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WWII HISTORY

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Cover: Two soldiers from SS-Kampfgruppe Hanson are photographed soon after the unit attacked an American convoy on December 18, 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. A similar attack later that same day was made by another Kampfgruppe on another American unit. See story page 30. Photo: Alamy.

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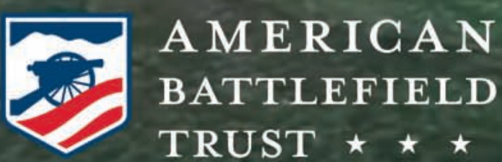

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Intrigue still surrounds Luftwaffe attack that killed all onboard a civilian DC-3—including actor Leslie Howard—in 1943.

On the morning of June 1, 1943, the Douglas DC-3 lifted off from the airport at Lisbon in neutral Portugal. BOAC Flight 777 or Dutch KLM Flight 2L272, as it had been designated, carried 13 passengers and its crew on a flight bound for London.

But the unarmed passenger plane was jumped while flying over the Bay of Biscay. Eight German Junkers Ju-88 maritime patrol fighters had taken off from their base near the French city of Bordeaux. Their rendezvous with the civilian flight ended in tragedy as a burst of cannon and machine-gun fire sent the DC-3 spinning into the Atlantic, killing everyone aboard.

The shootdown was the climax of a series of odd events that grabbed the attention of the world, not because a plane was lost—this was wartime after all—but because one of the casualties was actor Leslie Howard, one of the best-known screen performers of his time. Howard, a veteran of World War I, had taken up acting on the advice of a doctor to cope with the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He went on to achieve acclaim, primarily as Ashley Wilkes, the handsome Confederate suitor of Scarlet O'Hara in the blockbuster film *Gone With The Wind*. Howard had also earned Academy Award nominations for his roles in *Berkeley Square* and *Pygmalion*.

However, during the rise of the Nazis in the mid-1930s, another of Howard's films, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, had drawn the ire of German Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. The updated version of the literary classic substituted Nazis for villains as they attempted to stop political refugees from fleeing their regime with the assistance of Howard, the hero of the story.

Why was this particular civilian aircraft on this particular day targeted by the Luftwaffe for elimination? Some would say that it was simply an incident of war. Actually, though, a tacit agreement between the British and Portuguese governments had allowed these flights to continue while the Germans ostensibly left them alone because some of the traffic could be useful to them—agents flying in and out of the cities gaining useful intelligence and such.

Then, on April 19, 1943, this very DC-3, named *Ibis*, had been fired upon by German aircraft and barely escaped to land safely in Portugal. Despite the close call, the flights were continued without much concern given that such an incident was more or less bound to happen in war.

On that fateful June morning, Howard, having been to Portugal to promote his film distribution business and deliver a series of lectures on his film career, boarded the plane. Before leaving from London days earlier, he had expressed concerns to his wife, Ruth, noting "…a queer feeling about this whole trip, but what the hell! You know that I'm a fatalist anyway."

Also on the doomed flight was portly Arthur Chenall, a business associate of Howard's who smoked cigars and reportedly bore at least a passing resemblance to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Others included Kenneth Stonehouse, a reporter for Reuters News Service; Ivan Sharp, a mining engineer who had furthered British interests regarding the import of tungsten; Tyrrel Shervington, Shell Oil Company's top man in Lisbon; Wilfred Israel, a Jewish relief worker; and seven other men, women and children.

Prior to boarding, Stonehouse had misgivings. He lamented, "I'm normally not frightened, but somehow, I feel bad about this air trip. I wish that I could go to sleep here and wake up at some English airfield." Shervington had a disturbing premonition, a dream that he had died in the crash when the plane was shot down.

Aside from the fact that Howard's anti-Nazi activities had annoyed Minister Goebbels and other assertions that the actor may in fact have been serving as a British intelligence operative, might Nazi agents in Lisbon have spotted the rather rotund Chenall and mistaken him for Churchill, a tempting target indeed? Was it a case of revenge, a political hit, or simply an unfortunate crossing of aerial paths?

Some reports indicated that the German planes circled the wreckage after shooting down the DC-3, taking photographs to confirm that their mission had been executed. Smoking gun? Maybe.

The death of Leslie Howard and the other unfortunates aboard BOAC 777/KLM 2L272 remains one of the enduring mysteries of World War II.

—Michael E. Haskew, Editor

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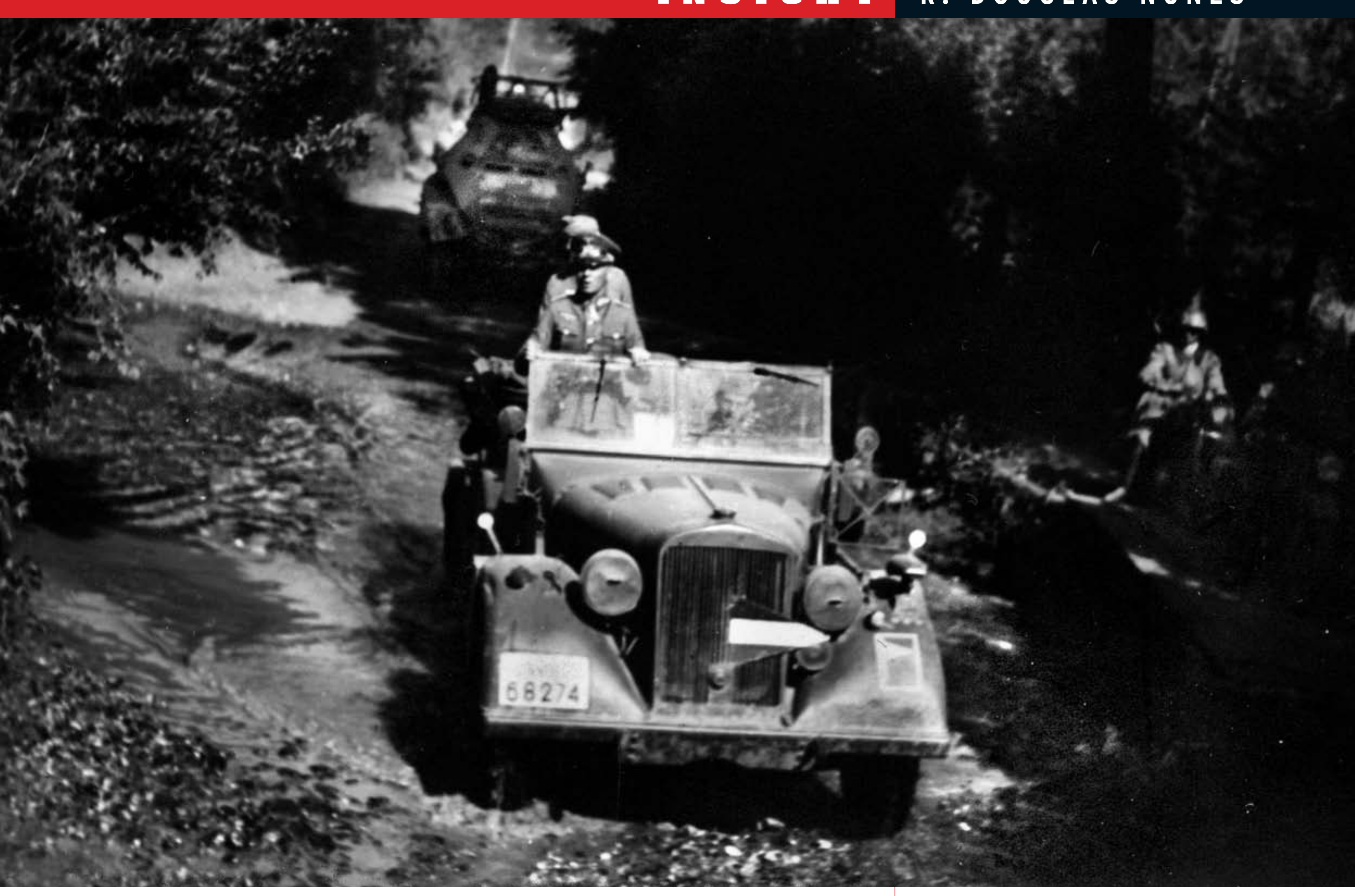

My dad was 'The Boy Who Got Rommel'—erroneously credited with killing the field marshal in 1944.

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the infamous "Desert Fox," was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Army Group B on the Western Front and put in charge of strengthening the Normandy coastal defenses.

In the months leading up to the Allies' D-Day invasion, Rommel ordered the construction of more bunkers and machine-gun emplacements, the laying of millions more land mines, and the installation of thousands more anti-landing-craft obstacles. Possible landing sites for gliders were either flooded or filled with upright posts known as "Rommel's asparagus." But it was not enough. The Allies came ashore, broke through the coastal defenses, and began pushing the Germans back.

On July 17, 1944, while traveling in his open-top staff car, Rommel was attacked by Allied warplanes and seriously wounded. Many stories have swirled around the identity of who actually deserves credit for the attack that put the former commander of the Afrika Korps hors de combat.

P-47 "Thunderbolt" pilot Harold O. "Hal" Miller—my father—was initially credited with shooting up Rommel's car, becoming known locally as "the Boy Who Got Rommel."

Born in 1924 in Galt, California, Miller grew up in Sonoma County, graduating from Santa Rosa High School in 1942. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force at 18, and trained as a fighter pilot. While in flight training in Alabama, he married his hometown sweetheart, Peggy Degner.

Arriving in England, he was assigned to the 352nd Fighter Squadron of the 353rd Fighter Group, stationed at RAF Raydon near Ipswich, England. The youngest pilot in the squadron at 20, he flew his first

In 1940, Major General Erwin Rommel commanded the Wehrmacht's 7th Panzer Division during the invasion of France. Here he rides in an open car in northern France. As one of Germany's most prominent personalities, killing or capturing him was one of the Allies' top priorities.

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ABOVE: Lieutenant Hal Miller smiles from the cockpit of his P-47 "Sniffles." The four swastikas denote that he had shot down four German aircraft to date. He would gain another two, making him an "ace." BELOW: The front page of the November 29, 1944, edition of the Santa Rosa (Cal.) *Press-Democrat* proclaimed—erroneously—that a local boy killed the infamous "Desert Fox." RIGHT: A poster that appeared in Santa Rosa to celebrate Miller's "accomplishment."

combat mission May 3, 1944, flying escort for B-17 bombers that were hitting targets in Germany. Over the next few weeks, he and the 352nd engaged in strafing missions on enemy trains, truck convoys, ground troops, and battled German aircraft in the skies.

He flew two missions over the D-Day beaches in his P-47 "jug" nick-named "Sniffles" and flew often during the next few weeks. He was once forced to make a crash landing on Sword Beach, near Caen.

On July 24, Miller reported that he had fired on a German officer's staff car; his gun camera confirmed that fact.

"I spotted the staff car coming down the road and I made a diving turn. When I got it in my sights within range, I let loose with all my guns. I was lucky and my first burst scored direct hits," Miller would later recall.

"The fuel tank exploded and it burst into flames. It left a trail of blazing gasoline for about 200 yards and then swerved into a ditch. Then it bounced into a field and I watched it. I came back for another look to make sure it was a goner."

But exactly who was in the staff car remained a matter of conjecture. On September 1, Army intelligence surmised that Miller's target on July 24 was probably Rommel.

After just four months in Europe, Miller was credited with destroying six enemy aircraft, with another "probable" and two damaged, 56 locomotives and 109 truck convoys. He was considered an "ace"—having destroyed five or more aircraft—and was awarded the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After flying 75 missions, Miller was rotated back to the States to serve as a flight instructor. He was given a ticker-tape parade in New York City and then went on a war-bond sales tour along with several Hollywood celebrities, including Bob Hope and Frances Langford.

Miller's exploits were front-page news. The Santa Rosa Press-Democrat headline

Death of the Desert Fox * * S. R. Flyer Bagged Rommel

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

88TH YEAR NO. 286 SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1944 2 SECTIONS—14 PAGES

S. R. FLYER HAILED FOR STRAFING RAID THAT KILLED GEN. ROMMEL

Patton's Third Army Within Eight Miles of Saarbrucken

Penetration of Reich Now 26 Miles as Nazis Retreat

U.S. DESTROYERS RAID ORMOC, LEYTE PORT

BAGGED 'FOX'

Lt. Harold Miller Tells Own Story As Secrecy Lifted

Flaming Doom of 'Desert Fox' Under Guns of Young Santa Rosan's Plane Substantiated By Motion Pictures, Enemy Admissions

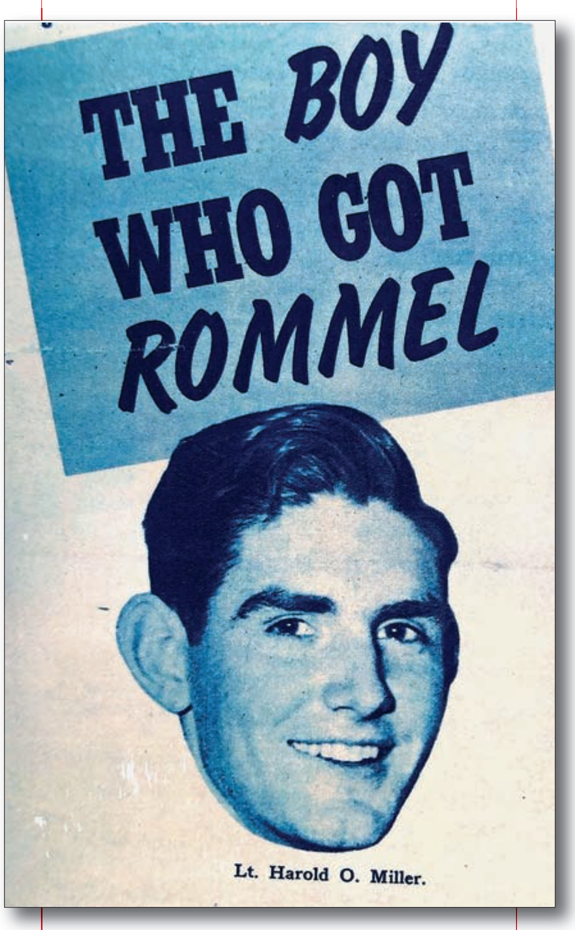
on November 29, 1944, proclaimed, "S.R. Flyer Hailed for Strafing Raid that Killed Gen. Rommel." The sub-head read, "Lt. Harold Miller Tells Own Story As Secrecy Lifted."

Unfortunately for Miller—in spite of news clippings to the contrary—he did not ultimately receive credit as the pilot who "got" Erwin Rommel.

Rommel was badly wounded in an aerial attack, but was not killed. He was hospitalized with serious head injuries and by August he was able to return to Germany to recover.

Instead of a hero's death on the battlefield, Rommel was implicated in the July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Though there is no evidence Rommel was actively involved in the plot, Hitler ordered his death. Given the choice of committing suicide or being executed and having his family persecuted, he chose cyanide on October 14, 1944, and was given a state funeral with full military honors.

So who did shoot up Rommel's car? Through extensive research, Reginald Byron, archivist at the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum in England, wrote in 2016: "The bare facts of the case, insofar as I have been able to establish some consensus about them from the sources I have seen, are that Rommel's car was attacked south of Livarot on the N179 in the direction of Vimoutiers near the village of Ste. Foy de Montgommery sometime between 5 and 7:30 p.m. [on July 17]. The aircraft appear to have been Spitfires. The car was forced off the road and Rommel was thrown out of it, suffering serious head injuries."



Byron has concluded through all the evidence he has been able to uncover that the pilots who attacked Rommel's Horch staff car were most likely Charley Fox of the Canadian 412 Squadron and Ed Priser, an American flying for the RCAF.

Since 1944, at least eight claims of responsibility for shooting up Rommel's car have been made, with that of Captain Ralph C. Jenkins of the 510th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, Ninth U.S. Air Force, being given the most credence. However, Byron's research seems to be the most conclusive.

So it wasn't my dad who killed the famous field marshal after all, but he enjoyed a brief moment spotlight. He left the Air Force in 1950 and worked as a Federal Civil Defense Manager for 35 years, before retiring to his 56-foot Morgan Catch in Florida and the Bahamas. He died in 2004. □

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A destroyer commissioned in 1921, the USS *Zane* served a generation later throughout the Pacific in World War II.

Much credit goes to the American ability to quickly manufacture the many ships and planes needed to fight the Pacific War and overwhelm the Japanese enemy. Less well known is the vital contribution made by ships from World War I that served during the century's second global war. These unsung heroes also did their bit to win the conflict of 1939-1945. Among them was a Clemson-class destroyer laid down at Mare Island Navy Yard, Vallejo, California, in 1919.

In February of 1921, she was commissioned and named *Zane* (DD-337) after Marine officer Randolph Zane, who died of his wounds at the 1918 Battle of Belleau Wood. At 1,190 tons (1,750 tons fully loaded) she equaled the size of other destroyers of her time. However, destroyers would soon grow in size and power.

After fitting out and a shakedown voyage, *Zane* was assigned to Destroyer Division 14, which left California in June 1921, and steamed across the Pacific to the Philippines to join the Asiatic Fleet. *Zane* spent a year in Philippine waters before moving on to China. There she visited Shanghai and the crew was given leave in the capital city of Peking (now Beijing).

In August of 1922, *Zane* made a goodwill visit to Nagasaki, Japan, future target of the second atomic bomb, dropped on August 9, 1945, ending World War II, on the first leg of her voyage back to California. There she was put into the Reserve Fleet. The brand new ships that came on line too late for World War I were "mothballed" in several ports. *Zane* was stored in San Diego, California. During World War I and afterward, 267 destroyers were built. After the war, up to 120 of them were kept in limbo, moored side by side in San Diego's Red Lead Row, as the area was called. Fifty old World War I destroyers would later be sent

TOP: In this painting by war artist John Hamilton, the Japanese light cruiser *Yubari* fires its main batteries and prepares to launch torpedoes as its searchlights illuminate distant U.S. ships on August 8, 1942, during the Battle of Savo Island. The USS *Zane* and four other minesweepers cleared the landing sites and screened the transports carrying U.S. Marines to the first ground offensive against the Japanese in World War II. INSET: Laying the keel for the USS *Zane* (DD-337) at Mare Island Navy Yard, January 15, 1919. The ship was launched in August of that year and commissioned in February, 1921.

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to Great Britain as part of Lend-Lease in the famous 1940 Destroyers-for-Bases Deal.

Zane was recommissioned in 1930 as a fleet destroyer. Meanwhile, new classes of destroyers were beginning to come available. The old"four pipers," so named because of their quartet of stacks, or "flush deckers," were being replaced on front line duty.

There was a need, however, for fast minesweepers. The older ships still had most of their design speed. *Zane* could steam at 35 knots if needed, while cruising speed was 15 knots. Eighteen of the World War I era destroyers, including *Zane*, were converted to that task. Eight others became minelayers, 14 were converted to seaplane tenders, and 32 were modified as fast transports.

The conversion work on *Zane* was done at Pearl Harbor and consisted of removing her torpedo tubes, replacing older 4-inch guns with new 3-inch dual purpose guns, and removing one of the four funnels. This made room for sonar gear and depth charge racks. The work was completed in November of 1940. She was no longer DD-337, but now designated as a "Destroyer Minesweeper" (DMS-14).

December 7, 1941, found *Zane* at rest on the north end of Pearl Harbor. She was quietly moored side by side in a nest with three of her sister ships, *Trever* (DMS-16), *Wasmuth* (DMS-15), and *Perry* (DMS-17). *Zane* was sandwiched between *Wasmuth* and *Perry*. On that lazy Sunday morning, 10 percent of her crew and 25 percent of her officers were enjoying shore leave.

At 07:57, a signalman on watch observed something odd. A single plane was making a long, slow glide toward the south end of Ford Island before dropping what looked like a bomb. Only as the plane flew off could the signalman see that it did not have American markings.

When the bomb exploded, it triggered the clarion call to battle stations throughout the sleepy fleet. *Zane* had a .50-caliber machine gun armed and was firing away in minutes. As a host of Japanese planes arrived from the north, *Zane*'s crew fired at any of them that came within range. The first wave of enemy planes disappeared before much resistance could be offered. All the while, *Zane* and most of the other ships began building up steam to get underway. *Zane* could not move until *Perry*, moored outboard of her, got underway.

This was still being sorted out when, at 08:30, a sailor observed a periscope moving through the water nearby. *Zane*'s gunners loaded a round in one of the ship's three-inch guns and attempted to train the barrel on the suspicious submarine. But the gun's aim was blocked by *Perry*. As it happened, destroyer *Monaghan* (DD-354) was underway, and she rammed and depth-charged the Japanese midget submarine.

Soon afterward, the second wave of the Japanese air attack began. Now antiaircraft fire poured into the sky from dozens of ships, often doing more damage to each other than to the enemy. *Zane*'s rigging and antennae were shot up by friendly fire.

When *Zane* and her sisters finally untangled their moorings at 09:10, they raced toward the entrance to the harbor and stood out to sea, where they conducted anti-submarine and anti-mine operations. By then the Japanese, declining to send a third wave, had departed. In all, *Zane* had expended 3,000 rounds of .50-caliber ammunition. The one unfired three-inch round, having been primed, was removed from the breech and thrown overboard as a precaution.

In the confusion and fear that followed that day of infamy, *Zane* conducted patrol duties in Hawaiian waters until April of 1942. She was then assigned to escort a convoy to California, where she underwent some repairs and upgrades before returning to Hawaii in June. Not long afterward, she was provisioned for a long journey. Her crew could only guess their destination as they steamed to the southwest.

Zane's skipper at this time was Lieutenant Peyton L. Wirtz. He took his job seriously. One admiring junior officer fresh out of the Academy said of his commander, "He would spend innumerable hours, 36 hours at a stretch, on the bridge making sure everything was under control."

In early August of 1942, *Zane* and four other minesweepers would be the first American ships the Japanese would see off the coast of Guadalcanal. The five ships, dodging inaccurate fire from shore, swept the impending landing sites in advance of the arrival of U.S. Marines executing the first ground offensive against the Japanese in World War II. No mines were found when the Marines went ashore on Guadalcanal on August 7.

The next day, an Australian coastwatcher warned of an approaching flight of Japanese planes. *Zane*, while maneuvering at sea, fired at a passing Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" bomber with its 20mm gun and shot it down. Wirtz ordered the ship to pick up survivors from the plane. When the Japanese pilot pulled himself onto the floating wreckage of his aircraft, he began firing his pistol at the would-be rescuers. The ship's 20mm gun decided the issue.

During the first month of fighting for the island, *Zane* was tasked with patrolling and conducting mine sweeps in the waters off Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Wirtz and his crew

spent long hours at duty stations. In September, they were given a new assignment. Much has been said about Japanese destroyers resupplying their troops on Guadalcanal with night supply runs from fast destroyers of the so-called Tokyo Express. Such activities were not limited only to the Japanese.

The U.S. Navy also used fast destroyers to deliver supplies to the embattled island. At the island of Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, *Zane* and *Trever* (DMS-16) loaded drums of aviation gasoline on deck along with torpedoes, ammunition, and other stores. This material was meant for the two PT boats they each had taken in tow. They reached Tulagi at 05:30 on October 25, 1942, and finished unloading after dawn.

By 09:00, a group of three Japanese destroyers, *Akatsuki*, *Ikazuchi*, and *Shiratsuyu*, were spotted in the gap between Savo Island and Guadalcanal entering the waters known to the Americans as "Iron Bottom Sound" during broad daylight. This was unexpected as the Americans ruled the sky during daylight hours. The three Japanese ships headed toward vital Henderson Field on Guadalcanal to bombard the airstrip in support of their land forces.

The enemy destroyers had loaded their guns with high explosive ammunition for use against land targets. Against ships the standard practice was to use armor-piercing shells. At first, *Zane* and *Trever* hid in a bay at Tulagi, but *Trever*'s captain, in charge of the two-boat flotilla, did not want to be "trapped like a rat." He ordered the two boats to make a run for it. As they left the protection of Tulagi, they were spotted by the Japanese, who changed course to intercept them.

A deadly chase began. Each of the Japanese ships could bring two of their six 127mm/50 guns to bear, while *Zane* and *Trever* had but one 3-inch or 76mm gun mounted at the stern to reply. To make matters worse, the Japanese destroyers were newer and faster. They rapidly closed the gap from 21,000 yards to 9,200 yards. Shells began falling close to both American vessels.

Naval History and Heritage Command

ABOVE: USS *Trever* (DD-339) (at left) follows USS *Zane* (DD-337), in the center, and USS *Borie* (DD-215) as they make a high speed turn at Kelp Point, off Hecate Island, during their 1937 Alaska cruise.
OPPOSITE: The USS *Zane* DMS-14 (formerly DD-337), Clemson-class Destroyer Minesweeper in 1943.

Despite zig-zagging to throw off the enemy aim, a shell landed in one of *Zane*'s gun positions, killing three and badly wounding a fourth crew member. If it had been an armor piercing round, damage to the interior of the ship might have been much worse. Japanese shells also ripped up much of her rigging, and the antenna was knocked out. All of her halyards were splintered and useless, except one. Significantly, and symbolically, it was the spar that carried the American flag.

Thankfully, the Japanese broke off the chase. However, their distraction at chasing *Zane* and *Trever* allowed time for airplanes to take off from Henderson Field and oblige the enemy destroyers to retire quickly. *Zane*'s unintended sacrifice saved the Marines guarding Henderson Field from a bombardment meant for them.

Wirtz's hard work and devotion to his ship paid off. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant commander and awarded the Silver Star medal. His commendation read in part: "In addition to participating in the initial attack against the islands…Lieutenant Commander Wirtz frequently brought his ship into the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area in the face of persistent Japanese air raids in order to escort and protect vessels bearing reinforcements and supplies to Marine forces established on the island shore." Wirtz was also given command of a brand new Fletcher-class destroyer, *McDermut* (DD-677). *Zane* would have seven commanders during World War II. None of those who followed was as popular with the crew as Wirtz.

Zane continued her nocturnal supply runs and convoy escort duties until she left for Sydney, Australia, for repair and R&R for the crew. While there, on January 22, 1943, the Japanese submarine *I-21* torpedoed and severely damaged the Liberty Ship *Peter H. Burnett*. Her crew launched five lifeboats. Four of them were able to stay near the damaged ship, but one drifted some 90 miles away in the dark.

The next day, *Zane* received orders to proceed to the last reported position of the crippled steamer. She was aided by a Consoli-

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dated PBY Catalina flying boat of the Royal Australian Air Force in locating the drifting life boat and rescued the 14 men aboard. The Catalina then directed *Zane* to the *Peter H. Burnett*, and *Zane* began a tow of the damaged ship to Sydney harbor in tandem with the Australian corvette HMAS *Mildura*.

In February 1943, with Guadalcanal secure, *Zane* arrived in New Caledonia, where she took on a new ensign named Herman Wouk. Wouk would serve on *Zane* for two years before transferring to *Southard* (DMS-10). By war's end he was her executive officer. After the war, Wouk published books about the conflict, including *The Caine Mutiny*, a popular novel set on a fictional destroyer minesweeper, USS *Caine* (DMS-22). Woven into the story were some of his experiences aboard *Zane*.

With Wouk aboard, *Zane*'s next assignment was to support operations against the Russell Islands, northwest of Guadalcanal. The invading force consisted of the U.S. Army's 43rd Infantry Division and the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion. *Zane* towed four landing craft loaded with men to the island, released them, and undertook minesweeping operations off the coast. Fortunately, the Japanese garrison had already evacuated, and there were no casualties to the Americans who landed.

In June, *Zane* was assigned to transport a company of the army's 169th Infantry Regiment to participate in liberating New Georgia Island. Rain squalls and choppy waters caused the ship to ground as she was disembarking the troops. When *Zane* finally got her bow unstuck, she backed up and grounded the stern, damaging the all-important propellers. She was a sitting duck for four hours until she could be yanked free and towed back to Tulagi for temporary repairs.

More work was needed, so the veteran warship steamed under her own power back to Mare Island, California, for a comprehensive repair. She would return to Hawaii in September and serve there until January of 1944. She then took part in the invasion of the Marshall Islands and Kwajalein. On minesweeping operations near Eniwetok, she was slightly damaged again, this time due to mines exploding nearby. Another trip to port was required, and *Zane* reached Pearl Harbor for repairs.

Zane's last campaign included minesweeping in support of the invasion of the Mariana Islands and Palau. Beginning in June, she set

At the San Diego Destroyer Base in California, some 65 destroyers are tied up at "Red Lead Row." The Zane was decommissioned at San Diego in February 1923, and remained here for seven years. She spent the 1930s as a destroyer with the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla. At the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard in 1940, she was reclassified as Destroyer Mine Sweeper 14 (DMS-14).

out warning buoys near minefields and fired on drifting mines with her guns. In July, she supported the landings on Guam as an anti-submarine escort ship. Following the success of those operations, *Zane* became a target-towing vessel, serving as such for the rest of the war. She was given a new designation as an auxiliary vessel, AG-109. The end of the war found her in the Philippines. She then returned to California for the a date with the scrap yard.

During the war, *Zane* earned six battle stars for her role in action from Pearl Harbor to the Marianas. She was also awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for her contributions to the victory at Guadalcanal. None of the World War I era destroyers remain in existence today. □

Glenn Barnett has published more than 30 articles about World War II. He has worked in aerospace on the Apache Helicopter, B-1B bomber and several space craft programs.

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U.S. Coast Guard veteran Julius Boreali recounts his time aboard an LST during Operation Overlord.

Julius Boreali's diary entry from May 29, 1944, is different from the more typical "calm sea, sun shining" entries that precede it: *12:30 am attacked by a group of German planes. They blew up a big oil depot. They tried to get it for 3 yrs and finally got it. Killed some American soldiers in barracks. We were at our guns but did no firing. We only hoped they could not see us in the darkness. One plane was shot down.*

The attack was a sign of things to come. Boreali and his Coast Guard shipmates were docked in Falmouth, England, making preparations for the largest amphibious landing in history. In a matter of days, they would be starting the 170-mile journey across the English Channel toward Omaha Beach on the coast of Normandy, France.

The son of Italian immigrants, Boreali was born December 15, 1922, and grew up in Howes Cave, New York. In 1942, there was a high potential to be drafted into the Army, so he decided to enlist in the Navy instead. But the day he went to Albany to sign up, the line to join stretched three blocks.

He looked across the street and saw that no one was waiting outside the Coast Guard recruiting office. They took him on the spot, and three days later, he was at their training station in Manhattan Beach, New York.

Next was Wildwood, New Jersey, where he learned to be a baker. That's also where he learned he would be stationed on a tank landing ship, commonly known as an LST.

It was dangerous duty. "You get on one of those, you'll never come home," Boreali recalled someone telling him.

LSTs were 300-foot-long, flat-bottomed ships designed specifically for amphibious landings. They could operate in shallow water, and their bows could open to offload vehicles, tanks and personnel from their giant cargo holds. Boreali said the ships looked like giant floating bathtubs.

Looks aside, LSTs would become a major part of the Allied forces' ability to push into France and sustain operations to overthrow German forces and end the war in Europe.

Photos courtesy *DAV Magazine*

Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) unloading vehicles and cargo on a Normandy beach, June 6, 1944. INSET: Julius Boreali, 100, holds a photo of him and late wife, Antonette, married August 19, 1945. He met her before joining the Coast Guard in 1942 and wrote letters to her while he was deployed overseas. OPPOSITE: Boreali's wartime diary, open to his entry for the start of Operation Overlord.

Boreali and the rest of the crew on LST-27 learned of their exact role when they read what was posted on the ship's bulletin boards:

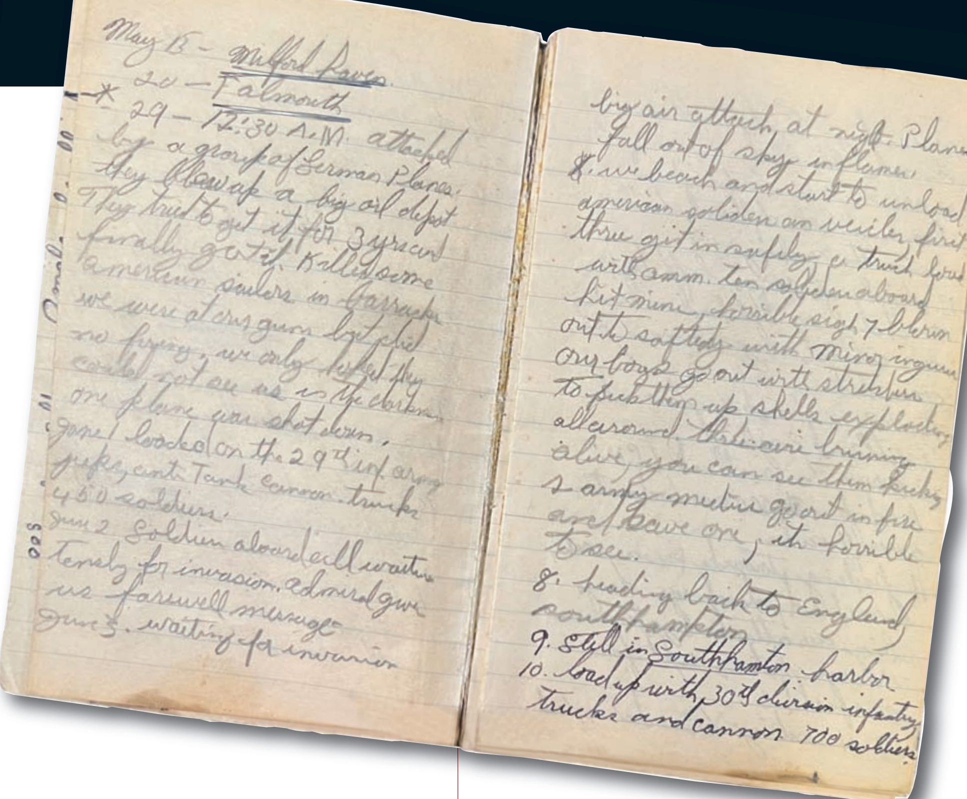
27 May 1944. SECRET From: Naval Commander, Western Task Force.

To: ALL HANDS Subject: Coming events. We of the Western Naval Task Force are going to land the American Army in France.

Rear Adm. Alan Kirk's message continued: Every man in every ship has his job.

And those tens of thousands of men and jobs add up to one task only—to land and support and supply and reinforce the finest Army ever sent to battle by the United States. In that task we shall not fail. I await with confidence the further proof, in this the greatest battle of them all, that American sailors are seamen and fighting men second to none.

A few days before D-Day, 300 men from the Army's 29th Infantry Division and their equipment were loaded into Boreali's LST. As they set sail, a priest gave everyone on board a benediction. "They were trying to build up our morale," he said. Boreali detailed in his diary some of the horrors he witnessed on June 6, 1944, but the memories are vivid in his mind today, too.



May 15 – Milford Haven
20 – Falmouth
29 – 12:30 A.M. attacked
by a group of German Planes.
they blew up a big oil depot
They tried to get it for 3 yrs and
finally got it. Killed some
american sailors in barracks
we were at our guns but did
no firing, we only hoped they
could not see us in the darkness
one plane was shot down.
June 1 loaded on the 29th inf. army
jeeps, ant. Tank cannon. trucks
450 soldiers.
June 2 Soldiers aboard all waiting
tensely for invasion. admiral gave
us farewell message
June 3. waiting for invasion

big air attack at night. Planes
fall out of sky in flames.
6. we beach and start to unload
american soldiers on vehicles first
three get in safely a truck loaded
with amm. ten soldiers aboard
hit mine, horrible sight 7 blown
out to safety with minor injuries
our boys go out with stretchers
to pick them up shells exploding
all around. [illegible] burning
alive you can see them kicking
2 army medics go out in fire
and save one, its horrible
to see.
8. heading back to England
southampton
9. Still in Southampton harbor
10. loaded up with 30th division infantry
trucks and cannon 700 soldiers

"It was just getting daybreak. All of a sudden, these German [88 mm guns] and airplanes came overhead and started bombing," he said. "Now that's when fear set in. ... There was no place to hide. You just had to stay where you were. I was on a 40mm gun, shooting at the airplanes." He didn't sleep for the next three days. "I was no cook anymore," he said. "I was on a gun or out picking up the wounded on the beach."

The conditions were brutal. Boreali said thousands of men were killed or wounded between the destruction inflicted by the German 88s, the mines in the water and soldiers drowning as they tried to wade ashore with 60-pound packs. "They floated in to the beach that evening," he said. "They just floated in. It was a mess."

There were highlights and serendipitous moments in the midst of the horrors of battle, though, like one of the times Boreali went to shore to pick up wounded to bring them back to the ship.

"I reached down to pick up this one guy. He looked up at me and he said, 'Julie?!' I couldn't believe it. It was Freddie Wessel, a kid I went to school with in Cobleskill," Boreali said. "Thousands of men, and here he was. I picked him up and tears came to my eyes. You know, I still get tears in my eyes."

Boreali brought Wessel back to the ship and to England. Not only had they gone to high school together, but their fathers both worked at the same cement plant back home. "So when I got back to England, I wrote a letter to my father and mother. And I told them, I says, 'Freddie Wessel, Whitey Wessel's son, I just picked him up on the beach in France.'"

In his letter, he detailed that the bullet that hit Wessel went clean through and that he was safely recovering at a hospital in England. Boreali knew that families only received a telegram informing them their son was wounded in action with no other information provided.

When Boreali returned home a year later, the Wessels were the first people to come to visit him. "They hugged me and thanked me because [that letter] put their minds at ease," he said.

Over the months following D-Day, Boreali and the crew of LST-27 made dozens of trips from England to France to resupply and bring in reinforcements for the Army. There were no harbors to dock at, so it all had to be done at the beachhead. "LSTs were the lifeline," Boreali said. "Men, ammunition, food, material of all kinds—it was us. We brought it in."

Boreali said there was imminent danger on each trip because of enemy acoustic and magnetic mines littering the channel. He witnessed many ships sink from these, but LST-27 kept bringing supplies. "We had a job to do, and that was our job, and we knew it," he said.

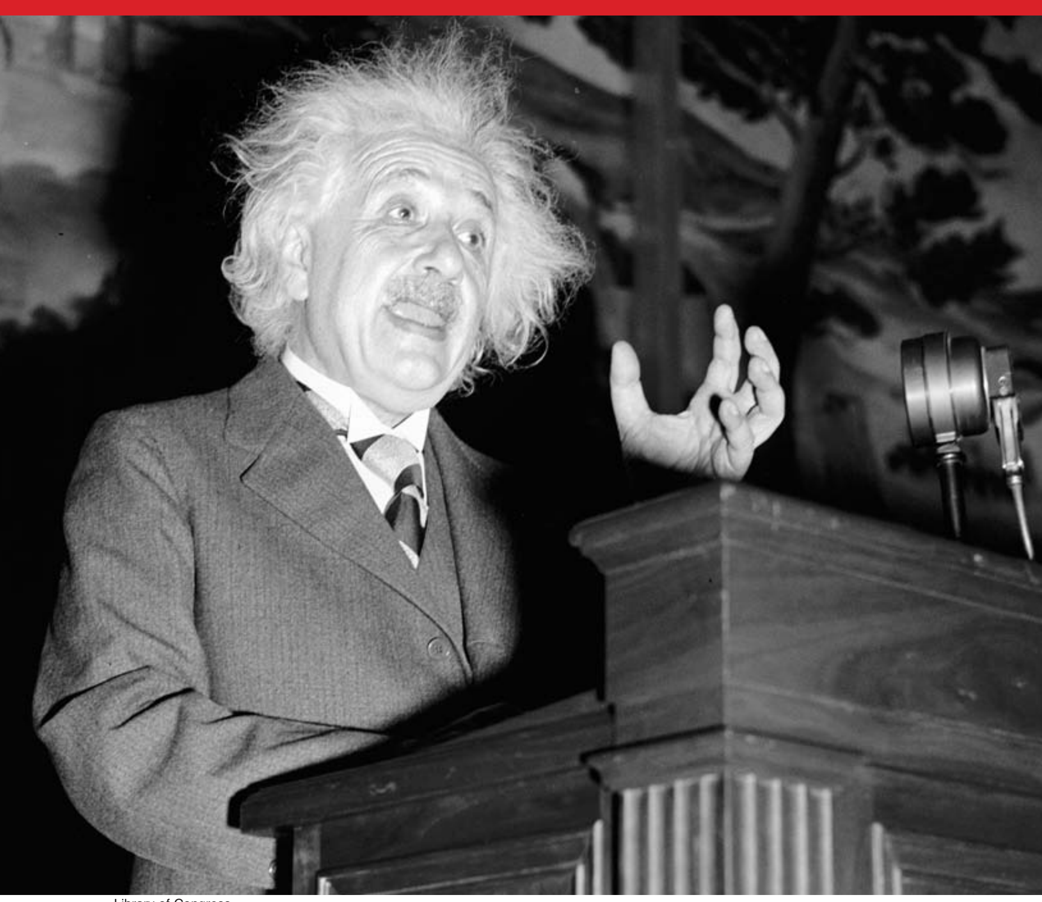
Nearly 80 years later, Boreali, sitting in his apartment in Schenectady, New York, carefully unfolds the D-Day message that was pinned to his ship's bulletin board. It's yellowed and worn with age.

Clearly, the explicit instructions to destroy the message before sailing toward Normandy were never followed. Boreali had stuffed it into his seabag before anyone had a chance to burn it. It's now a piece of memorabilia he shares with his children, along with various magazine clippings and photographs.

"I was glad I did my duty," said Boreali. "I felt that I did my job and did it well. I was important. They expected of me, and I gave it to them."

Boreali, who recently turned 100, left service in 1946. He married, raised a family and became a life member of DAV Chapter 88 in Schenectady. His daughter, Judy Sogoian, said that growing up, she and her siblings didn't hear him talk much about his time in the military. And she admits, at the time, she never really cared about asking. "But fortunately, when I started to care, my father was still here to

Continued on page 98



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Einstein vehemently opposed the Nazi regime and was a target for assassination prior to coming to the United States.

When Albert Einstein arrived in Pasadena, California, in early 1933, he was to take up his duties as visiting professor at the California Institute of Technology for about three months. CalTech President Robert Millikan had made all the arrangements for the world famous theoretical physicist, but Einstein discovered there was a small price tag: he would have to make a speech promoting German-American relations. Millikan had procured a $7,000 grant—a substantial sum for the early Depression days—from the Oberlaender Trust, a U.S.-based foundation that promoted cultural exchanges between America and Germany.

The grant would be more than enough to fund Einstein's California stay, and the professor had no objections to making such a public appearance. Of course, there were speeches—and then, there were speeches. Once Einstein arrived in Pasadena, Millikan politely arm-twisted the physicist to cancel another talk that was to have been made with the University of Southern California's chapter of the War Resisters League. The USC speech was to have denounced forced conscription, what Americans would call the draft—to build armies in Europe and elsewhere.

Einstein's German-American relations appearance was a gala event attended by thousands of people at the Pasadena Auditorium. To ensure an even wider audience, the speech would be broadcast by NBC radio, this at a time when virtually every American, regardless of class or economic status, seemed to have a receiver.

Einstein spoke of the Depression, which he blamed in part for the technological advances lessening the need for "human labor" and thus a decline in the public's purchasing power. He also noted how words can be laden with emotion, and if misused, become vehicles of hate. He offered the word "Jew," as used by "the reactionary group in Germany," as an example.

As a pacifist, Einstein said Germany should not be allowed to introduce mandatory military service. "Universal military service means the training of youth in a warlike spirit," he said. The professor was a popular figure in America, but the impact of his speech was probably minimal. Franklin D. Roosevelt was about to take office as President, and economic concerns were uppermost in most people's minds.

In retrospect, that 1933 Pasadena speech was the first round in a contest that would pit the scientist against Hitler and Nazi Germany. On January 30, 1933, one week after Einstein delivered his remarks in Pasadena,

Wikimedia

TOP: Renowned scientist Albert Einstein speaks to a gathering circa 1940. Einstein, who was Jewish, was targeted by the Nazis for assassination but made his way safely to the United States. INSET: This Nazi poster from the 1932 German presidential election campaign implores, "German Women, Think of Your Children. Vote Hitler." Albert Einstein was dismayed by the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in 1933.

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Adolf Hitler, the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing, bows subserviently before German President Paul von Hindenburg. Thinking that Hitler could be controlled, a group of German politicians persuaded Hindenburg to appoint the Nazi leader Chancellor of Germany in 1933. Albert Einstein soon fled the country.

Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany. Once the Nazis took control, Einstein's opposition to them took on an added dimension. The physicist was not only the most famous living scientist, he was also Jewish, which made him a special target for Nazi ire and put his life in danger.

Albert Einstein was born in Ulm, Germany, in 1879. As a teenager, his growing aptitude and lively interest in science led him to get a degree in mathematics and physics at the Swiss Federal Polytechnic School in Zurich. He became a Swiss citizen and obtained his doctorate but found he could not obtain a teaching position. As a fallback measure Einstein took a job at the Swiss Patent Office in Bern.

His patent office duties were not onerous, leaving him plenty of time to work at his real profession, theoretical physics. Beginning in 1905, he wrote and published a series of groundbreaking scientific papers that revolutionized our thinking about the universe. In 1915, he produced the general theory of relativity, which he considered the masterwork of a lifetime. Briefly, it said that gravity, as well as motion, affects time and space.

Einstein's theory of relativity was truly a scientific revolution that overturned the system Issac Newton had established in the 17th century. Newton's ideas, which had been treated as "gospel" over 250 years, had been replaced by a new cosmology in which the universe was not unchanging and static, but was actually capable of expanding and contracting.

The physicist continued to work in the patent office until 1909, when he finally landed a position teaching at the University of Zurich. By 1913 he was back home in Germany as a director of the University of Berlin's Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physics. Einstein would remain in Berlin for the next 20 years.

After World War I, Einstein won the Nobel Prize for his work on a complicated subject called the "photoelectric effect," because his theories on relativity were still controversial. But while the scientific community still harbored doubts, the public did not. The impact of modern media and advertising had really come to the fore by the 1920s. Radio broadcasts reached millions, newspaper circulation was at its height, and newsreels in movie theaters brought the world to your neighborhood.

Albert Einstein was the first celebrity scientist, a man whose fame equaled, and at times eclipsed, the movie stars of the time. When the liner Rotterdam docked at Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1931, it was greeted by 5,000 New Yorkers eager to catch a glimpse of the steamship's most famous passenger, Dr. Einstein. On another occasion a decade later, while landing in San Diego, cheering students at the pier chanted his name, "Einstein! Einstein! Einstein!" with all the enthusiasm of a championship college football game.

His fame was baffling, even to the great scientist. A man who could unlock the secrets of the cosmos stood clueless and mystified before the intricacies of the human heart and mind. And even more baffling was the fact that his fame was based upon concepts completely esoteric to the average person. Even some scientists didn't fully grasp what he was driving at, let alone the general public.

In 1931, Einstein went to the premiere of City Lights with Charles Chaplin. Applauded on their way into the theater, Chaplin remarked, "They cheer me because they understand me, and they cheer you because no one understands you." Einstein wrote later, "I never understood why the theory of relativity with its concepts and problems so far removed from practical life should have met with a lively…resonance among broad circles of the public."

Einstein's own appearance and personality answers at least some of the questions involving his popularity. His deep-set eyes, often twinkling with merriment at a joke or quip—he had a self-deprecating sense of humor—were offset with a walrus mustache and strands of long hair that burst from his head like the waves of energy he liked to mathematically describe.

Newspaper reporters and photographers loved him, simply because he made good copy, and his eccentricities were endearing, not repulsive. He did not like to wear socks and preferred comfortable old sweaters. The good doctor was avuncular, easy to approach, and not above answering his own door if someone came by. Once, after he made America his permanent home, some girls came by his house to sing Christmas carols. To their utter delight, Einstein grabbed his violin and added some music to their songs. Occasionally, a child might come by and ask for help on math homework, and if not busy, Einstein was more than happy to lend a hand.

Einstein was the stereotypical "absent minded professor," distracted and hardly knowing his surroundings as he mulled over

endless equations, jotting the symbols down on paper as fast as they were born in his brilliant, ever-probing mind. Though his head might have been in an abstract cloud, his feet were firmly planted in the sobering realities of the world. Einstein cherished freedom, especially freedom of thought. He hated injustice, and above all, hoped that war, the scourge of humanity, would be abolished forever.

In September 1930, Depression-wracked Germany held a national election, and the National Socialist German Workers' Party—the Nazi Party—won over six million votes to become the second largest party in the Reichstag. Controlling 107 seats, they were now a force to be reckoned with. At first, Einstein felt the Nazis were an anomaly, a "childish disease of the (German Weimar) Republic" brought on by the worldwide Depression, "a momentarily desperate economic situation."

When asked about Adolf Hitler in December 1930, Einstein replied, "I do not enjoy Herr Hitler's acquaintance. He is living on the empty stomach of Germany. As soon as economic conditions improve, he will no longer be important." He was guardedly optimistic, but still he felt the "solidarity of the Jews, I believe, is always called for." Jewish people, the target of hate and violence for centuries, had to closely monitor the situation lest they be swept away.

The rise of Hitler paralleled a rise of militarism and potential rearmament. Hitler did little to hide his loathing of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I. Versailles had limited the German army to 100,000 men, the Germans could not create an air force, and their warships had to meet strict guidelines on tonnages and armament. It was plain that Hitler intended to ignore the treaty and rearm Germany if he ever gained power.

Einstein, in contrast, was a passionate pacifist, who once declared he would rather be "torn limb from limb" than take part in a war. He tried to use his celebrity to promote peace—writing, campaigning, serving on committees, raising money, and making speeches against war. But by December 1932, he came to realize that it was all in vain, though he never gave up hope.

That month, Einstein left Berlin for Pasadena, California, to deliver that speech promoting German-American friendship.

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During his days in Great Britain, Albert Einstein is shown with his secretary, Miss B. Howard, and Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, seated with a shotgun. The three are seen outside a holiday hut on the moors provided by Locker-Lampson. At the time, it was rumored that Hitler had placed a $5,000 price on Einstein's head. After spending the summer of 1933 in Britain, Einstein relocated permanently to the United States.

His wife Elsa was to go with him, so their house at Caputh, a village near the Havel River in Potsdam, was to be closed.

Despite appearances, Einstein knew too well what was happening in Germany. As they left for America, said to Elsa, "Take a good look—you will never see it again."

On January 30, 1933, Hitler took the oath as chancellor of Germany. Einstein was still in Pasadena, frankly enjoying his life under the California sun. In February of that year, a photo showed a beaming Einstein trying his hand at riding a bicycle. It displayed the great scientist's whimsical side, but behind the scenes he was monitoring events in Germany.

At first, the situation seemed fluid, and Einstein toyed with the idea of returning to Germany in April. But then the Reichstag was burned, and a plague of brown-shirted Nazi stormtroopers looted Jewish homes throughout the country. "Because of Hitler," Einstein commented to a friend, "I don't dare step on German soil." He decided to travel to Belgium, and some suggested Switzerland as an ultimate place of refuge. While still in transit, Einstein learned his Caputh house had been raided by the Nazis under the pretext of searching for a cache of "communist" weapons. There were none, of course, but later they came back and confiscated his beloved boat.

Einstein decided to take a public stand.

In Europe, he renounced his German citizenship and resigned from the Prussian Academy. His criticisms stung the Nazi government and stirred a firestorm of denunciations from the German press. One headline read,"Good news of Einstein—he's not coming back!" Another paper declared that the physicist was "...never a German in our eyes and who declares himself a Jew and nothing but a Jew."

Worse was to follow. His bank accounts were seized and scientific works publicly burned. Then, the Nazi propaganda war against Einstein took a more sinister turn. One of its anti-Semitic journals ran a piece about the "enemies of Germany."

Titled "The Jews are Watching You,"(Juden Sehen Dich An), it went on to describe the scientist as having "...discovered a much-contested theory of relativity... Showed his gratitude (to Germany) by lying atrocity propaganda against Adolf Hitler." A photo was included, and the caption under Einstein's picture read, "BIS JETZT UNGEHAENGT" or "not yet hanged."

Einstein's life was in real danger, though he remained calm and unconcerned about the threats. But the danger became a reality when on April 30, 1933, Nazi assassins killed Theodor Lessing, a controversial German-Jewish philosopher living as a refugee in Czechoslovakia. He was shot and died the next day. There had been a price on Lessing's head, and the killers were honored in Germany. Lessing's photo had also been published with the caption "Not yet hanged."

After the assassination, more rumors circulated that Einstein was next on the list for extermination. One story claimed there was a $5,000 bounty on the physicist's head—more than $100,000 today. Hearing this, Einstein playfully touched his head and said, "I really had no idea my head was worth all that!" But Lessing had been his friend, so he must have privately grieved even if he showed nonchalance about his own fate.

On a more serious note, he added, "I have no doubt it (the purported reward for his death) is really true, but in any case I await the issue with serenity." Instead of returning to Germany, Einstein went to Belgium. Now rootless and technically homeless, he needed time to determine his next course of action. He considered making Zurich his permanent home—he still had Swiss citizenship—but just wasn't up to the paperwork it would require to bring his family as well.

Mulling it over, he decided to take up temporary refuge in Belgium. Einstein rented a house on the sand dunes near Ostend, whimsically named Coq sur Mar, or "Rooster by the Sea." Various universities were sending him offers of employment, including Oxford and Leiden. Though the physicist didn't know it, his decision was literally one of life and death. If he had chosen Leiden, for example, he could have been a victim of the Holocaust when the Nazis occupied the Netherlands in World War II.

It was now the summer of 1933, and the threats against his life were unending. Einstein was a personal friend of Albert, King of the Belgians, and his consort Queen Elizabeth, and the royal pair took measures to protect their distinguished guest. Two Belgian police officers were assigned to Einstein as personal bodyguards. He didn't like to feel watched all the time, even if it was for his

own safety, but perhaps because of his wife's anxieties, he accepted the police protection with a good-natured shrug.

Einstein's next stop was England. He was scheduled to give a lecture at Oxford University, but he had visited the island nation before, loved it, and needed no excuse to go there. It was during this summer of 1933 that he first met Winston Churchill, very much a kindred spirit in terms of opinions on Germany and Hitler. But Churchill was then in a kind of political limbo, which later historians call the "wilderness years." Churchill was a pariah, ignored and barely tolerated, but Einstein and the "exiled" politician got along well.

England was pleasant, but the threats of assassination still dogged Einstein. Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, a member of Parliament, feared for his friend's life and decided to offer Einstein a secluded cottage that was on a moor near the southwest of London close to Comer. The professor could stay there before another anticipated trip to America.

Einstein readily accepted. The vastness and solitude of the windswept moors of Norfolk appealed to the scientist. Though the danger was real, once he was in England he was relatively safe even without Locker-Lampson. In fact, Locker-Lampson couldn't help displaying a bit of showmanship when he had press photographs taken of the physicist and two beautiful shotgun-wielding women.

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Shortly after emigrating to the United States, eminent scientist Albert Einstein is shown receiving his certificate of U.S. citizenship from Judge Phillip Forman.

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Amused, Einstein quipped that "the beauty of my bodyguards would disarm a conspirator sooner than their shotguns!"

Other photos show male guards, casual but alert, next to a smiling Einstein just outside his cottage/hut. Einstein loved this "hermit" life, where he could focus on mathematics and physics. No need to lecture, or deal with the petty problems and everyday concerns of normal existence. If he became bored, he played his violin, or a tune on a piano that had been provided by his host in another hut.

In the end, he decided to accept an offer from the newly established Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, New Jersey. The United States would be his home for the rest of his life. But before he left England, Einstein gave a speech in English at London's Royal Albert Hall. The event was designed to raise money for displaced refugee scientists; not all were as famous, or as lucky, as Einstein. While not mentioning the Nazi government directly, Einstein spoke about the rising threat to freedom, and without freedom "there would be no Shakespeare, no Goethe, no Newton, no Faraday, no Pasteur, no Lister."

At first, the world was too preoccupied with their own internal problems and the Depression's economic storms to really care what was going on in Germany. Einstein was one of only a handful of people—Winston Churchill was another—who tried to raise the alarm about Hitler and his intentions, but were ignored or ridiculed for their efforts.

"I cannot understand the passive response of the whole civilized world to this modern barbarism," he wrote, referring to the Nazi menace. "Does the world not see that Hitler is aiming for war?" Though ambivalent about his worldwide fame, Einstein used his celebrity to sound the alarm about the Nazis.

Einstein denounced Nazi aggression, but didn't demonize the German people. Even in the early 1930s, he could see the Nazis were poised to start "a war of extermination against my Jewish brethren."

Einstein's own views on war and pacifism began to change in the 1930s. Reluctantly, he admitted military resistance to tyranny was the only hope for freedom and justice. "To prevent a greater evil, it is necessary that a lesser evil—the hated military—be accepted for the time being," he wrote.

More startling was his admission—at least

in theory—that he would take up arms to oppose dictators like Hitler. "In the heart of Europe," he wrote in a missive later published in the *New York Times*, "lies a power, Germany, that is obviously pushing towards war with all available means. I should not, in the present circumstances, refuse military service. Rather I should enter such service cheerfully in the belief that I would thereby be helping to save European civilization."

Einstein arrived in New York aboard the liner *Westmoreland* on October 17, 1933. At 54, he was still the world's most famous scientist. He grew to love Princeton and the U.S, eventually becoming a citizen in 1940.

Einstein was not the "father of the atomic bomb" as is sometimes still claimed, based on his famous equation, E=mc2, or "Energy equals mass times velocity squared." His equation itself wasn't a breakthrough, but it did explain what was going on. Einstein's theory behind the equation holds that energy and mass are essentially the same thing. In splitting atoms —fission—the energy in their mass is released, producing enormous power.

In 1938, German scientists achieved nuclear fission, demonstrating that a uranium atom can be split, and as it divides, it loses mass, which is then converted to energy. It was this energy that could potentially be used to create an explosive device of immense destructive power. Hungarian scientist Leo Szilard, who was then living in the U.S., worried the Nazis might soon possess the unthinkable—an atomic bomb.

Szilard knew there was no time to waste and that only Einstein had the celebrity and prestige to make Roosevelt take notice. Szilard contacted Einstein, and they drafted a letter to the president. Dated August 2, 1939, it spoke of uranium as a new power source and warned of the German progress in fission. Einstein warned about an atomic bomb, suggesting that if one were smuggled in a ship, it could obliterate a port city.

Though Szlard and Einstein were wrong about the delivery method, their scenario moved an alarmed Roosevelt to action. The president authorized a board to look into the matter, but the Roosevelt Administration only approved $6,000 for graphite and uranium experiments. Frustrated at the slow progress, Szilard again turned to Einstein, who wrote a second letter to the President urging him to take greater action. Once again Roosevelt responded in a positive way, but serious work didn't really begin until America entered the war in December 1941.

When acting Army Chief of Staff Brigadier General Sherman Miles was organizing the committee to explore the idea of an atomic bomb, he hesitated to add Einstein. It didn't matter that Einstein's letter was the catalyst for the committee or that Einstein was able to directly communicate with Roosevelt, who admired the physicist. Miles contacted FBI director J. Edgar Hoover for guidance.

Hoover's motives are unknown, but he negatively reviewed Einstein—whose antiwar pacifism made him suspect in Hoover's eyes. In 1932, the scientist had refused to attend the World Antiwar Congress because it glorified Soviet Russia. Yet to Hoover, Einstein was a pro-communist and a rabid supporter of Joseph Stalin's Soviet system." □

Longtime contributor Eric Niderost is a college professor in the California Bay Area.

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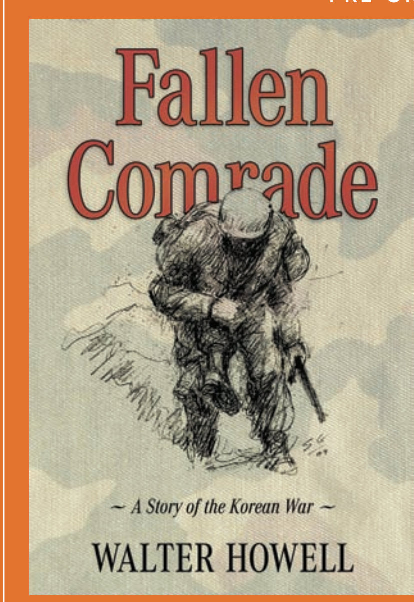

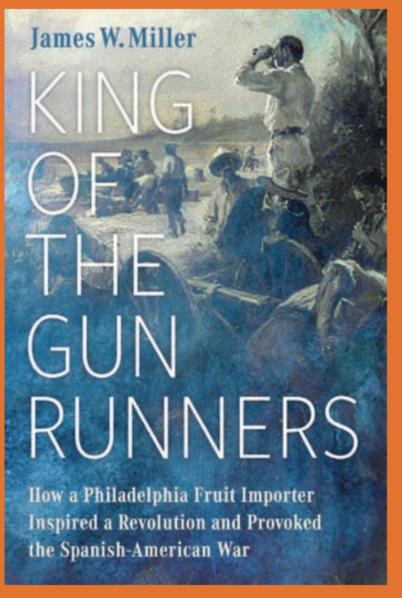

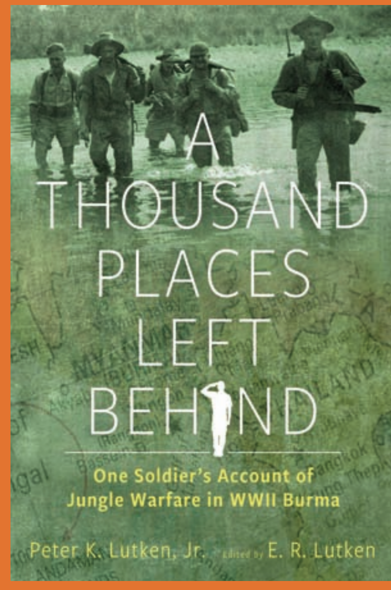

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Captain (Dr.) Willis P. McKee did not like what he was seeing. For several hours now, crowds of panicky civilians had been streaming past his unit's tent hospital located at a crossroads eight miles northwest of Bastogne, Belgium. A veteran of both the Normandy and Market-Garden campaigns, McKee knew "that something was pushing" those refugees and feared an enemy column could be advancing close behind them.

At dusk on Tuesday, December 19, 1944, he drove to the 101st Airborne Division's headquarters in Bastogne to report this ominous development to Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, the acting division commander.

Meeting inside the general's war room, Captain McKee indicated on a map his undefended hospital's vulnerable location. He also described the throngs of fleeing townspeople he had observed all afternoon. McAuliffe, however, appeared unmoved by this news. "Go on back," he reassured the young physician, "you'll be alright."

Willis McKee's fears were realized when, barely seven hours later, a large enemy armored force over-

Germans overwhelm the 326th Airborne Medical Company's aid station in Bastogne, capturing 101st Airborne wounded.

BY PATRICK J. CHAISSON

ran the 101st Airborne's clearing station and took him prisoner. Also captured in the attack were 141 other American soldiers as well as a large quantity of supplies, vehicles, and equipment. With its lone surgical facility now lost, General McAuliffe's division could no longer provide advanced emergency care to G.I.s gravely injured in the fighting around Bastogne.

The situation worsened on December 21 when German troops cut the last road leading out of town. Now surrounded, those few doctors and enlisted medics left inside the perimeter used a rapidly diminishing supply of medicine and plasma to treat the wounded men who flooded their overcrowded aid stations. For the next five days, they struggled to keep alive as many patients as possible under the most appalling of conditions. Only after General George S. Patton Jr.'s Third U.S. Army opened a corridor into this beleaguered stronghold were ambulance teams again able to evacuate back to proper hospital facilities the hundreds of long-suffering casualties stuck in Bastogne.

When the 101st Airborne Division was first activated in 1942, its force structure included a robust medical department. Yet, in acknowledgement of the Screaming Eagle Division's status as an air-delivered strike force that often fought behind enemy lines, its health service organizations needed to remain utilitarian, flexible, and able to enter the battlefield either by parachute or glider.

Each of the 101st's three parachute infantry regiments (PIRs) contained a medical detachment composed of seven officers and 62 enlisted men. The division's one glider infantry regiment (GIR) counted 8 commissioned officers and 86 enlisted troops in its medical detachment. Additionally, the Screaming Eagles' field artillery, combat engineer, antiaircraft, and support outfits all had assigned physicians and aidmen.

These detachments constituted the first echelon of medical service within the 101st Airborne Division. In combat, unit aid teams (three enlisted medics per company) provided basic frontline care to sick and wounded soldiers. Litter bearers moved forward from a central battalion aid station (BAS) when required to evacuate those requiring more extensive treatment. At the BAS, aidmen under a commissioned surgeon's supervision examined and sorted casualties, dressed wounds, administered medication, and prepared seriously injured patients for transport to the nearest field hospital. Each infantry regiment also maintained an aid station responsible for serving the regimental headquarters and service company.

Badly wounded troopers did not stay long in a battalion or regimental aid station. Fleets of jeep ambulances sped casualties who required specialized attention back to the division clearing station, a second-echelon treatment facility run by the 326th Airborne Medical Company.

With an authorized strength of just 216 officers and men, the 326th Med was a pocket-sized organization but one uniquely suited to its mission. It consisted of a Company Headquarters Section, Medical

Germans Seize Field Hospital at BASTOGNE

U.S. Army medical personnel use stretchers across the hood of a Jeep to evacuate wounded soldiers from the front line in Bastogne, Belgium, during heavy action—evidenced by the bullet hole in the Jeep's windshield.

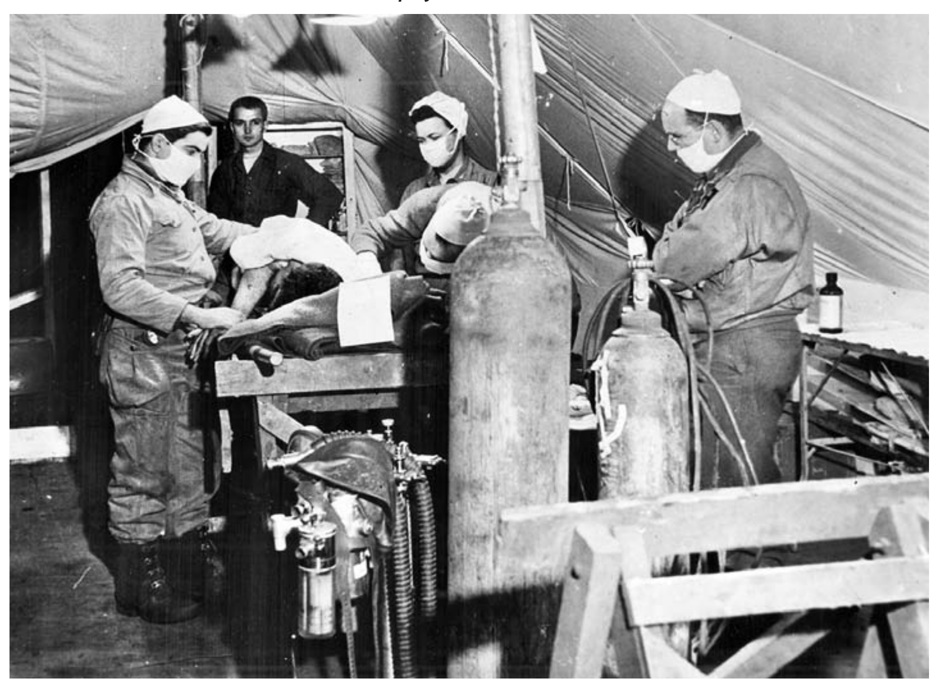
Supply Section, and three platoons (Platoon Headquarters, Litter Bearer Section, Ambulance Section, and Treatment Section). In command was Major (Dr.) William E. Barfield.

As all its equipment and vehicles had to fit inside CG-4A cargo gliders; the outfit primarily employed jeeps fitted with litter racks to move wounded soldiers. Its clearing station, a set of tents marked with distinctive Red Cross symbols, could be set up within two hours. By itself, though, the 326th Airborne Medical Company possessed neither the apparatus nor the specially trained doctors required to conduct surgical procedures. The unit's main role was to collect casualties, then triage, stabilize, and ready them for transport to an army level hospital.

Recognizing the Screaming Eagle Division would often operate out of contact with the normal ground evacuation chain, army planners attached to it a team of medical specialists from the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Group. Four trauma-trained physicians and four enlisted assistants, led by Maj. (Dr.) Albert J. Crandall, performed emergency surgery at the 101st Airborne's clearing station throughout its campaigns in France and the Netherlands. Crandall's team remained attached to the 326th Med when in November 1944 that unit moved to a rest camp at Camp Mourmelon, France, after enduring 72 days of intense combat during Operation Market-Garden.

While at Mourmelon, the 326th Airborne Medical Company rebuilt its ranks and replaced broken or lost equipment. By mid-December, the company roster indicated 19 officers and 198 enlisted soldiers present for duty. An additional three officers and two enlisted clerks supported the division surgeon. This staff officer, Lt. Col. (Dr.) David Gold, was responsible for all medical plans, training, and operations throughout the 101st Airborne Division.

On December 17, 1944, the Screaming Eagles were alerted for combat in response to a massive German surprise attack that struck the weakly defended Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg. One of two divisions then designated as European Theater Reserve, the 101st Airborne was needed to bolster an unsteady First U.S. Army, then reeling under intense pressure from thousands of enemy troops, tanks, and guns.



ABOVE: Members of the 326th Airborne Medical Company are shown at Veghel with fighters of the Dutch underground during Operation Market Garden, September 1944. Veghel was near the city of Eindhoven, where heavy fighting occurred. BELOW: Two doctors, a nurse, and other personnel operate on a wounded GI at a field hospital during the Battle of the Bulge. Such surgery so close to the combat areas often meant the difference between life and death for seriously injured soldiers.

Medical personnel across the division rushed to get ready. Newly assigned replacements followed the old timers' lead as they efficiently packed individual and unit equipment, including a large supply of litters and wool blankets. Starting at 1800 hours on Tuesday, December 18, the 326th's troopers departed Mourmelon in a convoy of jeep ambulances and borrowed cargo trucks. After an all-night motor march into Belgium, they closed on their destination at 1000 hours the next morning.

In Bastogne, meanwhile, a fateful decision was being made. Division Surgeon Lt. Col. Gold met with the 101st's Logistics Officer, Lt. Col. Carl W. Kohls, to select a site for the 326th

Med's clearing station. They chose a convenient road junction located about eight miles northwest of town on the Bastogne-Marche road, figuring this position was about as close to the rear area as could be expected. Neither officer seriously considered the possibility of an enemy breakthrough; information about German activity in the region was either inaccurate, out of date, or absent.

The 326th's soldiers moved into their newly designated bivouac area and started setting up. Emil K. Natalle, a Technician 4th Class (T/4) with the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Team, described this activity: "Soon after arrival, our tent crews hoisted the canvas, mess tent, headquarters tent, surgical tent, ward tents, the works." Natalle also remembered hearing "…gunfire…to the east of us. Most of us had a hunch we were in vulnerable terrain…Our site was totally exposed, no cover, just open space."

Aside from a single (and possibly unmanned) anti-tank gun pointing east down the road to Houffalize, the tent complex was completely undefended. In compliance with Geneva Convention rules regarding the noncombatant status of all medical personnel, no one there carried a personal weapon. The nearest infantry outpost, two miles distant, could offer little help in case of a sudden enemy attack.

Confusion reigned. Writing after the war, Major Crandall admitted, "We should have been more familiar with the current military situation." Yet there was a job to do; at 1030 hours, teams of jeep ambulances set out to begin evacuating casualties from the regimental and battalion aid stations posted around Bastogne. Thirty minutes later, the clearing station admitted its first patient.

Sometime around noon, Lieutenant Colonel Gold and Major Barfield went on a reconnaissance to find an installation where the 326th Medical Company could transport its most urgent trauma cases. Near Libin, Belgium, they discovered both the 64th Medical Group's headquarters and the 107th Evacuation Hospital. The commander there agreed to accept their casualties and even loaned out several field ambulances to supplement the 101st Airborne Division's pool of litter jeeps.

A growing roar of gunfire, together with the sight of fleeing refugees, offered proof that a large-scale battle was taking place nearby. Some 326th Med soldiers observed that not every patient arriving at the clearing station that afternoon was wearing a Screaming Eagle shoulder patch. Several other outfits were bleeding themselves dry in order to buy time for the 101st Airborne to arrive, organize, and take over the defense of Bastogne.

Infantrymen and tankers from Combat Command B (CCB), 10th Armored Division, had since daybreak been grappling for possession of a hamlet named Noville, just a few miles northeast of town. This small task force, fighting alongside some American tank destroyers and, later, a battalion of McAuliffe's paratroopers, managed to beat back several determined assaults—at a heavy cost.

Sometime that afternoon, German shellfire struck down both the parachute battalion commander, Lt. Col. James L. LaPrade, and the 10th Armored's Major William R. Desobry inside their Noville command post. The barrage killed LaPrade outright and left Desobry with a grievous head wound. Rushed back to the 101st Airborne's clearing station, Desobry underwent immediate emergency surgery. Sedated and with both eyes bandaged, he was then left in a ward tent to await evacuation.

It was becoming increasingly clear to combat-wise veterans such as McKee that no friendly forces stood between Noville and the 326th Medical Company's tent hospital. "About 1600 hours," he remembered, "I went into Division HQ and asked permission for us to move into Bastogne." McKee further explained, "I thought we were in danger of being overrun," adding that his division would be completely without advanced medical care if that were to happen.

The acting division commander, Brig. Gen. McAuliffe, did not want his clearing station to move just yet. Normally assigned as head of the Screaming Eagles' division artillery, "Tony" McAuliffe found himself the senior 101st Airborne officer present when that organization was ordered forward into the Ardennes. He had just concluded a series of meetings with VIII Corps Commander Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, whose last orders before leaving town were to "hold Bastogne."

McAuliffe and his staff considered the situation confusing but manageable. Despite the loss of LaPrade and Desobry, their posi-

This aerial view of the 326th Airborne Medical Company was taken on December 18, 1944, near Sainte-Ode, Belgium. At 10:30 that night a German Kampfgruppe attacked the unit.

tions in Noville seemed to be hanging on for the time being. Elsewhere along the line, a garrison of nearly 22,000 paratroopers, glidermen, and armored infantry were hard at work establishing sturdy roadblocks intended to dominate key terrain. Stocks of ammunition, fuel, and rations seemed adequate, so long as routes to and from Allied supply dumps in the rear area remained open. To the 101st Airborne's operations officers, it seemed highly unlikely that any enemy forces could encircle—let alone crush—the strongpoint style defense they were crafting.

Darkness fell early on the night of December 19. At 1630 hours, Major Barfield left the clearing station in charge of a convoy containing five ambulances and 15 wounded men. After delivering these casualties to the 107th Evac Hospital in Libin, Barfield found his route back to the crossroads blocked by dense fog and a blown bridge over the Ourthe River near Sprimont. Determined to try again after first light, the major turned his trucks around and headed back to Libin.

Meanwhile, ambulances from across the division continued to arrive at the clearing station. Separately, two regimental dentists —the 501st PIR's Captain Carlous D. Lancaster and Captain Samuel Feiler of the 506th —led jeeploads of wounded soldiers back to the 326th Medical Company after sunset. Neither officer realized until it was too late that they were driving into an ambush.

Advancing through the murk was a column of German armored cars and halftracks from the 116th Panzer Division's Reconnaissance Battalion. This unit, commanded by Major Eberhard Stephan, had been pushing forward through a rupture in the Americans' lines for nearly three days. Stephan—a veteran of combat on both the Eastern and Western Fronts—spent the bulk of December 19 trying to find a suitable route around the fighting at Noville, through the recently abandoned village of Houffalize, and toward what he hoped would be still intact bridges across the Ourthe River north of Bastogne.

For the Ardennes campaign, Major Stephan's thin-skinned scout cars were reinforced by at least six armored fighting vehicles (some sources list these as PzKpfw. V Panther medium tanks, while others suggest they were Sturmgeschutze III assault guns). Kampfgruppe (KG) Stephan's column also included an artillery battalion, a Nebelwerfer (rocket launcher) battery, and several self-propelled antiaircraft guns.

So far, the 116th Panzer's attack was going well. "The reconnaissance battalion dissipated and destroyed a number of enemy groups, knocked out some enemy tanks, [and] captured a lot of personnel and vehicles," boasted Division Commander Maj. Gen. Siegfried von Waldenburg in a postwar interview. These German soldiers also appropriated large quantities of abandoned U.S. cold weather clothing, rations, and cargo trucks, a habit that would later lead Allied commanders to accuse Stephan's men of intentionally concealing their identities by wearing enemy uniforms—a war crime.

Kampfgruppe Stephan departed Houffalize in mid-afternoon on December 19, its objective a bridge spanning the Ourthe at Salle, Belgium. To get there, the battlegroup needed to move five miles west down a secondary road and turn north at an intersection listed on German maps as the Bois de Herbaimont. At 2230 hours, Stephan's advance guard came across a

darkened tent camp adjacent to that crossroads. Gunners inside the lead vehicles immediately opened fire on their unsuspecting target.

First Lieutenant (Dr.) Gordon L. Block of the 326th Med was off duty "…sleeping not too peacefully in my hole that night" when the shooting started. Grabbing his steel helmet, Block crawled to the evacuation tent where "tracers tore through the canvas." He remembered how "the wounded lying on stretchers groaned as some were hit a second time." Aidmen risked death when they lowered screaming casualties to the ground and —in some cases—covered the wounded with their own bodies.

ABOVE: This photo reportedly shows the damage inflicted during the attack on the 326th Airborne Medical Company by Kampfgruppe Stephan during the Battle of the Bulge. TOP: Army medics move a wounded soldier to safety during the Battle of the Bulge. Officers of the 326th Airborne Medical Company were worried that their position might be overrun, but Gen. Anthony McAuliffe, commanding the 101st Airborne Division, gave them repeated assurances that they were secure. OPPOSITE: Well camouflaged and heavily armed German soldiers move out during the Battle of the Bulge. Kampfgruppe Stephan was reinforced with PzKpfw. V panther medium tanks or sturmgeschutze III self-propelled assault guns after leaving Houffalize, Belgium, prior to attacking the 326th Airborne Medical Company.

Captain McKee described how "a German motorized patrol…had knocked out the [anti-tank] gun at the crossroads" before setting alight six of the 326th Medical Company's evacuation vehicles. Illuminated by the flames, Red Cross symbols adorning U.S. hospital tents now became visible to Stephan's gunners. After a 15-minute shooting spree, they mercifully ceased fire.

According to McKee's narrative, "Captain Charles Van Gorder, a member of the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Team assigned to us—and of Pennsylvania Dutch origin, who spoke German rather well, yelled that we were medical troops and unarmed." Lieutenant Colonel Gold quickly surrendered the facility to Major Stephan, who informed his new captives they had 30 minutes to load all their personnel and equipment into any functioning vehicles and follow his recon troops back to enemy lines.

While all this was taking place, several ambulances carrying injured G.I.s drove into the ambuscade. At the wheel of one jeep, Pfc. Robert Barger noticed "…a burning truck right there in the middle of the road." Barger "…stopped at the top of the hill, trying to decide whether we should move down there or not," when "a machine gun opened on us, killing the two litter cases" riding atop Barger's vehicle. German soldiers then herded the stunned driver and his assistant into a nearby field where well over 100 newly captured prisoners of war sat glumly awaiting their fate.

Dentist Samuel Feiler's ambulance team also blundered into KG Stephan's ambush. Ordered by enemy troops to join the flock of POWs, Feiler surreptitiously tossed away a P-38 pistol that another officer had loaned him earlier. Then, noticing his captors were too busy looting the hospital to pay him much attention, Feiler kept on walking into the darkness until he reached safety.

One of Feiler's medics, Pfc. Don M. Dobbins, witnessed another catastrophic incident when 12 cargo vehicles driven by African-American soldiers accidentally entered the kill zone. "The Germans fired

LEFT: On January 6, 1945, medical personnel treat numerous wounded American soldiers at one of the makeshift hospitals set up in the ruins of Bastogne. The December 19 attack on the 326th Airborne Medical Company had placed great strain on available resources. LEFT: Nurse Rene Lemaire (left) was killed by enemy fire while assisting American medical teams in tending wounded troops in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. Major William Barfield (right) was in command of the 326th Airborne Medical Company during the bitter fighting.

on every truck standing there and set them on fire," Dobbins wrote. "I remember a Negro truck driver in one of the trucks who got up in his cab and blasted away at the Germans with a 50-caliber gun mounted on his cab. He didn't last long, for the Germans turned everything they had on him. If they had fired a second longer, they could have cut the cab away from the rest of the truck."

A sergeant in 1st Lt. Henry Barnes' evacuation platoon later claimed that Germans dressed in U.S. Military Police uniforms stopped his ambulance as it approached the Medical Company's area. Just then, the luckless convoy of cargo vehicles appeared. "A machine gun started firing," he said, relating how "a truck mushroomed up in smoke, with the canvas afire. Tracers were shooting out in all directions." Eluding capture, Barnes' sergeant later returned to the platoon command post with a look on his face that seemed "as though he had caught a brief glimpse of hell."

"Down at the crossroads," wrote T/4 Emil Natalle, "a number of vehicles were burning fiercely. Some of the vehicles surely had men inside, for we heard their cries for help." Natalle, along with a German soldier, went to render aid but could not approach the scene due to intense heat.

"It was bedlam," Natalle said of the onslaught. "The Germans were all over the area. They hollered, laughed, and made noise, just as Germans always do." Caught up in their search for treasure, Major Stephan's men inadvertently allowed several prisoners of war to escape. Both Sam Feiler and Don Dobbins slipped away into the night, as did three captains from the 326th Medical Company: Jacob Pearl, John Breiner, and Roy Moore.

Another airborne medic who evaded capture was Private Lester A. Smith. He and two other aidmen dashed off "…headed in the direction we thought we might find friendly troops." After taking a short break to enjoy some food and drink offered by helpful Belgians, the trio approached U.S. lines around dawn. A sentry challenged them, and despite not knowing the password, Smith "convinced him we were American soldiers."

A total of 11 officers and 119 enlisted men from the 326th Airborne Medical Company surrendered on December 19, 1944, along with four officers and three enlisted soldiers of the 3rd Auxiliary Surgical Group. Also taken prisoner were five men belonging to the Division Surgeon's office, to include the 101st Airborne's chief medical officer Dr. Gold.

One member of the 326th Med, Private Henry P. Sullivan, died from enemy fire, as did an unknown number of helpless casualties. No full identification has ever been made of the African-American truck drivers who stumbled into KG Stephan's ambush; their unit and number of men killed on December 19, 1944, remain a mystery to this day.

In the early hours of December 20, a U.S. infantry patrol led by Captain Robert J. McDon-

ald of Co. B, 401st GIR, cautiously approached the crossroads. One of these glidermen, 21-year-old Pfc. Carmen C. Gisi, recalled hearing a "loud, continuous wail" which was caused by the body of a dead truck driver draped over the horn of his vehicle. Gisi also observed in the gloom several careless German soldiers who were searching for souvenirs amid the clearing station's wreckage.

McDonald's riflemen swiftly formed on line and attacked the enemy stragglers. At dawn, after the Germans ran off, Gisi and his squad "went into the 326th Medical Company area where we found two troopers dead." Word quickly passed up the chain of command to Brig. Gen. McAuliffe, confirming earlier reports of the hospital's capture.

This was a troubling development for several reasons. Primarily, the Screaming Eagle Division now needed to constitute a new second echelon medical treatment facility from its already overworked regimental and battalion aid personnel. Even under ideal circumstances, it would be no easy task to replace the 142 highly skilled doctors and medics (not to mention their specialized equipment) lost in KG Stephan's ambush.

The presence of enemy forces operating so deeply in what McAuliffe's staff considered their rear area also caused American commanders to reconsider Bastogne's safety. The 101st Airborne's senior officers took a lesson from this unfortunate incident and started preparing a 360-degree strongpoint defense in case German troops and tanks encircled them.

That did in fact happen when enemy forces seized the last road into town at approximately 2330 hours on Thursday, December 21, 1944. Once again, Maj. Barfield (now promoted to the position of Division Surgeon) found himself unable to join his command as he had traveled outside the perimeter for a conference when Bastogne was surrounded. Barfield could not make his way back to the Screaming Eagles' headquarters for nearly a week.

Within the besieged city, aidmen from the 501st PIR set up temporary collection facilities located inside a convent. To provide additional care for the casualties now accumulating in and around Bastogne, Major (Dr.) Martin C. Wisely of the 327th GIR assembled a team of physicians and medics from the 101st Airborne's artillery, antiaircraft and attached tank destroyer units. Wisely opened an improvised clearing station at the Belgian Army barracks in town, later moving it into a basement garage after German forces began blasting their foe's positions with heavy artillery and aerial bombs.

American troopers of the 101st Airborne Division drag supply containers air dropped to them during the siege of Bastogne. The 101st was surrounded at the Belgian crossroads town, and as the number of wounded increased, the losses sustained in the 326th Airborne Medical Company severely strained the ability of available medical personnel to care for those injured.

To ease the strain on Major Wisely's facility, medics assigned to the 502nd PIR and CCB, 10th Armored Division, established their own ad hoc collecting posts. Unfortunately, CCB's aid station was destroyed by a bomb on Christmas Eve. Killed in the explosion were a number of patients, as well as a Belgian woman who had volunteered to help nurse the wounded.

Shortages of whole blood, blankets, and penicillin constantly bedeviled Bastogne's embattled aidmen as they attended to a growing number of wounded troops. Parachute resupply, which began on December 23, helped alleviate but never totally solved the problem. Luckily, the Screaming Eagles discovered in town several large medical stockpiles that had been abandoned by other outfits. Foraging parties also combed through ruined dwellings for quilts and bed coverings to help keep casualties warm.

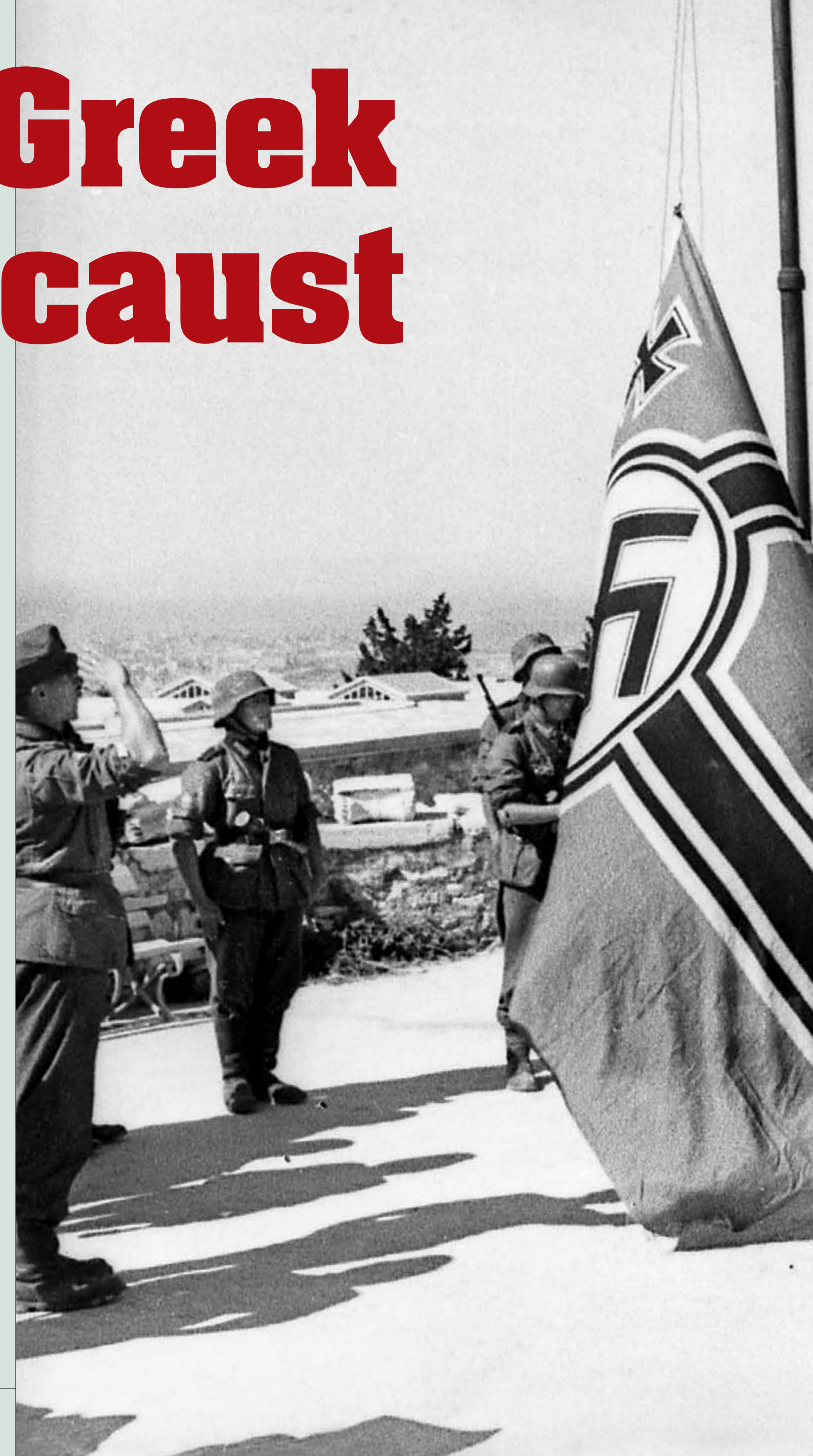
A more serious challenge involved the garrison's inability to conduct emergency surgery on those individuals most severely injured in battle. One trauma surgeon was flown into Bastogne by liaison plane on Christmas, while the following morning a CG-4A cargo glider carrying nine more medical officers and enlisted technicians landed inside the perimeter. This surgical team (assisted by three Belgian nurses) went to work immediately, performing major life saving operations on 50 patients over the next two days.

After Patton's Third Army bulled its way into Bastogne on December 26, casualties could once again be evacuated. One day later, a convoy of 21 field ambulances and 10 cargo trucks carrying 260 patients rolled out of the formerly surrounded city. By

Continued on page 97

BY NATHAN N. PREFER

The Greek Holocaust



In late 1940 and early 1941, German Chancellor Adolf Hitler was concentrating on his next great conquest, the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, his Axis alliance partner, Benito Mussolini, was having difficulties with his North African campaign against the British and was looking for an "easy" way to restore his and his nation's prestige.

Mussolini believed that by invading Italy's old rival Greece, he would challenge British sea power in the Mediterranean and remove the threats to his own supply lines to North Africa. Once strengthened by the Germans in North Africa, he could invade and conquer Egypt, forcing the British out of North Africa altogether. Having easily occupied Albania in 1939, he expected little resistance from the Greeks, whom he believed would not fight.

Mussolini began his program with a demand in August 1940 to the Greek government that it renounce the British guarantee of its independence. Greece's King George II indignantly refused to do so. Mussolini promptly declared Greece an "unneutral" country secretly sympathetic to Britain and indulging in terror tactics on the Albanian border. The Italian Navy then sank the Greek cruiser *Elli* while it was anchored in the harbor of the Greek island of Tinos.

On October 15, 1940, the Italian high command held a war council in Rome, and one after another, the generals rose to declare that their forces were ready to crush the insolent Greeks, boldly asserting, "Our troops are eager to fight and advance" and "Enthusiasm is at its highest point." One participant later said, "They spoke of seiz-

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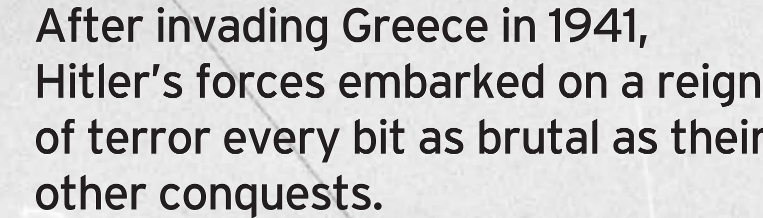

After invading Greece in 1941, Hitler's forces embarked on a reign of terror every bit as brutal as their other conquests.

After having failed to conquer his long-time rival Greece, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini asked Axis partner Adolf Hitler for help. Here, German soldiers raise the German war banner atop the Acropolis in Athens after forcing the Greeks to surrender on April 27, 1941. Terrible atrocities by the Germans against the Greek populace followed.

ing Greece or Yugoslavia in the same offhand way they would decide to order a cup of coffee."

After having invaded and easily conquered Greece's weak neighbor Albania in 1939, the Italians massed their forces along the Greek-Albanian border and waited for an incident that would give them an excuse to invade. One came along soon enough. At 3 am on October 28, 1940, the Italian minister at Athens presented an ultimatum listing Italian "grievances" and giving the Greeks three hours to allow Italian troops to occupy key strategic areas within Greece for the duration of the war.

The reason for Italian optimism was the condition of Greece's military forces. They had no mechanized equipment, no heavy arms, and only a few hundred antiquated aircraft. Their main line of defense, the Metaxas Line, faced Bulgaria and not Albania, where the Italians had massed their forces.

Luckily, help for the Greeks soon arrived. The British government kept its pledge to ensure Greek independence by mining Greek waters to prevent the Italian Navy from attacking the coastal cities and sent 56,000 British, Australian, and New Zealand troops directly to Greece from North Africa. But the Italians didn't wait for German help to arrive. Even before the three-hour ultimatum expired, Italian troops had crossed the border into Greece.

Italian optimism quickly evaporated. Within days, the attackers became bogged down in the mountainous and wooded terrain. The Greek commander and "Premier for Life," General Ioannis Metaxas, shrewdly waited until the Italian forces were deep within the narrow valleys of northern Greece and away from their supply lines before striking.

When the time was right, he unleashed his experienced mountain warriors, known as the Evzones, who hit the Italians with artillery and cut their columns to pieces. British planes then arrived and destroyed much of the Italian supply lines. The 25 Italian divisions committed to the conquest of Greece were stymied.

The Italians, whose officers had claimed that their troops were "eager" and "enthusiastic," were now demoralized and disheartened. Bad weather in the Greek-Albanian mountains added to their woes. At the end of November 1940, the main Italian force broke and ran, retreating in disorder from the Greek front. General Metaxas quickly took advantage of the Italian discomfiture and moved across the Albanian border, seizing Ersek and cutting the enemy's lines of communication. By the end of the year, the Greeks had seized one fourth of Albania.

Mussolini's embarrassments were not yet over. In March 1941, the Italian fleet put to sea to disrupt the flow of British reinforcements pouring into Greece from North Africa. On the

ABOVE: An elite force of motorcycle-mounted Italian Bersagliari troops, identifiable by the feathers from black capons on their sun helmets, roll into northern Greece. Poorly led, the Italians met stiff resistance just inside Greece's border. OPPOSITE: A Greek horse-cavalry unit climbs a muddy mountain pass. Horses were essential in the rugged terrain. Greek forces pushed the Italian army into southern Albania before German divisions arrived.

LEFT: Greek Prime Minister and former military officer Ionnis Metaxas led the successful defense against invasion until his death on January 29, 1941. MIDDLE: In retaliation for the killing of three of his soldiers, SS-Colonel Karl Schümers ordered the deaths of 280 civilians in the village of Kleisoura in April 1944. RIGHT: To avenge the deaths of German troops by Greek partisans, Wehrmacht General Karl von Le Sure ordered civilians to be massacred.

night of March 28, a Royal Navy fleet sailed from the port of Alexandria, Egypt, to intercept and sink three Italian cruisers and two destroyers, a savage blow to the Italian Navy's morale.

Early in 1941, Benito Mussolini was in deeper trouble than he had been at the beginning of the year. The defeat in Greece and the invasion of Albania had stunned the Italian people. Fed a constant diet of lies and propaganda about the invincibility of Italy's armed forces, they were shocked by these defeats. Not one to admit defeat, Mussolini told his people, "We'll break the backs of the Greeks, and we don't need any help!" He ordered mass attacks against the Greek positions, and his troops were slaughtered.

Adolf Hitler, who had not been consulted before the invasion, was annoyed and concerned about the events in Greece and Albania. He was deep into planning his conquest of the Soviet Union and wanted no hostile powers on his flanks as he roared across the Russian steppes. Nor did he want any enemy planes close enough to bomb his precious oil reserves at Ploesti, Romania. Bulgaria had surrendered to his threats and allied itself with Germany, but Yugoslavia and Greece remained fiercely independent. His faith in his Italian ally having waned, he ordered his own armed forces into the battle for Greece.

On April 6, 1941, German forces invaded Yugoslavia. That nation surrendered 11 days later, having been crushed by the German blitzkrieg. At the same time, German forces positioned in Bulgaria struck Greece. They outflanked the Metaxas Line, surrounded three Greek divisions, and captured Thessaloniki in two days. Other German forces struck the Greek homeland from Bulgaria and Albania, a thrust the Greeks were unable to stop.

One after another, the Greek divisions were cut up, flung back into the mountains, and ordered by their leaders to scatter. Although the Greek rear guards were still holding the Italians and even counter attacking them, the main battle along the Greek-Albanian border was lost. After General Metaxas died in January, General Alexander Papagos, the Greek minister of war, assumed command. On April 20, he asked the Germans for a cease-fire, admitting that the Greek Army could no longer successfully resist Germany's half million well-armed, motorized troops.

Nor could the British, who had come to assist Greece. A withdrawal was ordered, and in yet one more Dunkirk-style operation, the British managed to evacuate about 43,000 troops to Crete and back to North Africa. The cost to the Germans was about 5,000 soldiers. So ended the Greek campaign.

Hitler was magnanimous, however. He maintained the fiction that the Italian armed forces had been the center of the Greek conquest and let Mussolini occupy the country while he turned his own forces east. But many students of the war note that the five weeks the Germans lost in conquering Greece delayed their invasion of Russia long enough to prevent the seizure of Moscow in the first year of that campaign.

Greece was now an occupied country, split between the Germans, Italians, and Bulgarians. The minister of war, General Alexander Papagos, was taken as a hostage to Germany, where he was imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp. (He would be freed in 1945 by American troops.) The Greek king and his government had taken refuge in Cairo, forfeiting all of their authority over the nation. Greece itself was to be administered as an occupied zone by German military authorities, presenting as it did access to the Third Reich's enemies in the Mediterranean. A group of collaborationist generals ruled the country at the German military's behest.

General Georgios Tsolakoglou, who had signed the armistice with the Germans, was appointed as prime minister of the new Nazi puppet collaborationist regime in Athens. He

was soon succeeded by two others, one of whom, Ioannis Rallis, created the Greek Security Battalions. These units were collaborationist troops who served the puppet regime. Some joined because they shared the German National Socialist agenda, others because they were strongly anti communist, and still others were simply opportunistic. Still others came from Greek fascist organizations that had existed in Greece before the war.

Other Greeks chose to hide in the mountains, refusing to concede their country to the Germans, giving birth to a resistance movement. The movement armed itself with supplies, weapons, and equipment left behind by the British and other supplies hidden by the Greek Army. But even here, there was a dichotomy. Two distinct groups emerged within the resistance. There were the noncommunist partisans—the EDES (The National Republican Greek League)—and there was the communist resistance—the ELAS (Greek People's Army of Liberation). There were also fringe groups, such as the EAM (National Liberation Front), under a Colonel Psaros.

The first resistance act occurred on the day Athens surrendered on April 27. When the Germans ordered one of the Evzones, Konstandinos Koukidis, to haul down the Greek flag and turn it over to them, the soldier did as he was told, then wrapped the Greek flag around him and jumped to his death from the walls of the ancient fortress. A few days later, two teenagers, Manolis Glezos and Apostolis Santas, tore down the Nazi flag flying from the Acropolis. These acts foreshadowed the Greek resistance movement.

The British continued to try to help. They sent a mission to the resistance to assist in supplying weapons, ammunition, supplies, and medicines via airdrop. They tried to cooperate with all the resistance groups indiscriminately by organizing acts of sabotage that delayed supplies destined for the German Afrika Korps in North Africa.

In one cooperative effort, the Gorgopotamos viaduct on the Athens-Thessaloniki line was blown up on November 25, 1942, causing a great stir among the occupying Axis forces. But such cooperation was rare, and soon the British were forced to sit back and watch the bitter struggle between the resistance groups.

In the mountains of Greece, the resistance movement continued to grow. The EAM was at its largest in the early months. It soon developed its own offshoot, the ELAS, which took to the mountains in the summer of 1942 under the command of Athanasios Klaras, whose nom de guerre was Ares Veloukhiotis; he was a ruthless but capable leader.

Although organized and controlled by the Greek communists, many of the members of ELAS were neither right nor left in the political spectrum: most were Greek patriots who wanted to liberate their country. Soon, the ELAS was reported to have as many as 70,000 members, with the parent organization, EAM, rising to nearly two million by the end of the German occupation.

On the other side of the resistance movement was the EDES, a noncommunist organization under the command of General Napoleon Zervas. In this, like all other resistance groups, women played a key role in operations and support.

Both groups attacked bridges and German supply convoys, which required the Germans and Italians to keep a large occupation force in Greece, further angering Hitler. But as the partisan war progressed, the hatred between the two resistance groups became more and more pronounced, sometimes to the point that they preferred to attack each other than

strike at their nation's occupiers.

While these resistance groups were organizing themselves, the Germans were busy plundering Greece. Having decreed that the Greeks must pay for the war, they confiscated food, animals, and anything of use to the German war effort.

The result was mass starvation and the deaths of an estimated 100,000 Greeks in the first year of the occupation. In part, this was because the new government of collaborationist generals was incompetent and corrupt. Even though crop yields were only about 15 percent below normal, the new government was unable or unwilling to properly organize the collection and distribution of the harvest. While the urban population starved, the rich thrived on a newly rising black market.

The Germans also forced the collaborationist government to grant Germany a "war loan" in addition to reparations. These combined demands resulted in runaway inflation in Greece, which ruined the country's infrastructure.

Adding to the difficulty was the ongoing argument between the Germans and the Italians regarding who was responsible for providing food for the Greeks. This argument was just one more dispute between the so-called Axis allies that soon led to more deaths. The Germans continued to insist that the Greeks were the Italian Army's responsibility, and the famine continued to the point that in Athens, the Greek Orthodox rites of burial were abandoned due to the overwhelming number of deaths.

The Greeks blamed the Germans for the famine, while the Italians blamed the British blockade. To address the issue, the British reluctantly agreed to allow shipments of grain from Turkey to pass their blockade. The Greek War Relief Association in the United States also helped by hiring a Turkish ship, the SS *Kurtulus*, to bring food into Greece from Switzerland and Turkey under Red Cross auspices. These efforts, however, only brought a token level of relief, and in the winter of 1942 the SS *Kurtulus* ran aground near the Sea of Marmara and was lost.

It wasn't until 1943 when pressure from the United States, Great Britain itself, and the Vatican convinced the British military to lift the blockade to avoid another year of famine. The situation nonetheless continued to be serious on some of the outlying Greek islands, where the Germans had banned fishing. Without the food and income from fishing, and with no food coming from the mainland, the islanders' suffering continued. Later, it was determined that this crisis caused the Greek people to lose faith in their government, now believing that the politicians were only interested in taking care of themselves, a deep sense of popular alienation from the Greek state that would last into the next century.

ABOVE: Greek Jews in the city of Ioannina, in northwest Greece, are rounded up to be transported to a concentration camp, March 25, 1944. OPPOSITE: As Athenians watch from rooftops, German Field Marshal Wilhelm List (right) reviews troops during a victory parade in Athens, April 27, 1941—just 24 days after the German invasion. The Greek king and government fled to Egypt.

The Greek occupation also produced a strange phenomenon in the German-Italian alliance. Although never truly close allies, the Germans now found themselves drawn more to the Greeks than to their Italian partners. They developed more respect for the Greeks for having defeated the Italians and came to believe that the Greeks were a better-educated people, just like the Germans themselves. In the meantime, the ongoing dispute over who was responsible for the occupation continued.

None of this, however, kept the Germans from enforcing their brutal occupation. After increasing attacks by Greek resistance forces, the Germans resorted to their usual methods of retaliation: wholesale slaughter of the civilian population.

The troops of Lt. Gen. Walter Stettner Ritter von Grabenhofen's 1st Mountain Division (Gebirgsdivision), veterans of the fighting in Poland, France, and Russia, were sent to Greece in mid-1943 to quell the resistance. On August 16, 1943, the division arrived at the village of Kommeno, near where a resistance force had attacked German troops. The entire village, 317 men, women, and children, were executed and the village burned to the ground.

The atrocities continued. In December 1943, 78 German soldiers were ambushed and killed near the village of Kalavryta. In reprisal, a German force marched from Tripolis to Kalavryta, killing every Greek they met along the way. Another German force—Lt. Gen. Karl von Leisure's 117th Jäger (Light) Division—marched from Aigion, killing 42 Greek men in the village of Kerpini and then burning the village to the ground.

At the village of Zachloros, they murdered another 18 men and tossed their bodies into

a nearby well, then burned that village too. The villages of Souvardo and Vrachni suffered as well before the Germans arrived in Kalavryta. Here, the Germans rounded up the entire male population and took them to a nearby field, where the civilians were killed with machine guns. Survivors were shot again. The village was burned, and on the way back, the Germans burned down the monastery of Agia Lavra, killing four monks and the caretaker.

In another episode, German SS troops killed 218 Greeks in the village of Distomo on June 10, 1944, using bayonets against babies, raping and stabbing pregnant women, and beheading the village priest before moving on. All the men were shot or hanged.

The Bulgarian occupation zone encompassed the whole of northeastern Greece east of the Strymon River in eastern Macedonia and western Thrace. Only the area around the Evros Prefecture, which bordered Turkey, was occupied by the Germans. Even more brutal than their German allies, the Bulgarians adopted a policy of extermination or expulsion, for they wanted to annex those territories to their own country.

Once they arrived in their zone, the Bulgarians deported all Greek mayors, judges, lawyers, and police. Greek schools were closed, and the teachers expelled. Greek clergymen were replaced by Bulgarian priests. The Greek language was sharply repressed. The names of towns and place names were changed to traditional Bulgarian names. Even gravestones with Greek inscriptions were defaced.

The Bulgarians instituted forced labor and put thousands of Greeks out of work by requiring a license to work in any trade or profession, effectively banning Greeks from participating. By the end of 1941, more than 100,000 Greeks had been expelled from the Bulgarian occupation zone and thousands of Bulgarian colonists were brought in to settle the nearly vacant territory, encouraged by cheap confiscated Greek houses and land.

But as elsewhere, the Greeks did not sit idly by while they were being eliminated. In the city of Drama in Macedonia, a revolt erupted on September 28, 1941, and soon spread to other towns. Armed clashes with the occupying forces broke out.

The Bulgarians reacted swiftly and moved troops into the towns to seize all men between the ages of 18 and 45, executing more than 3,000 in Drama alone. In the ensuing pacification campaign, an estimated 15,000 Greeks were killed and dozens of villages looted by the Bulgarian occupiers.

The Italian occupation zone, mainly the bulk of the Greek mainland and most of the offshore islands, fared better, at least at first. Although the Italians had brought up the prospect of annexing part of Greece to Italy, nothing came of the idea due to the opposition of both King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and the Germans themselves, who feared further alienating the Greeks.

Still, the Italians replaced the Greek civil authorities, particularly on the islands, in the expectation of a postwar annexation. To appease the Albanian claims, an Albanian high commissioner was appointed to oversee some areas claimed by that nation, but again, German opposition kept any real authority to a minimum.

Unlike their German and Bulgarian allies, the Italians never instituted a policy of mass

ABOVE: Greek communist partisans move into Lamia in central Greece after its liberation from the Germans on October 19, 1944. OPPOSITE: Greek women served alongside men in communist partisan units (EAM-ELAS-EKKM-EDES) that operated in the mountains.

reprisals. They even protected the Greek Jews in their zone. But because they occupied most of Greece, the Italians faced the bulk of the Greek resistance movement's activities.

By mid-1943, these resistance attacks had driven Italian forces out of some local areas and towns, creating liberated areas known as "Free Greece." But all this ceased when Italy deposed Mussolini and surrendered to the Allies in July 1943 in an unsuccessful attempt to stave off invasion, moving the Germans to take over the Italian occupation zone in Greece.

Still, postwar estimates show that, at the very least, the Germans executed 21,000 Greeks, the Bulgarians 40,000, and the Italians 9,000 during the occupation.

Things in Greece were already in desperate straits when September 1943 arrived. Early that month, the Allies invaded Italy and the Italian government joined the Western Allies in the war against Germany. This made the Italians the enemy of Nazi Germany. As always, the Germans reacted swiftly, surrounding and disarming their former Italian allies across Greece. Some Italian units fought back, and these were attacked and destroyed, their weapons and supplies confiscated. In some cases, particularly on the outlying islands, Italian officers who had either surrendered or been captured were executed. The Germans moved in to occupy the former Italian zone.

Jewish communities had existed in Greece for thousands of years. There were two main groups, the Romaniote Jews, who had been there since the Roman era, and the 50,000-strong Sephardic Jewish community of Thessaloniki, which originated when Jews fled the Spanish Inquisition during the late Middle Ages.

More than 12,000 Jews served in the Greek armed forces during the war, with 631 being killed in action and another 1,412 permanently disabled. As they did elsewhere, the German and Bulgarian occupiers gradually imposed a series of decrees limiting Jewish participation in public life.

The first deportations to the death camps came when the Bulgarians agreed to German requests to be allowed to round up all 11,000 Jews then living in Macedonia and Thrace. This occurred in 1941, with 20 trains hauling men, women, children, invalids, and the aged north to so-called "labor camps."

Packed densely into the trains, the Jews had no sanitary arrangements, no food, and no water for the six-day journey. Each morning, the trains would stop, and the dead would be unceremoniously thrown into the snow, with no burial arrangements allowed. All Jewish property was confiscated and sold. Monies not confiscated by the Germans were deposited in a bank account supposedly for the benefit of the deported Jews, most of whom were already dead by the time the deposit statements were printed.

But in the Italian zone, things were different. Mussolini, for all his faults, had refused to use his own resources to pursue Hitler's "Final Solution," the elimination of European Jewry.

Many German leaders, including German Foreign Minister Joachim Ribbentrop, complained personally to Mussolini about this lack of enthusiasm but to no avail. In Greece, this aided the Jewish community, for those within the Italian zone were not required to wear the yellow star denoting being a Jew, nor were any special restrictions placed upon them in the Italian zone. In fact, once it became clear that the Germans would continue to persecute the Jews in their zone, many Jews moved into the Italian zone to survive.

The Germans asked the Italians to seal off their zone to Jews, but General Carlo Geloso refused, saying he had no such instructions from his own government. To avoid losing the bulk of the Greek Jews in their midst, the Germans expedited their roundup of Jews in their zone before they could "get away" into the Italian zone. Within five months, they had eliminated Thessaloniki's Jewish community, the largest group of Sephardic Jewry in the world. An estimated 43,000 Greek Jews perished in this operation.

So weak and undernourished were the Jews deported from Thessaloniki that literally none were spared by the Germans for forced labor. Indeed, so ravaged were these Greek citizens that for three weeks, the crematoria at Auschwitz had to be stopped because of raging spotted typhus brought into the camp by the Greek Jews. Only about 1,000 Jews of Thessaloniki were spared, thanks to the efforts of the Italian consul general in Thessaloniki and the Spanish chargé d'affaires in Athens.

Italian Consul General Castrucci also handed out naturalization papers to Greek Jews, saving 550 (mostly women) from the death camps. Hundreds more were saved by the intervention of Spain, which claimed that they were of Spanish descent and thereby Spanish citizens. German Colonel Adolf Eichmann protested, but Spain persisted, and as Spain was at the time a "friendly" neutral, the matter was dropped.

In Athens, the grand rabbi of the city, Elian Barzilai, was ordered to hand over a com-

plete list of Jewish residents of the city. Instead, he destroyed the list and began to advise the Athenian Jews to flee the city or go into hiding. Some time later, the rabbi himself was spirited away by EAM-ELAS fighters and joined the resistance. Indeed, the resistance helped many Jews escape to the mountains, where they joined the existing resistance groups or formed their own.

Not all the rest of the Jews were rounded up. Many soon learned what it meant to be sent "east" and, heeding Rabbi Barzilai's warning, fled to the mountains. Here, many, including young Jewish women, served with the resistance. Many left their families behind and would never see them again. Jewish girls who escaped to the mountains served in several ways that belied their somewhat genteel urban upbringing and high level of education. They came from a patriarchal society that protected its women from some of the harsh realities of real public life, yet they soon adapted to the ways of the Greek resistance.

Matilda Bourla had been interested in nursing after seeing a movie about Florence Nightingale and was training as a nurse in Athens. Soon after the German occupation of the Italian zone began, she went into the mountains to serve as a nurse for the resistance. When German patrols came too close to the hospital, the nurses moved the patients higher up or deeper into the mountains. Each nurse carried a wounded man on her back for hours until safety was reached.

Fanny (Flora) Florentin served with the Greek Red Cross in Albania and, in March 1943, escaped into the mountains with her husband. There, she served as a nurse and taught other Greek girls nursing. In the fall of 1944, German troops attacked the resistance group she was aiding, but rather than leave a wounded resistance leader behind, she remained with him and was captured.

The resistance leader killed himself rather than be captured, but Fanny was taken to jail in Ioannina, where she freely admitted she was a Greek Jew. She was imprisoned at the Pavlos Melos Prison in Thessaloniki. While there, she managed to communicate with her sister, and the resistance soon arranged to bribe guards to free Fanny.

There were many others. Dora Bourla fought in the mountains of Macedonia and was known as "Tarzan" by her fellow resistance fighters. One resistance unit consisted of 30 Jewish women. Sara Yehoshus, known as Sarika, was 14 years old when she became a nurse on the island of Euboea, where wounded soldiers and amputees from the Albanian front were sent.

In 1943, she and her mother escaped a German roundup of Jews and fled into the mountains. There, she taught in a village until the Germans came and burned it to the ground for harboring Jews. She escaped higher into the mountains, where she joined another resistance group. When they decided to form a women's unit, Sarika was chosen as the leader and recruited a dozen of the girls she had previously taught. They would function as a diversionary unit, using Molotov cocktails against outlying German posts to draw off the main German forces from the real resistance targets.

With the Italian surrender in September 1943, the 13,000 Jews under their control lost the

BELOW: Many towns were wiped off the Greek map. Here, German soldiers put the small village of Distomo to the torch after murdering all of its 218 citizens, June 10, 1944. OPPOSITE: Prisoners being processed upon arrival at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland, May 1944, where a million Jews, including 70,000 from Greece, were gassed.

protection of that government. They and the Jews in Albania, Montenegro, and the Dodecanese Islands were now at the mercy of the Germans. The anti-Jewish laws were quickly enforced, something the Italians had ignored. German patrols searched day and night for Greek Jews and offered rewards for anyone turning one in.

On September 27, barely three weeks after the Italian surrender, German General Jürgen Stroop, who had recently been in command of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, arrived in Athens and began to round up any remaining Jews.

An attempt by Jewish resistance fighters to evacuate most of the remaining 3,500 Jews failed, although a few hundred Athenian Jews did escape to the mountains. Jewish leaders managed to destroy all records identifying Jews, which allowed some Jews to remain in hiding; some Greeks hid their Jewish neighbors until the war's end.

Still, by April and June 1944, half of the Jewish population of Athens had perished. So too did the Jewish populations of the islands of Kastoria, Ioannia, Arta, Corfu, Preveza, and Kana. But the 275 Greek Jews on the island of Zakynthos were hidden deep in the mountains by the island's population and survived the war.

In a complete waste of their resources, the Germans devoted tanks and trucks urgently needed on the front lines to the roundup of all remaining Jews in Greece outside Athens, which resulted in the deportation of more than 5,000. The entire Jewish population of Rhodes—1,200 people—was deported. So were the 1,800 Jews of Corfu and 260 from Crete. All this at a time when the Germans were retreating on all fronts and losing men, equipment, and supplies at an unsustainable rate. Of the estimated 60,000 Greek Jews at the beginning of the war, only 1,475 survived.

But the Greek Jews had one more contribution to make. At the infamous death camp at Auschwitz, the entire crematoria labor group was made up of 135 Greek Jews led by a former Greek Army officer, Lt. Col. Joseph Baruch, aided by two other officers, José Levy and Maurice Aron.

These three men decided on a plot to destroy the crematoria and stop the mass murder. Secretly assembling dynamite and weapons from German warehouses within the camp, the group, aided by fellow French and Hungarian Jewish inmates, struck on September 6, 1944. Two of the four crematoria were blown up, and the group fought off German guards for over an hour, killing four German officers and 12 German soldiers before they themselves died.

The few Jews who had survived the holocaust in Greece and returned after the war were disappointed. Athens had changed beyond recognition. The Jewish cemetery had been bulldozed, as had the former Jewish neighborhoods The Germans had dynamited all the synagogues. Jewish businesses, as well as former Jewish homes, had been turned over to Greeks, and few would be returned.

In June 1943, a massive demonstration had taken place in Athens protesting the collaborationist regime and the execution of 100 Greeks as reprisal for the sabotaging of a train taking prisoners to the concentration camps. That August, German troops were ordered, "All armed men are to be shot on the spot. Villages from where shots have been fired or where armed men have been encountered are to be destroyed, and the men of the village are to be shot. Elsewhere, all men capable of bearing arms are to be rounded up and sent to Ioaninna."

Simply put, the Germans henceforth would regard all civilians as the enemy, and no attack on Germans would go unpunished. If the attackers could not be found, then the nearest village would suffer the consequences. The important people of that village—doctors, priests, mayors, and other prominent citizens—would be publicly executed. For every German soldier killed or wounded, 100 Greek civilians were to be executed.

This policy had some effect on the ongoing resistance efforts. EDES and ELAS had become more concerned with fighting a civil war among themselves than fighting the Nazis, and some villages were fearful of helping either side. The attacks against the Germans nevertheless continued, and more and more Greeks joined the resistance.

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THE BLOODY GILBERTS: 'Another Road to Tokyo'

The savage battle for Makin Island was not the smooth victory it might have been. BY NATHAN N. PREFER

By the spring of 1943, the Japanese advance across the Pacific had been brought to a halt. In the South Pacific, General Douglas Macarthur's Southwest Pacific Theater of Operations was beginning its laborious climb up the north coast of New Guinea, destination the Philippines.

Launching from recently captured South Pacific islands, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's Central Pacific Theater of Operations was about to launch a counteroffensive as well. It, too, had an ultimate destination of the Philippines and then Japan itself.

In the North Pacific, also under Nimitz's command, the defensive buildup of the Aleutian Islands of Kiska and Attu, recently recaptured from the Japanese, were well underway. With the direct threat to the United States and Canada eliminated, planners could look elsewhere.

"The attack upon the Gilberts was for the Central Pacific the counterpart of that upon the Solomons (August 7, 1942)." Said the Army's official history of the campaign. To Admiral Nimitz, the Gilberts were "another road to Tokyo."

These Gilbert Islands lie along the equator 2,000 miles southwest of Hawaii. Most are low, coral atolls that rise only a few feet above the sea. Vegetation is limited to palm trees, breadfruit trees, mangroves, and sand brush.

Makin Island had been seized by the Japanese on December 10, 1941, in the opening days of the war, and developed into a seaplane base and communications center. Later the Japanese would also seize the Gilbert Islands of Tarawa and Apamama. Air bases were later developed on Tarawa, Ocean, and Nauru Islands, while Apammama became an observation outpost.

The Gilberts, with the Marshall Islands to their west, were a part of

In this famous photo of the invasion of Makin, soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 165th Infantry Regiment wade ashore at Butaritari, the atoll's key islet. The Makin invasion was a component of Operation Galvanic, November 20, 1943. A miscalculation of the water depth caused some infantrymen to wade ashore in neck-deep water.

an interlocking system of defense for the Japanese. From the Gilberts, they could observe American military movements—and their submarines and aircraft could harass the American fleets. The possession of these islands by Japan was a threat to any planned Allied offenses in the Pacific and therefore had to be taken from the enemy.

Makin Island was first attacked by a U.S. Navy task force in January 1942, barely a month after its capture. The next several months were peaceful on Makin, until August of that same year when 220 Marine Raiders of Lt. Col. Evans F. Carlson's 2nd Marine Raider Battalion were deposited on the island, destroying most of the Japanese installations and troops there.

Beginning in January 1943, Major General Clarence Tinker's Seventh Army Air Force (previously the Hawaiian Air Force) regularly raided Makin Island as weather and aircraft availability allowed.

By July 1943, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided that there were enough resources now available to undertake an offensive against the Gilbert Islands, removing that threat against Allied communications and paving the way for future advances across the Pacific.

One Army and two Marine divisions were needed for the offensive; the target date was tentatively set for November 15, 1943. Besides seizing the Gilbert Islands to the advantage of the Americans, this would also put the Japanese under a new source of pressure, opening a Central Pacific front.

Further, it was planned that the Gilbert Islands would be a springboard to the Marshall Islands the following January. Admiral Nimitz, in his role as Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas, would be in overall command. Tactical command rested in Major General Holland M. ("Howlin' Mad") Smith, USMC, and his V Amphibious Corps staff. Planning and the gathering of forces began at once.

The Gilbert Islands campaign was an early amphibious warfare experience in atoll warfare. Every item had to be planned and prepared for as, once committed, the combat troops had to fight with what was immediately available, since their nearest friendly base would be 2,000 miles away.

During this planning, it was decided that one target, Nauru, was too strongly defended for the available strength of the planned attacking force. It was also deemed too far from Tarawa and Apamama, the other targets, to be mutually supporting.

The objective instead became Makin and the Army's 27th Infantry Division was selected as the assault force. The veteran 2nd Marine Division would seize Tarawa and Apamama. When this change was made, the division staff of the 27th Infantry Division had barely six weeks left to plan their part of "Operation Galvanic."

The Army division had other problems as well. A National Guard division from New York State, the 27th had been federalized early and rushed to Hawaii, where it was assigned as the defensive garrison of the outer islands. Because of the latter responsibility, and the fact that the division was spread over several islands, it had rarely trained in units larger than a battalion, perhaps a regiment.

It had no infantry-armor training, despite having its own National Guard tank battalion attached to it. Infantry-artillery cooperation was rare. Amphibious training had only recently begun. Makin Island would be its first combat assignment.

The division commander was Major General Ralph Corbett Smith. A graduate of Colorado State College, he had been commissioned into the Infantry in 1916 and fought in France during World War I, where he earned two Silver Stars and a Purple Heart. He was an instructor at West Point and the Infantry School before graduating from the Command and General Staff School in 1928.

He followed this by becoming an instructor at the Command and General Staff School before graduating from the prestigious Army War College in 1935. Fluent in French, he studied in France at the Ecole Superieure de Guerre before serving in the Military Intelligence Branch of the War Department General Staff.

By 1942 he was a brigadier general, a respected tactician, and assistant division commander of the new 76th Infantry Division. When a vacancy arose, the Army appointed him commander of the 27th Infantry Division.

Newly appointed Lieutenant General Ralph C. Richardson, Jr., now commanding U.S. Army Forces, Central Pacific Area, tried to better prepare the novice infantrymen for their coming assignment. In addition to training with ropes, boats, transports and barbed-wire entanglements, he ordered training centers opened to familiarize the ground pounders with amphibious tactics and acquaint them with the naval officers and sailors they would be working with in the coming operation. Shore-fire control parties were attached to the division.

The War Department Field Manual 31-5, Landing Operations on Hostile Shores (1941)

was used as a basis for training. This manual, derived almost entirely from the Marine Corps' amphibious manual issued in 1934-35, was the doctrine taught to the soldiers. But even General Richardson admitted that there was no time for everything in the brief time left after the change of targets, and he specifically regretted that there was no time for infantry-armor training in Hawaii.

Poor weather conditions also limited the actual amphibious training that was practiced. Lack of available fire support ships further eliminated some reality from the exercises.

Logistic problems also hampered preparations. Planners determined that it would be necessary to use the new amphibian tractors (LVTs) to get the assault troops over the reefs surrounding both Tarawa and Makin, but few were yet available.

The New Yorkers had only one such vehicle with which to train until a supply reached them less than two weeks before the attack. Even then, only 48 were received, less than half that received by the 2nd Marine Division. A provisional company drawn from the Army division's 193rd Tank Battalion was hastily created to train on these new vehicles.

The division did succeed in another area, however. Copying from the experience of the 7th Infantry Division in the Aleutians campaign, the division "palletized" nearly all its supplies. This involved stacking all sorts of supplies on sled-like structures to which they were then strapped. This made logistical movement of supplies faster, easier, and more compact. Later in the war, palletizing would become commonplace.

The first section of the assault force sailed from Hawaii on October 31, 1943. Two thousand miles to the west the Japanese on Makin Island were waiting; that garrison had been strengthened after the Marine Raiders' visit the previous year. Troops from the Marshall, Caroline Islands, and Japan itself were rushed forward to garrison all the Gilbert Islands, including Makin.

ABOVE: A tank lighter manned by U.S. Coast Guard personnel makes it way toward shore at Makin while hauling a heavy gun and tractor. The ship in the background is a combat transport also manned by Coast Guardsmen in service with the U.S. Navy task force. As this photo was taken, American bombers were hitting targets on the islet of Butaritari. OPPOSITE: A pair of Grumman TBF Avenger bombers from the escort carrier USS *Coral Sea* fly near Butaritari during Operation Galvanic, November 20, 1943. The wakes of landing craft turning toward shore and the fires burning from preinvasion bombardment are visible below.

A company landed on Makin from Jaluit on August 19, followed by more air-transported troops and equipment. The nine Marines abandoned by the Carlson raid were captured and executed. Nauru and Ocean Islands, previously left alone, were seized.

The 5th Special Base Force sailed from Saipan to Makin to become its defense. The Yokosuka 6th Special Naval Landing Force (later renamed the 3rd Special Base Force) was rushed to the Gilberts and its 1,509 men divided between Tarawa and Makin Islands. Most of the 6th Special Naval Landing Force followed suit later.

The Australian and New Zealand coastwatchers who had provided so much valuable intelligence for the Allies had to flee for their lives. The airbase on Makin was reopened by July 1943 and coastal defenses were installed. American Seventh Army Air Force attacks hindered, but did not halt all this progress.

When the first ships of the American task force destined for Makin Island sailed into Japanese view, there were 798 officers and men on the island, including 284 from the 3rd Special Base Force, under the command of Lieutenant (j.g.) Seizõ Ishikawa. These were the only infantry-trained troops on the island. The rest, more than half, were noncombat troops such as air personnel, construction personnel (mostly Koreans), and a 4th Fleet Construction Detachment.

Lieutenant Ishikawa had little with which to defend his island. There were three dual-purpose 8cm guns defending the main installations at what was known as King's Wharf, in the island's lagoon. Several machine guns were also available. Two extensive tank barriers had been built running entirely across the island's width. Known to the Americans as the East and West Tank barriers, they consisted of wide ditches and coconut log barriers 12 feet wide and nearly five feet high. Each was protected by a single pillbox, an antitank gun, 6 machine guns and 50 infantrymen.

Barbed-wire obstacles had also been laid across the entire island, and rifle pits abounded. A 70mm howitzer had been placed to defend against a landing on the ocean shore, as had the three 8cm guns. Clearly the Japanese expected the Americans to follow Carlson's plan and attack from the ocean side.

The assault force for Makin Island was carried to the Gilbert Islands by Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner and his amphibious Task Force 54. The assault troops were drawn from Colonel Gardiner J. Conroy's 165th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, the former "fighting 69th" of World War I fame. Tanks of Company A, 193rd Tank Battalion, would support the landing.

"Instead of delivering an assault of maximum power at any one point, the schedule called for two separate landings, one following the other, after an interval of about two hours," said the official history. The 1st and 3rd Battalions would land first, on the ocean (west) side, followed by the reserve 2nd Battalion two hours later, on the lagoon side.

Each battalion would be preceded by what was termed a "Special Landing Group" made up of men from the 3rd Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment. Each of these groups would land first from 16 LVTs. Naval gunfire and air bombardment support from four battleships, four cruisers, and nine aircraft carriers would support the landings.

Even as the convoy approached Makin Island on November 20, it came under air and submarine attack from the Japanese. These attacks, after several close calls, availed them nothing. But during this approach, three Landing Ships, Tank (LSTs) carrying the LVTs and Lt. Col. Harmon L. Edmundson's tanks became lost in the darkness. They were located and properly placed while the pre-invasion bombardment was underway.

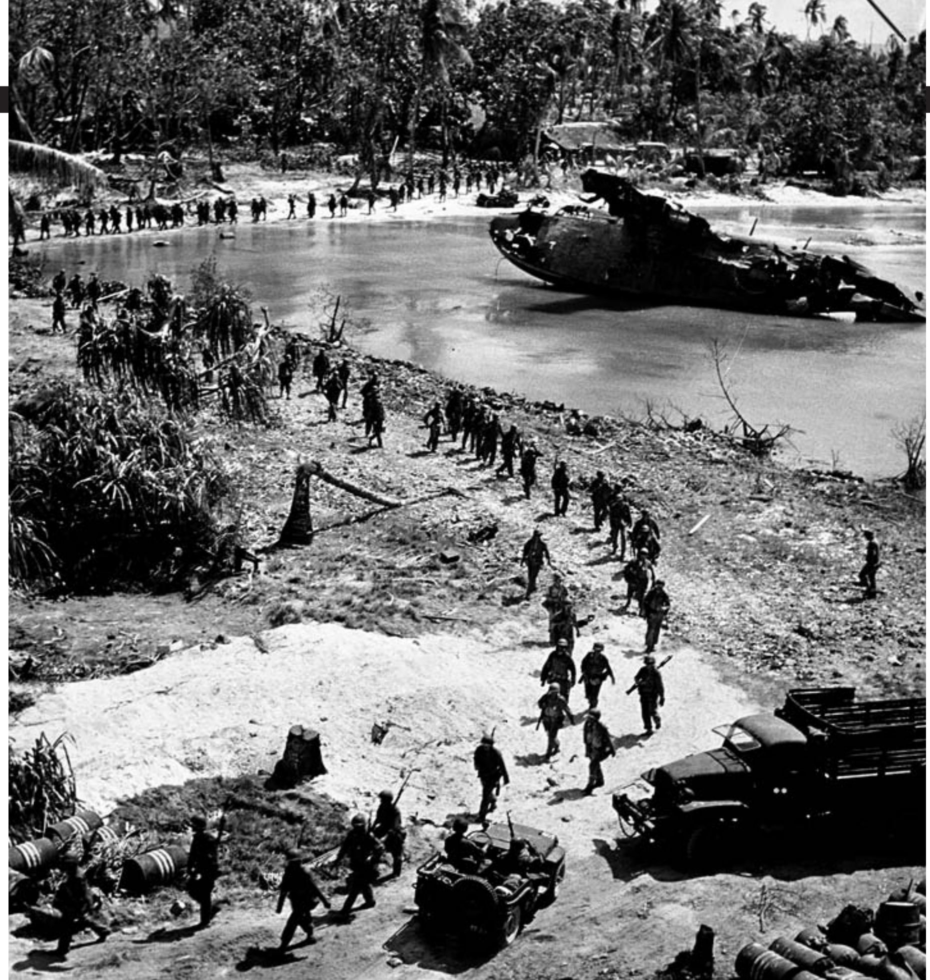
While this bombardment continued, 19 Marines of the 4th Platoon, V Amphibious Corps Reconnaissance Company under 1st Lt. Harvey C. Weeks, USMCR, and the 2nd Platoon, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 165th Infantry, under 2nd Lt. Earl W. Montgomery, sailed in LCVPs for Kotabu Island, a small, round island about four miles from Makin, to secure that flank of the landing.

At Makin, the landings of Lieutenant Colonel Gerard W. Kelley's 1st and Lt. Col. Joseph T. Hart's 3rd Battalions, 165th Infantry, on the Red Beaches were unopposed. Major Edward T. Bradt, commanding the "Special Landing Groups" drawn from his 3rd Battalion, 105th Infantry, recalled, "I jumped down from my boat and stood straight up for two or three minutes, waiting for somebody to shoot me. Nobody did! I saw many other soldiers doing the same thing."

Follow-up troops were immediately ordered ashore, and the word went to Lt. Col. John M. McDonough to land his 2nd Battalion, 165th Infantry, on Yellow Beach.

The advance from the Red Beaches began quickly and met little in the way of resistance. Coast-defense guns were found to be dummies, just logs painted to look like guns. Three enemy strongpoints identified by intelligence behind the beaches proved to be equally harmless.

It wasn't until the advance troops had moved well inland, and two hours after the landings, that the first opposition was encountered when a small enemy patrol resisted the advance and was wiped out. Behind the advance engineers, signalmen and gunners of the 93rd Coast Artillery (AA) Battalion set up shop. Colonel H.G. Browne positioned his supporting 105th Field Artillery Battalion as planned at the village of Ukiangong. All was going according to plan.



ABOVE: To contest the U.S. Army invasion of Makin atoll, the defending Japanese placed machine guns in the wrecked hulks of ships and the partially submerged seaplane visible just offshore. The Americans were obliged to silence these guns as they pushed the Japanese steadily back. In this photo, a column of U.S. soldiers advances into the jungle. OPPOSITE: Taking cover in a shell hole, a soldier of the American 165th Infantry Regiment pauses as other troops also move forward from Red Beach at Makin, November 20, 1943.

In the lagoon, Colonel McDonough's battalion, reinforced with "Special Landing Group Z," Company A, 193rd Tank Battalion, a platoon of Company C, 102nd Engineer Combat Battalion, and some guns from the 98th Coast Artillery (AA) Battalion loaded into their assault boats and began the run to the Yellow Beaches.

Watched by the U.S. Marines and soldiers on otherwise empty Kotabu Island, the landing team sailed into heavy smoke and dust raised by the bombardment. Covered by fire from destroyers USS *Phelps* (DD-360) and USS *MacDonough* (DD-351), the battalion sailed into the heart of the Japanese defenses on Makin Island. Yet, for some reason, reports by Army officers observing the attack mentioned that the infantrymen seemed "in a gay and confident mood. Many were inattentive to the tumult; some even slept."

Fearing "friendly fire," the assault waves stopped for a few minutes to let the naval guns and aircraft clear the area before proceeding ashore. When the assault resumed, enemy fire was encountered about 500 yards from shore. Enemy machine guns hidden in sunken wrecks within the lagoon opened fire. An enemy patrol boat in the lagoon also opened fire while hidden machine guns ashore contributed their voices to the growing battle.

As they landed, the soldiers jumped clear of their landing boats and raced for cover from this fire. Several landing craft became disoriented and wandered around, one even going completely across the narrow island until it was ditched in a large shell crater. Squads immediately set about clearing the immediate area and the two destroyed wharfs (Kings and On Chongs) of enemy troops and guns.

Fortunately, opposition was light, and the "Special Landing Force's" mission was accomplished. Follow-up troops and tanks soon landed and set about clearing the area entirely. Two tanks were drowned in shell holes, while others became stuck on shattered tree trunks. The tank advance then stalled, with Captain Robert S. Brown, the company commander, stuck offshore in a drowned-out tank.

A miscalculation of the water depth forced many soldiers to wade ashore under fire, carrying their equipment, and struggling in water sometimes neck deep to reach the beach. Radios, flamethrowers, and bazookas were damaged by the immersion. Surprisingly, only three fatalities resulted from this episode.

The battle at Yellow beach continued for several hours, with a particular annoyance: those machine guns hidden in the sunken hulks in the lagoon. Finally, the landings were halted and U.S. Navy aircraft from the USS *Enterprise* (CV-6), USS *Coral Sea* (CVE-57), USS *Corregidor* (CVE-58) and USS *Liscome Bay* (CVE-56) bombed the hulks, with little success.

The fighting ashore continued, with the infantry clearing out the numerous enemy shelters in the area. A score of Japanese were killed, and 35 captured, the latter being Korean laborers.

As directed, the battalion set out to cut the island in two and contact the other battalions of the 165th Infantry on the left. It was during this move that they rescued Lieutenant Charles Hough, of Company L, 105th Infantry, whose group had been trapped in that landing craft that had raced across the island in the early moments of the landings on Yellow Beach.

Two men had been killed and others, including Hough, wounded as they fought off attacking enemy troops and awaited the arrival of the rest of the assault force.

The advance inland was difficult. First Sergeant Pasquale J. Fusco reported, "We could not spot them [Japanese] even with glasses and it made our advance very slow. When we moved forward, it was as a skirmish line, with each man being covered as he rushed forward from cover to cover. That meant that every man spent a large part of his time on the ground.

"While at prone, we carefully studied the trees and ground. If one of our men began to

fire rapidly into a tree or ground location, we knew that he had spotted a sniper, and those who could see the tree took up the fire. When we saw no enemy, we fired occasional shots into trees that looked likely." It would be precisely this type of advance that would later bring considerable criticism upon the 27th Infantry Division.

In the advance, one pillbox gave 3rd Platoon, Company F, difficulty. The enemy halted the platoon's advance for over two hours, killing eight and wounding six. Captain Wayne C. Sikes, a tank officer, was sent up by Colonel McDonough to see what the problem was. He led his tanks on foot into the enemy fire, joined by the infantry.

But the pillbox was strongly constructed and built into what little high ground existed on Makin Island. Hand grenades failed, as did a flamethrower. Even 75mm armor-piercing shells fired by the tanks did not penetrate the pillbox.

Then, a demolition squad of engineers from Company C, 102nd Engineer (Combat) Battalion under 1st Lt. Thomas B. Palliser appeared. In a combined operation, one of the very few conducted on Makin Island, the infantry, tankers, and engineers managed to get a pole charge of TNT into the pillbox and explode it. Even that did not destroy the emplacement, but the shock of the blast did kill the dozen enemy soldiers inside, ending the contest.

The most common Japanese defense on Makin Island was a hole in the ground. This was no ordinary hole, however. It usually consisted of an open pit for a machine gun, a covered shelter, and a communications trench, all cleverly hidden in jungle foliage. The walls were usually from three to five feet thick and the trenches four feet deep. These were generally connected to a very strong dugout, revetted with sandbags and logs, with an underground exit.

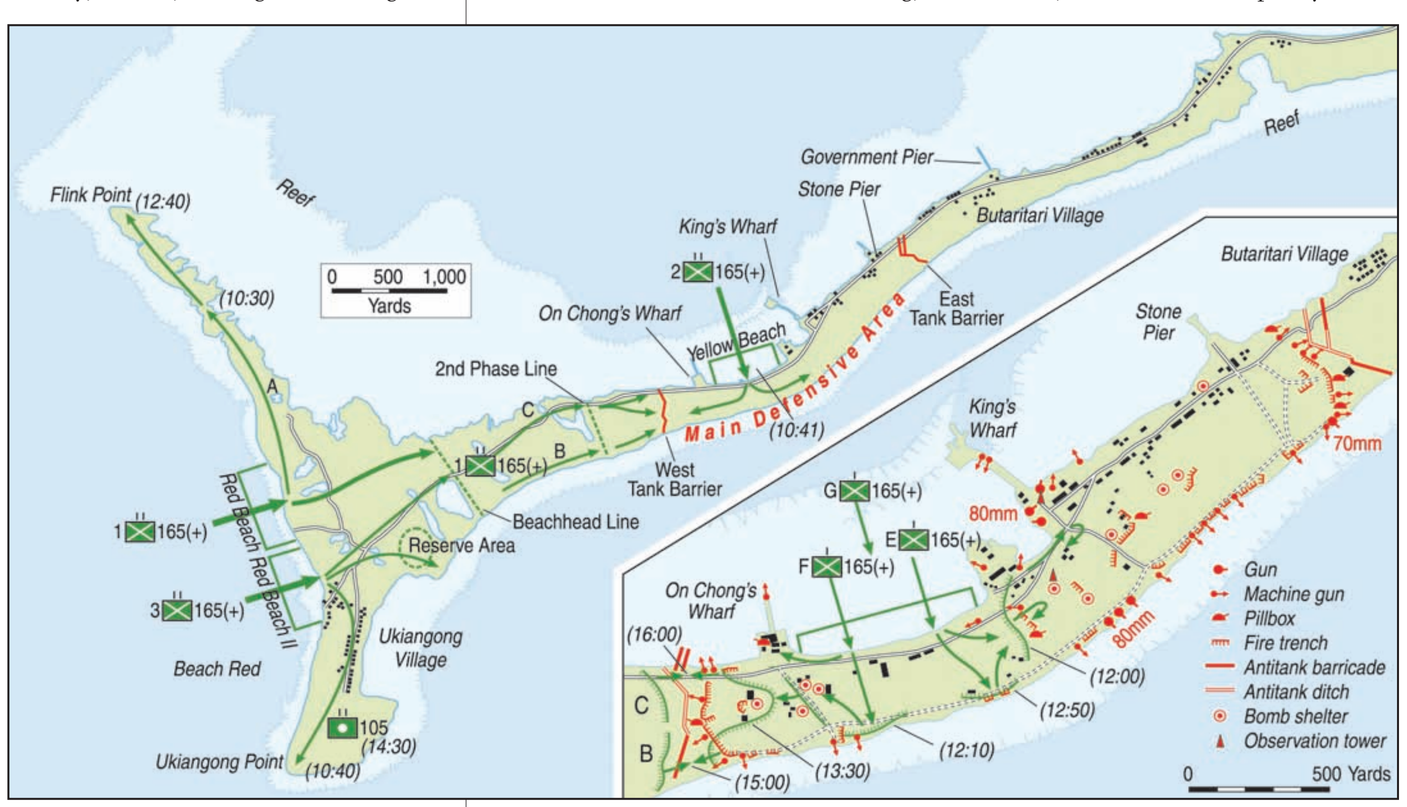
The GIs developed a method of attack against these defenses. A squad of eight men would crawl to within 15 yards and then surround the pit behind cover. The Browning Automatic Rifleman (BAR) and assistant would provide cover fire while two others with grenades would attack on each flank of the pit. They would rush the enemy post and toss their grenades and then dash to the opposite side dropping more grenades. Once the grenades had exploded, the others would follow with bayonets, some covering and others inspecting the pit. According to one participant, "We did not lose a man in this type of action."

Colonel Kelley expected the main enemy defenses to come at the west tank barrier. He joined with the attacking troops to supervise what he expected to be the major battle for the island.

Assisted by two Washington observers—Marine Lt. Col. James Roosevelt (the president's eldest son) and Colonel Clark Ruffner—Colonel Kelley moved forward to observe but came under heavy fire from enemy machine guns, probably those in the bombed hulks in the lagoon.

Under orders from division headquarters to "Continue your attack vigorously to effect a junction with McDonough without delay," Kelley ordered the attack resumed. Company B was on the right and closest to the tank barrier while, off to the east, firing from Company F and some tanks could be heard. Soon, both companies were being fired at by the other across the barrier. For safety reasons, Company B took cover.

Company C, meanwhile, was farther from the barrier and making slower progress against stronger opposition until halted about 250 yards from the barrier. Using the cover of swampy gullies, small pools, high grass, and large trees, the Japanese had set up machine guns in a well-concealed culvert. The fire was strong, well-directed, and its source completely hidden



ABOVE: An American soldier peers from a reinforced bunker recently occupied by the Japanese at Makin in the Gilbert Islands. Makin was captured after landings on November 20, 1943, during Operation Galvanic. OPPOSITE: The landing beaches at Makin were heavily defended by the Japanese, who fortified the tiny spit of land with machine-gun nests and bunkers fortified with coconut logs and concrete. Despite the resistance, the Americans pushed steadily inland to capture the atoll.

from view at all but inches distance.

In their advance, a platoon of Company C had been pinned down by this fire in a small clearing along the road. As the infantrymen pondered their next move, 2nd Lt. Daniel T. Nunnery, sheltering nearby, observed Colonel Kelley coming forward again. Using hand signals, Lieutenant Nunnery tried to warn the colonel of the hidden danger.

While Colonel Kelley was trying to determine the strength and position of the enemy, he was joined by the regimental commander, Colonel Gardiner Conroy. Initially, Conroy believed that the opposition consisted of only a few snipers, but was convinced by Colonel Kelley that there was strong opposition facing Company C. He decided to bring up some light tanks to feel out the enemy position and determine its real strength.

While Colonel Conroy returned for the tanks, Colonel Kelley moved up to Lieutenant Nunnery's position, only to find him dead. Another man lay wounded nearby and the regimental chaplain, seeking to assist the wounded man, was himself shot in the arm. Another man was killed, and seven others wounded in the brief time since Colonel Kelley had arrived.

Four light tanks of the 193rd Tank Battalion then appeared. Behind them walked Colonel Conroy, upright and without seeking cover. He was shouting directions for the infantry to get moving and join the tanks against what he obviously believed was negligible opposition. Colonel Kelley shouted to him to seek cover, and that the opposition was both strong and accurate.

Just as it seemed Conroy would heed Kelley's warnings, he was shot between the eyes and crumpled to the ground. The 165th Infantry Regiment had lost its commander to enemy fire in mid-afternoon of November 20, 1943.

Shocked, both Colonels Roosevelt and Ruffner, accompanying Colonel Conroy, attempted to carry his body to safety but were directed by Colonel Kelley to leave his body and save themselves.

The light tanks, which never fired a shot, retired to the rear. All this shouting and directions emanating from behind Colonel Kelley's tree brought him the unwanted attention of the Japanese, who turned their machine guns on him. Colonel Kelley assumed command of the 165th Infantry Regiment, while his executive officer, Major James H. Maloney, took command of the 1st Battalion.

The problem remained Colonel Kelley's, however. He had no armor, could not use mortars or grenades because of the trapped platoon being in the way, and had no other support available. He ordered 1st Lt. Warren T. Lindquist, with 10 men of his Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, to attack the enemy while the rest of the battalion withdrew to better positions and consolidated.

The reconnaissance troops located the enemy gun and tossed two grenades at it but could not see what happened. They then moved against a second gun but were pushed back by "friendly fire" from Company C. After pulling the wounded chaplain to safety, they had to spend the night guarding him since no evacuation was possible in the darkness.

Despite these situations, the first day's plan for Butaritari Island, the main island of Makin Atoll, had been accomplished. The entire western half of the island, except for the small enclave at the west tank barrier clearing, had been seized. Upon orders from the division headquarters, hostilities ceased for the night.

Meanwhile, Colonel McDonough's 2nd Battalion had reached the west tank barrier and contacted the rest of the 165th Infantry Regiment. It had cleared the lagoon side of the island and reduced nearly all the enemy installations there, including the radio station, warehouses, and buildings.

Two enemy Type 94 "tankettes" had been knocked out. As night fell on November 20, 1943, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 165th Infantry, held the front lines while the 3rd Battalion was in reserve. The 105th Field Artillery Battalion was ashore in support, as were the air defense battalions, supporting engineers, medical services, and shore party groups.

So confident was General Ralph Smith that he ordered the 3rd Battalion to Kuma Island the next morning, an order disapproved of by Admiral Turner and General Holland Smith, who felt it was necessary to retain one battalion in readiness for aiding the Marines at Tarawa.

The 27th Division settled down for the night. The landing craft and tanks assembled behind the lines, as did the reserve battalion. At the beaches, logistics were a problem, for moving the supplies and ammunition was becoming increasingly difficult as the troops advanced further inland.

Even as these issues were addressed, the Japanese created others. Several Japanese had managed to avoid the advance and survive in the western half of Makin. These now tried to rejoin their comrades to the east, and in doing so they aroused the fears of all soldiers lying alone in a dark night. The result was several casualties and a sleepless night for the infantry.

Using English phrases they had picked up, or suddenly throwing grenades out of the complete darkness, they kept the GIs on their sharpest alert the entire night. Even firecrackers were used. One Japanese soldier crawled to the edge of a GI's foxhole and announced, "Me got no gun" before he was shot and killed. His weapon was found beside him in the morning.

Two new Japanese machine guns suddenly appeared in the lagoon; five others were placed near King's Wharf. Another suddenly appeared in a wrecked enemy reconnaissance plane in the lagoon. A group of 16 Japanese tried to infiltrate past Company E's flank near the lagoon. After spending the night sniping, they lay hidden in the tall grass but were discovered and eliminated in the morning. Enemy snipers even reached back into the tank park, killing three men who had left the safety of their tanks.

The morning brought solutions to these problems. Tanks moved to the lagoon's edge and shelled the hulks, the wrecked plane, and patrol boat. Air strikes soon followed. Next, the enemy "pocket" at the west tank barrier was addressed. S/Sgt. Emanuel F. De Fabees led a patrol into the area and in some unrecorded fashion eliminated the pocket's defenders.

In another instance, three light tanks cleared opposition in front of Company F by carefully firing canister rounds into the enemy's suspected area. Yet, sniper fire would continue to be the main source of enemy resistance for the day.

Company E had received the assignment of clearing up the western half of the island while the 1st Battalion cleared the west tank barrier. This latter attack was delayed for two hours while the tanks refueled. Then, despite calls for it to stop, the air bombardment of the area continued, delaying the attack further. The attack, led by 10 medium tanks, did not begin until 11 a.m.

At that same time, the Marines and 2nd Platoon, Company G, returned from searching the outlying islands and were attached to Colonel McDonough, who ordered them to join in his battalion's attack.

The attack included Special Detachment Z, Company G, and Company E. Behind them came a second line with more of Companies E and G, and the Marine platoon. Averaging three yards a minute, the line advanced aggressively.

"On the second day we did not allow sniper fire to deter us," said 1st/Sgt. Thomas E. Valentine of Company E. "We had already found that the snipers were used more as a nuisance than an obstacle. They would fire, but we noted little effect by way of casualties. We learned that by taking careful cover and moving rapidly from one concealment to another, we could minimize the sniper threat.

"Moreover, we knew that our reserves would get them if we did not. So we contented ourselves with firing at a tree when we thought a shot had come from it and we continued to move on. Our reserves could check on whether we had killed him or not."

The dual-purpose 3-inch guns were eventually abandoned as the enemy fled to the eastern tip of the island. The GIs faced only pillboxes, dugouts, and log-revetted emplacements.

Some of these were defended, others not. The grenade, BAR, machine gun and tank were the main weapons used as the advance moved east. As another night approached, the Americans settled down once again for a second night on Makin Island.

Expecting a repeat of the night before, they were not to be disappointed. Sniper fire, grenades, and some mortar fire were received, but nothing unusual or unexpected. At daylight, the 3rd Battalion again moved forward, supported by aircraft from the USS *Coral Sea* and USS *Corregidor*. The USS *Liscome Bay* provided anti-submarine patrols, as there had been some scares recently. The east tank barrier was shelled, and the advance resumed against light opposition.

Earlier intelligence had identified many enemy positions, and these were now targeted by supporting arms. Captain Lawrence O'Brien and his Company A boarded landing craft and sailed three miles behind enemy lines. They landed unopposed, killed 45 enemy soldiers, and established themselves on the Japanese rear.

Another flanking operation, this one under the command of Major Brandt, also succeeded and began moving towards the 3rd Battalion. That afternoon Gen. Ralph Smith officially assumed full command of the forces on the island, as planned. Later he received orders to re-embark the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 165th Infantry, from Admiral Turner; Colonel Hart's 3rd Battalion would finish the mopping up.

But before these operations could be completed came "Saki Night." The night of November 22-23 saw the 27th Infantry Division beginning to board ship for a return to Hawaii. Enemy resistance was considered weak and disorganized. Only 5,000 yards of Butaritari remained unoccupied. During the day, 100 enemy soldiers were killed and another 99 captured. Clearly the battle was over.

Admiral Turner even officially announced that Makin Island was secured, "though with minor resistance remaining." Apparently even the Japanese thought so. Delving into their supplies of liquor, they prepared for their end. Gathering a group of natives, they pushed them ahead of their attacking force as soon as darkness fell.

ABOVE: After reaching the beach at Makin, U.S. Coast Guardsmen in service with the Navy inspect the corpses of Japanese soldiers killed defending the atoll. These Coast Guardsmen were probably operating one of the landing craft that brought soldiers of the 27th Infantry Division ashore hours earlier. OPPOSITE: An American M3 medium tank, with a sponson-mounted 75mm gun and 37mm cannon mounted in a small turret, rolls across the sandy terrain of Butaritari. This tank belongs to the 193rd Tank Battalion, and though rapidly obsolescent the M3 outclassed any Japanese armor in the Pacific. Some of the Japanese strongpoints proved difficult for the 75mm guns to crack as the tanks accompanied the Army's 27th Division in taking Makin.

After the natives had passed the American lines, the Japanese followed, imitating the cries of a baby to get as close as possible before being discovered. But they were recognized and a fight began, with American machine guns, BARs and rifles ripping into the enemy group. More and more enemy troops appeared. Some still carried liquor bottles or glasses filled with saki. Several jumped into GI foxholes and fought to the death. Others used clubs as weapons. Grenades sailed through the night. Wounded GIs held onto their weapons, knowing this was a fight to the death. Only daylight brought relief.

"Saki Night" cost the 165th Infantry three dead and 25 wounded; over 50 Japanese dead were counted.

Day four of the operation cleared the last 500 yards of Butaritari. The battle was over. All told, it cost the U.S. Army 58 killed in action, 150 wounded, and eight died of wounds. Another 35 were injured in noncombat incidents.

But that was not the whole story. The USS *Liscome Bay* was torpedoed and sunk while supporting the operation, at a cost of 702 killed, including Rear Adm. Henry Mullinix and Pearl Harbor Navy Cross recipient, Ship's Cook Doris "Dorie" Miller.

There were 257 survivors injured, burned, or suffering from numerous other ailments. Another seven sailors were killed and 18 wounded supporting the campaign. A turret fire aboard the USS *Mississippi* (BB-41) killed 40 and injured nine. Even the submarine USS *Plunger* (SS-179) on pilot rescue duty was strafed by an enemy plane and suffered six wounded.

General Ralph Smith signaled "Makin Taken," signifying the combat was over, but the fighting had really just begun. Both the U.S. Navy and certain U.S. Marine Corps officers were highly critical of the Army's performance on Makin.

Continued on page 97

PFC Frank Cohn interrogated German prisoners from Belgium to Germany during the war in Europe. BY KEVIN M. HYMEL

'Vat Goes on

On a Belgian hillside at the height of the Battle of the Bulge, an American lieutenant watched as a jeep carrying four men dressed in American uniforms stopped on the road in front of him. Two of the men dismounted and approached, neither showing any rank on their uniforms. A cold drizzle kept everything miserable.

"I'm Captain Remple, Military Intelligence," one of the men informed the lieutenant. "Give me a briefing of the situation." The lieutenant, suspicious of the strangers, looked them up and down.

"You know," the lieutenant explained as his men gathered around the strangers, "we just got a word that Germans were coming this way in American uniforms, and you guys look just like them." With that, he started a line of questioning: "What's the fifth general order?" The captain didn't know. "Who won the World Series?" again, the captain didn't know. "Recite the Star Spangled Banner." The captain started to speak the tune, but when he got to "by the dawn's early…"

Here?’

He stopped. He could not remember the rest. The man next to the captain just stood there silently. Just then, a third man from the jeep came running up carrying his rifle and shouted “Vat goes on here?”

That’s all the lieutenant and his men needed. They lowered their rifles and jabbed the barrels into each of the three men’s abdomens. Other soldiers ran down to the jeep and pointed rifles at the driver.

For seven hours the soldiers questioned their new prisoners outside in the cold. When they asked the man who quietly stood next to the captain where he was from, he answered in perfect English, “Yeah, I’m from Germany.” Even though he had no German

Photo courtesy Frank Cohn

American soldiers drive by a destroyed German vehicle and the bodies of its former occupants during the Battle of the Bulge. U.S. Army PFC Frank Cohn and his team were suspected of being German spies when they were stopped and interrogated at an American checkpoint in Belgium.

All: National Archives except where noted

accent, the men remained suspicious.

The quiet man from Germany was Frank Cohn, a Jew who had emigrated to the United States in 1938, became an American citizen, and was serving as an interpreter for a prisoner interrogation team attached to Lieutenant General Omar Bradley's Twelfth Army Group, but he failed to convince the lieutenant that he was anything more than a German spy.

Four years earlier, 16-year-old Cohn was growing up in New York City when he learned the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He had been in the United States for almost three years. He and his parents had arrived on visitor visas, but 10 days after he and his mother united with his father in the city, back home in Germany Nazis ransacked Jewish businesses, synagogues, and facilities and imprisoned Jewish males in concentration camps—Kristallnacht. Fortunately, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order that Germans visiting the United States could remain indefinitely.

Cohn enjoyed his new home and the friends he made. One day, while playing ping-pong with a buddy, they met two girls. They called one "Ping" and the other "Pong." Pong's name was Pauline Brimberg. Cohn called her Paula and they dated for a while.

In September of 1943, the U.S. Army drafted Cohn a month after his 18th birthday. He reported to Fort Dix, New Jersey, where he received his uniform, worked on Kitchen Patrol (KP) duty, and watched two movies: one on why the United States was at war and the other on how to avoid venereal diseases. "After that," he recalled, "I always volunteered for guard duty to avoid KP."

On his fourth day, all the draftees but him departed for basic training. When he asked his sergeant, a Native American named Cheraux, what had happened, Cheraux responded, "Quite simply, you're an enemy alien," and reminded Cohn that he held a German passport. Cohn figured he would spend the rest of his Army career pulling KP.

But Cohn had joined Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) in high school and participated in a semester of ROTC at the City College of New York. "I have some military background," he told Cheraux. "I know close order drill, I know firing of weapons, I know some tactics." Cheraux considered his young recruit's offer and told him, "I'm going to make you an acting gadget." Cohn had no idea what that meant. Cheraux handed him an armband with corporal stripes. His new job was to escort recruits to watch the two movies. "It was so much better than KP!" remembered Cohn. "I've seen that movie about avoiding VD more than anyone in the Army." He never got the disease while he served.

Finally, after three months, Cohn received orders to report to Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), Georgia, for the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), which, after basic training, sent recruits to colleges to earn degrees in fields like medicine, engineering, and foreign languages. But before Cohn could complete his training, the Army canceled the program. Soldiers, not scholars, were needed to win the war.

The Army then sent Cohn to Columbus, Georgia, where he was officially sworn in as an American citizen. "I was no longer an enemy alien!" he said. From there he went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to join the 87th Infantry Division.

It was at Fort Jackson that Cohn received his first injury. During a gas mask demonstration, one of his sergeants tossed what he thought was a smoke grenade among the men, but it was actually a white phosphorus grenade, which burns skin when exposed to oxygen. Cohn raced to the infirmary with his ears and hands burning. The doctors didn't know how to treat him until the sergeant ran in and shouted, "White phosphorus!" The doctors immediately put Cohn's hands in two buckets of water. He spent a month in the hospital recovering.

Cohn shipped out to England as a replacement onboard the luxury liner RMS *Queen Mary*, which had been converted into a troop ship. He spent most of his time on guard duty to avoid KP. Fortunately, guards were allowed to jump ahead of the chow line and were given more spacious accommodations than the rest of the troops.

The *Queen Mary* steamed into Southampton, England, in September of 1944 and Cohn waited almost a month before boarding a Liberty ship bound for Utah Beach, France. Arriving at a floating dock, he marched onto the beach without getting his feet wet. He could see smashed weapons, jeeps, and armored vehicles all around. "No one said a word," he recalled. "It was obvious that this was a slaughter."

Cohn then boarded a train which took him all over France and Belgium until he received orders for Le Vesinet, France, near Paris, to work as an intelligence agent. He reported to a chateau with a handful of other interpreters for a two-week course on German military ranks and Nazi agencies. "I should have been part of the Ritchie Boys [Jewish intelligence soldiers]," recalled Cohn, "but ASTP sent me the other way."

Cohn became a member of Interrogator of Prisoner of War (IPW) Team 66, part of T-Force, which secured German scientific and industrial technology and reported directly to Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley's Twelfth Army Group. The six-man team consisted of a captain, a lieutenant, two interpreters, a non-commissioned officer, and a driver. Cohn could only remember the captain's last name—Remple—the same for the lieutenant—Hershey. Cohn's other interpreter was a German farmer named Lawrence Froehlich, whom Cohn called "Floh." As an IPW team, the officers and interpreters wore no rank. The new team headed off to Luxembourg City to meet up with other T-Force units.

The team spent only one night in Luxembourg City before heading off to Remouchamps, Belgium, where the locals offered up their homes to the Americans. Without any orders, the men had nothing to do. "It was very easy," admitted Cohn, "those first days of December."

Cohn spent his time visiting with the locals. On a sojourn to Malmedy, some girls invited him and Floh into their home where they shared some family photos. One picture showed their father in a German uniform. "I was in the home of the enemy!" Cohn recalled. They quickly departed and hitched a ride on an Army truck filled with unexploded

BELOW: PFC Cohn straddles two jeeps used by Prisoner of War Team 66. He served under General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group, which can be identified on the right jeep's front bumper. OPPOSITE: An American soldier searches surrendering German troops for weapons. Cohn served with the Prisoner of War Team 66, interviewing German soldiers and officers for intelligence and assessed buildings for use in prosecuting war criminals.

Photo courtesy Frank Cohn

bombs. Halfway back to their headquarters, MPs stopped the truck and told them that the Germans had broken through the line. The Battle of the Bulge—Adolf Hitler's major offensive against the American Army in Belgium and Luxembourg—had begun.

Back in Remouchamps, Cohn and his team were alerted to move out but needed time to organize the move. Cohn was ordered to head out in the dark and guard a road against German attack. Rumors spread that German parachutists in American uniforms were working behind the lines. Armed with a rifle and a flashlight, Cohn headed out into the cold to check the password of anyone heading west. "It was the scariest night of my life," he confessed.

Cohn could hear gunfire all around. A vehicle rolled up and stopped. "What the heck are you doing here?" a GI in the vehicle asked. "I'm making sure you're not German," Cohn responded. "If I was a German," the GI snapped back, "you'd be dead!" The GI told Cohn to get some cover in a roadside ditch. Cohn manned the ditch, but when another vehicle rolled up he shouted "Halt! Halt!" and the vehicle just raced past him. "I'm not doing my job," he thought.

Around midnight, Cohn and his unit finally headed west. The column moved at only about five miles an hour so no one would get lost. All the vehicles had blackout lights, covers over the headlights that only revealed a slit of light. In Namur, they received orders to circulate through the town looking for Germans disguised as American GIs. "It was miserable," recalled Cohn, who sat in the back of the jeep as snow, sleet, and freezing rain pelted him. To shield himself from the wind, he huddled in the back seat, using Captain Remple in the front seat as a windbreak.

In the town of Dinant, they came across four dead Germans dressed as GIs in an American jeep who had just been killed by a bazooka blast. They searched the bodies and found dog tags, maps, and explosives. "You could tell they were Germans by their haircuts," said Cohn. "The GIs must have found out they didn't have the password."

The next day, Cohn headed out with Captain Remple, Floh, and their driver for another patrol but got lost. When they passed an American unit deployed on a hillside, Cohn and Floh convinced Remple to ask the lieutenant in charge where they were. Remple agreed and took Cohn with him. Cohn expected Remple to simply ask the lieutenant where they were. Instead, he told the lieutenant, "I'm Captain Remple, Military Intelligence, give me a briefing of the situation," which led to all four getting rifle muzzles shoved in their guts.

After a few phone calls, the lieutenant discovered they were who they said they were. "Get the hell out of here," he told them. As they drove back to headquarters, the captain told the team, "I don't want anyone to say a word of this to anyone." But when they reached their headquarters in Namur, intelligence soldiers ran up the jeep shouting "Vat goes on here?!?" The word had already spread.

With Christmas came clear skies, allowing Allied airpower to help stem and push back the German tide. Cohn's team cheered every time aircraft flew over. Team 66 transferred to a small town outside of Liege. "We were there for months," said Cohn, "waiting for the infantry to get into Germany." It was in Liege that Cohn took his first shower in weeks. He stood under the warm spray for 20 minutes, washing away the accumulated grime. When other soldiers screamed at him to get out, he refused. "I wouldn't move."

On March 7, 1945, the American First Army captured the German city of Cologne. Team 66 headed to the city, passing GIs looting everything they could get their hands on. "This is terrible," Remple told Cohn as they passed soldiers sporting top hats. "Our army shouldn't act like that." Most of Cologne had been reduced to rubble but the men could see the city's famous cathedral still standing. Fighting continued in the city.

Team 66 hunted for enemy personnel and building targets. The personnel were interrogated for information while the buildings were assessed for future use in prosecuting war criminals. The team took over an apartment building, kicking out the German civilian residents. Floh

ABOVE: Underneath a Nazi banner in a police station in Dusseldorf, Germany, an American soldier interrogates Amelys Merks, colonel of the organization *Das Bund Deutscher Maedel in der Hitlerjugend*, or "League of German Girls in the Hitler Youth." OPPOSITE: U.S. soldiers squat behind a tank and building as they fight to capture Cologne on March 6, 1945. PFC Cohn almost lost his life to a German mortar barrage in the city.

opened a window and started playing German songs on an accordion. Germans on the other side of the street opened their window and listened. Floh then addressed them, pretending to be Adolf Hitler. “Comrades of the people,” he started, “you get rumors that we didn’t get any coffee, well, we have plenty of coffee but the reason you don’t get any coffee is because we can’t get to it, because there’s too much butter in front of it.” The Germans slammed their window. Cohn and Floh burst out laughing and Cohn translated Floh’s dialogue to the rest of the team so they could share in the joke.

A few days later, the team checked out a German military barracks on the west bank of the Rhine River, the last natural barrier for the Allies attacking into Germany. Cohn and his driver could see German soldiers fleeing so they decided to park at a distance and proceed on foot. They found only a canary in the building. As they admired the bird, an enemy mortar round exploded near them. The two men took off, knowing the Germans were finding their range from across the river. As they reached the jeep the next mortar came in short. They took off as the third mortar exploded exactly where the jeep had been. “That changed my attitude about the war,” said Cohn. “They’re really trying to kill me.”

Later, on another patrol through Cologne, Cohn and his driver spotted a person in the distance and gave chase. The suspect turned out to be a 17-year-old girl. Cohn started talking to her and the girl was aghast that an American spoke German. When Cohn asked her what she was doing out after curfew, she told him she hadn’t eaten in two days and was looking for food, adding that she and another girl lived with a Dutch woman who had one ration card for the three of them. When Cohn asked her why three people only had one ration card, she explained, “Because we’re Jewish.” “I almost fell out of the jeep,” recalled Cohn.

Cohn and the driver took her home where she introduced them to the Dutch woman. The team gave them their C-rations and the women ate. “It was a pleasure to see them eating our rations,” said Cohn. The Dutch woman explained that she had taken the Jewish girls into her home to protect them from the Nazis but she was dying from cancer and worried what would happen to the girls after she passed. “If I’m gone, they’re done for,” she explained. Cohn headed back to headquarters and told Lieutenant Levy, who was also Jewish, about the situation. “Don’t worry about it,” Levy said, “I’ll take care of them.”

A few days later, Cohn and Floh returned to check on the three women, but were stopped by an “Off Limits” sign on her street. They went back to Levy and asked him why he had put up the sign. Levy didn’t know what they were talking about, so the three went back to the house where they

were greeted as liberators. When Levy asked the Dutch woman about the sign, she told him he had done too good of a job. Levy had sent a truck full of food to the house, but when the story got out, other GIs did the same. Truck after truck arrived at the house, packed with food. She went outside and asked a captain how to stop the flood of food. The captain put up the sign. “That Dutch Lady was a hero” said Cohn, reflecting on the incident. “I should have enrolled her in the Yad Vashem as one of those Righteous Among Nations.”

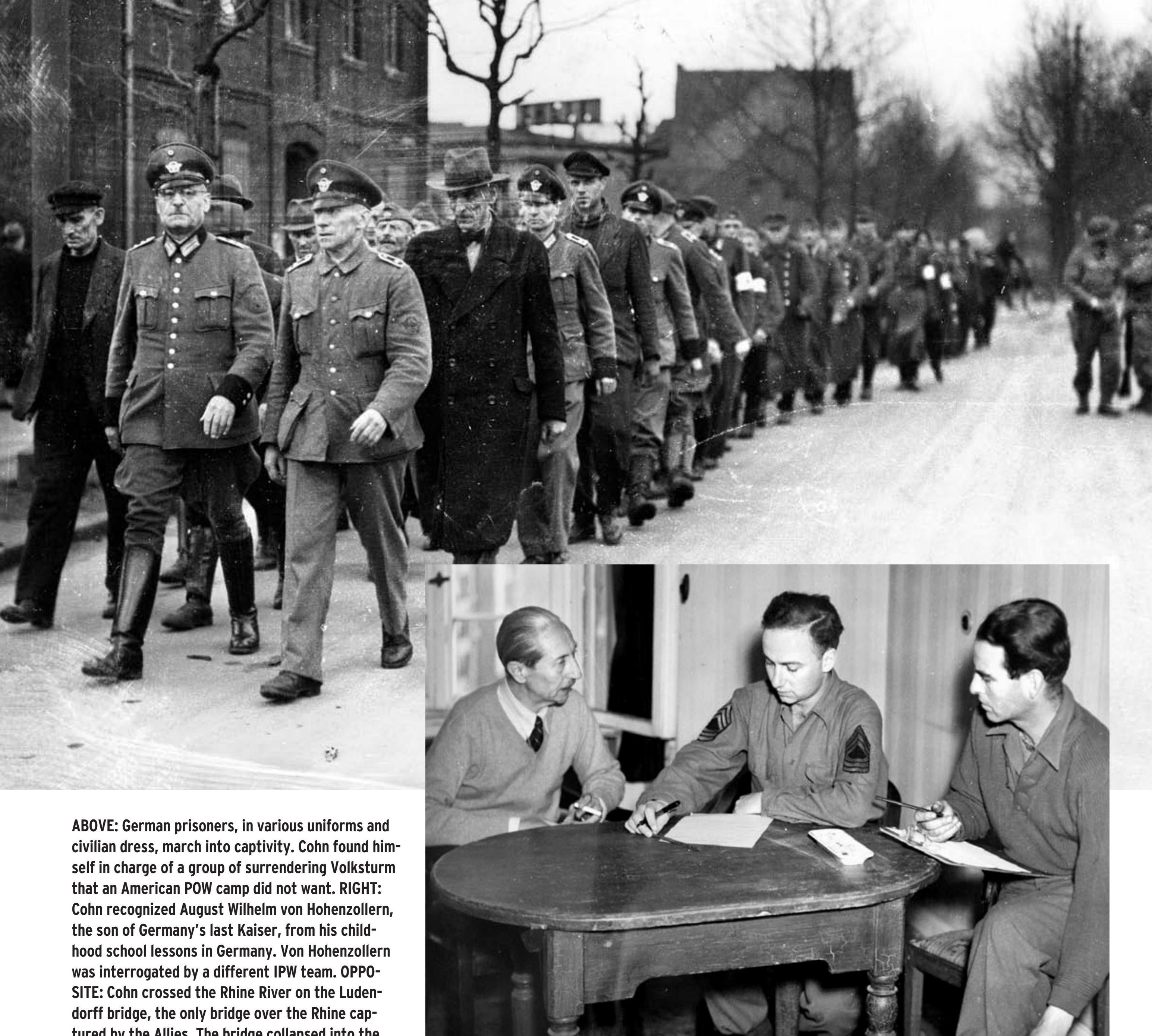
On March 7, elements of the 9th Armored Division captured the Ludendorff Bridge across the Rhine River at Remagen. Cohn and his team waited for hours in a holding area, waiting to cross. When it was finally their turn, they drove the single lane across the damaged bridge. Cohn watched as engineers constructed a pontoon bridge parallel to it. It was a smart engineering move since 10 days after its capture, the Ludendorff bridge collapsed into the river.

On the east bank of the Rhine, Cohn and his team headed north to Düsseldorf, where confused fighting continued. Cohn and Floh drove into the destroyed city and saw white sheets hanging from every building. Civilians who were dismantling a roadblock fled at the sight of the Americans. As Cohn and Floh drove through the roadblock one of their tires blew out. They found a gas station where the owner put on a spare and told them they were the first Americans he had seen. “We’re liberating Düsseldorf,” Floh told Cohn. “It’s not our job,” Cohn snapped back. “Let’s get the hell out of here.” They raced back to headquarters where Captain Remple told them to wait another day before returning.

Cohn returned the next day with a Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) economist. They entered a German steel company building but could only find a janitor. Cohn asked him to gather the company’s directors and the janitor complied. The Americans left and when they returned were escorted into a beautiful conference room filled with German civilians in suits. They offered Cohn a cigar but he begged off. When the CIC agent told them he needed an assets report in 24 hours, they told him they needed six months. The agent said they could have 48 hours. They provided him with the report on time.

A few days later Cohn and Floh were surprised to find an operational telephone exchange building, with German women connecting calls. “Connect me with Berlin,” Floh told one of the women. Once an operator picked up, he asked, “How’s the weather in Berlin?” and started chatting. After a little while he asked, “Do you know who you’re talking to? I’m an American!” The line went dead. “Floh was always a jokester,” explained Cohn.

On patrol in the Ruhr city of Siegen, Cohn heard a screaming woman. He came to find a Polish worker pointing a rifle at a family, including the woman and child. The Pole told Cohn the father was a guard at his work farm. The father claimed he was a railroad official. Cohn asked the father for his papers but the man said he didn’t have any. Realizing the Pole



ABOVE: German prisoners, in various uniforms and civilian dress, march into captivity. Cohn found himself in charge of a group of surrendering Volksturm that an American POW camp did not want. RIGHT: Cohn recognized August Wilhelm von Hohenzollern, the son of Germany's last Kaiser, from his childhood school lessons in Germany. Von Hohenzollern was interrogated by a different IPW team. OPPOSITE: Cohn crossed the Rhine River on the Ludendorff bridge, the only bridge over the Rhine captured by the Allies. The bridge collapsed into the river 10 days after it was captured.

was drunk, Cohn traded him a pack of cigarettes for his rifle. He told the Germans to get out of there. "Our job was to keep order," Cohn explained. He had saved the German man's life. "I hope he deserved it."

On another night patrol, Cohn heard the crunching sound of hobnailed boots on a street. He got out of the jeep and called out "Abteilung halt!" From the darkness, a German noncommissioned officer approached. Cohn asked him what kind of unit they were and the man responded, Volkssturm, Hitler's last reserves made up of young boys and old men. "I want to surrender myself to you," the NCO told Cohn, "but we left all our weapons in the forest."

The NCO had about 50 soldiers with him, which Cohn and his team marched to a POW camp. Upon arrival, a lieutenant in charge told Cohn the camp could not take new prisoners and to try another camp three miles down the road. "What the hell did I get myself into?" Cohn asked himself. As he and his prisoners reached the second camp, he shouted to a guard that a platoon of Volkssturm were heading to the camp and to take care of them. Without waiting for an answer, Cohn's driver turned the jeep around and they raced off.

Cohn's team headed for Frankfort to ensure the IG Farben building was suitable as General Dwight D. Eisenhower's new headquarters. But once they reached the center of the city, they were ordered to a hotel across from the city's train station to interrogate German officer prisoners to see if any needed further interrogation. Most were quickly sent to POW camps. A Waffen-SS major general stepped up to Cohn, not knowing he was reporting to a Jewish PFC.

Cohn asked him his name and he responded, “August Wilhelm von Hohenzollern.” Cohn immediately recognized him from his lessons in Germany. “Oh my God!” he thought, “It’s Prince Auwi, the son of the Kaiser!” Kaiser Wilhelm had been Germany’s last monarch, having been deposed at the end of World War I. “Stay right there!” Cohn ordered, and reported to Captain Ruble, “I got a big one for you.”

His interrogations over, Cohn and his team reached the IG Farben building. It was in shambles. Although the U.S. Army Air Forces had not bombed the building, it succumbed to a different fate. A group of Russian and Polish forced laborers, who had been put into the building by American infantry, took out their rage at the Germans by ransacking the place. They smashed windows and threw furniture out of the building. American engineers added to the destruction by blowing the safes in the basement, finding documents relating to war crimes (the company provided Zyklon B poison to concentration camps) as well as diamonds and German currency. Cohn handed out stacks of cash to his friends as souvenirs, not realizing it had kept its value. “I gave away thousands of dollars,” he said with a smile, “and I never got a single piece of it.” To this day, he believes that if his team had not been pulled away to screen prisoners, they would have stopped the building’s destruction.

Next, Cohn’s team entered a labor camp in Wiesbaden, where they found a complicated situation. Half of the workers were Ukrainian volunteers, while the other half were Ukrainian, Polish, and Russian forced laborers. Cohn found it impossible to figure out who was who since they all only spoke broken German and kept accusing each other of being pro-Nazi. Finally, the team gave up and called everyone forced laborers. Years later, Cohn found out that when forced laborers returned to the Soviet Union, they were all declared volunteers—basically, traitors to the Motherland. The men were imprisoned and the women’s heads were shaved.

On April 12, President Roosevelt died. Cohn cried at the news. The president had been a father figure to him. “He saved me,” said Cohn as his voice choked with emotion, referring to Roosevelt’s executive order that allowed him to stay in the United States after Kristallnacht. “It still gets to me today.”

About two weeks later, Cohn’s team drove the German Autobahn into Magdeburg, along the Elbe River. As they drove, hungry German soldiers ran towards them, surrendering. The war was almost over. The Allies had designated the Elbe River as the delineation line between Soviet and Western Allied forces. Magdeburg lay in the designated Soviet zone. Captain Remple had orders to cross the river, find Soviets commanders, and tell them they could have the city in a few months, once the Americans pulled out. Unable to find an interpreter who spoke Russian, Remple picked Cohn. “I can’t help you,” Cohn protested. “I only speak one word of Russian—‘tovarish (friend)!’” Remple didn’t care.

The two men found a small boat and a German to take them across the Elbe. On the far bank they could see Soviet soldiers. About halfway across the river, Remple stood up in the boat and the Soviets cheered. Upon reaching the west bank Cohn and Remple were hugged and kissed and given vodka. Cohn took his first slug of vodka and realized it was too powerful for him. Then the Soviets hoisted the two Americans onto their shoulders and carried them around to cheers and laughter.

Captain Remple headed off to confer with Soviet officials while Cohn, with his one word of Russian, passed out cigarettes. He found himself sitting along the river next to a Russian sergeant. "Me Moscow," explained the sergeant. "Me New York," Cohn told him. "You come visit Moscow," the sergeant invited Cohn. "You come visit New York," Cohn responded. About an hour later, Remple showed up happy which made Cohn happy. It was only later that Cohn realized why the Soviets were so excited to see them. "The Germans were afraid to be taken prisoner by the Russians, so they fought for every inch," he explained. "The Russians realized when they saw us that there were no more Germans in front of them and that they had survived the war."

A few days later, Cohn was back in Magdeburg when someone walked by his villa and said, "We got VE Day." It was an anticlimactic end to the war. Two days later, Cohn's team reported back to Wiesbaden where the unit broke up. Everyone was sent to different locations. Cohn spent the next year shipping German war criminal prosecution documents to the United States and guarding prisoners facing the Nuremberg trials for concentration camp officials.

Finally, in May of 1946, the T-Force's chief of documents ordered Cohn to escort a stack of top-secret documents to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Cohn crossed the Atlantic onboard a Liberty ship where he took his meals at the petty officers' mess. "Those were the best meals I had in the war," he recalled. "I had to wait that long to get a decent meal." He found the Navy meals much better than the tooth-chipping chocolate D-Bars he ate in the Army.

Once back home, Cohn returned to the City College of New York to finish his degree. There he reunited with Paula Brimberg, his Pong. Although he had never written to her during the war, they resumed dating, and in 1948 Cohn gave her an engagement ring, which she wore on a necklace under her clothes, so as not to shock her parents. Due to the post-war housing shortage, the couple still lived at their parents' homes. Cohn tried to have a judge marry them, but the judge was only a magistrate. Undeterred, Cohn and Brimberg took a train to Brooklyn where a rabbi married them. They then both then went to their respective homes.

Photo courtesy Frank Cohn

ABOVE: PFC Frank Cohn and another soldier pose for a photo in a Belgian town at the end of the war. Cohn spent his time after the war shipping German war criminal prosecution documents to the United States. OPPOSITE: An American soldier inspects the papers of a young German girl. Cohn discovered a Dutch woman in Cologne who sheltered two girls and used her own food ration card to feed them. He was shocked to learn the girls could not get ration cards because they were Jewish.

Eventually, they found an apartment, told their parents they were married, and moved out. They spent their honeymoon in Germany at Floh's farm. Paula worked as a model until Cohn finished school in 1949. After graduating, he was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army. He spent 35 years in uniform as a Military Policeman, retiring as a Colonel. In 1964, Paula gave birth to a daughter, Laura. After his retirement, Cohn worked at the University of Maryland as an administrator and manager.

Over the years, Cohn has attended the annual Spirit of the Elbe observance at Arlington National Cemetery, until the Russian invasion of Ukraine suspended the event. He attended three WWII events in Moscow in 2005, 2010, and 2015. Today, he lives in Fort Belvoir, Va., where he serves on the Speaker's Bureau of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. He also attends WWII events wearing his veteran's baseball cap.

Looking back at the war, Cohn has few regrets. "I might have screamed bloody murder earlier that I could have gotten into the Richie Boys," he jokes, but he admits that he would not have done anything radically different. His memories of the war remain sharp, and he is reminded of it almost every day. "To this day when I take a shower," he says with a smile, "I always think of Liege." □

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DIARY OF A B-17 TAIL GUNNER

A Fifteenth U.S. Air Force B-17 tail gunner details his time in training—and the terror of combat.

BY ALLYN VANNOY

Just after releasing their bomb-load, flak slammed into the B-17, causing it to go out of control, falling fast. Tail gunner Ken Tucker saw the sky rushing by and knew their luck had finally run out.

He had come a long way since that infamous day: December 7, 1941. Kenneth S. Tucker had only been 16, living in Eastpoint on Florida's Gulf Coast, where his father owned and operated a wholesale seafood business.

During World War II, many young men joined the armed forces at 17 if their parents consented. Tucker felt he could serve better if he first graduated high school; besides that, his parents would not agree to let him join up.

In May 1943, Tucker turned 18, graduated from high school, registered with the draft board, and volunteered for service. After three months of waiting, he arrived at Camp Blanding, Florida, on August 20, where he was sworn in and given a series of tests that included the Army General Classification Test—the Army's IQ test—as he looked to join air cadet training.

His basic training at Keesler Field, Mississippi, was cut short after just seven weeks as he was ordered in November to Morehead State Teachers College in Minnesota. An accelerated program, it was to provide an equivalent of two years of college in just six months, covering basic courses in English, math, physics, history, geography, weather, and political science. There was also pilot training using Piper Cubs. But Tucker found some difficulty with his flight training instructor.

In March 1944, Tucker was ordered to report to Santa Ana, California. But less than two weeks after he arrived, he was told that the USAAF had too many personnel in air-crew training. Tucker and his squadron would be removed from training and given a choice of other fields that were experiencing shortfalls.

The order ended Tucker's chance to become an officer, but he was tired of training and classrooms—he wanted to see action. His options were aircraft mechanic, radio operator, or armament. The desire for the shortest school led Tucker to choose armament—and an eight-week gunnery school in Kingman, Arizona.

After finishing gunnery school in June, Tucker received his wings and promotion to Private First Class.

His next stop was Lincoln, Nebraska—a staging area for assignments. From there he headed for Alexandria Army Air Field, Louisiana, for B-17 air-crew training. At his barracks he met his pilot—1st Lt. Louis Dunigan—along with the rest of the crew he was assigned to. Like most bomber crews, they were a mixture of educational backgrounds, ages, hometowns, and personalities.

B-17 tail gunner Ken Tucker thought his crew's luck had run out on a raid over Germany—just as flak had ripped into the wing of this Flying Fortress over Vienna in February 1945. But he managed to complete 35 missions with only one wound.

All photos: National Archives

Dunigan was from Casper, Wyoming, a graduate of the University of Wyoming, and had enlisted before Pearl Harbor. He had begun training as a fighter pilot, but rapid changes in altitude gave him sinus problems, so he transferred to multi-engine aircraft. Dunigan was 27 years old, married, didn't drink, smoke, or use profanity.

The co-pilot was 2nd Lt. James W. Garrison of Norfolk, Virginia. Like Dunigan, he didn't drink, smoke, or curse. He was engaged to be married.

The navigator was 2nd Lt. Halsey S. Nisula of Gardner, Massachusetts, near Boston. He was 23, quiet and had worked in a grocery store before enlisting. Nisula was responsible for guiding the aircraft from base to target and back, but also was to call out crew oxygen checks every 10 minutes, and also kept the aircraft's flight log. Mission success depended on the skill of the pilot and navigator and their ability to work together.

Flight Officer Donald H. "Mac" McQuistion was the bombardier. He was from New Jersey and had attended Rutgers University. Trained in the use of the top-secret Norden bombsight, he saw to its operation and also its security.

Tech Sgt. Clyde Dwight, Jr., was the flight engineer and top turret gunner. He stood behind the pilot and co-pilot and monitored engine and aircraft performance when not operating his gun. Dwight, 27, was a tall Texan, married with a daughter. Before enlisting, he had worked in the oil fields near his hometown of Pampa, Texas.

The radio operator was Sergeant Malcolm Vignes, from Louisiana. Vignes sat in a compartment just behind the bomb bay where he operated a set of radio transmitters/receivers, and also had a single .50-caliber machine gun that pointed aft and skyward.

Lieutenant Dunigan told the four gunners to sort out which positions they would man in the aircraft, but suggested that the shortest of the four, 18-year-old Pfc. Jack B. Taylor, from Beaumont, Texas, should take the ball turret. Another, Corporal Michael E. Joyce, requested one of the waist guns because he suffered from claustrophobia and the tail position was too tight.

That left Tucker and Pfc. Kenneth Snow. Neither had a preference, but Snow volunteered for the other waist-gun position and Tucker was fine with the tail gunner's spot.

Joyce, 27, the right-waist gunner, was an Irishman from Holyoke, Massachusetts. He was married with a small son. Snow, 18, was from Oklahoma and took the left waist gun.

To reach his position in the tail, Tucker had to crawl through a tunnel-like opening and then ease down onto a bicycle-type seat. It was tight, with little room to move about. In rough skies, the tail gunner could get bounced around and become airsick. He was also isolated from the rest of the crew, only able to communicate via the plane's inter-phone. Tucker, who considered himself somewhat of a loner, felt comfortable in the tail.

Ground-school training consisted mostly of aircraft recognition and crew procedures, followed by in-flight training. During training, Lieutenant Dunigan had the gunners come onto the flight deck, one at a time, to get a feel for the aircraft. Dunigan would place the bomber on autopilot and have them sit in the pilot's seat. Lieutenant Garrison would act as the instructor and teach them how to control the plane. Tucker was surprised at how sluggish and slow to respond it was, but he enjoyed his time behind the controls.

Towards the end of their training, they conducted both day and night flights. During this time they found out that Nisula was an excellent navigator. At the same time, Dunigan displayed his calm and confident ability to command. Tucker also noted how well the crew members worked together as a team—their skill and dedication. Dunigan's crew, one of 50 or 60 in the training cycle, receiving the Most Outstanding Crew Award.

As they completed crew training and prepared to head overseas, orders were received that

one of the gunners was to be left behind; they were told that there were extra gunners overseas. When Dunigan asked for a volunteer to stay behind, no one stepped up. So, the wing commander ordered Snow to remain behind.

The squadron took a train bound for Lincoln, Nebraska on October 10, 1944. There they received a shiny new B-17G. The "G" model was modified from the "F" model with the addition of two .50-caliber machine guns, operated by the bombardier, mounted in a chin turret under the aircraft's Plexiglas nose. The crew conducted two test flights to check out the plane. Next, the squadron flew their new Fortresses to Grenier Army Airfield, New Hampshire.

From Grenier, they were instructed to take off separately and fly to Gander Lake, Newfoundland. There they waited three or four nights until a weather front over the Atlantic cleared. Heading east over the ocean, they had instructions not to open sealed orders until two hours after departure. When Dunigan opened the orders, they learned that their destination, after several stops en route, was Gioia [del Colle], Italy, along the Adriatic coast, about mid-way between the cities of Bari and Taranto.

ABOVE: Crew of the B-17 "Kwitchurbitchin" (standing, from left): Clyde Dwight, Malcolm Vignes, Michael Joyce, Jack Taylor, Kenneth Snow, Kenneth Tucker. (Kneeling, from left): Louis Dunigan, James Garrison, Halsey Nisula, Donal McQuistion. BELOW: The 97th Bomb Group B-17s parked in the mud at Amendola Field in Foggia, Italy, where the living conditions were primitive and unpleasant for the crews but were heaven compared to their bombing missions. OPPOSITE: Based at Foggia, Italy, in 1944, B-17 44-6544 "Kwitchurbitchin II" flies in formation with other B-17s of the 97th Bomb Group on a bombing run. INSET: Staff Sgt. Ken Tucker, tail gunner on "Kwitchurbitchin."

Their stops on the way to Italy were Lajes Field in the Azores, then Marrakesh, Morocco, and Tunis, Tunisia. Finally arriving at Gioia, they were trucked to Foggia and then on to their base at Amendola, about 10 miles to the northeast, where they were assigned to the 414th Bomb Squadron of the 97th Bomb Group, part of the Fifteenth Air Force.

The Fifteenth Air Force had been activated on November 1, 1943, from groups that were originally assigned to the Twelfth Air Force's Bomber Command. Transferred from Tunisia to Italy in December 1943, it was organized into three combat wings, six heavy bomber groups (BGs), five medium bomber groups, and four fighter groups.

Of the heavy bomber groups, the 2nd, 97th, 99th, and 301st flew B-17s as part of the 5th Bomb Wing; added to this later was the 463rd and 483rd bomber groups. Other groups were equipped with B-24s.

Unfortunately, Tucker's crew lost their B-17G upon arrival, as it was reassigned to another crew. They christened their replacement aircraft "Kwiturbitchin."

Arriving in dark and rainy weather, they found conditions at Amendola rough. The enlisted men were issued a tent and cots and shown a place to set up. To deal with the muddy ground, they used the wood from discarded ammunition boxes to create a floor in their tent.

The latrine and showers were more than 100 yards from their tent. There were no sidewalks, just a muddy path. The mess hall was a somewhat more positive note. The cooks seemed to do the best with what they had. There was no fresh food, only canned, dried, or powdered. Chili sauce was used to make powdered eggs palatable. And there was always fresh, hot coffee.

The first day at their new base they were given an orientation briefing. A first sergeant gave a rundown of the base rules

and regulations, and an intelligence officer provided an overview on what to do if they survived a crash landing or bailed out into enemy territory.

What surprised Tucker was information about the Ustashe (Ustaša–Croatian Revolutionary Movement). During the German occupation of Yugoslavia, the extremist group ruled Croatia, just across the Adriatic, and the Yanks were told that if they were captured by the Ustashe, their best hope was to be turned over to the Germans. The Ustashe were said to be a sadistic group that murdered Orthodox Serbs and Jews; they were to be avoided at all costs.

The base had few permanent buildings. An old brick farmhouse had been converted into squadron operations housing and an orderly room, intelligence office, and medical facility. A large barn had been turned into the Group Headquarters. Other buildings, the mess halls and service clubs, had been built of limestone.

Sergeant Dwight, the crew's flight engineer, turned out to be a very good scavenger, turning up with the parts to make a heater for the crew's tent.

The airfield's runway was made of Marston mats—perforated steel sheets—but was not in the best condition.

Tucker learned that the 97th had the reputation of having the best ground crews in the Fifteenth Air Force. There were a dozen planes per squadron; each B-17 had a crew chief and four mechanics. Tucker witnessed their dedication to their work, their long hours, and the pride they took in the success of their planes. Ground crews would be disappointed if one of their planes had failed to complete a mission, or turned back due to mechanical problems; it was an especially sad day if their plane failed to return from a mission.

Tucker had great praise for the Boeing B-17 aircraft. Crews were confident that the Fortress would get them to the target and back. If necessary, the B-17 could fly on just three, sometimes even two, engines. Even shot full of holes, the B-17 was so well built that it was often able to make it home.

Since they had arrived without a left-waist gunner, a substitute was assigned. One of those was Earl Whit. On the return from a mission with Whit, he asked if he could be permanently assigned to the crew; he thought the crew was the best he had seen. Lieutenant Dunigan checked with the rest of the crew and they were all happy with Whit.

But that could not be said about the radio operator, Vignes. While good at his job, his bunk area was sloppy and he rubbed others the wrong way. Sergeant Dwight presented the crew's case to Dunigan, who told the operations officer to remove Vignes from the crew. A permanent radioman was not assigned.

Tucker thought a lot of his crew, recalling that "on every mission, I was always so thankful

ABOVE: The tail gunner on the B-17 "Hell's Angels" poses for a photo with his twin .50-caliber machine guns between missions. Tucker said that he once had to shake his guns at a USAAF rookie pilot who flew too close to his "office." OPPOSITE: At Amendola Field a stretcher crew (under fuselage) works to remove a casualty from a 97th Bomb Group B-17 "Marishka" after it returned from a combat mission. Tucker noted that after each mission a medic offered crews a shot of whiskey to help them through post-raid debriefings.

for our crew. The teamwork and dedication displayed by each and every one of those guys was second to none. There was no doubt in my mind that they were each going to play a huge role in getting us all back alive. My biggest fear wasn't of dying—my biggest fear was letting my crew down. There may have been 10 of us, but when we got in that plane and prepared for takeoff, we were one."

The weather played a key role in operations—both over the Alps and near the base; sometimes they were grounded for days. The delays frustrated their efforts to reach their 35-mission goal and return home. Some missions were scrubbed due to bad weather even as the crews were waiting for takeoff clearance. And there were times after takeoff when they were recalled to base due bad weather over the target and having to hazard a landing with their bomb-load still onboard.

On the ground, mud was a constant problem. Not only on the roadways and in the bivouac area, but mud would accumulate on the tires during taxiing and takeoff and freeze at altitude. On one landing, the right tire of Tucker's aircraft had been hit by flak, but the frozen mud hid the damage. When the tire blew upon touch down, Dunigan gunned the left engines and was able to clear the runway for the following aircraft.

When having to fly through fog, pilots had to loosen up the formation in an effort to avoid a mid-air collision. Once clear of the fog, the pilots hurried to close up the formation. There was concern that German fighters could be waiting on the other side of the fog to jump a bomber that had become separated from the group.

The pre-mission routine began early. Even though crew rosters were posted the night before a mission, the crews never seemed quite prepared for the morning wake-up call between 2:30 and 4:30 in the morning. Once dressed, they headed to the mess hall for breakfast, then returned to their tent to grab their gear.

The crews assembled in the Group Briefing Room where they were shown a large map of central Europe, a black ribbon marking the route to the target. An operations officer would go over aerial photos of the target, provide details of flak and fighters. An intelligence officer would brief them on the best escape routes if they crashed or had to bail out. A meteorologist briefed them on the weather to the target and over the target area.

The pilots then met with the operations planner to work out their positions in the formation. The navigators, bombardiers, and radio operators met with their leads to discuss any issues and instructions related to the mission.

Next, they were driven to the crew shack to get their flying clothes and electric suits, parachute harness, "Mae West' life vest, oxygen mask, and escape kit. The kit included a compass, knife, maps, matches, and first-aid kit.

The crews were then trucked to their planes. As the driver approached a hardstand, he would shout the last three digits of the plane's serial number. If it was the crew's assigned plane, the driver would stop, the crew would jump out, and haul their equipment to the plane. The pilots and flight engineer would already be there, performing their pre-flight check. Shortly before takeoff, a jeep would pass by and the driver would toss out a case of K-rations for the in-flight meals.

The ground crew chief would invariably call out, "Bring my plane back in one piece!"

On a green light from the airfield's control tower, the crew boarded and got ready for takeoff, the pilots and the flight engineer going through the cockpit checklist before starting engines. Once the engines were started, they moved into line for takeoff.

"The biggest concern was staying warm at high altitude, where the temperature could reach 50 degrees below zero," Tucker recalled. "Deaths from hypothermia and seri-

ous injuries from frostbite were a very real concern. As cumbersome as they were, our heated suits were a life saver."

To protect their hands, crew members wore silk gloves, then electric gloves, and finally fur-lined leather gloves. They wore leather helmets with built-in earphones. Oxygen masks were plugged in as well to keep them from freezing up. A Colt .45 pistol was worn in a shoulder holster. On top of all this was a flight jacket.

To this was added their "Mae West" and their parachute harness, but the parachutes were set nearby. A flak vest and helmet were also at their combat station and only put on when approaching flak-possible areas, as the vest weighed 22 pounds.

Once the control tower had fired a green flare, they began to taxi out to the runway for takeoff. As soon as the first plane lifted off, the next plane immediately started its takeoff roll. The bombers went into a circling pattern as the others were getting airborne, organizing themselves into formation.

With the sky crowded with circling planes, forming up could be quite dangerous in fog or low clouds. The goal was to be formed up by the time they'd crossed the Adriatic.

Depending on the mission, the bombers would form into their squadrons, groups, and wings. The 97th Bomb Group would usually fly four squadrons of seven planes each. The squadron's seven planes would form up in a box or diamond shape. The bomber at the top of the diamond was "the lead" and the one at the bottom was "the tail." The lead planes always carried the highest-ranking pilot.

The last plane in the formation—dubbed "Tail-End Charlie"—was the least desirable position, because that plane was the most vulnerable to an attack from behind by enemy fighters.

Tucker flew his first combat mission on November 19, 1944, but not with the crew he'd trained with. It was standard practice to fly the first mission with an experienced crew. For Tucker, flying with a group of strangers was quite stressful.

Rookie gunners were supposed to fly at either of the waist positions. A veteran crewman was to assist the rookie, but instead Tucker was placed in the tail, and he questioned whether he was really prepared for combat.

The target for the day was Munich, on the other side of the Alps. The formation made it over the snow-capped peaks without any problems but, as the bombers approached their target, the sky seemed full of flak bursts. After returning to base, the ground crew assessed damage to the aircraft, counting 102 holes in the bomber's skin.

With so many planes in close proximity, there was always the danger of mid-air collisions. During a later mission, Tucker's aircraft was trailed by one flown by an inexperienced pilot, the plane in a lower position behind Tucker's. When flak was encountered or enemy fighters were spotted, the rookie pilot would move in close enough that Tucker could look the rookie and his co-pilot in the eye.

Tucker contacted Dunigan over the plane's inter-phone and asked him to call the nearby pilot and to tell him to back off. The rookie would drop back, but then, when conditions got rough again, he would close the distance again. Tucker called Dunigan again to report the situation.

Dunigan suggested Tucker "wobble" his twin .50s at the rookie, showing he meant business.

"That's exactly what I did, and he backed off all right; and he stayed back—way back," Tucker recalled. "Guess it took looking down the barrels of the two .50-caliber machine guns for that guy to realize that he better stay off our butt."

During missions to targets in Germany, the bombers passed near the city of Udine in northern Italy, where there was an airfield with Italian pilots that continued to fly for the Germans. The Italian fighters almost never challenged the bombers because the B-17s maintained a tight formation.

On one occasion, the Italians did take off and approached a straggling bomber. When Tucker's group leader saw what was happening, he directed Dunigan's aircraft into a 360-degree turn to cover the straggler. As soon as the enemy fighters saw them coming, they turned away.

ABOVE: A B-17 from Tucker's 414th Bomb Squadron drops a salvo of 500-lb. bombs on the railroad marshalling yards at Parma, Italy. OPPOSITE: The marshalling yards at German-occupied Brod, Yugoslavia, feel the impact of bombs from the 414th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group, September 8, 1944.

Escort fighters were greatly appreciated by the bomber crews. Tucker said, "Our favorite escorts were the P-51s from the all-black Tuskegee Fighter Group." (See *WWII Quarterly*, Spring 2023.)

Lieutenant Garrison was an "eagle-eyed" co-pilot, who scrutinized approaching fighters to make sure they were escorts and not enemy interceptors; the Germans were known to repair downed Allied aircraft and then use them to monitor and report bomber air speed and altitude to their flak gunners as they approached a target.

On one occasion Garrison thought a lone P-38 didn't look quite right. So Dunigan contacted the commander of the fighter escorts and reported on the odd looking P-38 that was flying opposite their group. The rogue fighter soon peeled off and disappeared.

Approaching a target area, the bombers never flew directly to the Initiation Point (IP), but instead made a wide turn to approach the target. The bomb run started when they turned on the IP, lasting about three to five minutes. When the bombardier turned on his bombsight, he took over control of the aircraft, announcing, "Bomb-bay doors opening."

After the bomb load was released ("Bombs away!"), the radio operator would then look into the bomb bay to make sure that all bombs had been dropped. The bombardier would close the bomb-bay doors, followed by the radio operator's verification that the doors were closed.

Enemy fighters would usually approach from directly ahead and above. The FW 190 pilots would roll over as they dove on the bombers so that they could use their armor-plated bellies for protection.

During a raid on the Rublin oil refinery south of Berlin, after having released their bomb load and coming off the target, Tucker spotted a fast-moving aircraft approaching at "Seven o'clock level, going around toward nine."

He then saw two more coming up from straight behind—"Six o'clock level." Tucker and the tail gunner in the neighboring plane opened fire. The three aircraft were Me 262 jet fighters that streaked right through the squadron.

Flak was the worst nightmare for the bomber crews. The 88mm flak guns were feared due to their accuracy. The crews knew what size the shells were by the color of the smoke from the shell bursts. If black, it was an 88mm shell, if white it was a 105mm shell.

Tucker's 10th mission was on Christmas Day, 1944. The target was the Brux oil refinery in northern Czechoslovakia—well defended and dreaded by the bomber crews. But before they reached the primary target, bad weather caused them to switch to an alternate target.

They flew past the alternate target at about 28,000 feet and then turned back on their route to strike it. When over the target, they dropped their bombs but then felt a tremendous jolt; their B-17 had been hit. The plane went out of control and started falling fast.

"I remember holding on for dear life and looking out the Plexiglas and seeing the sky whiz by," Tucker said. "There was no doubt in my mind that we were done for. I clearly remember thinking: 'This is it; our luck just ran out.'"

But before the scenes of his short life could play out before him, the plane stopped plunging and leveled out.

Over the plane's inter-phone, Tucker and the crew could hear Dunigan and Dwight struggling to assess the damage to the aircraft. Flak had taken out the right-inboard engine. Dunigan had just feathered it when they were

hit by a second round of flak that shattered the feathering mechanism of the left-inboard engine. It started windmilling—turning freely. The runaway prop increased drag, slowing the aircraft.

When they were able to reach the Adriatic coast near Yugoslavia on two engines, Dunigan told the crew to prepare to ditch. The U.S. Navy had ships stationed in the Adriatic to pick up ditched crews. But the sea was so rough that Dunigan reconsidered ditching, while the coastal terrain appeared too rugged for the crew to parachute.

As a last resort, he made the decision to try to make it to the island of Vis, just off the Yugoslavian coast. It was occupied by partisans and a few American troops had carved out a crude airfield for crippled bombers that couldn't make it back to base.

As they approached they found they had no hydraulics and no flaps. There wasn't time to turn and come back against the wind, so they had to make a downwind landing—nearly unheard of for a B-17. There was no real runway, just rough terrain where there had once been a landing strip. Miraculously, they landed safely.

As the crew tried to climb out of the aircraft, they found their way blocked by three very large women—dressed in olive-drab uniforms, armed with submachine guns, draped with bandoliers of ammunition, and wearing caps with the Communist Red Star.

A Yugoslavian sergeant then appeared, greeted the crew in English, and said he was responsible for taking care of Allied aircrews. He had been raised in Chicago and had returned for a family visit when fighting broke out. Caught in the country, he was drafted into the Yugoslav Army.

The sergeant took them to a group of American soldiers—a captain, eight enlisted men, and a cook. They had been sent to the island with a bulldozer to scrape out another emergency landing field. The next day, a C-47 was able to make a landing—delivering supplies for the partisans and picking up downed aircrews. By December 28, Tucker's crew had returned to Italy and were back in the air.

On another mission near Munich, Tucker's crew witnessed three unusual smoke trails rising from the ground. They appeared to spiral or spin. Later, it was learned that they were rockets fired from the ground. The rockets were estimated to be 12 feet long and exploded with a large cloud of white phosphorus smoke.

After each mission, the flight gear had to be returned to the equipment room. Where the crews exited, a medic was seated behind a small stand. Beside him were a ledger, a bottle of American whiskey, and a shot glass. Those who wished could stop and have a shot.

Initially, Tucker thought the shots were offered to help settle frazzled nerves, but subsequently learned that it was intended to loosen up the crews during post-strike interrogations. The interrogation, or interview, took place at Group Headquarters where each crew met with an intelligence officer. They were questioned about the intensity of enemy fighters and flak. Bombardiers were asked about bombing accuracy. The navigators went over the mission log with the intelligence officers.

The Red Cross set up just outside the interrogation area serving coffee and donuts. But if a mission was really rough, most crewmen just wanted to get back to their tent and get some rest.

If crews wanted a break, they could get a ride into the town of Foggia, about 10 miles away, and spend time at the USO Club. While there, Tucker's crew became friends with a group of Australian gunners.

"There was something about their free-spirited attitude that I liked," Tucker said. "I was telling one of my Australian buddies how much we enjoyed their company but didn't particularly care for the Royal Air Force fellows. His response was, 'Frankly, old boy, we don't either.'"

Tucker's 20th mission, February 1, 1945, was to Vienna. The city was heavily defended, with intelligence reporting 360 anti-aircraft guns. As expected, the flak was heavy, intense, and accurate. As they turned off onto the bomb run, there was a flak burst close by the aircraft.

Tucker immediately felt the concussion of the shell blast and was slightly dazed. When his senses returned, he felt a burning pain in his arm and discovered that the plane's rudder cable was cut.

Dunigan called to check on Tucker, who told him that his arm was hurting pretty badly and that there were other problems. Dunigan, at the controls, realized what the problem was. Dunigan told Garrison to get the first-aid kit and directed Tucker to move to the radio room.

Tucker told Dunigan his wound could wait until they cleared the flak. Once out of the danger zone, Tucker shed his flak vest and oxygen mask and made his way to the radio room;

ABOVE: B-17s of the 97th Bomb Group attack the Szob railroad bridge at Budapest, Hungary. Bridges were among the hardest targets to hit. OPPOSITE: A crewman poses by the tail of his flak-damaged B-17. Tucker was wounded once when flak hit his plane and a piece of the B-17's aluminum skin penetrated his flak vest.

Whit, the left-waist gunner, moved back to the tail. When Garrison checked Tucker over, he found a small entry wound just below the shoulder of his left arm.

From the burning sensation deep in his arm, Tucker realized he'd been hit by a piece of shrapnel. Whit returned from the tail with Tucker's flak vest, showing a huge rip in the canvas covering in the middle of the back of the vest. Garrison and Whit believed that it had been hit with a piece of flak about the size of a fist. They seemed surprised that Tucker had survived.

With the cut rudder cable, Dunigan, who was flying squadron lead, called the other aircraft in the formation and informed them that he would be making a wide turn because of the rudder problem. Meanwhile, Dwight was able to use his tools to repair the cable and they proceeded without further problems.

After returning to base, Doc Remley, the group's flight surgeon, examined Tucker's wound and determined that a small fragment of the aircraft's aluminum skin had penetrated Tucker's skin. Remley decided to leave it and told Tucker that it would probably work itself out.

The doctor supervised and scheduled rest camp visits. He made a point of checking in with all the pilots to see if any of their crewmen were having any problems or were showing signs of combat fatigue. If there was a concern about any of the crew members, Doc Remley would schedule them for a rest camp visit.

After their 22nd mission, Tucker's crew was sent for a week of well deserved rest at the Isle of Capri, off the west coast of Italy. The crew greatly enjoyed their time there.

Tucker had many other memories of "interesting" incidents on his missions. He recalled that the crews always felt relief when they reached the target and delivered their bomb load. On one mission, a 500-pound bomb failed to release from the top rack of the bomb-bay. Dunigan intended to drop it when they were over the Adriatic, but a substitute bombardier that was aboard for the mission, advised Dunigan that it would be safe to land with the bomb. The bombardier said that he had locked in the bomb and removed the fuzes. Although Dunigan questioned the recommendation, the bombardier assured him it was safe.

As the aircraft's wheels touched down there was a loud bang. The bomb fell from the top rack, sprung the bomb-bay door open, hit the ground, bounced up, and dented the underside of the aircraft. Nearby ground crews scattered as the bomb rolled across the runway and into a field. It was unclear as to what happened to the bombardier, but he never flew with Tucker's crew again.

Another time, after a bomb run, the radio operator reported that they had a 100-or-200-pound general-purpose bomb hung up. Dwight, the flight engineer, announced that he would take care of it. He disconnected from the oxygen system and grabbed a "walk-around" oxygen bottle along with a pair of pliers and headed back into the bomb bay. There, he eased down and placed one foot on the 18-inch wide catwalk that ran the center length of the bomb bay and the other foot against the side of the plane.

He wasn't wearing a parachute because the chest pack would have been in the way. With the bomb-bay doors open, there was nothing but five miles of air beneath him. He cut the wires that held the bomb, allowing it to fall away from the plane. For his action, Dwight received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

On another mission, the aircraft began to lag behind the formation as they were headed for the target. Dunigan directed that a bomb be dropped to lighten the plane's load, allowing it to maintain position with the group. But when it began to lose power again, Dunigan decided that they needed to lighten their load further.

He directed McQuistion, the bombardier, to drop another of their 500-pound bombs. Mac identified a spot in a patch of forest, away from populated areas he thought would be a safe place to drop the bomb. But the bomb set off a huge explosion, possibly hitting hidden oil-storage tanks. Black smoke rose to nearly 20,000 feet.

Tucker recalled another incident of the aircraft lagging behind the squadron and having to drop some of their bombs in order to lighten their load. They were almost to the target when they began to lose power. Dunigan ordered Mac to drop the first bomb, allowing them to make up ground. But then, after a few minutes, they began to fall behind again. Dunigan ordered another bomb to be released, then another, and another.

In the meantime, the rest of the group completed the bomb run and made the turn for home. The leader of the fighter escorts radioed Dunigan and told him to turn around and join the returning group because there weren't enough fighters to protect the lone bomber.

But Dunigan declined and continued on. They were quickly over the target and dropped their two remaining 500-pound bombs. Dunigan may have also realized that if they didn't reach the target, the mission wouldn't be credited to their count.

On one mission, the co-pilot Garrison was sick and a substitute came aboard—an inexperienced, rookie lieutenant. Passing over the Alps, the aircraft experienced an oxygen leak. Dunigan and Dwight assessed the situation and determined that the leak was minor and decided to continue on. The rookie lieutenant disagreed and wanted to turn back.

Later, as they approached the target, the heavy flak was too much for the rookie. He began begging Dunigan to turn back and began crying about his wife and two kids he wanted to see again. Dunigan chewed him out and was able to calm him down. Dwight later told some of the crew that he had his hand on a fire extinguisher and that if the lieutenant had not calmed down he was "gonna bean him." The rookie lieutenant never flew with the crew again.

Lieutenant Nisula was recognized for his excellent navigator skills and was often requested by the group-lead pilots. On one mission, with Nisula again the navigator of the lead ship, Dunigan and Garrison witnessed Nisula's aircraft take a hit. They counted just seven chutes from the plane. Tucker's crew was upset when they were informed that Nisula was reported as missing in action.

One morning in March 1945, operations informed the crews that that day's target was Berlin. The distance to the target made the crews nervous. Fuel tanks were filled to the top and ammunition loads reduced by half to reduce aircraft weight. The mission to Berlin recorded the longest flight time for Tucker's crew: nine hours and 20 minutes.

Some of the worst flak that Tucker witnessed was over Innsbruck, Austria, near the northern end of the Brenner Pass. The target for the day was a railroad yard. As they flew over the pass, they noted that the anti-aircraft guns had been placed high on the mountainsides—so close that the air crews could see the muzzle flashes. The aircraft were exposed for some 32 minutes of flak. Tucker believed that it was the longest time they were under fire by anti-aircraft guns.

ABOVE: A B-17 waist gunner gets set to test his .50-caliber machine gun. On his 35th and final mission, Tucker flew as a waist gunner with an inexperienced crew—an error-filled mission that made him very nervous. OPPOSITE: On another mission to Yugoslavia, a B-17 flies high over snow-capped mountains. Tucker said the only thing that kept crewmembers alive in the cold at high altitudes were oxygen and heated flight suits.

Tucker experienced five strikes on Vienna. During one, the aircraft of the Fifteenth Air Force flew a "squadrons in trail" maneuver as one squadron followed another in a long column, dropping their bombs on a railroad marshaling yard. As a result, the city experienced a raid that lasted over two-and-a-half hours.

On a raid that targeted marshaling yards at Landshut, Germany, the area was without air defenses, allowing the bombers to approach at just 13,000 feet. As the lead ship released its bombs, the lead pilot radioed the rest of the group to hold their bomb loads; but the message was received too late. The lead reported that there were Red Cross emblems on the top of many of the railcars in the yard. At that moment, one of the trains blew up followed by several large explosions—the Germans apparently having the cars marked with Red Crosses loaded with ammunition.

Of Tucker's 35 missions, 13 targeted oil refineries such as Blechammer and Ruhland, Germany, Brux in northern Czechoslovakia, and Moosbierbaum, Austria.

For Tucker's last mission, to northern Italy, on April 23, he was assigned to a very green crew.

Given concerns about an individual's last mission, it was customary to assign tail and ball-turret gunners to a waist-gun position so that there was someone to keep an eye on them. Tucker was quite nervous. While he took the left-waist position, the right-waist was manned by a rookie gunner.

As the bomber flew toward the target, Tucker saw that the rookie gunner was seated on a box with his head against the side of the plane. He had on his oxygen mask and appeared to be asleep. Tucker kicked the box and grabbed the rookie, stood him up, then chewed him out about the dangers of falling asleep on oxygen (an on-demand system that could cut-off or reduce the flow of oxygen when an individual was asleep).

Then Tucker noticed that the rookie's gun was not loaded—the ammunition belt was not across the feed. Tucker really tore into him.

Then Tucker realized that the pilot seemed inexperienced, as he was incapable of holding his position in the formation as the aircraft kept drifting. They were in the low group and Tucker soon noticed that their left wing was directly under the bomb-bay doors of the plane above them.

Tucker called the pilot and informed him of his concern. But the pilot put him off, telling him that it was just a case of nerves. Tucker shot back that he had flown enough missions to know that bombs had been known to fall out of a bomb bay and hit the aircraft below. Though the pilot continued to seem unconcerned, he did move out from under the other bomber.

Tucker completed his service as a staff sergeant. Returning home, he was discharged and went to work as a fisherman. But he eventually decided to go back into the Air Force and stayed until retiring in 1967 as a master sergeant.

Later, Tucker's thoughts were drawn to those who didn't make it home: "About all of those who were left behind were young men who would never return home to start a new life. I thought about the potential that lay buried in graves so far away; young men, in the prime of life . . . I decided that somehow I had to honor them; and the only way I could think of to do that was to get on with my life"—a thought that so many other veterans likely had as well. □

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French Navy commandos parade at Wellington Barracks on Bastille Day, 1943. They were issued British uniforms but maintained elements of their distinctively French heraldry and kit, including French Navy blue berets with red pompons. OPPOSITE: Lieutenant Commander Philippe Kieffer was wounded twice leading the French commandos onto Sword Beach on D-Day.

French Commandos LAND ON D-DAY

With the advent of the campaign to liberate their country from Nazi occupation, Free French commandos rose in support of the D-Day landings at Normandy. **BY JOHN E. SPINDLER**

Aboard one of two LCIs carrying French commandos approaching the Normandy coast, Lieutenant-Commander (*Capitaine de Corvette*) Philippe Kieffer looked at his watch. Its face showed 7:30 a.m. on what would be one of the most important days in history—June 6, 1944.

These 177 Frenchmen awaited their turn to storm Sword Beach as part of Operation Overlord. Four years removed from the fall of their country, French soldiers were finally returning to stay. Kieffer and his men would be the only contingent from France to fight on land that day. Part of Britain's No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando unit, they served in Brigadier Lord Lovat's 1st Special Service Brigade. For the invasion, Lovat placed these French combatants in the No. 4 Commando, led by French-speaking Lieutenant Colonel Robert Dawson.

Having sailed from England, the troops eagerly anticipated the moment they would reach the soil of their home nation. At 7:32 a.m., only seven minutes after the lead wave of British troops landed, the planks of LCI 527 dropped. The first wave of the 1st Marine Rifle Battalion Commandos (*1er Bataillon de Fusiliers Marins Commandos*) plunged into water, wearing their standard green berets instead of steel helmets. Powered by adrenaline, they strove toward the beach. Either through skillful aim or pure luck, a German round struck the craft's landing planks as the second wave of Frenchmen prepared to depart.

While the remaining soldiers and the LCI's crew members dropped scaling nets so the commandos could fulfill their part in Operation Overlord, the first French troops made their way onto terra firma. As the French commander advanced, urging on his countrymen, a mortar fragment struck him in the thigh. Despite the injury, he pressed forward. Kieffer still believed in completing the task given by Dawson. No. 4 Commando was ordered to advance into the seaside town of Ouistreham, east of the beachhead. Given the honor of leading the advance, Kieffer's unit had been assigned to eliminate a German strongpoint that had been built on the ground of a demolished casino. After completing this task and linking back up with the British, No. 4 Commando would march to a pair of key bridges held by British paratroopers. The last part of the plan was to join up with Lovat's brigade and secure the far eastern flank of the Allied beachhead in Normandy. Since their inception in 1942, Kieffer had been dutifully preparing his men for achievement of these goals.

June 25, 1940, would go down in French history as one of the nation's worst days with the capitulation to Nazi Germany after early fighting in World War II. One week before, a strong-willed French officer named Charles De Gaulle had issued an appeal from London for French soldiers and civilians to join his cause of continuing the fight against the Germans. Kieffer, then a 40-year-old reserve quartermaster secretary in the navy, joined de Gaulle's Free French forces the next day. Born in Haiti to French parents and a banker in New York City when World War II began, Kieffer returned to France and enlisted into the French Navy. Along with many countrymen, he escaped to England. Pledging his

support to de Gaulle, Kieffer joined the *Forces Navales Francaises Libres* (FNFL) or "Free French Naval Forces."

Stationed aboard the old French battleship *L'Amiral Courbet*, which the British docked in Portsmouth to aid in the port city's anti-aircraft defense, sub-Lieutenant (*Sous-Lieutenant*) Kieffer was among the staff officers on board. He became aware of the newly formed British Commandos and learned of their operations on Norway's Lofoten Islands. Encouraged by these daring raids, he put forth a proposal to create a similar force for the FNFL. Admiral Emile Muselier supported the idea, however he informed Kieffer a lack of funding would not permit its implementation. Muselier suggested that he convince the British to arm, equip, and train this proposed French Commando unit. Kieffer's first attempt failed, although he had stressed the advantages of having a French unit conducting raids and operations on French soil. Later that year, Lord Louis Mountbatten took command of Combined Operations. With the strain put on English Commandos and seeing the success of foreign units serving in the Royal Air Force—such as Polish and Czech airmen during the Battle of Britain—Lord Mountbatten was open to the idea of creating a commando unit composed of troops-in-exile from the occupied countries.

Much to Kieffer's relief and elation, authorization to create a French commando unit was granted in March, 1941. Part of the FNFL, this unit quickly possessed a core to build around with the recruitment of Lieutenant Charles Trempel, Warrant Officer Francis Vourc'h, and 16 marines, five of them released from detention upon their volunteering. Though wearing standard British battle dress, the Frenchmen retained their traditional blue berets capped with a red pompom. By summer the ranks grew to around 40 men, all with their own tales of how they arrived in Britain to volunteer for 1st Marine Company (*1er Compagnie Marin*). Jean Gautier, an Austrian who had changed his name from Zivohlava to avoid Gestapo attention while living in Paris, escaped France via ship heading for Canada. In mid-journey that ship sank after being torpedoed. Rescued by another ship in the convoy, safety

ABOVE: A French commando carries a Thompson submachine gun during the Bastille Day celebrations in 1943. The following year, after joining No. 4 Commando in preparation for D-Day, the French adopted British Army rank designations, along with the green berets. OPPOSITE: The French commandos engaged in grueling training at a facility established for the British commandos at Achnacarry, Scotland, in the spring of 1942. The regimen, designed to mold the men into a cohesive unit, included mountain climbing, orienteering, lengthy marches with full packs, and more.

lasted only a short time as the Germans also sank that ship. With luck or perhaps fate on his side, he was then rescued by a merchantman heading to England. Arriving with only the clothes he was wearing, Gautier was detained and screened. The Austrian eventually was allowed to join Kieffer's fledgling unit. Another volunteer, Hebert Faure, escaped from a prison camp and arrived in England via Portugal.

Throughout 1941, the French volunteers trained and conditioned to build their stamina and health back to pre-surrender conditioning levels. At Achnacarry, Scotland, a training facility had been established for the British Commandos. In March 1942, Kieffer's company became the first foreign unit to train there. An extensive and grueling regimen of climbing mountains, fording rivers, and running miles with full backpacks further hardened the French soldiers into a cohesive military unit. The 1er Compagnie Marin not only underwent physical training and marches, but the men attended lectures. Unfortunately, not all who began the

regimen survived and an unknown number died. But motivation to one day free their homeland pushed the men to complete the training and earn their green beret (*beret vert*).

On July 2, 1942, Lord Mountbatten's vision became a reality with the creation of the No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando. Its structure followed the 1940 Commando structure of a headquarters and four troops with the potential to increase the number to eight troops. By October 1942, No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando grew to six troops, all varying in size. Along with No. 1 (French) Troop, the formation initially included No. 2 (Dutch) Troop and No. 3 (X) Troop. The latter, also known as No. 3 (British) Troop, was mostly made up of Jews of German, Austrian, and Eastern European ethnicity. After the Commando's official creation, volunteers allowed for the establishment of the No. 4 (Belgian) Troop, No. 5 (Norwegian),Troop and No. 6 (Polish) Troop.

Men from Kieffer's No. (French) 1 Troop and the No. 3 (British) Troop saw the first official combat action for No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando on August 19, 1942. Sixteen Frenchmen from Sub-Lieutenant Guy Vourc'h's section accompanied the Canadians and British on Operation Jubilee's ill-fated landing at Dieppe on the French coast. Although told to remove their "Commando" and "France" shoulder titles and wear steel helmets instead of the naval berets, these instructions were ignored. Attached to British No. 3 and No. 4 Commando as well as divided between various Canadian brigades, these men were given three assignments: act as interpreters, gather intelligence, and recruit any Frenchmen willing to return to England and join Free French forces. Of those French commandos involved, one was executed when the Germans saw his "Commando" and "France" shoulder titles while another went missing for months before finding his way back to England.

Not until mid-1943 did the potential for another operation occur. The French commandos were put on alert for possible operation in Corsica or a raid on the German U-Boat pens located at Lorient. Neither operation took place as the French would soon be employed elsewhere. By the end of 1943, No. 7 (Yugoslavian) Troop and a second French Troop increased the strength of No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando. No. 8 (French) Troop consisted primarily of men from the 2nd Marine Rifle Battalion (*2eme Bataillon de Fusiliers Marins*). This unit had been stationed in Lebanon before being disbanded. With two troops, on October 8, 1943, the French contingent became *1er Bataillon de Fusiliers Marins Commandos* (1er BFMC). Kieffer established a battalion headquarters. Sub-Lieutenant Alex Lofi took over command of No. 1 Troop while Lieutenant Charles Trempel commanded No. 8 Troop. By this time the French had been based at Criccieth in North Wales.

Between Operations Jubilee and Overlord, French commandos participated in small-scale operations along the northern coast of France. Prior to redesignation as 1er BMFC, from July to September 1943, a series of raids under the code name Operation Forfar occurred, with men from No. 1 (French) Troop involved in one of its six operations. Goals were to collect intelligence about German defenses along the coast and the capture of prisoners for interrogation. In total, the Operation Forfar raids were not very successful. No prisoners were taken, and minimal information was brought back.

At the end of December 1943, British Commando units again undertook a series of raids along the French coast as well as on the Channel Islands. Overall code named Operation Hardtack, from No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, both French troops sent men to participate in some of the missions. As with the raids of Operation Forfar, the goals were reconnaissance of German coastal defenses and, if possible, bringing back prisoners. Weather hampered more than one of the raids by forcing the assault group to return to England. Out of all of the Hardtacks, only Hardtack 21 yielded a positive result. Led by Sous-Lieutenant Vourc'h, the six men from No. 1 (French) Troop arrived at Quineville at 11:50 p.m. on December 26. Moving inland they discovered an antitank beach obstacle known as "Element-C." The

French took detailed notes about this framework of horizontal and vertical steel rails sunk into a concrete base fitted with rollers.

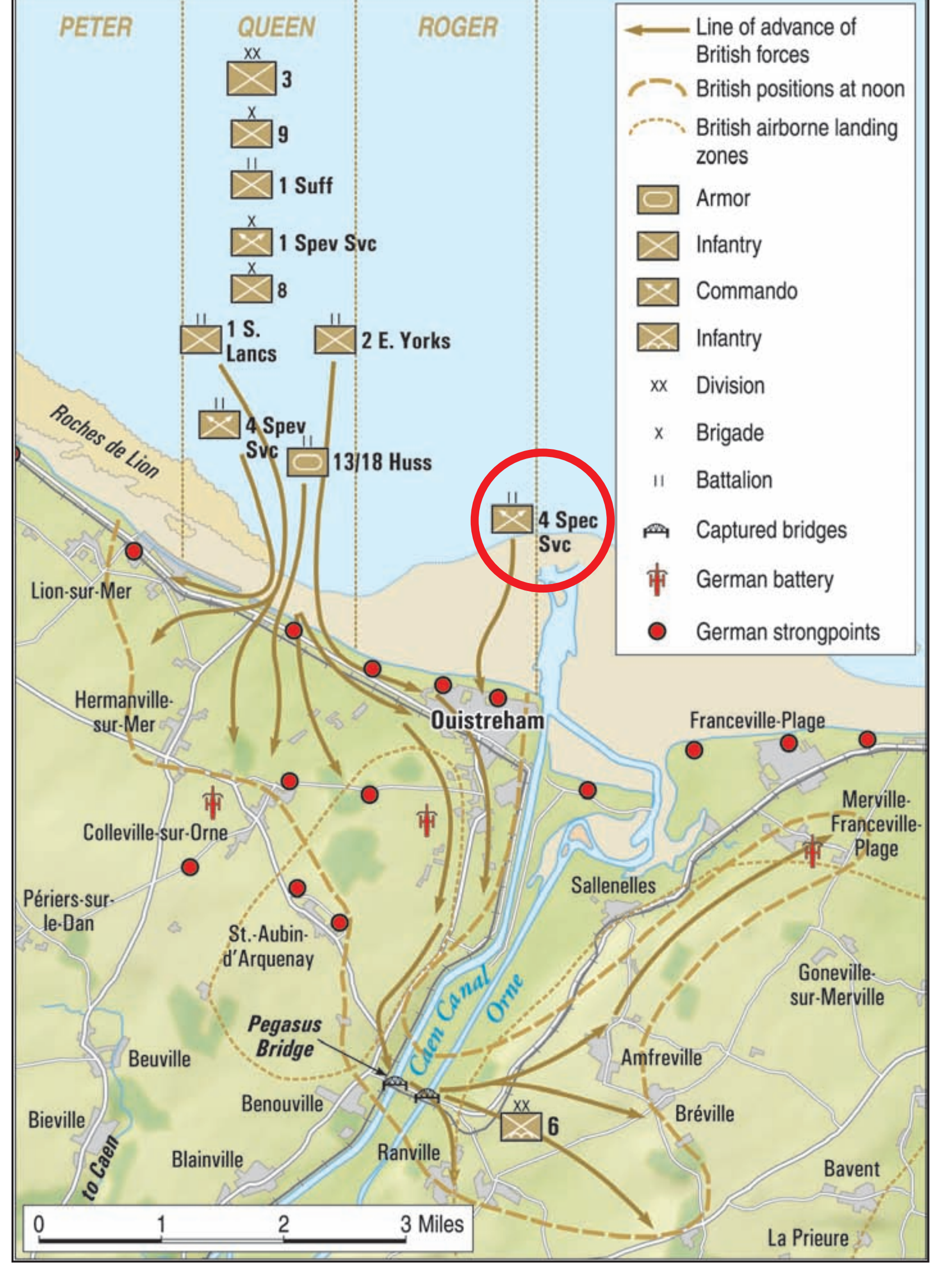
Developed by the French in the early 1930s, the 2.5-ton Element-C would be used against them and the Allies in Normandy. For his successful leadership, Vourc'h earned No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando's first Military Cross.

Misfortune struck in another recon operation along the Dutch coast on February 27-28, 1944. Lieutenant Trempel and five members of No. 8 Troop went missing during the mission. Graves discovered after the war led investigators to conclude that five men had died of exposure and one had drowned.

Six weeks later, Kieffer and men were transferred to No. 4 Commando, part of the recently formed 1st Special Service Brigade.

By early 1944, Brigadier Simon Fraser, the 15th Lord Lovat took over command of the 1st Special Service Brigade, having previously led No. 4 Commando. He was familiar with the French commandos from their participation in the Dieppe raid. With the planning of Operation Overlord underway, Lord Lovat knew his brigade, which consisted of Nos. 3, 4, 6 and 45 (Royal Marine) Commando, was assigned to Sword Beach, the furthest east of the Allied landing zones. He delegated to No. 4 Commando the task of silencing specific German coastal batteries on and near Sword Beach and then defending the far-left flank of the Allied area of control. Aware that No. 4 lacked sufficient strength as well as the fact that most troops of No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando were not being utilized, Lovat requested and received permission to transfer Nos. 1 and 8 (French) Troop to the 1st Special Service Brigade. He proceeded to offer them to No. 4 Commander Lieutenant Colonel Dawson, who as previously noted spoke French fluently. Also familiar with their capabilities from Operation Jubilee, Dawson gladly accepted the additional men. On April 16, 1944, Nos. 1 and 8 (French) Troops joined No. 4 Commando, becoming its Nos. 5 and 6 Troop, respectively. Renamed Le Franco-Britannique Commando, the French adopted Army ranks in lieu of naval ranks. Though difficult at first, a regimen was hashed out that meshed

ABOVE: Lieutenant Colonel Robert W.P. Dawson briefs his men of No. 4 Commando, 1st Special Service Brigade, aboard the landing ship infantry (LCI) *Maid of Orleans* on June 5, 1944, the eve of D-Day. BELOW: An American Martin B-26 Marauder bomber flies over Sword Beach en route to its airfield in Britain on D-Day. Lyon-sur-Met is shown at upper right. OPPOSITE: The 1st Special Service Brigade, including Lt. Com. Philippe Kieffer's French commandos, came ashore near the seaside village of Ouistreham on D-Day following months of training and preparation.



British and French training styles.

The British 3rd Infantry Division received the task of landing first at Sword Beach. Broken down into sectors, two kilometers west of Riva-Ouistreham, the specific landing sites were given the codenames Queen White and Queen Red. Its 8th Brigade's 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment, also called the 2nd East Yorks, would be given the crucial mission of being first and securing the Queen Red beachhead. Support for the infantry came from the 13/18th Hussars and its amphibious Sherman Duplex Drive (DD) tanks. Additional armored firepower came courtesy of the Royal Marines 5th Independent Armoured Support Battery.

Employing the Centaur IV, armed with a 95mm howitzer, this unit provided close support for the infantry. Its primary mission would be eliminating hardpoints and other difficult defenses. Soldiers landing on the beach welcomed the Centaur IV's ability to fire suppressing rounds while they were still motoring toward the beachhead in their landing craft. After arriving on Queen Red beach, Dawson's Commando was assigned to silence the German strongpoints in Ouistreham, near the mouth of the Caen Canal.

This area was held by the 736th Grenadier Regiment of the German 716th Infantry Division. The regiment's 2nd Company controlled the area that Dawson would assign to his French troops. As part of their Atlantic Wall defensive system, the Germans had constructed strongpoints —*Wiederstandnester* (WN). In addition to one that dominated the Sword Beach sector where the British were landing, a pair had been built at Ouistreham. WN-08 oversaw access to locks for the canal. This was No. 4 Commando's D-Day objective.

To the west, on the site of a demolished casino, the Germans built WN-10, also called the Riva Bella strongpoint. Its main function was to guard access to WN-08. This would be the objective of the 177 Free French commandos.

Aerial photographs of WN-10 and other reconnaissance showed the primary armament was a 75mm Pak 40 anti-tank cannon built into a roofed casemate. A short distance from this sat a 50mm Pak L/40 anti-tank gun in a Ringstand bunker. These were circular, reinforced concrete bunkers, also known as Tobruk bunkers. Three smaller scaled Tobruks, built for machine guns, provided defense against infantry assaults. These emplacements and other weapon pits were connected via a series of trenches. According to Corporal Maurice Chauvet, at least a dozen pillboxes had been constructed along their assault path toward the strongpoint. Further complicating the French mission, anti-tank trenches and automatic flamethrowers protected the area. Overlooking the entire strongpoint, a water tower provided up-to-date information on any approaching enemy. The Germans placed what most sources reported as a 20mm anti-aircraft gun atop the water tower.

Dawson felt it would be best to provide the French with their own objective due to potential language complications. To increase the unit's firepower capability in the operation, No. 4 Commando received a version of the .303-caliber Vickers K-Gun. These defensive armaments for the Catalina flying boat used a drum magazine and fired

at a rate of 1,000 rounds per minute. For infantry use, these machine guns were fitted with a bipod. Given the enormity of the French task, Dawson supplied four of these weapons to Kieffer. These probably had been supplied to the two French troops before they and the rest of the 1st Special Service Brigade arrived at Titchfield Camp by May 25. In addition, Dawson lent six men from Royal Signal for communications. Once both groups accomplished their respective tasks in Ouistreham, they were to regroup and then proceed to a pair of crucial bridges, one over the Caen Canal (Pegasus Bridge) and the other over the Orne River, that were to be captured and held by paratroopers of the British 6th Airbourne Division in a daring pre-dawn airborne mission.

In overall command of the two French Troops, Kieffer led from his small Headquarters section. Lieutenant Vourc'h commanded No. 5 Troop. In his troop served Sergeant Guy, Comte de Montlaur. Unconfirmed lore has arisen that Sergeant de Montlaur stated he looked forward to taking the Riva Bella strongpoint as he had lost a fair amount of money at the former casino. To lead Troop 6, Kieffer assigned Lieutenant Lofi, while selecting Lt. Pierre Marc Azoulay-Amaury as commander of the 32-man K-Gun Troop. Capt. Robert Lion served as the battalion's medical officer, most likely assisted by a pair of British orderlies. Like Dr. Lion, the unit's chaplain, Father Rene du Naurois, had escaped from Vichy France to join de Gaulle's cause.

Kieffer and his men had known about their assignment since the beginning of May. Lofi's troop was given the task of clearing the dunes on the beach, which included a passageway through mines and barbed wire obstructions. Although the 2nd East Yorks and supporting elements ideally would have the beachhead under sufficient control by the time the French were scheduled to land, the experienced Kieffer knew that the best laid plans are scrapped upon first contact. There stood a good chance that his men would have to assist in taking the beachhead. On the journey across the English Channel, the French commander insisted upon the English operators of the LCIs landing as far to the east on Queen Red as possible. Using aerial photographs, he and his officers outlined a detailed plan of attack upon reaching the western edge of Ouistreham. After landing, the entire No. 4 Commando would assemble at a deserted children's holiday camp 250 yards inland. Some men recognized their target area; one commando mentioned he once worked near the canal locks. Upon learning that some French soldiers had intimate knowledge of the objective location, the British confined the contingent to the camp until they were to board the craft for the operation. On the eve of the invasion, Lovat addressed Kieffer's men in French. He told them that tomorrow they would be the first French soldiers to fight the enemy in their homeland.

ABOVE: Lord Lovat, visible in the water to the right of the column, wades ashore with his command at Sword Beach on D-Day. The commandos came ashore seven minutes after the first British troops hit the beach. OPPOSITE: Troops from several units fight the Germans and prepare wounded for evacuation from the Queen Red sector of Sword Beach. Commandos of the 1st Special Service Brigade disembark from landing craft in the background.

On June 5, the French took transportation to Warsash (near Southampton), the site for the loading of the LCIs. Around 3 p.m., Lofi's No. 6 (No. 8 French) Troop plus two Vickers K-Guns boarded LCI 523. Kieffer and No. 5 (No. 1 French) Troop took their place aboard LCI 527 with the remaining pair of K-Guns. "No return ticket, please," replied Corporal Gautier to the British officer in charge of loading LCI 523 upon the calling of his name. At 10:30 p.m., the two LCIs departed England as part of the most famous invasion force in history. Rough and stormy seas impacted the journey across the Channel. A number of the French commandos suffered seasickness on the voyage. Both Lovat and Dawson agreed to give the 1er Bataillon de Fusiliers Marins Commandos the honor of leading No. 4 Commando onto the soil of their homeland.

After walking around the LCI and talking to many of his men, Kieffer retired for the night. Before going to bed, he remembered the prayer of Sir James Astley at the 1642 English Civil War Battle of Newbury. "Lord, I shall be very busy this day. I may forget thee, but do not

thou forget me." Through the early hours of June 6, the Allied invasion fleet sailed toward its destination, the coast of Normandy. Those on deck saw or heard the air armada carrying elite paratroopers. At 5 a.m., a sailor on each of the LCIs informed the French that it was time.

Kieffer ate a small breakfast before joining Vourc'h's men. While the men began preparing, at 5:10 a.m., the naval bombardment commenced, starting with the light cruiser HMS *Orion* blasting German positions on Gold Beach. Not long after that, the armada allocated to support the invasion of Sword Beach joined the onslaught. Targeting the two Wiederstandnester in Ouistreham, the heavy cruiser HMS *Frobisher* fired numerous shells from its 7.5" main guns. Aboard the two LCIs, the French Commandos, as with all units in the 1st Special Service Brigade, proudly wore their hard-earned beret vert. Continuing toward Queen Red, the French observed Allied bombers overhead and may have heard that Rome had been entered by the Americans. Desiring to record the details of this momentous day, Kieffer witnessed the naval bombardment of German defenses, but with increasing difficulty as smoke from Allied shells obscured his view. Many noted long trails of smoke from volleys of rockets streaking toward this area of Sword Beach, also called the "La Breche." He recalled seeing examples of the beach obstacles implemented by German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. At 7:25 a.m., he watched as 13/18th Hussar Sherman DD tanks and the men of the 2nd East Yorks began landing under fire.

The British crews of LCI 523 and LCI 527 performed their task to perfection as they approached the far left of Queen Red Sector. Commandos armed with Bren light machine guns readied themselves to lay down support for their fellow soldiers. Others, armed with British-made PIATs (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) and Bangalore torpedoes to deal with barbed wire and other hardpoints, awaited the moment when their specific weapon would be needed. Despite knowing that not all would survive this day, or even the next few minutes, the men did not let fear control their actions. After all, these elite soldiers were about to take the first steps to liberate their country. Among the first to disembark when the ramps were deployed stood Troop 5 commander Vourc'h.

At 7:32 a.m., LCI 523 dropped its bow ramps, 30 yards from solid ground as remembered by Corporal Chauvet. The order to disembark was given, and out poured the first men from Lofi's troop. Almost simultaneously and 50 yards laterally, the planks of LCI 527 splashed into the water. Lt. Vourc'h and the first group of No. 5 Troop rushed toward the beach bearing 80-lb. packs filled with four days of ammunition and rations on their backs. With machine-gun fire and mortar rounds landing all around the Allied invaders, the third Frenchman to arrive on the beach went down, seriously wounded. In his written account of his war experiences, *Beret Vert*, Captain Kieffer recalled that just before the second wave was to depart LCI 527 into the

Sherman DD tanks of the 13th/18th Royal Hussars support troops of No. 4 Commando on D-Day as they advance along the Rue Riva-Bella on the outskirts of Ouistreham near Sword Beach.

waist-deep waters, "…a 75mm shell swept away the gangplanks of the barge in a tearing of wood and metal."

To continue the mission, scaling nets were dropped over the sides of the stricken LCI. After unloading No. 6 Troop and their accompanying K-Guns, the British crew of LCI 523 maneuvered their craft along LCI 527 for the French to climb aboard and stream down its ramps. Differences have arisen over the predicament of the 2nd East Yorks. Some French soldiers recall that the British had not progressed far past the waterline, a claim hotly disputed by the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment. The formidable German strongpoint WN-20, overlooking the Queen sector beaches, could account for the progress of the British assault. Perhaps a round from its 75mm anti-tank gun destroyed LCI 527's landing planks. Gautier remarked seeing more than a few knocked-out British tanks as he rushed up the beach.

At some point, Kieffer received the shrapnel wound in his left thigh. Though it would become a serious complication in a couple of days, the Haitian-born officer continued his mission. Shortly after the French landed, No. 4 Commando stormed ashore. Dawson took a wound to the leg almost immediately and then was hit again in the head. Both wounds were not serious enough, as he stayed with men. With Lieutenant Vourc'h wounded, Lieutenant Mazeas took over command of No.5 Troop. Few Ouistreham residents remained in their village after the Germans had evicted them in May. Yet, one who stayed behind met the Allied troops. Somewhat suspicious at first, his attitude warmed when the French troops told him that they were here to stay.

Over the next 15 minutes, the two French Troops made their way inland, steering to the abandoned holiday camp. A sergeant cut through a barbed wire obstacle barring the path. Passing through the subsequent mines, the commandos rallied at the holiday camp. Once all arrived, the men took a few minutes to inspect their weapons and reload ammunition, as well as preparing themselves mentally for what they were about to undertake. Their heavy backpacks were left behind not far from the holiday camp to be picked up after the silencing of the Riva Bella strongpoint. From the 177 Frenchmen and eight British subordinated to the unit, 16 commandos failed to arrive at the Lion-sur-Mer holiday camp, plus at least one of the British communication operators. Four of the battalion's 13 officers had been wounded.

This included Mazeas, who was wounded performing a short recon from the holiday camp in preparation for the march to Ouistreham. Due to the high percentage of officer casualties, Kieffer disbanded the battalion's headquarters and personally took command of No. 5 Troop with Sgt.-Maj. Herbert Faure as his second-in-command. Being a professional soldier, Kieffer knew this operation had to remain on schedule. He prepared his men to move out, leaving the second assault wave to care for his wounded and dead.

With all of No. 4 Commando at the forming-up location, the drive toward Ouistreham commenced at 8:15 a.m. Again, Dawson permitted the French the honor of leading it, Lofi's Troop 6 on point. Once into the ruins of the seaside village, the force made its way toward Boulevard Marechal Joffre, which would take them straight at their objective. Upon reaching the crossroad of Avenue de Pasteur, Dawson's commandos turned onto it and proceeded

toward its target, WN-08, near the mouth of the Caen Canal. Following Lofi's troop, Amaury's K-Gun section brought their four machines. The No. 5 Troop brought up the rear with Kieffer letting Faure direct it. The lead men of Lofi's troop turned onto the boulevard five minutes after leaving the holiday camp.

To capture and silence WN-10, the two troops, each supported by a pair of K-Guns, would maneuver to attack the German stronghold from the rear via different directions. Each of these attack formations were further broken down into smaller groups with the necessary equipment and weapons. The size of each group depended on the specific target assigned to them. Weapon-wise, each subgroup had at least two Bren guns, a soldier armed with a Thompson submachine gun, and one flamethrower. The Bangalore torpedoes were discovered to be useless, thoroughly soaked when the men stormed the beach.

ABOVE: Yves Meudal, far left, was one of 177 members of the Kieffer commando group that landed at Sword Beach on D-Day. Meudal joined the unit in 1943 after serving in the Free French naval forces. TOP: In this rare photo taken during the attack, Lieutenant Commander Kieffer's commandos prepare to assault German strongpoint WN10, popularly known for its peacetime function as a casino.

By advancing this way, Kieffer felt each subgroup would be able to mutually support the other. As the squads closed in on the Riva Bella strongpoint, German resistance stiffened. Lieutenant Lofi received a minor wound but persevered. Using the remains of the buildings and mouse-holing through fences to minimize exposure to fire, the French commandos gradually made their way toward WN-10.

As aerial photographs provided a limited aspect of the subject, the advancing soldiers saw that most of the strongpoint's emplacements sat below ground level or in fieldworks. Casualties among those scouting ahead increased. In addition to dealing with machine guns and mortar rounds striking their positions, the attackers came under fire from snipers.

The Frenchmen knew the accuracy of the German fire resulted from the tower-based observation post that radioed the French movements to the defenders. The experiences varied between the subgroups. While some got held up from previously undetected trenches, others overran sites that on the aerial photographs showed machine-gun nests but were found empty.

Though manpower decreased as the commandos battled toward their objective, firepower stayed the same with the troops exchanging their rifles for the more powerful Bren guns and Thompsons. A couple of soldiers armed with PIATs positioned themselves in a villa across a square from the casemated 75mm gun, but they only had four rounds. They used two of them to take out an antiaircraft gun employed in a ground defense role. They fired the remaining two rounds at the structure with the 75mm antitank cannon, inflicting little damage, and got out of the villa before it was blasted to ruins.

A pair of the K-Guns set up in a bomb crater on the right flank provided covering fire for an assault attempt. Once alerted to this fact, a small group of Germans began to outflank them. Kieffer learned that an officer overseeing the situation took a sniper round to the head while trying to alert the K-Gun

crews of the impending danger. The situation worsened when both K-Guns jammed one after the other. The gun crews took refuge in a nearby building where both weapons had to be stripped down and thoroughly cleaned.

In the midst of the ongoing battle, a World War I veteran appeared among the French soldiers. A member of the French Resistance, Marcel Lefevre had a precise knowledge of German locations and he advised the commandos on the safest routes to approach the various enemy strongpoints. Lefevre also said he knew where the communication cables from the tower to WN-10 were buried. Informed of the location, Faure and another man armed with a pair of 8-lb. charges of plastic explosives went to deal with them. The demolition charges severed both the communication lines and the power cables for the automatic flamethrowers.

The French bravely approached the blockhouses, firing Bren guns, K-Guns, and PIATs that had no effect. German fire poured forth, destroying structures used by the French and inflicting casualties. The battle had been going on for only 30 minutes when Dr. Lion was killed instantly by a sniper shot through the heart as he attended a wounded soldier. As the chances of success diminished with every casualty, Kieffer concluded that his men must make one last attempt, a frontal assault, before the 1er BMFC became insufficient to eliminate their objective. As he hesitated to issue the order, Kieffer heard over the radio that six Centaur IVs from the Royal Marines 5th Independent Armoured Support Battery had landed on the beach.

Quite aware of the extremely low probability of overcoming the German strongpoint without heavy support, Kieffer decided to get the necessary assistance. He ordered his troops to dig in and not take unnecessary risks until he returned. The French commander headed back to the beach with his batman, Private Ferdinand Devager. At the beach Kieffer convinced the British that his men desperately needed support. He and Devager climbed onto the engine deck of a vehicle commanded by Sgt. E.R. Woods and directed it to the battle.

"It was 9:25 a.m. when the Centaur arrived in front of the obstacle," wrote Kieffer. He directed the Centaur, not a 13/18th Hussars Sherman DD tank as popularly believed, into a position where it was partially covered from enemy shells and had the close support vehicle fire on the casemated 75mm. "The first two shells hit the casino dome squarely and the enemy guns fell silent immediately," wrote Kieffer in his report. In addition to being buffeted by the blast wave from the 95mm rounds of the Centaur IV, a rifle round struck the French commander in his right forearm. Jumping off the vehicle with his batman, he repositioned the Centaur. The twice-wounded Kieffer directed Woods via hand signals to the placement of a dozen more rounds into the German defenses.

Keeping the enemy off balance, the French rushed the strongpoint, storming through trenches, machine-guns nests, and Tobruks. Directed to split into two attack sections, Faure had Sergeant de Montlaur lead the group attacking on the left and a sergeant-major attack to the right. De Montlaur's group made good progress, but those on the right stalled in the face of fire from the antiaircraft gun atop the tower. In response, Woods had his gunner fire at the tower. After four rounds, the top portion of the tower disintegrated. Kieffer, in his report to French Rear Admiral Georges d'Argenlieu, specifically remarked on the support and conduct of the Centaur commander during the battle.

The French started mop-up operations at 9:55 a.m. With their escape route blocked, the German soldiers began to leave their bunkers and surrender. While one batch of 11 prisoners was being marched away, one of them used a grenade that injured two men. Retaliation was immediate as nearby commandos fired upon the Germans, killing three. News came in over the radio about successful captures of strongpoints throughout Sword Beach, the drive inland, and the flow of German prisoners to the holding areas established on the beach. By 11:20 a.m., fighting was winding down when Kieffer received the order from Dawson for

ABOVE: Lord Lovat's commandos make their way through the French village of Colleville-sur-Orne on their way to link up with the glider troops of the British 6th Airborne at the Pegasus Bridge over the Caen Canal. OPPOSITE: After the battle, the wreckage of an American Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter, shot down on D-Day plus 4, lies abandoned on the sands of Sword Beach.

No. 4 Commando to assemble near the holiday camp.

At 12:40 p.m., Kieffer's two troops arrived back at the location of their stashed backpacks. Replenishing ammunition and strapping on their packs, the French were ready to move out with No. 4 Commando, which had successfully completed its objective roughly the same time as its French comrades. Twenty-five minutes later, Dawson's unit hastily made its way to the British paratroopers and the bridges they held. This time Kieffer's men provided rearguard duty. Dealing with hidden mines along the path and the occasional sniper, the trek passed with little difficulty. The last members of Lovat's 1st Special Service Brigade to reach the bridges, No. 4 Commando, arrived in Benouville. Fighting still raged in the area, though the paratroopers controlled the bridges over the Caen Canal and the Orne River. But the constant sniper fire, along with mortar and artillery barrages, made crossing them hazardous. For cover, the British employed a smoke screen covering the bridge and opposite bank. The French loaded their K-Guns onto jeeps for the crossing. With a mad dash at 4:15 p.m., British and French soldiers crossed the two waterways. The smoke was thinning when the last group went across the Orne River and three French commandos were wounded.

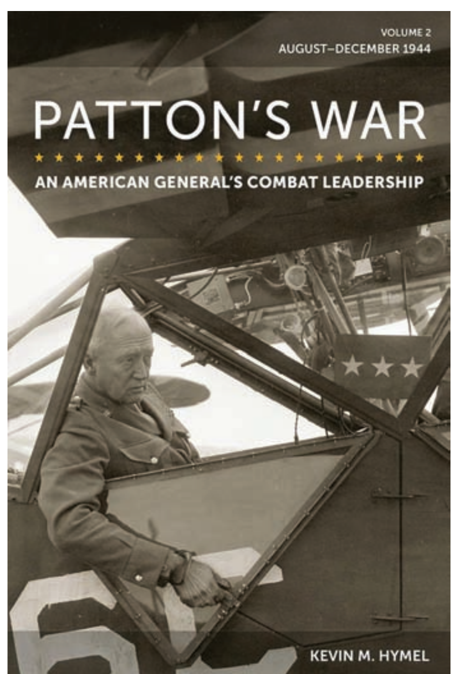
No. 4 Commando marched eastward to set up a defensive perimeter. Dawson ordered the 1er BFMC to hold the area between Amfreville and Le Plein. As night fell at 8 p.m., the French soldiers built up a defensive perimeter through digging trenches, setting up camouflaged machine-gun pits, and positioning PIATs. Despite a long and exhausting day, the inevitable German counterattack necessitated this essential labor. The French and fellow British commandos could then look back on the day in which all objectives assigned had been successfully completed. For his action on June 6, the British awarded Lieutenant Commander Kieffer the Military Cross. The first day of the retaking of Western Europe from Nazi Germany was not without cost. From their landing on Sword Beach to securing a bridgehead east of the Orne River, the battalion suffered 10 killed in action and 31 wounded on the first day of the Normandy Campaign.

With his thigh wound seriously inflamed, Kieffer was ordered into medical treatment on June 8. Under Lofi's command, the French fought hard to hold their sector. A week later Kieffer returned from treatment and led the men in the drive for the Seine River, during which they assisted in the liberation of a number of towns. Withdrawn to England on September 5, only 40 of the original 177 soldiers remained unscathed.

In November, the French participated in Operation Infatuate I alongside No. 2 (Dutch) Troop from No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando. The French and Dutch part of this operation took the form of a seaborne landing on the western end of the Netherlands' Walcheren Island with the objective of capturing the port of Flushing, while at the same time to the east, a Canadian brigade forced a crossing from the mainland. The last action of now three French troops took place in March 1945, conducting raids against the island of Schouwen. After the war, The French Armed Forces absorbed the three French troops as their own commandos. □

John E. Spindler is a regular contributor to Military Heritage. *This is his first article for* WWII History.

National Archives



Lieutenant General George Smith Patton Jr. commanded Third U.S Army in France and Germany following the Allied invasion of Normandy in June, 1944. From August 1, 1944, until the German surrender on May 9, 1945, Third Army was in continuous combat for 281 days—claiming to have killed, wounded, or captured 1,811,388 German soldiers.

Patton's Persona: The drive and vigor of the great American general shines in volume two of Kevin Hymel's biography.

The meeting room was freezing cold on December 19, 1944, despite the small stove in the corner. It was in northern France during one of Europe's coldest winters in memory. There were 16 officers in the room, four British and twelve American. They kept their coats on to stay warmer and smoked cigarettes, pipes, and cigars, filling the room with smoke. A large map covered one wall with rows of wooden folding chairs lined up before it.

One of the cigars smokers was General George S. Patton, Jr. He paced the room, concerned about the reports he had been reading about German penetrations in the Ardennes. Outwardly he feigned a cheerful attitude, but Patton worried about Allied setbacks and the weather that kept their air forces from flying.

Patton's superior, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, seemed in a genuinely better mood. He started the meeting by stating definitively, "The present situation is to be regarded as one of opportunity for us and not disaster. There will be only happy faces at this conference table." The good attitude bolstered Patton's outlook. He said, "Hell, let's have the guts to let the bastards go all the way up to Paris. Then we'll really cut "em off and chew 'em up!" It broke the tension in the room, though Eisenhower reminded everyone the Germans could not be allowed to cross the Meuse River.

The meeting turned to a discussion of how best to engage the attacking Germans and defeat them. Shortly the group realized their best idea was to have Patton turn part of his army north and counterattack into the German southern flank. Other commanders would take over responsibility for the section of the front Patton had to vacate to turn part of his Third Army.

Patton was initially quiet, though he did say he needed replacements for his infantry casualties. Finally, Eisenhower said, "George, you're going to have to abandon your plan to break free of the Siegfried Line and attack north. I want you to go to Luxembourg and take charge." Patton replied simply, "Yes sir." When Patton was asked how long it would take for him to pivot and attack, some say he said 48 hours—December 21—while others thought he said the 22nd. Many in the room didn't believe he could turn that fast, though a few seemed excited at the prospect. A few of the British officers laughed. Patton reportedly

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Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

PASSIONATE WARGAMERS AIM TO CREATE THE NEXT WORLD WAR II CARRIER CLASSIC THEMSELVES.

TASK FORCE ADMIRAL VOL. 1

PUBLISHER MICROPROSE SOFTWARE • **GENRE** STRATEGY • **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** TBD

Beloved sim publisher Microprose Software is back with another potential hit in the upcoming *Task Force Admiral - Vol. 1: American Carrier Battles*. As the title suggests, this one has players commanding a World War II carrier group, all within the tumultuous battles of the Pacific theatre in 1942.

Developer Drydock Dreams Games took a healthy dose of inspiration from Microprose's own *Carrier Command*, and as such *Task Force Admiral* is gearing up to deliver a solid challenge with multiple ways to take on and view the tasks at hand. You can soak in an overview of the action from a top-down perspective or switch to a full 3D view for a closer look at how each unit within

your carrier group is falling into place. Protecting your carrier is a top priority, so you'll need to make sure you never leave it exposed for too long, lest the enemy get a bead on you and end your mission prematurely.

Task Force Admiral features true-to-history battles as you fight through the Coral Sea, Midway, Guadalcanal, and more. The full game promises somewhere between 30 and 40 single scenarios along with a quick scenario generator and a full scenario builder. The majority of the game will be single player for starters, but player-versus-enemy and player-versus-player multiplayer modes are planned for future volumes.

At the time of this writing, Drydock Dreams Games has set a nebulous yet admirable release date of "When it's done (and by that we mean well done)." It's very clear that the team behind *Task Force Admiral* is full of fans who have a deep love for the real-time-strategy and sim genres. As they say on their official website, they waited for years, decades even, for games to come by that could sit next to the greats—like *Carriers at War*, *Great Naval Battles*, *Task Force 1942*, and *Fighting Steel*—in their hearts. Passionate hearts can only wait for so long, though, so eventually they decided to take on the task and get the job done themselves. I can't say for certain that we'll see how it all pays off soon, but we'll definitely see it when the final game is ready.

WAR HOSPITAL

PUBLISHER DAEDALIC ENTERTAINMENT • **GENRE** XXX **SYSTEM** PC • **AVAILABLE** NOW (EARLY ACCESS)

It may not be set during World War II, but *War Hospital* fits the bill for the kind of unique experience we're often looking for in comparable war games. This one was announced a while back, and last time we checked in on it it was penciled in for a Q4 2022 launch. Clearly it didn't make the cut, but at the time of this writing it's been moved to a concrete date of January 11, 2024.

War Hospital puts players in the shoes of Henry Wells, a retired British combat medic who finds himself drafted back into the horrors of World War I, facing a grim situation on the French Front that will take everything he has to surmount. Though Henry is both understaffed and undersupplied, with the help of the player he'll be able to provide the care necessary to tend to the hundreds of lives that depend on his crucial expertise.

Right alongside the deafening explosions of artillery shells, you'll need to build a field hospital facility with sufficient capabilities for treating some of the war's most horrific injuries. Players have access to authentic period equipment, and choices made throughout each run will shape the way these tools evolve along with the situation itself. Your goal is to expand this humble facility into a community of survivors and healers, kindling a bit of hope along the way and promoting something most war games don't get a chance to savor: Life.

True to its central themes, developer Brave Lamb Studio S.A. is creating *War Hospital* with the angle of saving lives rather than taking them. The French Front

has been faithfully recreated along with developing WWI medical technology and the inner workings of a British field hospital. The real meat of *War Hospital* comes along with its intriguing society survival elements, though. Both tactics and morals will be challenged as the campaign progresses, and the way choices impact the narrative should hopefully make for a fluid experience worth revisiting time and time again for different outcomes.

By the time this issue is in your hands we should finally have a good idea of how *War Hospital* turned out in its finished state. Perhaps we'll see a similarly-themed followup that focuses on other campaigns, and maybe even other legendary conflicts like World War II and beyond. Time will tell, but for now we're looking forward to trying our hand at healing. ■

followed by stating, "I can put on a spoiling attack with three divisions in three days or a more concentrated attack by six divisions in six days."

General Omar Bradley, Patton's direct superior, wasn't surprised by the statement; Patton had mentioned it the night before. He was alarmed at how quickly Patton was claiming he could do it. When Bradley asked Patton how feasible the plan was, Patton replied, "Brad, this time the Kraut's got his head in a meatgrinder." Patton symbolically closed his hand into a fist. "And this time I've got hold of the handle."

Though no one doubts his ability to command an army in the field, George S. Patton is a controversial figure. He cared for his men and tried to see to their needs, but he also slapped two of them in a hospital in Sicily. Many admired his leadership ability, but he could be a harsh bully to his subordinates. Patton was a man of contradictions, but he was also someone who could thrive in the terrible conditions of war and achieve success. The reader can see Patton at the height of his generalship in ***Patton's War: An American General's Combat Leadership, Volume 2 August-December 1944*** (Kevin M. Hymel, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, MO, 2023, 467 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover).

So much has been written about Patton it would seem there is nothing new to be discovered, but the author has succeeded in this task. Previous scholars have used Patton's transcribed diaries, which are heavily edited. This book benefits from the author's use of the general's original handwritten diaries to rediscover lost information. This volume focuses on Patton at his best, after his troubles in Sicily and before his late- and postwar difficulties. He was a field commander and this book lets the reader see him in that way, strengths and flaws together.

The Human Face of D-Day, Walking the Battlefields of Normandy: Essays, Reflections and Conversations with Veterans of the Longest Day (Col. (Ret) Keith M. Nightingale, Casemate Books, Havertown, PA, 2023, 357 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $37.95, hardcover)

On D-Day, Sergeant O.B. Hill of the 82nd Airborne Division landed by parachute along the flooded banks of the Merderet River. He could see some of his comrades drowning after landing in the swollen waters. He and Corporal Dave Jones quickly rounded up 28 men and decided to occupy a nearby farm building from which they could interdict a nearby road. The ad hoc unit dug in around the farm with Hill taking up an observation post on the second floor. German tanks and infantry soon approached, and Hill told his men to hold their fire. One of the German tanks, a black-clad commander perched in its turret hatch, drove up right next to the building. Hill took a Gammon grenade and dropped it right into the hatch past the unsuspecting German. The explosion sent the enemy soldier flying up into the air; "He popped out like a champagne cork and came up to me and then down like on an elevator," Hill later said. The Germans retreated, and the American paratroopers held that farm for three more days until relieved.

The author gathered multiple perspectives of the D-Day invasion from the participants and organized them deftly in this new book. The narrative is engaging and keep the reader's attention page after page. The book is filled with veteran accounts and interesting battle stories.

Task Force Hogan: The World War II Tank Battalion that Spearheaded the Liberation of Europe (William R. Hogan, William Morrow Publishing, New York, NY, 2023, 320 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.50, hardcover)

Sam Hogan commanded 3rd Battalion, 33rd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division in June 1944, during the Normandy campaign. At 28, he was young for battalion command, but skilled leaders rose quickly in wartime. His battalion formed the core of Task Force Hogan with 54 M4 Sherman tanks reinforced as needed by infantry, artillery, tank destroyers, and engineers. They began their war in Normandy, taking losses at Mortain. Afterward came a headlong attack through France and into Belgium. Finally, they went into Germany, taking part in the Battle of the Bulge before helping cut off 376,000 German troops in the Ruhr Valley. Sam led his men with compassion and principle, pushing them to do their part in winning the war, a task they readily rose to accept.

The author is an army officer and youngest son of Sam Hogan. This book is a fitting trib-

New and Noteworthy

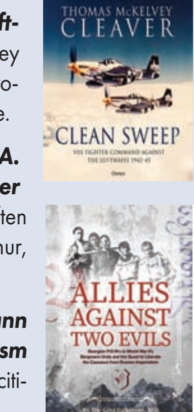
The Reconquest of Burma 1944-45 From Operation Capital to the Sittang Bend (Robert Lyman, Osprey Books, 2023, $25, SC) When the Japanese Invasion of India failed in August 1944, it created an opportunity for UK forces to take the offensive.

The Blitz 1940-41: The Luftwaffe's Biggest Strategic Bombing Campaign (Julian Hale, Osprey Books, 2023, $25, SC) Focuses on the German air offensive, including its objective, tactics, and results.

Clean Sweep: VIII Fighter Command against the Luftwaffe, 1942–1945 (Thomas McKelvey Cleaver, Osprey Books, 2023, $32, SC) Focuses on the fighter units which protected the U.S. bombers during their long-running offensive.

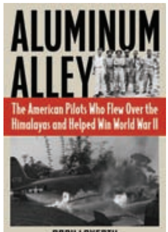
Loyalty First: The Life and Times of Charles A. Willoughby, Mac Arthur's Chief Intelligence Officer (David A. Foy, Casemate Books, 2023, $37.95, HC) Often maligned as a lackey of the imperious Douglas MacArthur, Willoughby's complexities are revealed.

Allies Against Two Evils: Georgian POWs in World War II's Bergmann Units and the Quest to Liberate the Caucasus from Russian Imperialism (Dr. Givi Gabliani, Doppelhouse Press, 2023, $49.95, SC) Nominally Soviet citizens fighting with the Germans to liberate their Soviet-dominated homelands.



ute to his father, written using Sam's own words, interviews with members of the unit, journals, letters, and official reports and documents. The narrative is smooth and easy to follow, and there are good maps to keep the reader anchored in time and place as the action unfolds. The book is a good battle story, keeping its focus on the soldiers and their experiences through a year of unrelenting combat.

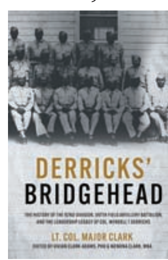
Aluminum Alley: The American Pilots Who Flew Over the Himalayas and Helped Win World War II (Rory Laverty, Stackpole Books, Essex, CT, 2023, 268 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, $29.95, hardcover)



The United States carried out the world's first long-range airlift for 42 months to keep Nationalist China in the war. Over a million Japanese troops were tied down in China, occupying the territory they seized in the 1930s and fighting China's disparate military forces. Every enemy soldier remaining in China was one less to fight the other Allies in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Flying over the Himalaya Mountains, known as the "Hump," U.S. pilots ferried fuel, food, ammunition, and other critical cargo from Assam, India, to southern China. They flew over thick jungles and towering mountains which threatened to appear out of the icy mists, braving storms and Japanese air attacks along the way. Flying conditions were so harsh that one-third of the airmen who flew the Hump were lost in the effort.

The aircrew who flew the Himalayas remain among the lesser-known heroes of the war. They flew in a theater of the war most Americans know little if anything about. The author effectively relays the military situation through the pilots' own words and flight logs, but also discusses the war situation in China and how the airlift influenced it.

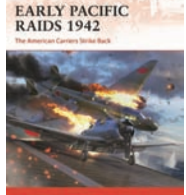
Derrick's Bridgehead: The History of the 92nd Division, 597th Field Artillery Battalion, and the Leadership Legacy of Col. Wendell T. Derricks (Lt. Col. Major Clark, Casemate Books, Havertown, PA, 2023, 304 pp., photographs, notes, appendices, bibliography, $37.95, hardcover)



The 597th Field Artillery Battalion, 92nd Infantry Division, was the first, last, and only direct support field artillery battalion entirely commanded by black officers to see combat in U.S. Army history. It was also the first all-black unit in a combat division. The unit's commander, Colonel Wendell T. Derricks, was an effective and skilled leader who also strove to protect his soldiers from the racism black troops experienced throughout the war. He was the most senior black officer to command troops on the ground during the war, and though recommended for the Legion of Merit, it was turned down at the time.

The author was an officer in the 597th during World War II and Korea, who had his own distinguished military career. He saw firsthand the unit's hardships and setbacks, but also its successes and victories. His brings this direct knowledge to bear in this detailed and fascinating look at the experiences of African American military units during the war.

Early Pacific Raids 1942: The American Carriers Strike Back (Brian Lane Herder, Osprey Books, Oxford, UK, 2023, 96 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $25, softcover)



In the chaotic period immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack, the Japanese military launched numerous offensives in support of its goals to expand Japan's territorial holdings in Asia and the Pacific. What is less known are the carrier raids carried out by the United States Navy from January through March 1942. The Americans sought to keep the Japanese off balance while the U.S. recovered from the blows it received in Hawaii, Wake Island, the Philippines and elsewhere. Japanese bases in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands, Wake Island, Rabaul, Marcus Island, Lae, and Salamanca all suffered quick hit-and-run attacks, proving America was in the fight and determined to carry forward.

These early-war carrier raids are usually given brief coverage if they are mentioned at all. This interesting new book instead focuses on them, bringing to light the planning and execution of these risky missions. These raids helped American aircrews gain experience and set the stage for future battles such as Coral Sea and Midway; this book provides a detailed look at them. □

BASTOGNE

Continued from page 37

December 28, all 964 wounded men trapped in the fighting there had been transported to higher echelon medical facilities.

The struggle for control of Bastogne continued well into the new year. In town, a provisional medical battalion took on the role of casualty collection while the 101st Airborne's Division Surgeon, Major Barfield, worked to rebuild his clearing station. Captain Roy Moore took over command of the 326th Medical Company, devoting considerable time and effort in training the newly assigned aidmen sent forward to replace unit personnel lost in Belgium.

As difficult as Moore's job was, it paled in comparison to the plight of those men taken prisoner on the night of December 19. Major Desobry, the 10th Armored Division officer wounded at Noville, woke up in the front seat of an ambulance headed east. Hearing German voices outside his vehicle, the temporarily-blinded Desobry said he must be traveling alongside a group of surrendered enemy soldiers. Desobry's driver had to inform him that they were the ones being held captive.

The 326th Med's Pfc. Henry S. "Hank" Skowronski walked into Germany, subsisting on rutabagas and sugar beets, until he arrived at Stalag IVB near Muhlberg. Skowronski also recalled how the food at Muhlberg, mostly "thin soup and bread that was baked with sawdust," kept him and the 5,000 other POWs held there on the edge of starvation until Red Army forces liberated the camp in May 1945.

Like Skowronski, most members of the 326th Airborne Medical Company who survived KG Stephan's surprise attack sat out the remainder of the war in a German POW camp. While behind the wire, they continued to care for their fellow captives with whatever supplies and medications were made available. Although the 101st Airborne Division no longer benefitted from their service, these dedicated doctors and aidmen undoubtedly kept alive many Allied prisoners of war during the last months of World War II. □

Patrick J. Chaisson is a retired U.S. Army officer and historian who writes from his home in Scotia, New York.

GREEK HOLOCAUST

Continued from page 47

This German reprisal policy was, as one can imagine, counterproductive. Survivors of these village burnings had no home to return to, and so the Greeks were left with only one option: join the resistance. Also, the Germans were clearly defeated on all battlefronts by August 1944. Russian troops were in Romania and storming into the Balkans, and Greece would be next. The German armies in Greece were in danger of being cut off from Germany.

Finally, the German swastika came down off the Acropolis, and German forces began to evacuate the country they had devastated. The blue and white Greek flag reappeared on buildings and homes, and Athens rejoiced with public demonstrations, but it was not over just yet.

More than 500,000 Greeks, mostly civilians, had died in World War II. The Jewish communities in Greece ceased to exist. A loaf of bread in Athens cost two million drachmas, and people were trading homes and property for olive oil to keep their children alive.

When the Allies arrived on the heels of the retreating Germans, they found a people who stared, dazed in a state of shock, over what they had been through: schools burned to the ground, more than 1,770 villages destroyed, thousands of Greek civilians homeless. There were no surviving industries or factories. Ports and cities were in ruins. There was no government. The economy was bankrupt, the infrastructure destroyed.

Sixty percent of the horses, mules, and cattle had been slaughtered for no reason. Twenty-five percent of the country's forests had been decimated, and 56 percent of the roads were in need of urgent repair. Ninety percent of the bridges had been destroyed, and nearly all the water and sewage facilities were in ruins. The entire country needed to be rebuilt. Thirteen percent of the Greek population—one of every 10 Greeks—was dead. But there was still fighting to be done.

The Germans left behind the Greek anti communist and fascist security battalions under the control of the collaborationist government, and they busily hunted down communists and battled the ELAS resistance groups in the countryside. A civil war was about to begin.

No Greek leader with the stature of Yugoslavian partisan leader Marshal Josef Broz Tito had emerged from the Greek resistance movements. Greece, both within and without, was in political turmoil. In North Africa, the "Free Greek" forces serving King George II had mutinied no less than three times, demanding a republican government.

In response, King George II agreed to abide by a national plebiscite on Greece's future once the Germans were defeated. Political turmoil continued, though, with each side demanding concessions from the others while refusing to concede anything themselves.

Moderated by the British, who had the principal interests in the Mediterranean, the various Greek factions eventually came to blows. The communist organizations refused to disarm when the provisional Greek government returned to Athens with the incoming British troops. The first battle began in Athens on December 3, 1944, even as World War II continued elsewhere.

Often called the first battle of the Cold War, the Greek Civil War was an international war, with the Greek government's army supplied and advised by the United States under the terms of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. The communist forces were equally supplied and advised by Soviet proxies in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania. The scattered clashes of 1943 turned into full-scale civil warfare between the two groups.

A truce agreement was entered on February 12, 1945, after a 33-day battle in Athens. But tensions remained, with many leftist organizations hiding weapons and the "White Terror" of the right against the left within Greece. These tensions once again erupted into open warfare, and in December 1947, the communists formed a provisional Greek government. The civil war would rage across Greece until 1949, when the Greek communists surrendered after their allies had abandoned them.

This ended armed conflict in Greece for the time being, but as later events would show, it was only the beginning of internal political struggles that would take decades to resolve. □

MAKIN ISLANDS

Continued from page 57

The Navy was particularly critical of the time it took to secure the island, time in which its ships had been tied to supporting the ground troops and exposed to enemy attack. Proof was readily available in the loss of the USS *Liscome Bay* and the resultant casualties.

As for General Holland Smith, he was clearly superfluous as a corps commander of two units fighting separate battles over 100 miles apart. Tied by naval transportation to Makin, he yearned with his entire being to be present at Tarawa where "his" Marines were undergoing one of the most horrendous battles of the war.

This he blamed on the slow progress of General Ralph Smith's division. He claimed that a few snipers had held up an entire battalion for four hours; that Army tanks refused to assist the infantry, causing Colonel Conroy's death; that the wild firing by the GIs on the first night indicated a lack of discipline among them; and that they unnecessarily delayed the attack on the morning of the second day, losing four hours of combat time and thereby extending the battle.

He would not forget this, and the following year when the 27th Infantry Division was again under his command at Saipan, he would relieve Ralph Smith of command, thus igniting an inter-service dispute that would last for decades.

None of this should obscure the fact that the 165th Infantry Regimental Combat Team did take Makin Island in a military manner. For the GIs, whose training as we have seen was inadequate to say the least, they had learned as they went. Comparing the statements of Sergeant Fusco on the first day with that of Sergeant Valentine a day later indicates a marked difference not only in tactics, but in attitude.

So, too, does the actions of Captain Sikes in organizing an ad hoc combined arms team to eliminate an enemy position which had halted the infantry alone. Considering all the obstacles placed in their path, the GIs of the "Fighting 69th" served their forefathers well. □

Nathan Prefer is the author of several books of World War II history and is a frequent contributor to WWII Quarterly. *He lives in Fort Myers, Florida.*

HISTORICAL MILITARY PRODUCTS

WW2 GERMAN NSDAP PAPER BUNTING FLAG - ORIGINAL

SS TOTENKOPF S.LB. HEYDRICH 9.11.41 H. HIMMLER HONOR RING LRG HEAD

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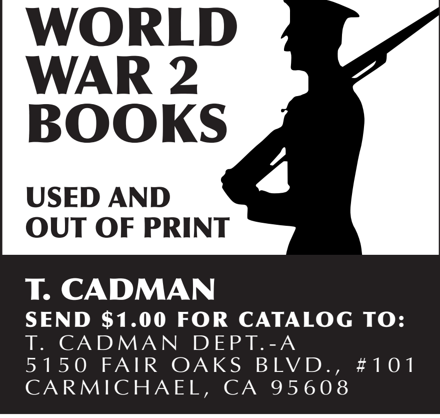

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Continued from page 21

give me the stories," she said. "And I really appreciate that time that I have with him."

Sogoian and her brother, Fred Boreali, have heard most of their father's stories hundreds of times now. She likes the ones that don't focus on the tragedy of war but on the humorous and touching moments. One of her favorites is about how he despised having to make dozens of pies to feed the crew while the other baker got to make big sheet cakes that could be portioned out much easier.

"My father got this great idea: 'If I didn't have the pie tins, I wouldn't have to be making pies,'" Sogoian said. "So in the middle of the night, he would go to the top of the ship ... and he would start flinging off the pie tins. And the next day, when there were no pies, the head baker would say, 'Where are the pies, Boreali?' And he would say, 'I had no pie tins. I don't know what happened to them.'"

The head baker ordered more. But those "mysteriously" went missing, too. Eventually, the head baker stopped ordering pie tins. Boreali never got caught.

Sogoian said she loves those stories that illustrate the contrast between the gravity of the situation and the fact that her father and almost everyone else on board were still just teenagers. Young, but in the words of Rear Adm. Kirk, "seamen and fighting men second to none."

The last entry in Boreali's diary spans June 9–12, 1945, when the crew of LST-27 arrived back in Falmouth. It was the same site where just over a year before, German planes attacked the base. All was quiet now. The war in Europe had ended a month earlier. "We report to Falmouth," he wrote. "At last we know we are going home."

Even today, though, his thoughts go back to those who wouldn't be joining him. "Let me tell you something: I'm no hero," Boreali said. "The heroes are all dead. They're the ones buried over in Normandy. We came home." □

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