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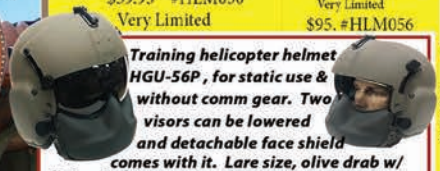

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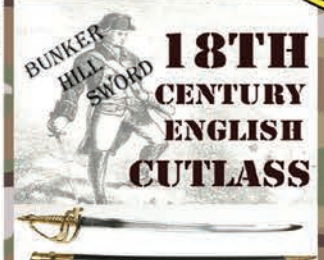

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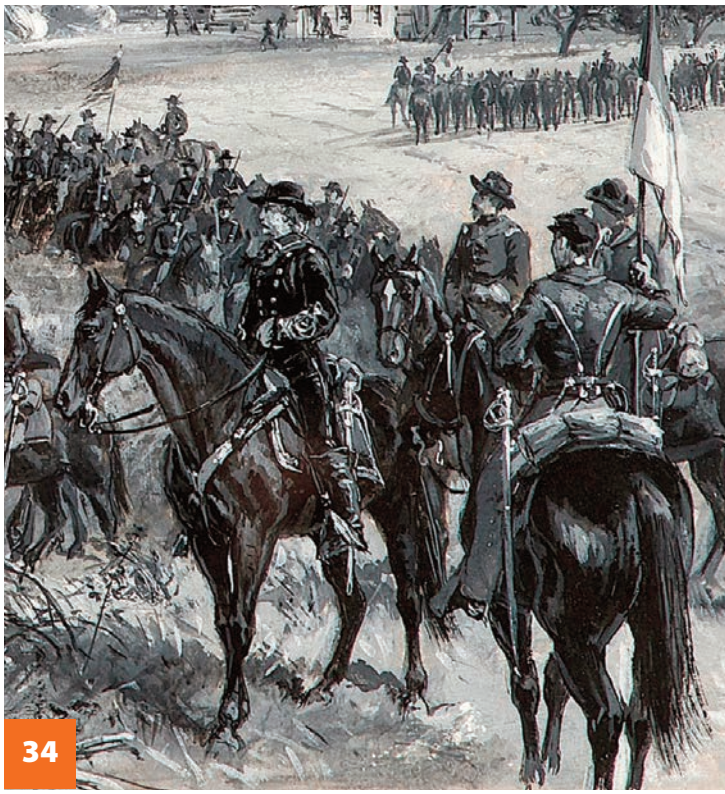
Fall 2023

FEATURES

Cover: An injured U.S. Marine carries an M1 Thompson submachine gun during the battle for Hue City, Vietnam, February 1968. See story page 24.
Photo: National Archives.



COLUMNS

Military Heritage (ISSN 1524-8666) is published quarterly by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Ave., Suite C-100, McLean VA 22101-4554 (703) 964-0361. Periodical postage PAID at McLean, VA, and additional mailing offices. *Military Heritage*, Volume 25, Number 3

Subscription Services, back issues, and Information: 1(800) 219-1187 or write to *Military Heritage* Circulation, *Military Heritage*, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703. Single copies: $12.99, plus $5 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $49.95; Canada and Overseas: $63.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Editor, William E. Welsh. Send editorial mail to *Military Heritage*, 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite C-100, McLean VA 22101. Email submission queries to Managing Editor at seabrooke.sovmedia@gmail.com. Review the magazine to tailor your submission to its approach before querying. Do not send unsolicited hardcopy manuscripts. The Editorial Department will not respond to inquiries regarding individual contracts. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Military Heritage*, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.

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EDITORIAL

Arlington National Cemetery: A Nation's Hallowed Ground

It's not just for veterans and history buffs—no visit to our nation's capital is complete without a visit to Arlington National Cemetery.

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON, DC, TO VIEW FAMOUS ICONS OF the United States. Mainly these are working institutions like the Congress and the White House or edifices such as the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials. Many travelers have the good fortune to cross the Potomac River for a visit to Arlington Cemetery, the nation's most hallowed burial ground.

Arlington Cemetery is striking in a number of ways. For one, it is a beautiful place: tall oaks over trimmed green turf on rolling hillocks that occasionally give glimpses of the nation's capital across the valley. For another, it is remarkably restrained. One can imagine that in Europe such a personage as General Pershing might have a building erected to him, or that our own "Guilded Age" would have created far more extravagant monuments than are evident here. Rather, the markers and memorials are on the whole simple, as if those who wish to remember and those wishing to be remembered prefer to rely on recollections of such intangibles as honor, service, and duty rather than architectural and funereal flights of fancy. Here the man with the highest rank ever given in the United States, General of the Armies John Pershing, lies beneath a simple government-issue headstone of the type that also serves any private. Audie Murphy has a government-issue headstone no different from those of thousands around him, except that Murphy's lists more awards. Actor and World War II Marine Lee Marvin lies beside boxer Joe Louis. Marvin was wounded in the Pacific; his headstone reads: "Lee Marvin, PFC, U. S. Marine Corps, World War II, Feb. 19 1924, Aug 29 1987." He is one of many.

Anyone interested in U.S. military history should visit the cemetery. Here lie several veterans of the Revolutionary War. And the cemetery, of course, has its roots in the Civil War, when the grounds were taken over at the suggestion of the astonishing Union Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs because soldiers were dying so fast in Washington hospitals the city had run out of space in which to bury them. Meigs is interred here, as are Abner Doubleday, Phil Kearny, Arthur MacArthur, David Porter, William Rosecrans, Phil Sheridan, Dan Sickles, John Gibbon, and John Schofield.

Arlington has its surprises. Hundreds of Confederates are buried here, and were since the Cemetery's early days. And there is a tall Confederate Monument, dedicated in 1914, in the cemetery's Confederate Section. A great number of women are buried at Arlington, too. Wives, of course, but also hundreds of nurses, who lie interred around the Nurses' Memorial.

Arlington is rich in leaders and heroes of World War II. Here lie "Pappy" Boyington, Claire Chennault, "Wild Bill" Donovan, Jimmy Doolittle, "Bull" Halsey, William Leahy, Anthony McAuliffe, Jonathan Wainwright, Matthew Ridgway, and five-star generals Hap Arnold, George C. Marshall, and Omar Bradley.

Most striking of all are the thousands upon thousands of white marble headstones, the ranks of ordinary Americans who took up arms in times of trouble, many of whom lived less than two and a half decades. Without their dedication and sacrifices, the United States would not have become a beacon of democracy and justice. This is why Arlington Cemetery is hallowed ground.

Brooke C. Stoddard

MILITARY HERITAGE

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 3

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McLean, VA 22101-4554

SUBSCRIPTION, CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND BUSINESS OFFICE
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Williamsport, PA 17701

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VALOR

National Archives

Gunner's mate earns Navy Cross for holding off large enemy force in rescue of special ops team along the Saigon River.

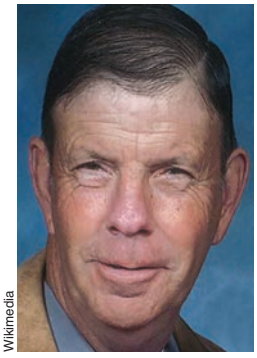
By Kevin Seabrooke

As darkness fell along the upper Saigon River in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region, one of two River Patrol boats of the U.S. Navy's "Operation Game Warden" River Patrol Force cut its engines and nosed up to the riverbank. Three figures leapt from the boat and disappeared into the thick jungle. The second boat continued ahead, then did the same and three more figures disappeared. The men were part of an Army Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP), a six-man ambush team that would search for Viet Cong and provide security for the waterborne two-boat guard post watching for enemy traffic on the river.

It was August 2, 1969, and 21-year-old Petty Officer David Larsen was the gunner's mate aboard Patrol Boat, River (PBR) 775, one of the two boats that would wait there until dawn. In the beginning of Operation Game Warden, the boats would move quietly along the channels and canals, but in the silent darkness, the engines were too loud even at the lowest rpms. So now the tactic was to wait near a suspected enemy crossing, tied up at the bank, or under some trees, maintaining radio silence. Watching and listening for the whispers and small splashes of the enemy crossing the river, more often waiting for hours with nothing happening.

The River Patrol Force (Task Force 116) was created in December 1965 by the U.S. command in Vietnam to stop the flow of men and materiel flowing from Cambodia into the Mekong Delta. By March 1966, Operation Game Warden was underway, using 31-foot fiberglass river patrol boats with enlisted crews of four to stop and search river traffic.

Based on a commercial design by the Hatteras Yacht Company, the Mark I and Mark II PBRs were built by United Boat Builders of Bellingham, Washington. The fiberglass hulls were impervious to marine boring creatures and didn't produce wood splinters or metal shrapnel like other boats when hit by enemy fire. It weighed 14,600 lbs. with a draft of 26 inches and was powered by two General Motors 220-horsepower diesel engines, with a top speed of 20



Wikimedia

A U.S. Navy River Patrol Boat (PBR) of River Patrol Force 116 moves at high speed down the Saigon River in Vietnam, November 1967. INSET: Petty Officer David Larsen was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions on August 2, 1969. Larsen, assigned to PBR-775, held off an estimated 50 enemy soldiers on the banks of the Saigon River , allowing three members of an ambush team to be recovered.

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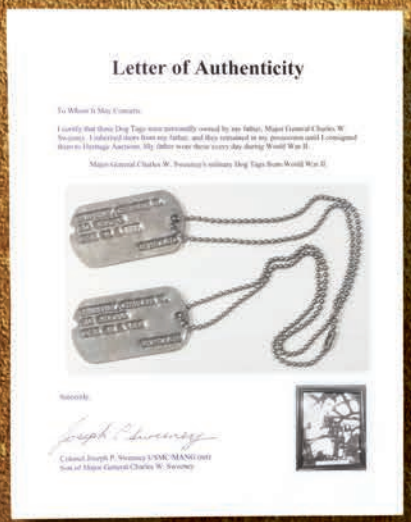

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knots. Two jacuzzi water-jet pumps propelled and steered the Mark I, making it highly maneuverable, able to stop quickly and turn around completely. It was equipped with a Raytheon Pathfinder surface search radar and two AN/VRC-46 radios. For armament, it had three .50-caliber machine guns—two in a turret at the bow and one mounted at the stern. They usually carried an M-60 machine gun, a 40mm grenade launcher amidship.

The PBRs usually worked in pairs, with one boat intercepting and boarding sampans, junks and other river craft, while the other stood off watching for ambushes. At night, the PBR crews had more latitude in dealing with river traffic—all of which was assumed to be hostile as there was a dusk to dawn curfew. They crews could radio in for permission to fire on a vessel but, if fired upon, they were free to return fire without direct orders.

Once the patrol commander was sure the enemy was in the water, both boats opened fire with their machine guns and grenade launchers. Artillery or air support could also be called in.

By 1967, working with heavily armed Bell Aviation UH-1B and UH-1M Huey helicopters, these PBR patrols were limiting enemy activity on South Vietnam's larger rivers. Nicknamed "Seawolves," the Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron Three (HAL-3) provided close air support for the Game Warden River Patrol Force as well as armed reconnaissance and fire support for Navy SEALs.

In addition to the PBRs and other U.S. resources flowing into South Vietnam for Operation Game Warden, the River Patrol Force oversaw an increasing number of SEALs. Three 14-man platoons each from the Atlantic Fleet's SEAL Team 1 and Team 2 were deployed in the delta region.

The main role for the SEALs for Task Force 116 was intelligence gathering—location and capabilities of enemy units and possible attack plans. The highly trained six-man SEAL units avoided combat, if possible, but carried out many ambushes in day or night and ran raids to kill or capture Viet Cong leaders or couriers. Though SEALs could use a wide variety of craft on the rivers, they were often transported by River Patrol Force PBRs or the HAL-3 helicopters, which also provided armed support and stood by to pick them up after their operations.

In July 1968 an officer in tactical command of a SEAL detachment described operations in the vast mangrove swamps of the delta south of Saigon known as the Rung Sat Special Zone. In an end-of-tour report, he wrote that "the foliage is so thick that it is not unlikely for a patrol to be within a Viet Cong base camp and not realize it. Visibility is sometimes only 5 to 10 feet and silent movement is practically impossible. . . . In a firefight with a concealed enemy at a range of 5 to 10 meters the possibility of losing at least the first two members of a friendly patrol is great."

Up on the Saigon River, sometime after dark on the night of August 2, Petty Officer Larsen and the crews of the two PBRs heard shots and then the explosion of rockets. Larsen and the rest of the crew took their stations, ready to provide cover for the retreating ambush team. Their orders required them to stay on the boats.

Soon after the explosions split the night, a call came over the radio asking the PBR crews for help. The ambush team had engaged four enemy soldiers who turned out to be part of what was later estimated as a force of 35-50 men, who returned fire with rockets, killing or critically wounding five members of the team.

Larsen said later that he grabbed the M-60 machine gun and jumped, almost falling off the boat as his crew tossed him ammunition belts.

Arriving just as the ambush team was about to be overrun, Larsen fired the M-60, killing one enemy soldier, forcing the two others to flee.

Larsen maintained a one-man perimeter defensive position under continuous enemy fire until help arrived.

The citation for the Navy Cross describes Larsen as "the first man to take his post on the perimeter established to provide security for the medical evacuation helicopter. By his extremely courageous one-man assault in the face of direct enemy fire, Petty Officer Larsen was responsible

National Archives

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Thomas J. Miller

ABOVE: U.S. Navy Seal-Air-Land (SEAL) team members and South Vietnamese soldiers disembark from a river patrol boat (PBR) for an assault on Viet Cong positions on Tan Dinh Island in the Mekong Delta during Operation Bold Dragon III, March 26, 1968. RIGHT: David Larsen, left, a recipient of the Navy Cross for actions in Vietnam, and Joe Rosner, center, both with the Mobile Riverine Force in Vietnam, speak with U.S. Sailors attending the Naval Special Warfare Preparatory School at Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois, September 2, 2011. OPPOSITE: Crewman aboard a U.S. Navy river patrol boat (PBR) man their weapons during a river patrol mission in Vietnam.

for saving the lives of three fellow servicemen, and for protecting his shipmates as they administered aid to the wounded."

Eight men earned Bronze Stars that night, though they broke the rules in leaving the boat.

"At the time, it just comes to you that you need to do it to get the job done," Larsen would later say.

Larsen grew up in Kansas and joined the Navy in 1966 right out of high school. He went to boot camp in San Diego, California. After boot camp, he was at Bremerton, Washington, before serving a tour of duty aboard the USS Ranger in Vietnam. From there he went to Korea when the USS Pueblo was captured.

He returned stateside for survival, evasion, resistance and escape training and language school in San Diego. Training complete, he was sent back to Vietnam where he served a year on a PBR in River Division 593, River Patrol Flotilla FIVE, Task Force 116 (TF-116).

During his tour on the river, Larsen would receive not only the Navy Cross, but also a Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts, as well as several other medals and awards. He completed his fourth year of enlistment stationed about the USS Oriskany in San Diego and would serve one year in the Navy Reserves.

Throughout his life, Larsen would maintain that during his time in Vietnam, he really only had one goal: "stay alive and make it back to Kansas."

Larsen would return to Parsons, Kansas, where he was born, and live an active life in the community, serving as a volunteer firefighter, a member of the Parsons Planning Commission and Parsons City Commission. He also was a past president of U.S. Gamewardens Association of Vietnam, as well as a member of the U.S. Gamewardens Board of Directors.

The City of Parsons proclaimed November 12, 2001, as "David R. Larsen Appreciation Day" and named a street after him. His experience in Vietnam has been mentioned in several books and his actions on August 2, 1969, have been featured in two television shows, The Discovery Channel's "Battle Zone," in 2007, and an episode of The Smithsonian Channel's "Weapon Hunter" in 2015.

Larsen died at home in Parsons at the age of 75 on November 2, 2022. ■

The first modern military surgeon, Larrey developed techniques in the service of Napoleon's army still in use today.

By Eric Niderost

It was late November, 1812, and the fate of Napoleon's *Grande Armee* hung in the balance. Several Russian armies were closing in, but if the French crossed the 300-foot-wide Berezina River, the bedraggled survivors of a once great army might still manage to escape the trap. Two bridges had been hastily thrown across the river, a frigid waterway littered with great chunks of floating ice.

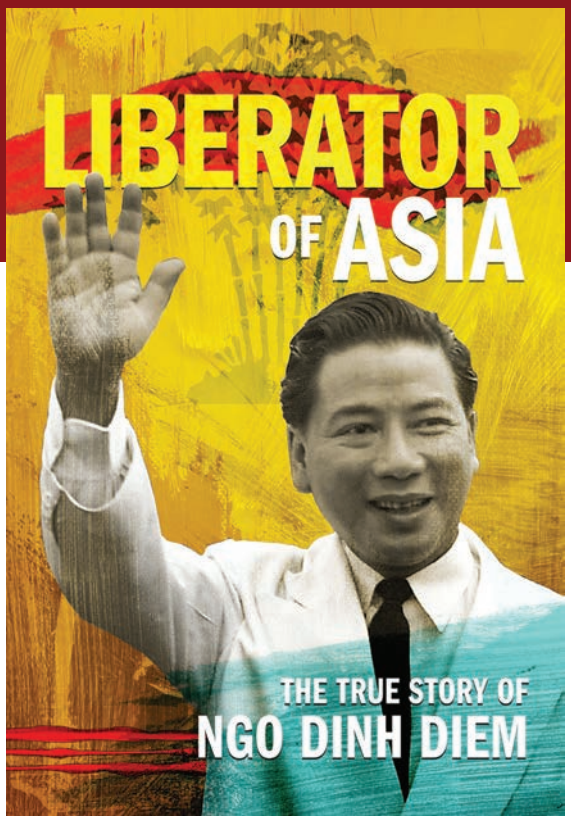
Temperatures continued to plummet, until they reached -27.4 degrees Fahrenheit, or -33C. The ragged soldiers had been reduced to gaunt scarecrows from lack of food, their breath misting into clouds of ice crystals as they trudged painfully along on frostbitten feet. Some even were snow blind, and without a companion to assist them, they were doomed.

Dreams of glory were replaced by an animal instinct for personal survival. Camaraderie, even basic human compassion and decency, was all but forgotten in the struggle to keep alive. Some charged money for a place at their campfire, and teamsters callously drove wagons over wretches who couldn't get out of the way in time. Things got worse when Russian cannonballs began to fall near the bridges, sparking fear that soon became a full-blown panic.

A traffic jam blocked parts of the spans, and in the scramble to cross many were trampled or fell into the icy waters. But amidst the chaos a voice could be heard above the groans, shouts, and cries of anguish. "Monsieur Larrey! Monsieur Larrey! Save him who saved us!" The single voice was joined by

Both: Wikimedia

French surgeon Dominique Jean, Baron Larrey distinguished himself in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. This 1850 wax painting by Charles Louis Müller in the National Academy of Medicine shows "Larrey Operating on the Battlefield." INSET: Portrait of Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey by Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson, 1804.



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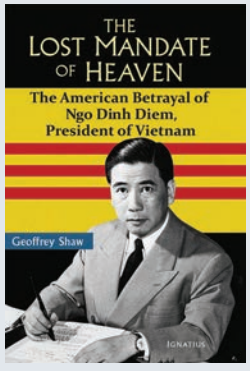
Geoffrey Shaw



Ngo Dinh Diem, the first president of Vietnam, possessed the Confucian "Mandate of Heaven", a moral and political authority that was widely recognized by all Vietnamese. This devout Catholic leader never lost this mandate in the eyes of his people; rather, he was brutally murdered in a military coup sponsored by the U.S. government. Based on his thorough research of original sources, military historian Shaw tells the whole tragic story for the first time.

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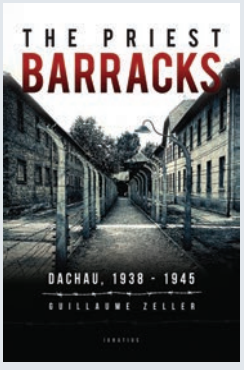
Guillaume Zeller



How many people know that at the Nazi death camp Dachau, three barracks out of thirty were permanently occupied by about 3,000 clergy from 1938-1945? And 1,034 lost their lives. The story of these men is told for the first time in this moving and riveting historical account.

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Roy Wenzl & Travis Ewing

Emil Kapaun—priest, soldier, Korean War hero, recipient of the Medal of Honor – was a rare man. His cause for canonization is moving through the Vatican. Learn his amazing story from his fellow soldiers who testify to the many lives Kapaun saved, as well as the stories of miraculous healing attributed to his intercession. *Illustrated.*

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another, and another, until it was a rising chorus. Larrey, Surgeon-in Chief to Napoleon's Imperial Guard, needed to cross the Berezina—if he didn't, he would probably be killed by rampaging Cossacks or vengeful Russians.

Strong hands lifted him and passed him from one to another, like a piece of driftwood floating on a sea of humanity, until he was across the bridge and safely on the opposite bank. Larrey was surprised by the men's reaction, not realizing that his selfless devotion to wounded soldiers had already become the stuff of legend. He had saved many lives in his career and the soldiers were going to return the favor by saving him.

Dominique Jean Larrey was born on July 8, 1766, in the tiny village of Beaudean, a hamlet nestled on the French side of the Pyrenees mountains, not far from the Franco-Spanish border. The son of a shoemaker, the future surgeon had humble, even obscure origins. He might have followed in his father's footsteps, toiling away at a cobbler's bench, but fate decreed otherwise. Orphaned at 13, he was sent to live with his uncle Alexis, who was the chief surgeon in Toulouse.

Young Larrey found he liked the medical profession, and after serving an eight-year apprenticeship with his uncle he journeyed to Paris to study under Pierre-Joseph Desault, who was the chief surgeon at the Hotel-Dieu. His uncle Andre gave him a letter of introduction, but money was scarce, and Larrey walked all the way from Toulouse to Paris, a distance of roughly 400 miles. Desault was kind, but essentially told the young surgeon he needed more practical experience.

Larrey took the advice and joined the French Royal Navy of Louis XVI, but found in the end a life at sea had little appeal. Quitting the navy, he took a position as an assistant surgeon at the Hotel-Dieu where his mentor Desault welcomed his arrival. Larrey became a passionate supporter of the French Revolution, and personally witnessed the celebrated fall of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. When the War of the First Coalition broke out in 1792, Larrey joined the French Army of the Rhine. He was an army surgeon during the 1790s, but as he gained experience he also developed new ideas in treating battlefield casualties.

In retrospect it is amazing he accomplished as much as he did, given the abysmal state of medical knowledge at the time. In 1800 the first true anesthetics were over 40 years into the future, and if a soldier was in agony he might be given a swig of liquor. But most of all Larrey and his contemporaries had no idea what caused disease or the horrible infections like gangrene that all too often plagued the wounded. The existence of pathogenic microorganisms—germs—were still unknown.

In the 1790s Larrey was appalled by the haphazard way the wounded were evacuated from the battlefield. Ambulances were posted well behind the lines, and often wounded were not picked up until the fighting was over. Many could lie on the battlefield for hours, even a day or two, suffering not only from their wounds but from shock, hunger, dehydration, and the risk of being stripped and murdered by nearby villagers or even other soldiers, especially if they were from the opposing army.

All too often these unfortunates died before they were picked up, or died en route to the dressing station. Larrey felt there had to be a better way. He was inspired by observing how fast the French mobile artillery could maneuver, and decided to create ambulances that were similar in design. The result was the celebrated *ambulance volantes* or "flying ambulances."

The flying ambulances were light, wooden horse drawn carriages that were designed to carry

TOP RIGHT: French surgeon Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey's *ambulance volante,* or "flying ambulance," was used to evacuate casualties from the battlefield during the Napoleonic wars. BOTTOM RIGHT: Napoleon visits his friend, Marshal Jean Lannes, who was mortally wounded at the Battle of Aspern-Essling (May 21-22,1809) as Surgeon Larrey looks on in this 1894 painting by Paul-Émile Boutigny. OPPOSITE: Larrey "Tending the Wounded at the Battle of Moscow," oil painting by Louis Lejeune.

Both: Wikimedia

two wounded soldiers. These ambulances could pick up the wounded even as a battle still raged, and take him to a larger vehicle for transport to field hospitals that were set up in the rear. The drivers and medical staff that accompanied each ambulance were well trained, and the carriages included portable surgical instruments, field dressings, and some medicines. Nothing was left to chance.

Larrey also developed the system of triage, which he described as "the assignment of degrees of urgency to wounds or illnesses to decide the order of treatment of a large number of patients or casualties." Injured soldiers were divided into three groups: dangerously wounded, less dangerously wounded, and slightly wounded. The ones who had the worst wounds were given priority for treatment. Larrey's triage system was strictly egalitarian, with no consideration given to rank, or even if a wounded soldier was from the enemy. All were treated with the best care then available.

No doubt hearing of Larrey's reputation, General Napoleon Bonaparte requested that the surgeon be attached to the Army of Italy in 1797. It was the beginning of a long association that would last for many campaigns until the curtain fell at Waterloo. It was during the late 1790s that Larrey fine-tuned his flying ambulance system. He insisted that, when practicable, the ambulances pick up the wounded immediately, even during battle and some risk was involved. As a result almost all badly wounded soldiers had operations within 24 hours, and death rates fell.

In 1798 Larrey was appointed Surgeon in Chief of the Army of the Orient, Napoleon's ultimately ill-fated expedition to Egypt. After the famed Battle of the Pyramids, wounded Mamluks were astonished that they were treated with humanity, decency and respect. After Larrey dressed his gunshot wound, a Mamluk Bey (chieftain) expressed his gratitude by giving the surgeon a large ruby ring. Larrey kept it with him as a kind of good luck talisman until some Prussians stole it after Waterloo.

When Napoleon prepared to secretly leave Egypt, Larrey was one of those chosen to accompany him. The surgeon politely refused, declaring the soldiers in Egypt needed him more than Bonaparte did. Larrey was repatriated to France in 1801 with the remnants of the Army of the Orient. By that time Napoleon was First Consul and ruler of France, and once he returned to Gallic shores Larrey was made Surgeon in Chief to the Consular Guard. A few years later, he was named a Baron of the Empire.

When Napoleon became emperor, Larrey was named Surgeon in Chief of the Imperial Guard, and an officer of the Legion of Honor. Once a staunch Republican, Larrey fell under Napoleon's spell and over time became a staunch Bonapartist. He had remarkable prescience when he wrote to his wife in Egypt, saying in part "all that are united to him [Napoleon] are bound to follow. I share his career, though where it will take me or what its limits or perils I have no way of knowing."

The years went by, and Larrey added to his laurels in campaign after campaign. He distinguished himself at the Battle of Eylau. Though the French army didn't know it at the time, it was a small foretaste of the frozen horrors they would endure on the Russian campaign. At one point the Russians nearly overran the field hospital where Larrey was busy performing operations. Larrey refused to leave, declaring he'd die with his wounded if need be. Only an eleventh hour

Continued on page 98

UNIFORM Noble Celtic Warrior, 1st Century, B.C.

Artwork:
Johnny Shumate

HEADGEAR: Made of iron, a "Montefortino helmet," so named after the region in Italy where the first example was discovered.

WEAPONS: Wooden spear with iron tip, based on examples found at Alesia. Leather belt secures iron sword with decorative scabbard in the style of the late La Téne (Gallic iron age) period.

ARMOR & CLOTHING: Chain mail corselet edged with leather over a plaid woolen smock, plus plaid woolen trousers and leather ankle boots.

SADDLE: Four large pommels help rider stay mounted in combat. Stirrups were generally unknown until after the Roman age.

SHIELD: Usually oval, sometimes round. Made of wood, often covered in leather or metal, with a protruding metal boss—a cup to protect the hand holding the grip.

The Gauls were Celtic people who lived in much of Europe from the 5th century BC. They were described by Greek and Roman historians as tall, muscular, fair-skinned, with long blonde, or reddish hair. Some men were clean-shaven while others grew mustaches.

The Gauls were made up of many tribes that, on occasion, would unite their forces for military operations. They reached their greatest power by the third century BC, but by 125 BC the Romans had conquered much of the Gallic territory bordering Italy. In 58 BC, Julius Caesar began to conquer the Gallic tribes of what is now much of Belgium and France.

In 52 BC, Vercingetorix, a noble leader of the Arverni tribe, took command of the most significant Gallic rebellion against Rome.

In July, 52 BC, Caesar defeated the Gauls at Vingeanne, causing Vercingetorix to lead his retreating army to Alesia, a fortified settlement on the crest of a hill. Laying siege to the town, the Romans built elaborate defensive works, laid out in two somewhat parallel lines encircling the hill, to defend against attacks from Alesia, within the circle, as well as attacks from outside the siege lines.

A large relief force of Gauls arrived, estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands, and attacked the Roman outer works while Vercingetorix and his men attacked the inner works.

However, after repeated attacks the Gauls realized they could not dislodge the Romans from their works and the relieving Gauls soon retreated. Vercingetorix agreed to surrender, and was imprisoned in Rome for five years before he was finally executed. Caesar's victory at Alesia effectively established Rome's dominance of Gaul. ■

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The BAe Sea Harrier, the naval version of the world's first successful V/STOL jet fighter, proved invaluable to the U.K. victory in 1982 Falklands War.

By John E. Spindler

At 1:25 p.m. on May 1, 1982, the Sea Harrier naval jet fighter became the symbol of British resolve. A pair of aircraft flown by Royal Navy Flight Lieutenant Paul Barton and Lieutenant Steve Thomas had received warning that a number of Argentine aircraft were on an inbound path towards them. Radar determined the enemy consisted of Mirage IIIs. These French-built fighters flew faster and carried more weapons than their aircraft. Barton and Thomas were aware that the Mirage III had already been battle-tested, while the Sea Harrier had been officially operational for less than three years.

The British pilots waited for the enemy jets to fire their missiles and turn for home before engaging the now-vulnerable Mirages. Barton pushed his Sea Harrier into a position a mile behind the rearmost enemy fighter, then fired one of his two American-built AIM-9L air-to-air missiles. He tracked the Sidewinder until it struck the Mirage, which exploded in a ball of flame, raining debris into the sea. Barton had just earned the first British aerial victory since the Korean War. Thomas targeted another

TOP: One British Royal Navy FRS.Mk 1 Sea Harrier hovers over the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* as another approaches during an exercise in October 1984. INSET: For short or vertical takeoffs, a lever is used to point four vectoring nozzles downward and the throttle is pushed to its maximum, at which point the aircraft leaves the ground. Transitioning between hovering and conventional flight requires considerable skill and concentration on the part of the pilot.

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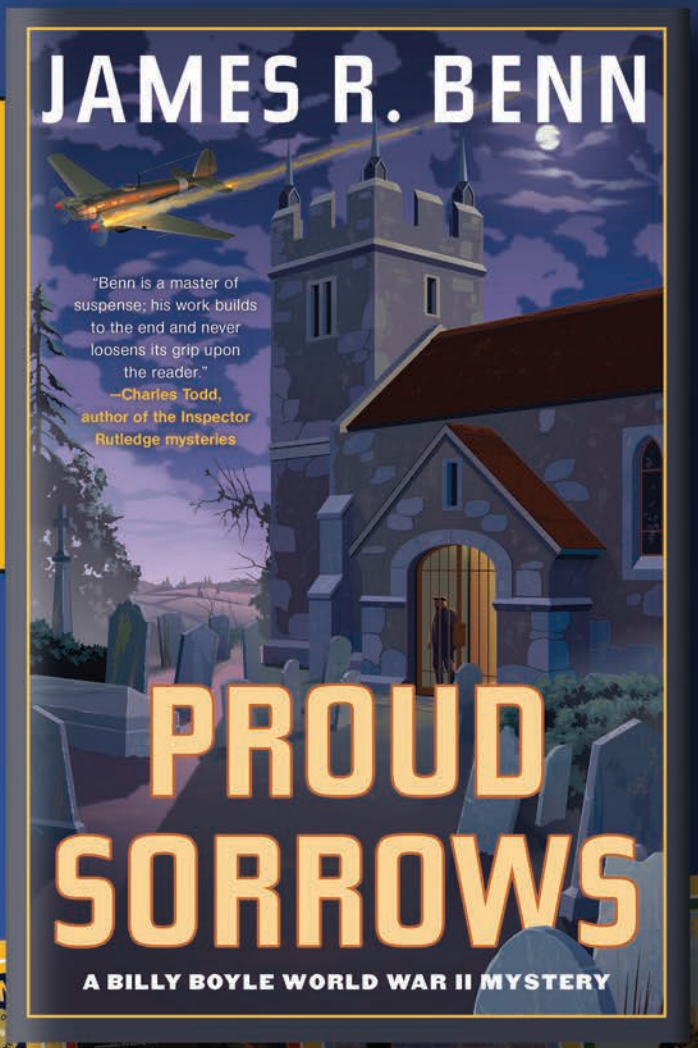

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ABOVE: An FRS. Mark 1 Sea Harrier aircraft takes off from the flight deck of the British light aircraft carrier HMS *Invincible* during the NATO Southern Region exercise "Dragon Hammer" in 1990. An upward-curved ramp angled at 6.5 degrees allowed Sea Harriers to take off with a higher disposal payload. OPPOSITE: Sea Harrier FRS.1s XZ451 (foreground) and ZA176 flying in "Operation Corporate," the former using its AIM-9L Sidewinders, which it is seen carrying here, to shoot down several Argentine aircraft, including a Canberra B-108 bomber on May 1, 1982, and a C-130 Hercules transport on June 1.

Mirage with a heat-seeking Sidewinder and fired. This Mirage pilot dove into the clouds and Thomas was unable to pursue to confirm a kill as he was low on fuel and had to return the HMS *Invincible*.

Later that afternoon, another patrol intercepted a pair of British-built Canberra bombers and downed one to earn the day's second confirmed kill. To cap the day, another Sea Harrier pilot destroyed a Dagger—Israeli-modified Dassault Mirage 5—that evening. On the opening day of aerial combat in the 1982 Falklands War, the Argentines flew 35 sorties over their newly-captured territory. Four failed to return, with three of them credited to the Hawker-Siddeley Sea Harrier, the world's only operational naval vertical/short take-off and landing(V/STOL) jet fighter.

The road to that day for Fleet Air Arm's Sea Harrier had its origins in the Second World War. Germany was among the pioneers of vertical take-off and landing aircraft. The most notable of their experimental craft was the rocket-powered Bachem Ba 349 interceptor. Although its only test flight ended disastrously, this setback did not discourage continued pursuit into the area of V/STOL. For the rest of the 1940s and into the 1950s, various nations explored the field, which resulted in some interesting concepts such as Avro Canada's VTOL design of the jet-powered "flying saucer" known as VZ-0 Avrocar. Despite all the attempts, the important question of how to produce a vectored-thrust powerplant for a single-engine fighter still evaded aviation designers.

In the mid-1950s, Frenchman Michel Wibault worked on the concept of using a single engine that funneled its thrust into four centrifugal compressors. Rotating the casings of said compressors produced the required vectoring for vertical or short take-off. Having to overcome the issues of a lack of interest for such an engine as well as little funds available for research and development, Wibault eventually met with Bristol Aerospace Engine's Stanley Hooker. Fortunately, Hooker assigned the task of converting Wibault's concept into reality to Gordon Lewis. Lewis and Wibault's combined effort led to a joint patent in 1957 for such an engine. A revised version of this powerplant was designated the Pegasus. From this moment forward, engineers continued to modify the Pegasus in order to increase its thrust output.

The Hawker Aircraft Company welcomed the idea of designing an aircraft to use the Pegasus engine. Eventually becoming Hawker-Siddeley, the company was incorporated into state-owned British Aerospace (BAe) in 1977. In October 1959, the British Ministry of Aviation requested a pair of the experimental P.1127 aircraft. Less than two months after its unveiling at Hawker's Dunsfold airfield, an important stage in development of V/STOL aircraft was witnessed—the P.1127's first flight, although tethered, on October 21, 1960. The first conventional flight had to wait until the following March. Despite the project almost being halted more than once, the Royal Air Force (RAF) decided to evolve the P.1127 into a combat aircraft, designated the "Kestrel."

Powered by a newer, more powerful Pegasus engine, the Kestrel had large swept-back wings, a higher tail and longer fuselage. Development progressed at a quick pace, with the first flight in March 1964. Shortly afterwards it was renamed the Hawker Siddeley Harrier. A contract for the first 60 aircraft was signed in early 1967, leading to another milestone as the first production Harrier took flight on December 28, 1967. Sixteen months later the RAF received its first Harrier.

Due to a number of factors, the Royal Navy initiated studies into a naval version of the Harrier. The results of these reports demonstrated its feasibility after a few modifications. Importantly, the magnesium engine casing had to be changed to aluminum to protect against corrosion from salt water and sea spray. Designed as an interceptor, the naval version would need a larger nose to house the Ferranti Blue Fox radar. Wing pylons were incorporated to carry both RAF and American weapons, crucially the AIM-9 Sidewinder. To provide the pilot with the view needed to land upon a ship, the cockpit had to be elevated 11 inches. All of these alterations caused the Sea Harrier to be heavier than the RAF-used Harrier Gr.3

The Fleet Air Arm (FAA) breathed a sigh of relief when the Navy agreed to purchase 3 developmental and 21 production aircraft, designated the Sea Harrier FRS.1 (Fighter, Reconnaissance and Strike) in May 1975. A year later the Navy ordered an additional 10 aircraft and three trainer versions. While Hawker Siddeley worked on fulfilling the orders, another crucial development

took place. The design of a "ski-jump" that allowed a heavily-loaded Sea Harrier to perform the short take-offs dictated by the size of a carrier deck. Trials at various angles began in August 1977, and soon this concept was introduced to the Royal Navy's carriers—though the angle was not uniform, being 7° on the HMS *Invincible* and 12° for the HMS *Hermes*.

The debut of the FAA's newest aircraft took

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A Sea Harrier takes off from the airfield at Port Stanley during Falklands war. In the background is a destroyed Argentinian Air Force IA 58 Pucará counter-insurgency (COIN) aircraft.

place in front of an audience at the 1978 Farnborough Air Show, capturing the public's interest. On June 18, 1979, the Sea Harrier formally entered service with what would eventually be the 899NAS (Naval Air Squadron). The number of Sea Harriers (nicknamed "Shar" by its crews) ordered, allowed for two more squadrons to be formed—the 800NAS and 801NAS. A fourth squadron, the 809NAS, was quickly formed a week into the Falklands War. For 13 years, the world's first successful V/STOL jet fighter saw no combat action. All of this changed on April 2, 1982, when Argentina occupied the British territory of the Falkland Islands, asserting ownership. Seventy-two hours later, a task force departed on an 8,000-mile journey to reclaim the Falklands.

Under "Operation Corporate," a hastily-assembled task force would sail from Britain with the Sea Harriers squadrons activated for military operations. Due to the limited space aboard the two aircraft carriers, only 20 Sea Harrier FRS.1s made the initial voyage with 12 aircraft aboard the HMS *Hermes* and eight on the HMS *Invincible*. This left 11 "Shars" in England, with two more still in production. One aircraft had been destroyed in December 1980. Author Roy Braybrook in his book about the Harrier and Sea Harrier written shortly after the British victory put forth the theory that if Britain did not possess the Sea Harrier, there would have been no task force—and the Falklands might now be known as "Las Malvinas."

On the voyage southwards, squadron pilots honed their combat skills and trained using the latest Sidewinder model, the AIM-9L. Each Sea Harrier was armed with a pair of these heat-seeking air-to-air missiles, supplemented by two Aden 30mm cannons mounted beneath the aircraft, each carrying 150 rounds. For attack missions, the "Shar" could carry a 1,000-lb. bomb. Opposing them in the air, British intelligence calculated the Argentine Air Force could muster around 100 operational aircraft, including the Mirage III, the Dagger, various versions of the American-built A-4 Skyhawk, Canberra bombers and the locally-built IA-58 Pucará ground-attack jet. But Argentine aircraft could spend little time over the combat zone, as they had to fly from mainland bases because the Port Stanley runway was too short for all but the Pucarás. Augmenting the Air Force were over a dozen Navy jets, mostly A-4 Skyhawks, but the real concern lay in a small number of Dassault-Breguet Super Étendard which carried the deadly French Exocet anti-ship missile. Some of the FRS.1 pilots already had some experience against the French aircraft with victories over them in combat exercises.

The morning of the first Sea Harrier air-to-air kills witnessed the beginning of Britain's response. A sole RAF Avro Vulcan bomber targeted the Port Stanley Airport. Only one of the 21 bombs struck the runway, but the British sent a statement. A few hours later, the Sea Harriers engaged in combat for the first time. With 801NAS of the *Invincible* providing combat air patrol (CAP), the dozen "Shars" from the 800NAS departed the *Hermes* on attack sorties. Stationed well to the east due to fear of the Exocets, nine aircraft targeted the airfield at Port Stanley with a combination of 1,000-lb. bombs and cluster weapons while three jets dropped cluster weapons on the Goose Green airstrip. All aircraft safely returned. The Sea Harriers eliminated three enemy aircraft with the fourth destroyed by friendly fire. Two days later, another attack on Goose Green brought about the first Sea Harrier loss—Lieutenant Nick Tay-

lor downed by antiaircraft fire. A suspected collision in poor weather downed two more Sea Harriers. The British had now lost 15 percent of their available fighters.

Over the next couple of weeks, the Sea Harriers continued CAP missions, with six or eight planes in the sky at any given time. Although their mere presence turned back a number of enemy sorties, the numbers game came into play as Argentinian aircraft got by them and sunk or damaged a number of British ships. The attack missions exposed a weakness in the Sea Harrier's design: the lack of chaff dispensers as a countermeasure to enemy missiles. Improvised chaff distributors were fitted on the remaining "Shars." The first reinforcements of eight Sea Harriers from the newly-formed 809NAS and four RAF Harrier GR.3s were transported via the Atlantic Conveyor.

After three weeks of softening up the Argentines, the liberation of the Falkland Islands commenced with the San Carlos landings on May 21. The day also ended the lull in aerial combat. Sea Harrier pilots used the combination of their superior skills, the FRS.1's superior maneuverability and the short time the enemy could stay over the islands to down several Argentine planes via AIM-9Ls and 30mm rounds with a kill-list of five Skyhawks, four Daggers and a Pucará. Sea Harriers on CAP frequently arrived back on the carriers dangerously low on fuel. The next few days saw continued aerial action. An Aerospatiale Puma helicopter was listed as a kill after it crashed having lost control in Flight Lt. Morgan's wake. But the British did not have everything go their way. Another "Shar" was lost when it crashed after take-off and, severely hampered by the lack of an Airborne Early Warning aircraft, a second FRS.1 was lost to enemy air defenses on May 27.

The last aerial battles resulting in Sea Harrier victories occurred on June 8, as British ground forces advanced towards the capital of Stanley. Additional troops were landing at Fitzroy in Bluff Cove. Once again Morgan flew CAP, this time with Lieutenant Dave Smith. Called to the area, both pilots observed a large plume of black smoke and knew something catastrophic had happened. They later learned the landing ship HMS *Sir Galahad* had been struck while unloading 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and had suffered heavy loss of life. Morgan and Smith jumped on the outgoing A-4s. Closing to 1,200 yards, Morgan launched one of his Sidewinders with a successful ending. He notched a second kill with the remaining AIM-9L. Smith shot down a third, also via missile. These were to be the last aerial victories. On June 14, 1982, Argentine forces in the Falkland Islands surrendered.

Flying over 1,435 sorties, comprising combat air patrol, attack and close air support, Sea Harriers accounted for 22 enemy aircraft and one helicopter without a single loss in air-to-air combat. Argentinian air defenses claimed two Sea Harriers with a further four destroyed in accidents.

Lessons about the Sea Harrier's limitation were observed and used to improve it. An encompassing upgrade occurred in the 1980s. The resulting FRS.2, later redesignated FA.2 (Fighter and Attack) replaced the inferior Blue Fox radar with the vastly better Blue Vixen pulse-doppler radar. Powered by the latest version of the Pegasus engine, the upgraded Sea Harrier carried four missiles, two on the wing pylons and two on the belly in place of the cannons. The FA.2 became the first non-U.S. aircraft to carry the Hughes AIM-120 AMRAAM (Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile). Its first flight took place in September 1988. Six years later the British government placed an order for additional FA.2s bringing the total to 47 aircraft with all FRS.1s modified into the new version.

The Sea Harrier FA.2 squadrons saw service in the Balkans, the Middle East and Sierra Leone. On two separate operations in the Balkans "Shars" flew sorties to patrol and enforce No-Fly Zones over Bosnia and then Kosovo. During the latter operation, Sea Harriers flew strike missions which resulted in the loss of aircraft to a SA-7 missile. Sandwiched between the Balkan tours, the aircraft were used to enforce the No-Fly Zone over Southern Iraq. Sent to Sierra Leone from May to June 2000, Sea Harriers operating from the HMS *Illustrious* were used to intimidate anti-government guerillas.

The only export customer for the Sea Harrier FRS.1 was the Indian Navy. The 25 aircraft and five trainers differed in having a downgraded version of the Blue Fox radar and the ability to carry a different missile package. The few remaining serviceable Sea Harrier FRS.51 retired from Indian Navy service in 2016. By this time, the FAA had long retired its Sea Harriers with its last squadron, 801NAS, disbanded on March 29, 2006.

The naval version of the world's first successful V/STOL jet fighter, the BAe Sea Harrier, served as Fleet Air Arm's sole fighter from June 1979 to its retirement from service in March 2006. In the 1982 Falklands War, the "Shar" proved itself, both in the role of attack and as an interceptor. In this latter function the 28 aircraft that served had earned 23 aerial kills without loss in air-to-air combat. Further action in the Balkans, Iraq and Africa only strengthened its legacy. As it is unlikely that Great Britain will develop another indigenous fighter due to cost, author Jaime Hunter rightly titled his book on this aircraft as *Sea Harrier: The Last All-British Fighter*. ■

PAVN and Viet Cong takeover of the Imperial City of Hue during the Tet Offensive marked a turning point in the Vietnam War. | By Victor Kamenir

The old Imperial capital of Hue was ready for the Tet Festival, a joyous occasion celebrating the Vietnamese Lunar New Year on January 31, 1968. It was the time when families came together to greet the new year in hopes it would bring them better fortunes than the previous one. The streets and homes were decorated with colorful strings, lanterns, and arrangements of golden apricot and peach blossoms and flowers. Honoring the upcoming festival, the president of South Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu declared a cease-fire.

The capital of the Thua Thien Hue Province and a revered symbol of Vietnam's past, Hue was treated almost as a free city by both the South Vietnamese government and the Communist Viet Cong guerillas. Other than an occasional mortar shell or a rocket lobbed into the city by Viet Cong, Hue was largely spared the ravages of war.

The third largest city in Vietnam with a population of 140,000, Hue lies on the bank of the Perfume River. On the river's north bank was the older part of the city, known as the Citadel, a three-square mile rectangular enclosure inside stone walls up to 30 feet tall. A water-filled moat up to 90 feet wide and up to 12 feet deep ran along the Citadel's walls.

Inside the Citadel was the old Imperial Palace, complete with its own walls. Parks, residential and commercial blocks, often with their own stone enclosures, and a small Tay Loc Airfield filled the rest of the Citadel. Along the waterfront of the Perfume River's southern bank was the city's administrative heart, containing provincial headquarters, prison, treasury building, and Hue University. The Nguyen Hoang Bridge, spanning the river, connected both parts of the city. The river, the An Cuu Canal, and Highway 1 formed an area that became known as the Triangle.

Refugees file past an M48 Patton Tank supporting the 1st Marine Division during the Battle of Hue City on February 3, 1968.

THE TET OFFENSIVE AND THE BATTLE OF HUE

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The Allied presence in the city was minimal. In the northeast corner of the Citadel was the Mang Ca compound, housing the headquarters of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)'s 1st Infantry Division. Four battalions of the division's 3rd Infantry Regiment and two airborne battalions from the General Reserve occupied camps within several miles of Hue. The 7th Cavalry Squadron was at Tam Thai Camp on the city's southern outskirts. Division's commander Brig. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong was considered one of the best South Vietnamese commanders by the Americans. Truong had only his elite reconnaissance company Hac Bao (Black Panthers), and an ordnance company at the Tay Loc Airfield at his immediate disposal in the city.

Two blocks south of the Nguyen Hoang Bridge was the compound of the United States Military Assistance Command—Vietnam (MACV). It housed close to 200 U.S. Army and U.S. Marine personnel under command of U.S. Army Colonel George Adkisson. American and Australian officers, assigned in adviser and observer capacity to South Vietnamese units, billeted there for a few days before heading back out to the field. The compound consisted of a former hotel and several adjoining buildings encircled by fences and barbed wire and protected by bunkers and guard towers. At the bridge's southern end was a small U.S. Navy landing dock abutted by a park.

The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) began planning the Tet Offensive almost a year in advance. The objective was to attack all major cities and strategic locations in South Vietnam to incite a popular uprising that would bring down the corrupt government of South Vietnam. The operation was called the Tong-Tan-cong-Noi-day (General Offensive or General Uprising).

Since September 1967, PAVN and Viet Cong guerrillas had been launching strong attacks south of the Demilitarized Zone. Unlike previous small-scale strikes, the new attacks involved company and battalion-sized units. Despite suffering heavy casualties, Communist actions accomplished their missions of drawing American and South Vietnamese attention toward the border region. In response, the commander of the U.S. forces in Vietnam, General William Westmoreland, began shifting U.S. Marine and Army units north.

Task Force X-Ray was established at Phu Bai, six miles south of Hue, under Brig. Gen. Foster "Frosty" LaHue, assistant division commander of the 1st Marine Division, as part of the realignment. The 1st and 5th Marine Regiments and the 1st Artillery Group of two battalions were placed under LaHue's command. As January 31 approached, only the Task Force headquarters and headquarters of the two regiments moved to Phu Bai. Other than one infantry company as a reaction force, the rest of LaHue's combat units were in the field.

The Viet Cong guerillas had been infiltrating Hue, stockpiling ammunition, food, and supplies. They primarily used young women, some of them in their teens, which drew less attention. The girls observed the movements of the ARVN and American forces, guard shifts, and the number of guards. They identified home and work addresses, routines of the Europeans, government officials, military and police officers, and anyone whom the Viet Cong considered supporters of the government.

At the same time, well-trained and well-equipped regular PAVN units have been moving south on a long, dangerous journey along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Some of the early-arriving units spent many months in the clandestine mountain camps. To coordinate operations of the PAVN regulars and Viet Cong guerillas, numbering close to 8,000 men, the Hue City Front was created under the command of PAVN officers.

Despite PAVN's best efforts, movements of large numbers of men and supplies were impossible to hide completely. Increased enemy contacts and worrisome intelligence reports led President Thieu to cancel the cease-fire. Similarly, General Truong issued a recall order in Hue for his men to rejoin their units, but the overwhelming majority had

already left for the holiday. Truong deployed platoons of Hac Bao at strategic locations throughout the city, including the Tay Loc Airfield.

Before dawn on January 31, over 80,000 PAVN and Viet Cong troops attacked over 70 locations throughout South Vietnam. At Hue, a signal flare at 2:30 a.m. launched the attack. Under cover of mortar and rocket barrage, PAVN battalions in their clean new green uniforms and Viet Cong in black rushed toward Hue. The main attack came from the southwest while the Communist guerrillas, already in the city, attacked the ARVN and police detachments guarding the gates from the inside.

The 800th and 802nd Battalions from the 6th PAVN Regiment and the 12th Viet Cong Sapper Battalion attacked through the southwestern gates toward the Mang Ca compound and the Tay Loc Airfield. A detachment of PAVN breached the compound, but after heavy fighting General Truong's scratch force of roughly 200 staff and support personnel threw back the attackers.

At the Tay Loc Airfield, the ARVN ordnance company and the Hac Bao platoon put up a dogged resistance and hung onto several buildings, although all aircraft were destroyed. As the situation at the airfield stabilized, General Truong recalled the Hac Bao platoons to reinforce the Mang Ca compound. At the same time, he radioed all units outside Hue to rush to the city. Next, Truong contacted his immediate superior, Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, commander of the ARVN 1st Corps, requesting additional units. Lam concurred and placed the 2nd and 7th Airborne battalions under Truong's command.

During the attack several of the PAVN units, made up of northerners and unfamiliar with Hue, became separated and veered off course moving through the city. When the local guide leading the 806th Battalion was killed, the battalion lost its way and did not add its weight to the attack on Mang Ca. Squad and platoon-sized detachments were left to guard important locations and street intersections, further fragmenting PAVN forces.

Two battalions from the 4th PAVN Regiment (804th, 815th, and 818th) and the Hue City Sapper Battalion moved against the Triangle and outlying southern and eastern suburbs. However, only the 804th Battalion arrived on time, another battalion was delayed taking a local defense outpost, and the third became lost.

As the 804th PAVN Battalion attacked the MACV compound, an alert Marine in a guard tower spotted them and opened fire with an M-60 machine gun. The Americans inside the compound quickly occupied bunkers and defensive positions and hurled back two attacks. Failing to take the compound by storm, the Vietnamese continued harassing fire with mortars, B40 rockets, and machine guns.

Except for the MACV and Mang Ca compounds, by daylight, Communist forces controlled most of the city, including the Imperial Palace, the province headquarters, and other governmental buildings. They held 11 out of 12 city gates, with only the gate closest to Mang Ca remaining in General Truong's hands. A blue and red flag with a yellow star, a combination of the Viet Cong and North Vietnam's flags, flew from the flagpole near the Imperial Palace.

Political officers began rounding up foreigners and the South Vietnamese "traitors" from prepared lists. Some were offered an opportunity to join, others were taken away never to be seen again, several Europeans and Americans among them. To the dismay of political officers, the city's population remained largely apathetic to "liberation." Many residents were put to work digging trenches, building bunkers, and carrying supplies.

In the village of Thon La Chu, three miles west of Hue, the Hue City Front established its headquarters in a three-story underground bunker. Built by a South Vietnamese official, who turned out to be a Communist sympathizer, the bunker was meant to be a bomb shelter, but all along intended to serve as the command post for the Front.

Due to initial poor communications between

ABOVE: Viet Cong troops attack the city of Hue, Vietnam in early 1968. They had been stockpiling arms and other supplies months before the planned Tet Offensive, believing the civilian population of the city would rise up and join the fight. OPPOSITE: A member of the First Battalion, Fifth Marines with an M60 machine gun watches for North Vietnamese soldiers breaking cover in the battle for Hue, January 31, 1968.

The 106mm self-propelled Ontos (M50A1) proved effective in urban combat for the U.S. Marines in the fight for Hue City, Vietnam, during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

Department of Defense

The unique 'Ontos' was highly effective in the fight for Hue

The M50 Ontos (Greek for "thing") was easily one of the most unusual armored vehicles fielded by the U.S. military. A joint Army-Marine project in the 1950s called for an armored self-propelled tracked anti-tank vehicle light enough to be transported slung under a helicopter.

After testing several prototypes, the finished model became officially designated "Rifle, Multiple 106mm, Self-propelled, M50A1." The small vehicle armed with six 106mm recoilless rifles, four .50 caliber spotting rifles, and a .30 caliber machine gun featured angular sloping armor and a crew of three. The cramped internal space in the turret allowed room for only eighteen rounds. Its thin armor would not stop a projectile heavier than a .50 round, and the externally mounted recoilless rifles had to be reloaded from the outside.

The Army, geared for head-on armored clashes with the Warsaw Pact across the European battlefields, passed on the projects. However, the Marines accepted the Ontos in 1955 and placed an order with Allis-Chalmers for 297 units.

The Ontos' primary weapon was an M40 recoilless rifle. Although it fired a 105mm caliber round, it was designated as the 106mm to distinguish it from the M27 recoilless rifle, which it replaced. The six recoilless rifles were mounted on each side of the turret in clusters of three, two on top and one on the bottom, with .50 caliber spotting rifles coupled to the top four. The spotting rifles fired tracer rounds for optical sighting. The M40 fired several types of projectiles, including HEAT (High-Explosive, Anti-Tank) and HEAP (High-Explosive, Armor-Piercing) rounds, and a Browning .30 caliber machine gun provided self-defense.

The later versions of the Ontos featured a Chrysler HT-361-318 V-8 engine with a maximum speed of 60 mph, although a governor limited the speed to 30.

The Ontos first saw action in 1964 during the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Civil War, destroying a French-built AMX-13 tank and an old Swedish-built L-60 tank. It was the only time an Ontos saw action in its designed tank-destroyer role.

However, the Ontos came into its own in Vietnam several years later. The light vehicle could pass on muddy roads and fields where its heavier brethren became stuck, and on multiple occasions, the Ontos were airlifted slung under a helicopter.

The Americans rarely faced North Vietnamese armored vehicles; when they did, they were primarily Soviet-made light amphibious PT-76 reconnaissance tanks. The Ontos excelled in the infantry support role with no tanks to destroy. Their high explosive rounds were deadly against buildings and bunkers, and a "beehive" round packed with 8,000 steel flechettes was deadly in an anti-personnel role.

The Battle of Hue was the high tide of the Ontos' use. The stocks of spare parts were running out, and some vehicles had to be cannibalized to keep the others running. By the end of 1969, the Ontos were removed from service. Most vehicles were sold for scrap, and the chassis of others were sold to civilian construction companies. Over a dozen surviving vehicles are on display at various museums throughout the United States, and some are restored by private collectors.

—Victor Kamenir

the PAVN units, the Front's command was unaware that Nguyen Hoang and An Cuu bridges remained standing after detachments sent to destroy them were wiped out by local forces.

Alerted by General Truong, several ARVN units attempted to reach Hue. Two airborne battalions and a troop from the 7th Armored Squadron moved toward the city from the PK-17 outpost north of the city. They ran into heavy PAVN resistance and were forced to halt after taking casualties. The next day a patrol from Hac Bao led them around the Citadel from the north to the Mang Ca compound.

South of the city, the rest of the 7th Armored Squadron, composed of American light M24 Chafee tanks and M113 Armored Personnel Carriers, minus the troop at PK-17, moved off from their Tam Thai camp. Just short of the An Cuu Bridge it ran into a PAVN ambush. Losing several tanks and APCs, and its commander killed, the rest of the squadron retreated several miles along Highway 1.

The 2nd and 3rd battalions from General Truong's 3rd Regiment encountered heavy enemy resistance and halted southwest of the city. The 1st and 4th battalions, moving from the southeast, were surrounded. The 1st Battalion managed to break through to the coast and reached the Citadel the following day. The 4th Battalion was not able to extricate itself for several days.

While the fighting was raging at the MACV compound, Colonel Adkisson radioed Task Force X-Ray for help. General LaHue dispatched the only available unit, Company A under Captain Gordon Batcheller, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment (1/1st) to relieve the MACV compound. The Marines moved off on trucks, accompanied by two U.S. Army M42 "Duster" self-propelled guns armed with twin 40mm cannons and two trucks with M45 "Quadmounts" armed with four .50-cal machine guns.

South of the city, Company A encountered four Marine M48 Patton tanks (two armed with 90mm cannons and two flamethrower "Zippo" tanks) from the 3rd Marine Tank Battalion. The tanks were heading to the U.S. Navy dock in Hue for embarkation to move north to Dong Ha. The tankers halted upon encountering destroyed tanks and APCs from ARVN's 7th Cavalry Squadron. After a short discussion with Captain Batcheller, the four tanks led the way to Hue.

As the small column approached the city, it encountered increasing enemy resistance before forcing its way across the An Cuu Bridge under fire from automatic weapons, RPGs, and 40mm rockets. Casualties were heavy, including Captain Batcheller seriously wounded, and the depleted company took up defensive positions.

Shortly after noon, General LaHue sent Lt. Col. Marcus Gravel, commander of the 1/1st Marines, with just-arrived Company G under Captain Meadows, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, (2/5th) to follow Company A. After reaching Batcheller's company and taking fire along the way, Gravel consolidated the two companies. Sending the dead and wounded back to Phu Bai on trucks and led by the four tanks, Gravel's column reached the beleaguered MACV compound around 3 p.m.

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An unidentified U.S. Marine with a bandaged hand carries an M1 Thompson submachine gun during the Tet Offensive in February 1968 in Hue City.

After Gravel reached the compound, General LaHue, unaware of the actual situation in Hue, ordered Gravel to move to the Citadel to reach General Truong's compound. Company A, down to half its strength, was in no shape to advance. It expanded the defensive perimeter to the south side of the Nguyen Hoang Bridge and secured the Navy dock.

Marine M48 tanks were too heavy to cross the bridge and remained on the south side to provide fire support. Company G moved across the bridge on foot under withering automatic weapons fire from the Citadel. Two platoons reached the narrow strip of land between the bridge and the Citadel wall but were pinned down and could advance no further. With darkness fast approaching and casualties mounting, Gravel issued withdrawal orders. Taking their dead and wounded with them, Company G re-crossed the bridge, losing a third of the company.

During the night, a Marine CH-46 helicopter landed under fire in the park near the Navy dock to drop off ammunition and evacuate casualties.

On February 1, Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Lam and Lt. Gen. Robert Cushman, commander of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, met at Da Nang. The two generals decided to have ARVN forces liberate the north of the river, while the Marines took the south. Because of the city's historical significance, they chose to refrain from using heavy weapons, artillery, and air strikes to limit damage to the city.

Still unaware of the situation in Hue, General LaHue ordered Gravel to reach the prison, seven blocks west of the MACV compound, where a small group of ARVN defenders still held out. After futile protests, Gravel sent out Captain Meadows' Company G, led by Patton tanks. As soon as Company G left the compound, they came under heavy machine gun fire. The PAVN

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turned every building into a defensive position, sweeping the streets with withering automatic weapons fire. Marines were proficient in fighting in Vietnam's jungles and rice paddies, but street fighting was a whole new experience. Until they found city maps at a Texaco station, Marine officers unfamiliar with the city had only foggy notions on how to proceed to their targets. Eventually, after three hours of fighting, Meadows' Marines captured the Hue University building but could not proceed further.

Company F, 2/5th Marines under Captain Michael Downs, arrived in the morning by helicopters. Gravel immediately gave Downs a mission to rescue a detachment of U.S. Army and Air Force technicians unnoticed by the enemy at the communications center several blocks from the compound. A platoon sent out by Downs was ambushed and forced to turn back, bringing their dead and wounded with them.

Truong's two airborne battalions recaptured the Tay Loc Airfield in the Citadel, where the ordnance company still defended several buildings. The 1st Battalion, 3rd ARVN Regiment, reached Mang Ca, while Marine helicopters delivered two companies from the 4th Battalion, 2nd ARVN Regiment, under heavy fire. Inclement weather and falling darkness prevented the delivery of the rest of the battalion. By the end of the day, General Truong's troops cleared the northwest corner of the Citadel.

Due to still-poor communications between the Hue City Front units, its command was unaware that the An Cuu Bridge on the canal still stood. It allowed Task Force X-Ray to bring up reinforcements and supplies from Phu Bai and evacuate casualties. One convoy brought the Company H, 2/5th Marines under Captain Ronald Christmas, accompanied by two M-50 Ontos. The Ontos (Greek for "thing") lightly armored tracked vehicle mounted six 106mm recoilless rifles, four .50 spotting rifles, and a .30 caliber machine gun.

Commander of the 2/5th Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Cheatham, and Col. Stanley Hughes, commander of the 1st Marine Regiment, were to follow the next day, bringing Company B, 1/1st Marines. Aware of his lack of knowledge of urban combat, Cheatham located two field manuals, *Combat in Built-Up Areas* and *Assault on a Fortified Position*. The main lesson Cheatham learned was to stay off the streets as much as possible and to move through walls by blowing holes in them. To that end, he rounded up all the available bazookas at Phu Bai and six 106mm recoilless rifles, the same type mounted on Ontos.

On February 3, Hughes and Cheatham arrived at the MACV compound, bringing replacements and volunteers from Phu Bai. Upon arrival, Hughes assumed control from Gravel. Cheatham now had three companies of his battalion, the fourth was still in the field, and Gravel had one company from his battalion, Company A, with Company B arriving the next day. With his three companies, Cheatham would attack west with the Hue University as his base of operations. Company A, severely mauled two days before, was to expand the perimeter around the dock and clear approaches to Highway 1.

As the American and ARVN presence in Hue steadily increased, the Hue City Front headquarters in Thon La Chu ensured a steady flow of reinforcements and supplies reaching the PAVN units in the city. Per General Cushman's request, General Westmoreland ordered the commander of the U.S. Army 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), Maj. Gen. John Tolson to cut the enemy lines of communications. Tolson delegated the mission to Colonel Hubert Campbell, the division's 3rd Brigade commander.

The brigade's artillery at Camp Evans, 24 miles north of Hue, was too far to support the attack. At the same time, heavy enemy air defense prevented helicopter insertion in the immediate vicinity of Hue. On February 2, helicopters brought the 2nd Squadron, 12th Cavalry (2/12th) under Lt. Col. Richard Sweet to PK-17,

seven miles north of Hue, from where the troopers would advance on foot.

The following day, February 3, the 400 men of the 2/12th moved off in heavy rain without artillery support. Sweet decided to make a sweeping maneuver south to avoid possible ambushes along Highway 1. Approaching the heavy-defended village of Thon La Chu, the headquarters of the Hue City Front, Sweet's squadron ran into well-prepared enemy positions in a tree line. Caught in the open, the soldiers were pinned down by grazing fire and mortar rounds began exploding among them. Throughout the day, the Americans were engaged in a firefight, with helicopters swooping in to bring ammunition and evacuate dead and wounded. With casualties mounting, remaining in place meant the squadron would be cut to shreds. Sweet ordered his men to charge the enemy positions. Taking more casualties, the Americans captured the tree line and set up defensive positions. The low cloud cover prevented American fixed-wing aviation from adding its weight to the battle.

When darkness fell, Sweet's squadron shrunk from 400 men to 200 effectives. Staying put was out of the question, and Sweet made the decision to break out to the west and later flank the Thon La Chu. During the night of February 3-4, the depleted squadron slipped away in the night, unnoticed by the enemy.

Starting on February 4, Marines in the Triangle began making incremental gains. The fighting at close quarters was brutal, and crossing a street under fire was deadly, as well as entering a building through a door or a window. Before entering, the Marines would blast a hole in a wall with C4 explosives, followed by grenades.

Built in French colonial style, the buildings had thick walls to keep cool, and the light M72 LAW rockets carried by Marines in the field were frequently insufficient to defeat them. The 106mm recoilless rifles, both tripod-mounted and mounted on Ontos, proved invaluable. Their heavy 20-pound rounds tore out big chunks of a wall or brought down the wall altogether. A light and quick Ontos would dart out from behind cover, fire off a volley of its six rifles, and quickly move back. Several rounds from an 81mm mortar could bring a whole roof down on the building's defenders.

Any tank that entered a street was immediately bombarded with B40 rockets, with some taking close to a 100 hits. Their armor was tough enough to keep the tanks from being destroyed, but there were casualties among the crews. Initially, the Marines were prohibited from using tank cannons and flamethrowers in the city and employed them as mobile cover for infantry and machine gun platforms. But as the fighting wore

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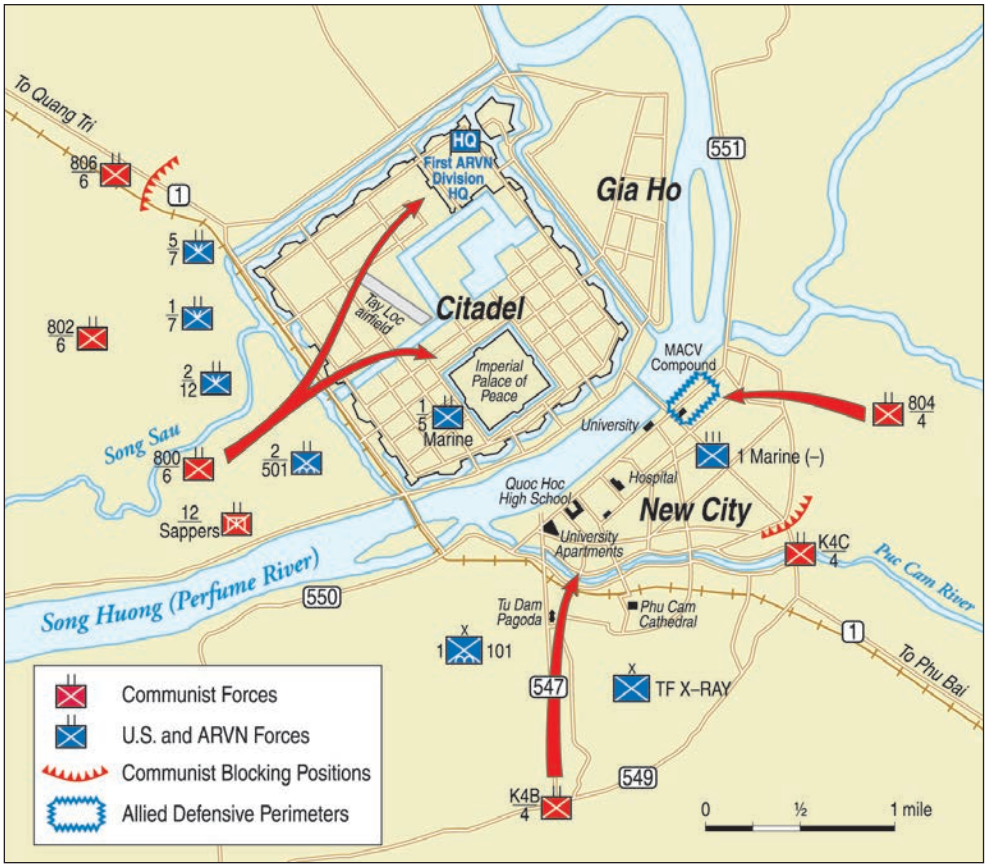


ABOVE: South Vietnamese (ARVN) troops held the Citadel and airfield north of the Perfume River, while Allied forces defended the MACV compound and Hue University south of the river. TOP: An M48 Patton Tank provides support to the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines in bitter street fighting in the imperial city of Hue, Vietnam, February 12, 1968. OPPOSITE: French press photographer Catherine Leroy was shooting the Battle of Hue when she was taken by North Vietnamese forces. She took this photo, and others, while she was being held.

Both: National Archives and Records Administration

on, prohibitions were ignored.

The Treasury building with its extra thick walls proved invulnerable even to 106mm rifles until Major Ralph Salvati, 2/5th Executive Officer, brought up E8 CS gas launchers from the MACV compound. The launchers, firing 64 canisters in volleys of four, rained on the Treasury building, followed by Marines from Company F wearing gas masks. The PAVN soldiers, lacking gas masks, were forced to abandon the building.

Shortly after Company B, 1/1st Marines reached the Triangle from Phu Bai, the Vietnamese finally brought down the An Cuu Bridge. The resupply would now have to be carried out by helicopter and riverboats under fire.

Lieutenant Colonel Cheatham continued pressing west along the waterfront, with his left flank anchored on the Perfume River. Fighting was slow and brutal, with progress some days measured by several captured buildings. Mounting casualties were made good by a flow of volunteers and replacements new to the country, frequently arriving in clean, pressed fatigues. The provincial capital, housing the headquarters of the PAVN's 4th Regiment, was retaken on February 5. Organized PAVN resistance in the Triangle collapsed, although it would take several more days to reduce the last pockets of stubborn holdouts.

Gravel's 1/1st Marines cleared the area north of the destroyed An Cuu Bridge, and by February 13, Marine engineers built a pontoon bridge over the canal, and truck convoys from Phu Bai rolled once again. As more and more territory came under American control, terrified civilians came streaming in seeking shelter from death that seemed to be everywhere.

In the Thon La Chu area, Sweet's squadron was joined by another from the 1st Cavalry Division, the 5/7th under Lt. Col. James Vaught, where three PAVN battalions defended the Hue City Front headquarters. Despite assistance from artillery, helicopter gunships, and naval gunfire, the Army troopers could not progress against defenders who outnumbered them. The PAVN supply route to the western mountains continued functioning, and several more battalions entered the Citadel through the southwestern gate.

In the Citadel, by the end of February 7, General Truong had three battalions from the 3rd and one from the 1st Regiments, three airborne battalions, parts of two armored cavalry squadrons, and a severely depleted Hac Bao company. However, heavy fighting reduced some South Vietnamese battalions to 200 men and Truong requested help from General Cushman.

On February 10, enemy resistance, other than a few pockets, collapsed in the Triangle. After a battalion from the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division took over the fight for Hue's southern and eastern suburbs, Cushman ordered Colonel Hughes to send Marines to the Citadel.

On February 11, ARVN troops cleared the neighborhoods around Tay Loc Airfield, and Marine helicopters delivered a company of South Vietnamese Marines and one from 1/5th Marines to Mang Ca before the weather turned bad. The next day, two more companies from 1/5th Marines under Maj. Robert Thompson and five Marine tanks moved by boat to Mang Ca.

Thompson met with Truong, and they split the Citadel into two areas of operations. The South Vietnamese troops would operate in the western part of the Citadel. The U.S. Marines would relieve the depleted airborne battalions in the eastern half of the Citadel and attack south. However, neither officer knew that the Vietnamese paratroopers, which belonged to the ARVN General Reserve, had already pulled back from their positions under orders to return to Saigon. During the night, the PAVN occupied the abandoned positions. When a Marine company from 1/5th moved forward the next morning, it ran into an ambush and took casualties.

The Marine attack south along the eastern wall of the Citadel immediately ran into strong defensive positions. Bunkers, trenches, and snipers were everywhere. The enemy resistance appeared heavier than in the Triangle and the American attack temporarily stalled in the face of mounting casualties.

On the west side of the Citadel, the South Vietnamese marines had a hard time after relieving the battered 3rd Regiment. The ARVN forces lacked heavy weapons, such as 106mm recoilless rifles used by the Marines with great success, and their casualties were disproportionately heavy.

Due to the South Vietnamese government's request to spare the historical nature of the Citadel, the American command held back from using artillery and air strikes. However, due to heavy enemy resistance, Hughes was eventually permitted to use all the firepower on hand, except for firing on the Imperial Palace.

From February 13 to 15, reinforced by Thompson's fourth company and supported by M48 tanks, the Marines battled for positions around

the heavily defended Dong Ba Gate and its massive tower in the eastern wall of the Citadel. Even after the tower was destroyed by artillery, naval gunfire, and air strikes, the PAVN doggedly hung in the rubble before giving up their positions.

The push south along the wall continued on February 16 under heavy flanking fire from the Gia Hoi Island in the Perfume River to the east and from the walls of the Imperial Palace to the west. While the Marines could call fire on the Citadel's outer wall, they could do nothing about enemy fire coming from the Imperial Palace.

The PAVN constantly launched counterattacks, and fighting was house-to-house and room-to-room. The Hue City Front command knew they would be eventually defeated, but each day they could hold the Citadel was a political statement.

Thompson and his command staff identified a pattern in PAVN's movements during the previous fighting. When the action halted for the night, the PAVN troops moved back from their positions to reoccupy them the next morning. To take advantage of this pattern, Thompson launched an attack under cover of darkness at 3 a.m. on February 21. A platoon from Company A in three groups occupied buildings identified as key to enemy defensive positions.

When the PAVN soldiers approached their positions in the morning, they came under withering Marine fire. The rest of Thompson's battalion moved up to secure their gains and by the end of the day, the Marines came within 100 meters of the southern wall. The same day, two newly arrived South Vietnamese ranger battalions cleared the last pockets of resistance southeast of Hue.

During February 21-22, enemy resistance in the hamlets surrounding Thon La Chu began to weaken, and during the night, the enemy began to withdraw closer to Hue. By the end of February 22, the enemy only controlled the Imperial Palace and the southwestern corner of the Citadel. After the South Vietnamese marines recaptured the Imperial Palace, the Hue Front Command ordered its troops to break off contact and withdraw to the western mountains.

By February 25, the last scattered PAVN defenders completely abandoned the Citadel and attempted to escape to the north and west under constant American artillery fire. After a few more days of sporadic skirmishing, the American command declared the Battle of Hue over on March 2.

The beautiful city of Hue lay in ruins. More than 70 percent of buildings and the majority of its infrastructure were destroyed or damaged during the fighting. Bodies of civilians caught in the crossfire and PAVN soldiers were strewn everywhere. After the battle, several mass graves containing over 3,000 bodies were discovered in the vicinity of Hue, many bearing signs of torture and execution. Despite evidence to the contrary, Communist leadership only admitted to a small number killed at their hands. Including those found in the mass graves, civilian casualties were estimated at more than 5,000.

The fighting in Hue was the longest battle of the Vietnam War. Consistent underestimation and disbelief of the situation on the ground by Generals Westmoreland and LaHue prevented them from dispatching sufficient forces and firepower to defend Hue. The U.S. Marines suffered 147 dead and 857 wounded; the U.S. Army lost 74 killed and 507 wounded. The South Vietnamese Army losses were 421 killed, 2,123 wounded, and 30 missing. Estimates of PAVN and Viet Cong losses vary greatly, from 2,500 to 5,000 killed.

Despite their generally poor reputation, the South Vietnamese forces under General Truong's leadership fought well and bore the larger share of the fighting in the Citadel, as indicated by their casualties compared to American losses.

Although the PAVN and Viet Cong attacks throughout South Vietnam were defeated after several days, the battle of Hue was the most successful enemy operation during the Tet Offensive. By the time the struggle was over, more than 8,000 PAVN regulars, an equivalent of two divisions equipped with mortars and recoilless rifles, had fought for the city. However, the failure of the PAVN to overrun the Mang Ca and MACV compounds allowed the Allied forces to use them as springboards from which to launch counter attacks to liberate the city. Likewise, PAVN's failure to destroy key Nguyen Hoang and An Cuu bridges allowed the Americans to rush reinforcements during the crucial first days of the battle.

Despite the month-long occupation of South Vietnam's third-largest city, the main goal of the Tet Offensive—to bring about a popular uprising—was a failure. The majority of South Vietnam's population remained indifferent, concerned with their survival and being left alone to live their lives.

Despite failing to score a political victory at home, the Communists scored a major one abroad, especially in the United States. Images of death and destruction and mounting casualties, brought by television into American living rooms, had a negative impact on the American public opinion toward the war. ■

ABOVE: A unit of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, rests alongside a battered wall of Hue's imperial palace after a battle for the citadel in February 1968, during the Tet Offensive. OPPOSITE: U.S. Marine Corps helicopter drops off Vietnamese Marine reinforcements, February 23, 1968. Introduced in Vietnam in 1965, the Boeing/Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight could carry 12-13 marines, compared to the Army's Huey capacity of 5-6. The CH-46's cruising speed of 155 mph was also 25 mph faster than the Huey.

'A Bad Place for

BY MIKE PHIFER

In the early hours of October 19, 1864, fog blanketed the hills and fields along the meandering Cedar Creek in the northern Shenandoah Valley. Federal troops slumbered in their sprawling camps as 3,000 Confederate troops of Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early's Army of the Valley, clad in ragged gray and butternut uniforms, were silently on the move. Under the command of Maj. Gen. Joseph Kershaw, they slipped through the rough terrain toward the Yankee's fortified line and waded across Cedar Creek at Bowman's Mill Ford. While three of Kershaw's brigades deployed into battle formation, a brigade of Georgians under Colonel James Simms slipped off to silence enemy pickets.

Shrouded by the fog, Simms' Georgians appeared as dark shadows to pickets of the 5th New York Heavy Artillery, who lit up the dawn with the orange flash of rifle-musket fire before dashing back to camp. The Georgians overran the surprised New Yorkers, capturing 300 of them.

Leading Kershaw's attack, Simms' troops pushed on toward the entrenched position of Colonel Joseph Thoburn's Division. "The works were of a formidable character, with strong abatis covering most of the front and in a favorable position for defense," recalled Simms. Thoburn's Federals, many of them half dressed, stumbled out of their tents and loosed a galling volley at the advancing Confederates.

But Kershaw's Division was unstoppable. With a Rebel yell they crashed over the entrenchment, made free use of the bayonet and routed Thoburn's Division in about 15 brutal minutes. Kershaw's men next fell upon a battery of the 1st Pennsylvania Reserve Light Artillery and captured six of its guns. Kershaw's men quickly swung the heavy 10-pounder Parrotts around and fired on the retreating bluecoats. Battery B, 5th U.S. Artillery was next attacked, but this time the Federals escaped with most of their guns.

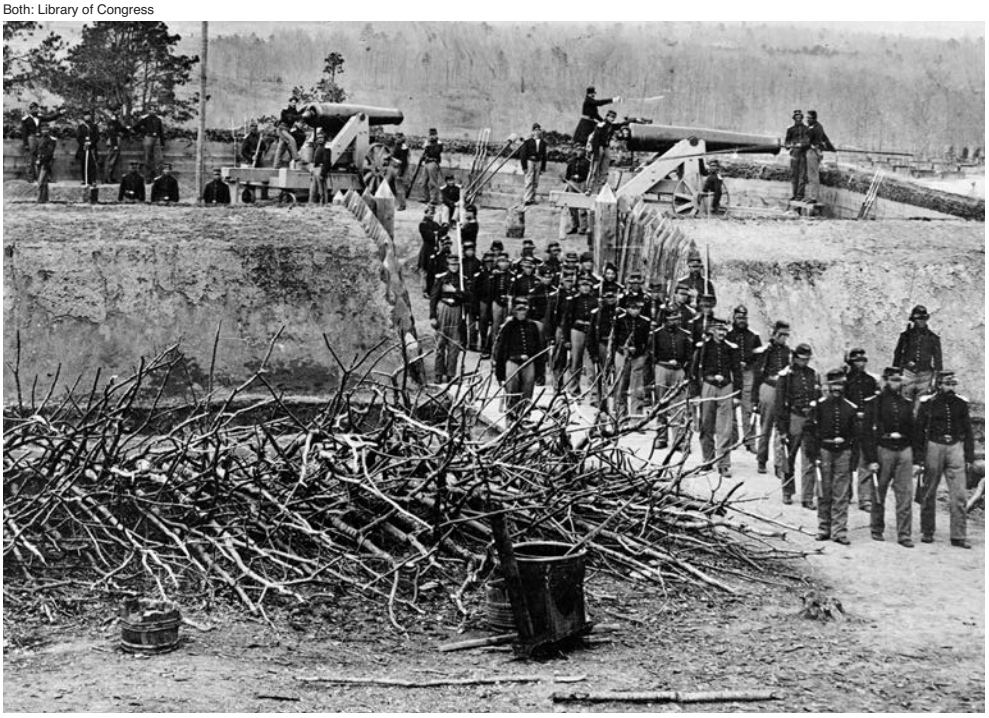
To Kershaw's right, three divisions under Major General John Gordon launched a vicious attack against the Federal left as well. Early's bold gamble to drive the Union forces from the vital Shenandoah Valley was off to a promising start.

"Battle of Cedar Creek," chromolithograph by Kurz & Allison of Chicago, December 12, 1890.
Library of Congress

a Fight'

By October 1864, Philip Sheridan believed the fight had gone out of Jubal Early's Confederate troops—he would find out how wrong he was at Cedar Creek.

Both: Library of Congress



ABOVE: On July 11, 1864, Jubal Early attacked Fort Stevens—less than four miles from the White House—one of 68 forts erected to protect Washington, D.C. Confederate sharpshooters fired on the Union garrison from nearby houses, but retreated back to Virginia the second day. BELOW: On July 30, 1864, Early's troops advanced into Chamberburg, Pennsylvania, demanding a $500,000 ransom. When the town refused, or was unable to pay, Early's men burned much of the town in retaliation for Union destruction in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Shenandoah Valley was no stranger to war. This strategic valley stretches for about 165 miles in western Virginia angling from the southwest to the northeast. Bordering its flanks are the Allegheny Mountains to the west and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east. Called by some the "Breadbasket to the Confederacy," its fertile lands helped keep the Confederate forces fed, especially the Army of Northern Virginia. The Valley also served as an invasion route for Southern forces into the north in 1862 and 1863. Federal forces operating in the Valley had not fared well so far in the war. "To many a Federal general it had been the valley of humiliation, on account of the defeats his forces had suffered," wrote George Carpenter of the 8th Vermont.

Newly appointed General-in-Chief of Union forces, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, would again send Federal forces into the Valley in 1864. Grant planned a major spring offensive. Maj. Gen. William Sherman would advance on Atlanta through northern Georgia, while Grant would accompany Maj. Gen. George Meade's Army of the Potomac as it advanced overland to Richmond, Virginia. At the same time, the Federal Army of the James would strike at the Confederate capital up the James River. Grant sent a third Federal force in the east under Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel to invade the Shenandoah Valley to sever key railroads supplying Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and force Lee to divert forces to that sector.

President Abraham Lincoln replaced Sigel, who met with defeat at the hands of the Confederates, with Maj. Gen. David Hunter. Lee entrusted Early to act independently using the corps that he had commanded in the Army of Northern Virginia. Early's troops defeated Hunter at Lynchburg, Virginia, on June 18, 1864, and drove him out of the Valley. Lincoln demoted Hunter and replaced him with Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan.

Following his victory at Lynchburg, Early marched up the Shenandoah Valley (north), crossed into Maryland, and advanced southeast towards Washington. He ran headlong into a blocking force commanded by Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace at Monocacy Junction. Early triumphed in the July 9 battle, but Wallace's delaying action allowed large numbers of Union reinforcements to arrive in the capital to boost its defenses. The Confederate commander attacked Fort Stevens, which guarded the northern approaches to the city, on July 11-12. Union major generals Horatio Wright and Alexander McCook soundly repulsed his attack. Early then withdrew back to the Shenandoah Valley to regroup. He took the offensive again, launching a successful attack on July 24 against Brig. Gen. George Crook at Kernstown. Early then launched a raid into Pennsylvania, burning Chambersburg on July 30.

The following day, Grant traveled from Petersburg to Fort Monroe to meet with Lincoln. They decided to consolidate four military departments in Virginia. As part of the reorganization, they gave Sheridan the command of 37,000 troops of the Army of the Shenandoah on August 7. Grant instructed Sheridan to take all provisions, forage, and stock from farms and towns in the Shenandoah Valley to support his army, and to destroy

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This illustration by Alfred R. Waud shows Custer (with staff at right) and his division burning farms and fields near Mt. Jackson, Virginia, on October 7. Sheridan would report to Grant that day that "I have destroyed over 2,000 barns filled with wheat, hay and farming implements; over 70 mills, filled with flour and wheat; have driven in front of the army over 4,000 head of stock, and have killed and issued to the troops not less than 3,000 sheep."

that which Sheridan's troops could not consume. "It is desirable that nothing should be left to invite the enemy to return," wrote Grant.

Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah comprised Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright's VI Corps, Crook's VIII Corps, and two divisions of the XIX Corps transferred east from the Trans-Mississippi Theater, led by Brig. Gen. William Emory.

Sheridan did not wait until all of his forces were assembled. Instead, he immediately marched south with those at hand. For six weeks the two opponents, Early and Sheridan, sparred in the Lower Shenandoah Valley. By mid-August Sheridan held a position at Cedar Creek 15 miles south of Winchester. Sheridan did not like his position. "I cannot cover the numerous rivers that lead in on both of my flanks to the rear," he complained.

While he halted at Cedar Creek waiting for a supply train to catch up, Sheridan received word from Grant that Confederate reinforcements under Lt. Gen. Richard Anderson were on their way from Lee's army to join Early. Anderson's command comprised Maj. Gen. Joseph Kershaw's Division, Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee's Cavalry Division, and a battalion of artillery. With these troops on the way and provisions running low as a result of raids on his supply line by Confederate partisans, Sheridan withdrew 40 miles north to Charles Town, West Virginia, where he repulsed a Confederate probe on August 21. The following day Sheridan took up a strong position at Halltown. Deciding Sheridan could not be dislodged from his strong position at Halltown, Early feinted that he intended to invade Maryland. After clashing with Federal cavalry and forcing them to withdraw to the north bank of the Potomac, Early resolved to take up a defensive position at Bunker Hill 12 miles north of Winchester.

Skirmishing occurred through the first part of September with no major engagements, as Sheridan was still careful. He explained after the war that although his forces outnumbered those of Early, he nevertheless had to exercise caution not to incur a defeat on the eve of the 1864 presidential election. Federal authorities in Washington had warned him that a defeat by a Union army in the field might result in the overthrow of the political party in power. Good news, however, arrived to help ensure Lincoln's reelection when Sherman captured Atlanta on September 2.

Sheridan met with Grant on September 16. The Union commander approved of Sheridan's plan to go on the offensive upon learning that Anderson and Kershaw's troops were returning to the Army of Northern Virginia at Petersburg. Three days later Sheridan defeated Early at the Third Battle of Winchester.

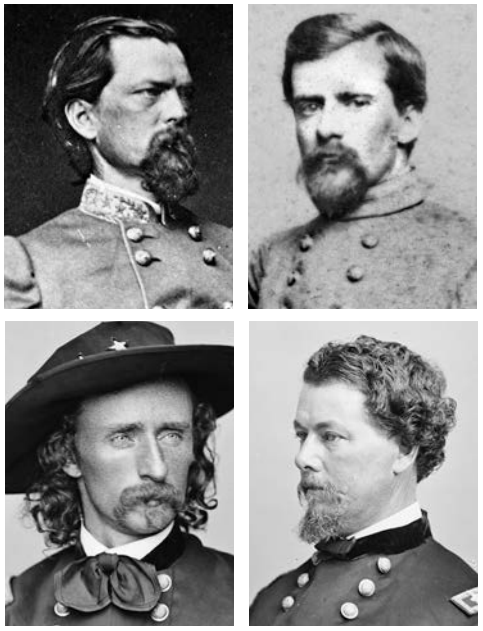
Early's beaten troops retreated a dozen miles to Fisher's Hill. Sheridan routed Early's forces with a flanking maneuver on September 22. After his defeat at Fisher's Hill, Early withdrew 70 miles south to Waynesboro, Virginia, to await reinforcements. Lee once again sent Kershaw's Division and Rosser's Laurel Brigade to rejoin the Army of the Valley. Rosser took command of Early's cavalry after Fitzhugh Lee had been severely wounded at Winchester.

With Early's defeat, the Federals controlled the Valley as far south as Staunton. Sheridan next turned to the grim task of torching a good part of the Valley. Sheridan's army marched northward, while his horsemen spread out and lit up barns, mills, and stacks of hay and grain. The skies over the Lower Shenandoah Valley were black with smoke. Sheridan claimed to have burned 2,000 barns, 70 mills, and 435,000 bushels of wheat. The Federals consumed all of the livestock they could eat, and then shot the rest, leaving them to rot in the fields. Although they had succeeded in removing a major source of food stores for the Confederate forces in Virginia, they endangered the lives

of the civilians who would have to endure the approaching winter months without sustenance.

Rosser received orders on October 6 to harass Sheridan's army with his Confederate cavalry brigade. A clash between opposing cavalry unfolded three days later at Tom's Brook, four miles south of Fisher's Hill. Sheridan took up a new position on October 10 with 31,000 Union troops on the north side of Cedar Creek. Confident that Early's Army of the Valley was no longer a menace, Sheridan sent Wright's VI Corps east to join the Army of the Potomac.

All: Library of Congress



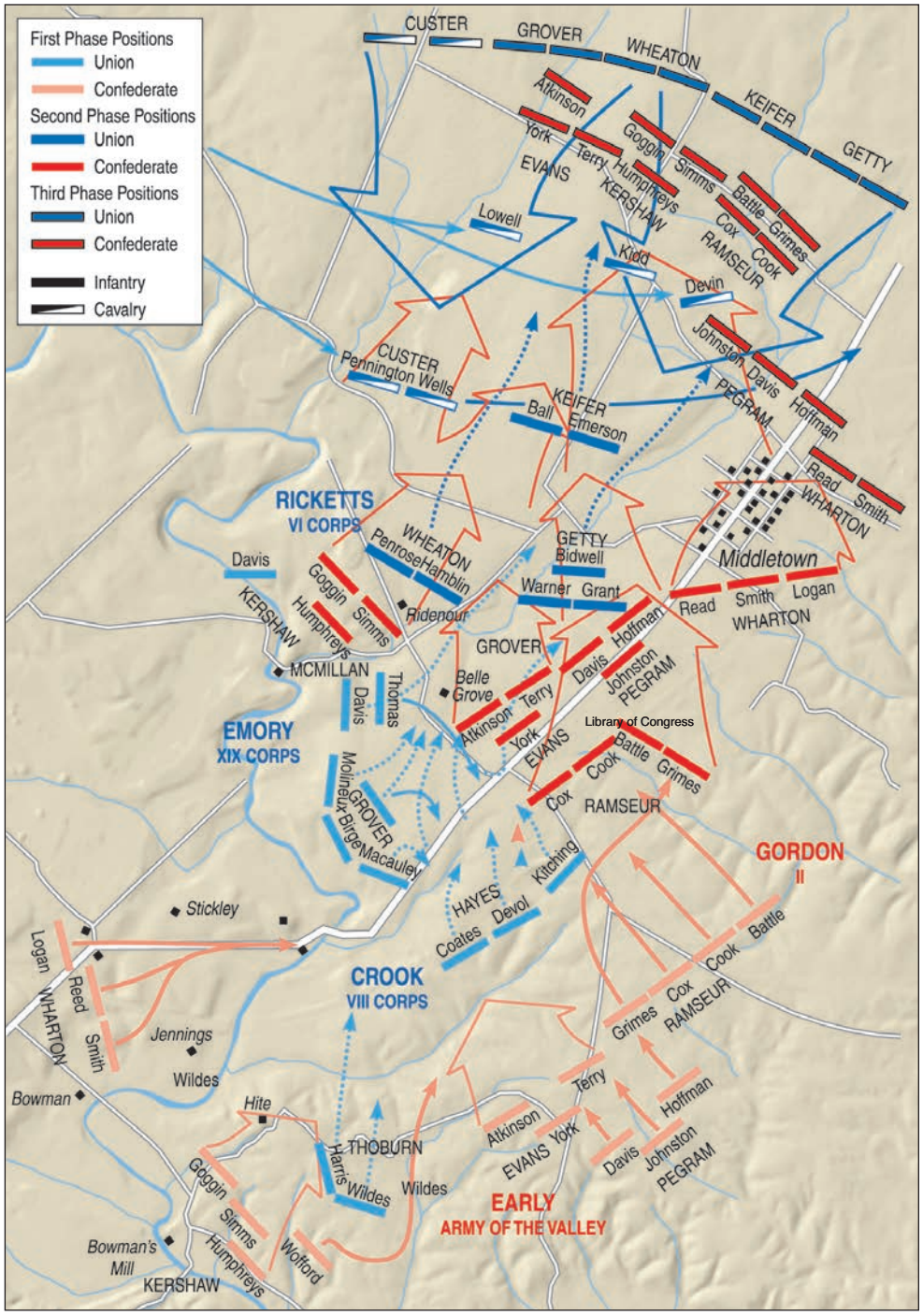
Clockwise, from top left, are Confederate Brigadier General John B. Gordon, Confederate Brigadier General John Pegram, Union Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer, and Union Major General Horatio G. Wright.

Early, though, was not done yet. After being informed of Wright's departure, Early decided it was time for his 17,000 troops to strike. Gordon's division, forming the vanguard of Early's army, advanced on October 13 to take possession of Hupp's Hill, just south of the Federals at Cedar Creek. Southern guns soon scattered Yankee troops encamped nearby.

In response, Crook sent two brigades from Thoburn's Division splashing through the creek to engage the Confederates. Federal artillery opened fire as well. A brigade from Kershaw's Division joined the fight and helped drive the bluecoats back. Early then decided to pull his army back to Fisher's Hill.

Sheridan recalled the VI Corps, but after reviewing his position decided that the Confederates likely would remain at Fisher's Hill. Two days later Sheridan departed for Washington to

Map © 2023 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



The Confederate attack drove the Federal forces back past Belle Grove plantation to the outskirts of Middletown, Virginia, where Early inopportunely halted the attackers in their tracks.

meet with authorities at the War Department to discuss future operations. He left Wright in temporary command of his army. At the same time, Brig. Gen. Alfred Torbett's Cavalry Corps set off south on a raid in the direction of Charlottesville.

Wright informed Sheridan that Union troops had intercepted a message from a Confederate signal station stating that reinforcements from Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's I Corps at Petersburg were en route to join Early. Sheridan suspected that the message was a ruse, but as a precaution he ordered Brig. Gen. Wesley Merritt's First Division and Brig. Gen. George Custer's Third Division of Torbett's Cavalry Corps to rejoin the Army of the Shenandoah. He also issued orders for Colonel William Powell's Second Division to take up a position to the east at Front Royal to watch for Longstreet's troops.

Sheridan would prove to be right about the message being a ruse. His army, however, would

The clash at Cedar Creek pitted two proven Civil War army commanders against each other.

Dubbed "Little Phil" due to his diminutive stature, Maj. Gen. Philip Henry Sheridan, who was born to Irish immigrants in Albany, New York, graduated from West Point in 1853 and was posted to the western frontier.

Having served ably during the first year of the war, Sheridan received a promotion to brigadier general in September 1862. The following month his division held its ground at Perryville, Kentucky, on October 8 against repeated assaults by Confederate forces under General Braxton Bragg during the Confederate Heartland Offensive.

When Bragg launched his sledgehammer attack on December 30 against the Union right wing at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Sheridan made sure that his troops held their ground in the Union center in a grove of scrub cedar until they had exhausted their ammunition. This bought precious time for Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans to establish a new line anchored on the Nashville and Chattanooga railroad.

The War Department promoted Sheridan to major general on April 10, 1863, for his stellar performance at Stone's River. By that time Sheridan had shown a degree of aggressiveness, courage, and steadiness in combat that propelled him to the front rank of Union commanders in the West. Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant reassigned Sheridan to the Eastern Theater in 1864 and gave him command of the Army of the Shenandoah. After his successful Shenandoah Campaign, Sheridan joined Grant in March 1865 at Petersburg.

During the Siege of Petersburg in March 1865, Sheridan drove the infantry of his V Corps hard. Through a series of rapid marches he circled around the flank of Lee's army and cut Confederate general Robert E. Lee's rail and supply communications with the Deep South. He succeeded by the end of the month in piercing Lee's right flank twice, thereby compelling Lee to withdraw westward on April 2 uncovering the Confederate capital at Richmond.

Sheridan's superb performance continued during the Appomattox Campaign. He helped close off Lee's escape route, leaving Lee no choice but to surrender on April 9.

Lieutenant General Jubal Anderson Early, who was born in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, graduated from West Point in 1837. The commander who his Civil War troops affectionately called "Old Jubilee" chose to join the Confederate Army to defend the soil of his native state.

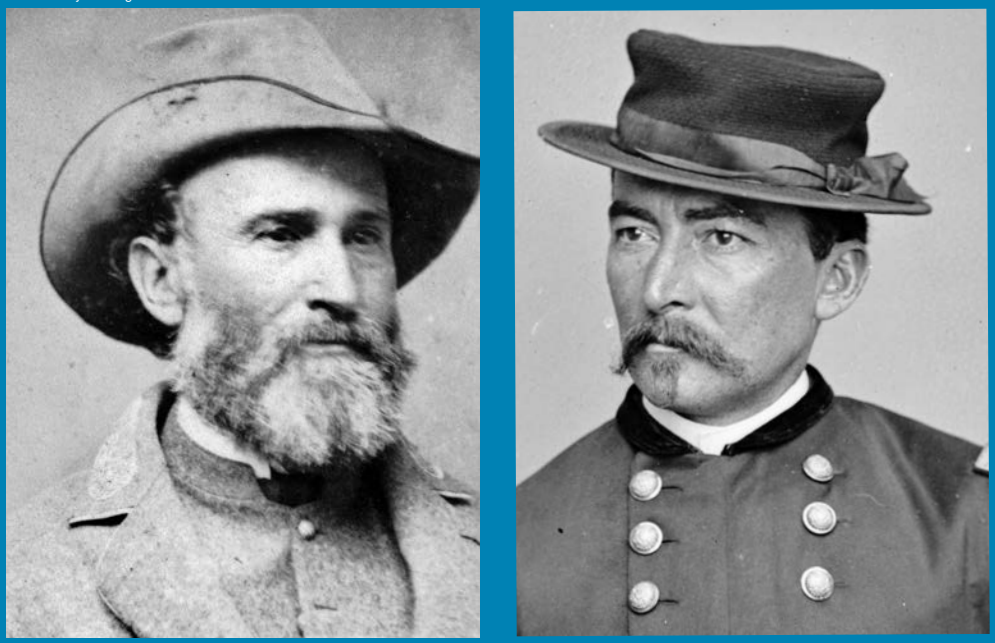
He fought ably as a brigade commander at First Manassas and afterwards received a promotion on August 28, 1861, to brigadier general. He then fought skilfully in Lee's newly established Army of Northern Virginia at Second Manassas and Antietam. When Federal troops pierced the Confederate right at Fredericksburg, he led his troops in a counterattack that plugged the hole in Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's line. For that performance, he received a promotion to major general on April 23, 1863. He once again showed his flair for offensive operations at Gettysburg when the soldiers of his II Corps division helped rout the Union XI Corps on July 1, 1863.

Lee gave Early permanent command of the Confederate II Corps on May 27 and four days later Confederate authorities confirmed his promotion to lieutenant general. Despite operating at a sharp disadvantage in numbers in command of the Confederate Army of the Valley in 1864, Early succeeded not only in threatening Washington through his invasion of Maryland, but also in launching his own sledgehammer attack against Sheridan at Cedar Creek.

Although blamed by many Southerners for the Confederate loss of the Shenandoah Valley, he actually had fought a brilliant campaign that had tied up a considerable number of Union forces. He finished the war with a record that is comparable to the greatest of Confederate generals. "He exhibited during his whole service, high intelligence, sagacity, bravery, and untiring devotion to the cause in which he had enlisted," wrote Lee.

—Mike Phifer

Both: Library of Congress



Confederate General Jubal Early, left, and Union General Philip Sheridan. In the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, Sheridan was put in command by Grant in August and defeated Early at Fisher's Hill and Tom's Brook. Early's surprise attack on October 19 smashed two thirds of the Union force there and sent them running. But Early's exhausted and hungry troops—due largely to Sheridan's "scorched earth" tactic of burning crops and seizing livestock—stopped to raid the Union camp. Sheridan was at Winchester when he got word of the attack and rode to rally his men, who turned and routed the Confederates.

Both: Library of Congress

soon be paid a bloody visit by the Confederates. "I was now compelled to move back for want of provisions and forage, or attack the enemy in his position with the hope of driving him from it," wrote Old Jubilee, adding, "I determined to attack."

Early dispatched Gordon, Brigadier General Clement Evans, and Major Jedediah Hotchkiss, the army's topographical engineer, to reconnoiter the Federal position on October 17. They were soon joined by Major Robert Hunter, Gordon's chief of staff. The little party climbed up Massanutten Mountain where they could see for miles in every direction. They got a good look at Sheridan's army with their field glasses. They could see "every piece of artillery, every wagon and tent and supporting line of troops," Gordon wrote.

The Union troops had spread their camps and field works between Cedar Creek and Middletown. Cedar Creek was "a good place for water, but a bad place for a fight," wrote James Ewer of the 3rd Massachusetts Cavalry. The creek itself, with its torturous curves and steep banks, flowed into the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. There were about a dozen fords across the river and a bridge where the Valley Pike crossed it.

The entrenched VIII Corps held the Federal left north of the creek. The XIX Corps deployed to their right in the middle. The VI Corps held the Federal right near Belle Grove plantation. The cavalry divisions of Custer and Merritt took up positions supporting the Federal right.

Scanning the Federal position, Gordon observed that the Union army had failed to anchor its left flank against any natural feature of the landscape. Upon returning to Early, Gordon insisted that Early attack the Federal left. Early agreed, but first he would have to find a way to get troops through the rough terrain and across the Shenandoah River.

Working together, Gordon, Hotchkiss, and Maj. Gen. Stephen Dodson Ramseur found a narrow rugged trail on October 18 that could be used to attack the Federal left. Early gave his approval and plans were made for an advance to battle. Early gave Gordon command of the Confederate right wing consisting of Gordon's Division, Brig. Gen. John Pegram's Division and Ramseur's Division.

Each man received 60 rounds of ammunition. The troops also received orders to leave behind any unnecessary accessories, such as canteens and tin cups, which might make noise that would alert enemy pickets of their advance. Gordon's command moved out at 8 p.m. Through the cold dark night "the long gray line like a great serpent glided noiselessly along the dim pathway" wrote Gordon. After a rugged journey southeastward from Fisher's Hill, Gordon's troops reached a ford across the Shenandoah River before dawn. Only a mile from the Federal left, they waited for the order to attack, watching the mounted Federal pickets a short distance away.

Also slipping through the darkness toward the sleeping Federal army as part of the Confederate plan were the soldiers of Kershaw's Division. "We got in sight of the enemy's fire at 3:30 a.m.," wrote Early, who accompanied Kershaw on the advance. They waited for another hour before crossing Cedar Creek at Bowman's Ford.

One mile west of Kershaw, Brigadier General Gabriel Wharton's division on Hupp's Hill prepared to advance northeast up the Valley Pike against the Federal XIX Corps. A mile and half behind Wharton, 40 limbered guns stood ready to move out under Colonel Thomas Carter. Five miles north of Wharton, Rosser's 2,000 mounted and dismounted troopers prepared to make a diversion against the Union cavalry.

As the time neared for the attack, Gordon ordered 300 troopers under Colonel William Payne to ride across the Shenandoah River and disperse the enemy pickets. The sound of gunfire pierced the early morning as the Federal pickets raced back to their camps. Simms' Brigade soon on the move as well to drive off enemy pickets. On the Confederate left, Rosser's troopers also moved forward. Early's army, which was outnumbered two to one by Sheridan's army, unleashed its attack at 5 a.m.

Captain Frederick Wilkie commanding the 5th New York Heavy Artillery had been uneasy in the early hours of October 19 as he and his men could hear noise coming from east of where they were posted. A handful of other Union officers feared the enemy was up to something, but the senior commanders of the Army of the Shenandoah seemed far less concerned. For the last few days the Federal army had been getting up at 2 a.m. and standing to arms, but Wright canceled that order effective as of the morning of October 19. It would prove to be a costly mistake, for Kershaw's Division quickly overran Thoburn's Division.

At the same time, Wharton launched his attack down the Valley Pike toward Cedar Creek. Elsewhere, Rosser launched his diversionary attack securing a ford over the creek and a mill. Rosser's troopers quickly encountered the 7th Michigan Cavalry, which was soon reinforced by the rest of Colonel James H. Kidd's Brigade. As for the rest of the Union cavalry, it remained in place awaiting further orders.

On the Federal left, Colonel Rutherford Hayes, the commander of the Second Division of Crook's VIII Corps, having learned of the disaster overtaking Thoburn less than a mile south of him, formed his division on the east side of the Valley Pike facing southeast. Hayes stretched his left flank to make contact with the raw recruits of the Provisional Division under Colonel Howard Kitching, which had been attached to Crook's corps.

Colonel Thomas Wildes, the commander of the First Brigade in Thoburn's Division, was falling back with two Ohio regiments, the 116th and 123rd, when he encountered Emory. With the Confederates 300 yards off in a wooded tract, Emory ordered Wildes to charge the Confederates to buy time allowing Emory to plug the gap between the XIX Corps and Hayes's position.

Wildes led his Buckeyes, along with Wright who was at that location, into the woods that were full of Confederates accompanied by Wright. "We met with a terrible fire and a counter-charge from ten times our number, which swept us back again to the pike," wrote Wildes. The Ohioans fell back toward the Federal lines with a bloodied Wright, who had been wounded in the face.

By this time Colonel Stephen Thomas was attempting to fill the gap with his brigade between Emory's XIX Corps and Hayes' command, but it was too late. Through the fog that continued to blanket the battlefield, Hayes' men quickly began to take fire in their left flank from Gordon's advancing divisions. "Our division had not more than got into line when a most deadly fire was being poured into our ranks and a general confusion prevailed," wrote Colonel Benjamin Coates, one of Hayes' brigade commanders. The situation was indeed becoming chaotic as the retreating bluecoats of Thoburn's battered division came tumbling back through the lines. The Confederates continued to pour a deadly fire into the Federals and Kitching's men began to give way, soon followed by Hayes' troops. The future president Hayes had a horse shot out from beneath him and escaped capture by taking cover in a grove of trees.

In less than half an hour, Early's Confederates had succeeded in shattering Crook's Corps. With Hayes' men in retreat, XIX Corps faced the seemingly unstoppable Confederates. As the 40 Confederate guns hammered away at the Federals sheltering behind their earthworks, Wharton, Kershaw and Gordon's divisions moved toward the Federals.

ABOVE: Hearing the sound of battle from his headquarters in Winchester, Sheridan rode toward Middleton, waving his hat at retreating soldiers. "Sheridan's Ride. Battle of Cedar Creek," sketch by Alfred R. Waud, October 19, 1864. OPPOSITE: "Cedar Creek, Virginia," drawing by Alfred Rudolph Waud, October 19, 1864. Waud immigrated to the U.S. from London, and found work as a newspaper artist. He was assigned to cover the Federal Army of the Potomac and was present at every battle that unit fought in, from the First Battle of Bull Run to the siege of Petersburg.

Emory ordered Thomas to make a hopeless attack against the Confederates with his lone brigade. A hail of lead greeted them as the beleaguered brigade moved forward and were soon overrun by the Confederates. "Men seemed more like demons than human beings, as they struck fiercely at each other with clubbed muskets and bayonets," wrote Herbert Hill of the 8th Vermont of the vicious fighting. With half the brigade down, Thomas' men fell back 200 yards and rallied. They made a brief stand, but were soon reeling northward again.

As the Confederates continued to push onward, Gordon's troops were so extended they were advancing on the XIX Corps' left and rear. Emory quickly ordered his remaining command to take cover on the reverse side of their entrenchments allowing them to face north and the Confederate attack. At the same time the 176th and 154th New York attempted to refuse the XIX Corps' left flank. Bolstered by Battery D, 1st Rhode Island Artillery, Emory's command only hoped to slow the Confederate's advance allowing the VI Corps to better secure their position.

A heavy fog continued to cover the battlefield as Kershaw came crashing into the Federal's left flank. "A desperate hand-to-hand fight ensued," recalled Lt. Col. Alfred Neafie of the 156th New York. He added, "The enemy had planted their colors on our works and were fighting desperately across them meeting with a stubborn resistance, while they swarmed like bees round the battery on our left and rear."

Attacked from different directions, the situation quickly became critical for the XIX Corps and Emory ordered a withdrawal. "It was now time for us to back out of our hole," wrote Captain John DeForest of Emory's staff, "and we marched rearward sadly diminished in numbers, though not a regiment had entirely disbanded."

As the XIX Corps retreated past Belle Grove, Crook and Emory with a makeshift line of 1,500

troops, many of them officers, attempted to stall the Confederate advance. "We checked the advance of the enemy, and pushed him back a short distance," recalled Wildes. "We were fighting Kershaw and Wharton's Confederate divisions," he added. Crook's line held for 30 minutes giving time for the wagon supply trains to rumble out of harm's way.

The VI Corps, which was temporarily commanded by Brig. Gen. James Rickett, was ordered by Wright to dispatch Brig. Gen. Frank Wheaton's 1st Division and the 3rd Division under Colonel J. Warren Keifer to aid Crook and Emory. As they were greeted by fleeing soldiers, the divisions soon took up position on high ground overlooking Meadow Brooks. They came under Confederate attack and managed to drive them back briefly. Gordon's divisions and Kershaw resumed their bloody attack forcing the bluecoats of the two Federal divisions to scramble back through Middletown.

The VI Corps remaining division under Brig. Gen. George Getty was posted in front of Middletown, but had been ordered to link up with Wheaton's Division. As this division was routed, Getty's 2nd Division stood alone. Getty quickly ordered his division to take up position on a ridge west of Middletown. Here they endured repeated attacks by Pegram, Wharton and Ramseur's troops. Early brought in his guns and ordered them to hammer the Federals. For 30 minutes the Confederate guns blazed away as the bluecoats hugged the ground. When the guns finally fell silent the Confederates attacked again, driving back the Federal skirmishers.

By this time Getty had received news he was to take command of the VI Corps as Ricketts had earlier been wounded. In turn Brig. Gen. Lewis Grant took command of the 2nd Division. With the Confederates moving in for another assault, Getty realized the tattered division could not withstand another attack. He ordered them to fall back north of Middletown where much of the battered Army of the Shenandoah clustered. Here a new makeshift line was attempting to be formed by Wright.

Merritt arrived with his cavalrymen and Wright ordered him to halt the fleeing Federals. "It being necessary in several instances to fire on the crowds retiring, and to use the saber frequently," recalled Brig. Gen. Thomas Devin, who commanded the second brigade of Merritt's cavalry division.

Early's men pushed into Middletown at 10 a.m. where they collided with Merritt's troopers, who were supported by five Federal batteries. Early then made the fateful decisions to halt his army's advance. By this point his ranks were worn out and had dwindled not only to casualties, but to a good number of men who were plundering the Federal camp. Captain D. Augustus Dickert of the 3rd South Carolina recalled that food, blankets, overcoats, hats, boots and shoes lying about "looked to the half-fed, half-clothed Confederates like the wealth of the Indies."

Early told Gordon "this is glory enough for one day," but Gordon wanted Early to strike another blow to ensure that there would not be left a single organized company of infantry in Sheridan's army. "No use in that; they will all go too, directly," Early replied.

With his Army of the Shenandoah on the verge of collapse, Sheridan was in Winchester where he had arrived on the evening of October 18. At sunrise the following day Sheridan was awakened and informed by an officer on the picket line that artillery fire was heard in the distance. As the fire seemed irregular Sheridan was not concerned, believing it was a Federal reconnaissance he knew was to take place that day.

Sheridan, though, began to grow restless and got up and had breakfast. After again being informed of firing in the distance, he decided to mount up and ride out for Middletown to investigate. He was joined by his staff and a cavalry escort. Two miles south of Winchester on a high ridge, Sheridan spotted wagons in the distance that seemed disorganized and in great confusion. News soon reached Sheridan that his army had been defeated and was being driven north.

Sheridan rode rapidly south along the Valley Pike, which was becoming more congested with wagons, ambulances and soldiers. Some of the Federal soldiers were plodding away from the battle, while others were resting along the road or boiling coffee. As Sheridan rode by he waved his

Both: Library of Congress

ABOVE: "Mortal wounding of Major General Stephen Ramseur," a sketch by James Taylor. After two years as a sergeant in the Union Tenth New York Volunteers, Taylor was hired as a "special artist" by *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in 1863. After Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley campaign in August 1864, Taylor would follow the armies of Generals Benjamin Butler and William Sherman. OPPOSITE: Union Colonel Charles Russell Lowell was mortally wounded leading a brigade in Merritt's cavalry during the Union counter-attack on the grounds of Belle Grove Plantation at the Battle of Cedar Creek, Virginia.

hat at the men and pointed to the front. When he arrived at the beleaguered Federal lines around 10:30 am he quickly met with Wright. Sheridan was determined to reorganize his battered army and fight. Word soon spread among the troops that Sheridan was back and their morale rose. "Sheridan immediately instilled new vigor, energy and determination into the men," wrote Lieutenant Edward Duff of the 159th New York. "He passed along the whole line amid the most marked enthusiasm, telling the men they would quarter in their old camp again that night."

As Sheridan was re-forming his army, skirmishers from Gordon's Division probed the Union right held by Emory's XIX Corps at 1 p.m. They met with fierce resistance and Gordon did not push the attack. Sheridan, on the other hand, was ready to launch an attack; but first he wanted to determine Longstreet's whereabouts. Although he first thought the supposed Longstreet message a ruse, Sheridan wanted to be sure. At 4 p.m., satisfied that just Kershaw's Division of Longstreet's Corps was present, he ordered a counterattack.

"It was a glorious sight to see that magnificent line sweeping onward in the charge," wrote Colonel James Kidd, a brigade commander in Merritt's Cavalry Division. Sheridan's line stretched for two miles. From right to left were Custer's Cavalry Division, the XIX Corps, the VI Corps, and Merritt's Cavalry Division. Crook's battered troops, meanwhile, formed up to the rear and left of the VI Corps.

As the Federals moved forward Confederate guns opened up. Facing the two Union corps was Gordon's Division on the Confederate left, while to their right was Kershaw and Ramseur's Divisions. To the right and rear of Ramseur was Pegram's Division with Wharton on their right, positioned on the east side of the Valley Pike.

Merritt's troopers moved ahead of the slower infantry and soon took vicious fire forcing them back to reform. The VI Corps fared little better. Covered by a stone wall, Ramseur's Division blazed away at the Federal infantry opposite them. A good part of the corps reeled back under the Confederate rifle and cannon fire. Only the Vermont Brigade and much of Colonel James Warner's Brigade of the 2nd Division held their ground and traded volleys with the graybacks behind the stone walls.

Meanwhile on the Federal right, Custer had spotted Rosser's Cavalry Division lurking nearby. Custer was compelled, he later reported, "to break my connection with the infantry on my left, in order to direct my efforts against the force of the enemy approaching my right." A battery quickly opened up on the Confederate horsemen and Custer dispatched Colonel Alexander Pennington to attack them vigorously.

The XIX Corps' right flank was exposed and they came under deadly fire from Gordon's Division. However, Gordon had problems as a gap existed between Brig. Gen. C.A. Evans' Brigade which held the extreme left of his position and the rest of the division. Brig. Gen. James McMillan's Brigade and part of Colonel Edwin Davis' Brigade of the XIX's Corps 1st Division wheeled to the right to confront this deadly fire. The bluecoats returned fire and charged, scattering Evans' Brigade who fled to the rear.

"You are doing splendidly, but don't be in too much haste," Sheridan warned the soldiers of the XIX Corps. "Now lie down right where you are, and wait until you see General Custer come down over those hills," ordered Sheridan, adding that once the cavalry arrived they were to "push the Confederates." The hunkering bluecoats would not have long to wait as Custer's troopers soon came thundering in from the west.

The soldiers of the XIX Corps attacked anew.

Continued on page 97

The Bridge at Remagen

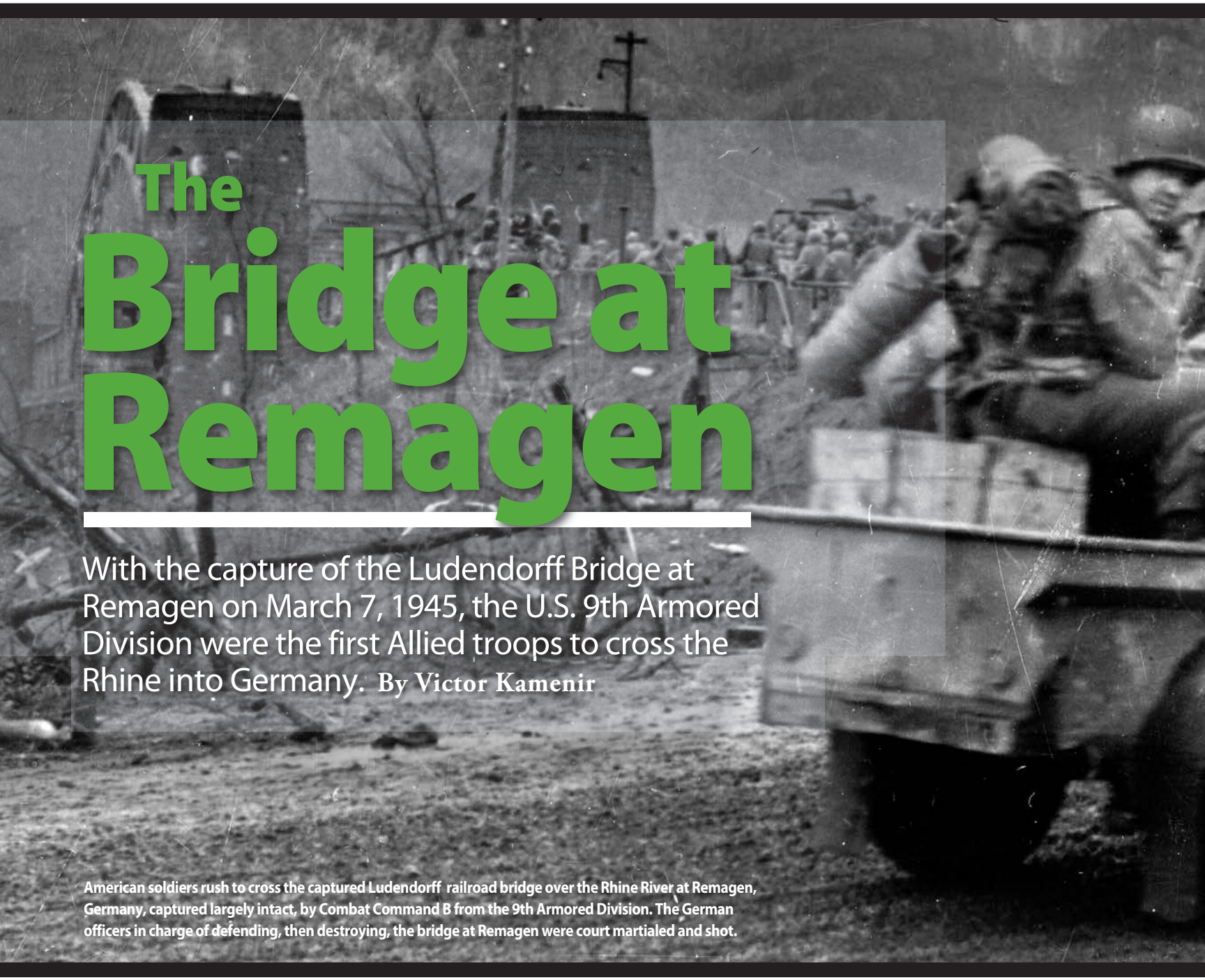
With the capture of the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen on March 7, 1945, the U.S. 9th Armored Division were the first Allied troops to cross the Rhine into Germany. **By Victor Kamenir**

By the end of January 1945, Hitler's desperate Ardennes Offensive had ground to a halt. Though the last-ditch push to the west had inflicted heavy casualties on American forces, it was the German army that suffered irreplaceable losses in men, equipment, and materiel and was no longer capable of offensive operations. The Allies regrouped and raced for the Rhine River, the last major natural obstacle to Germany.

The Allied forces advanced toward the Rhine on a broad front with British General Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group in the north and U.S. General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group in the south. Bradley's army group was composed of the U.S. First Army under Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges on the left and the U.S. Third Army under Lt. Gen. George Patton on the right. Supreme Allied Commander in Europe General Dwight D. Eisenhower and the senior Allied command expected to find no bridges over the Rhine still standing.

First Army considered two possible river crossing sites on the extremes of its flanks—one in the sector between Cologne and Bonn in the north, and at Koblenz in the south. In both cases, the American forces would have to fight on the river's east bank through heavily-wooded terrain with a poor road network to reach the Ruhr-Frankfurt autobahn. In the central sector near Remagen, where steep cliffs overlook the river, the terrain was deemed too prohibitive to be considered a viable crossing option.

During World War I, First Quartermaster-General Erich Ludendorff of the German General Staff advocated for the building of a railroad bridge at Remagen to facilitate the movement of supplies and reinforcements to the Western Front. Construction of the bridge, which would connect Remagen on the west bank with Erpel on the east, began in 1916 and was concluded in 1919. Four stone piers supported three metal spans totaling 1,069 feet—earth access ramps on



American soldiers rush to cross the captured Ludendorff railroad bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen, Germany, captured largely intact, by Combat Command B from the 9th Armored Division. The German officers in charge of defending, then destroying, the bridge at Remagen were court martialed and shot.

each bank extended the overall length of the Ludendorff Bridge to 1,300 feet.

The bridge carried two sets of railroad tracks with catwalks on either side. Wooden planking could be placed over one set of tracks to allow vehicular traffic when needed. From the east, the tracks onto the bridge ran from a tunnel cut through the Erpeler Ley ridge, looming 600 feet above the river. Castle-like stone towers with embrasures for machine guns, two on each end, guarded the approaches to the bridge.

Like other Rhine bridges, the Ludendorff Bridge was prepared for demolition. Zinc-lined boxes with explosive charges were emplaced strategically to blow up the bridge and drop it into the river. The electrical cable for the demolition fuse was encased in steel metal pipes, and the terminal for the ignition switch was located just inside the entrance to the Erpeler Ley tunnel. A hand-activated primer cord provided a backup in case the electrical means of ignition failed. A separate explosive charge with a dedicated ignition switch was placed under the western bridge access ramp. Engineers periodically tested ignition circuits to make sure they functioned properly.

After an American bomb struck the Mulheim Bridge in Cologne on October 15, 1944, setting off its demolition charges and destroying the bridge, German dictator Adolf Hitler ordered all bridge demolition charges removed to prevent further such incidents. The charges were to be replaced when the Allies were within five miles of a bridge and even then a bridge could be destroyed only by a written order from the commanding officer of the defensive sector. Needing scapegoats, Hitler ordered the officers "responsible" for the loss of the Mulheim Bridge court-martialed. As a result, officers in charge of other bridges were anxious about the consequences of blowing them too soon or letting them fall into enemy hands.

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Initially, the Remagen sector fell within the area of responsibility of the Wehrkreis XII Nord (War District 12 North). However, as fighting drew closer, responsibility passed to a field command, in this case, Field Marshal Walter Model's Army Group B. On March 1, Model appointed Maj. Gen. Walter Botsch, commander of the shattered 18. Volksgrenadier Division, to oversee defenses of bridges in the Bonn-Remagen sector.

Upon inspecting the Ludendorff Bridge, Botsch found its defenses woefully inadequate and command structure jumbled. While Captain Willie Bratge, a hardened combat veteran with two Iron Crosses, was in nominal command of the Remagen defensive area, collocated units with their own chains of command were only required to cooperate with him. The only unit directly under Bratge's command was his own convalescent company of 36 men unfit for front-line duty.

Engineer Captain Karl Freisenhahn, an easy-going fifty-year-old WWI veteran commanding a company of 120 older reservists, was responsible for maintaining and preparing the bridge for demolition. The two 20mm anti-aircraft flak batteries deployed on top of the Erpler Ley belonged to the Luftwaffe and were not subordinate to either Bratge or Friesenhahn. There was also a hodgepodge of local Volkssturm and Hitler Youth, the National Labor Service, and some service support detachments, all of dubious combat value and with their own chains of command.

Neither Bratge nor Friesenhahn had dedicated transport or radios, relying on one military and one civilian telephone line for communications. However, neither line was wholly reliable and suffered frequent service interruptions and delays.

Botsch immediately requested at least one infantry regiment and additional anti-aircraft assets to bolster the defenses of the Ludendorff Bridge. He was promised a heavy anti-aircraft battalion which never arrived.

During the night of March 5-6, Maj. Gen. John Millikin, commander of the U.S. III Corps from the First Army, received the mission to advance in the sector from Bonn to Bad Neuenahr-Ahweiler on the Ahr River, the Rhine's western tributary. Milliken was to clear the west bank of the Rhine and await a link up with Patton's Third Army. Remagen fell within the area of operations of Maj. Gen. John Leonard's 9th Armored Division.

During the night of March 6-7, as Leonard's 9th Armored Division was closing on Remagen, Botsch was reassigned to command the LIII Armeekorps. At 1 a.m. on March 7, General Otto Hitzfeld, commander of the LXII Armeekorps, received orders assigning him the responsibility for defending Remagen. Botsch's departure to his new command was so sudden he did not have an opportunity to brief Hitzfeld. Defensive lines of Hitzfeld's corps had been penetrated in multiple locations by the fast-moving American formations and Brig. Gen. William Hoge's Combat Command B from the 9th Armored Division was already closer to Remagen than Hitzfeld's headquarters.

Having no knowledge of the situation at Remagen, Hitzeld dispatched his adjutant Major Hans Scheller at 1:30 a.m. to take charge of the Ludendorff Bridge's defenses, prepare it for demolition, and destroy the bridge, if needed, at Scheller's discretion.

Scheller set off in a staff car, accompanied by a radio truck. In the darkness, detouring around advancing American units, Scheller's small column became separated. Unable to get through, the radio truck turned back to Hitzfeld's headquarters, denying Scheller communications with his superior.

On the morning of March 7, Hoge organized his command into two columns. The southern column was to secure crossings over the Ahr River. The northern column under Lt. Col. Leonard Engeman, composed of elements from the 14th Tank Battalion, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion,

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters

ABOVE: Brigadier General William M. Hoge, an engineer soldier, was in charge of Combat Command B, 9th Armored Division, when its leading elements discovered the Ludendorff rail bridge still standing at Remagen. Contrary to orders, Hoge ordered the capture of the span. TOP: The Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, Germany, before the intense fighting began for the last remaining bridge over the Rhine River. OPPOSITE: Crews of the 14th Tank Battalion, 9th Armored Division, await with their new M-26A3 Pershing tanks for the word to advance in early March. Elements of the unit commanded by 2nd Lt. John Grimbal were among the first to arrive at the Ludendorff Bridge with four of the new heavy tanks.

and 9th Armored Engineer Battalion, received orders to take Remagen. While Engeman's specific orders did not call for capturing the Ludendorff Bridge, he was to attempt to "grab it" if the bridge was still standing. Engeman's departure in a drizzling rain was delayed until 10 a.m. while combat engineers cleared the streets of Meckenheim of rubble from the previous day's fighting.

Major Scheller arrived at the bridge at 11:15 a.m. No sooner had Scheller informed Bratge he was taking over command at the bridge when sounds of rifle and machine gun fire came from the woods north of Remagen. He ordered the bridge readied for demolition as the retreating Germans continued moving east over the bridge. As Friesenhahn's engineers made the final preparations, Luftwaffe Lieutenant Karl Peters arrived with a battery of secret new Flakwerfer 44 Föhngeräte multiple rocket launchers. He requested Scheller to delay the bridge's destruction a little longer to allow more German units to escape.

Karin Loef, a resident of Erpel, watched the exhausted and dejected German soldiers pour across the bridge. "I could not help comparing it to Napoleon's retreat," she remembered, "The older ones could hardly march on; their eyes were cast down onto the ground, they seemed to simply stumble on without any hope."

Around the same time, additional explosives requested by Friesenhanhn arrived by truck. To his disappointment, instead of the 600 kilograms he asked for, only 300 arrived. Even then, the new explosive was Donarit, a weaker industrial grade composed of 70 percent ammonium nitrate, 25 percent trinitrotoluene (TNT), and five percent nitroglycerine.

At 1 p.m., Engeman's column emerged from the woods on the cliffs overlooking the Rhine north of Remagen, a mile away from the Ludendorff Bridge. Engeman could clearly see a lot of activity around the bridge, with German soldiers and military vehicles intermixed with civilians moving across.

Continuing the advance, Engeman sent 2nd Lt. Karl Timmermann's dismounted A Company, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, down to Remagen at 1:50 p.m., followed thirty minutes later by 2nd Lt. John Grimball's platoon of new heavy T26 Pershing tanks from the 14th Tank Battalion. March 7 was Timmermann's first day in command of the A Company, the previous commander having been hit the day before during the fight for Meckenheim. Besides Timmermann, there were two other officers in the company, 2nd LTs Burrows and David Gardner, the 2nd and antitank platoon leaders. Staff Sergeants Michael

Chinchar and Joseph DeLisio, for lack of officers, commanded the 1st and 3rd Platoons.

Scheller ordered his men to the east bank of the Rhine at the Americans' approach, leaving only Bratge's company to defend Remagen. The explosives firing circuit was tested and found operational and German traffic going both ways was halted.

Grimball's tanks quickly overtook Timmermann's men advancing on foot and raced through the town toward the bridge. The A Company followed Remagen's main road, encountering only minor resistance from the few German soldiers still in town and ineffectual fire from the 20mm flak guns from the top of the Erpeler Ley. Captain Bratge's 36-man company melted away, with only Bratge and several men escaping to the Erpel side.

At 3:15 p.m., as the American tanks reached the western end of the Ludendorff Bridge, Scheller gave the command to detonate the demolition charge under the west approach ramp. Sending a fountain of debris in the air, the resulting explosion created a 30-foot trench in the earthen ramp, sufficient to halt the tanks but also providing good shelter for Timmermann's men.

As Grimball's tanks and Timmermann's infantry began exchanging fire with the Germans on the east bank, news began circulating that a captured German soldier reported that the Ludendorff Bridge was going to be blown up at 4 p.m. This was highly unlikely since the bridge's demolition was solely based on Scheller's judgment and not on a schedule. Nonetheless, the rumor reached Hoge, who immediately ordered Engeman to take the bridge.

Engeman passed the word down to Major Deevers, commander of the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, who ordered Timmermann to take his company across the bridge. To give them cover, American mortars began firing white phosphorus rounds at the German side of the bridge while the tanks engaged the Germans in their defensive positions.

Around 3:30 p.m., with American shells blanketing the area between the east end of the bridge and the tunnel, Scheller ordered Friesenhahn to blow the bridge. From his position just inside the tunnel, Friesenhahn personally triggered the ignition switch, but nothing happened. He then called for volunteers to set off the secondary charge by hand. Corporal Anton Faust ran out of the tunnel, dashed the 100 yards under fire to the east end of the bridge, and set off the charge by hand.

The bridge seemed to jump into the air, but when the dust settled, the bridge was still standing. Timmermann's men, who were about to enter the bridge, dove for cover. When Timmermann gave orders to continue, the men hesitated. It took great effort to get them to enter the bridge they expected to collapse at any moment.

Staff Sergeant Joseph DeLisio's 3rd Platoon led the way. Directly behind the 3rd Platoon came three combat engineers from the 9th Armored Engineer Battalion, First Lieutenant Hugh Mott, Staff Sergeant John Reynolds, and Sergeant Eugene Dorland. As DeLisio's men rushed from girder to girder, the engineers began locating explosive charges, cutting the wires, and tossing the charges into the water.

German soldiers on a half-sunken barge

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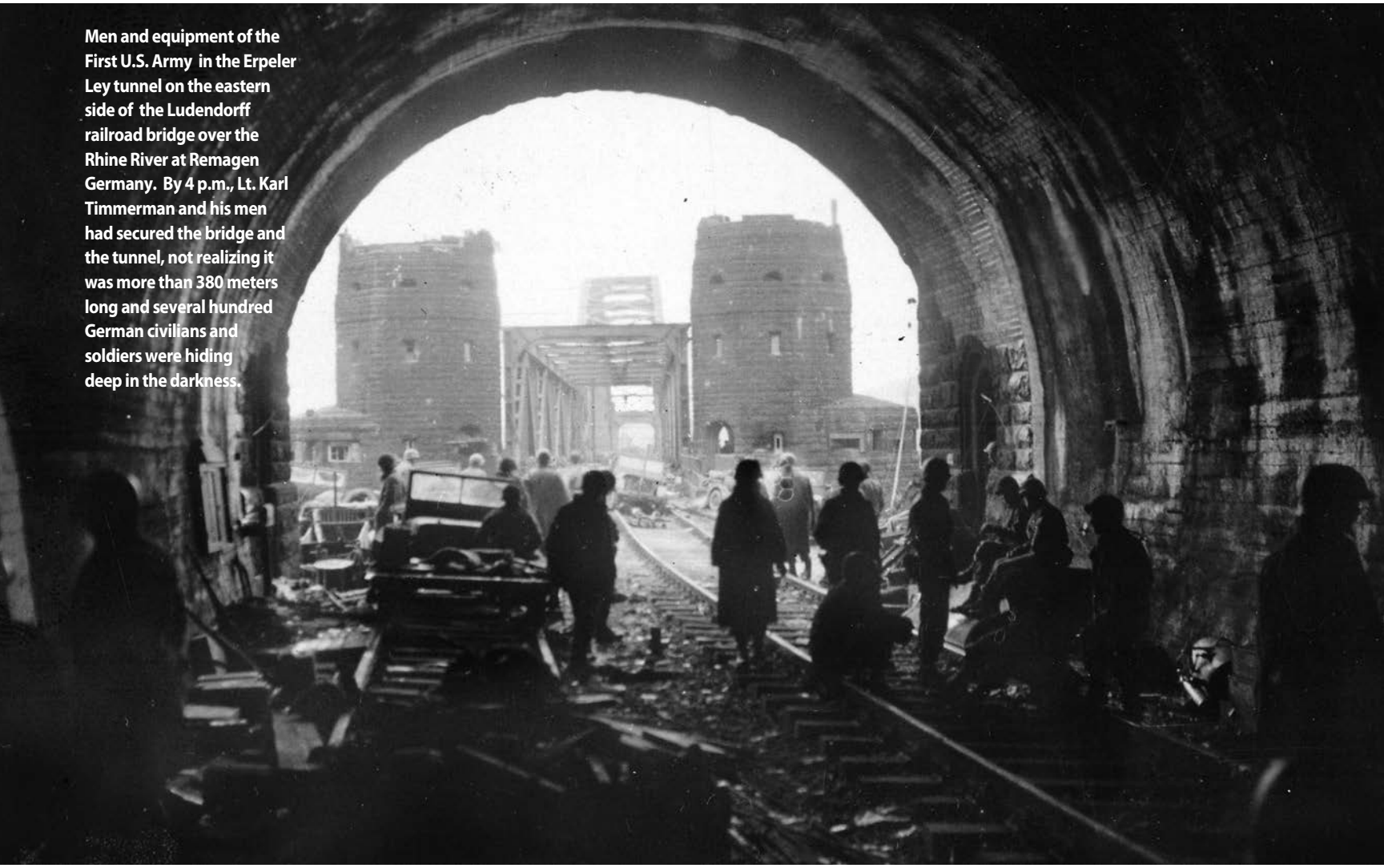

Men and equipment of the First U.S. Army in the Erpeler Ley tunnel on the eastern side of the Ludendorff railroad bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen Germany. By 4 p.m., Lt. Karl Timmerman and his men had secured the bridge and the tunnel, not realizing it was more than 380 meters long and several hundred German civilians and soldiers were hiding deep in the darkness.

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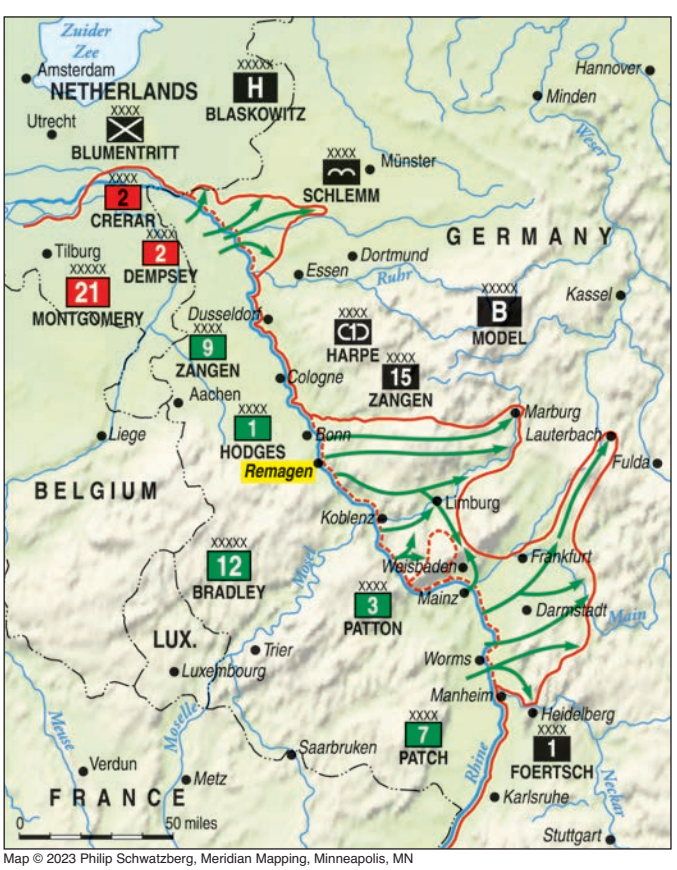

Map © 2023 Philip Schwatzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

approximately 200 meters from the bridge opened fire on Timmermann's men but were quickly silenced by Pershing tanks.

As G.I.s got closer to the east end of the bridge, machine gun fire erupted from one of the towers ahead of them. The flak batteries on top of the Erpeler Lay also opened fire, but most anti-aircraft guns could not depress low enough to be effective.

DeLisio charged into one of the towers, where he found several German soldiers attempting to clear a jammed machine gun. After DeLisio fired several shots, the Germans surrendered. Sergeant Chinchar and privates Samele and Massie entered the second tower, and the German soldiers there also surrendered.

Sergeant Alexander Drabik, a squad leader in the 3rd Platoon, was the first American soldier across the Rhine. "We ran down the middle of the bridge, shouting as we went. I didn't stop because I knew that if I kept moving, they couldn't hit me. My men were in squad column, and not one of them was hit. We took cover in some bomb craters. Then we just sat and waited for others to come. That's the way it was," Drabik later recalled. Timmermann was the tenth man across and the first American officer to step onto the east bank of the Rhine.

ABOVE: Utilizing the broad-front strategy, the Allied 12th and 21st Army Groups approached the Rhine in the early spring of 1945. Ninth Armored crossed the Rhine at Remagen on March 7, while elements of Patton's Third Army crossed the night of March 22/23, and elements of Montgomery's 21st Army Group the following day. TOP: German POWs file across to the western end of the Ludendorff Bridge shortly after capture. German soldiers and civilians had been hiding deep in the Erpeler Ley railroad tunnel for several hours before surrendering.

By 3:50 p.m., all of Timmermann's company was across the bridge. Despite a flurry of fire directed at them, not one of the G.I.s was hit crossing the bridge. While Timmermann deployed his three platoons around the east end of the bridge, Lieutenant Mott and his two sergeants methodically continued searching for additional demolition charges.

Timmermann sent Sgt. DeLisio with four soldiers to check out the tunnel. Several shots rang out from the tunnel and after DeLisio and his men pumped several shots in return, several German soldiers ran out with their hands up. DeLisio advanced a few meters into the tunnel, destroyed the ignition switch box, and returned to Timmermann to report that the tunnel was clear. He did not see several hundred German civilians and soldiers further down the tunnel hunkering down in the darkness.

Timmermann was painfully aware his lone company was in a dangerous position. There was still sporadic fire coming from the top of Erpeler Ley. Timmermann sent Lieutenant Burrows with his 2nd Platoon to clear the top of the cliff. The slope was extremely steep, and several G.I.s fell and were seriously injured. Several more were

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U.S. forces cross the Ludendorff railroad bridge at Remagen on March 8, 1945. Combat engineers had cleared debris from the German's failed effort to blow the bridge the day before and installed wooden decking. Until it finally collapsed on March 17, the Germans attacked the bridge with infantry and armor, howitzers, mortars, floating mines, mined boats, a railroad gun, and more than 300 aircraft.

wounded by German fire. "Taking Remagen and crossing the bridge was a breeze compared to climbing that hill," Lieutenant Burrowed later recalled. After clearing the top of the Erpeler Ley, Lieutenant Burrows pushed his platoon to the spot overlooking the east end of the tunnel and halted there.

At 4:15 p.m., as Engeman was pushing the other two companies from the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion across the bridge, a liaison officer from the 9th Armored Division's headquarters reached Hoge. His orders, dated 10:50 a.m., were to continue south along the Rhine's west bank to "seize or, if necessary, construct at least one bridge over the Ahr River in the Combat Command B zone and continue to advance approximately five kilometers south of the Ahr; halt there and wait for further orders."

On his initiative, Hoge continued moving the 27th Armored Infantry Battalion across until he could confirm his orders. At 4:50 p.m., Hoge met Leonard at Birresdorft, five miles west of Remagen. Apprised of the new development, Leonard directed Hoge to secure the bridgehead. The closest units, the 52nd Armored Infantry Battalion, the 1st Battalion from the 310th Infantry Regiment, one tank destroyer company, a reconnaissance troop, and an engineer platoon, were redirected to the Ludendorff Bridge.

While Hoge was conferring with Leonard, German officers bottled up inside the Erpeler Ley tunnel were getting desperate. Out of contact with higher headquarters, Major Scheller grabbed a bicycle and rode off to find the nearest German unit with a radio. Discovering Scheller gone, Bratge sent a motorcycle messenger for help. However, fire by American soldiers from above the eastern end of the tunnel cut Bratge's messenger down before he got away.

By 5:30 p.m., with the Americans controlling both ends of the tunnel and realizing the hopeless situation, Bratge and Friesenhahn ordered their men to lay down their weapons. Intermingled with civilians, German soldiers began leaving the tunnel with their arms up. Among German equipment captured by Americans at the east end of the bridge was one Flakwerfer 44 Föhngeräte multiple rocket launcher from Lieutenant Karl Peters' battery.

Without heavy weapons, the American bridgehead at the east end of the bridge was in a precarious position. A plow-equipped tank from the 14th Tank Battalion bulldozed the crater in the western approach ramp while the combat engineer platoon placed additional planking over the bridge's roadway. After midnight, in heavy rain, a tank company and one of the tank destroyers made it across before another tank destroyer slipped off the roadway, halting the traffic for several hours. The one-way traffic resumed at 5:30 a.m. on March 8 once the disabled vehicle was winched out.

The word about the bridge capture quickly went up the chain. "Shove everything you can across it, Courtney, and button the bridgehead tightly," Bradley ordered Hodges upon receiving

Lt. Karl Timmermann was the first U.S. Army officer over the Rhine River at Remagen.

When Lt. Karl Timmermann arrived at the bluffs overlooking Remagen, he had come almost a full circle to his birthplace of Frankfurt, Germany, some 140 miles away.

Karl's grandfather, Arnold Timmermann, immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1871, settling in Nebraska and marrying another German immigrant, Anna Wortman. Arnold's second son and Karl's father, John Henry Timmermann, registered for the World War I draft in 1917 but was not inducted. He enlisted in April 1919 after the war and reported for duty to Fort Logan, Colorado. Henry was shipped to Germany, where he was assigned to the 8th Infantry Regiment, part of the American Army of Occupation.

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Henry went Absent Without Leave while on occupation duty. During his time away from his unit, he fell in love with a German girl Maria Weisbecker. Henry and Maria married and settled near Frankfurt, where Karl was born on June 19, 1922. When Karl was 18 months old, Henry returned to the United States with his family, settling in West Point, Nebraska. Henry eventually turned himself in to the U.S. Army in 1928. After a short stint in the stockade, Henry received the "Other than Honorable" discharge.

Karl Timmermann developed an interest in military and military history from an early age, joining the Citizens Military Training Corps while in high school. According to his sister Mary, Karl felt that "my dad disgraced the Timmermann name, but I'm going to make it right again."

Karl enlisted in the Army in July 1940 and, after completing infantry officer candidate school, was commissioned a second lieutenant on February 16, 1943. As part of the 9th Armored Division, Karl fought at St. Vith, receiving a shrapnel wound in the arm.

Timmermann was discharged from the Army in December 1945. Returning to Nebraska, he worked for a time as a salesman. Karl missed the Army, but officer billets were limited, and he enlisted as a sergeant in October 1947. In December 1948, Timmermann was commissioned as first lieutenant and assigned to the 7th Infantry Division.

In September 1950, Lt. Timmermann participated in the Inchon Landing in Korea and subsequent fighting. After several months of combat, while suffering excruciating abdominal pain, Timmermann sought medical help. He was diagnosed with testicular cancer and sent back to the United States for treatment at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital near Denver, Colorado. The surgery to remove the tumor was unsuccessful, and Timmermann died on October 21, 1951, at the age of 29. He was buried with full military honors at Fort Logan National Cemetery in Colorado, at the same installation where his father, Henry, was inducted into the Army 32 years earlier.

Karl's wife LaVera recalled, "He detested cancer because of the fact that it was killing him and depriving him of a soldierly duty… He made me promise to polish up his silver stripe (bar), his buttons, and his medals for the burial. He wanted every battle ribbon in the proper place on his chest. He wanted to be as soldierly as possible.

the news. In turn, Bradley reached out to Eisenhower. "Hold on to it, Brad," Eisenhower responded, "Get across with everything you need —but make certain you hold that bridgehead."

All attention now shifted to the Ludendorff Bridge. Hodges redirected Millikin's 9th and 78th Infantry Divisions to Remagen, as well as III Corps' and First Army's artillery, air defense, and engineering assets.

Discovering the loss of the Ludendorf Bridge, Major August Kraft, commander of the 3rd Battalion from Landes Pioneer Regiment 12, and regimental commander Major Herbert Strobel organized a scratch force of some 100 engineers and air-defense gunners. Bringing along explosives, Strobel's force began moving toward the bridge shortly after midnight. They ran into the forward pickets of the 14th Tank Battalion and 1st/310th Infantry Regiment. Strobel's force was dispersed in a series of confused clashes in the dark, and the majority was taken prisoner. By 7 a.m. on March 8, the dismounted 52nd Armored Infantry Battalion was also on the east bank and took over the northern sector of the bridgehead at Erpel. Three field artillery and one air-defense artillery battalions took up positions on the west bank of the Rhine.

On the morning of March 8, Model arrived in Bonn to receive the news about the calamity at Remagen. He ordered General Fritz Bayerlein, commander of the elite Panzer Lehr Division, to organize a task force consisting of remnants of his own division together with the 9th Panzer Division, the 106th Panzer Brigade, and the 11th Panzer Division. The four once-formidable formations now barely numbered sixty tanks and 12,000 men, critically short on fuel and ammunition. Bayerlein wanted to gather the four units into one powerful fist, but Model ordered him to commit the tank formations as soon as they became available. The 11th Panzer Division was so short on fuel that it could not get underway until March 11.

Finding out about the loss of the Ludendorff Bridge and the American breakthrough to the east bank of the Rhine, Hitler flew into a rage. He immediately dismissed Model and replaced him with Field Marshal Albert Kesselring. However, Kesselring kept Model in operational command of Army Group B.

Majors Scheller, Kraft, Strobel, Captain Friesenhahn, and Lieutenant Peters were arrested and court-martialed. Captain Bratge was tried in absentia. Majors Scheller, Kraft, and Strobel were found guilty of dereliction of duty and Lt. Peters of allowing one of his secret rocket launchers to fall into enemy hands. The four unfortunate officers were promptly shot. Bratge was also found guilty, but his conviction was moot since he was an American POW. Friesenhahm, also in Amer-

ABOVE: American engineers attempted to shore up the Ludendorff bridge while pushing across as many troops as possible. Attacks by German aircraft and V-2 rockets, in addition to the damage from the initial demolition attempt, finally caused the bridge to collapse on March 17. Six soldiers from the 276th Engineer Combat Battalion died; 11 were missing and presumed drowned; 60 were injured, and three later succumbed to their injuries. OPPOSITE: A U.S. antiaircraft battery guards a pontoon bridge built by the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB). When weather cleared the Germans sent waves of aircraft to bomb the bridge, including Stukas and the jet-powered Ar-234, and the Me-262. Twenty-six aircraft were shot down over the course of two days, with more damaged.

ican hands, was absolved of any guilt.

While the weak German Volkssturm and rear echelon units established a defensive perimeter around the bridgehead, German artillery began the bombardment of the bridge. The hilly terrain provided good observation points for German artillery observers, and during the next two days, multiple direct hits were scored on the bridge.

Starting late on March 8, the Germans began launching ground counterattacks. Rain and low clouds grounded fighter-bombers, but the German air force launched a raid with 10 Ju-88 Stukas against the bridge, eight of which were shot down. The increasing flow of American reinforcements created bottlenecks and traffic jams at Remagen, resulting in heavy casualties from German artillery. The open space between Remagen and the west end of the bridge became known as the Dead Man's Corner.

By the end of the day, over 8,000 American troops had crossed the Ludendorff Bridge. While the infantry steadily and cautiously expanded the bridgehead in rugged terrain on the east bank, American engineering assets began arriving in force at Remagen.

The American commanders expected the damaged Ludendorff Bridge to collapse at any time. On the morning of March 9, the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB) began constructing a treadway bridge roughly 400 meters downstream from the Ludendorff Bridge. Combat engineers worked in full view of German artillery observers on the east bank, and German shells began falling on the equipment assembly and bridge construction site almost immediately. The forward end of the treadway bridge where the floating sections were attached was called the Suicide Point. The name was justified when around 1 p.m., a German round scored a direct hit on the Suicide Point, killing one man and wounding five more.

Despite continuous German fire, the engineers assembled 300 feet of the floating bridge by the time darkness fell, and pontoon boats with outboard motors began ferrying troops to the eastern bank.

On the morning of March 10, the 276th ECB from the III Corps relieved the exhausted 9th Armored Engineer Battalion. Before leaving, the men of the 9th erected a sign, "Cross the Rhine With Dry Feet, Courtesy of the 9th Armored Division."

The mission of the 276th ECB was to repair damages to the bridge's western approach ramp and make the bridge passable for vehicular traffic. "[The] single charge completely destroyed a critical panel joint in the upstream truss, almost directly over the right river pier… forcing the truss 4 inches out of alignment," noted Lt. Col. Clayton Rust, commander of the 276th ECB, "Restoration of the bridge to full strength was not intended at the time; the immediate goal was to provide only sufficient strength to support the dead load and Class 70 one-way traffic. Full repairs were to be made later when more adequate equipment and skills could be mobilized." A detachment from the 1058th Engineer Port Construction and Repair Group assisted the 276th ECB with specialized equipment.

Another engineer battalion placed three lines of net and log booms upstream to prevent the Germans from floating down mines and boats loaded with explosives. The nets were also to pre-

vent underwater attacks by German frogmen after such an attempt was made in September 1944 when the Germans tried to blow up two bridges at Nijmegen on the Waal River. The Germans blew up one bridge in that attempt while the 12-man team was killed or captured.

As more and more American units crossed the Rhine, the bridgehead slowly expanded in rugged terrain against stiffening German resistance and local counterattacks involving tanks and self-propelled guns. The air was thick with incoming and outgoing artillery. However, German artillery fire began to slacken as the expanding American bridgehead pushed German artillery positions farther east, and a German artillery observer with a radio was captured in Remagen.

On March 12, two treadway and two pontoon bridges were fully operational. With multiple ferries shuttling men, equipment, and vehicles to the eastern bank, the Ludendorff Bridge was closed for repairs. It is unknown why the explosive charges failed to destroy the bridge on March 7. The electrical circuit was tested shortly before the American arrival. It is possible that the shelling from T26 Pershing tanks, tank destroyers, and mortars cut one of the pipes containing the fuse.

With the weather slightly improving, between March 12 and 13, waves of German aircraft totaling 91 machines conducted 58 raids against the thickening American air defense umbrella. Twenty-six German planes were shot down, with eight more limping away trailing smoke. The attacks on March 13 included Ar-234 jet bombers, accompanied by Me-262 jet fighters from III.Kampfgeschwader 76. The improved weather also allowed American P-38s to fly continuous air cover of the bridge.

Four tanks equipped with searchlights called Canal Defense Lights took up positions on both sides of the Rhine to scan and illuminate the river. At the same time, three LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) began patrolling upriver and dropping depth charges at intervals to interdict German midget submarines and combat swimmers.

At 9:45 a.m. on March 17, the first German V2 rocket hit near Remagen. The impact of the 46-ft. long supersonic missile carrying a 2,200-pound warhead shook the ground. A total of 11 rockets from launch sites near Hellendoorn in the Netherlands, redirected from being fired at Antwerp in Belgium, continued landing at regular intervals through the day until 9:45 p.m.

Being area-effect weapons, most of the V2 rockets landed within several miles of the Ludendorff Bridge, destroying several farms and killing civilians and farm animals. One rocket landed on the west side of Remagen, striking a two-story inn housing the command post of B Company, 284th ECB, killing three men and wounding 31 others.

Around 3 p.m. on March 17, engineers working on the bridge heard sharp cracks of rivets breaking. The arch of the Ludendorff Bridge collapsed, taking the adjoining bridge spans and engineers working on it into the river with it.

"I was out on the bridge but only at the [west] edge. When it came down, the noise and the sight of the falling soldiers was very frightening. I was afraid that the rest of the bridge would go, and all of us would meet the same end," remembered Private John Morgado from the 276th ECB, "I looked down to see the men, several of whom I knew, trying to keep their heads above the water, but because they had on heavy gear and the river was flowing so swiftly they couldn't."

Downstream, the men from the 291st ECB rushed onto their treadway bridge to intercept the debris pieces and guide them between the floats. Many engineers jumped into the water to rescue the injured men being swept downstream. They saved 18 survivors.

Six soldiers from the 276th ECB died; 11 were missing and presumed drowned; 60 were injured, and three later succumbed to their injuries. Lt. Col. Rust, who fell into the water but made it out on his own, described the event as the "complete decimation of the unit command." The battal-

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Both: National Archives and Records Administration

Portrait of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, painted c. 1618 by Peter Paul Rubens. OPPOSITE: A period woodcut depicts Swiss pikemen stopping mounted cavalry during the Burgundian wars.

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

A contest of cavalry versus pikeman, the battle of Grandson crushed the dreams of empire for 'Charles the Bold,' Duke of Burgundy.

By Eric Niderost

THE BATTLE OF GRANDSON

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

On Friday, September 28, 1473, Charles, Duke of Burgundy arrived at Trier to meet with the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III. Trier, nestled along the banks of the beautiful Moselle River, had been founded by the Romans, and as the oldest city in Germany had seen much in its 1,400-year history. Though the city's merchants and craftsmen were used to visiting dignitaries, they thronged the streets eager to witness the pomp and pageantry of the Duke's arrival. Charles was something of a legend in his own time, a man whose wealth and power equaled, if not surpassed, Europe's greatest potentates.

The Emperor and the Duke met just outside the city, but before they made their triumphal entry through the main gate there were a few last-minute items to iron out. There was the matter of who would take precedence in the procession. Weak and often vacillating, Frederick probably feared the mighty duke, but hid his qualms behind a façade of imperial dignity. The Emperor felt he should take the lead, and Duke Charles follow. After all, in feudal terms, Charles was his vassal.

The two men argued for a half an hour but, predictably, Charles had his way: the pair would ride in side by side. In a world where hierarchy was all, and symbolism often reflected political realities, riding with the emperor implied that Charles was Frederick's equal. It was a point that was not lost to the thousands who turned out to witness the spectacle.

The procession featured armored soldiers whose glistening breastplates were covered in cloth of gold, and trumpeters in white and blue carried silvered instruments. But the most impressive of all were the heralds of the various states that acknowledged Charles as sovereign. Their coats bore the armorial designs of each duchy, county, or territory in his vast realm, a blaze of color and intricately embroidered design. But it was the Burgundian flag that put it all into perspective—emblazoned with the diagonal stripes of old Burgundy, the fleur de lys of France, the red lions of Brabant and Limberg, and the black lion of Flanders.

Charles himself dazzled his onlookers with

Eon Images

armor so polished it shone like the sun. Over the armor was a mantle embroidered with diamonds and other precious stones that was rumored to be worth 200,000 gold crowns. To top it off, literally and figuratively, his hat was a velvet cap ornamented with a diamond so large no one could even speculate as to its value.

It seemed as if Charles wanted to overwhelm the Emperor with displays of wealth and power. Indeed, as the weeks went by a steady procession of embassies—from the various Italian and German states, England, and even far-off Hungary—came to Trier to pay court to Charles, not Frederick. But the thing Charles coveted most was to be crowned king of Burgundy, something only the emperor could grant.

Charles belonged to the House of Valois-Burgundy, a branch of the royal Valois dynasty that currently ruled France. Philip the Bold, Charles's great-grandfather, had been the first Duke of Burgundy, a title given to him by his father, King John of France. Originally Burgundy was just a moderately large province in northeastern France, and during Philip's tenure relations with France were good. But under the next two dukes, John the Fearless and Philip the Good, Burgundy grew in wealth and power, and family ties took a back seat to political rivalry and growing ambition.

Burgundian possessions continued to grow, through inheritance, marriage, conquest, or even purchase. Burgundy eventually controlled Flanders and most of the low countries, much of which is Belgium and the Netherlands today. In the late middle ages the low countries were economic powerhouses, dynamic centers of trade and nascent capitalism. Above all, the wool trade made Flemish cities rich, with textile workers producing cloth that was a much sought-after commodity.

But ducal possessions were scattered, with the original Duchy of Burgundy far from the dynamic wool centers in Flanders. By the time Charles had come to power, it was his overriding ambition not just to be king, but king of a contiguous state strategically located between France and the Germanic Holy Roman Empire. His father Philip the Good had been a patron of the arts, commissioning and encouraging artists to produce works that were the envy of Europe. The Dukes of Burgundy were kings in all but name; Charles wanted a title commensurate with his power and wealth.

Perhaps a bit cowed by his powerful guest, Frederick agreed in principle that Charles should be king. It was said that royal regalia had been prepared for Charles's elevation, and a date had been set. But at the last minute, Emperor Frederick departed Trier without even saying farewell to his illustrious guest. Frederick's departure put the idea of Charles' coronation on hold. Angered by the Emperor's flight, Charles comforted himself with the notion that this was only a temporary setback.

Some of Burgundy's neighbors viewed Charles's ambitions with alarm. One of these was the *Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaff* (Swiss Confederation). The Confederation was something of an anomaly in the 15th century, a group of proudly independent free states without a feudal lord demanding loyalty and tribute. The Swiss were not yet a nation in the modern sense, but rather a group of independent cities and Cantons that banded together for mutual support and defense.

The alliance was started in 1291 with the three so-called forest cantons—Uri, Unterwalden, and Schwyz on the shores of Lake Lucerne. More states, including Glarus, Zug, Zurich, Lucerne and Bern had been added by the 15th century. The Swiss knew Charles had designs on the neighboring Dutchies of Lorraine and Savoy, even though their current rulers were nominal friends of Burgundy. Swiss merchants also feared Charles would deliberately block or otherwise interfere with their trade routes.

Sooner or later, the Swiss feared, their lands were bound to be coveted by the rapacious Duke. When would Charles be satisfied with his territorial acquisitions? For their own protection the Swiss Confederation formed an anti-Burgundian alliance that included Rene II, the embattled Duke of Lorraine, Sigismund of the Hapsburg dynasty, and eventually King Louis XI of France.

Truly, politics did make strange bedfellows,

especially when it came to Sigismund and the Swiss. The Hapsburgs were a traditional enemy of the Swiss, an enmity that dated back to the "forest cantons" period when the former tried to impose its will on the stubborn mountaineers. But when Sigismund was short of cash he pawned one of his holdings, Alsace, for 50,000 florins, with the option—he thought—of buying them back.

But when Sigismund, his wealth restored, tried to redeem Alsace, Charles refused. As far as the Duke of Burgundy was concerned, Alsace was his, in perpetuity. Charles kept the province—but gained a new enemy in the Hapsburg prince. Their coalition forming, the Swiss formally declared war on Burgundy in October, 1475 by sending a herald to the Duke. The herald announced that "We declare to your most serene highness, and to all of your people, on behalf of ourselves and our friends, an honorable and open war."

This war was going to be a clash of military titans. Charles realized that feudal levies were inefficient and mercenaries were costly and slow to muster. The Duke still used both—he had little choice—but had gradually started to think of raising a standing army. In 1467, after a campaign against Liege, Charles asked his captains if any of their men would like to extend their military services beyond the usual period. Basically he needed men to garrison the Liege area, but the precedent was established, and grew over time.

Charles devoted himself to the minutiae of military affairs, and even his worst enemies admitted he had a flair for organization. The Duke issued a series of ordonnances that outlined what he expected in terms of discipline, weaponry, clothing, and general administration. The "lance" was the basic administrative unit, and referred not to an individual knight or man at arms, but to a grouping that included no less than three mounted archers, a swordsman "coustillier" armed with a javelin and sword, and even a page.

The man at arms need not be a knight, but usually came from a family —son of a merchant, for example—that had the means to buy expensive armor. These groupings were relics of the old feudal order, for administrative purposes, and did not fight together as a unit.

The "lance" also included one crossbowman, one pikeman, and a hand-gunner. The latter's weapon was a primitive firearm that was essentially a brass or iron tube. It was clumsy to handle, in part because the gunpowder was not encased in cartridges, a technique which came later in the period. The guns didn't have a true stock, but were set on a long wooden stave that was held under the arm as the gunner applied a burning match to the vent.

The war opened with a Swiss victory over Burgundian and Lorraine forces at Hericourt. Charles was not present at Hericourt, but felt this was a blow to his prestige. Worse was to follow. The Swiss easily routed Jacques of Savoy, Count of Romont in the Savoyard-held provinces of Vaud and Valais. It was a stinging reverse for Charles, especially since the Swiss would block access to Italian mercenaries that the duke used.

He could have fallen back to the low countries, but decided to take the offensive in 1476 while

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ABOVE: The Swiss besieged Charles the Bold's allies at Hericourt, France in November 1474. When Charles sent a force to relieve the siege, the Swiss attacked and defeated the Burgundians over two days, forcing the Hericourt garrison to surrender. OPPOSITE: Troops of Charles the Bold representing his father, Philip, fight the French forces of Louis XI at the Battle of Montlhéry in 1465. Charles was fighting to support his father's royal ambitions.

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Europe was still in the grip of winter. The duke tended to be impulsive, selfishly wanting his own way immediately, regardless of consequences. His nickname was Charles le Temeraire, usually translated as "the Bold," but in French it is closer to "the Rash." Not even the news that his ally, Duke Galeazzo Sforza, had decided not to send Milanese troops against the Swiss would change his mind.

Charles began moving his armies south from Germany, his intention to occupy several key towns and castles along Lake Neuchâtel. Once these positions were secured, they would form a base from which he could launch an invasion of the Swiss Canton of Berne. All of the Swiss Confederation were troublesome irritants to him, but Berne, in particular, was a thorn in his side.

Canton Berne had a pretty good idea of what the Duke might do, as well as his probable routes, so it lost no time in evacuating Yverdon and strengthening the garrison at Grandson. As expected, Duke Charles appeared before Grandson with his army and put the town and its castle under siege.

The city walls were easily breached, and as Burgundians soldiers poured into Grandson, the beleaguered garrison fell back towards the town castle for refuge. The castle boasted thick walls and its battlements bristled with cannon. Grandson Castle was formidable, but Charles boasted the largest, and quite possibly the finest, artillery train in Europe. Burgundian bombards were set up and maintained such a steady fire the castle defenses were pounded into ruins.

On the night of February 23-24, two Swiss messengers were lowered over the walls and successfully passed through the Burgundian siege lines. When they reached safety the tale they told was a harrowing one. The castle's master gunner had been killed, ironically beheaded by a cannonball, and there was no one to replace him. The castle magazine had blown up, reducing stocks of gunpowder, and the subsequent fire did further damage.

Food was running out and the garrison was reduced to eating unground grain. Soon even that would be gone, and sheer starvation would compel them to surrender. A relief force of several ships were assembled and tried to reach the garrison via Lake Neuchâtel, but the effort failed. Burgundian artillery fired on them from the shoreline, and the Duke's superior ships soon forced them to retreat.

But as the news of Grandson spread through the Cantons, the Swiss began mobilizing for a relief army to confront Charles. Swiss troops laid siege to Vaumarcus castle, located further up Lake Neuchâtel, in order to draw the Burgundians away from the Grandson area. But then they received the news that Grandson had surrendered unconditionally with the expectation of quarter. That belief was tragically mistaken, as Charles had determined to execute them all, regardless of age or rank.

Wikimedia Commons

ABOVE: A view of the battle of Grandson, based on drawings by eyewitness Diebold Schilling the Elder. OPPOSITE TOP: The town of Grandson, originally governed by an ally of Charles, had been brutally taken by the Swiss in 1475. Charles besieged the town in February 1476, and had the Swiss garrison executed after they surrendered by hanging, or drowning in nearby Lake Neuchâtel. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The Swiss Army on the left faces the Burgundian Army during the battle of Grandson. Illustration by Diebold Schilling the Elder who witnessed the battle.

The 15th century was a brutal age, where ideals of chivalry and knightly honor were often given lip service, but rarely followed. Charles the Bold was no exception. A few years earlier, when the rebelling city of Dinant had mocked him as a bastard, and implied his mother had loose morals, it was said Charles took revenge by slaughtering the whole population, including women and children. Grandson was no exception, but this atrocity seems to be a deliberate act of terrorism.

The victims were paraded past Charles's tent, then hanged on nearby trees or drowned in Lake Neuchâtel. The grim process took over four hours to accomplish. The killings were supposed to frighten the Swiss, make them submit in terror, but like the Alamo centuries later, it had the opposite effect. The Swiss were outraged, swearing to avenge their slaughtered countrymen.

The Swiss army, some 20,000 strong, marched through the forests of the Jura mountains in search of the Burgundians. The Swiss Confederation had very few cavalrymen, but their infantry was considered the best in Europe. Most were halberdiers and pikemen. In fact, pike formations had dominated the battlefield for the last half of the 15th century. The pike was most effective in massed phalanx formations, similar to the ones associated with the ancient Greeks.

The pikes were generally 14 to 18 feet in length, and it took constant drill and firm discipline to keep the ranks of the prickly "hedgehog" formations tightly packed.

The Swiss marched on, breath misting in the cold mountain air as they sang songs and trudged through snowy alpine meadows. The concept of Swiss nationhood may have been embryonic, but it was there, and would grow in time. They were united in their opposition to Charles, and the feeling of hatred flared anew with the Grandson atrocities.

In the meantime Charles was advancing along Lake Neuchâtel, until forward elements reached a hamlet called Concise, about 4.5 miles from Grandson. There was a temporary halt while the Burgundian Vorhut—the van—started pitching tents and setting up camp just west of Concise. The camp was on a slope that extended through dormant vineyards to a line of woods.

About 100 foraging Swiss soldiers suddenly appeared, and a brief skirmish ensued. Charles, now alerted, formed up his own troops for battle and ordered elements of his infantry up the slopes to engage the Swiss, whose Vorhut had also come up. The skirmishing grew heated, with the Burgundian archers getting the worst of the encounter. The battle of Grandson, March 2, 1476, was about to begin.

More Swiss troops arrived, including the Bernese, Solothurn, and Fribourg contingents, until the Confederation army had around 10,000 effectives at this point; Duke Charles had about 20,000. The Swiss commanders gave the order to halt, but the rank and file would have none of it—"Grandson! Grandson!" was the cry that emerged from hundreds of throats. The soldiers wanted to come to grips with the ruthless enemy who had so brutally killed their brothers.

Bowing to popular pressure, the commanders ordered an advance. A group of about 300 hand gunners and crossbowmen—mainly Bernese, Schwyzer and St. Gallen—were sent out as a new skirmishing "forlorn hope" while the main body formed a *gevierte ordnung*, or squared formation. Ensigns carrying some 30 standards formed the core of the formation, their colorful kaleidoscope

of banners standing out in the chill morning air.

Men carrying halberds, boar spears, and other short-hafted weapons surrounded the standard bearers, and they in turn were surrounded on three sides by eight rows of pikemen—many, but not all, in full armor. Each Swiss soldier was obligated to purchase his own armor, and the poorer men had to do with whatever they could afford, including "hand me downs" and older style odds and ends.

The Swiss phalanx formations were a formidable sight and in the center it was said one of their commanders, Nicklaus von Scharnachtal, with his flowing beard and long tunic, was just as striking. Hauptmann Ulrich Karzy of Schwyz was also notable among the officers. Bernese cannon provided artillery support, though the Burgundian guns far outmatched them in quantity.

The Burgundian army was a polyglot force consisting of Flemish and French men at arms (*gendarmes*), pikemen, Italian crossbowmen, English longbowmen, and German gunners. Most of them fought for pay and few, if any, had any real allegiance to Charles or faith in his cause.

The Burgundian army also presented an impressive display of military might when drawn up in full battle array. Encased in armor, the Burgundian men at arms and their mounts were dazzling in the morning sun. There was a degree of uniformity, too, because their helmets had white and blue plumes, something that Charles insisted each man at arms display.

One of the main Burgundian emblems was the so-called red "ragged staff," a saw-toothed St. Andrew's Cross. Each soldier wore a plain red version of the St. Andrew's Cross, usually in the center of his chest. Though it was a good means of identification—when the concept of uniforms was still in the distant future—Swiss crossbowmen must have found it a convenient target.

But before the battle commenced the whole Swiss army got down on their knees and began to pray, invoking God's help in the coming contest. The Burgundians, watching the curious spectacle from afar could hardly believe their eyes. It was a violent age, but in this period virtually all western Europeans were pious Catholics. Charles himself regularly had his armies shout inspirational battle cries evoking heavenly aid. The Duke himself wrote that before one clash "We gave the cry of "Notre Dame! (Our Lady, Mary, mother of Jesus), and Monseigneur St George!"

But the Swiss were doing something very different—10,000 men on their knees praying to the Almighty. The Burgundian astonishment turned to derision, then laughter. Some Burgundians even thought that the Swiss were surrendering, on their knees begging for mercy.

But once the prayers were over, the Swiss rose as one man and stood silently, waiting for the signal to advance.

The signal was not long in coming, and Burgundian laughter soon ceased as 100 Swiss drums began to beat a throbbing tattoo that stirred the blood and quickened the pace. It was about 10 a.m.—some sources say 11a.m.,—and the battle of Grandson was about to begin. Charles began the fight with a massive barrage from his artillery, all but drowning out Swiss drumming with thunderous roars. The shot largely passed over the "forlorn hope" Swiss vanguard, causing grievous harm whenever they hit a phalanx formation trailing behind.

One projectile crashed into the tightly packed phalanx with such force it killed and horribly wounded 10 men in one section. Yet by some accounts the Burgundian guns were not as effective as they could have been, because of the hilly nature of the ground. In any case, the Swiss

Eugène Burnand Museum at Moudon, Switzerland

ABOVE: Unable to break the Swiss pikemen, and with the arrival of more Swiss troops, Charles tried to pull his army back to more favorable ground. The retrograde movement turned into a confused rout despite Charles' effort to rally his men, and his retainers finally convinced him to withdraw. OPPOSITE: Charles' Burgundian mounted knights, left, charge the swiss pikemen at Grandson. The charge was broken by the Swiss.

artillery—Bernese culverins in this case—flamed in counter-battery and also did some damage.

Impulsive as always, Charles decided the Swiss were softened up enough by his cannon to be finished off by his cavalry. The Duke ordered a cavalry charge, and the armored warriors, lances couched under their arms, spurred their horses into a gallop. Their first target was the "forlorn hope" vanguard of hand-gunners and crossbowmen, who initially held their ground in the face of the surging tide of armor, steel, and horseflesh. Depending on the thickness of the steel and how close the target was, crossbow bolts could pierce armor and this proved the case at Grandson.

The crossbowmen and hand-gunners unleashed a final storm of missiles before falling back to the safety of the phalanx just behind them. Bolts fell on the advancing cavalry like a deadly hail, and when they found their mark horsemen tumbled from the saddle. Horses were also felled, in spite of their protective armor. But the charging mass of cavalry was coming on too fast for another volley; so the gunners and crossbowmen turned around and ran for the safety of the phalanx.

Most did reach the phalanx in time, and once the pike barrier was lowered it was all but impenetrable. Horses reared and plunged, unable or unwilling to breach the prickly barrier. Now protected by the pike wall, the crossbowmen reloaded and fired again and again into the densely packed mass. At such close range the crossbow bolts easily penetrated the armor of horse and rider alike.

One desperate Burgundian spurred his horse forward into a jump and landed right in the midst of the phalanx ranks. He was quickly dispatched, but his passage left a momentary gap in the lowered wall of pikes. Another horseman took advantage of this break and pushed his way deeply into the phalanx. Flailing away with his sword, he spied the banner of Schwyz just ahead and attempted to capture it.

It was an act of suicidal bravery, but the horseman managed to grab the brown, blue and white banner's flagstaff from the ensign carrying it before the Swiss soldiers closed in. A Swiss halberd axed his horse, which dropped immediately, and moments later a pike was driven through his breastplate with such force the point emerged from his backplate.

It was only later that the Swiss realized that the rider was Ludwig von Chalon Chateau Guyon, one of the most prominent of Burgundy's cavalry commanders. The horsemen who survived the charge galloped back to Burgundian lines, their mission a failure. There was now a brief pause while the Burgundians regrouped and the Swiss took stock of the situation. The ground in front of the phalanx was a horrible sight, a field of broken pikes fouled with the blood of dead and wounded men and horses.

For all his faults, no one ever accused Charles of the Bold of cowardice. After his men at arms reformed, Charles decided to use a wedge formation of heavily armored mounted men at arms to break the phalanx, The Duke himself would lead the charge, resplendent in his shining armor, and it's possible he even wore an open surcoat that displayed his heraldic arms. But pageantry wasn't going to break the pike wall and the Duke soon found the bloody debris from the first charge slowed the impetus of the second.

Unable to break the phalanx, the Burgundian cavalry again withdrew. Though Charles had a horse killed under him, he was unscathed. Luckily for the headstrong duke, a fresh mount was available and he galloped away to join the rest of his horsemen. Now frustrated, the Duke committed a grave error. He ordered his artillery, which had

Musée historique de Berne

ABOVE: Swiss troops plunder the camp of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy after the battle of Grandson. Banners of the different Swiss regions are visible in the background, as well as Lake Neuchâtel beyond. OPPOSITE: After defeat at Grandson, and again at the Battle of Morat in June, the Duke of Burgundy's military ambitions came to an end at the Battle of Nancy in January 1477. Overwhelmed trying to rally his men once again, he was slain and his body lost until discovered several days later on the battlefield.

started to open fire and was decimating Swiss ranks, to withdraw to the flanks, while the rest of his infantry fell back slightly

The idea apparently was to lure the Swiss forward, away from the slopes and grape vines that hindered cavalry movements. Once on more level ground, the Swiss phalanx would be more vulnerable to flank attacks by Burgundian cavalry, because the latter would have more room to maneuver. There was even a possibility that the Burgundian horsemen might get around the phalanx and attack the rear. But as the Burgundian army began its planned withdrawal, Swiss reinforcements appeared on the battlefield.

There were two main routes to the Concise region: an upper road and a lower road closer to the lake. The men of Lucerne, Uri, and Unterwalden had marched along the upper road, while the soldiers of Zurich, Glaris, Zug, Schaffhausen, Strasbourg, and Basle had marched along the lake. The battle-weary Swiss on the field took heart at the arrival of their comrades in arms, and before long the newcomers were integrated into the already existing formations.

The great Hartshorner of Lucerne sounded a deep, almost rumbling, roar that was joined by other Swiss war horns in the assembled army. Loud and compelling, the music stirred the blood of the Swiss. For the Burgundians, it was more like a funeral dirge that foretold their approaching doom. The Swiss army started to advance, and as they moved forward thousands of men began to shout "Grandson! Grandson!"

The arrival of additional Swiss troops had caught Charles and the Burgundians off guard, as they were under the mistaken impression that the men they had been fighting since late morning were the entire Swiss army. The shock of these additional Swiss soldiers caused consternation in the Burgundian ranks and planted the seeds of panic. The arrival also coincided with the Duke's planned withdrawal, which to the uninformed looked like a headlong retreat.

Burgundian soldiers started to break formation and run away, and before long the trickle of escapees became a flood. The camp followers joined the stampede, spreading the panic to units that had not been affected. Charles, incredulous, shouted orders to stand, but he was ignored. The Duke, his frustration working up into a boiling rage, began hitting the fleeing soldiers with the flat of his sword, but to no avail. The retreat had turned into a total rout.

His passion spent, the Duke finally began to calm himself, and a handful of faithful retainers and men at arms managed to persuade him to withdraw. Charles was one of the last Burgundians to quit the field.

The Battle of Grandson was over. It was a triumph for the Swiss, who lost some 500 men. The Duke's army saw about 1,000 killed, with more Burgundian corpses floating on the lake. But the defeat created shock waves that reverberated throughout Europe. Charles the Bold, arguably the greatest potentate in Europe, possessing a huge army and the finest artillery train in existence, had been defeated by sturdy peasants and mountaineers.

The aftermath was long remembered by the Swiss soldiers who had participated in the fight. One of the first things they saw were the corpses of the Grandson garrison, still hanging by the dozens on tree branches. The Swiss recognized neighbors, friends, and even relatives swaying in the wind, faces distorted and showing signs of decay. Each dangling corpse had a name, a family, and loved ones back home that would be devastated by the news. Enraged by the sight, Swiss soldiers killed the Burgundians they had captured.

Captured intact, the Burgundian camp was a wonder to the Swiss—pavilions and tents filled dazzling riches the likes of which the Swiss soldiers, especially the rank and file, had never seen The tents of the princes and high status nobles were richly embroidered, with colorful flags and banners fluttering in the breeze, symbols of the wealth and power of their owners.

But the rich exteriors only hinted at what lay inside. There was silver tableware, elaborate armor, jeweled ornaments, and stacks of gold coins piled everywhere. But the grandest of all was the tent complex of Charles the Bold himself. He had intended to literally hold court when he pushed on to Savoy, so he brought along everything he felt he needed for such a regal occasion.

There was a richly decorated chapel, and regalia for state occasions. Particularly noteworthy was the sword of state, covered in sculpted gold, large gems, and pearls. The Burgundian state seal was also left behind, encrusted with one pound of solid gold. Charles's hat, the one with the large diamond that he wore in Trier, was also in his tent. And there were gold and silver coins scat-

Musée historique lorrain

tered about and works of art from the various Dukes of Burgundy that had preceded Charles. Even allowing for the possibility of holding court, why Charles chose to take so much of the art and wealth of Burgundy will remain unknown.

The Swiss also discerned there were liquid spoils as well. There was cask after cask of good Burgundian wine, and the soldiers lost no time in drinking copious amounts to celebrate their victory. Necessity is the mother of invention: the Swiss took the smallest guns (*Feldschlagen*), put stoppers in the touch-holes, and made makeshift tankards to drink the wine.

But there were more surprises in store for the rough-hewn craftsmen and peasants of the Swiss army. There were over 2,000 prostitutes still in camp, each wearing colorful low cut dresses that aped court fashions. They spoke no German, and most of the Swiss spoke no French, but when one of the Swiss who did know French asked one of them "Qu'avec vous a offrir, mes dames?" (What are you offering?), she lifted her skirts in a provocative manner. No further translation was necessary. It was said some later even became wives to the Swiss soldiers.

Charles seems to have had something of a nervous breakdown after Grandson. He began drinking heavily, and made bizarre jokes about his soldiers being loyal to the French king. He did recover enough to start to boast of his military might, and that he still possessed ample resources to beat a foe he still considered contemptible both socially and militarily. But in June, 1476, only a few months after Grandson, Charles was decisively defeated by the Swiss at Morat.

Worse was to follow. Duke Rene II of Lorraine recaptured his capital city of Nancy. If Rene took control of Lorraine, Charles's lines of communication between Burgundy and his Flemish provinces would be cut. He was now running out of money and manpower. Against all advice, Charles rashly decided to take a gamble and try to recapture Nancy from Rene's forces in the dead of winter.

It was a foolish move, but Charles was prepared to risk all with one throw of the dice. Sooner or later the Lorrainers and their Swiss allies would come to relieve Nancy and they far outnumbered the rash Duke's meager forces. Estimates vary, but Charles had no more than around 8,000 men; the Allies at least 18,000. The results were predictable, but this time the course of European history was altered forever. The duke's generalship was poor, and the Burgundians were not merely defeated, but crushed.

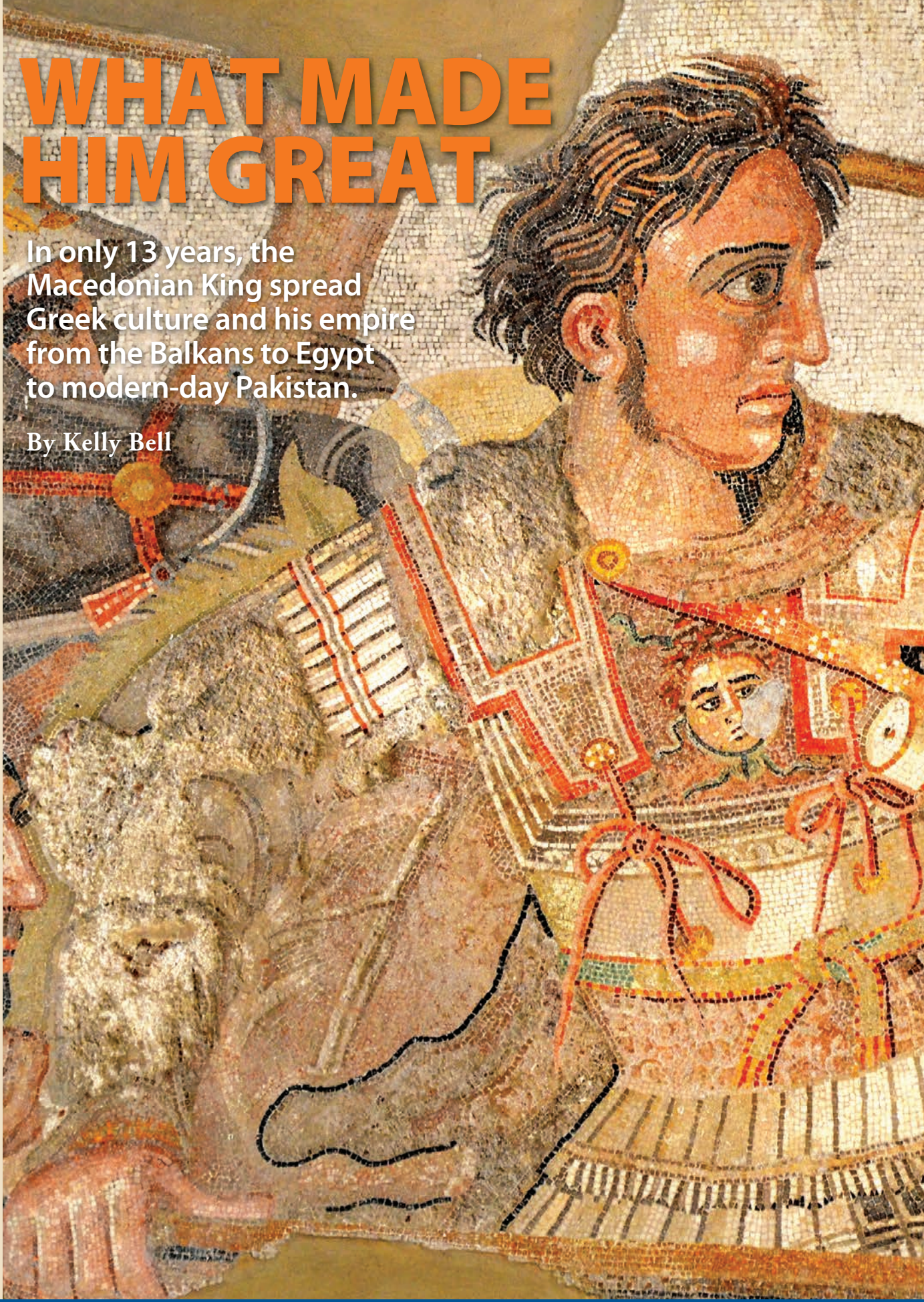
Charles was killed at Nancy, struck down by a halberd that was probably wielded by a Swiss peasant, the kind of man the Duke so despised. His corpse was found a few days later, stripped completely naked, head showing terrible wounds. He was identified by missing teeth and a few old battle scars. His face had been half submerged in icy slush, and part of his features had been eaten away by scavenging wolves.

The dream of a Kingdom of Burgundy, arbiter of western Europe, perished with Charles the Bold. Eventually his Flemish possessions were taken by the Habsburgs, and Burgundy proper was absorbed by France. A mighty prince and his grandiose dreams of glory had died, and European history changed, a process that had begun on the snowy fields of Grandson. ■

ALEXANDER: WHAT MADE HIM GREAT

In only 13 years, the Macedonian King spread Greek culture and his empire from the Balkans to Egypt to modern-day Pakistan.

By Kelly Bell



Steven Zucker at flicker, Creative Commons

He was the first Caucasian many of his conquered subjects had ever seen. The empire he established during his short life stretched from Greece to the Indus River in modern Pakistan, an area of about 2 million square miles—more than twice the size of the Louisiana Purchase. His was a time in which war, bloody campaigns and conquest were not viewed so much as brutal aggression, but (in this case) as a route to winning the moniker "the Great." Despite his bloody hands and steadfast, altruism-bereft resolution this charismatic young warlord would probably be called Alexander the Great even had he lived and fought today.

His empire encompassed all or most of what are now called Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Cyprus, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, central Asia, Pakistan and as far as India. He was just 20 when he set out after what some would call immortality. His father King Phillip of Macedon had just been assassinated. Sobered by this personal tragedy and fearful of its implications for his own future, Alexander, in 336 B.C., headed for Delphi to consult its oracle.

The "Alexander mosaic" on display at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, Italy. From Pompeii, c.100 BCE, the floor mosaic is believed to be a copy of a lost Hellenistic Greek painting by Philoxenos of Eretria from the 4th century BCE , depicting Alexander the Great and Darius III of Persia at the Battle of Issus (333 BCE).

BELOW: Alexander is attacked by his father during his father's wedding to Cleopatra Eurydice, the young niece of one of Philip's generals. This marriage cast doubt on Alexander's ascension to his father's throne, and Alexander was exiled for six months, before reconciling with his father. RIGHT: Battle of Granicus 334 BC, by Charles Le Brun depicts Alexander the Great at the center of the cavalry battle. The rout on the banks of the Granicus—now called the Biga River in modern Turkey—gave him a firm foothold in Asia. To neutralize Persian naval superiority, Alexander decided to destroy its maritime provinces and he then turned south toward the Turkish seacoast.

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Musée du Louvre, Paris

Although believing in its visions he was unimpressed by the reputation and reverence attached to this congregation of priests and the seeress they served. Alexander stormed through the coterie of aghast holy men, strode into the prophetess' chambers unwashed, without respectful attire or invitation and demanded a precognitive report on his planned campaigns. When the imperious old lady refused, he seized her gray hair, dragged her into the temple and repeated his order. The historian Plutarch later recounted what followed.

"As if conquered by his violence she said, 'My son, thou art invincible.'"

"That is all the answer I desire," replied the ambitious, fearless youth.

Alexander was a small man with flowing blond locks and a beardless countenance whose big, round blue eyes made him look too innocent to be a dashing, formidable figure. He never let his appearance impede his career and his thirst for glory as he carved out a sprawling realm via untouched courage, leadership, battlefield brilliance and a willingness to be ruthless on occasion.

The 13 years he spent with his armies transformed his part of the world. He overhauled civilization throughout his massive, conquered realm that stretched from Europe to Asia. It did not long outlive him, breaking up soon after his passing, but its very existence and how he brought it into being won him such acclaim as to establish him as a martial/cultural institution. Although succeeded by such paladins as Caesar, Charlemagne, Khan, Napoleon, Shaka and Hitler it is Alexander who holds the status as the first of the great conquerors, and he is the only one of them called "the Great." These others merely followed in his legendary footsteps. He showed them the way.

Seemingly incapable of being intimidated, Alexander, in 334 B.C. turned his eyes eastward toward the gargantuan Persian empire that stretched north into what later became Russia, south into Egypt and east into India. He was king of Macedonia and undisputed ruler of all Greece. Now that he was in a position to do so, he could hardly wait to war on the Persians.

In 480 B.C. Emperor Xerxes had overrun Greece and Persia, and burned Athens. Greece withstood the assault under the leadership of King Leonidas, and aided by a hurricane that destroyed the Persian fleet. Inspired by the heroism of their king and his small personal bodyguard at Thermopylae the Greeks drove Persian King Xerxes back across the Dardanelles. More than a century later Macedonian leaders still thirsted for and preached vengeance, and Phillip may have been planning a retaliatory, eastern campaign when he was assassinated. He had conditioned his son for war, and Alexander almost certainly suspected the Persians of complicity in his father's death.

Having conscientiously studied logic under the great philosopher Aristotle, and further schooled by his passionate and violent mother, Olympias, to fight and live with abandon and recklessness Alexander was conditioned for a life on the battlefield, campaigning offensively and irresistibly.

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

Third century BC bust of Alexander believed to be a reasonably accurate depiction of his appearance.

Starting out with an army of 35,000 he swept through Asia Minor, and then turned toward the eastern Mediterranean, taking its maritime provinces and thus rendering the dread Persian fleet irrelevant. He proceeded to take on the Persian King Darius III, overwhelming him and usurping his lands and titles. But it was not nearly enough.

Although now rich in acclaim and booty, Alexander spent his seven remaining years conquering lands stretching from the Russian steppes to India's Indus Valley—no human foe could stop him. At the end of his crusades he succumbed to ill health and widespread disillusionment among his homesick, dwindling troops. Realizing they had a valid complaint, he returned with them to conquered Babylon, where he died childless at 32, and his huge but poorly administered empire fell apart under the inept governing of the generals to whom he bequeathed it.

Still, his influence had stitched together many kingdoms, countries and satraps into mutually supportive trade partners. He had explored and mapped previously unknown territories, founded conurbations and stimulated the profitable exchange of ideas, customs and commodities between East and West. Greek became the tongue of the educated elite from the Mediterranean to India, creating crucial communication that made vital interaction possible and effective. It was his brilliance that conceived the notion that victors and vanquished could live together in opulent harmony.

He spent his formative years in the Macedonian city of Pella (now Nea Pella,) where archaeologists still exhume columned temples, mosaic-adorned stone floors and beautiful artwork and sculptures. Millenia later the local Supervisor of Antiquities, Photios Petsas, said the historically rich site is still revealing its secrets.

"These may be the palaces of Alexander's generals, built soon after his death," Petsas said. "We expect to find Phillip's palace on the west side of the present village."

It was here Alexander, 13, broke and rode the only horse that would ever carry him. He would name the fiery stallion "Bucephalus." A trader had tried to sell the steed to Phillip, but the king and trainer after trainer failed to break the animal as he sent men flying from his back. Phillip despaired of ever taming the massive mount-to-be, but the crown prince had hope.

"I can manage this horse," said the boy.

He turned the hulking creature to face the sun so that he no longer could see his own threatening shadow. Bucephalus instantly became quiet and docile and Alexander rode away on him. His face a river of tears, Phillip cried out:

"O my son, look thee out a kingdom worthy of thyself, for Macedonia is too little!"

Phillip relentlessly worked his boy to prepare him to achieve this adjuration. The adolescent Alexander learned to kill lions with spears, both fight and command in the field, and to concoct brilliant battlefield strategy. The young man eagerly threw himself into these preparations, excelling in every field and thirsting for the day he would be at the head of rampaging armies. His eagerness led him to fret over Phillip's successes, lamenting, "Will my father leave me nothing to do?" Alexander would find plenty.

In 336 B.C. Phillip of Macedon died at the hands of a band of dagger-wielding assassins. Alexander unhesitatingly ascended to the throne and crushed a series of anti-Greek revolts with sobering totality. After pacifying rebellions from the Danube to Thebes, he deployed the 35,000-man force of infantry and cavalry in the spring of 334 B.C. This army was followed by supply trains, botanists, geographers and sundry scientists to insure Alexander would not only conquer, but learn all there was about the lands he was subjugating. Aristotle had impressed on him how the need to know is as vital as the need to rule. Upon fording the Axios River he plunged into his new world of conquest, never to return home.

After 20 days and 300 miles he and his army reached the town of Sestos on the western shore of the Strait of Gallipoli (also known as the Hellespont.) To the east lay the rich and powerful Persian Empire. This realm used its wealth to hire and meticulously train a massive, formidable fighting force, many of them Greek mercenaries. Spies had been closely monitoring Alexander's progress, and as his men boarded galleys to ferry them eastward the forewarned Persians were hurrying to a point on the Granicus River two miles' march inland, where they deployed to meet the incursion. But before marching to battle, Alexander temporarily left his troops with his second-in-command General Parmenion, and boarded a galley southward to Troy.

Alexander had brought along his prized possession, a copy of Homer's *Iliad* given to him by Aristotle. He slept every night with the tome under his pillow, reading its passages until they were frayed and dog-eared. Obsessed with the Trojan War of almost a millennium earlier, he idolized Achilles and described the *Iliad* as the "perfect portable treasure of all military virtue and knowledge."

His foray to Troy was his means of obtaining an icon from the flesh-and-blood demigod he adored. After arriving in the city he made for the Temple of Athena and purchased a shield he believed had been carried by Achilles himself. His faith would be vindicated. This shield would later save his life. Re-boarding his ship he headed north to face Persia. The campaign would last 10 years.

Alexander returned to find both his army and their foes deployed along the deep, swift Granicus. The veteran Parmenion, who was old enough to be his commander's grandfather, futilly urged caution when it came to fording this surging stream.

"I should disgrace the Hellespont should I fear the Granicus," replied Alexander, spurring his horse into the river.

Many of his men later recounted how he made something of a comical sight. Diminutive as he was, he seemed even smaller astride his huge mount. It looked almost as if Bucephalus was carrying a child, but this little warrior fearlessly plowed through the torrent amid a downpour of arrows and spears. His troops were too proud to not follow his example, and unhesitatingly plunged into and through the torrent. Shocked by the ferocity of the Macedonians' assault the entire Persian force

Musée du Louvre, Paris

ABOVE: In 333 BC Alexander was challenged to untie the complex Gordian Knot. Instead of untangling it, he cut through it with his sword, thus exercising another form of mental genius. OPPOSITE: After the collapse of his army at the Battle of Issus, Darius fled, leaving behind his wife, daughters Stateira and Drypetis, and his mother, Sisygambis. Alexander was said to have treated the captured women with great respect, and Stateira later became Alexander's second wife.

Chateau de Versailles, France

quickly broke and retreated in disorder.

Realizing his authority was only as strong as his army's support, he had his dead buried with full military honors, and exempted their families from taxation and conscription. Circulating among his wounded, he questioned each of them as to their proclivities during the battle, encouraging them to take credit for the acts of individual heroism that had brought on such a smashing victory. Such astute handling of his soldiers brought him their enduring loyalty.

The rout on the banks of the Granicus gave him a firm foothold in Asia, but was just the beginning. Darius' main army was a full 1,000 miles to the east, so it posed no immediate peril, but the Persian fleet seriously outnumbered Greece's and controlled the seas. Alexander decided the best way to neutralize his enemy's naval superiority was to destroy its maritime provinces. He turned south and headed for the Turkish seacoast.

He would have widespread local support from these coastal enclaves peopled by descendants of Greek settlers who had little use for the Persians who had conquered their region. In Ephesus the residents rose in revolt upon Alexander's approach, stoning Persian officials and greeting the Macedonians as liberators. One after another, the populations of Turkey's coastal cities joyfully threw open their gates to this army they regarded as their own. In each town he confiscated no more than absolutely necessary to support his command. When a Greek-descended mayor asked him why he did not plunder more from such an opulent empire he replied:

"I hate the gardener who cuts to the roots the vegetables of which he ought to cull only the leaves."

With little bloodshed he pressed on to Miletus and Halicarnassus, where powerful Persian garrisons awaited. It took another seven months to overpower these troop concentrations and pacify the coast.

After resting his army until spring he led it across the lofty Anatolian Plateau to Gordium where, according to legend, he solved the challenge of the renowned Gordian knot by simply slicing it apart with his razor-sharp sword. It was believed that whoever untangled this ropey mass was destined to rule Asia.

Making plans as he moved, he marched resolutely toward the main Persian army, overrunning Cappadocia en route to the sole gap in the otherwise impassable Taurus Mountains. It was called the Cilician Gates, and was so slender his cavalry had to pass through it in single file. Similar to the bottleneck at Thermopylae, the pass might have stopped his progress, but Alexander rushed through it in a night advance that surprised its sleeping defenders and sent them scurrying. Bearing southeast he made for Darius.

They met in the autumn of 333 B.C. at Issus, and the again-outnumbered Greeks outmaneuvered and outfought the swarming Persians. Alexander called his elite cavalry his Companions, and in this brouhaha he led them in a wild charge into their opponents' horsemen that broke their ranks and cleared the way for the Macedonian infantry to charge with their thousands of spears leveled. Seated atop massive Bucephalus, Alexander had a panoramic view of the battlefield, and spotted the Persian king's portable pavilion. Screaming for his cavalry to follow he led a charge on the royal retinue. Darius prudently abandoned his bivouac, mounted his own horse and fled, managing to maintain a safe distance between himself and the pursuing Greeks until dusk. He escaped under cover of darkness.

Although frustrated at his foe's evasion, Alexander returned to Darius' enormous tent and eagerly partook of the sumptuous fare the Persians had left.

"This, it seems, is royalty," he remarked to his officers.

Still, apart from food, all he took for himself was a bejeweled coffin he thereafter used to hold his treasured copy of the *Iliad*.

After resting his army, cremating his dead and sending the severely wounded home in a wagon train, Alexander bore southward along the eastern Mediterranean coast. His next mark was the Lebanese port of Tyre, which was both a commercial/naval base and trade center for the whole Middle East. The Tyrians might have profited

Musei Capitolini, Rome

Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid

immensely by welcoming the Greeks as new business partners, but this too-proud island hub of lucrative commerce, surrounded by high walls, slammed their gates and refused him entry. He came up with an ingenious solution.

Showing himself to be a master of military engineering as well as tactics, Alexander devised an inexorable stratagem the city's residents and defenders could readily see and diagnose, but were powerless to stop—he built a 200-foot-wide causeway to the island.

It took seven months under a constant cascade of arrows and catapulted rocks, the smallest of which were cabbage-sized. Finally his own trebuchets came within range of Tyre's east wall and commenced cracking its facade while the southern wall crumbled under the assault of battering rams the Greeks ferried to the isle aboard captured boats. The offshore burg quickly fell, leaving the Persian fleet with no ports, and essentially putting it at Alexander's command. The causeway is there to this day, widened by drifting sand.

The Tyrian siege had kept Alexander too busy to respond to a feeler from Darius. Now he turned his attention to this unexpected offer.

The emperor proposed a conditional surrender, offering to Alexander his daughter, 10,000 talents of gold, and all Persian-held territory west of the Euphrates—literally one-third of his empire. Although Alexander was already certain of his response to this proposition, he decided to call his senior officers together for consultation.

"Were I Alexander," said the homesick old Parmenion. "I would accept."

"So would I, were I Parmenion," Alexander replied.

The young warlord had his eye on the whole of the Persian Empire, but first he had to get past Egypt. When he reached the pyramids he found the Egyptians had heard of his brilliant, devastating exploits and had no desire to oppose him. With much ado they crowned him Pharoah without spilling a drop of blood. He founded a city and gave it his name—Alexandria.

From then until now, Alexandria has been a hub of middle eastern culture even while governed by successive dynasties of Greeks, Romans, Crusaders and Muslims. Until the 1950s it was Egypt's version of Las Vegas, and although Cairo is now the country's heart and soul, Alexandria remains a favorite resort city for Egyptians. It all started with Alexander.

"Now Cairo is the hub of Egypt," opined an Alexandria businessman 2,400 years later. "Alexandria is like an empty stage. All the actors are gone...the aristocracy, the landowners, the foreign elements, everyone who gave the city life."

All the while he was laying out the confines that would be Alexandria, Alexander felt a compelling urge to consult another source of precognition. Specifically, he desired to visit the renowned oracle at Siwa Oasis. It took him a month to reach the verdant patch of date palms, ponds and green fields encircled by featureless, dry desert.

Today the Oasis remains a beehive of activity as packaging plants, olive oil pressing facilities, clinics and schools where young Egyptian women are being educated in the nation's first co-ed learning center.

Alexander arrived on his faithful Bucephalus, to

Musée du Louvre, Paris

ABOVE: Alexander enters Babylon after defeating Persian King Darius III at Gaugamela in 331 BC. LEFT: "Battle of Alexander versus Darius," by Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669) depicts the Battle of Gaugamela, 331 BC where Darius was defeated again. INSET: This 18th-century ivory relief depicts Darius fleeing from Alexander at the Battle of Gaugamela, their second and final meeting.

be met warmly at Siwa by the chief priest of the sect of Ammon, the Egyptian equivalent of Zeus. The conqueror and the holy man went alone into the Oracle. The time was drawing near when the campaigning Macedonians would have to meet Darius and his main army, whom Alexander took very seriously. He never disclosed the prophecy the Oracle gave him, but he emerged from its confines in high spirits and eager to continue his exploits.

After returning to Tyre, he allowed his troops to rest awhile longer, and then set out to the northeast, where his scouts had informed him Darius' army waited and continued receiving reinforcements. Moving steadily across the rolling Syrian cropland, the invaders found it burned to ashes as Darius had employed scorched earth tactics to make it difficult for the Greeks to live off the land. Although refusing to stop, Alexander did slow his advance sufficiently for the crucial supply trains to keep up with the army. With time being of the essence, the Macedonians did not, as the Persians expected, stop to rest and refresh when they reached the Tigris River. Commandeering every available riverine conveyance, they crossed the river and headed straight for Darius.

Following Alexander's rejection of his peace terms, the Persian emperor had resignedly but resolutely commenced preparations for the coming clash, putting his enormous army to work leveling the sprawling prairie outside the city of Gaugamela to the east of Mosul. His plan was to transform the countryside into a site ideal for his ranks of scythed chariots, which he aimed to send directly into the Greek legions, cutting bloody swaths through their ranks. Alexander anticipated him and devised appropriate tactics, but would still need a psychological haymaker to carry the day.

After carefully briefing his soldiers on the Persians' likely strategy, he lined them up on the battlefield and sent them marching forward. Sure enough, hundreds of chariots came pounding at them at breakneck speed, the sharp curved blades protruding from their hubs flashing in the bright sunlight. Acting on their leaders' orders the spear-wielding Macedonian infantry waited until the last possible instant before parting like the Red Sea. The charioteers were going too fast to stop or turn aside as they hurtled into the midst of the foot soldiers, who closed in and surrounded them.

After skewering the horses, the Greeks drew their swords, dragged drivers and archers from the chariots and slaughtered them. Alexander then spurred Bucephalus into the fray, and, followed by his Companions, made straight for the emperor's pavilion. Seeing this onrushing threat, Darius leaped onto a horse and escaped.

Despite their initial success, the battle soon began going badly for the outnumbered Greeks as units were repeatedly outflanked and overrun by their teeming adversaries, but word began to spread among the Persians of their emperor's departure. Disheartened at being abandoned by their leader, tens of thousands of his troops threw down their weapons and fled.

The battle was won, but Darius and most of his army had escaped. Still a threat, the Persian emperor and his legions would have to be followed and destroyed, but for the moment, the Macedonians needed time to recover. Trudging to Babylon, whose residents eagerly threw open their gates and welcomed them, the Greeks rested for a month, puzzled by the strange black liquid bubbling from the ground. They may have been the first westerners to see crude oil.

After settling in, Alexander appointed a Persian to govern Babylonia as part of his objective of uniting his own people with their conquered subjects, thus creating a stable realm. He and his men doubtless spent the next few weeks gaping at the Hanging Gardens, the Ishtar Gate and drinking

Istanbul Archaeology Museum

ABOVE: The marble Alexander Sarcophagus from about the time of Alexander, depicts him wearing a lion's head helmet, in combat against the army of Darius III. OPPOSITE: According to local officials, this fortress in Qalat City, Afghanistan was built by Alexander the Great during his push to India. Since then, nearly every military force has used it, including the British, the Russians, the Taliban, and the Americans.

in all of Babylon's sumptuous fleshpots. Although they must have hated the thought of leaving this lush ancient city, they could not stop thinking about the untold riches beckoning from central Persia. After the month's respite they resolutely set out eastward.

This desert trek was more challenging than combat as the Macedonians plodded through a heat-blasted landscape quivering with mirages that looked like lakes. The invaders needed camels to replace the sweat-drenched horses that were dying in droves, but since they could rarely catch these ships of the desert, the Companions found themselves unwillingly assuming the role of infantry.

Alexander's first objective in this latest foray was Persepolis, and as he and his command emerged from the sea of sand and began to encounter villages and towns along the approaches. Eagerly plundering gold and silver coins and vessels, jewels and sundry lucrative furnishings they became rich from this area that so many centuries later would be opulent for oil production. Persepolis would be an even richer haul.

Darius had used his vast wealth to transform Persepolis into an opulent commercial and cultural center. Cedar imported from Lebanon was expertly carved and inlaid with silver and gold before being used to construct massive temples and public buildings supported by huge fluted columns topped by statues of charging bulls and soaring griffins. Beautiful woven tapestries covered the interior walls. The invaders gaped at the endless treasuries, palaces and packed storehouses, and confiscated herds of thoroughbreds from stables before drinking themselves silly and burning the magnificent palace of Xerxes in retaliation for the dead emperor's razing of Athens 150 years earlier. Even after becoming perhaps the wealthiest army in the world by taking and plundering this extravagant metropolis, the Macedonians still had plenty of campaigning to do. After collecting and distributing their booty they headed north toward Hamadan in the spring of 330 B.C. Trailed by a lengthy wagon train heavy with plunder, they aimed to capture Darius himself and ransom him for a fortune.

Averaging an impressive 36 miles a day they quickly reached the city, but did not find the emperor. He had fled to the east through a gap in the Elburz Mountains called the Caspian Pass. Immediately resuming the chase the gracile expeditionary force soon overtook the plodding Persian wagon train only to find that, despite their rapid clip, they were too late to capture Darius—the Persian generals, having lost confidence in their feckless leader, had assassinated him.

They had mistakenly assumed Alexander would be pleased with them for ridding him of an enemy, but he viewed it as their having robbed him of a king's ransom. After having them beheaded he marched his command to Zadracarta (now Gorgan,) where he was crowned Persia's emperor in a setting of untouched opulence.

But he couldn't stay long. Alexander's spies informed him that Bessus, the Persian general who had planned Darius' death, had fled to Balkh in what today is northern Afghanistan, set up a court, proclaimed himself king of Persia and was raising a new army. The Greeks headed east to meet this threat, but were diverted.

Just before reaching the Afghan border, Alexander learned a revolt had broken out in a province

to the south. Leaving off his advance on Bessus he moved on this latest objective, launching an attack of extreme resolution and abandon and quickly crushing the rebellion. He left a garrison that remained there so long it evolved into the modern-day city of Herat. More uprisings were erupting yet farther south, so the Macedonians maintained that heading. Alexander soon faced a much closer threat.

They made it as far as Qala-i-Kang, where a mutiny in his ranks forced him to stop. Many of his men were becoming disillusioned with their leader because of his increasing affinity for all things Persian. He had appointed many Persians to high positions in his recently conquered holdings, and, determined to insure their loyalty to their new rulers, had appointed Persians to many high positions in the occupied territories. He even adopted Persian attire. Most of his troops, however, regarded these subjected people as little more than slaves. The mutinous elements were soon overwhelmed, but Alexander's internal problems were just beginning.

Rumors began to circulate of a plot to assassinate him, and were sufficiently numerous for him to take them seriously. One of his ablest generals was Philotas, who possessed a brilliant military mind, but whose taskmaster ways made him quite unpopular within the Macedonian ranks. With little more evidence than the rumors themselves, Alexander had him court-martialed for treason, convicted and executed. Greek tradition decreed that the immediate families of traitors also be killed. Alexander spared all of Philotas' relatives except his father, Parmenion. Possibly weary of the old man's constant adjurations to leave off campaigning and return home and make a dire impression on any other potential mutineers, Alexander had him beheaded before invading southern Afghanistan, ranging through the region during the summer and autumn of 330 B.C.

Today this region is called *Dasht-i-Margo*, "Desert of Death," but 23 centuries ago it was a well-watered savannah with numerous settlements. Modern-day provincial Vice-Governor Rsul Pashtoon notes that, "This wasn't always a desert. When Alexander came through it was probably one of the more fertile regions of Afghanistan. There were canals everywhere. Then came Genghis Khan 15 centuries later. His Mongols ravaged the area, filled in the canals, massacred the population, and the sand took over. You'll see dozens of ruined cities along the way."

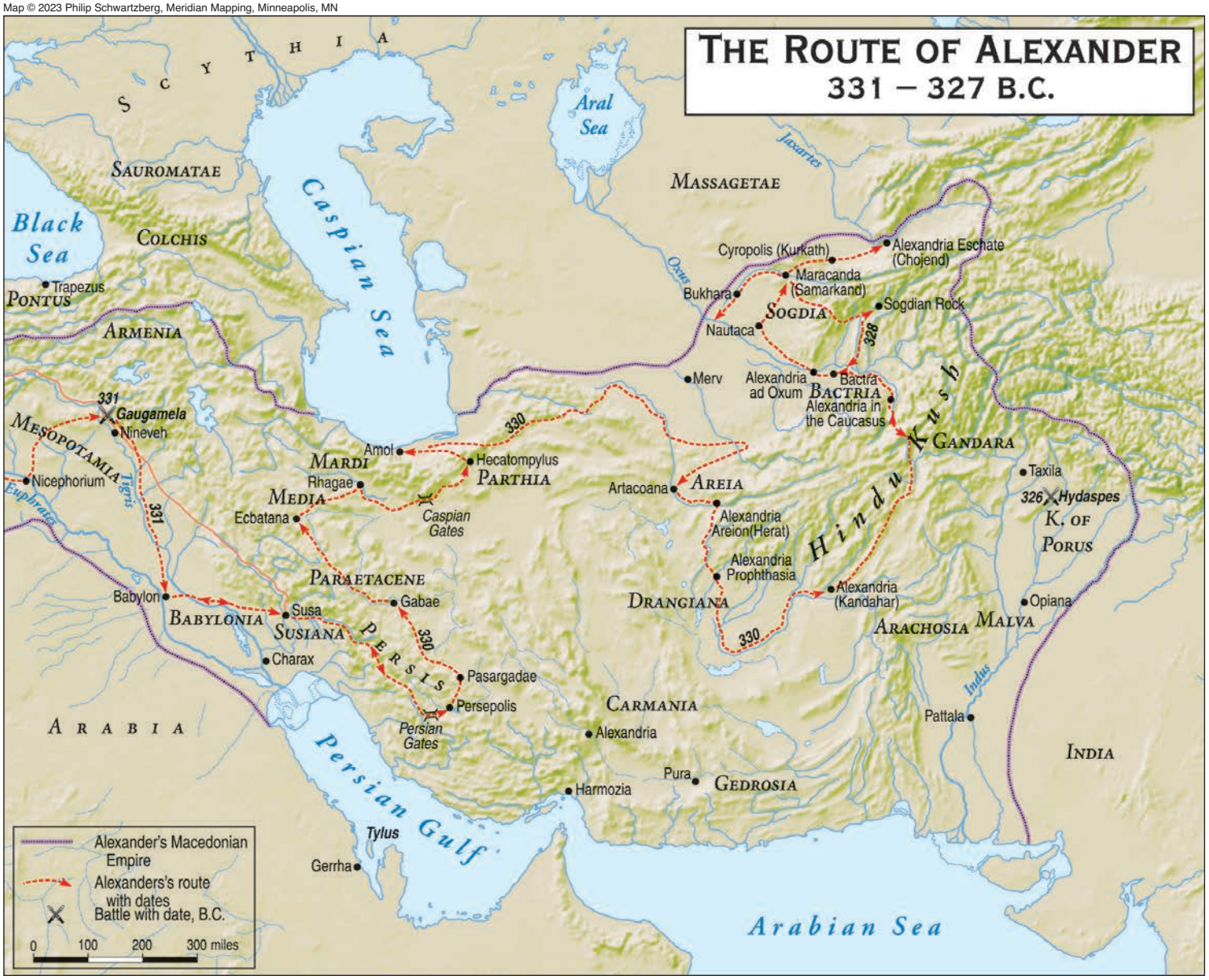
In December the army passed through the Kabul Valley, only to grind up against towering, snow-cloaked mountains. Bessus and his teeming entourage had made it past the peaks by using the sole aperture, the Khawak Pass, just before winter blizzards sealed the passage. Although it does provide a path through the towering peaks, it sits at 11,650 feet itself, and Alexander found it buried in hard-packed snow. Having stocked up with copious supplies in Zadracarta, he decided he could afford to wait out the cold months and resume chasing Bessus come spring.

As soon as the seasons turned he acted on what his calendar told him rather than what his eyes did, and set out through the pass before the snowpack melted. Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus later wrote of the Greeks' plight as they advanced:

"The army, in this absence of all human civilization, endured all the evils that could be suffered—want, cold, fatigue, despair. The unusual cold of the snow caused the deaths of many. It was especially harmful to those who were fatigued. When they struggled to rise they could not do so, but were roused from their torpor by their fellow soldiers, for there was no other cure than to go on."

Bessus had set up a base of operations in the city of Balkh. After the Macedonians finally cleared the mountain gap and headed for him, he gathered his troops and fled. After reaching the semi-deserted city Alexander realized his own troops were nearing the limit of their endurance. He

U.S. AFCENT Combat Camera Team



ABOVE: The route of Alexander and his army and the extent of his empire. Before reaching India, Alexander spent years in the region of modern Afghanistan. The work there wearied both men and ruler. OPPOSITE: In May of 326 BCE, Alexander defeated Porus in the Battle of the Hydaspes, folding a large part of Punjab (much of which is now modern Pakistan) into his Macedonian empire. The battle is depicted in this 1673 painting "Alexander and Porus," by Charles Le Brun, the most influential French artist during the reign of Louis XIV.

secured Balkh and spent the next two years using it as a headquarters as he rested, reprovisioned, recruited and reconnoitered. While simultaneously sending out long-range mounted units to search for Bessus, he fought the regional nomadic tribesmen who ranged the area on both sides of the Oxus River. Although he eventually managed to subdue them, these hard-riding and hard-fighting horse soldiers so impressed him that he absorbed many into his own ranks. After seeing the stocks of glittering booty the Greeks had accumulated, these locals were eager to enlist.

After the two-year hiatus Alexander and his reinforced, rested army spent five days crossing the Oxus on rafts. No sooner had they commenced marching eastward than they encountered a Persian delegation that simply handed Bessus over to them in hopes of lenient treatment from this force they had come to dread. Having the usurper summarily tortured to death, however, did not end the warring.

New Persian leaders arose, and it took some hard campaigning by the Greeks to conquer the region called Samarkand, overrunning five cities in two days as this refreshed army gained momentum. When it reached a lofty, heavily fortified kingdom called Sogdian Rock and Alexander demanded its surrender, the confident defenders laughed and called down at their besiegers: "Find soldiers with wings. No one else can touch us."

Under cover of darkness, 300 Macedonians used pitons and ropes to scale the promontory and breach the defenses of the fortress. At daybreak Alexander called: "Come see my flying soldiers."

The Sogdians prudently capitulated, and their new masters treated them with civility. After marrying a local nobleman's daughter named Roxana, Alexander embarked on a two-year offensive against the steppe nomads in what later became Iran and Afghanistan. After subduing the worrisome plains tribes and eliminating them as a threat to his rear, the young warlord again set his eyes eastward, toward India.

By the time he resumed campaigning in the summer of 327 B.C. the people of Sogdiana Rock

Musée du Louvre, Paris

had become very attached to their occupiers, who had greatly increased the kingdom's material wealth. A great many accompanied the free-spending Greeks as they headed into what later became Bangladesh. In fact, it could no longer be accurately called a wholly Macedonian expedition as the influx of Persian mercenaries and sundry camp followers had swollen the coterie to 120,000 as it left Afghanistan through the Nawa Pass. The composition of the army was not the only thing that was different.

Alexander himself was a changed man. Seemingly affected by the strain of campaigning he was drinking heavily. Pitiless in his dealings with anyone who disagreed with him he was subject to violent temper fits, at one point hacking to death his old friend Black Cleitus, who had saved his life at the Granicus. Still, his multitude of troops were getting richer and richer off his conquests and remained devoted to him.

Soon after entering what is now northern Pakistan, the army encountered and were fascinated by an enclave of people who said they were descended from Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. Their form of government was similar to that of Greece, and Alexander's Persian mercenaries told him their rulers had been known to exile Greek settlers from Asia Minor to their realm's easternmost regions. He spared this tribe, but used its land as a base of operations as he spent the next several months fighting and eventually overcoming this region's fiercely independent residents. It was an area barely the size of Connecticut, and the difficulty of this campaign brought on the first hints of discontent among the Macedonians.

Still, the soldiers were for the most part unified behind their charismatic and brilliant, if increasingly erratic, leader. In the spring of 326 B.C. his engineers constructed a bridge over the Indus River and Alexander entered India. His first encounter was with the king of Taxila, who had heard reports of the interlopers' wealth and was anxious to do business. Alexander paused for a massive reprovisioning and refit before facing his first hostile Indian—King Porus.

Wide, deep and swift, the Jhelum River lay between the Greeks and Porus, with his bristling 35,000-man army and their 200 trained war elephants. While Keeping his foes off-balance via a series of feints, Alexander quietly had his men collect every floatable craft throughout the region. On a stormy night the Macedonians boarded their boats and crossed the river unnoticed. At first light they charged with such abandon they knocked Porus' army off-balance and stampeded its elephants. Decimated and demoralized, the Indian army fled in disorder and never reformed. An unbowed Porus was captured. When asked how he wished to be treated the answer was, "Like a king." Impressed, Alexander installed him as puppet ruler and expanded his territory. For many of the invaders, however, this latest bloodbath was the last straw.

They were receiving reports of additional and formidable armies awaiting them, and their accumulated riches were doing nothing to alleviate their homesickness, fatigue and heartbreak at seeing so many of their friends, brothers, cousins, uncles and fathers fall in battle. Their morale gone, Alexander's troops refused to go on. He called a conclave of his senior officers to seek their advice, and his loyal and fearless General Coenus, who had served him faithfully from the beginning, rose to his feet, removed his helmet to emphasize that his fighting days were behind him and addressed his leader:

"Oh king, I speak not for those officers present, but for the men. Those that survive yearn to return to their families, to enjoy while they yet live the riches you have won for them. Lead us back now. A noble thing, Oh king, is to know when to stop."

Alexander silently rose and stalked out of the meeting, and spent the next three days pouting in his tent. Still, he could see the writing on the wall and knew he was beaten. To resist this opponent would lead to self-destruction. Knowing he was beaten, he submitted to the will of his men. "Alexander has allowed us, but no other, to defeat him," his jubilant troops proclaimed.

In the autumn of 326 B.C. part of the massive congregation headed downriver along both banks of the Jhelum while additional elements set out

Continued on page 96

RONCESVALLES and the Birth of Chivalry

Wikimedia

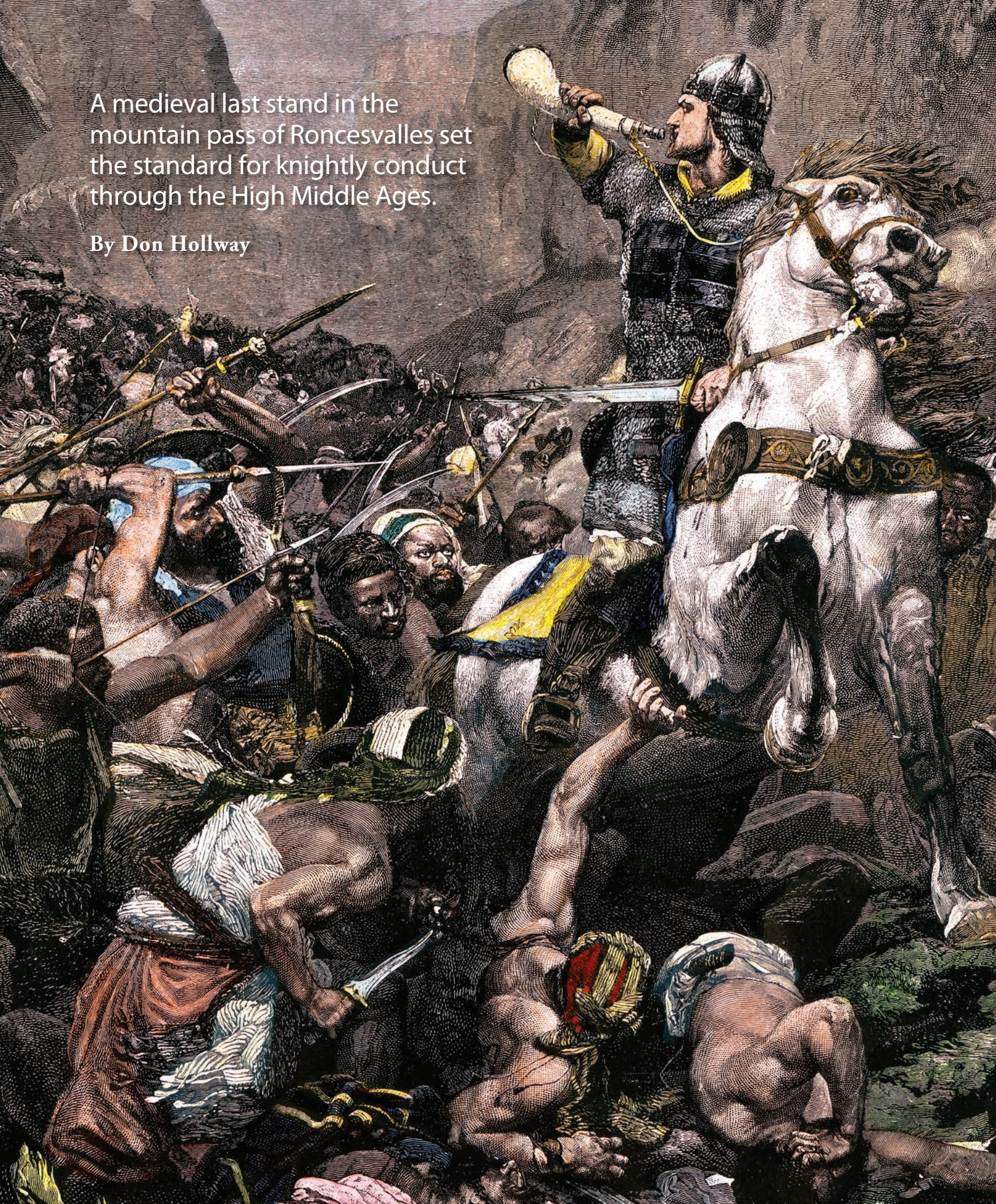
The Age of Chivalry brings to mind knights in shining armor and damsels in distress, along with traveling troubadours and minstrels singing *chansons de geste,* "songs of deeds," telling of feats of arms and labors of love. One of the first, and the most famous, was *La Chanson de Roland*, "The Song of Roland," the Frankish hero who, with his boon companion Oliver, was the favorite of his king Charlemagne. For a thousand years readers and audiences have thrilled to the moment when Oliver, on hearing the blaring war horns of the approaching Saracen army, warns his friend that they and their very few men face a battle against overwhelming odds, and very likely their deaths, to which Roland replies gamely, "God grant it be so."

Written in the latter half of the 11th Century, Roland's *chanson* told of events from the late 8th. Over those 300 years Europe had changed almost as much as it had over the preceding 300, after Rome fell to the Goths in AD 410 and the Western Roman Empire collapsed. What had been Roman Gaul had been rent into separate realms that no longer exist as such: Neustria, Austrasia, Burgundy, Aquitaine, Gascony, more. From these the Franks, a Germanic people once loyal to Rome, slowly wrought a new empire in their own barbarian manner. Their kings Childeric, Clovis, and Carl (later famed as Charles Martel, the Hammer) united the Frankish tribes, halted the Muslim expansion out of Spain and gave rise to the Carolingian Dynasty, named for Martel's grandson Carolus, called Magnus—Charlemagne, Charles the Great. Crowned King of the Franks in AD 768, he made it his life's work to resurrect the old Roman Empire.

Progress, however, came at a cost to peace. Almost every spring the king assembled his army for an expedition to the far reaches of his realm, in order to expand his borders at the expense of his neighbors, the Lombards and Saracens in the south, the Saxons in the east, and the proto-Viking Scandinavians in the north. The Franks rode horses on those long marches to the frontiers, and many eventually did not dismount even to fight. This tradition of horse-borne warfare, inherited from their forefathers' service as mercenary cavalry to the Romans and retaught to them by the Hunnish hordes of mid-millennium, created a warrior elite in Charlemagne's army. The concept of knights and knighthood was still in the future—the stirrup and high-cantled war saddle were only recent adoptions, and full-body plate armor would not be invented for some centuries yet. A chain-mail hauberk requiring up to 1,000 man-hours to weave was fantastically expensive; only the wealthiest lords and their men could afford more than a byrnie of leather and metal scales. Yet the distinction of mounted, armored men fostered something like the old Roman equestrian class, the *comites palatinus*, counts of the palace, high officials of the court. From these, it was said, came the king's chosen few—12 to be precise, a number central to Christian theology—an inner circle to become legendary, near-mythical, akin to King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table or Christ's Apostles, whom later minstrels praised as Charlemagne's Paladins. Foremost among these—at least, to hear the trou-

"Roland Sounding Oliphant"at the Battle of Roncesvalles—a key moment in "The Song of Roland" *La Chanson de Roland,* written in the first half of the 11th century, depicted in two different art forms. ABOVE: This illustration from one of the many published versions of the tale shows him blowing his Olifant (horn) for help while holding his sword Durendal while mounted on his horse Veillantif. The geologic feature "Roland's Breach" is in the background. OPPOSITE: "Roland Sounding Oliphant," is one of 24 medieval panels depicting The Legends of Charlemagne in stained glass in Chartres Cathedral, France.

Alamy



A medieval last stand in the mountain pass of Roncesvalles set the standard for knightly conduct through the High Middle Ages.

By Don Hollway

Both: Wikimedia

badours tell it—was the lord *Hrothiland*, ("famed of the land" or "famous and brave"in Frankish). More popularly, he would become immortal with the French name Roland, *le Preux*, "the Valiant."

Though documentation is sparse, Roland was an actual person. The oldest form of his name, the West Germanic "Rotlan," appears on the witness roll of a Carolingian document dated to AD 776, and no later than 790 on a Frankish silver denier coin. His place in history is secure, even if most of what was written down about him were tall tales.

In the so-called Dark Ages few people were literate, even among the nobility. The chansons became mass entertainment, the "bestselling novels" of their day. Their authors and re-tellers never hesitated to fictionalize and exaggerate their heroes' exploits to suit their stories. Though it was written a century after his personal chanson, and 400 years after his death, Roland appears as a lad in the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, about a battle at modern Aspromonte, along the Strait of Messina in Calabria, southern Italy. This would have been during Charlemagne's AD 773–776 campaign against the Lombards who then ruled the peninsula, though like Roland's the *chanson* casts Saracens as its villains.

As shall be seen, this is a common theme, for Roland's song was written prior to the First Crusade and embellished during it, and the song of Aspremont in anticipation of the Third Crusade, both in part as propaganda against the later enemy, Islam.

As King of the Franks Charlemagne, determined to expel "Saracen invaders"—i.e., Lombards—from Italy, sends another of his Paladins, Archbishop Tilpin of Rheims (who didn't actually become an archbishop until years later), to confine Roland and his friends in their castle at Laon: "I cannot take young boys on this business."

That Roland was said to be Charlemagne's sister's son surely had something to do with royal concern. The king had three sisters, Adelheid (born 740), Bertbelle (745), and Gisela (757). It's been surmised, admittedly on scant historical basis, that Berta was Roland's mother, and furthermore that his father was Milo or Milon, a nobleman of Andecavis, modern Angers in western France, who died in battle soon after his son's birth.

At any rate Roland, as medieval champions are wont, is having none of his uncle's enforced safety. In the best action-hero tradition, on hearing the royal army march through Laon, he and his friends knock their guard senseless and set off after the army. It does not befit highborn lads to march on foot, however, and as soon as they catch up to the army's rearguard Roland tells his companions, "Friends, shall we walk like serfs all the way to Calabria? See those riders ahead of us? Let us catch and pull them off, and get ourselves horses."

That these were Bretons, Charlemagne's allies, did not enter into a warrior's thinking. Might made right, as was proven when the boys rode into the royal camp and the king and assembled lords laughed to hear of their exploits. It did not qualify them as fighting men, but they tagged along with the army as it marched down the length of France and over the Alps into Italy. (High mountain passes would play a critical role in Roland's story.)

Charlemagne laid siege to the Lombard king in Pavia, deposed him, and chased his son into exile. In Rome the Frankish king was welcomed by Pope Adrian I as the new King of the Lombards. That was an insufficiently exciting climax, though, for the authors of the *chanson*, which casts the enemy as the fictional Saracen king Agolant and his son Aumon, and after the Franks defeat a Muslim force three times their number at Aspremont, has Charlemagne face Aumon in single combat, winner take all.

The purposes of the story naturally required Aumon to be a great warrior. His war horn, *Olifant*, was said to be carved from elephant tusk, or even unicorn horn from India. His Arab steed, in Italian versions of the story called *Briadoro* or *Brigliadoro*, "Golden Bridle," was described in the songs as a "swift courser" (warhorse). His sword, *Durandal* (of various meanings in Old French, Breton or Arabic), was a legend in its own right, said to have been handed down from Hector of Troy, or alternatively forged by the fabled Wayland, master blacksmith of Germanic heroic myth, from the same steel as Charlemagne's sword *Joyeuse*, completely indestructible and capable of hewing through stone.

Charlemagne's helmet, however, has an impervious stone set in the nasal, which is all that saves him in the fight. Finally Aumon tears the helmet

ABOVE: The equestrian statue of the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne, carved c. 1725 by the Italian artist Agostino Cornacchini, stands at the entrance of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican in Rome. OPPOSITE: A carved frieze depicting a cavalry fight inspired by the Song of Roland, c. 1120, at the Saint-Pierre Cathedral, Angoulême, France.

off and is about to deliver the death blow when who should ride to the rescue but none other than Roland: "Milord uncle, what are you doing? It is I, your nephew Roland, your favorite! Would we ever be welcome at court if we can't tame one pagan hawk?"

He has armed himself with a warhorse, armor and helmet taken from battlefield dead—all except a sword, for as he well knows he is not yet worthy to carry one. Instead, with a cudgel or quarterstaff, he strikes Durandal from Aumon's hand and proceeds—with a medieval savagery that would seem to defy chivalric code, but doubtless delighted its Crusader audience—to club the Muslim prince to death and claim his property as trophies of war: "Young Roland gained his Olifant this way, and Durendal with which he won such fame, and the swift horse he named *Veillantif* [Vigilant]."

These would have indeed been trophies fit for a hero. Arab steeds, though smaller than stout northern mounts, were famed for their speed, agility and endurance. And when true welding was yet in the future, Northern European swords were "pattern welded" of white-hot iron rods twisted together, beaten flat and ground to an edge, with unpredictable results. Middle Eastern blades of damascened crucible steel and Central Asian cast blades had a reputation for superior hardness, sharpness and durability. And as the crescent scimitar symbolic of Islam would not become popular in the Muslim world until the next century, Durandal would have been a cruciform sword of the finest quality, eminently suitable for a Christian champion.

The *Chanson d'Aspremont* is fantasy, of course, written when Roland and Charlemagne had already become legend, in what modern audiences might recognize as a kind of prequel or superhero origin story. Another *chanson, Girart de Vienne*, by the 12th century French cleric and poet Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube, told how Roland and Oliver came together.

It has Charlemagne laying siege to rebellious Count Girart in his city of Vienne on the Rhône River—an event that actually happened about a 100 years after Roland's day, when the "Emperor Charles" in question was Charlemagne's grandson, Charles the Bald. In the narrative, when the siege proves inconclusive, the two leaders agree to a duel of champions, Charlemagne's nephew Roland against Girart's (probably fictitious) nephew Oliver.

"If you had been beneath Vienne, my lords, when Oliver and Roland faced and fought!" proclaims the song. "There never were two knights as brave before, so bold of heart and so well-skilled in war!" They are said to have battled all day and into the evening, pausing only when Oliver broke his sword on Roland's shield and accepted another—gold-hilted, bejeweled *Halteclere*, said to have once belonged to a Roman emperor. Watching from the city walls, Oliver's sister, the maiden Aude, who naturally admires Roland from afar, prays for both: "Glorious Lord, let Your great mercy flow on these two knights, for I do love them both. Let them neither be maimed or slain as foes!"

And God answers, sending down an angel to part and halt the antagonists. "This feud and fight of yours shall be no more, lords. Not one more blow must be exchanged….

Henceforth in Spain against the race of heathens your fierce prowess shall yet be known and needed. Men shall know well your valor there and see it." At this Roland and Oliver swear their amity and loyalty for each other, and Roland is betrothed to Aude. Medieval audiences loved it. The *Chanson d'Aspremont* and *Girart de Vienne* were the literary blockbusters of their day.

Just a few years after his conquest of Lombardy, an opportunity indeed arose for Charlemagne to again extend his domain to Spain. For once, the enemy really were to be Saracens. The Umayyad Caliphate that had wrested the peninsula from the Goths in the early 700s had in mid-century itself been overthrown in the Middle East by the Abbasid Caliphate, but a generation later their civil war still raged in Spain. The Umayyad emir of Cordoba, Abd ar-Rahman I, was battling the Abbasid *wali* (governor) of Barcelona, Sulayman al-Arabi. Lacking support from his caliph far away in Baghdad, in AD 777 al-Arabi turned to Charlemagne, pledging his fealty and that of Abbasid cities, including their regional capital at Saraqusta, modern Saragossa.

The chance to convert Spain back to Christianity—and vastly increase his territory, manpower and tax base—proved irresistible to Charlemagne. His biographer, the Frankish scholar Einhard, recorded in his contemporary *Vita Karoli Magni*, "Life of Charles the Great," that the king "attacked Spain with the largest military expedition that he could collect."

The Frankish kingdom is thought capable of supporting 100,000 footsoldiers and 35,000 horsemen. The vast majority, however, were employed at garrisons along its vast frontiers and

akg-images / André Held

ABOVE: Charlemagne's army battles the Vascones, considered ancestors of the present-day Basques, at Pamplona, Spain. At the Battle of Roncesvalles, Basque warriors ambushed Charlemagne's rear guard as they crossed the Pyrenees back into France, killing them all. OPPOSITE: French Carolingian knights besiege a medieval town in this 9th century drawing. When Charlemagne arrived at Saragossa without siege equipment he was unable to force the muslim population to submit. After a month of negotiation, Charlemagne decided to head back to France.

borders, with only about 10,000 available at any given time for offensive operations. For Spain Charlemagne may have assembled as many as 25,000, with a wagon train bearing a three-month supply of food for each man. In the 8th century that was a huge army, but the king recognized that he would have trouble bringing all his forces to bear on this campaign.

The main obstacle was the wall of the Pyrenees Mountains separating France from Spain, in places 11,000 feet above sea level. An invasion could only be accomplished through key mountain passes. The *Annales Regni Francorum*, the Royal Frankish Annals, a court chronicle of the age, recorded, "King Charlemagne marched to Spain by two different routes."

He sent his Austrasians, Lombards and Burgundians through the eastern passes under command of his uncle Bernhard of Saint Quentin to support Barcelona, and meanwhile personally led his Neustrian forces through the western range. The two armies would then meet at Saragossa. Part of this great campaign was Roland—"brave Roland," "great Roland," "from here to farthest East no knight his equal ever lived"—now with the rank of *Brittannici limitis praefectus*, Prefect of the Breton Frontier.

Setting out from central France in mid-March, the Franks reached Aquitaine in the southwest within a month. From there an old Roman road led south to the Portum Sicera, modern Cize Pass through the Pyrenees, called the "Gate of Spain." In those days this was Vasconia, roughly modern-day Gascony in southern France and Navarre in northern Spain. The fierce Vascones—modern Basques—had maintained their independence since Roman times. Four hundred years after Charlemagne and Roland, French pilgrim Aymeric Picaud crossed the mountains by the same route, and found the Vascones little more civilized by the intervening centuries. "They are a barbarian people, different in customs and nature from all other people, extremely evil," he wrote. "…For a miserable coin, [they] would kill a Frenchman, given the opportunity…. However, they are considered brave in the battlefield."

In 755 the Vascones, most of whom are thought to have adhered to a pagan religion, had defeated an Umayyad army, and since then had maintained relations with the Christians to their north and Muslims to their south as a balance of power. An alliance of Charlemagne with the Abbasids, however, would leave the Vascones at the mercy of both. It behooved them to side with the Umayyads.

Charlemagne bargained with the Duke of Gascony, Lupus II Otsoa (whose name translates as "Wolf"), exchanging hostages for safe passage over the mountains. Lupus, though, only nominally ruled Vasconia, which was more a patchwork of territories subject to *buruzagis*, local warlords. They allowed the Frankish army to thread its way unmolested through the high passes, but their neutrality was tested in early June, when the Franks came down out of the mountains to the gates of their chief city, Pamplona.

Founded by the Romans on the site of an ancient Vascone settlement atop a steep riverbank, Pamplona was walled and stoutly defended. These southern Navarrese Vascones may not have considered themselves subjects of the Duke Lupus at all, and were apparently reluctant to submit to an invading king. On his way over the mountains, however, Charlemagne had received the blessing of Pope Adrian, who was said to have sent him the *Oriflamme*, "Golden Flame," the red and gold battle flag carried by French kings throughout the Middle Ages. A medieval prophecy claimed the Oriflamme, mounted on a golden lance, would burn and drive Saracens ahead of it. It made Charlemagne's campaign something of a proto-Crusade, and the Franks evidently brooked no resistance from non-believers. A century later the Poeta Saxo, an anonymous Saxon poet in the Carolingian court of East Francia, recorded of Charlemagne, "When he had crossed the first crest of the Pyrenees and had reached Pamplona, which is said to be a fine fortress of Navarre, he took it by force of arms."

From this base of operations, Charlemagne advanced south to join up with Bernhard at Saragossa. *The Song of Roland* has its hero boasting to his king of the towns his forces have conquered in Spain, all but a few of which lie on the road from Pamplona to Saragossa, and the city of Valterne (probably the valley of modern Tiermas in Aragon), "sacked by Roland and left in ruins, which for a hundred years was a desert." If any of this was based in fact, the Muslims would have had looked on the oncoming Franks as invaders rather than allies.

"Arriving from two sides," reports the *Annales Regni*, "the armies united at Saragossa." In mid-July, Charlemagne and Bernhard camped on the bank of the Ebro River before the city walls. Unlike Pamplona, Saragossa was thoroughly Islamic. Its wali, Husayn ibn Yahya al-Ansari, would have received news of Charlemagne's crusade, and did not consider himself bound by the treaty with the Franks if it required his submission to a Christian king. The previous autumn his city had stood off a siege by the Umayyads, and he still held their general as a prisoner. Perhaps deciding he no longer needed Charlemagne's support, al-Ansari refused to open his gates.

Charlemagne had come all this way expecting submission, not to mount a siege, for which he had neither the machinery nor the time. Cordoba's Umayyad emir had sent forces to block the Franks' retreat east toward Barcelona. On top of that, word came that in the Franks' absence the Saxons were stirring up trouble at home.

The Song of Roland would have it that al-Ansari, called King Marsile in the poem, offered Charlemagne hostages, treasure and his conversion to Christianity if the Franks would go home. It is something of a trigger incident in the story, for Roland nominates his stepfather Ganelon, the king's brother-in-law, to bear the royal reply to the Muslims. Ganelon—a character based on the actual Archbishop Wenilo of Sens, who crowned Charles the Bald king in 848 but 10 years later infamously turned traitor—fears death at Muslim hands and accuses Roland of intending it: "If God but grant me safe return, I shall hurl such ill fortune on you to smite your life for now and forever with a curse."

The *chanson* has Ganelon striking a deadly bargain with the Muslims for his life: "Together they pledged their faith, to snare Roland and lead him to his death." And in fact, the Saracens made noises about fealty and handed over their captive Umayyad general as a hostage who could be ransomed to his emir. Charlemagne had to be satisfied with that. "Charles the Great that land of Spain had wasted," proclaimed Roland's song, "her castles taken, her cities violated," but the truth is, this Spanish expedition had turned out to be a losing proposition, netting the Franks little of the promised territory, loot or subjects.

Things got worse. While Charlemagne was occupied with Saragossa, the Vascones' resolve had stiffened. The chronicles vary—the timelines are confused—but there may have been some kind of battle outside Pamplona. This further evidence of treachery may be why Charlemagne wrought vengeance on the city, so fearsome it was still remembered centuries later. The anonymous Saxon poet recorded, "He went back to Pamplona and completely destroyed its walls lest it became rebellious."

"Now the Saracens [in this sense meaning both Muslims and pagans] were forced to give up the city, even if they didn't want to," recorded a medieval account. Another reported, "The king gave life to all the Saracens who wanted to be baptized, but all those who did not want to be baptized he ordered killed." And a third claimed, "So much blood was shed of the Saracens that the Christian people waded in the blood. And Charles, all the Saracens that he found in the city of Pamplona, he slew."

The Franks looted the city. Having done his worst, in August Charlemagne turned north for home.

If anything, the Pyrenees now presented an even greater impediment to the march, for the mountains' southern slopes are steeper, the Franks were weary from marching back and forth over northern Spain, and their wagon train was laden with stolen treasure. The army, now including that of Bernhard, would be strung out even further, but this time the vengeful Vascones would not be so cooperative. In *Roland's Song* Charlemagne seems well aware of the hatred he has left in his wake, fully expects an attack to come from behind, and knows that to face it is practically a suicide mission: "Barons, you see those deep defiles and narrow passes. Decide who will command our rear."

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Alamy

Roland being still a young lord at this time, the rearguard was in reality probably led by a more seasoned warrior, Aggiardus (in modern spelling, Eggihard). He was Charlemagne's Mayor of the Palace, his *seneschal*, equivalent to a modern prime minister or second in command, but curiously received no billing in Roland's *chanson*. Its plot line requires treachery on the part of Ganelon. As he had been nominated to go into the Saracens' den at Saragossa, he now returns the favor, fulfilling his part of the bargain with the enemy by offering up his choice of sacrificial lamb: "Roland, my stepson, whom among your valiant knights you prize the most."

Though the king sees through Ganelon's plan —"You devil incarnate, into your heart is come a mortal hate"—Roland would rather risk death than be shamed by refusing. He accepts, assuring Charlemagne, "You can pass through the defiles in safety, and fear no harm from man while yet I live."

Charlemagne is equally honor-bound to trust his nephew to fate. On the other hand his Paladins, including Oliver and Tilpin, are all eager to share in Roland's glory. They muster to his white banner and bring up the rear as the army winds its way up into the mountains. "High are the peaks, the valleys murky-dark," goes the *chanson*. "The rocks are black, the gorges terrible. The Franks toil through them painfully."

About 30 miles from Pamplona, and 3,000 feet above sea level, lies *Roncesvalles*, the "Valley of Briars" (*Roncevaux*, in French). A mountain meadow sloping up toward the north, it provided an apt campsite for the army on Wednesday evening, August 14th. In the morning, Charlemagne led the vanguard into the narrowing pass. "The king had gone on ahead," recorded the Poeta Saxo. "That part of the army that was hindered by the carrying of the baggage was behind him."

The size of the army, and the tightness of the way, was such that the file of marching men stretched out for nearly 11 miles. It was nearly midday before the wagon train could even begin to follow into the single-lane, beech-shrouded defile. Einhard reported, "The army was moving in column, and its formation was much extended, as the narrowness of the pass required."

The *Chanson de Roland* would have it that Roland, Oliver, Tilpin and the rest of the Paladins bring up the rear. Meanwhile the Saracen army, claimed in the poem to be 400,000 strong, rides in pursuit. From a mountaintop lookout, Oliver sees them coming. He rides to warn Roland the Franks are outnumbered, advising him to blow the Olifant and summon Charlemagne to their rescue. Roland, however, would rather die than be thought cowardly: "A man should willingly suffer for his lord."

Archbishop Tilpin gives the Franks final absolution for their sins. They mount and face the enemy charge. Each slays a Muslim prince in turn. Roland and Oliver break their spears in battle, on which Roland unsheathes Durendal, and Oliver Hauteclere. Together the Paladins hew into the enemy. The poet revels in men speared through the spine, struck from the saddle, cleaved in half by Frankish steel: "Roland and Oliver vie with Tilpin in skill and glorious deeds."

One by one, however, the rest of the Paladins are cut down. Hard pressed by sheer numbers, Roland finally decides to blow the Olifant. Oliver chides him that it is too late now, that neither of them will live to see fair Aude again. This is no

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ABOVE: A marker commemorating Roland at the Battle of Roncevaux was erected at Roncesvalles Pass, or Roncevaux Pass, in 1967. At 3,468 feet, the pass is on the Spanish side of the border and has historically been an important route between France and Spain through the Pyrenees. LEFT: Death of Knight Roland, nephew of Charlemagne, in the battle of Roncevaux (778) between the Army of Charlemagne and the Saracens (ancestors of the present-day Basques), from an Illuminated manuscript (14th c.) in the Library of the Arsenal, Paris.

time for bickering, says Tilpin: "Roland, blow your horn, so that returning Charlemagne will at least see to it our bodies are given honorable burial rather than stripped and left for carrion." Roland blows the Olifant so loudly that the king hears it 30 leagues away—that would be 90 miles—and, over Ganelon's objections, turns back to save him.

It is too late. Oliver dies, speared through from behind. Veillantif is killed under Roland, dead of 30 wounds. Archbishop Tilpin fills the Olifant from a mountain stream to administer a final benediction to Oliver and the rest of the Paladins before falling dead himself. With his last breath Roland strikes Durendal on a stone to shatter its blade, but Durendal instead splits the rock, and God sends his cherubim to bear the dead champion's soul to heaven. On arrival at the battlefield Charlemagne weeps over his nephew's body. In France Aude, upon learning her brother and hero are both slain, falls dead herself. For his treachery Ganelon is chained by hands and feet to four horses and torn apart. All very heroic, romantic, tragic and satisfying to medieval audiences, but the reality of the Battle of Roncesvalles was otherwise.

It was not Muslims, but the Vascones who attacked the Franks, and they were not following but already lying in wait for Charlemagne. Einhard recorded, "the Vascones arranged an ambush on the top of the mountain where the thick woods made it perfect for such an attack."

Unlike the Franks, weighed down by their horses and wagons, armor, heavy shields, lances, swords and axes, the hill tribesmen preferred the *azcona,* or short spear, and wore little more than woolen cloaks and leathern kilts and sandals. They scaled the heights like mountain goats and waited for the Franks to pass beneath them. North of Roncesvalles the Cize Pass trail narrows to only a little over 10 feet across, winding and doubling back on itself, with steep banks up one side and to the other, equally steep, drops to the valley floor. At one point the nearby river below runs almost beneath the pathway, while above it rises a sheer 130-foot cliff. The Frankish vanguard, with Charlemagne in command, marched through easily enough, but only because the Vascones once again let them, silently awaiting the wagon train full of Pamplona's treasure before signaling the attack. "When in hiding to capture prey [the Basque] wants to call his colleagues quietly," recorded the pilgrim Picaud, "he sings like an owl or howls like a wolf."

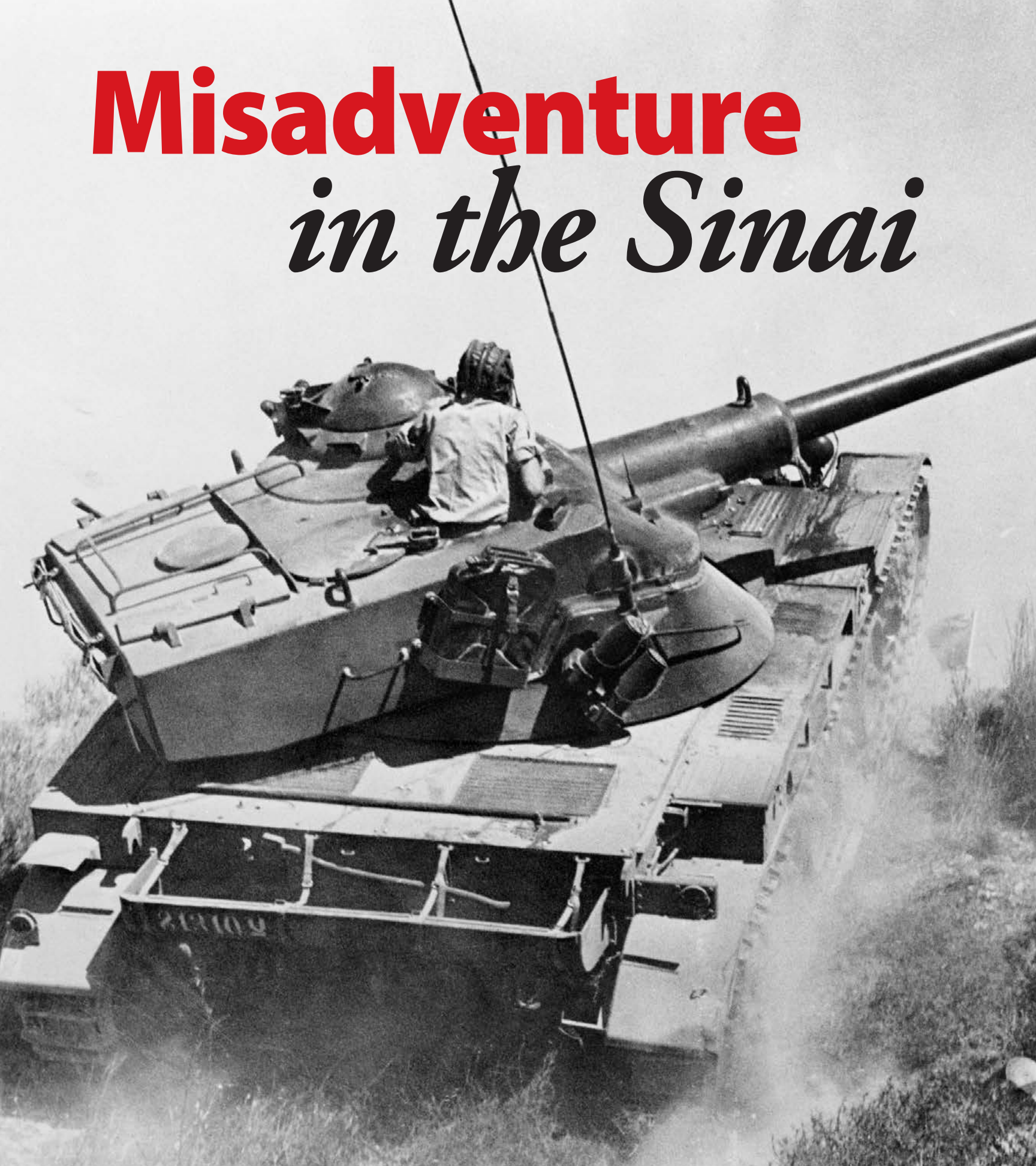
It's not hard to picture the worn-out, footsore Franks trudging along the narrow path, pushing their wagons upslope behind their sweating cart horses and gasping for breath at the high altitude, only to be startled by the trilling, ululating *irrintzi*, the shrill cry still characteristic of the Basques, echoing in the narrow pass just before a sudden hiss of arrows shooting from the thickly wooded slopes and a shower of rocks tumbling from the cliff tops.

It has become common among historians to dismiss Roncesvalles as nothing more than a skirmish, but the Franks did not think of it as such. They referred to it in Latin as a *certamen*: battle, war. "The army was frightened," recorded the Saxon poet, "and thrown into sudden tumult." Strung out in nearly single file along the trail, the Franks had no cover, no side roads or paths on which to escape. The *Annales Regni* attests the attack "threw the whole army into confusion."

Their own arrows and spears, launched upward,

Continued on page 95

Misadventure *in the Sinai*



Determined to preserve its access to the Suez Canal, Israel launched a surprise attack on the Sinai Peninsula, catching the Egyptian Army entirely by surprise.

By Eric Hammel

Many historians consider the Suez-Sinai campaign in the autumn of 1956 the last hurrah for British and French colonial efforts in the Middle East. Whether or not that was the case, the campaign was certainly a highly successful dress rehearsal for the Israeli Defense Force (Zahal) and the stunning Six-Day War 11 years later, as well as an authentic military campaign in its own right. It was, in every way, Zahal's coming-out party.

The seeds of the Suez Crisis were sown on July 23, 1952, when Egyptian Army officers overthrew their nation's long-ruling monarch, King Farouk. Emerging at length to head the new Egyptian government was the mercurial and charismatic Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, a veteran of the Egyptian Army's humiliating defeat by Israel in 1948. Convinced that he was destined to head the great pan-Arab alliance of millennial myth, Nasser launched an unrelenting rhetorical campaign against Israel in particular and the western world in general, which he denounced as an age-old colonizing menace.

Nasser's campaign against Israel had less to do with defeating the eight-year-old Jewish state than with providing a convenient rallying cry he could use to unite the divergent Arab masses. Nasser's efforts took the form of state-sponsored terrorism and as a barrage of vicious radio broadcasts aimed at the Arab street. For all his sound and fury, however, Nasser at first was only mildly annoying to the Israelis, and he was not seen as a serious threat until he successfully brokered a massive 1955 arms deal with Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia, which suddenly placed Egypt in the preeminent military position in the region.

Bolstered and emboldened by his newfound strength, Nasser soon claimed the right to seal the narrow Straits of Tiran against Western shipping bound for the isolated Israeli port of Eilat at the head of the Egyptian-dominated Gulf of Aqaba. At the same time, he closed the air route over the straits to airplanes flying between Israel and destinations in Africa and East Asia. It was all part of a plan to bankrupt Israel and effectively isolate it from the world community. After the United States broke off talks about funding the proposed Aswan Dam across the Nile River in protest of Egypt's de facto blockade of Israel, an infuriated Nasser unilaterally nationalized the Suez Canal on July 27, 1956.

Fearful that Nasser meant to control the free flow of all Western goods through the canal, Great Britain and France entered into a secret pact that proposed using military force to guarantee their countries' continued right of passage. This secret pact mirrored the increasingly embattled psychology prevailing within the Israeli government at the time. Denied lawful access to crucial markets in Asia and Africa, and alarmed by the sudden build-up of the Egyptian armed forces, Israeli leaders were convinced that Nasser intended to launch the often-promised war of annihilation against the Jewish state. In self-defense, the Israeli government began to plan a preemptive strike of its own and attempted to purchase arms from nominally friendly Western nations.

Israeli tanks led the lightning-fast thrust across the Sinai Peninsula to a point only 18 miles from the Suez Canal.

On September 1, 1956, the Israeli military attaché in Paris learned of the secret Anglo-French alliance against Egypt. Secret negotiations ensued at high government and military levels, and a deal was struck between Israel, France, and Great Britain on October 21. As part of a joint military campaign, British and French forces would parachute into Egypt or land amphibiously to secure the Suez Canal, while the Israeli Zahal would invade the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Zahal had three immediate goals: to destroy a large portion of the Egyptian Army's offensive potential, to eliminate a number of troublesome guerrilla bases in the Gaza Strip, and to reopen the contested Straits of Tiran after overwhelming the Egyptian garrison at Sharm-el-Sheikh.

Israeli planning for the military offensive was placed in the hands of Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, but it reflected the long-standing philosophy of Chaim Laskov, the spiritual father of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). Facing a numerically superior and better-equipped Egyptian battle force, and fully expecting the United States and the Soviet Union to apply immediate pressure for a cessation of hostilities—albeit for entirely divergent reasons—Dayan and his staff outlined a lightning-fast offensive that would achieve all its goals and sow maximum destruction in the shortest possible time. The Israeli assault against Egypt was to commence on October 29, with the supporting Anglo-French air assault slated to begin a day later. The timing placed enormous political and military pressure on Israel by making the Jewish state appear to be the aggressor, but it was necessary in order to mitigate extreme political pressure inside Great Britain and France and deflect world opinion from the European superpowers.

The opening phase of the operation envisaged by Dayan and his planners was a parachute drop far behind Egyptian lines at Mitla Pass, a natural bottleneck on two of the three major east-west highways crisscrossing the Sinai Peninsula. There were only enough C-47 Dakota transport planes in the Israeli Air Force to drop the bulk of one parachute battalion, 395 men in all, east of the pass. Given the high state of readiness the paratroopers of the 1st Battalion, 202nd Brigade had achieved, not to mention their proven combat prowess, a battalion was thought to be sufficient to achieve the straightforward goal of creating a diversion in the rear of the Egyptian forces in Sinai. To ease the isolation of this small force, the rest of the parachute brigade was to rush overland to Mitla Pass by way of the southern road, from Al Kuntillah via El-Thamad and Nekhel. If successful, the paratroop battalion—and later the entire brigade—would be in position to block an important Egyptian line of reinforcement and retreat.

Coupled with the initial parachute drop, one Israeli reserve infantry brigade was to advance from the Israeli town of Nitzana to seize jump-off positions around the important road junction at the Egyptian town of Kusseima. Behind this advance infantry brigade, two Israeli divisional task forces were to move into place and await orders from the government on whether to proceed along the coastal or central approaches from Israel to the canal. Depending on what Great Britain, France, and Egypt did next, the Israelis were to break through whatever Egyptian force they confronted on the coast and in the center, and then advance swiftly across Sinai to within 10 miles of the Suez Canal.

To attain both strategic and operational surprise, the Israeli plan was exactly the reverse of any logical military order. The farthest objective—Mitla Pass—was also the first target. Then the general offensive was to open in the center, followed by an attack on the nearest and most vexatious objectives, Gaza and its teeming guerrilla bases. Sharm-el-Sheikh and the Straits of Tiran, the strategic and political objectives whose control by Egypt had precipitated Israel's decision to go to war, were left for last.

Operationally speaking, the strengths of the larger and more powerfully equipped Egyptian forces determined the sequence of the Israeli attacks. Holding or seizing Sinai was largely a matter of controlling Sinai's road network. The Egyptians tended to concentrate their forces at crossroads while leaving natural obstacles unguarded. The seeming illogic of the Israeli objectives was intended to keep the Egyptian commanders guessing about where and when they should commit their mobile reserves. Once a defensive sector close to the Israeli frontier had been reduced or bypassed, long advances into the Egyptian rear could be achieved across unguarded stretches by the relatively more mobile Israeli brigades.

There was considerable concern on the part of French strategists that 10 smallish Israeli brigades would be unable to defeat a much larger Egyptian force consisting of two infantry divisions, seven large independent infantry brigades, one tank brigade, two independent infantry battalions, and

assorted garrison units. Dayan had to go out of his way to convince his French colleagues that the Israeli assault force had far greater mobility and agility than the Egyptian force it was facing, and that Israeli leadership, training, morale, and motivation were far superior to those of the Egyptians. The arguments were tenuous at best, but Dayan was given unwitting help by the Egyptians when at the last minute they moved their two infantry divisions and only tank brigade from eastern Sinai to guard the Suez Canal against a feared Anglo-French assault. At that point, even though they enjoyed only a bare advantage in numbers of brigades—and none at all in numbers of troops, tanks, or guns—the Israelis were able to convince their allies that they could indeed achieve their relatively ambitious objectives.

To keep their intentions secret for as long as possible, the Israelis did not begin to mobilize their reserve units until the last possible minute, October 26, and then only the two armored infantry brigades were called up via secret messengers. The next day, only 48 hours before the initial assault, the national radio was employed to call up the bulk of the reserve infantry and selected home guard units. The delay naturally led to mass confusion. The tanks and half-tracks of the two reserve armored infantry brigades could not be fully serviced in the time allotted, a factor that led to numerous breakdowns after the war started, and many of the 13,000 civilian vehicles that were commandeered for Army use could not be readied for combat in less than one day. Indeed, most of the reserve infantrymen themselves could not assemble as quickly as ordered. They all reached their unit depots more or less on time, but equipment either was not issued or else was inadvertently left behind, and few reservists went into battle knowing exactly what their units were supposed to accomplish. Nevertheless, the government and the Army general staff had carefully weighed the risks, and Zahal's core of battle-tested professionals was prepared to make do as never before.

The Israeli Air Force struck the first blow of the campaign when, late in the afternoon of October 29, four P-51 Mustang fighter-bombers swept in low over the Sinai Peninsula and cut many existing telephone lines with their propellers. This audacious and imaginative blow crippled the Egyptian Army's command and control structure, leaving the 30,000 troops in the Egyptian 3rd Infantry and 8th Palestinian Divisions completely cut off and without instructions. Just before sunset, 395 Israeli paratroopers jumped into a drop zone east of Mitla Pass and dug themselves into blocking positions in the low hills around the defile's eastern end. During the night, an Israeli reserve infantry brigade hiked into Sinai from the vicinity of Nitzana and easily secured the Kusseima crossroads.

In three short steps, the Israelis had severely disrupted Egyptian communications throughout Sinai, blocked a vital line of supply and communication at Mitla Pass, and outflanked the bulk of the Egyptian forces in east-central Sinai. Soon, however, Dayan's carefully orchestrated plan came unglued. Early in the afternoon of October 30, the general in charge of the Southern Command, Brig. Gen. Assaf Simchoni, learned that a light reconnaissance unit had reached a narrow defile called Deika Pass without encountering any Egyptian resistance. Israeli jeeps had driven from Kusseima almost to the rear of Abu Ageila, the westernmost and largest Egyptian defensive position in east-central Sinai. West of Abu Ageila, as Simchoni knew, there was virtually nothing to prevent his brigades from rushing all the way to the Suez Canal port of Ismailia.

Leaving Deika Pass unguarded was a major blunder on the Egyptians' part, and Simchoni instantly realized that Israel's military and political objectives in Sinai could be achieved in far less time and cost if he could exploit the Egyptian oversight by rolling up Abu Ageila from the rear. However, there was only one unit in the Zahal that was equipped with tracked vehicles, and it was sitting idle near Nitzana. Without consulting Dayan, who was roving hither and yon across the entire southern zone of operations, Simchoni unilaterally tapped the command's reserve, which consisted of Colonel Uri Ben-Ari's 7th Armored Brigade, Zahal's only full-time standing armored force.

With only skeletal information and instructions provided by Simchoni, Ben-Ari, a spectacularly aggressive military innovator, improvised an assault straight up the rear of the Abu Ageila defenses.

When Dayan discovered at sunup on October 31 that the entire 7th Armored Brigade was on the move against Abu Ageila, he nearly countermanded Simchoni's attack order. But by the time Dayan heard the news, just before 0500, the leading elements of Ben-Ari's brigade were already approaching the Egyptian rear. Dayan had no choice but to let events unfold. As often happens in warfare, the unexpected had outrun the planned.

ABOVE: An Israeli reconnaissance patrol scouts far to the front in order to aid the careful planning of the Sinai offensive. OPPOSITE: Egyptian soldiers armed with Czech weapons man a forward position in the Sinai desert in 1956.

At dawn on October 31, Lt. Col. Avraham "Bren" Adan's combined tank-infantry task force began its attack on the rear of Abu Ageila. This time the Egyptians were ready, having noticed hours earlier that an Israeli force of some type was approaching from the south and southwest. As the half-tracks bearing the first armored infantry company of Bren's force got to within two miles of the base wire, the Egyptians opened fire with a full battalion of 25-pounder field guns, antitank and infantry weapons that had been shifted to the rear to counteract the attackers. Other Egyptian

soldiers manning the outlying position at Ruefa Dam, on the high ground immediately south of Abu Ageila, blasted the right flank of the Israeli assault force.

The lead company of Israeli Sherman tanks suppressed the fire from Ruefa Dam, while the infantry-laden half-tracks pressed straight on toward Abu Ageila. An Egyptian armored reaction force quickly pressed in from the north along the road from the coastal city of El Arish, but it was counterattacked and defeated by Israeli tanks guarding Bren's left flank. Abu Ageila was held by the equivalent of three Egyptian infantry brigades supported by a battalion of 25-pounders and 23 antitank guns. But it was not enough. Even though the Egyptians had shifted their defenses to meet the attack of the Israeli armored task force, the vast complex of military camps fell to the equivalent of a battalion of Israeli tanks and armored infantry in only an hour.

After the main base fell, the Egyptians continued to fire on Bren's armored task force with artillery from another fortified position to the east, and more Egyptian tanks moved down from the direction of El Arish. Bren's own tanks, assisted by a flock of Israeli fighter-bombers, held both threats at bay. At this point, a second Israeli armored task force was to have passed through Bren's column to reduce the Ruefa Dam position. Before it could move out from blocking positions at the head of Deika Pass, news arrived that a large part of Egypt's only tank brigade—two T-34 medium tank battalions, a company of SU-100 assault guns, and a battalion of mechanized infantry—was moving along the main road from Ismailia toward Abu Ageila. Immediately, Ben-Ari added a bevy of mobile supporting arms to the second task force and set off hastily down the road to Ismailia. On reaching the major road junction at Jebel Libni, about 15 miles west of Abu Ageila, Ben-Ari halted his force and dug in to stop the oncoming Egyptians.

As it turned out, the Egyptian force never reached Jebel Libni. Israeli fighter-bombers caught it on the open road about 30 miles west of Ben-Ari's ambush and destroyed or disabled many T-34s, SU-100s, and APCs. When Ben-Ari heard that the survivors had begun a bloody withdrawal back toward the canal, he mounted his force to chase them down. Ben-Ari's armored task force never caught up with the retreating Egyptians, but it did advance to within 10 miles of the Suez Canal before it was ordered to stop. Along the way, it easily swept aside several roadblocks the Egyptians had set up to delay it. (This swift, effective advance argued strongly in favor of an independent role for armor within Zahal's war-fighting doctrine. Hitherto, Israeli armor had been a mere adjunct to the infantry, something

The Israeli offensive in the Sinai reversed logical military order by attempting to take the farthest objective (Milta Pass) first, and the Straits of Tiran, the main objective, last.

that Ben-Ari had been vociferously—some would say obnoxiously—fighting for years.)

While Ben-Ari's armored task force had been moving west by way of the central route across the Sinai, a third 7th Armored Brigade task force had been moving to the west by a more southerly route. This task force was to have supported Bren's assault on Abu Ageila, but word arrived just before the attack that an Egyptian mechanized force was moving up from the southwest. The third task force went off to investigate the report and turn back the interlopers. After it had advanced all the way to Bir el-Hasana without finding any Egyptians, the force was ordered to continue to Mitla Pass to bolster the dug-in paratroopers.

While the other two segments of the 7th Armored Brigade were attacking to the west, Bren's victorious force was ordered, on the evening of October 31, to seize the Ruefa Dam defensive position. Bren's tanks and half-tracks moved out at sunset—right into the face of 19 entrenched antitank guns and six 25-pounder artillery pieces. As the Israeli tanks led the way into the Egyptian position, every one of them was struck at least once by antitank rounds and many were disabled. Bren refused to give up. Even after many of the Shermans ran out of ammunition, the attack bore down on the well-entrenched defenders, running directly over those who did not break and flee. As the halftracks followed the tanks across the Egyptian trenches, the armored infantrymen tossed hand grenades over the sides and sprayed foxholes with automatic weapons fire. The defenses cracked and the surviving Egyptians, who had fought bravely, fled or surrendered.

As the Israelis were scouring the abandoned defenses and taking stock of their own losses, Egyptian artillery from another strongpoint opened fire in support of an infantry counterattack from the Umm Katef position. The Israeli tanks and armored infantry easily repulsed the last-ditch attempt, but Bren's tanks had been rendered virtually ineffective by lack of ammunition and spare parts.

On the morning of November 1, Simchoni reluctantly committed his last reserve infantry brigade to capturing Umm Katef by direct frontal assault. Simchoni had been forced to commit the infantry to a risky frontal assault on a powerful position to open a direct line of supply to the three divergent components of the 7th Armored Brigade. Not only had Bren's task force been rendered *hors de combat* by lack of ammunition and maintenance, but the two mobile task forces to the west were losing increasing numbers of tanks and half-tracks due to similar equipment failures. Since Bren was no longer able to fight through from the west, Simchoni was obliged to commit the infantry to clear the Umm Katef bottleneck from the east.

Two Egyptian outposts between Nitzana and Umm Katef fell to the 10th Reserve Infantry Brigade's reconnaissance group almost without bloodshed, but after the unit was reinforced by an infantry company and sent forward toward Umm Katef itself, the Egyptians delivered a bloody repulse. The stunned Israeli brigade commander went more or less to ground for the rest of the day.

As Simchoni hectored the 10th Reserve Brigade to get on with it, two battalions of infantry attempted to deliver a night attack against Umm Katef's northern and southern flanks. Both units, predictably, went astray in the dark. One of them finally found Umm Katef, but only after sunrise, by which time the Egyptian artillery was able to blow it off the battlefield. The second battalion missed Umm Katef altogether and settled for capturing a small outlying position. Simchoni and Dayan, following the action closely, were not impressed. The brigade commander was replaced on the spot and two armored infantry task forces of the 37th Reserve Armored Infantry Brigade were ordered up to resume the assault.

The Israeli tanks and armored infantrymen attacked Umm Katef frontally. In the course of

yet another bloody repulse, the brigade commander was killed while leading a futile last-ditch assault. As the Israeli survivors pulled back, the Egyptians, perhaps convinced that they were about to be cut off, slipped away during the night. The next morning, after clearing routes through the Egyptian minefields, the 37th Reserve Armored Infantry Brigade captured Umm Katef without further loss of life.

While the fighting was raging in the center, an Israeli divisional task force commanded by Brig. Gen. Chaim Laskov and consisting of the 1st Infantry Brigade and the 27th Reserve Armored Infantry Brigade opened an attack through Rafah to seal off the southwestern end of the Gaza Strip. Launched just after midnight on November 1, the meticulously planned attack by one armored infantry and four infantry battalions quickly ran afoul of Egyptian minefields, but the commanders were able to improvise a path that carried their forces into and through the Egyptian defenses. By dawn, Laskov's main body was in the clear on the coastal highway, bound for the main Egyptian headquarters at El Arish. That afternoon the Egyptians mounted a strong defense at Jiradi Pass. By the time the Israelis overran the pass, it was late in the day. Dayan had become unnerved by reports that the Egyptians were holding El Arish in considerable strength. Not wanting to risk heavy casualties, he ordered Laskov to stop a few miles east of El Arish and spend the night preparing to deliver a major assault.

When the attack was renewed at 0600 on November 2, the 27th Reserve Armored Infantry Brigade spearhead entered the city virtually without a fight. From there, Laskov raced almost to the Suez Canal, rolling up retreating Egyptians along the way. At the same time, two reserve infantry brigades supported by the 37th Reserve Armored Infantry Brigade were launching their attack on the city of Gaza. While 120mm mortars and tank guns dropped shells on the stoutly defended ridges that dominated the sprawling city, an armored infantry battalion and a squadron of tanks broke through the Egyptian main line of defense. An Israeli infantry battalion then entered the city on foot to mop up Egyptian defenders, most of whom were eager to surrender. At noon the city's governor capitulated, and the bulk of the Egyptian Army garrison followed suit.

The Israeli attackers met resolute resistance only at Khan Yunis. There a brigade of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) refused to bow to reality—Israelis held all of the Gaza Strip to the north, south, and east of them—and it took until the afternoon of November 3 for an Israeli reserve infantry brigade and armored combat team to secure the town.

By prior arrangement, Israel had already accepted a disingenuous October 30 Anglo-French ultimatum that all Egyptian and Israeli forces remain clear of a *cordon sanitaire* extending 10 miles on either side of the Suez Canal. While British and French forces, as planned, occupied the "demilitarized" zone, Israeli brigades advancing along the coastal and central highways hounded the disintegrating Egyptian Army all the way across Sinai before halting on November 3. At the same time, a pincer force consisting of the 202nd Parachute Brigade and a fresh reserve infantry contingent closed on Sharm-el-Sheikh. Following a huge air strike on November 4, the two Israeli brigades moved into the battered city and effectively reopened the Straits of Tiran. The last Egyptian holdouts in Sinai and Gaza surrendered or withdrew on November 5.

Militarily, the Suez-Sinai campaign was a great success for Israel, but politically the adventure was a fiasco. England and France, under pressure from the United States, were forced to withdraw their forces from the region in mid-November, and a United Nations peacekeeping force moved into the Sinai in their place. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden resigned in disgrace two months later, and the seeds were planted for a rebellion of French Army officers a year later that toppled the nation's Fourth Republic and returned Charles de Gaulle to power. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the so-called "Muslim Mussolini," emerged as hero in the Arab world and, most ominously, Palestinians within Israel began the first faint stirrings of social unrest that would ignite into a continuing and as yet uncontained forest fire of rebellion whose flames would be felt as far away as the World Trade Center in New York City. ■

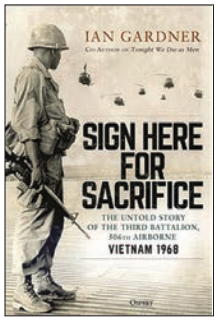
ABOVE: An infantry group advances down a dusty road towards Rafah in the Gaza Strip. BELOW: A burnt-out T-34 tank stands testament to the fierce combat in the Sinai.

Alamy

The 506th Parachute Infantry served with courage and determination during the Vietnam War.

By Christopher Miskimon

Climbing a ridge, Phil Vernon spotted wisps of smoke coming from somewhere below. The paratrooper from Company A of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment was in Vietnam in December 1967 and the unit was participating in "Operation Klamath Falls." They had spent most of the day on a Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP), visiting villages along Highway 1. Many children in the area suffered from an eye disease called trachoma. If left untreated, it could lead to blindness. Medics went through all the medicine they had on hand to help the villagers, though many seemed unimpressed by the charitable effort.



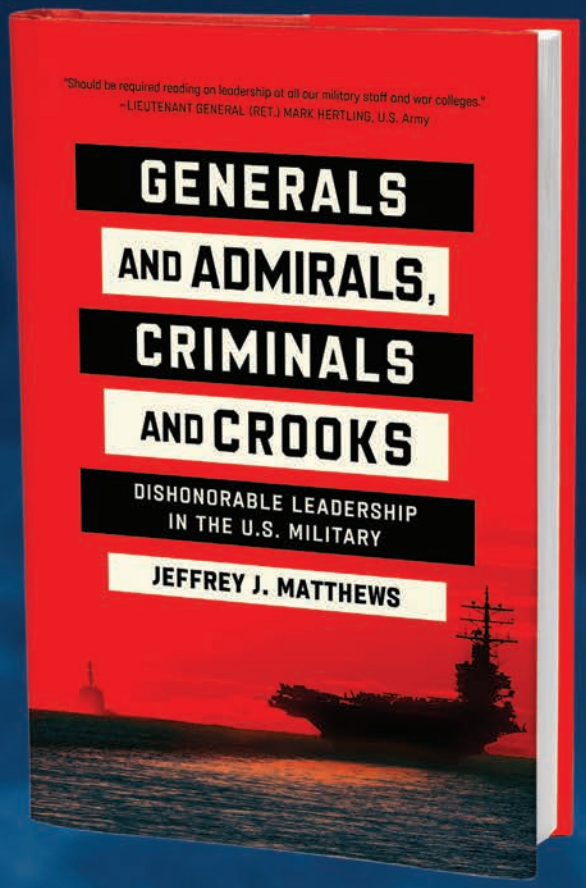
Vernon summoned another soldier, Sergeant Andy Rivera, known as a dependable fire team leader in his company. They contacted their platoon leader, Lt. Jim Schlax, who ordered them to take a closer look at the source of the smoke. Rivera led the way down the ridge, silently moving through a rock formation. Along the way, he noticed the distinctive odor of fish oil, commonly used in Vietnamese cooking. Rivera led his squad along a small gully and onto a ledge from which they could get a better look at the terrain below. Scanning the low ground, they spotted a campfire. Rivera moved along the ledge for a better look and soon spotted three more campfires. Around them, about a dozen Viet Cong were lazily perched, eating lunch.

As the Americans watched one of the Viet Cong stood up and walked a few paces before tripping and falling. His comrades laughed at his clumsiness, but stopped when the man raised his hand and pointed up toward Rivera on the ledge. The young American sergeant wasted no time. He fired a quick burst at the man who had spotted him and lobbed several grenades at the clustered Viet Cong. The Vietnamese fighters scattered, abandoning much of their equipment and leaving behind two dead men. Within moments, however, the Viet Cong returned for their fallen men and more shooting broke out, forcing Rivera to take cover.

Helicopter insertion of a combat team. Soldiers with Company D, 3rd Battalion, 506 Infantry, 101st Airborne Division deploy from a UH-1D Huey helicopter in Vietnam in 1970

He saw another enemy fighter emerge from a cave and fired at him. The Viet Cong fell dead. The firefight died out and the surviving enemy troops withdrew. Rivera went into the cave and found some journals and a stock of medical supplies. Outside, his squad collected two rifles and seven carbines from the campsite area. Nearby, an American soldier named John Harrison found another, much larger cave. This one had sleeping accommodations for 40 people and was well furnished. He also recovered 400 pounds of rice, originally sent as aid by the U.S. Government.

The unit spent the next two days searching for their elusive enemy, to no avail. The terrain was swampy and difficult to traverse. For many, this



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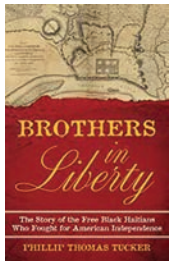
was typical of the war in Vietnam; long stretches of time without enemy contact punctuated by brief periods of intense combat. The experiences of one infantry unit are chronicled in ***Sign Here for Sacrifice: The Untold Story of the Third Battalion, 506th Airborne Vietnam 1968*** (Ian Gardner, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2023, 304 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $30, hardcover)

The 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment is famous as the unit of the famed "Band of Brothers" of World War II fame. This book focuses on a battalion of this regiment during the Vietnam War. The author has collected many accounts and interviews from veterans of the battalion and woven them into a coherent narrative of the time around the Tet Offensive. The book is well organized and does justice to its subject. Bravery and dedication are qualities which belong to soldiers of every generation, not just those of World War II or earlier. The soldiers whose stories are revealed in this book were the equal of their forefathers and it is fitting to see them get their due.

Brothers in Liberty: The Forgotten Story of the Free Black Haitians Who Fought for American Independence (Phillip Thomas Tucker, Stackpole Books, Essex CT, 2023, 352 pp., notes, $34.95, hardcover)



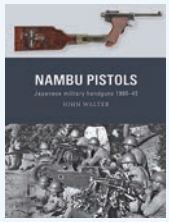
When British fortunes waned in the north during the American Revolution, they turned their attention south. They formed an expeditionary force which sailed from New York to Savannah, Georgia, which they captured in 1778. The city became a base of operations for the British in the region. To eliminate this threat, an international force attacked Savannah, consisting of Americans, French, Poles, Germans, Irish – and significantly a volunteer force of free Blacks from Haiti. They were the largest Black military unit in the war, the *Chasseurs-Volontaires de Saint-Domingue*. At Savannah, they formed the reserve during the assault, and after the French and American units were thrown back, the Haitians held their ground, launched a counterattack, and then stopped a British counterattack, rescuing the situation. Many of the Haitians who survived went on to fight in the Haitian Revolution, helping found the first Black republic in history.

The service the Black Haitian unit performed for the cause of liberty in the Western Hemisphere has never been fully appreciated, and is indeed unknown even to many students of military history. The author does excellent work correcting this imbalance with a detailed and well-written account of the Chasseurs' military exploits. The tale of the role these men played in the creation of the United States is informative and enlightening.

White Sun Star: The Campaign for Taiwan (Mick Ryan, Casemate Publishers, Havertown PA, 2023, 340 pp., maps, $22.95, softcover)

Taiwan has been a potential flashpoint for conflict between the United States and communist China since the 1950s. In this new novel, that simmering tension explodes into open warfare when China invades Taiwan in 2028. Fighting rages on the ground, at sea and in the air as well as the relatively new frontlines in both orbital space and cyberspace. New weapons come into play, such as drone swarms, robotic fighting vehicles and hyper-

SHORT BURSTS

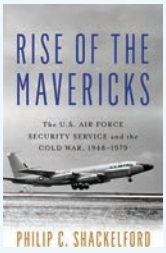


Nambu Pistols: Japanese Military Handguns 1900-45 (John Walter, Osprey Publishing, $23, softcover) The Nambu is the iconic Japanese pistol. This new work covers the development and use of various Nambu models.

100 Greatest Battles (Angus Konstam, Osprey Publishing, $20, hardcover) The author has chosen 100 battles important for their decisiveness, impact, or innovation. Each battle summary is accompanied by detailed artwork.

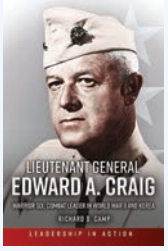
Vietnam Combat: Firefights and Writing History (Robin Bartlett, Casemate Books, 2023, $37.95, hardcover) The author served as a junior officer in the 1st Cavalry Division starting in 1968. This memoir relates his experiences.

Target Saigon: 1973-75 Volume 4: The Final Collapse, April – May 1975 (Albert Grandolini, Helion & Company, 2022, $29.95, softcover) This final volume concludes the series with a look at the final battles for South Vietnam, as Communists forces finally conquered in their decades-long war.



Rise of the Mavericks: The U.S. Air Force Security Service and the Cold War, 1948 - 1979 (Philip C. Shackelford, Naval Institute Press, 2023 $34.95, hardcover) The history of how the USAF Security Service became a leading communications intelligence organization during the Cold War.

SOG Kontum: Top Secret Missions in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, 1968 – 1969 (Joe Partner and Robert Dumont, Casemate Books, 2023, $37.95, hardcover) Members of SOG were long prohibited from speaking of their activities. With passage of time, their stories can now be known.



Lieutenant General Edward A. Craig, Warrior Six: Combat Leader in WWII and Korea (Richard D. Camp, Casemate Books, 2023, $37.95, hardcover) Craig spent over 30 years in the Marine Corps. This book chronicles his extensive combat experience.

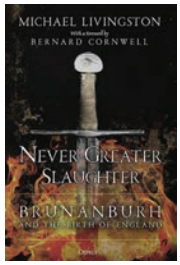
Black Space: The Nazi Superweapons that Launched Humanity into Orbit (David Axe, Pen and Sword Books, 2023, $34.95, hardcover) After World War II, German scientists served both the U.S. and Soviet Union in the Space Race. This book covers the various ways in which they contributed.

Elizabeth's Navy: Seventy Years of the Postwar Royal Navy (Paul Brown, Osprey Publishing, 2023, $60, hardcover) The Royal Navy shrank considerably after World War II but retained its professionalism and ability. This coffee-table books highlights this evolution.

sonic missiles. At the war's heart, however, are thousands of Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Space Guardians. They plan, control and deploy the new weapons and for some, still face the enemy on the battlefield.

With tensions between the United States and China seemingly on the rise, this novel provides the reader with a view of what a conflict around Taiwan might look like. The author is a retired Australian Army general with long experience in the Pacific region and the narrative incorporates his extensive knowledge of how such a war might occur. The book is written partly as though it is a history created after the war ended, and the author clearly understands the changes in warfare which the latest technology creates. Parts of it are reminiscent of the classic 1978 bestseller, *The Third World War* by General Sir John Hackett, updated for the 21st Century.

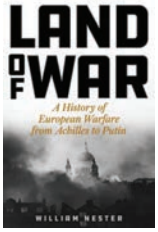
Never Greater Slaughter: Brunanburh and the Birth of England (Michael Livingston, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2023, 224 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $18, softcover)



England was born in AD 937 at the Battle of Brunanburh. An army led by Viking and Celtic kings from Ireland, Scotland and Strathclyde gathered to destroy the rising power of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of England. The Anglo-Saxon force, led by King Athelstan, defeated them; accounts refer to the killing of five kings and seven earls from among the enemy ranks. Battle in that time and place was a clash of shield walls. Warriors on both sides would hack and slash at each other hoping to pierce the shield wall; then the real slaughter could begin. At Brunanburh the English split their enemy's shield wall and cemented the existence of England as a nation.

Brunanburh is one of the most important battles in history, but even many knowledgeable students of military history have never heard of it. Awareness of the battle faded over the centuries until even its exact location was lost, though some archaeologists believe they have found it in recent years. The author gathers what is known of Brunanburh along with what can reasonably be inferred and makes an interesting and compelling argument for his account.

Land of War: A History of European Warfare from Achilles to Putin (William Nester, Stackpole Books, Essex CT, 2023, 488 pp., maps, charts, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover)



As long as human beings have lived on the European continent there have been wars on it. They began with stones and flint axes and progressed through bronze, iron and eventually steel weapons, but the advent of gunpowder changed the nature of combat from a largely face to face struggle to one of ever-increasing distances. With improvements in technology, bureaucracy and finance, the ability of European states to create, train, equip and move large military forces grew exponentially. Eventually, in the 20th Century, European warfare became so deadly it enabled the two most deadly wars in human history. Atomic weapons raised the stakes and in the 21st Century cyber warfare has brought a new dimension, although the current war in Ukraine is mainly fought on the battlefield with a mix of new weapons such as drones and hypersonic missiles and long-existing arms such as tanks, artillery and aircraft.

This new book shows how the history of Europe is the history of warfare, to the point where the continent's sense of itself is intertwined with its military heritage. The author touches on the major battles with lasting effects for Europe, demonstrating their significance. This is a good book for understanding the "big picture" about Europe's development and rise through the centuries. The chapters are dotted with useful tables of numbers and facts to reinforce the text.

Tannenberg 1914: Destruction of the Russian Second Army (Michael McNally, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2023, 96 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $24, softcover))

A month after World War I began, as the French, British and German armies vied for a quick victory in France and the Low Countries, a fast-moving campaign evolved in the East, where the German and Russians maneuvered for advantage. The far greater distances on the Eastern Front meant the fighting stayed fluid and mobile; the front lines were simply too long to create the trench systems which would soon appear in the West. The Russian First and Second Armies attempted to destroy the German 8th Army in East Prussia using overwhelming numbers. Instead, the Germans fought several battles against the Russians before trapping large numbers of them at Tannenberg, where the Russian suffered a terrible defeat.

The author skillfully describes the factors which contributed to the Russian loss. Attention is paid to the swift and aggressive movements of the Germans, as well as the contributions of 20th century technologies such as radio, railroads and aerial reconnaissance. Typical of this series, it contains detailed information on key leaders, tables of organization for each army, good maps and extensive illustration, including original artwork specially commissioned for this book.

Conquer We Must: A Military History of Britain 1914 - 1945 (R.D. Hooker, Jr., Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2023, 298 pp., photographs, appendices, glossary, $34.95, hardcover)

The author enlisted in the U.S. Army at 18 in 1975. He later went to West Point and gained a commission. His operational service began on the island of Grenada in 1983. From there he proceeded to serve in Somalia, as an American responding to the Rwandan genocide, Bosnia, Kosovo, the Sinai, Iraq and Afghanistan. These overseas tours were punctuated by duty at the Pentagon, the White House, and teaching at West Point. On his way from private to colonel he commanded an airborne company, a battalion and a brigade. By the time he retired from the military in 2010, he was the most decorated colonel in the army.

This memoir reveals the gamut of experience a military officer experiences during such a long career. It is a story of training, maturing, leading and learning. It is also a story of combat and the years of preparation an officer undertakes to prepare for the crucible of battle. This book shows the reader a perspective ranging from the tactical and operational sides of war, to the policy and planning decisions made at the highest levels of government. The author does not withhold praise or pull his punches when describing interactions with his fellow officers or politicians.

Mongol Warrior Versus European Knight: Eastern Europe 1237-42 (Stephen Turnbull, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2023, 80 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $23, softcover)

The Mongols had conquered most of Central Asia by 1237, overwhelming the Rus before advancing west. In eastern Europe the invading Mongols encountered Christian mounted knights, both sides determined in their

By Joseph Luster

LAST TRAIN HOME AIMS TO DELIVER BLEAK, UNFORGIVING AND UNIQUE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Last Train Home

Genre: Strategy • Platform: PC
Publisher: THQ Nordic • Available: TBD

When it comes to war games, there's no situation that can truly be described as anything but bleak and unforgiving, though we often see all the shades imaginable in the various era-spanning depictions across many genres. *Last Train Home* is another unique example, as publisher THQ Nordic and developer Ashborne Games aim to offer a mission fraught with peril in the devastating setting of the civil war between Russia's Red and White Armies following the events of World War I. *Last Train Home* doesn't have a specific release date at the time of this writing, but with strategy and resource management at its core it's already showing plenty of promise.

The story puts you in the shoes of Czechoslovak soldiers as they attempt to return home onboard an armored train, and the real challenge comes in ensuring your squad has enough resources to survive the trip. Over the course of the mission you'll zip across Siberia with an exhausted crew at your command in a brutal environment, as the horrors of war echo all around you. Training your soldiers effectively will have them ready to take on the real-time battles littered throughout the campaign, and the decisions made in the process will determine their fate.

That training involves things like acquiring new and more effective equipment, unlocking new skills and more, and you'll be treated to expanded stories for members of your crew as you progress. Beyond combat, each member of the squad has their own unique role that can be assigned on the train, from taking care of other wounded soldiers to crafting items and boosting overall morale. The train itself is customizable, too, with upgrades available for different sections and maintenance tasks waiting to be performed to ensure a smoother journey.

There aren't many games that take inspiration from the historical events surrounding the Czechoslovak Legion and their attempt to return to their newly-formed republic after World War I, and we're always keeping our eyes peeled for fresh takes on these harrowing tales. Closed Beta test sign-ups opened back near the end of July 2023, so we should know more about how everything plays out by the time this issue is in your hands.

Stronghold: Definitive Edition

Genre: Strategy • Platform: PC • Publisher: FireFly Studios • Available: November 2023

Those looking to relive—or try for the very first time—one of the more celebrated real-time strategy war games of the last couple decades will soon be able to do so in the form of *Stronghold: Definitive Edition*. The latest release of the BAFTA-nominated game that originally launched on PC back in 2001 is on the way from FireFly Studios in November 2023, giving us all another crack at the now-vintage (hey, we don't make the rules!) castle sim.

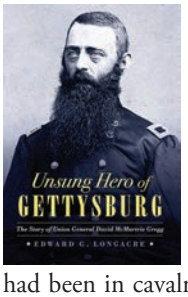
Stronghold whisks us away to medieval England and tasks players with breaking through defensive lines to capture enemy castles and reunite a scattered kingdom. As you build your ultimate fortress, you'll need to fend off incoming enemy assaults and balance city building with both offense and defense throughout. All told, two classic campaigns are present with 26 single-player missions, as well as a brand new narrative campaign from FireFly Studios founders Simon Bradbury and Eric Oullette. The new campaign comprises 14 missions that take your forces on a mission to find Sir Longarm's captured kin across the English hinterland. There's also a new historical "Castle Trail" with 10 unique scenarios, so there should be plenty for fans both new and old to explore when *Stronghold* returns.

The old visuals have seen dramatic rehauls—from textures and lighting to animation improvements—all from the original artists. *Stronghold: Definitive Edition* also lets you take the battle online with extra maps and full Steam multiplayer support, and it all looks to be updated regularly with community content from fans through Steam Workshop. No matter how well a game is executed, it's ultimately the players that keep it alive, so it should be interesting to see what all the creative minds out there do with this reinvigorated classic. ■

goals of conquest or defense. In 1241 the Mongol armies met a Polish army at Liegnitz and a Hungarian host at Muhi, the Christian armies bolstered by reinforcements from Western Europe. In 1242 the Mongols laid siege to the fortresses of Esztergom and Szekesfehervar. The region was devastated but the Mongols were not successful.

One of the latest volumes in Osprey's Combat Series, this edition delves into the recruitment, motivations and organization of the opposing forces. It also looks at their respective tactics, weapons, equipment, and command and control. Common to this series, the book includes specially created artwork and maps to accompany the many illustrations. The text is equally engaging, and very informative despite the book's compactness. An analysis chapter provides an excellent summary of the author's comparisons and descriptions. It is a good comparison of the Mongols who threatened Europe and the knights who ultimately helped keep them from doing so.

Unsung Hero of Gettysburg: The Story of Union General David McMurtrie Gregg (Edward G. Longacre, Potomac Books/University of Nebraska Press, 2023, 316 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)



General David McMurtrie Gregg, born in Pennsylvania and educated at West Point, became one of the most capable and successful cavalry officers on either side during the American Civil War. Before the conflict began much of his field experience had been in cavalry operations and he took to them naturally. He served with distinction during the Peninsula, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Bristoe, Overland and Petersburg campaigns. Gregg rose to command the Second Division of the Army of the Potomac's Cavalry Corps. The most important action of his career came at Gettysburg, however, when he led his own brigade and that of George A. Custer's to defeat an attempt by the Confederate Cavalry under J.E.B. Stuart to flank right and attack the rear of the Union Army as it faced Pickett's Charge on the last day of the battle. Unlike glory seekers such as Custer and Stuart, Gregg did his job effectively and without the need for personal recognition.

This biography does justice to one of the lesser-known cavalry officers of the Civil War, one who deserves more appreciation than he ever got. The author succeeds in removing the cloak of anonymity which Gregg pulled over himself to show who he was and how he served his country and cause so effectively. The book is both detailed and well researched. ■

Roncevalles

Continued from page 83

could not reach the Vascones. In the maze of mountain walls an oliphant blast would hardly have been heard around the next few bends in the trail, let alone by the king some eight miles ahead. Meanwhile even a few cart horses downed by spears, arrows or a landslide, or wagons smashed by boulders, made a perfect roadblock, completely cutting off the trail and allowing a handful of men to hold off an entire army, let alone the forward half of Charlemagne's.

Einhard claimed the Vascones "rushed down from their vantage ground into the valley below and threw themselves upon the trailing section of the baggage, and on those who were marching with it for its protection."

The *Annales Regni* reported, "Although the Franks were obviously their betters in arms and valor, they nevertheless suffered a defeat due to the unfavorable terrain and the unequal method of fighting."

In the tight confines of the single-lane battlefield the Vascones' light gear gave them extra speed and agility over the heavily encumbered Franks. The sheer momentum of the tribesmen plunging downhill into them would have been enough to drive them just a few steps off the trail, which meant tumbling down the steep slopes to be battered to death against the rocks and trees, smashed at the bottom, or drowned in the river. Einhard wrote, "The Vascones attacked them in a hand-to-hand fight and killed them all to a man."

The Paladins' horses and armor could not save them in this fight. The *Annales* recorded, "In this engagement a great many officers of the palace, whom the king had given positions of command, were killed."

No one actually knows the manner of Roland's end, glorious or otherwise, because no witnesses survived to tell of it. It is only the seneschal Eggihard's death, recorded in the chronicles as Thursday, August 15, 778, that so much as marks the date of the Battle of Roncesvalles, and only the dispositions of the dead were left to tell the tale.

The surrounding high peaks soon cut off daylight. As evening fell the Vascones looted the baggage train and, before the main Frankish force could intervene, vanished into the Pyrenees. The Poeta Saxo wrote, "They were very familiar with the heights of the mountains, the retreats of the woods, and the depths of the valleys. Imminent night made it impossible to track them down thus scattered in flight, and so no vengeance could follow."

If Charlemagne wept over news of the defeat, he did not do it over Roland's body but from a nearby valley, known thereafter as Valcarlos, which is the closest he got before night fell. The bodies of the Frankish dead were dumped into one of the rock grottoes which riddle the mountains. In later years a church was built over the site, where 1,000 years later the pit was still said to be full of human bones. The Saxon poet wrote, "The fact that so great a crime remained unavenged brought a cloud of sadness over the king's mind which his many previous successes had made serene," and the *Annales Regni* concurred: "To have suffered this wound shadowed the king's view of his success in Spain."

In the morning Charlemagne hurried northward to engage those other rebels, the Saxons. He never returned to Roncesvalles or tried to tame Vasconia. In AD 800 he was crowned as the first Western Emperor of the Romans in over 300 years, and in doing so established what some historians have dubbed the "Carolingian Renaissance," an era of stability, prosperity and learning. He is remembered as the *Pater Europae*, the Father of Europe. His courtier Einhard called Roncesvalles merely "a reverse which he experienced through the treason of the Vascones on his return through the passes of the Pyrenees," but it would be the greatest defeat of Charlemagne's life.

Through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, right into the Baroque era, *Roland's Song* became what modern audiences would call a "tentpole franchise." By the 12th century it became the *Rolandslied*, the national poem of the new, Germanic Holy Roman Empire. The 13th century Scandinavian *Karlamagnús saga* devoted merely a chapter to him; by the 15th he achieved top billing over Charlemagne in the Norwegian *Roland og Magnus kongen*, "Roland and King Magnus." The Italians knew him as Orlando in *Orlando Innamorato*,"Orlando in Love," *Orlando Furioso*,"The Fury of Orlando," and the epic *La Spagna*,"Spain." When the story plots began running dry, the 14th century Franco-Venetians even rebooted him as an Arthurian-style knight-errant in *Entrée d'Espagne*, "Entry to Spain." Roland transformed into a superhero. Various Basque villages, some 20 miles from Roncesvalles, still boast giant stones said to have been cast there by him in his anger. "Roland's Breach," a cleft in the mountains some 9,000 feet up, is said to be where he struck Durendal against the stone, even though it's some 50 miles from the battle site.

Oliver likely never existed, Tilpin didn't die at Roncesvalles but lived well into the 790s, and whether Roland's death was glorious or ignominious matters little. What matters is that he died for something greater than himself, and in a barbarian Europe struggling to re-attain imperial civilization, that set an example. *The Song of Roland* is less important for its accuracy than for its effect. It inspired medieval French aristocracy, and through them the aristocracies of the Western world, toward the highest goals of honesty, bravery and chivalry. ■

Alexander

Continued from page 75

downriver aboard 2,000 vessels. It was a nine-month journey along the Jhelum, Chenab and Indus rivers, and the fighting was not over.

Several times the Greeks had to fight their way through cities whose residents did not trust them sufficiently to grant them peaceful passage. In one brouhaha, Alexander, furious at the lackadaisical performance of his soldiers during the siege of the city of Mallians, grabbed a ladder and climbed an inner wall of the citadel, followed only by two bodyguards. The stunned soldiers all tried to follow their leader at once and the ladder broke under their weight. His army quickly breached the ramparts and swarmed into and through the city, to find their leader prostrate in the town square with an arrow embedded in his chest.

Carefully carrying him semiconscious back to their bivouac, his troops believed the still form might be dead. Alexander ordered the arrow removed, but his men were afraid to try to cut it out. One of his generals, Perdiccas, is said to have finally removed the arrow. Alexander's life hung in the balance for days and rumors of his death spread among his troops, who believed only he could lead them home. Finally, to calm the fearful men, the recovering Alexander was put on a boat and floated down the river for all to see.

Continuing downriver to the Arabian Sea, Alexander sent part of the mixed multitude homeward by ships along the coastline. Since there were not enough boats for everyone he personally led the remainder on a miserable march across the Baluchistan desert. Suffering was quick and intense as soldiers soon exhausted their reserves of food and water and were compelled to butcher their pack animals for food, and then burn their baggage and wagons to keep warm during bone-freezing nights. Without a means of transporting their plunder, most of it was abandoned.

The merciless desert with its killing temperature extremes between day and night was an enemy even this peerless horde could not fight. Thirst was the main problem. Sensing their leader was nearing the end of his tether his men, at one point, took up a collection from their dwindling canteens and collected a helmet-full of water which they gave to him. With tears in his eyes he poured it out to signify he would suffer the same as them. They were as touched as he was. According to the historian Arrian, who accompanied the expedition, Alexander "poured it out in the sight of all. The army was so much heartened that it seemed every man had drunk."

Too much water soon became a problem as a flash flood struck the lengthy column, carrying away most of the camp followers while the troops barely escaped. Managing to reach the city of Bampur, the Greeks found food, water and momentary rest. Anxious to make it home they quickly headed for Persepolis, where Alexander found the occupation government he had installed in disarray. The Persian and Greek governors he had appointed had not expected him to return and were greedily overtaxing the populace and embezzling from the coffers. After executing these thieves and appointing new civic leaders he pressed on to Susa and took a major step toward assimilation of his empire's population.

He organized a mass wedding in which 10,000 of his men married Persian women, and 80 of his senior officers married Persian princesses. After giving all the nuptials lucrative dowries and with Roxane at his side he married Darius' daughter, Princess Barsine, as a second wife. As ambitious as ever, he laid plans for further expansion. He dispatched ships to reconnoiter the coastlines of Saudi Arabia and Africa, the marshland along the Iran-Iraq border, and to sail up the Tigris all the way to Opis. Between his own flagging health and his army's disillusionment both with the endless campaign and with their leader's increasing adoption of Persian ways—outside his pavilion they chanted, "Send us all home. You can campaign with your father Ammon"—his soldiers furthermore suspected he considered himself a god. They did not agree, and there would, in fact, be no more crusades.

Plagued by desertions, Alexander led his remaining soldiers into Babylon in the spring of 323 B.C. The arrow that had struck him in India had pierced a lung, and the wound had not healed. Added to this injury was his overdrinking, the strain of the past decade and a fever he had contracted in Susa. He could sense he was dying. Word quickly spread to his soldiers, who demanded to see him.

Too weak to stand or even sit had had himself propped up with pillows on a couch in his pavilion. For the next several hours his soldiers filed past him. He acknowledged every man with a word or a nod. He died the next day. Despite his untimely passing at 32 he achieved his stated purpose. "I set no limits of labors to a man of spirit, save only that the labors themselves lead on to noble enterprises," Arrian recorded. "It is a lovely thing to live with courage, and to die leaving behind an everlasting renown."

His empire encompassed one and a half million square miles, but without him it did not last long. The implications of his having lived longer are sobering. On the banks of Italy's Tiber River a new realm called Rome was making its first stirrings. Eventually it would absorb tottering Greece, and at the same time be profoundly influenced by it and by the truly Great Alexander. ■

Cedar Creek

Continued from page 43

Their assault proved too much for Gordon, who wrote that Sheridan's counterattack had rolled up his left flank "like a scroll."

"The suddenness of our onset made resistance impossible, and they fled before us, thus exposing the flank of the main line, upon which we now poured down with a still fiercer shout," wrote Captain Orton Clark of the 116th New York.

The VI Corps and Merritt, meanwhile, had renewed their assaults. Kershaw's men fought desperately until someone shouted that Federal cavalry were surrounding them. "In a moment our whole line was in one wild confusion, like pandemonium broke loose," wrote Dickert.

The Confederate soldiers belonging to generals Wharton and Pegram who had held out against Merritt's horsemen and Federal guns, eventually fell back on the Confederate right. Ramseur, though, resolved to continue fighting as Federal troops advanced against his division. When Ramseur received a mortal wound, his position collapsed.

By 5:30 p.m. the Confederates were in a full rout. The defeated graybacks splashed back across Cedar Creek. Early's troops tried one last time to make a stand, but the Federals prevailed. While the Federal infantry stopped their pursuit at the creek, the cavalry continued to gallop after Early battered and worn troops. A bridge over a stream near Strasburg became blocked by a couple of wagons creating a bottleneck. Federal troopers soon came upon the traffic jam finding artillery, wagons and ambulances filled with wounded all abandoned.

At Fisher's Hill the cavalry reined up their tired horses, ending the pursuit. The Federal victory had been costly as they lost 569 men killed, 3,425 wounded and 1,770 missing or captured. The butcher's bill for the Confederates, on the other hand, amounted to 1,860 killed or wounded and 1,200 captured.

As the Confederate trudged onward in the early hours of the 20th to put more distance between them and the victorious Bluecoats, Dickert noticed General Early "sitting on his horse by the roadside, viewing the motley crew as it passed by. He looked sour and haggard. You could see by the expression of his face the great weight upon his mind, the deep disappointment, his unspoken disappointment."

Disappointment indeed, what had been a promising start at Cedar Creek, with victory in his grasp, Early had not only lost the battle, but the Shenandoah Valley to the Federals. Lincoln had another victory to campaign on in the coming presidential election. ■

Remagen

Continued from page 53

ion's executive officer, two company commanders, three platoon leaders, and six platoon sergeants were among the dead and missing. In the 1058th Port Construction and Repair Group, its commander Major Carr was killed, seven men were missing, and six more were injured.

"The main reason for the collapse of the Ludendorff Bridge, most engineers believed, was the break in the bottom chord of the upstream truss from the German demolition charge of March 7. This forced the downstream truss to carry the whole load and subjected the entire bridge to a twisting action," wrote Captain James Cooke, structural engineering expert, "The strain on the truss was increased by the weight of the timber decking American engineers had added to the flooring, by continuous bridge traffic between 7 and 12 March, and by engineer repairs between 12 and 17 March—hammering, welding, and moving heavy cranes and trucks."

During the night of March 17-18, seven German combat swimmers from SS-Kampfschwimmergruppe entered the near-freezing waters of the Rhine. The men, who wore underwater breathing apparatuses, rubber suits, and fins, carried explosives intending to blow the pontoon bridge upriver from the already-collapsed Ludendorff Bridge. Struggling in the strong current, the exhausted frogmen were spotted by American searchlights and fired upon. Several Germans were hit and went under; the rest made it to the bank and were captured.

On March 20, the Germans brought up a super-heavy Karl-Gerät 600mm mortar. After firing 14 rounds at Remagen without significant effect, the weapon was withdrawn.

American presence east of the Rhine could no longer be characterized as a bridgehead but a full-scale breakthrough. Realizing the futility of further counterattacks, Model ordered Bayerlein to pull back. By March 22, leading American units cut the Ruhr-Frankfurt autobahn, allowing three armored divisions to break into operational maneuver space.

For their heroic actions, Lt. Timmermann, sergeants DeLisio and Drabik, and 10 others received the Distinguished Service Cross, and 152 men received the Silver Star.

"We were across the Rhine, on a permanent bridge; the traditional defensive barrier to the heart of Germany was pierced. The final defeat of the enemy, which we had long calculated would be accompanied in the spring and summer campaigning of 1945, was suddenly now, in our minds, just around the corner," was how Eisenhower described the "Miracle at Remagen" after the war. ■

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French counterattack stopped the Russian drive.

Such sangfroid in the face of mortal danger was typical of Larrey. During the siege of Acre, a bullet hit General Arrighi Casanova in the throat, tearing an artery. As copious amounts of blood pumped from the wound, a quick-thinking soldier literally plugged the hole with his finger. Larrey arrived on the scene and went to work immediately, though shot and shell still fell all around them. The surgeon saved Cassanova's life, and it was only after the wound was sewn and dressed that Larrey realized his own hat had been shot off.

Larrey was present during Napoleon's Spanish campaign in 1808, and was also on hand during the 1809 fighting in Austria. It was during the Battle of Aspern-Essling that Jean Lannes, one of Napoleon's Marshals and one of Larrey's closest friends, was badly wounded. A cannonball had smashed into his legs, mangling one of them so badly he could not stand. The Marshal was taken to Larrey, who saw that the left knee was shattered and there was a terrible bloody gash on the right thigh.

Normally Larrey was in control of his emotions, but the sight of his friend momentarily unnerved him. He summoned other surgeons for their opinions. It was decided that the left leg should be amputated, and Larrey, his customary calm restored, performed the operation. The leg was taken off in two minutes, then the marshal was transported to Lobau Island, in the middle of the Danube.

Lannes was at Lobau when a grief-stricken Napoleon came to visit. There seemed to be a genuine friendship between the two men—only Lannes could use *du*, the informal French "you," when speaking to the Emperor. As Napoleon embraced Lannes, he soaked his white waistcoat in the marshal's blood. Afterwards, Lannes admitted that he felt he was probably going to die, but said to Larrey, "If I am to live, only you alone can save me."

Unfortunately six days after his amputation Lannes developed septicemia—a bacterial infection—which probably led to sepsis, an infection which spreads throughout the body. The marshal developed a high fever, and died. Hidden bacteria had triumphed over Larrey's skills, but his triage system and flying ambulances proved their worth and saved lives.

Larrey also performed wonders on the Russian campaign. The Battle of Borodino was one of the bloodiest battles of the 19th century, and it was said that Larrey personally performed 200 amputations during the course of the day with little rest. He might have died during the terrible retreat from Moscow had it not been for the efforts of the common soldiers.

Larrey never wavered in his devotion to the wounded, and his loyalty to the Emperor. The surgeon continued to serve in 1813 and 1814, even as Allied armies closed in for the kill. When Napoleon abdicated in April, 1814, Larrey must have thought his days on active service were over forever. By then Larrey was universally respected, and even the restored Bourbons treated him well.

Nevertheless, when Napoleon returned from exile to begin the celebrated "100 days," Larrey had no qualms about rejoining his beloved Emperor. When Napoleon's attempt to reestablish himself on the French throne ended with his defeat at Waterloo, Larrey came within a hair's breadth of being executed by the Prussians in the aftermath of the French defeat.

Larrey tried to get his ambulances to safety, but they were blocked by Prussian lancers. Firing his pistols, Larrey went forward at the gallop to try and force a passage for the ambulances. In the confusion, Larrey's horse was killed and he received cuts—either from a sword or lance—on his head and shoulder. Falling to the ground, he lapsed into unconsciousness.

The surgeon was captured by the Prussians, and stripped of almost everything he had, including most of his clothes. Disheveled, barefoot, and bleeding profusely from the head wound, Larrey was in a bad way. No one knew who he was and orders were given to shoot him—he was a Frenchman, and the Prussians were out for revenge. A Prussian surgeon bandaged his head wound, but he was still earmarked to be summarily executed.

At the last minute he was recognized, spared, and sent on to General Friedrich Wilhelm von Bulow, who treated him kindly, gave him clothing, and sent him on to Field Marshal Blucher. Once again, Larrey's past good deeds had a role in saving his life—years earlier he had saved the life of Blucher's son.

Like many Bonapartists, Larrey was out of favor when the Bourbons returned in the wake of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. But after a few years, past political associations were forgotten, and Larrey not only had his pension restored, but was appointed a member of the distinguished Academy of Medicine that was established in 1820. He remained active, lecturing and performing duties as Surgeon-in-Chief of *Les Invalides* in Paris, the celebrated old soldier's home. He died in 1842, honored by all.

Dominique Jean Larrey is considered by many historians to be the first modern surgeon. The basic principles he laid down in the treat of wounded, like triage, are still practiced today. Napoleon remembered Larrey in his will, and once said that the surgeon was "the most virtuous man I ever knew." ■


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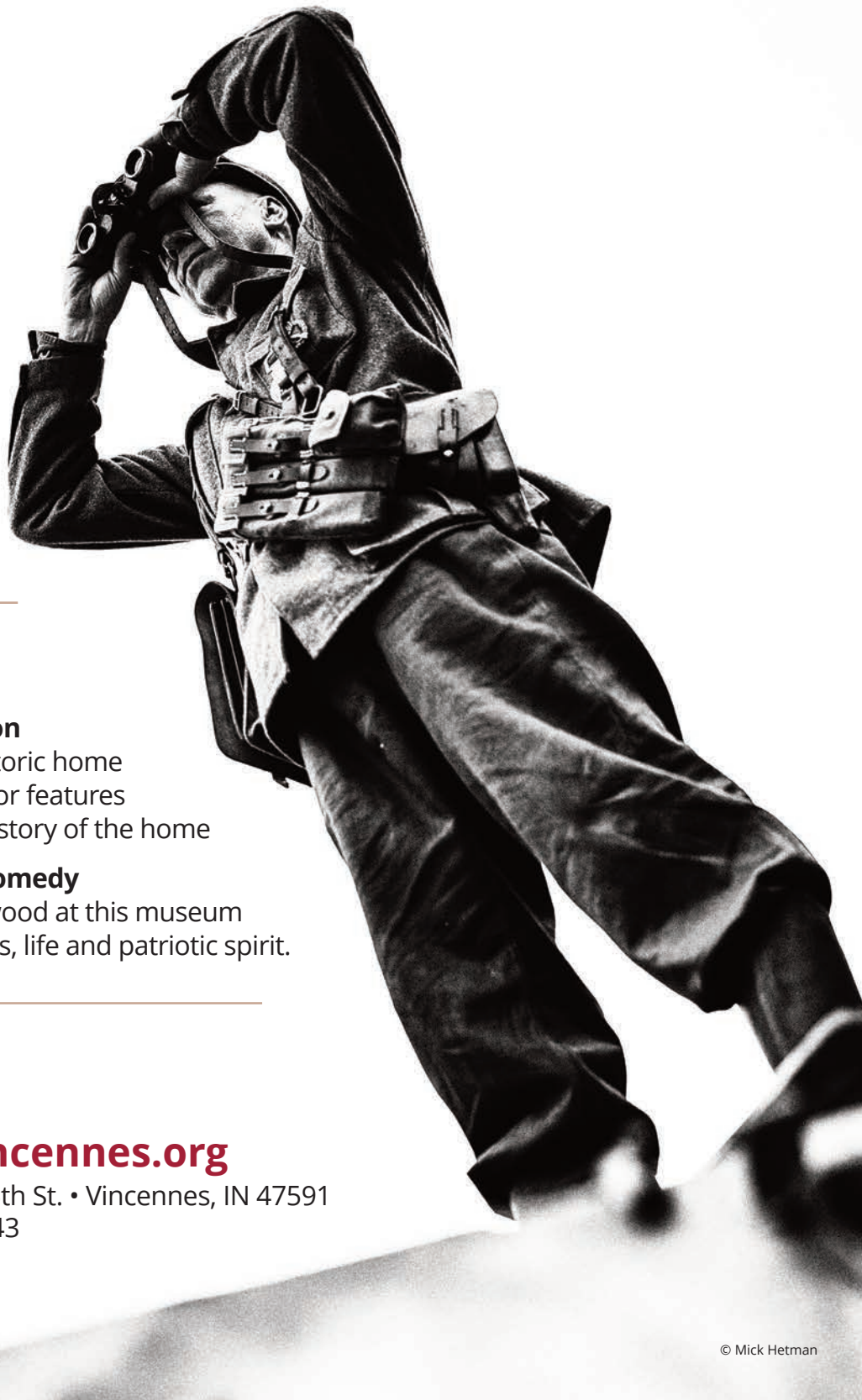
At the **Indiana Military Museum**, in Vincennes, Ind., relive the glory and the heartbreak of military battle. See aircraft, vehicles, artillery, uniforms and more spanning from the Civil War to present day at the museum recently featured on the History Channel hit show "American Pickers." In the museum's annex, tour immersive, life-sized scenes from the World War I trenches and home front, complete with sound effects. This museum is also completely handicapped accessible, all on one floor, for people of all abilities.



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