. The Japanese soldiers received their last reinforcements and supplies at Buna, and they knew this was their last stand. Surrender or evacuation was out of the question.

The Japanese were militarily finished, and tactically it would have been less costly in lives to contain them and simply leave them to wither on the vine, but General MacArthur insisted on urgent offensive action and sent in more American troops. The Australians once again had to go on the attack, only this time with a less than enthusiastic American ally. This caused the campaign to bog down, and MacArthur sent his trusted subordinate, General Robert Eichelberger, to sort things out.

Eichelberger's orders were chillingly simple. MacArthur said in part, "Bob, I want you to go out there and take Buna or don't come back alive." The Australians took Gona, but the Americans were stymied at Buna and were forced to seek help from the Australians. Finally, the Allies took Buna on January 2, 1943. MacArthur was delighted and played one of his many political and propaganda strategies by issuing a press release claiming American forces singlehandedly had taken Buna and won the campaign. Apart from completely ignoring the Australian effort, he dis-

gracefully left out any reference to General Eichelberger.

With their training completed at Canungra, the Australian troops of 2/4 and 9 Division joined 26 Brigade. "In August 1943, seven months after returning from Timor, we were on our way to New Guinea," remembered Coyne, who by then was promoted to sergeant. "We landed at Milne Bay, the scene of fierce fighting and Japan's land defeat back in August-September 1942. Although we didn't know it at the time, we were to take part in an amphibious landing near Lae."

The troops of 26 Brigade engaged in training exercises, firing and testing weapons, patrols, unloading stores, lectures, and physical exercises. For relaxation, the troops packed into the makeshift open-air picture theater and watched the only film available, *Seven Sweethearts*, starring Kathryn Grayson.

On September 4, the day of departure for Lae, Coyne was attached to A Platoon. He found his unit divided into three sections, and he boarded along with other troops of the brigade. As their ship, the American LST 471, cleared Milne Bay, they joined Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey's Task Force 76. Code-named Operation Postern, the task force comprised 12 destroyers, 50 transports, and three minesweepers with the U.S. Fifth Air Force and RAAF providing fighter protection and support for the landing.

The Allied planning for the capture of Lae



Piling out of a landing craft unopposed at Sadau Island, Bougainville, on April 30, 1945, troopers of 2/4 Commando familiarize themselves with their surroundings. No resistance from the Japanese was encountered on the island, and the Australians suffered no casualties. (Australian War Memorial)

involved a drive by the Australian 9 Division westward along the coastal plains from selected beaches approximately 16 miles east of the objective together with a thrust by the Australian 7 Division southeast from Nadzab along the Markham Valley to Lae. The estimated strength of enemy troops in the Lae area was between 6,400 and 7,250 with a further 7,000 believed to be in the Salamaua area.

The men resigned themselves to the heat, humidity, and cramped conditions aboard the transports ploughing a course around the eastern tip of New Guinea, through the Solomon Sea, and onto the landing beaches just east of Lae. The U.S. 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment was to capture and develop the landing strips in the Nadzab area in preparation for airborne operations. Some of the Australians were no doubt aware they were taking part in the first opposed amphibious landing by Australian troops since World War I.

"It was a sunny, calm afternoon," Coyne remarked. "At lunch we were told that we would be landing for the attack near Lae that afternoon and were advised to rest. We were quartered in the crew's quarters and directly

below us was the ship's magazine. We lay on the bunks, reading, sleeping, writing letters and trying not to think of the task ahead. We hadn't been there long when there was a shattering explosion, and the ship seemed to lift right out of the water. I was hurled against a steel bulkhead. Shaken and dazed but otherwise unhurt, I rose to my feet; I looked about me and saw death everywhere. The place was a shambles. The bunks were in tiers of three, and they had collapsed and were wedged together at weird angles. My mates were lying on the bunks—dead. Of the 48 troops, only 11 of us were alive: four of those were wounded.

"Our ship had stopped, and on the top deck the crew were frantically trying to put out a fire, man the antiaircraft guns and seal the bulkhead," he continued. "We had been hit by a Japanese aerial torpedo, which had gone straight into the ship's magazine underneath us, detonating the lot. The stern of the vessel was curled up like a scorpion's tail, the stern gun pointing straight up. The overall scene was bedlam. The sky seemed studded with weaving Jap and Allied aircraft, some taking evasive action,

the Japs on bombing runs or firing cannon or machine guns at the convoy. U.S. Naval escort ships were maneuvering at high speed around the troopships, and every available gun in the convoy was firing. I found some of my wounded colleagues on the top deck and was able to administer morphine I got from the ship's captain's apartment."

Nearby, another transport was also hit. According to the ship's deck log, the convoy was attacked by 18 Japanese planes. They were identified as six Mitsubishi Betty bombers and six twin-tailed torpedo planes thought to be Thelmas, with a fighter escort. The wounded were transferred to the destroyers USS *Conyngham* and USS *Drayton*.

The 2/4 unit's diary records the landing of the troops from the undamaged LST's at Red Beach at 11 PM on September 4. "All those faces of dead Japanese soldiers who had been buried in the sand ... the tide had washed away the sand and exposed the faces," recalled one soldier. "I'll never forget that. Later, we were going along further and someone yelled, 'Look out for snipers.' I have never forgotten the sight of one. They had shot him, and he was still hang-

ing there by his belt on the tree. You are going through the jungles like that at night, without sleep, your nerves are all on edge.”

Aboard the damaged LST, Coyne arrived at Morobe Bay in the darkness, transferred to another transport, and was then taken to join his comrades already ashore at Red Beach. “I remember stepping off the LST landing ramp into water up to my waist,” he said. “A firm hand gripped my arm. ‘You’re OK Aussie,’ said a warm, reassuring American voice. ‘Thanks Yank,’ I replied. ‘We should thank you boys,’ he said quietly. And that was the end of my meeting with a stranger, also far from home, whose face I couldn’t see, whom I would never recognize, but offered me friendship and support in a time of need.

“We walked throughout the night without sleep, looking for our unit, our nerves on edge as the enemy could be anywhere in the jungle or in the high kunai grass, which was very dense and makes a very effective screen to hide in. We finally found the unit just after day-break, and brigade assigned us to be flank cover and scout for Jap positions. When the brigade attacked, we were to eliminate any that escaped the initial onslaught. Being the wet season, the rain came down in sheets and turned the ground into a sea of thick mud, and rivers flooded. Our jungle green uniforms were permanently wet. We slept in the mud with our waterproof ground sheets strung overhead between two trees in a futile attempt to keep the rain off us. A couple of our platoons had gone upstream and came to the Kunda suspension bridge crossing the turbulent Busu River.”

The river and continuous rain delayed 9 Division’s advance to Lae. The B Platoon was ordered to secure the east bank of the Busu, the bridge, and the tracks leading north and west from the bridge, but not to cross the span.

There were no signs of Japanese forces on the other side, and it was in the Australians’ interest to cross before the river rose any further and the enemy arrived. A signal was sent to Brigade HQ for permission to cross, but this was refused.

By the time permission to cross was received, a small number of Japanese had arrived near the bridge on the west bank and had been made painfully aware who was in control of the east bank. Eighteen men were detailed to cross first with covering fire. As the men began crossing the bridge, the Japanese, who were not yet in position, opened up with machine guns, killing and wounding several of the Australians. Some fell into the river and drowned; some became tangled in the cane structure as it was cut up by the enemy fire. The ones who made it across

had no choice but to attack the Japanese before they could become well established. The bridge collapsed, and reinforcements were forced to wade across.

With the capture of Lae and other successful campaigns, the Allies had forced the Japanese to retreat, but still they fought ferociously. During the course of the war, the Japanese military had sent approximately 150,000 troops to New Guinea. Now, the ability to resupply them by sea was lost. They were abandoned to their own fate.

In 1945, the taking of Tarakan Island was

be on deck and saw one of the planes suddenly dive into the sea. The other plane circled the spot, and our LST turned and searched the area but nothing was found. We landed on Sadau Island and had with us a battery of 25-pounder field guns to help cover the main brigade landing the next day. To our surprise there were no Japs on Sadau.

“On May 1, the 26 Infantry Brigade Group backed by artillery and a naval bombardment fought their way ashore against fanatical Japanese counter forces. On May 3, the 2/4 Commandos sailed from Sadau Island to assist the brigade in another rendezvous with danger and



ABOVE: In this photo taken about three hours after the position was secured by 2/4 Commando, Tarakan Hill is shown looking north from an oil field boiler house on May 4, 1945. **LEFT:** Sergeant Ralph Coyne (left) poses with *criados* (left to right) Armind Monteiro, Rufino Conciro, and Manuel Ximenes along with another Sparrow Force commando, John Jones, during an emotional reunion in April 2006.

(ABOVE: Australian War Memorial / LEFT: Australian Department of Defence)

the most ambitious operation undertaken by Australian forces in the entire Pacific War. The Australians also suffered their highest percentage of casualties during the war. The military value of the campaign continues to be debated. On March 21, General MacArthur ordered 26 brigade to seize and hold the oil-producing island. Enemy strength was estimated at 1,500 to 2,000 troops. Twenty-four hours before the attack, the 2/4 Commando Squadron landed on the adjoining island of Sadau.

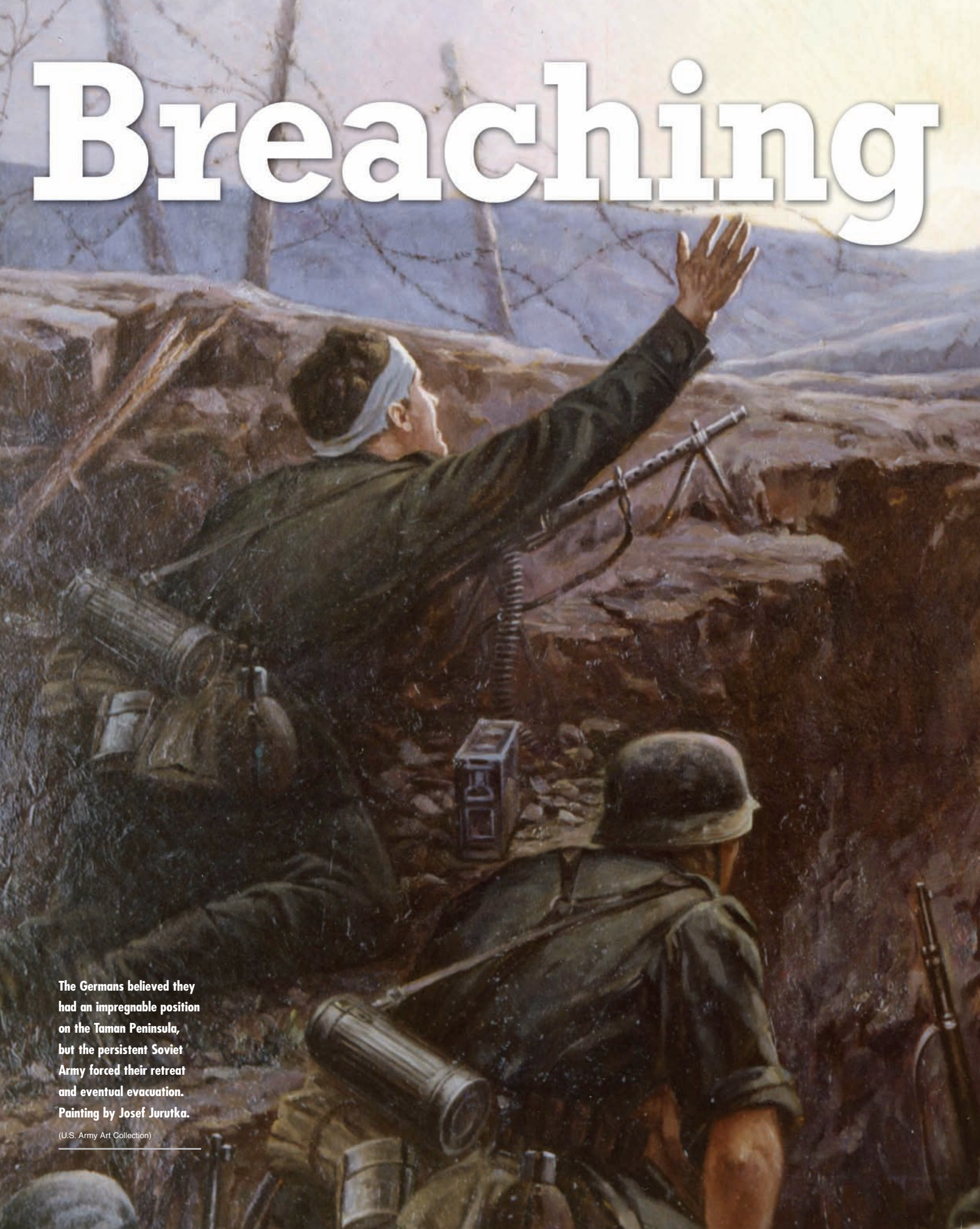
“Again, we were transported by an LST,” said Coyne. “Whilst sailing between Morotai and Borneo, we were accompanied by two American Kitty Hawk fighters. I happened to

death. The 2/4 joined the brigade after its troops had stormed ashore. We were given a job to capture Tarakan Hill, the highest point on the island. It was a sharp feature about 200 feet above the flat oilfields alongside. What upset us was that a battalion of 700 men had spent the previous day attacking it and were repulsed.

“It was now the task of our 250 troops,” he continued. “We soon found that the hill had tunnels with steel door entrances. Originally built by the Dutch as a hospital retreat in the event of an oilfield fire, there were exit shafts emerging at different points around the hill. Initially, no Japs were seen, but as soon as our patrols moved out into clear ground and

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Breaching



The Germans believed they had an impregnable position on the Taman Peninsula, but the persistent Soviet Army forced their retreat and eventual evacuation. Painting by Josef Jurutka.

(U.S. Army Art Collection)



THE Blue

The Soviet Army liberated the Taman Peninsula during a month of hard fighting in the autumn of 1943.

Line

BY VICTOR KAMENIR

The charred remains of men and machines scattered through the Kursk salient in July 1943 signified the death knell of the last attempt by the German Wehrmacht to regain the initiative on the Eastern Front. On the extreme southern flank of the front, Hitler still clung to the hope of breaking through to the great oil fields of Baku on the Caspian Sea. The Taman Peninsula, wedged between the Azov and Black Seas, was the westernmost location in an area called Kuban, north and west of the Caucasus Mountains. This peninsula was conveniently positioned for the Germans as the springboard in case another offensive toward the Caucasus Mountains became possible. It also barred the back door to the Crimea, vital for holding countries of the western Black Sea rim in Hitler's sphere of influence.

While waiting for their opportunity to materialize, the Germans turned the Taman Peninsula into a seemingly impregnable position. The Seventeenth Field Army, under General of Engineers Erwin Jaeneke, occupied the line in the vicinity of Torres Verdes. To the Soviets, these defensive positions became known as the "Blue Line."

The Seventeenth Army was composed of the V and XLIV Infantry Corps, XLIX Mountain Corps, and the V Romanian Cavalry Corps, a total strength of 18 divisions and four separate regiments. The Seventeenth was one of the strongest German field armies, numbering approximately 400,000 men, 2,860 cannon and mortars, more than 100 tanks and assault guns, and 300 combat aircraft.

The landscape of the Taman Peninsula was ideally suited for defensive operations against an enemy attacking from the east. Its northern flank is anchored on the shore of the Azov Sea, east of Kurchanski Bay. It continues through a series of inlets and then follows the Kurka River south, branching off from the Kuban River. Along the roughly 35 miles that the Blue Line followed the line of the Kurka River, the Germans built a high earthen berm on the western side of the river. After crossing the Kuban River, the Blue Line briefly followed the Adagum River, a tributary of the Kuban. There the position was anchored on strongly fortified Kievskaya village. This northern sector of German defenses was fronted by a wide swath of rivers, marshes, and flooded lowlands, making frontal attack practically impossible.

The central sector of the Blue Line, approximately 20 miles long, was characterized by a low plateau, easily accessible by Soviet tanks. Therefore, the Germans paid particular attention to fortifying this region. The defensive network here consisted of two heavily fortified lines anchored on villages and low hillocks. In front of each defensive line and in the empty spaces between strongpoints, there were extensive barbed wire

emplacements, minefields, and concrete bunkers bristling with guns.

The southern sector of the Blue Line ran along 15 miles of difficult mountainous terrain, terminating at the large port city of Novorossiysk located at Tsemess Bay on the Black Sea. The Germans turned whole districts of the city into miniature fortresses. Many streets were barricaded. A network of interconnected basements fortified with concrete, bricks, and timber was set up to establish in-depth defensive zones. German combat engineers blew up many buildings and built bunkers in the rubble, reminiscent of Stalingrad. The streets and the suburbs were extensively mined as well.

Fifteen to 20 miles behind the forward defensive line were multiple defensive positions, prepared with maximum utilization of advantageous terrain and narrow avenues of approach. These shorter defensive lines were given names such as Bucharest, Berlin, Munich, Breslau, Stuttgart, and Ulm. The most forward of them, running from the city of Temryuk on the Azov Sea coast southwest to the Black Sea coast and then west along it, was called the Little Gothic Line (Kleine Gotten Stellung).

Early in February 1943, the Soviet forces launched a general offensive to liberate the Kuban region. After several months of fighting, the Soviet Army advanced almost 400 miles before finally grinding to a halt at the Blue Line. The difficult nature of the terrain limited Soviet maneuverability, and combat actions degenerated into a costly process of

pushing the Germans out rather than surrounding and destroying them.

The retreating German forces systematically destroyed bridges and railroads, collapsed wells and mined roads, using every means available to slow down the Soviet pursuit. As the Germans retreated west, their defensive lines became shorter, allowing them to create local reserves and utilize internal lines of communication. In turn, the Soviet front lines became wider, decreasing troop density.

On February 4, a small force of Soviet soldiers and sailors from the Eighteenth Army landed in the immediate vicinity of Novorossiysk and established a beachhead. Despite determined German efforts to liquidate this threat, the Soviets stubbornly hung on and slowly expanded the beachhead. By the time the general offensive ground to a halt in the first week of June 1943, the Soviet beachhead was an impregnable network of trenches and bunkers.

This small sliver of shoreline became known as the “Little Land” in the Soviet Union. In this campaign, future Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev served as the chief political officer of the Eighteenth Army. Long after the war, Brezhnev authored a book called *The Little Land*, depicting the seven-month campaign on the beachhead. In his book, Brezhnev claimed to have been present on the Little Land on several occasions and in the thick of the fighting.

This book raised a large amount of controversy, which lasted for years. Many Soviet vet-

erans claimed that Brezhnev never got any closer to the Little Land than the opposite shore of Tsemess Bay. However, until the fall of communist rule in the Soviet Union, it was unhealthy to voice this point of view.

While both the Germans and the Soviets took advantage of a lull in the fighting, the Soviet high command began planning a new offensive to completely clear the Taman Peninsula of German forces.

The military council of the North Caucasus front, headed by Col. Gen. I.E. Petrov, made the decision to launch the new offensive in the south against Novorossiysk. The terrain in the north of the peninsula was simply too forbidding to allow any maneuver by large forces, and the center of the Blue Line was too strongly fortified. Neither Petrov nor any of his subordinates had any illusions that Novorossiysk would be an easy nut to crack. One major factor in deciding to move against Novorossiysk was the assistance of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet with its ability to move along the southern coast of the peninsula and provide the advancing Soviet Army forces with naval gunfire.

The Soviet North Caucasus front was composed of four land armies (the Ninth, Eighteenth, Fifty-Sixth, and Fifty-Eighth), and one air army, the Fourth. The Fifty-Eighth Army was assigned to defend the shores of the Azov Sea. The other ground armies, composed of 20 infantry divisions and four naval infantry brigades, would directly participate in the attack against the Taman Peninsula. The Eighteenth Army, under



Mounted on kettenkrad caterpillar-powered motorcycles, German soldiers fall back along a dirt road in the Caucasus. After giving up the Taman Peninsula, the Germans attempted to minimize their losses during the retreat. (All photos: National Archives)



ABOVE: In September 1944, Red Army soldiers waded through a marshy area during a patrol. Such terrain played an important role on the Taman Peninsula as both armies had to contend with mobility issues. **RIGHT:** Hastily bandaged, a wounded Red Army soldier is helped along by a comrade during the effort to liberate the village of Taman. With the Soviet capture of the town, German and Romanian troops were placed in a precarious position.

Lt. Gen. K.N. Leselidze, was assigned the all-important task of liberating Novorossiysk. The Ninth Army, under Lt. Gen. Alexey A. Grechkin, was operating in the north, and the Fifty-Sixth Army, under Lt. Gen. Andrey A. Grechko, was given the central sector.

During this stage of the war, while the Soviet Air Force did not have complete air superiority, its numerical advantage over the German combat aircraft in the vicinity was daunting. Opposing the 300 German aircraft on the Taman Peninsula, the Soviet Fourth Air Army and the air assets of the Black Sea Fleet amassed more than 1,000 planes.

Fighting among the Fourth Air Army was the famed 46th Guards Night Bomber Regiment. Every single person in this unit, from cook to mechanic to pilot, was a woman, usually barely into her 20s. Flying old plywood and canvas PO-2 trainer biplanes converted into night bombers, the Soviet female fliers proudly wore the nickname “Night Witches” given to them by Germans.

The Soviet female pilots fully earned the coveted and honored “Guards” designation, paying their dues in blood. Their sacrifices were epitomized by one harrowing night mission when the slow-moving biplanes were ambushed by a German night fighter. Four Soviet aircraft were sent burning to the ground, taking eight young women fliers to their fiery deaths.

As if having a premonition of events to come, Hitler on September 3 allowed Field Marshal

Erich von Manstein, commander of Army Group South, to begin the evacuation of the Taman Peninsula. The next day the orders were relayed to the Seventeenth Army, which now had only a few days to begin an orderly evacuation. Originally, the German commanders allocated eight weeks for the total evacuation of their forces from the Taman Peninsula. Coming events were to cut that time in half.

The Soviet offensive began at 2 AM on September 10, 1943. Under cover of massive artillery barrages from more than 200 cannon and air strikes by 150 combat aircraft, several small detachments of Soviet torpedo boats raced into the port of Novorossiysk and fired their torpedoes directly at jetties and German positions on the piers. Immediately following them, a small flotilla of cutters began disembarking three battalion-sized assault parties.

At 3:15 AM, the main forces of the Eighteenth Army went on the offensive from two separate directions. The western group attacked from the Myskhako beachhead on the western side of Tsemess Bay. The eastern group went into action over the rugged mountainous terrain north of Novorossiysk. By now, the German and Romanian defenders were putting up a very strong defense, and the Soviet units could

not make significant progress.

Throughout September 10, the Germans rushed reinforcements to the contested areas of Novorossiysk. Two of the Soviet assault groups, composed of naval infantrymen and NKVD (Soviet secret police), were fragmented and largely destroyed. Only the third group, consisting of men from the 1339th Rifle Regiment, hung onto their minor gains. It was reinforced by its sister, the 1337th Rifle Regiment, and by troops from the 318th Rifle Division during the night of September 11.

By then, the 1339th Regiment was in dire straits. The jetties and piers were recaptured by the Germans. They closed the ring around the 1339th, and the 1337th had to fight ashore. Fortunately for them, the Germans did not have time to reestablish strong defenses and the 1st Battalion of the 1337th Regiment soon linked up with the men from the 1339th.



Attacking in the early morning of September 11, the eastern group of forces of the Soviet Eighteenth Army, reinforced with tanks, broke through German defenses in the vicinity of the October Cement Factory by 6 AM. This allowed them to link up with the 1337th and 1339th Regiments that were advancing toward them.

At 7 AM on the same day, the Soviet Ninth Army went onto its own offensive in the northern sector of the Blue Line. Limited to narrow lanes of attack, the units of the Ninth Army were not able to breach the German defenses. Still, its offensive tied down German reserves in the north and prevented them from being shifted south against the Eighteenth Army.

The Soviet Fifty-Sixth Army, deployed against the central sector of the Blue Line, conducted only limited probing attacks during September 11-13.

While the battle for Taman swung into high gear, the German Seventeenth Army began an orderly, if somewhat hurried, evacuation of the

peninsula. German naval vessels were making shuttle runs from the towns of Anapa, Temryuk, and Taman to the city of Kerch on the eastern side of the Crimean Peninsula. Soviet aircraft harassed German vessels across the Kerch Straits, but the majority of the Soviet planes were busy supporting the ground forces, and the German evacuation was conducted with minimal losses in naval craft.

Throughout September 12-13, the Soviet command continued feeding reserves into the Eighteenth Army's area of operations, including a division-sized tank force. In contrast, the Germans defenses, lacking further significant reserves, began showing signs of weakening.

Advancing along the northern rim of the Tsemess Bay from the October Cement Factory, the forward units of the Eighteenth Army ran into determined German resistance

dubbed the "Red House." The Germans hung on for two days, subjected to point-blank fire from Soviet tanks and self-propelled artillery. The Soviets had to first reduce outlying positions in neighboring buildings before starting on the Red House proper.

At first, the Soviet cannon systematically suppressed the German heavy weapons on the lower floors. The Soviet Army infantry cleared the lower floors of the building, providing cover for their combat engineers, placing explosive charges around the main bunker. The collapse of the Red House signified the end of German resistance in Mefodievski, and by September 13 Soviet forces were in firm control of the suburb.

On the following day came the Fifty-Sixth Army's turn to assume the offensive. After a heavy artillery barrage at 7 AM, it had the unenviable task of frontally assaulting heavily forti-

ing fighting, the Soviet armor breached the forward German trenches. Soviet infantry, which this time was able to stay close to its tanks, steadily cleared the first trench line.

The Eighteenth Army was attacking on that day as well. Its western section, attacking from the Cape Myskhako area, achieved minor gains, pushing the Germans back approximately two kilometers. On the other hand, the eastern group, reinforced with tanks, captured the area of Sugar Head Mountain, opening the way into the city of Novorossiysk.

Parts of the German 4th Mountain Division defending the city were partially cut off, and the whole division was threatened with being encircled. It began falling back in the afternoon, hard-pressed by the jubilant Soviet Army. Late on September 16, the city of Novorossiysk was liberated by the Soviet Army and the Black Sea Fleet. As the German forces began withdrawing from the city, the Red Army advanced close on their heels, attempting to cut off and destroy straggling German units. A Soviet tank brigade positioned itself north of the city, ready to begin rolling up the German right flank the next day. Soviet partisan detachments, operating mainly in the forested terrain in the southwest of the peninsula, began attacking retreating German units, attempting to delay them and create panic.

As the Soviets continued pressing westward, they began running into well-prepared German defensive lines anchored on lagoons, marshes, and other difficult terrain. The German and Romanian soldiers of the Seventeenth Army put up a tenacious defense around Wolf's Gate Pass. The Soviet offensive was slowed for two days as they had to overcome extensive defensive works placed along steep ravines. Romanian mountain infantrymen and dismounted cavalymen gave particularly good accounts of themselves.

On September 20, Soviet tanks from the Eighteenth Army reached the small town of Anapa on the coast. The Black Sea Fleet aided the ground forces by providing extensive naval gunfire support and by landing assault parties behind German lines. On the morning of September 21, the Soviet soldiers broke into Anapa, clearing it of German defenders by nightfall. The Fifty-Sixth Army continued pressing frontally and attempting flanking attacks, often bringing infantry right up to the firing lines in trucks.

All the while, the Black Sea Fleet was landing small parties along the coast to cut the narrow roads running between lagoons and marshes. After nightfall on September 25, a



Red Army soldiers take cover behind a mound of debris during their pursuit of retreating German troops after liberating the Taman Peninsula. The victory on the Taman Peninsula was a costly affair for the Soviets during the autumn of 1943.

in Mefodievski, a northern suburb of Novorossiysk. Fighting from well-prepared positions, German defenders took heavy toll on attacking Soviet Army infantrymen. When the Soviet gunners attempted to manhandle their cannons into direct fire positions, accurate German fire caused heavy casualties among Soviet Army gun crews.

Finally, Soviet tanks and self-propelled artillery swung the balance in their favor. Methodically, the Soviet armor reduced the German strongholds to rubble and the Soviet infantrymen hunted down the German survivors among the ruins.

The German defenders put up a particularly strong fight around a large bunker complex

fied and capably defended German positions. The Soviet tanks steadily advanced in the face of direct German artillery fire. They were halted just short of German forward trenches protected by extensive minefields. While the Soviet tanks traded fire with German antitank artillery, the Soviet combat engineers cleared a narrow passage in a minefield. Several tanks immediately charged through. However, just as the valiant Soviet machines exited the minefield, they were knocked out by German artillery and set on fire. The Soviet infantry was cut off from its armor early in the attack and could not make any headway.

The fighting renewed in earnest with the dawning of September 15. After a day of grind-

larger assault force of almost 8,500 men with artillery and mortars landed near Salt Lake. Its mission was to capture the city of Taman, after which the whole peninsula was named, and to cut off German avenues of retreat. The next day, supported by two regiments of combat aircraft from the Black Sea Fleet, the Soviets battled for Taman. They were not able to break through for several days.

At the same time, the Ninth Army was steadily advancing on Temryuk. This town, situated on the south shore of the Azov Sea, was a key link in German shipping between the Taman Peninsula and Crimea. Soggy ground prevented the Soviet forces from using tanks and bringing up heavy artillery. The majority of the fighting was conducted by small groups of infantrymen, fighting in a nightmarish network of marshes and lagoons studded with minefields, wire emplacements, and bunkers. To overcome the problem of moving through the chest-high water, Soviet forces used large numbers of small, flat-bottomed boats. One field-expedient solution was the use of inflated inner tubes worn by individual men as they moved through the marshes.

Again, the Soviet forces resorted to tactical naval landings behind German lines. Before dawn on September 25, more than 1,600 Soviet Army and Navy men landed in two places west of Temryuk. They were supported by cutters from the Azov Sea Flotilla and the Soviet Fourth Air Army. Simultaneously, the main forces of the Ninth Army attacked from the east. After two days of heavy fighting, Temryuk fell on September 27.

While the fighting raged on land, the Germans continued evacuating their personnel and equipment from the Taman Peninsula. Strangely, they were almost unhindered by the Soviet Air Force. Instrumental in this evacuation effort was the German 3rd Minesweeping Flotilla. This flotilla was moved to the region in 1942 from the Baltic Sea. The monumental task of moving a whole flotilla overland involved the use of special 64-wheeled transports.

By the time the last German and Romanian soldiers pulled out of the Taman Peninsula on October 9, the 3rd Minesweeping Flotilla, aided by locally procured transports, had ferried more than 255,000 Axis soldiers, 21,000 vehicles, 1,800 guns, and 74,000 horses to temporary safety. Significant amounts of war materiel and other supplies were moved out as well.

The last Axis units to leave the Taman Peninsula were the German 97th Light and 4th Mountain Divisions from the XLIX Mountain Corps. German heavy artillery placed on the Crimean Peninsula covered the pullback of the



A coordinated month-long Soviet Army offensive along the coast of the Black Sea liberated the Taman Peninsula from the Germans. The locations of Soviet land and seaborne thrusts are visible in the above map.

(Map © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN)

rear guard by firing heavy barrages across the Kerch Straits. General Rudolf Konrad, commander of the XLIX Mountain Corps, and General Jaeneke were among the last men to evacuate.

In 1977, a movie called *Cross of Iron* premiered. It starred James Coburn as the battle-hardened German Sergeant Steiner. Coburn's character was pitted against an overzealous Captain Stransky, played by Maximilian Schell, who was out to win the highest German decoration, the Iron Cross, at all costs. This film portrayed the events of the fighting on the Taman Peninsula. Several scenes show the extensive German defensive positions and the close-in nature of fighting that developed there.

The tough fighting throughout the Taman Peninsula was exemplified by an interesting feature not often seen on the Eastern Front: minimal involvement of armored forces on both sides. Difficult terrain precluded the Soviet Army from the extensive use of heavy combat vehicles, and combat operations mainly involved infantry supported by massed artillery and air attacks.

The sailors and vessels of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet and Azov Sea Flotilla proved invaluable in liberating the Taman Peninsula. Continuous amphibious landings behind German lines kept the defenders off balance. The Soviet doctrine of combined arms utilization was coming to maturity.

After the Taman operation was over, both sides could tally up successes and shortcomings. While the Soviet forces liberated a significant portion of their territory and eliminated the possibility of future German operations against the Trans-Caucasian oil fields, they failed to trap and eliminate the German Seventeenth Army.

In turn, while losing the strategically important territory, the Wehrmacht preserved the combat capability of the Seventeenth Army and prevented large stocks of supplies from falling into Soviet hands. Even before the operation was over, Hitler recognized the accomplishments of his soldiers who served on the Taman Peninsula from February 1 to October 9, 1943, by authorizing the wearing of the "Kuban Shield" shoulder patch.

German commanders placed their casualties during the Taman operation of September 10 to October 9, 1943, at more than 10,000 killed, including four division commanders, 36,000 wounded, and 3,500 missing in action. Romanian casualties were placed at 1,600 killed, 7,200 wounded, and 800 missing. Various sources estimate total Soviet casualties around 114,000 men, including more than 40,000 killed.

Neither side lacked valor. In the words of James Coburn's Sergeant Steiner, the Taman Peninsula was the place "where the Iron Crosses grow." □

Victor Kamenir writes from his home in Sherwood, Oregon.

Surviving the German Death March

BY AL HEMINGWAY

Steve Stupak knew his stint as a prisoner of war was going to be harsh, but nothing prepared him for the “March to Nowhere.”

By 1945, the war in Europe was nearing its conclusion. Having suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Allies in the Battle of the Bulge, Adolf Hitler’s seemingly indestructible Third Reich was quickly crumbling under the Allied juggernaut. With British and American forces closing in from the west and the Soviets moving rapidly from the east, the Nazis decided to shuffle Allied prisoners of war from their prisons to avoid repatriation by friendly forces.

Most POWs were hurried from their camps with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. With the temperature well below freezing and, in some areas, more than a foot of snow on the ground, the Germans herded the men like cattle. The ensuing death march, also known as the “Shoe Leather Express,” or the “March to Nowhere,” resulted in the deaths of many POWs, but with the surrender of Nazi Germany in May 1945, it would soon be forgotten.

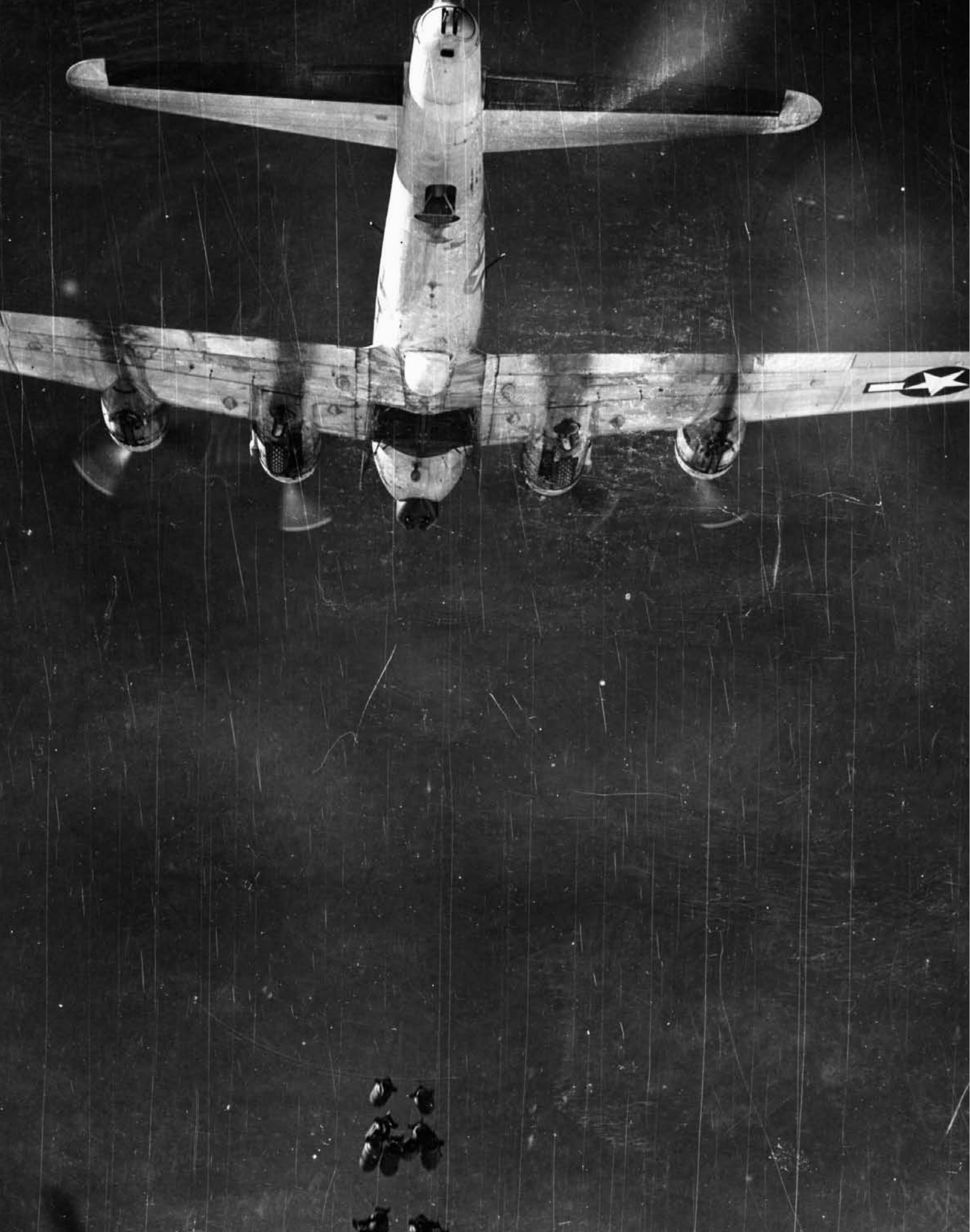
Most POWs helped each other through the horrible ordeal. Steve Stupak of Watertown, Connecticut, survived the arduous trek with the assistance of his fellow camp inmates. A member of the 331st Squadron, 94th Bomb Group, Eighth Air Force, Stupak was taken prisoner when his Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber was shot down on October 7, 1944. In an interview with Al Hemingway, Stupak recalled those terrible days that he miraculously survived more than six decades ago.



ABOVE: Congresswoman Ella Grasso (D-Conn.) poses with German Death March survivor Steve Stupak during the veteran’s term as president of the Waterbury, Connecticut, chapter of the Disabled American Veterans. **RIGHT:** During a bomb run over Augsburg, Germany, on February 27, 1945, a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress of the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force drops its payload on the city’s railroad yards. Many of the prisoners who participated in the German Death March were downed American airmen. (Above: Courtesy of Steve Stupak; Right: National Archives)

Al Hemingway: Where were you born?

Steve Stupak: I was born in Lopev, Pennsylvania, on June 8, 1920. As a young child I moved to Dupont. I attended grade school and, because Dupont was so small we didn’t have our own high school, I went to nearby Avoca High School. I grew up during the Depression, and things were rough so I didn’t graduate. I had to work.





ABOVE: German Death March survivor Steve Stupak stands at the far left in this photograph of the crew of the B-17 Bomber *A Little Behind*. **RIGHT:** This rare photograph depicts roll call in Lager A, Stalag Luft IV, where Stupak was taken by the Germans. Barracks 7 and 8 are located to the left. (Above: Courtesy of Steve Stupak; Right: Al Hemmingway)

AH: What kind of work did you do?

SS: I got a job with the National Youth Organization working for the State of Pennsylvania doing gypsy moth control. It was a 40-hour week, and we grossed \$20. Because I was in the Boy Scouts, I learned how to read maps. I would tell my boss where we were located, and he made me second in command. That was great because my pay doubled. I thought I was a millionaire!

AH: Quite a bit of money at that time.

SS: You bet it was. When that job ended, I had enough money saved to go to New Jersey. Pennsylvania was pretty depressed at that time. I went to work for a department store operating a steam table in their luncheonette area and was paid a dollar a day. I was just breaking even, so I started looking for another job. I got a letter of recommendation from a guy at the unemployment office, and he told me to go to the Western Electric plant. There must have been 200 people in line and the guard was yelling, "Go home; we have no more openings today!" I managed to work my way to the front and handed him the letter. The guard took it and he came back and opened the gate and told me to come in. He took me to see the boss, who gave me a job making telephone jacks for switchboards.

AH: You were lucky.

SS: I had to work the midnight shift, but I didn't mind. The work wasn't hard. In fact, I could have gone to work with a shirt and tie on. I wasn't complaining. One weekend I went to

Scranton to visit my mother, and my brother was there from Cleveland, Ohio. He talked me into going to Cleveland to get a job. So I did. I wasn't there three months, and Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941. They were closing the place where I was working and turning it into a government plant for the war effort. So, I knew I'd be called up in the draft and I decided to enlist.

AH: When was this?

SS: This was January 1942, and I enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. There was no Air Force in those days.

AH: Why the Air Corps?

SS: When I was a kid in Pennsylvania, I knew a guy who flew, and he told us of his exploits. It was adventurous, and it captured my imagination. I was sent to Maryland to get inducted, and from there we went by train to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. It was an old cavalry outpost, and it was cold there. They had to set up tents—there were so many of us. But I lucked out and got assigned to one of the buildings.

AH: What was your basic training like?

SS: It wasn't too bad. In addition to the normal training, we watched a lot of propaganda films about Germany and Japan. We remained there until the end of February, and then we went to Bakersfield, California. The Army had a training school there and an airfield.

AH: What kind of aircraft did you train on?

SS: It was a BT-6. The BT stood for basic training. It resembled a P-47 Thunderbolt [fighter]. Since I was a small guy, I always seemed to be in the fuselage to check the wiring and other con-

trols. After training, we were assigned to Santa Ana, California. It was a replacement squadron for everyone going overseas. It was so big they had three bus lines for soldiers reporting in and 14 mess halls! The place was enormous.

AH: With the influx of cadets for the war, it must have been a huge operation. What next?

SS: Originally we were slated to be permanent personnel. We were going to be the training cadre for the new recruits. Well, I wanted to go overseas, so I saw a notice asking for volunteers for gunnery school. I applied, but my first sergeant and I never got along. So to get even with me, he pigeonholed my orders. That is, he squashed them.

AH: That's too bad. What rank were you then?

SS: I was a sergeant by then.



AH: Wow, very good indeed.

SS: Well there was a war on, so they needed us.

AH: What ever happened to that first sergeant?

SS: He got into some trouble, and he was transferred. We got a new commanding officer, a captain who was related to Rosalind Russell. Anyway, he saw to it that my orders to gunnery school were processed, and I was gone in a week. I traveled to Amarillo, Texas, for armament school to learn all about the weapons on the B-17 bomber. Classes were held 24 hours a day, seven days a week. After graduation, I was shipped to Kingman, Arizona—the worst place God ever created [by war's end, 36,000 personnel had been trained as aerial gunners at Kingman].

AH: I'm assuming the heat?

SS: Yes, it was awful. They did air condition the buildings.

AH: That was unusual for that time.

SS: First of all, it wasn't for our comfort. It was the equipment they were concerned about. Also, the air conditioners were set at 85 degrees, so it was still very hot. They couldn't get it any cooler than that. Daytime temperatures were well over 100 degrees. They also issued us mosquito netting.

AH: Mosquito netting? In the dry Arizona climate?

SS: Not for mosquitoes. It was for the scorpions. At night they came out. So the netting would cover you, and they wouldn't crawl on you. Also, you had to shake out your boots

every time you put them on.

AH: What kind of training did you do at gunnery school? What weapons did you familiarize yourself with?

SS: Well, in the classroom we had .50-caliber machine guns equipped to fire BBs. There must have been a million of these BBs all over the place when we got through. They would sweep them up, put them in buckets, and reuse them. These specially made machine guns were used to get us familiar with tracking an enemy plane. We also shot skeet as well. At first we would practice using a shotgun. Then they placed two of us in the back of a pickup truck. One was the loader and the other the shooter. They would drive real slowly, I'd say 15 miles per hour or so, and they had bulletproof houses that would release the skeet, and we would practice firing at it. They also had a huge oval track that had these vehicles on it that pulled targets around. Here we fired the .30-caliber machine guns.

AH: Any handgun training?

SS: Yes, we went to a dry riverbed, and it was the first time I ever fired a .45-caliber pistol. It was pretty high, and they put a guy on top to watch in case water would rush out of nowhere.

AH: Seems strange in such a dry climate.

SS: I know, but it did happen on occasion. Anyway, this was ideal for handgun training because it was the perfect backdrop. We were all lined up, and I was way down at the end so I couldn't hear the sergeant who was instructing us what to do. There were quite a few men in this class. Well, all I heard was the word "Fire!" so I did. I popped off five rounds. He came running down screaming at me. I told him I couldn't hear him. He saw the stripes on me so he stopped yelling and called to see the target. I had put all five rounds in a nice group on the target.

AH: Nice shooting.

SS: Well, there was a bit of luck there I'm sure. Not so with the buzzard.

AH: Buzzard?

SS: Yes. Every day this old buzzard would fly around. All you heard was dozens of machine guns trying to kill it.

AH: Ever hit the bird?

SS: Never. All those rounds, and the thing never got a scratch as far as I know. We finally completed our gunnery training and off we went to Avon Park, Florida, which is part of Sebring where the racetrack is located. They brought in a grayish-colored clay from North Carolina and made the runways and walkways.

AH: Why the clay?

SS: The entire field was built on a swamp. So the clay would withstand the climate better.

They even built our barracks on top of it. They used a pile driver to drive these posts into the ground and erected the buildings on top of them. The water level was very high. In fact, they told us to be very careful, especially at night. Some of the water surrounding us was four or five feet deep. If you fell in, an alligator could get you.

AH: What a way to become a casualty. Did you do more training there?

SS: No, there they were assembling the crews for the B-17s. We all thought that we were headed to the South Pacific because we were in Florida. Everyone figured that they were trying

of their tails shot off and they still made it.

AH: The B-17 had quite a bit of firepower didn't it?

SS: We flew in the G Model and we had a total of ten .50-caliber machine guns but we only carried 250 rounds for each gun. Most of the time we only got off four or five bursts, so we didn't carry a lot to save on the weight.

AH: That makes sense.

SS: When we returned from a mission, the first thing they checked was our oxygen mask and our life vest, which we called a "Mae West." Then they would ask if you fired your weapons. If we did they would clean them.



Having sustained visible damage to its left wing either from thick German flak or marauding Luftwaffe fighters, this B-17 bomber nevertheless maintains formation during the bombing run on a mission against the communications center of Gelsenkirchen, Germany. (National Archives)

to acclimate us to the tropical climate.

AH: Tell me about the B-17, also known as the Flying Fortress. Was it a good aircraft?

SS: It was a good bomber. Right after that they introduced the B-24 Liberator. It had a longer range and carried more bombs than the B-17. One bad thing about the B-24, in my opinion, is that all its controls were hydraulic. If hit, and you lost that hydraulic fluid, you were done. Also, the B-24 couldn't glide if hit because it had parasol wings. They were flat on top and curved on the bottom. But even on the B-17 you could experience trouble.

AH: Like what?

SS: For example, if the landing gear didn't go down, you had to hand crank it down before you could land. It took you 20 minutes to crank one wheel down. If I remember right, it was 300 or 400 turns to do it. But it was a good plane. I saw some of them come back with half

AH: What was the crew of a B-17?

SS: Pilot, copilot, navigator, bombardier, flight engineer, radio operator, ball turret gunner, tail gunner, and waist gunner.

AH: What was your job on the aircraft?

SS: I was the flight engineer. My duties included making sure all four engines were synchronized, the fuel mixture was correct, and we weren't burning "too rich," as we used to say. I also monitored the electrical wiring and controls, and watched the plane on takeoff for engine rpms, air intake, and other gauges and kept the pilot informed of that. If we got hit, I was also the top turret gunner.

AH: When was your plane shot down?

SS: On October 7, 1944. It was supposed to be a pretty safe mission.

AH: Where was it?

SS: It was somewhere over Germany. I can't recall the name of the town. It seemed as if they

A photographer of the Eighth Air Force captured this haunting image of a B-17 streaking earthward as smoke streams from its engines while the remaining bombers in the frame continue toward their target, the city of Bremen. The tail assembly of the stricken B-17 has apparently been shot away. (National Archives)



were waiting for us. All of a sudden, German fighter planes were all over the place. I found out years later that we lost over 30 planes that day, and the Germans lost more than 50.

AH: Where was your aircraft hit?

SS: We caught some flak in our No. 4 engine, and it immediately caught fire. That is the outside engine on the copilot's side. We were at an altitude of about 29,000 feet. The pilot told us, "Hang on boys, I'm taking her down." He did a controlled dive to about 19,000 feet, and we put the fire out. The fire started in the engine's lubricating oil tank. Each engine had its own tank. It held about 60 quarts of oil. But No. 4 didn't have that after we put the fire out. This tank was right over the superchargers. These superchargers were exhaust driven, and they were the reason we could get a higher altitude. These manifolds became white hot because they took out the exhaust from the engines. They were so hot that the ground crew had to wait four hours to service the plane when we landed after a mission. I monitored the engine for about 40 minutes, but since we were flying with basically only three engines we were dropping altitude continuously. We also had lost our navigational equipment, so we were on what we called "dead reckoning."

AH: Did the fire ignite again?

SS: I noticed that the smoke had changed color. It began to turn dark, which meant that the fuel was leaking into the oil on the manifold. I immediately called the pilot and informed him and suggested that he give the order to bail out.

AH: Did you ever have any parachute training?
SS: Never. This was the first time I would jump.

And the crew never understood why I never wore my harness. I had on a 60-pound flak suit, so I figured I didn't need it. However, that day when I got on board I put it on.

AH: Why?

SS: Don't ask me why. I just did. I guess I had a premonition.

AH: Did everyone survive?

SS: Yes, we all did. I was counting the men as they jumped out, and I was one short. It was our radio operator. I went back to the radio compartment and told him to get out. Just as I did that the whole plane started to fill up with smoke. He jumped, and then I jumped right after him.

AH: You were the last one out. Where did you land?

SS: Yes I was. To this day, I'm not sure where it was. I want to say France or Belgium. After I opened my chute and was coming down I saw the plane crash in a field and burst into flames. I landed in a field where farmers were cutting wood. After I got out of my chute, I saw this guy coming at me with an axe. I spotted two German soldiers sitting in a staff car nearby as well. We were surrounded, so I went over to the soldiers and gave myself up. The civilians ran up and wanted to kill us. I heard that they hanged some crewmembers with their own parachutes. The soldiers motioned to them to get back to work.

AH: Why did the civilians hate you so much? If you were in Belgium or France, you were trying to help liberate their country.

SS: It wasn't all civilians. I guess they felt that we were bombing their cities and countryside

and they wanted revenge. Also, some civilians were pro-Nazi.

AH: What did they do with you?

SS: They took us to the Luftwaffe headquarters in town and made us sit on this big bench in the middle of the room. We were watched all the time. Even if you went to the bathroom the door was left open. One thing that I was surprised at is that they never took our cigarettes or matches from us.

AH: Yes, American cigarettes were sought after.

SS: I know, but they didn't. There was a German officer sitting there playing chess with a civilian. Maybe it was a town official or mayor. I'm not sure. He asked us our plane number, squadron mission, etc. He spoke pretty good English, too. I stood up and told him, "Name, rank, and serial number is all you get according to the Geneva Convention!" He said, "Who are you?" I told him I was the senior NCO on the crew. He just laughed and said from now on we would take orders from Germans and like it.

AH: He had you there.

SS: He then said the war was over for us. He then asked if I got out of here what would I do. I said I had no idea. He then said that we were not airmen but gangsters from Chicago and we got \$1,000 dollars for every mission we flew.

AH: Really?

SS: I yelled, "What? Now I know what I am going to do if I get out of here. I'm going to retire." I was on my 17th mission when I got shot down. I was brazen I guess.

AH: I guess so.

SS: But they did show some respect for us. I

think they considered airmen better than anyone else.

AH: Were you all together? Did they separate officers from enlisted?

SS: No. We all remained together. They captured us all in the same area. Our copilot was on a stretcher. He had been injured when he landed. They eventually took him away. Poor guy, it was his first mission, as I recall. The following morning the German guards formed a ring around us and marched us down the street. The civilians crowded around as we walked and they hollered, "American gangsters! American bastards! American SOBs." They would have killed us if they got through. They took us to a building that looked as if it was situated on an airfield. They kept me separate and put me in a room by myself. The room was about 4 feet by 12 feet, with a wooden bed with a wooden block for a pillow. There was only one window, a pitcher, chamber pot, and tin cup. That was it. To signal the guard you pulled a latch and he would come to see what you wanted.

AH: Doesn't seem very comfortable.

SS: Not at all. I could see a church with a beautiful steeple out the window. The bell would ring every 15 minutes. On the half hour the chime would sound different, and on the hour it was longer so you knew what time it was. At first it was nice. After about the second or third day it drove me crazy. So I decided to drive them crazy. I would ring for the guard and ask for water. I would take the water and put it in the chamber pot. I repeated this over and over, day or night. Time meant nothing to me.

AH: You were very defiant. What next?

SS: The ceiling was very high. They had a light that burned 24 hours in my room. At night they would cover my window so I couldn't see out. After a few days they took me to the shower. I had no soap, a towel the size of a washcloth, but the water was hot. Then they gave me a double-edge razor. I had to dry shave. I thought I was going to rip my face off because I hadn't shaved for a week or more. I also was still wearing the same clothes I had parachuted out of the plane with.

AH: Where to after that?

SS: They took me to this big room. It was beautiful with a huge desk that had to be over six feet long. A German officer was sitting there. He was immaculately dressed and spoke perfect English. He called me by my name and offered me a cigarette. He had this big Aladdin lamp he used as a cigarette lighter. When you hit one end, the flame would come out the other. I took a puff and inhaled and started coughing. I took the cigarette and put it out and tore it up so he

couldn't smoke it. He said, "I thought sergeants liked to smoke?" I said, "Yes, but I like cigarettes, not weeds!"

AH: You were cocky.

SS: Yes, I was young then. I looked on the walls and there were pictures of B-17s hanging everywhere. But what really amazed me is he had my traveling orders!

AH: From the States?

SS: Yes. He knew a lot about me.

AH: How?

SS: I think I know. I gave them to him.

AH: You! How?

SS: Let me explain. Before going overseas, I went home on leave. Everyone was having their picture taken. So I went to this very popular photography studio in town run by a Lithuanian. I

have gotten a lot of information that way. Anyway, this German officer had also done postgraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania. I didn't believe him, but he showed me his school ring. Well, he could have gotten that off some G.I. We started talking about boxing, and he said (Max) Schmeling got robbed. I told him he got the beating he deserved.

AH: From Joe Louis?

SS: Yes.

AH: You should have been careful how you answered. He could have had you shot.

SS: Maybe deep inside I thought I wasn't going to live. Who knows? But I wasn't going to cower to them. He then told me about a boxer at the school who was good but not good enough to be champion. It then dawned on



In this staged photograph, captured American airmen peruse a German newspaper in Stalag Luft III. In reality, the conditions in German POW camps were harsh at best. The situation deteriorated rapidly as the Allied armies advanced into Germany. (National Archives)

had my uniform on, naturally, and had my travel orders in my jacket pocket. As I sat, he said, why not remove the orders because they stuck out of my pocket. So I did, and he put them on the counter. He took several pictures, went in the back room for about 10 minutes or so, came out, and took another one. I wasn't paying attention. He must have taken my orders and made a copy. After I returned from overseas, I heard he had been arrested in a spy ring.

AH: That's incredible.

SS: That's the only way I can figure the Germans got my orders. They also snagged two or three doctors in that spy ring as well.

AH: This was in Scranton?

SS: No. Pittston, Pennsylvania. Everyone went to him because he did beautiful work. He must

me—he wasn't lying. He was there! He knew too much about the school and area to be making it up. He then told me that if the American soldiers were led by the German generals, we could rule the world. He felt that the Americans could adapt and think for themselves, and the German soldiers could not if their officers weren't there. In his opinion, the German officers were far superior to the American officers. He said if they knew he was telling me this, he would be shot.

AH: Interesting point of view he had. When did you get to your next destination?

SS: The first part of November 1944, I arrived at Stalag Luft IV. It was located in Gross Tychow, Poland. We split up, but I ended up going to the camp with my friend, John Stacco,

RIGHT: German camp authorities and delegates of the International Red Cross discuss the disposition of packages at Luft Stalag III B. **BELOW:** On April 27, 1945, liberated prisoners of war have their identification checked by members of the U.S. Army Medical Corps. The former POWs were then evacuated by aircraft of the 9th Troop Carrier Command.

(Both Photos: National Archives)



one of the gunners on my flight crew.

AH: What was the size of the camp?

SS: The camp was divided into four lagers, or areas. Each lager had 10 barracks, one bathroom, and a building they called the mess hall. Between all the lagers we had approximately 10,000 prisoners there. So there were about 2,500 per lager and about 250 in each barracks. Actually only nine barracks were for us. The end one was a latrine and the washroom. Each barracks was divided into rooms with each room able to hold 10 to 12 men. In our room we had 27.

AH: That was crammed. A variety of nationalities, I assume?

SS: We had four Czechoslovakians, five Americans, several Canadians, and quite a few from Great Britain. We had triple-decker bunks, and the rest slept on the floor. Our mattresses were heavy bags filled with straw and one blanket. There was no pillow. We had the typical towers with the guards manning machine guns and two sets of barbed wire. The first stand of wire was the warning area. Sometimes a soccer ball would go into the wire, and they would get the guard's attention to retrieve it. The guard would motion to go ahead. However, if you went there without his approval, he would shoot at you. The second set was supposedly electrified, but we never found out if that was true.

AH: Describe the day-to-day life at the camp.

SS: We would keep our area clean and had some chores around camp. They would let us play chess or soccer. Lights out was at 10 P.M. Somehow we got a radio, which was strictly forbidden, and we listened to the BBC. They gave us one newspaper per barracks. Also, we had some South Africans who spoke German in

our lager. They were Boers, the Dutch-Germans who settled there years ago.

AH: What about the food?

SS: Breakfast consisted of one cup of hot water—we had instant coffee from our Red Cross packages—and a slice of bread, half of which was flour and the other half was sawdust. All bread was dated. We received some bread that was five months old. We once got a cup of barley. We received a cup of soup at lunch and for supper a cup of potatoes. That was it. Sometimes we would get Red Cross packages, and we tried to save a few items from them. At Christmas the Red Cross brought in turkeys and hams. Only once we got that. It was propaganda to let them see how good they were treating us. Most of us lost quite a bit of weight on that meager diet. We were allowed to send a letter or card every so often as well. At least my family knew I was alive.

AH: So you remained in Stalag Luft IV for about three months until you started the march. Did they give you any advance warning?

SS: We were told a couple of days in advance. Anything we could carry, we did; otherwise it was left behind. I only had the clothes on my back and my blanket. I was wearing a British shirt, French pants, and a U.S. Army overcoat.

AH: Did they tell you why they were moving you?

SS: Yes, they said the Russians were closing in, and they didn't want them to get ahold of us. So they put the ones that couldn't walk on trains. The rest of us started to walk. We left in groups starting the first week of February. On the march it was me, John Stacco, a Canadian soldier with the last name of Stroub, and an Englishman named Sandy. We pooled our food

together and we each had a blanket. At night we laid a blanket on the ground and covered ourselves with the other three as we huddled together for warmth. We never took our clothes off because of the cold, with the exception of our shoes. However, at one point I did not take my shoes off for 14 days straight.

AH: How did the guards treat you?

SS: Some treated us well and others looked down on us. We had one German who was a guard on the march who dropped his rifle and took off. Another one picked up his rifle and hollered for him to stop. This guy must have been a marksman because he killed him with one shot. Most of our guards were real young, older, or unfit for duty. This one old guy was a veteran of World War I and he was pretty decent. One day the Englishman, Sandy, who spoke fairly good German, asked him for medicine for diarrhea. Most of us had it. In fact, many of the guys suffered from dysentery. It was awful. Some guys bled it was so bad. Others were so weak from it they were left by the roadside. I suppose they died.

AH: Dysentery was a big killer in war.

SS: This old guard told us that we had the medicine right here. The ground was covered with ashes.

AH: Charcoal?

SS: Exactly. We picked up handfuls of it and ate it; even the ash off of burned wood.

AH: Did it help?

SS: Yes it did! It really helped us.

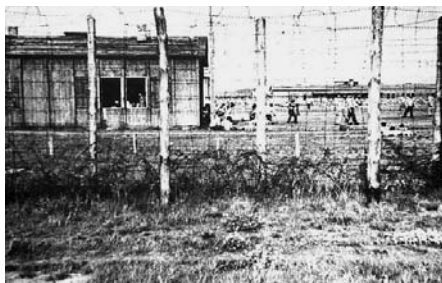
AH: Did the various groups of POWs take different roads?

SS: Yes. One day we passed a group of German soldiers retreating from the front. An American Piper Cub, which they used as a spot-

ter plane, saw us walking. Well, the Germans weren't stupid because they saw it too. That night they switched us and put us on the road the German soldiers had been traveling on. That night we found refuge in a farmer's barn and huddled together on the straw. A flight of British Mosquitoes [DeHavilland fighter bombers] came over and hit us. There were three barns in a row. I was in the middle barn. The first wave of bombers struck the barn with the cattle in it, and the second wave strafed us. I was sleeping on the inside next to the wall. I was hit by shrapnel and received a head wound, and the Canadian was seriously wounded in the stomach. This was the end of April 1945.

AH: You were on the death march a long time. What happened to the Canadian?

SS: I was on the march for 75 days. We both got transported to a hospital. I saw him there and he had a huge hole in his stomach, but he was awake and in terrible pain. I knew he was dying, but they wouldn't even give him morphine to kill the pain. So I went to see the doctor. He was a Frenchman who was also a prisoner and spoke very good English. I asked him to give my friend some morphine and make his last few hours on this earth bearable. He said, "Why waste morphine on him." I grabbed him by the throat, and someone jumped between us. Good thing he did or I would have ripped his throat out. Well, he



ABOVE: (top) This view of Lager A, Stalag Luft IV, focuses on Barracks 1, 2, and 3. The conditions American prisoners lived in were primitive. Food was often scarce, and cold weather was particularly difficult. **(bottom)** The spartan existence of life in a German POW camp is evident in this photograph depicting Barracks 6. (Both: Al Hemingway)

refused to work on me. I didn't dare tell the German doctor. They might have had me shot.

AH: What about your wound?

SS: After eight or nine days, I got sick. I was paralyzed. I couldn't even move.

AH: Probably poison from the shrapnel still in you.

SS: That's what it was. One day this British corpsman came by and asked me what the problem was. I recall he had been taken prisoner at Dunkirk in 1940. He looked at my wound, and by now it had swelled up and was almost the size of a football. He got this ointment that looked like tar and applied it to my neck. In about 20 minutes it popped. And the stuff that came out of there! It was disgusting. But in a few hours, I felt much better.

AH: You were lucky indeed. The war had to be nearly over by this time.

SS: One day I got up and all the guards were gone and a Red Cross flag was flying on the flagpole. Someone had a radio and found the Armed Forces Network and guess what song was playing?

AH: What?

SS: Bing Crosby singing "Don't Fence Me In."

AH: How appropriate.

SS: Right after that a U.S. Army truck came to the gate. In fact, the truck went right through it.

AH: You were liberated?

SS: Yes, we were finally free. I was one of the lucky ones. I survived. □

Frequent contributor Al Hemingway is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War.

The March to Nowhere

On February 6, 1945, the 10,000 POWs of Stalag Luft IV received their marching orders to move out. They were told it would take several days. It lasted 86, with the men covering nearly 600 miles. Prisoners were pressed onward at a grueling pace. Many soon came down with dysentery, diphtheria, pneumonia, typhus, trench foot, and tuberculosis. Frostbite resulted in the loss of limbs, toes, and fingers.

Major Leslie Caplan, one of the few doctors who endured the death march, recalled, "Some men drank from the ditches that others had used as latrines. Dysentery made bowel movements frequent, bloody, and uncontrollable. Men were forced to sleep on ground covered with feces of those who had passed before them ... Our sanitation

approached medieval standards, and the inevitable result was disease, suffering, and death."

Doctor Caplan tried desperately to get medical supplies from the Germans but was turned down. "I had no stethoscope," he later wrote, so to examine someone, he "would kneel by the patient, expose his chest, scrape off the lice, then place my ear directly on his chest and listen."

Often referred to as "luftgangsters" or "terror fliegers," the air crews of the Allied air forces were not popular among the civilian population who resided in the cities. Many were marked for death if they crashed in an area where the populace was hostile toward them. Some crew members were summarily executed if snared by SS troopers or angry mobs of people for delivering

such destruction to their homes.

During the march, however, the farms that dotted the countryside had not been on the receiving end of such destruction. Although it was forbidden to trade with the farmers, many guards ignored the rule and looked the other way, allowing the marchers to barter for food. Items such as watches, rings, cigarette lighters, and even chocolate were given up.

Men had to procure their own food, and there were scant supplies in the war-torn German countryside. Although they could be shot by their guards, the marchers took to stealing farm animals such as pigs and chickens. However, such livestock was scarce. Occasionally some Red Cross packages, if they were not already pilfered by the guards, arrived for them. The hunger became so intense that some POWs started eating uncooked rats they had captured.

Sometimes barns, such as the one Steve Stupak was wounded in, were used to find refuge from the winter weather. Although it was warmer, the lice and fleas were everywhere. Also, animal and human feces, plus the hundreds of unwashed bodies, littered the inside of the structures and made the stench unbearable. Some preferred to remain outside and brave the elements.

It is estimated that 1,300 men perished on the Death March. Carrol F. Dillon, author of *A Domain of Heroes*, wrote, "No records were kept, hence only a few cases are documented. When the men dropped by the wayside or were sent off somewhere supposedly to a hospital, their buddies never heard from them again. The survivors believe that there were many that died on the Death March. Certainly a much greater number died than we are aware of." □



how these images have subsequently altered public perception.

Much of the current thinking, Davis explains, has a great deal to do with the anti-Soviet, anti-Communist sentiment that was prevalent in the West during and following the war, as well as a paucity of reliable information released from behind the “Iron Curtain.”

As Davies writes, “In the case of the Soviet Union, a significant discrepancy arose between the huge influence of Marxist-Leninist theory on Western historians and the tiny trickle of credible information about Soviet realities. A whole generation of British, French, and American historians, deeply affected by the war, began publishing before it was over. But sober studies about Stalin and Stalin’s policies had to wait for decades.”

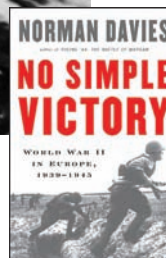
Davies asks readers to reconsider what they already believe about World War II and how those beliefs might be biased or even incorrect. He points out, for example, that the seven biggest land battles of the war were all fought on the German-Russian front; major battles in the West, such as the Normandy invasion and the Battle of the Bulge were—in terms of num-

The Soviets Carried the Heavy End of the Stick

Two new books detail the importance of the Soviet contribution to victory.

FOR OVER 60 YEARS, THE POPULAR MISCONCEPTION IN THE WEST IS THAT THE U.S. and Great Britain carried the burden of World War II, while the Soviet Union played a supporting role. Two recent books—*No Simple Victory* and *The Greatest Battle*—turn that notion on its head. It was the Soviet Union, say these authors convincingly, that carried the heavy end of the stick, while the U.S. and Britain made significant but much smaller contributions.

In *No Simple Victory* (Viking Press, New York, 2007, 544 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, \$30.00), an intentionally contrary treatise, the eminent British historian Norman Davies cuts against the grain and deconstructs the old notion that it was the West, with a little help from Joe Stalin and the Russians, that won the war. In his powerful and persuasive argument, Davies explains how the West’s misconceptions were built in the first place and presents a detailed account of the ways in which the war has been portrayed in film, art, and literature, and



bers of troops involved and casualties incurred—minor skirmishes compared to the immense struggles in the East.

Through a very thorough exploration of long-buried facts, particularly focusing on the role of the U.S.S.R. and the Red Army in the defeat of Nazi Germany, Davies proves that the contribution of the Soviet Army was far more significant than previously portrayed in the West, and that the war, far from being a contest between good and evil, was, at least on the Eastern Front, a contest between twin evils.

The Greatest Battle: Stalin, Hitler, and the Desperate Struggle for Moscow That Changed the Course of World War II, by Andrew Nagorski, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2007, 366 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$27.00.

Waged by seven million

The Soviet Army defends Voronezh during a fresh German offensive. Once it fell, Stalin was convinced that the Germans would move south rather than advance toward Moscow.

(National Archives)

troops—with 2.5 million killed, wounded, or taken prisoner—the battle for Moscow was the largest battle between two armies in history. What should be one of the best known battles has been reduced to obscurity, especially in the West, but also in Russia.

Although enormous in scale and importance, the battle for Moscow never quite achieved the supreme heroic status that Stalin accorded to the victories at Stalingrad and Kursk. It was downplayed in official Soviet histories because it was marred by too many errors and miscalculations by Stalin. Andrew Nagorski, formerly *Newsweek's* Moscow bureau chief, has taken it upon himself to set the record straight and give this titanic struggle its proper due.

Nagorski cites the many early Soviet failures and miscalculations—Stalin's naïve belief that the nonaggression pact he had signed with Hitler would be honored, the lack of trained officers following Stalin's purge of the officer corps, and the throwing of ill-prepared and ill-equipped troops into the breach. The author also examines the political as well as the tactical decisions made by both leaders—Stalin's decision to remain in Moscow during the siege, which rallied the Russians to him, and Hitler's decision to disregard his generals' advice and pursue his own grandiose but wrong-headed schemes that would lead to disaster.

In bringing this remarkable account of the battle to life, Nagorski draws on official records, visits to battlefields, and interviews with surviving soldiers and others who witnessed the events—from massacres in small villages to the near-famine and other calamities in the besieged capital.

Nagorski points out that the truth behind the battle for Moscow “is completely at odds with the standard image of Stalin's Soviet Union and its propaganda line about the unflinching unity and heroism of its people at their moment of greatest peril. So Soviet history books have generally whitewashed what happened.”

As Nagorski concludes, “Moscow's defenders paid a horrific price, but they changed the course of history, not just for their own country but also for everyone locked in the struggle against Hitler's Germany.” Nagorski's book makes a fine companion piece to the Davies' study. Both are highly recommended.

Betrayal: The True Story of J. Edgar Hoover and the Nazi Saboteurs Captured During WWII, by David Alan Johnson, Hippocrene Books, New York, 2007, 304 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$24.95.

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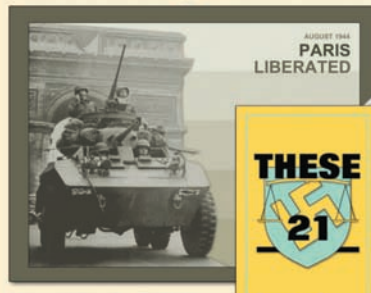
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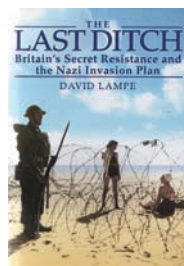
Before dawn on the foggy morning of June 12, 1942, a German submarine discharged its four passengers in an inflatable raft along the coast of New York's Long Island. The four passengers, all dressed in civilian clothes, had come to America ostensibly on a mission of sabotage—Operation Pastorius—to blow up key factories manufacturing vital war material.

What the Nazis who sent the saboteurs to the U.S. did not know was that the leader of the four-man team, George Dasch, was bent on sabotaging the sabotage operation. Dasch was a German citizen who had come to America before the war, married an American girl, but was persuaded to return to Germany by his mother, and was then unable to get back to the U.S. when war broke out.

Dasch loved America and hated the Nazis. When he was recruited by the Gestapo to take part in the operation, he felt he could accomplish two things: return to the U.S. and throw a monkey wrench into Germany's plans to wreck American industry.

Naïvely thinking that he would be welcomed back to his adopted country as a patriot after he and his team landed, Dasch went straight to the FBI to turn himself in. He did not count on egomaniacal FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover wanting to discount Dasch's role in the foiled plot so he could take all the credit for breaking up the sabotage effort himself. Instead of being hailed as a Nazi-fighting hero, Dasch and his co-conspirators found themselves on trial for their lives in front of a military tribunal.

In this fast-paced book that reads like a spy novel, Johnson shows step by step how George Dasch's sincere desire to aid his adopted country began to unravel as soon as he contacted



the FBI, and how his faith in American justice and fair play was shattered. A most interesting and thought-provoking book.

Sinking the Rising Sun: Dog Fighting and Dive Bombing in World War II, by William E. Davis, Zenith Press, Bath, United Kingdom, 2007, 304 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$26.95.

"In theory, I shouldn't have been able to see the tracers coming toward me, but I could see them coming up very clearly," writes William Davis. "They appeared to be climbing slowly toward me in an arc, like a soft lob in tennis, then suddenly they'd flash past me to explode behind my plane. The gunner hadn't led me enough. Now the shells were further in front, and I knew immediately it was going to be close."

William E. Davis III, a naval aviator with Torpedo Squadron 19, based aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington*, has crafted an excellent autobiography, *Sinking the Rising Sun*, one of the most heart-pounding recollections of aerial battle ever written. Davis was awarded the Navy Cross after displaying extraordinary heroism during the furious Battle of Cape Engaño in October 1944. Bravely flying through sheets of enemy fire, Davis was able to place a bomb on the flight deck of the Japanese carrier *Zuikaku*, which eventually sank.

Recreating the life-and-death drama of dog-

fighting and dive bombing over the Pacific, Davis recounts how his squadron shot down 155 enemy planes while losing only two of its own. More than a just book about his many aerial combat experiences, Davis has also written a fine account of how he was trained, how he and his fun-loving mates raised hell at parties in Hawaii, how he and the

aviators aboard the *Lexington* lived between missions, and how death over the vast ocean could come swiftly and unexpectedly.

Sinking the Rising Sun is a rare, true life account of what it was like to be in the cockpit of the powerful F6F Hellcat during some of the key battles of the Pacific Theater. Don't miss this one.

The Last Ditch: Britain's Secret Resistance and the Nazi Invasion Plan, by David Lampe, Greenhill Books, London, 2007, 220 pp., photographs, maps, index, hardcover, \$34.95.

Novelists, playwrights, filmmakers, and historical theorists have often played with the question of what would have happened had the Germans invaded Britain in 1940. The answer to this question is contained in David Lampe's book. Originally published in 1968, *The Last Ditch* is a compelling study of exactly what was intended by both sides. Methodically investigating the German invasion and occupation plans, then detailing the countermeasures that were to be undertaken by the British Resistance Organization, a guerrilla-warfare group, Lampe presents a realistic scenario of harsh occupation and fierce resistance.

The author shows how the British were trained to spy, sabotage, and kill. Hideouts were established, caches of arms and explosives were hidden, and a resistance

Short Bursts

P-47 Thunderbolt at War, by Cory Graff, Zenith Press, Bath, United Kingdom, 2007, 128 pages, photographs, illustrations, technical drawings, bibliography, index, softcover, \$19.95.

Regarded by many as the most significant aerial combatant of World War II, the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt (nicknamed the "Jug") was the largest and most powerful single-engine aircraft of the war. And with over 15,000 P-47s built, its



production numbers topped those of any other American fighter.

P-47 Thunderbolt at War traces the history of this tough warplane—from its design, prototype, and testing to its employment in all the major theaters of the war. Whether used as air superiority fighters, protective escorts for fleets of bombers, or as tactical fighter bombers, the P-47's speed, firepower, and durability made it a mainstay of American aerial combat.

Over 100 color and black-and-white photos bring the complete story of this legendary warbird to life.

FUBAR: Soldier Slang of World War II, by Gordon L. Rottman, Osprey, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2007, 296 pp., illustrations, bibliography, hardcover, \$15.95.

"Military slang is as old as warfare," says author Gordon L. Rottman. He points out that soldiers "develop their own, far earthier, terminology covering all aspects of their lives. Words, nicknames, acronyms, abbreviations, and phrases are bestowed on all manner of things, often with a cynical, humorous or completely



profane twist."

He goes on to prove his point with chapters devoted to U.S. Army and Marine Corps slang, Tommy-Aussie-Canuck-and-Kiwi talk, and even German, Japanese, and

Soviet soldier speak. If you know the meaning of "collision mats," "prang," "clifty wallah," "orgurtsy," "kojiki bukuro," and "Nachthexen," you're either a World War II veteran or you already read the book.

FUBAR is a fun, informative look at language that is guaranteed to provide hours of enjoyable information.

radio network was established. For their part, the Germans would have acted every bit as cruelly as they did following their invasions of Poland, Czechoslovakia, France, the Low Countries, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere.

Although the invasion of Britain never took place, the resistance was ready and waiting. So successful was the organization that it became the model for underground movements all over occupied Europe.

The Last Ditch is a chilling, "what if" look at what both sides would have faced had the invasion gone ahead as planned.

The Luftwaffe Over Germany: Defense of the Reich, by Donald Caldwell and Richard Muller, Greenhill Books, London, 2007, 304 pages, photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$39.95.

On September 4, 1939, the first British bombs fell on a fleet of German warships. So began British aerial retaliation for Germany's invasion of Poland. Over the next six years, the aerial assault—first by Britain alone and then with the addition of the U.S. Eighth Air Force—would grow in intensity and destructive power.

Yet, despite the thousands of raids and millions of tons of bombs, the Germans managed to hold out, thanks in large part to the pilots of the fighter aircraft of Hermann Göring's Luftwaffe.

At first a formidable force, the Luftwaffe was gradually reduced through attrition to a shadow of its former self, barely able to challenge the huge Allied bomber formations.

Caldwell and Muller, two noted Luftwaffe historians, have put together a remarkable book that documents the history of the German air force from beginning to end. Working on the project for over 10 years, the authors have delved deeply into logbooks, doctrine manuals, after-action reports, war diaries, official records, and interviews with surviving Luftwaffe veterans to bring this amazing story to life.

The result is a full and fabulous history of the Luftwaffe's fighter arm—the Fw-190s, Bf-109s, and Me-262s—that battled the Allied bomber streams. In this richly illustrated volume with over 200 photos, the authors present a complete examination of Luftwaffe organization, theory, and doctrine that eventually affected Germany's ability to defend itself.

This is a meticulously researched history of the longest and most intensely fought air battles of all time, worthy of a place on any aviation buff's bookshelf.

Corregidor in Peace and War, by Charles M. Hubbard and Collis H. Davis, Jr., University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 2007, 198 pp.,

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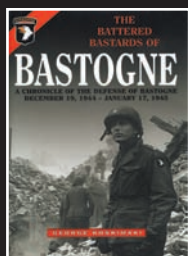
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Members of the US 101st Airborne Division, The Screaming Eagles, fought in Operation Market Garden to liberate the Netherlands. *Hell's Highway* is the personal account of the 612 members of this force who risked their lives for the freedom of the world. George Koskimaki expertly weaves together individual accounts of the battles and makes them into a cohesive whole. *Hell's Highway* helps us relive the battle by giving us a true picture of the war as seen through the eyes of the men who fought it.



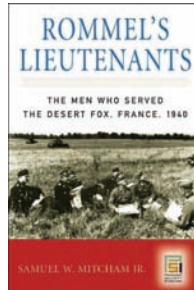
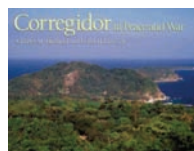
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photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$39.95.

Since the days of Magellan and the Spanish galleons, the island of Corregidor, guarding the entrance to Manila Bay, has played an important role in the history of the Philippines, the Far East, the South China Sea, and the Pacific Ocean.

During World War II, Corregidor's defiant stand against Japanese invasion, its role as the heartbeat of General Douglas MacArthur's doomed defense of the Philippines, and its eventual capture by the Japanese on May 6, 1942, have all been well documented in numerous histories.

Less well known, however, is the rest of Corregidor's story; Hubbard and Davis's heavily illustrated volume fills in the sizeable gaps in our knowledge. The authors detail the island's trans-



formation from a sleepy tropical rock into an important, formidable fortress captured by the U.S. during the Spanish-American War and continuously improved until 1941.

Interweaving old and new photos (many in color) with informative text, the authors provide a guided tour of the fortified island that captures the natural beauty of the site. Brilliant color images evoke a place where flora and wildlife coexist alongside abandoned fortifications, battered casemates, skeletal barracks, and scarred artillery pieces.

Today a tourist destination as well as a significant historical monument, Corregidor remains a beautiful, haunting island—and *Corregidor in Peace and War* is an outstanding tribute to the myths, legends, and heritage of the site.

Featured Publisher

Founded in New York in 1924, Simon & Schuster is one of America's oldest, largest, and most prestigious publishing houses, releasing an average of 1,800 titles on various topics per year. Many of the world's most respected authors and historians (such as Doris Kearns Goodwin and the late Stephen Ambrose) have been published by Simon & Schuster, which always seems to win more than its fair share of national and international book awards.

Some of Simon & Schuster's more recent World War II titles include:

- *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943*, by Rick Atkinson
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- *The Ultimate Battle: Okinawa—The Last Epic Struggle of World War II*, by Bill Sloan
- *American Spartans: U.S. Marines—A Combat History from Iwo Jima to Iraq*, by James A. Warren
- *Great Escape: Nine Jews Who Fleed Hitler and Changed the World*, by Kati Marton
- *Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign*, by Evan Thomas
- *Library of Congress World War II Companion*, edited by David M. Kennedy
- *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany*, by Donald L. Miller.

Rommel's Lieutenants: The Men Who Served the Desert Fox, France, 1940, by Samuel W. Mitcham, Jr., Praeger, Westport, Conn., 2007, 202 pp., photographs, maps, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$39.95.

One of the ablest and most admired of the German commanders was Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. Much has been written about his role as commander of the Afrika Korps where, outmanned by the British, he nevertheless outdueled his opponents on several occasions and earned the sobriquet "the Desert Fox."

Less has been written about his service as commander of the 7th Panzer Division—the so-called "Ghost Division"—during the lightning advance into France in 1940. During this campaign, 7th Panzer, although suffering more casualties than any other German division, inflicted even greater damage on the enemy divisions in its path, taking nearly 100,000 prisoners and capturing huge numbers of tanks, trucks, and guns. It was after spearheading this blitzkrieg that Rommel was selected by Hitler to take charge of German forces in North Africa.

But 7th Panzer was not a one-man show; Rommel had a great deal of help in France. His staff officers and regimental, battalion, and company commanders were an extremely capable collection of military leaders that included twelve future generals. Until now, no book has focused on the careers and contributions of Rommel's "lieutenants," men such as Hans von Luck, Frido von Senger und Etterlin, Karl Hanke, Gottfried Froelich, Rudolf Sieckenius, and many others. Mitcham's carefully researched and extremely well-written book brings to light these leaders and their important contributions in the early German victories. □

victory

Continued from page 43

finally disappearing beneath the waves. The front half, consumed in flames, floated a moment or two longer before going under.

Within seconds, the sea was a thick, viscous mass of oil slicks and screaming, half-dazed survivors. The *Queen Mary* sailed on without stopping—those were the standing orders—leaving smaller ships to pick up survivors. Only 101 sailors out of a complement of 429 officers and men lived to tell the tale.

Damage control parties quickly examined the *Queen Mary's* bow and found an 11-foot hole at the point of impact. There was serious flooding to the forepeak, but as long as the water-tight bulkhead held, there would be no serious danger. Speed was reduced to less than half, about 13 knots. The ship was inspected and deemed seaworthy. There was no need to replace the damaged bow, at least at the time.

The tragedy had been caused by a series of wrong assumptions, small miscalculations, and bad timing thoroughly based on human error. Both captains were men of ability and sound judgment. Though he was not entirely responsible for the disaster, Captain Illingsworth automatically thought that the *Queen Mary* would have the right of way. It was a fatal assumption.

The *Queen Mary* then embarked on one of the greatest troop delivery shuttles in her career. Dubbed the "long voyage," the vessel went from Scotland, to Suez, and to Sydney, Australia, and then returned to Gourock. Total round trip mileage was 37,943 miles.

The *Queen Mary* and her sister ship, *Queen Elizabeth*, were a vital part of the war effort. Indeed, many claim they helped shorten the war by about a year. Without the massive buildup provided by the *Queens*, D-Day might have been postponed until 1945. Between June 1943 and April 1945, the *Queen Mary* carried nearly 340,000 American and Canadian troops on journeys that covered 180,000 miles. The political consequences were immense. If the Western allies had been delayed, Stalin's Red Army might have spread Communism beyond the reaches of Eastern Europe.

It was Winston Churchill who summed up the matter best. "Built for the arts of peace and to link the Old World with the New," he later wrote, "the *Queens* challenged the fury of Hitlerism in the Battle of the Atlantic. Without their aid, the day of final victory must unquestionably have been postponed." □

Eric Niderost is a college professor in Hayward, California.

double diamond

Continued from page 53

crossed a creek near the base of the hill, their machine guns opened up and killed several of our boys. Tanks were called in to blast the steel doors. Our lads began climbing the hillside from different directions, dropping grenades down shafts. Rifle and machine gun exchanges were fierce. By nightfall, our sections were spread out on the hill, and the arrival of a moonless night reduced the shooting to tension-filled, intermittent exchanges throughout the darkness.

"By the third day, the entrances to the tunnels and the shafts had been sealed by demolition charges, and the hill was ours. Next, we moved onto Snags Track, a primitive one-lane vehicle track across the island bordered on the sides by low jungle scrub and overhead trees. Resistance was fanatical. Jap snipers had tied themselves to the tree branches and concealed machine gun entrenchments were built into jungle ridges covering the track. Hidden by logs leaving only slits as targets to attack, they could mow down approaching patrols. Throughout the Tarakan campaign, this was typical of the Japanese defensive system. As I moved along Snags Track rolling out a telephone cable, an explosion immediately in front of me made me turn quickly. One of the boys was blown to pieces. He had stood on a land mine."

Short of supplies and their numbers severely depleted, the Japanese were broken by June 1, and the survivors retreated to the north and northeast of the island, where they were eventually hunted down by Australian patrols. In two months of fierce fighting, 26 Brigade had achieved its main objectives and had killed approximately 1,540 Japanese with a loss of 225 Australian dead.

On August 14, 1945, President Harry Truman announced the unconditional surrender of Japan, and this was confirmed the following day by the Australian government. An issue of three bottles of beer per man helped the troops to celebrate in a proper manner. The 26 Brigade Group remained as an occupational force on Tarakan Island until December 2.

By December 18, most members of the 2/4 Commando unit, with their dark blue double diamond shoulder patch, had finally returned to Australia. On January 8, 1946, the unit was officially disbanded. The 2/4 was the only Australian infantry unit to have fought in each of the New Guinea and Borneo campaigns. □

Ken Wright lives and works in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.



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Player's choice: What was versus what could have been ...

This issue's column looks at two strategic, turn-based computer games that model the European Theater in World War II. The first is **Strategic Command 2: Weapons and Warfare Expansion** from Fury Software. Expansion is really the wrong designation for this package since for video games "expansion" has come to mean that you have to have the original game to play it. SC2:W&W builds on the mechanics and scenarios of the original game, but it can be played on its own without the purchase of the original game.

for one of the 30 different countries in the game) and each unit is rated in 32 different characteristics to give it a performance close to its real-world counterpart regardless of the game situation it finds itself in. The AI is both improved in this ver-



There are six campaigns for the single-player game that let the player complete WWII as one of the countries involved. For instance, the Fall Weiss campaign starts with the German invasion of Poland and lets the player control either the German and Italian armies or the English and French ones. There are also eight mini-campaigns that focus on a small slice of the war and play it out. For example, the Wacht Am Rhein mini-campaign lets the player refight the Battle of the Bulge as either the Germans or the Americans.

Whatever the campaign, the game is turn based and has two dimensions. There are counters for each unit of the 22 unit types (each one coming in a color and flagging

sion of the game and also adjustable so that player can find a level of challenge that he is comfortable with.

The other PC game for this issue is **Advanced Tactics World War II** from Matrix Games. Whereas the SC is an engine that the designers keep refining to better model WWII, the AT engine is built to model combat at any time period. This installment models the

European Theater of WWII, but it does so with less precision than SC2:W&W. For example, both games move the unit around as counters on a 2-D board, but in SC the counters have little 3-D pictures of the actual units; AT has silhouettes of the generic unit types.

The two games both have single-player and multiplayer modes. Both games support multiplayer in hot seat, LAN, and e-mail play with both games offering encryption on the play by e-mail option. Both games contain editors that allow the players to create their own scenarios and campaigns, customize units, and modify maps. Because it is a game built on a more generic engine, AT has more options for creating "what if" scenarios, and in fact has a three-way 1945 scenario built in.

Both games have supply rules, but AT's are more complex as are its resource and production rules. The combat animation is also more detailed in AT. SC plays sound effects and the counters take damage. AT displays a separate screen with more detailed results. Ultimately, both games are true to their model of the war and the men and machines that fought it, but SC seems to do a better job of letting players experience the choices as they were while AT seems better at modeling what

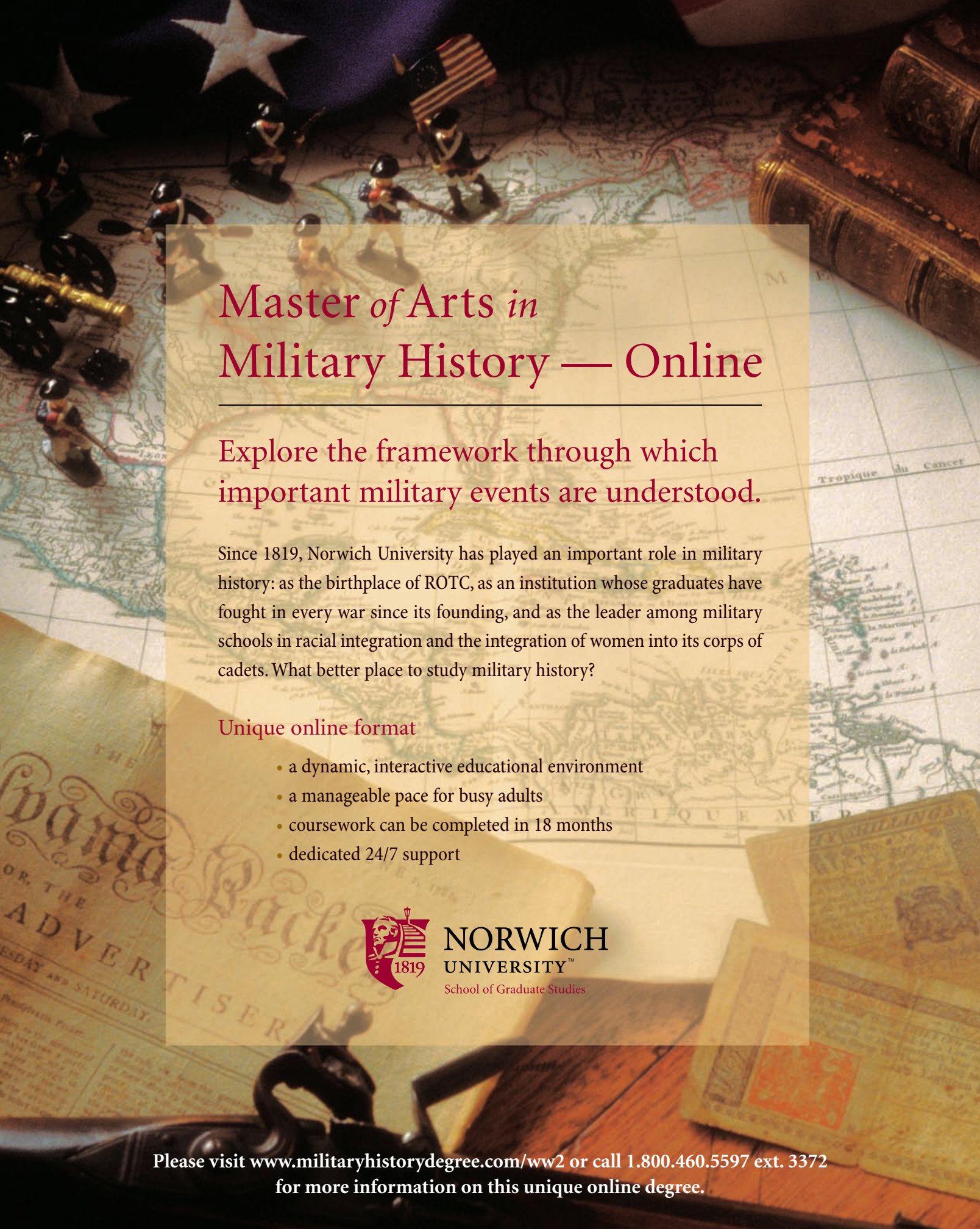


could have been if circumstances had been different.

The third game is **Red Storm Over the Reich: the Last Days of the Third Reich** from designer Ted Raicer and Compass Games. This is a board game that comes with two large, full-color maps, 456 counters, setup charts, rules, and two dice. This is a highly focused simulation and there are only three scenarios in the box. The first two have fewer units and most people will be able to play them in about 10 hours. The third scenario will take more like 14, but it uses about all of the counters.

What RSOIR models is the final Russian campaign, launched in January of 1945, to overrun Germany and take Berlin. There were terrible losses on both sides, but by May 1 the Russians controlled Berlin. The first scenario lets the players model these historic events. The second allows the German player to pull units back from the initial Soviet strike into the defensive alignment that Hitler forebade so that what units the Germans historically had have a better chance of stopping the Russians. The third scenario assumes that Hitler is removed from power in time for the Battle of the Bulge to be called off and the German units it wasted to be moved to the Eastern Front. □





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