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DUNKIRK

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WWII HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 2006

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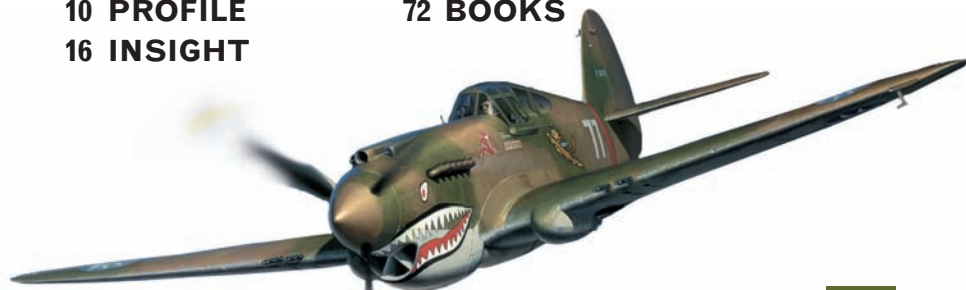
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Cover: German soldiers, including one carrying a flamethrower, accompany a camouflaged tank during the advance on Kursk in July 1943. Photo courtesy *akg-images / ullstein bild*.

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A blunder by Hitler and the fortitude of the common soldier resulted in a miracle at Dunkirk.

THE EVACUATION OF NEARLY 350,000 ALLIED OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS FROM THE EMBATTLED beaches at Dunkirk was indeed an event of epic proportions. Had the Nazis been successful in annihilating the British Expeditionary Force in 1940, the dark early days of World War II would have been incalculably more bleak.

The bravery of the British soldiers, remnants of the French Army, and their Belgian and Polish comrades can scarcely be overstated. Consider the sacrifice of the 2nd Battalion Irish Guards and a battalion of Welsh Guards which held the line against the Germans at Boulogne for two full days as the Allied situation rapidly deteriorated, suffering more than 400 killed.

When Operation Dynamo (the evacuation effort) got underway, the courage of the military was matched by civilians who risked their lives and property to undertake the perilous 20-mile trek across the English Channel. Some considered the rescue attempt to simply be a noble exercise in futility, but elements of the Royal Navy and 665 smaller vessels pressed on undeterred. Given the circumstances, the fact such an effort could even be organized was a miracle in itself.

Three days before Operation Dynamo began, Lieutenant General Alan Brooke, commander of the British II Corps, recorded in his diary, "Nothing but a miracle can save the BEF. The German armoured divisions have penetrated to the coast, Abbeville, Boulogne, and Calais have been rendered useless. We are therefore cut off from our sea communications and beginning to be short of ammunition."

At the 11th hour, Adolf Hitler unknowingly played a role in the salvation of so many Allied soldiers who would fight another day. Reichsmarshal Hermann Goering, chief of the Luftwaffe, prevailed upon the Nazi leader to allow his air forces to finish off the Allies. Hitler assented and ordered the panzers of General Heinz Guderian to halt just short of Dunkirk. Had they been allowed to proceed, the German tanks might well have reached the channel at Dunkirk in one more day.

Hitler had apparently been shaken by the ferocity of a British counterattack at Arras,

which had required the deployment of deadly 88mm antiaircraft guns in an anti-tank role and the personal direction of General Erwin Rommel, commander of the 7th Panzer Division, to beat back. He further worried the marshy ground of northern France and Belgium was not well suited to armored action and the tanks needed to regroup for the southward push toward Paris.

As it was, the Luftwaffe bombed and strafed while Royal Air Force Fighter Command exacted a toll on the attackers. By June 4, the British had lost 99 fighter planes in the skies above embattled Dunkirk, but the Germans had lost 132. The Allies put their reprieve from constant ground attack to good use, and many historians have ranked Hitler's decision among the great blunders of World War II — on par with his disastrous invasion of the Soviet Union a year later.

The rescued soldiers were greeted with celebrations when they reached the safety of England. Many had not eaten for several days, and they were given sandwiches and hot tea. They had been unceremoniously booted from the continent of Europe and endured one of the greatest defeats in the history of the British Empire, but there was indeed something of a triumph to acknowledge.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill warned against clothing a defeat in the mantle of victory. He also described most eloquently the resolve of his nation. "There was a white glow, overpowering, sublime, which ran through our island from end to end. In the midst of defeat glory came to the island people, united and unconquerable; and the tale of the Dunkirk beaches will shine in whatever records are preserved of our affairs."

Michael E. Haskew

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Dear Editor:

I am now into my second subscription year and am really enjoying your magazine. I will be extending my subscription for another two years.

I served in the U.S. Navy (11/1943- 12/1946) and flew in the good old, very reliable, very fast for its time, PV1-Vega Ventura, as the radioman/gunner. I was in CASU 21-VPB126.

I have yet to see any photos or read any stories about this magnificent plane. I learned last year there may be one still in flying condition. Is there a possibility of ever seeing any photos or maybe reading any stories that contain the history of this grand old plane?

John Bogan
Fayetteville, AR

Coolidge Goes Down

Dear Sir,

I have just received my new subscription to *WWII History*, and in reading "Dispatches," saw the letter from Dr. Charles E. Heller regarding the sinking of American President Lines vessel, *President Coolidge*, being used as a troop transport. My ship was the U.S.S. *Chester* (CA27) in the anchorage at Espirito Santo after being torpedoed in the Santa Cruz Islands on 20 October 1942. My duty that day was as engineer in the motor whaleboat. We were tied up to the port boom of the *Chester* when suddenly, all the ships in port started to blow their whistles and horns. A look eastward and you could see the *Coolidge* turning into the anchorage by way of a direct approach which, of course, was mined. The correct way was around the small island just south of the direct approach, which was not mined. All the small boats on duty made for the errant *Coolidge* just after she hit a mine. The *Coolidge* turned starboard in the narrow channel and ran her bow up onto the shallow beach.

I happened to see some photos in *Life* magazine while on leave sometime later; I liberated the page and have kept it ever since. The *Chester* whaleboat is bow-up to the starboard side of the *Coolidge*, helping to pull out the G.I.'s and their equipment. In the lower photo, I am in the engineer's position looking directly at the *Coolidge*. As she took on more water, conditions worsened, the mud grip on the bow released, she turned onto the port side, and slid into a deep watery grave.

Robert Teegarden
Carson City, Nevada



Robert Teegarden's torn page from *Life* magazine shows the *Coolidge* before going down.

Pappy Boyington Memorial

Dear Editor,

Pappy Boyington couldn't have scored a more direct hit than did Michael E. Haskew's Editorial "University of Washington (UW) student senate rejects memorial to honor Pappy Boyington." The University of Washington's student senate's decision to reject a proposal to honor Boyington with a memorial, as it has honored others who have attended the university over the years, is characteristic of a complete lack of historical military cultural knowledge and an extreme lack of tolerance toward economic and cultural diversity.

Being a recipient of both the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross makes Colonel Boyington more than worthy of a memorial. The fact that Boyington volunteered and served with the American Volunteer Group (AVG), the Flying Tigers, and was indirectly fighting for our country's interests even before the United States entered World War II, is indicative of a unique sense of courage and adventure that would make him a suitable role model for any person. When the U.S. did enter World War II, Boyington again answered his nation's call to duty. Serving in the Solomon Islands, Boyington's squadron won an astounding amount of aerial victories over Japanese Forces. Boyington himself is credited with shooting down 28 Japanese planes before being shot down himself and spending many months in a Japanese prisoner of war camp.

UW senator Jill Edwards' shallow-minded statement that she "didn't believe a member of

the Marine Corps was an example of the sort of person UW wanted to produce," leads a person to wonder what kind of person did UW produce in her. I would find it highly improbable that she, or any member of the UW senate, would ever come close to achieving what Boyington had achieved in his lifetime. Boyington's exploits have inspired a movie *Flying Misfits* and a popular television series *Black Sheep Squadron*, both of which have inspired young men and woman toward military history studies and military service careers.

Edward J. Smitreski
Northampton, PA

Dear Editor:

You have brought out a topic in the July issue of what looks to be a growing trend in our society. Apathy, disrespect, and dishonor to those who fought and died for the way of life we all now enjoy. Our young and impressionable people are being subjected to a warped view of who we should be, and our Constitution, our Bill of Rights, or at least portions of it, are being taught to be irrelevant. The striving for self reward above all else seem to be the rule of the day by many teachers and professors of higher learning institutions. Is it little wonder then why a memorial to Pappy Boyington would go south at the University of Washington? I believe also, too many of our country are forgetting the attacks of 9/11. I point to the current ongoing controversies of our overseas confrontations in Iraq and Afghanistan. I feel like we are being herded to forget.

We had better wake up now to this because not all threats to us, to our nation, come from extremist abroad. What we need to worry about is what comes from within.

Roland Oddera
Simpson, Illinois

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American William R. Dunn was the first Eagle Squadron pilot to shoot down a German aircraft in World War II.

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON

“I JAMMED THE THROTTLE WIDE OPEN AND, ATTACKING THE ME-109 FROM THE PORT QUARTER, fired one burst of four seconds and three bursts of two seconds each,” Pilot Officer William R. Dunn of No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron, Royal Air Force, said of the encounter with the first German aircraft he shot down. “At about 50 yards ... I could see my machine gun bullets striking all over the German’s fuselage and wingroot. Then he began to smoke.”

Dunn followed the enemy fighter, continuing to shoot at him, and watched as the plane dove straight into the ground, “where it crashed with a hell of an explosion near a crossroad.”

This action took place on July 2, 1941, during an escort mission to Lille, France. Number 71 Squadron, the first of three all-American Eagle Squadrons, formed part of a fighter escort for 12 RAF Bristol Blenheim bombers. Pilot Officer Dunn’s Messerschmitt was the first enemy aircraft to be shot down by a member of an Eagle Squadron. The official time of the kill is given as 12:35 PM. Five minutes later, at 12:40, Pilot Officer Gregory Augustus “Gus” Daymond accounted for the Squadron’s second kill, also an Me-109. This air action would start a controversy that would not be settled until many years after the Second World War had ended.

Dunn and Daymond did not have very much in common, except for the fact that they belonged to the same squadron and they both risked a heavy fine and a long prison sentence by leaving the United States to join the Royal Air Force. Daymond had been working as a make-up man in Hollywood, which had a very large Jewish community. “People on the film sets used to listen to Hitler’s speeches between takes—including Groucho Marx, who recalled that he got the chills from listening to ‘that lunatic’ scream,” Daymond remembered. “We were immensely concerned, and there was an atmosphere of dread and foreboding. Well, I went tearing off to do my stuff.” At the age of 19, due to what he described as a “sophomoric

but genuine sense of social consciousness,” Daymond left California for Canada and, eventually, England and the Royal Air Force.

Dunn’s route to the RAF was much longer and more difficult. In 1939, he was working for a Dallas, Texas, advertising agency and taking private flying lessons. When Hitler invaded Poland in September, Dunn tried to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. He went to Canada and showed the recruiting officer his log book, which indicated that he had 160 flying hours. The RCAF was not accepting American volunteers so Dunn joined the Canadian Army instead, hoping to transfer to the air force later.

The recruiting sergeant for the Seaforth Highlanders said that he could not accept any Americans, either, so Dunn said that he was from Moosejaw. He had no idea where Moosejaw was (it is in Saskatchewan province), but it was the first Canadian town that came to mind. Fortunately, the sergeant bought his story. Dunn was soon wearing the regimental kilts of the Seaforth Highlanders and sailed to England in December 1939. Before he finished his training, the British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk and France surrendered to Germany. During the summer of 1940, Dunn was credited with shooting down two Ju-87 Stuka dive bombers that were attacking the camp of his old outfit.

During the Battle of Britain, RAF Fighter Command was becoming desperately short of pilots. The Air Ministry in London invited anyone with 500 or more hours of flying time to transfer to the RAF. This was the chance that Dunn had been waiting for. Even though he had only 160 hours, he applied. While he was filling out his application, Dunn said that his pen must have slipped, “with my 160 looking



Robert Taylor, Military Gallery

In this painting by Robert Taylor, which commemorates the 240 American pilots who volunteered to fly for the Royal Air Force, Eagle Squadron members sit in the cockpits of their Spitfires and wait for the takeoff signal.



Shown in the cockpit of his Spitfire in 1941, then Pilot Officer William R. Dunn was the first Eagle Squadron pilot to shoot down a German plane.

like a 560." The Air Ministry did not notice the slip, so Dunn kept his mouth shut.

The inflated number accomplished Dunn's goal; He was accepted into the RAF. In the spring of 1941, he traded his regimental kilts for air force blue. Because of the urgent need for pilots, Dunn was rushed through pilot training in an accelerated course. In April 1941, he was posted to No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron, which flew Hawker Hurricane fighters out of Martlesham Heath, Essex.

When he first arrived, Dunn thought that his reception into 71 Squadron was somewhat cool, but he did not know why. "Maybe it was because I'd been an enlisted infantryman in the Canadian Army," he later said, "who had crawled from the muddy trenches into their blue heaven."

Whatever the reason, Dunn felt like an outsider. After a while, he discovered that the squadron had a clique called the "fair-haired boys," who had friends with political influence. "If you didn't belong to their clique," he noticed, "you were cut out of the pattern and pushed into the background."

Following his first victory on July 2, Dunn said that he ran head-on into the fair-haired boys—Daymond was given credit for shooting down the squadron's first enemy aircraft, even though it was clear that Dunn had been first. Dunn played down the slight, saying that it "didn't really make a hell of a lot of difference," but he was unhappy about it. "My claim was played down in favor of Gussy's." Daymond was a member of the clique; Dunn was not.

According to Dunn, this snub was the work of the squadron's intelligence officer, J. Roland 'Robbie' Robinson, a Member of Parliament who had influence at the Air Ministry. Robinson later became Lord Martonmere. Dunn felt that Robinson was always pushing his friends, including Daymond, for promotions and decorations at the expense of anyone not in the charmed circle. Combat reports would later confirm that Dunn was indeed the first Eagle Squadron pilot to destroy an enemy aircraft.

However, there were more immediate concerns. On July 6, 71 Squadron had another escort assignment to fly. A force of Blenheim bombers was being sent to Lille again, which would mean another encounter with the "Abbeville Boys,"—nine squadrons of Me-109s of Jagdgeschwader 26 based at nine airfields in the Abbeville area. Jagdgeschwader 26, commanded by General Adolf Galland, was considered the elite Luftwaffe fighter wing in the West. Galland set the example for his group; he already had 70 Allied aircraft to his credit.

German fighters attacked the RAF bombers shortly after they crossed the French coast, and the escorting fighters did their best to intercept the incoming Messerschmitts. In the fighting, Daymond shot down one Me-109. Dunn was credited with half a kill, sharing a Messerschmitt with a Polish pilot from 306 Squadron.

Air combat came as a nasty dose of reality for some of the pilots. Although they knew they would be shooting at the enemy, it somehow never occurred to them that the enemy would be shooting back. Daymond found out how unforgiving—and permanent—air fight-

ing could be. Over his earphones he heard a "terrific quacking" from one of the Polish pilots whose flight had been jumped by Messerschmitts. At first they called to each other in English. As the fighting became more frantic, they "blew their gaskets and began to garble-garble among themselves in Polish, and we didn't know what the hell was happening."

From the cockpit of his Hurricane, Daymond watched an Me-109 going down. A Pole in a Spitfire stayed right behind it, "shooting it into mighty small pieces," blasting away until it hit the ground. For the first time, Daymond realized that he was in the middle of a real war.

The rivalry between Dunn and Daymond continued to develop throughout the summer. The two were in a contest to see who could shoot down the most German airplanes, and the tone of the rivalry was not friendly. Throughout July and August the lead changed hands several times. Sharing the Me-109 with the pilot from 306 Squadron gave Dunn a half-plane lead. Daymond then shot down a Messerschmitt, which gave him a half-plane advantage. Dunn regained the lead on July 21, when he destroyed another Me-109 near Lille. Daymond then scored his third kill, but Dunn regained the lead on August 8, when he downed an Me-109 west of Mardyck. Through most of August, Dunn maintained a three and one-half to three advantage.

By August 27, 71 Squadron had been issued Spitfire Mark II fighters. On that day, the entire squadron was escorting nine Blenheims to France. The bombers' target was Lille again, which would mean another encounter with the yellow-nosed Messerschmitts of the Abbeville Boys. Almost as soon as the Spitfires crossed the enemy coast, anti-aircraft fire began popping in the sky all around them. When the flak subsided, everyone kept a sharp eye for enemy fighters.

An alert Spitfire pilot spotted a formation of three Messerschmitts; Dunn looked up and saw them, about 4,000 feet above. He did not know there was an Me-109 behind him until tracer fire shot past his cockpit. Dunn "shoved everything into a corner," violently evading the fighter behind him, and shouted a warning to the rest of his flight. The only damage done had been to his composure.

Even though the fight was only 20 or 30 seconds old, Dunn had already seen several fighters, from both sides, going down. He caught sight of two Messerschmitts in the distance, waiting for the chance to finish off any stragglers or cripples. Dunn climbed to a position above and behind them, with the sun at his back, then pushed the stick forward and dove

after them. The leader saw Dunn coming and broke away, but his wingman made a slow, climbing turn to the left, right in front of Dunn.

When he was about 150 yards from his target, Dunn pressed the Spitfire's firing button. "Pieces of the aircraft flew off, and engine oil splattered my windscreen," he wrote in his combat report. The enemy fighter faltered under the impact of the Spitfire's eight machine guns, and pieces of it flew off the fuselage. "The plane looked like a blowtorch with a bluish white flame as it went down," he said.

Dunn watched the Messerschmitt crash into a French field below. He felt a bit sorry for the pilot, who never made any real effort to get away from him, and was probably just a green kid, right out of training school. "What the hell," he added, "they all count."

Off in the distance, Dunn could see the Blenheims dropping their bombs. There were still nine of them. He felt something hit his port wing and saw tracers flash past him. Dunn thinks that he was attacked by the leader of the pilot he had just shot down.

He reacted instantly. "I yank back the throttle, give my prop full fine pitch, jam the flaps down, and violently skid my aircraft out of his gunsight," remembered Dunn. The Spitfire's airspeed dropped off immediately, and the Messer-

schmitt shot past, skimming not more than 10 feet above Dunn's head. He could see the black crosses on the German fighter, along with a red rooster painted on the side of the cockpit, a unit marking identifying the airplane as part of III Gruppe, Jagdgeschwader 2. Now the situation was reversed. Dunn was behind the Messerschmitt, and the hunter had become the hunted.

After a three- or four-second burst, a jet of gray smoke sprouted from the German's engine. The Messerschmitt burst into flames, rolled over and veered away, out of control. On the way down, its tail section broke off. Kill number two for the day gave Dunn a total of five.

With ammunition left, Dunn decided to go after another Messerschmitt about 500 feet below him. The German pilot saw his attacker and took evasive action, but Dunn managed to fire a short burst and saw smoke trail from the enemy fighter. He was about to fire another burst when he was jumped by four more Me-09s.

The first German missed. Dunn saw cannon shells go past him and curve away. The second pilot was a better shot. Dunn heard explosions and a banging like hail as bullets and cannon fire hit his Spitfire. A cannon shell blew a hole in his instrument panel. His right foot bounced off the rudder pedal and went numb. Something, actually two somethings, banged into his

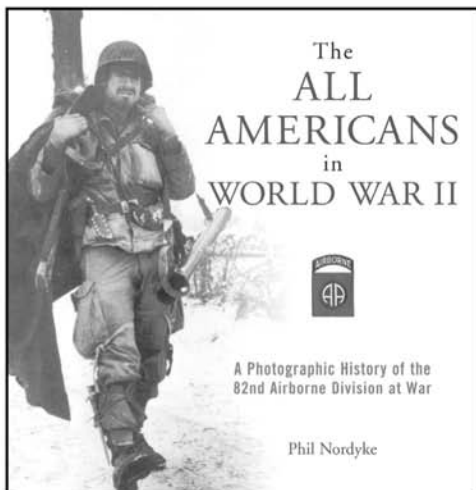
right leg, and his head snapped forward. Dunn began to lose consciousness. Through the increasing haze, he could make out bits of metal and broken glass on the cockpit floor.

His head cleared after a short while, and Dunn found himself all alone in the sky. He knew that he was about five miles from the Channel coast but did not know exactly how badly he had been injured. His head hurt, and his right boot was covered in blood. The Spitfire's engine was running rough, but he had enough fuel to make it back to England. His flight across the Channel seemed endless, but Dunn managed to set his damaged Spitfire down on the grass airfield at Hawkinge, Kent, just inland from the Channel.

From Hawkinge, Dunn was taken by ambulance to Royal Victoria Hospital in Folkstone. Doctors informed him that a cannon shell had blown off the front of his right foot. He was also told that two machine gun bullets had gone through his right calf and that another bullet had creased the back of his leather flying helmet. He had a three-inch long welt on his scalp, but if he had been leaning back another inch or two he would be dead.

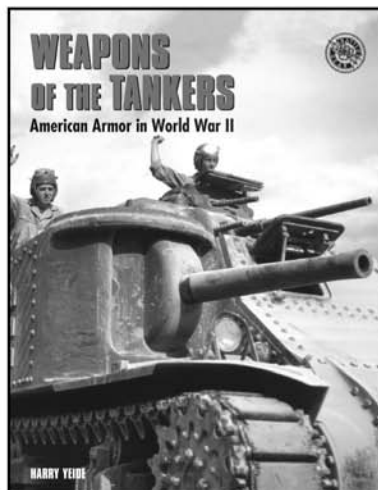
When he was fit enough to return to duty, Dunn was posted to Canada and a training command. Before leaving for his new job, he

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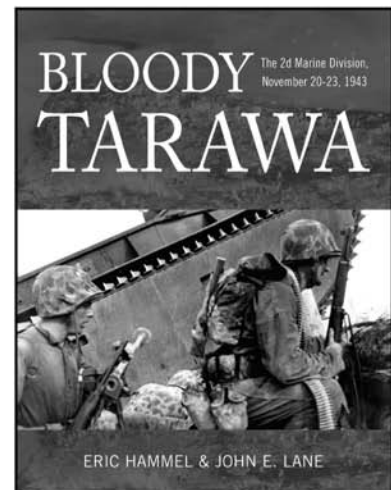
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Before heading overseas in March 1944, pilots of the 406th Fighter Group enjoy a farewell party. From left, Lt. Dudolski, Lt. Hughes, Cptn L.C. Seldeon, Cptn Dunn, and Lt. Marusiack.

decided to go back to 71 Squadron at North Weald to visit his squadron mates and pick up his belongings. He was not happy with what he found. Somebody had helped himself to Dunn's shirts, socks, underwear, and towels. What was left had been stuffed into a parachute bag and dumped on the floor, where Dunn found it in the middle of a puddle of water.

When Dunn found out that his rival Daymond had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and had also been given official credit as the first American ace of the war, he was even more unhappy. His friend and squadron mate Chesley "Pete" Peterson had also been awarded the DFC. To Dunn, this did not seem right. Daymond did not shoot down his fifth

enemy aircraft until September 19, over three weeks after Dunn, and Peterson only had two victories. The DFC was usually awarded to pilots who had five enemy planes to their credit.

To Dunn, this looked like another example of Robinson's work. Both Daymond and Peterson were members of Robinson's clique. It seemed as though Dunn's accomplishments had been deliberately overlooked in favor of Robinson's fair-haired boys. "What about my victories. Didn't they count?" Dunn asked. He never could prove anything, but he had his suspicions.

Favoritism or not, Daymond was listed as the first official American ace of World War II. Dunn thought otherwise, although there was nothing he could do about it. He went to Canada to train RCAF cadets, and transferred to the U.S. Army Air Force in 1943. "It was sort of implied that if I didn't agree to a transfer, they'd come and get me," he said. He finished the war as a lieutenant colonel. He also shot down three more enemy aircraft. But in spite of his war record, Dunn was always bothered by the feeling that he had been deliberately snubbed. "I always felt that my honesty was being questioned," he said.

For the next 24 years, Daymond remained the first official American ace. In 1965, a fluke

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brought the old rivalry to the surface again. The U.S. Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio, launched an appeal for Eagle Squadron artifacts and memorabilia for its collection. The Eagles were, after all, the first Americans to fight Hitler. Dunn responded to the museum's request by sending one of his old RAF uniforms, some photos, and his logbook from his days at 71 Squadron.

The museum's director, Colonel William F. Curry, was glad to accept Dunn's donations. He took special interest in Dunn's logbook, and in the dates of his five victories in 1941. After going over the logbook himself, Curry asked Air Marshal Sir Patrick Dunn, RAF (no relation to William Dunn), to recheck the official records. It seemed to him that Dunn's claim as first American ace might be valid, after all.

Air Marshal Dunn and W.J. Taunton of the RAF Historical Branch checked and rechecked the RAF files. After careful study, they concluded that Dunn had scored his fifth victory before Daymond or any other American pilot.

Dunn received a letter from Raymond F. Toliver, historian of the American Fighter Aces Association, dated March 19, 1968, informing him of the Association's decision. In the letter, Toliver said, "The American Fighter Aces Association is happy to inform you that in a



Eagle Squadron pilot William R. Dunn stands beside his fighter plane. The small black crosses denote aerial victories.

recently completed study in conjunction with the Royal Air Force, victory credits clearly indicate that you are America's first fighter ace of World War II." The letter went on to say that the records of the Association, which has the final word on victory claims "are being changed to reflect this fact."

Dunn was serving as air strike plans officer at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, when the letter reached him. "I was certainly glad to have

the matter settled," he later said. "Having had my victories confirmed for the second time should settle this matter once and for all."

Daymond refused to comment on the Fighter Aces Association's decision. He said that Warner Brothers bought the rights to his life story and his wartime experiences in 1946, and as far as he was concerned that precluded him from making any sort of comment. However, Daymond's friend Chesley Peterson was under no such restraint. In 1975, he said that he did not believe Dunn's claim and that he did not agree with the American Fighter Association's decision. In his eyes, the fact that Daymond had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross was enough evidence to back up his claim.

"It is evident to me that for Gus to have been given a DFC when he was just a section leader," Peterson commented, "it had to be awarded for being the first American Eagle to become an ace."

If J. Roland 'Robbie' Robinson had anything to say about the AFAA's decision, there is no record of it. □

Author David Alan Johnson has written numerous articles for Sovereign Media publications. He writes from his home in Union, N.J.

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The Argentia Conference helped forge the grand alliance that ultimately prevailed during World War II.

BY MICHAEL D. HULL

A BRITISH BATTLESHIP AND AN AMERICAN CRUISER CONVERGED SECRETLY IN A REMOTE BAY on the Newfoundland coast early in August 1941.

There, during a few days, one of the most momentous meetings of the 20th century would bring forth a historic resolution that would guide the Allies to victory in World War II and would seek to pave the way for eventual global unity.

On Saturday, August 2, President Franklin D. Roosevelt jauntily informed hovering reporters that he was going on a fishing trip. He boarded the presidential train at Union Station in Washington, D.C., and rode northward. The following day, at the Navy Submarine Base in New London, Conn., Roosevelt was lifted aboard the 165-foot presidential yacht, *Potomac*. His guests for the “fishing trip” included one of his most admired friends, the beautiful Princess Martha of Norway, and Prince Karl of Sweden, but no reporters.

The yacht sailed down the River Thames and into an Atlantic sunset. The president described his objective as “serious fishing.” The *Potomac* was later spotted cruising off Martha’s Vineyard, and then FDR’s visitors were put ashore. The yacht then headed out for the open sea and disappeared from sight.

In Washington, veteran reporters suspected that something unusual was afoot because Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles; General

George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff; and Admiral Harold R. “Betty” Stark, chief of naval operations, had all abruptly disappeared on vacations or undisclosed official business. No one in the capital outside the highest levels of the administration knew where the president was or what he was up to. “Franklin loved little mysteries of this kind,” his wife, Eleanor, said later.

At first light on Tuesday, August 5, 1941, the *Potomac* eased close to the heavy cruiser USS *Augusta* off Martha’s Vineyard, and Roosevelt was hoisted aboard. He joined Welles, Marshall, Stark, and other leading advisers for a top secret mission. The *Augusta* was the flagship of crusty Admiral Ernest J. King, commander of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

The cruiser and four escorting destroyers steamed northeastward, speeding recklessly through fog-shrouded fishing banks. The flotilla dropped anchor on Thursday, August 7, in Placentia Bay, a desolate cove on Newfoundland’s southeastern coast, near the fishing village of Argentia. Sleet began to fall, and two days of miserable weather followed.

Meanwhile, HMS *Prince of Wales*, the Royal Navy’s newest battleship, was churning westward through the heaving waters of the North Atlantic. The battleship, which had recently been refitted after her dramatic role in the pursuit of the German Navy’s dreaded battleship *Bismarck*, was carrying an important passenger—a chubby, pink, baby-faced man wearing a blue Royal Navy uniform and a peaked cap. British Prime Minister Winston Spencer Churchill was looking forward to his first meeting with the American president, an encounter they had postponed from the spring partly because of FDR’s legislative burdens and partly as a result of Churchill’s preoccupation with ill-fated military campaigns in Dakar, Greece, and Crete.

This would be the two leaders’ first face-to-face meeting, although they had corresponded congenially for two years. Both men believed that the disturbing chain of events in Europe and the Far East demanded personal discussions. The doughty prime minister was “as



President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill begin discussions aboard the battleship HMS Prince of Wales. During the Argentia Conference, they issued the Atlantic Charter.

excited as a schoolboy on the last day of the term,” according to his private secretary.

The British battlegroup maintained absolute radio silence during the trip across the Atlantic Ocean to avoid alerting German U-boats, and this gave Churchill a rare chance to relax. For 14 months since taking office, he had been burdened with problems: Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, the bombing of cities and industrial centers, military setbacks in North Africa and the Mediterranean, and the hardships borne by his people.

Churchill reported later that during the voyage he experienced “a strange sense of leisure which I had not known since the war began.” He was able to read a copy of C.S. Forester’s novel, *Captain Hornblower R.N.*, which Oliver Lyttelton, minister of state in Cairo, had given him. The former First Lord of the Admiralty found the book “vastly entertaining.”

Churchill also played backgammon with Harry Hopkins, FDR’s frail special envoy, who was returning home after conferring with Soviet Marshal Josef Stalin. Hopkins won \$32 from the prime minister. And Churchill watched films in the evenings. On the last night out, he saw Alexander Korda’s *Lady Hamilton*, starring Laurence Olivier as Lord Horatio Nelson, victor of Trafalgar, and Vivien Leigh as his mistress. It was Churchill’s favorite film, and it moved him to tears although he had already seen it four times.

Also aboard the *Prince of Wales* were Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound; General Sir John Dill, chief of the Imperial General Staff; Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent undersecretary at the Foreign Office; Lord Cherwell, the prime minister’s scientific adviser; and other staff members.

On the morning of Saturday, August 9, 1941, thick mist rose off the water and the sun broke through. HMS *Prince of Wales* slid majestically into Placentia Bay with her band playing and a Royal Marine detachment presenting arms. On the anchored American ships, seamen waved their caps and cheered. A whaleboat sped from the USS *Augusta* to the British battleship and returned with Hopkins. Shortly afterward, Churchill and his entourage set off in the admiral’s barge for the American cruiser. They climbed aboard.

The ship’s band struck up “*God Save the King*,” and the U.S. Marine detachment presented arms as Churchill walked across the main deck toward the waiting Roosevelt. Standing beneath an awning and leaning on the arm of his son, Elliott, the president extended his hand and said with a smile, “At last we’ve gotten together.”

The two leaders had approached their first encounter with mixed feelings. Both had looked forward to it, but were understandably nervous. Churchill had asked, “I wonder if he will like me,” and FDR had harbored a little envy for the prime minister’s reputation and eloquence. But, during their four days in Placentia Bay, the two men sealed a friendship and frank working relationship that opened a new phase in the historic Anglo-American alliance. There were divisions between them. Churchill was eight years older than Roosevelt and had more experience in war and world affairs. On the other hand, FDR was a head of state while Churchill was a minister.

Roosevelt was a bit peeved when he found that Churchill did not remember meeting him during World War I, when the American was assistant secretary of the Navy and the Briton was Prime Minister Lloyd George’s munitions minister. Nevertheless, FDR would tell members of his cabinet how much he liked the British leader, while Churchill formed a strong affection for “this formidable politician who had imposed his will for nearly 10 years upon the American scene, and whose heart seemed to respond to many of the impulses that stirred my own.” Eventually, as Cadogan observed, “the cigarette-in-holder and the long cigar were at last being lit from the same match.”

During their Argentia conference, the two leaders and their advisers met and talked continuously—in the mornings, afternoons, evenings, and over meals. Dill talked with Marshall, Pound with Stark, and Cadogan with Welles.

The most dramatic event of the talks came on the second day when a Sunday morning church parade service was conducted on the quarterdeck of HMS *Prince of Wales*. Flanked by their advisers and British and American sailors, Churchill and Roosevelt said prayers and sang familiar Anglican hymns. It was a stirring moment that affected all who were there.

The prime minister reported that no one who attended would forget “that sunlit morning on the crowded quarterdeck—the symbol of the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes draped side by side on the pulpit,” and “the close-packed ranks of British and American sailors, completely intermingled, sharing the same books and joining fervently in the prayers and hymns familiar to both.” Churchill had chosen the hymns—“For Those In Peril On the Sea;” “Onward, Christian Soldiers;” and “O God, Our Help in Ages Past.” He said later, “Every word seemed to stir the heart. It was a great hour to live. Nearly half of those who sang were soon to die.” HMS

Prince of Wales was sunk by Japanese aircraft off Malaya on December 10, 1941.

The conference would prove to be chiefly symbolic. Churchill and Roosevelt began to understand each other, and the chiefs of staff got to know each other. While the two leaders discussed their possible reactions to a feared German invasion of Spain and Portugal and to the threat of Japanese expansion in the Far East, the military leaders wrestled with other strategic concerns. They reached general agreement on the allocation of American defense production, agreed to send strong warnings to Tokyo against attacking British or Dutch possessions in the East Indies and Malaya, proposed a meeting in Moscow to arrange for the funneling of supplies to Russia, and accepted the proposition that the Atlantic theater was more critical to Allied security interests than the Pacific.

There were many differences of opinion, with the U.S. military leaders looking askance at Britain’s desire to protect her empire’s vulnerable position in the Mediterranean and doubting a British belief that Germany could be defeated by air power, a few armored divisions, and partisans—and without a large-scale invasion, for which the resources were not available. Hopkins briefed Churchill and FDR on his meeting with Stalin and convinced them that the Russians would hold out against the Nazi invaders. The two leaders agreed to send immediate aid to Russia “on a gigantic scale.”

Churchill tried to persuade FDR to take a strong stand against Japan, which had recently seized the southern rump of Indochina, and to agree to go to war in the Pacific if Britain were attacked there. The prime minister was anxious to obtain more Lend-Lease help, and he wanted the U.S. Navy to help escort the Atlantic convoys carrying vital war supplies to Britain.

Churchill also wanted to conclude the Argentia talks with a resounding public declaration of Anglo-American unity that would hearten his hard-pressed people, but Roosevelt was in a difficult position. He had long been aware of the aggressive postures of Germany and Japan, and he believed that helping Britain in its solitary struggle was the right and only course for neutral America. But he was plagued at home by shrill isolationist factions fearful of the country being dragged unprepared into the war, and he felt that he must avoid specific public commitments.

FDR told Churchill that he wanted to issue a statement denying that he or any of his military leaders had entered into any binding agreement with the British government that had not already been authorized by Congress. Churchill was aghast, saying that such a weak-kneed

stance would only encourage the Axis powers and would dishearten neutral countries that wanted to see some sign of America's opposition to fascism. "We also would not like it," the prime minister growled. Nevertheless, Roosevelt assured the British leader that his country would play as large a role as possible in the war against Germany.

During the conference, Churchill snatched some time to relax in congenial surroundings. At Placentia Bay, he took exercise by going ashore in his trademark siren suit, clambering over the rocks, and playfully rolling boulders down a cliff.

Eventually, the two leaders and their advisers drew up a joint, eight-point declaration that would soon become known as the Atlantic Charter. The eight points were: Britain and America would seek no new territories; no territorial changes without the consent of the people involved; the right of self-determination; free trade; joint economic development; freedom from fear and want; freedom of the seas; and abandonment of the use of force.

The charter embodied noble sentiments but would have little specific influence on the course of World War II. However, it was significant because it outlined the aims of the free peoples in the conflict and set out the reasons why the United States might go to war. Also, it had given the British and American high-level staffs an opportunity to get to know each other and to work together.

The declaration announced on August 12, 1941, the last day of the Argentia conference, was not an official state document in the accepted sense of the term. It was actually little more than a press statement issued jointly by the British and Americans and handed to the radio operators aboard their ships for transmission to shore. But Undersecretary Welles said that it was as valid in its binding effect as if it had been officially signed and sealed. It was "notice to the world by the president of the United States and the prime minister of the United Kingdom that ... the two nations which they represented would adhere to the great principles set forth in the declaration."

The participants did not know it at the time, but their conference was the precursor of subsequent high-level meetings during the war, while their joint statement would ultimately serve as the cornerstone for what would become the United Nations.

There were mixed reactions to the Atlantic Charter. Many Britons, hoping for a clear-cut American commitment to enter the war, were disappointed. Future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles agreed: "Unless we propose con-

crete measures, statements of good intentions will be looked upon with grave and warranted skepticism." The charter was dismissed in Berlin as "insipid chitchat," while a semi-official news agency in Tokyo accused Britain and America of a "tricky plot" to dominate the



Arriving aboard the battleship HMS Prince of Wales, President Franklin D. Roosevelt is set to begin the historic Argentia Conference with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

world. The isolationist *Chicago Tribune* criticized "the pretentious and meaningless eight points," but *The New York Times* declared perceptively, "This is the end of isolationism. It is the beginning of a new era in which the United States assumes the responsibilities which fall naturally to a great power."

After the conference, President Roosevelt sailed back to Maine on the USS *Augusta* and then took a train to Washington. When waiting reporters asked him if he thought America was now any closer to war, FDR replied that he did not think so.

Impressed with the ebullient Churchill and encouraged by the harmony and spirit of the conference, Roosevelt tried to cast the charter in a favorable light before his citizens. At a news conference, he quoted a letter from Justice Felix Frankfurter: "We live by symbols, and you two in that ocean ... in the setting of that Sunday service, gave meaning to the conflict between civilization and arrogant, brute challenge; and gave promise more powerful and binding than any formal treaty could, that civilization has brains and resources that tyranny will not be able to overcome."

FDR returned to Washington determined to stoke up the nation's defense program. He dispatched the capable, diplomatic Averell Harriman to Moscow to join Lord Beaverbrook, the British production minister, in coordinating aid to Russia; expanded the U.S. military mission to China; and ordered a sweeping reorganiza-

tion of the American preparedness program. The president stated, "I give solemn warning to those who think that Hitler has been blocked and halted that they are making a very dangerous assumption."

An opinion poll taken immediately after the Argentia conference showed that 74 percent of Americans opposed direct involvement in the war. Whether they liked it or not, the direction of U.S. policy had been set. The chief executive knew that his country would not survive long in a world dominated by the Axis powers and had determined that it should join hands with the British Empire and ultimately defeat Nazi Germany. Many Americans voiced the uneasy feeling that time was running out for them.

Churchill left Placentia Bay with the clear impression that Roosevelt would bring his country into the war. FDR had committed the Navy to taking over the America-to-Iceland leg of all convoy runs, and the prime minister believed that the president "would wage war but not declare it." Nevertheless, Churchill could not help feeling apprehensive about the future. As he would cable presidential envoy Hopkins later that month, "I don't know what will happen if England is fighting alone when 1942 comes."

Meanwhile, the prime minister returned home aboard the *Prince of Wales*. The battleship encountered a convoy of 72 ships in several columns, steaming at about seven knots. According to Cadogan, it was "a beautiful and inspiring sight ... the forest of funnels looked almost like a town." Churchill stopped off in Iceland to review British troops and the U.S. Marine garrison, and the playing of the rousing Marine Hymn moved him to tears. He received a warm welcome from the people of Reykjavik, whose hot springs Churchill—who loved to take baths—greatly admired.

The Atlantic Charter was signed at ceremonies in London and Washington on September 24, 1941. The 15 signatory governments included Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, the nations of the British Empire, and many exiled European governments. On January 1, 1942, the first step was taken toward the establishment of the United Nations when delegates from 26 countries gathered in the American capital to endorse the principles of the Atlantic Charter. They agreed to mobilize all their resources against the Axis powers and to make no separate peace. □

Michael D. Hull is a frequent contributor to WWII History. He has written extensively on the political aspects of the war and resides in Enfield, Connecticut.

The Curtiss P-40 Warhawk helped the Allies hold back the Japanese.

BY SAM MCGOWAN



Robert T. Smith, a member of Claire Chennault's American Volunteer Group, flies his P-40C against the Japanese in China. Painting by Jack Fellows.

DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN WORLD WAR II, THE CURTISS P-40 Warhawk (Kittyhawk or Tomahawk to the British) came to symbolize the United States Army Air Corps as it fought a desperate war to hold the Japanese in check. This was thanks in large measure to the highly publicized exploits of

the American Volunteer Group during the first six months of the war and of their successors in the 23rd Fighter Group in China. Although the P-40 lacked the performance of the twin-engine

Lockheed P-38 Lightning and Republic's radial engine P-47 Thunderbolt, it—along with the Bell P-39 Airacobra—was one of two types of pursuit planes that were available in large numbers at the outbreak of war and the only ones immediately available for service in the Pacific.

Several squadrons of P-40s were sent to the Philippines in the months prior to Pearl Harbor as the United States decided to beef up its military presence there in response to Japanese aggression in Asia, and more were on their way when the Japanese struck. In mid-1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the shipment of enough P-40s to equip four squadrons in China. American and Australian pilots fighting against nearly overwhelming odds in P-39s and P-40s would symbolize Allied determina-

tion in the China-Burma-India Theater in the dark, early days of the war.

Curtiss Aircraft Company developed the P-40 as part of its Hawk line of fighters, which began with retractable-gear biplane pursuit ships that served in Army Air Corps squadrons in the 1930s. Its immediate predecessor was the P-36, a monoplane that featured the R-1830 radial engine. To create the Warhawk, Curtiss adapted the Allison V-1710 liquid-cooled inline engine to the P-36 fuselage. The narrow frontage presented by the Allison significantly reduced drag and greatly improved the original design's performance.

The P-40, as it was originally designed, was poorly armed, with only two machine guns mounted on top of the nose, but the armament

was increased with subsequent versions and most combat models of the P-40 carried six .50-caliber machine guns. Hard points were added under the wings for bombs and rockets, turning the Warhawk into a potent ground attack airplane.

Both the P-40 and the smaller P-39 were products of 1930s U.S. military policy, which called for defending the coasts. Consequently, both designs were intended primarily to support ground troops. Little consideration had been given to interception of enemy aircraft, since the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans provided the best defenses against attack from either Europe or Asia. There were no aircraft in existence in the 1930s with the range to make a transoceanic attack on the United States. Although naval aviation was coming into prominence, neither Germany nor Japan was considered capable of mounting a carrier-borne attack on the United States or even Hawaii.

The threat the Army sought to defend against was an amphibious assault from the sea, and both fighters were designed with that in mind. It was not until war broke out in Europe and the bomber became a preeminent weapon that

aerial interception came to be seen as an important Air Corps mission.

The low altitude operations required for ground support placed aircraft in range of everything from small arms to heavy anti-aircraft fire, so the P-39 and P-40 were designed to absorb ground fire and keep on flying. These qualities would prove beneficial in the ground attack role, but both airplanes were severely lacking as interceptors due to their lack of high-altitude performance capabilities.

The P-39 was a nimble aircraft that could hold its own with Japanese fighters at lower altitudes, but the heavier P-40 was considerably less maneuverable. But, while they were lacking in climb and high-altitude performance, both types were rugged airplanes and would prompt the admiration of those who flew them into combat in the Pacific. General George C. Kenney would report that both designs could "slug it out, absorb gunfire, and fly home."

In the spring of 1941, the United States began a buildup of forces in the Philippine Islands as the War Department modified its Rainbow No. 5 war plan. Previous military plans had called for U.S. forces to withdraw to a line from Alaska to Hawaii, but Japanese aggression in Asia dictated modifications. Under the new plan, the Philippines would serve as a strategic base for attacks on Japanese positions threatening the oil fields in the Netherlands East Indies. In the event of an invasion of the islands, the defending U.S. and Filipino forces were to withdraw to the Bataan Peninsula and wait for reinforcements to arrive from the United States.

Modernization of the Air Corps in the Philippines was crucial to defense of the islands, and in May the first P-40Bs arrived in the islands and were assigned to the 20th Pursuit Squadron, replacing older types. The 3rd Pursuit Squadron was also equipped with P-40s, while the 17th Pursuit Squadron continued flying de Seversky P-35s for the time being. The Philippines Air Force received the antiquated Boeing P-26s that had previously served with U.S. Army Air Corps squadrons in the islands.

The three Army Air Corps fighter squadrons, the first in the Philippines, were organized into the 24th Pursuit Group in August 1941. They were joined by two squadrons of the 35th Pursuit Group, the 21st and 34th Pursuit Squadrons, in November. The 35th Group headquarters was still at sea when the Japanese attack came and never reached Manila; the ship carrying the headquarters was diverted to Australia, where the 35th would reform.

The two later squadrons were equipped with more modern P-40Es, but the 34th Squadron's airplanes were given to the 17th Pursuit; the 34th



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received the P-35s the 17th Pursuit Squadron had been flying. Additional P-40s were en route to the islands by sea to replace the P-35s. The 20th Pursuit had received P-40Es by the end of November. The Hawaiian Air Force on Oahu also included several P-40 squadrons. The 15th Pursuit Group at Wheeler Field was equipped with P-40s, as was the 18th Pursuit at Hickam Field. Other P-40 squadrons were deployed to Alaska and the Panama Canal Zone.

A stroke of luck put four squadrons of P-40s with experienced and well-trained American pilots in China before war broke out. Captain Claire Chennault had gone to China in 1937 after his retirement from the Army to take a position as a civilian advisor to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Chinese government. At the time of his retirement, Chennault was not only one of the most experienced and skilled fighter pilots in the Air Corps, but he was an outstanding tactician who knew how to use the best qualities of the aircraft under his command.

Over the next four years, Chennault experienced Japanese aggression firsthand and became an expert on enemy tactics. Even more important, he conceived tactics to challenge the Japanese. Experiments with mercenary pilots from Europe had proven nearly fruitless. As it was, in 1941 China still lay practically defenseless against Japanese air attack. The Chinese government appealed to the United States for help. T.V. Soong, the brother-in-law of Chiang Kai-shek, lobbied in the United States on behalf of China. His requests included American-built bombers and fighters to augment the Chinese Air Force, as well as American pilots to fly them in combat.

During a visit to the United States, Chennault managed to convince President Roosevelt to authorize what would later be known as a covert military operation, including the recruitment of experienced U.S. Army, Marine, and Navy fighter pilots for duty in China. The young officers were "sheep-dipped," meaning they were officially discharged from the service to which they were assigned and allowed to contract with Chennault's American Volunteer Group as civilians. While they had been officially discharged from their respective services, the volunteers were led to believe that they could return to them when their contracts in China were up.

Although the men of the AVG did not consider themselves to be mercenaries, nevertheless, that is what they were. Another part of the

deal was the supply of enough P-40s to equip four squadrons. The initial batch of 100 airplanes came from a consignment that was supposed to have gone to Sweden.

The Japanese attack on Hickam Field on December 7, 1941, nearly wiped out the 18th Pursuit Group. General Walter Short, the senior Army officer in Hawaii, believed that the greatest threat to the Army fighters was sabotage, and he ordered that the Army aircraft be parked close together so they could be more easily guarded. No one in Washington or Honolulu considered a carrier-borne aerial attack to be a significant threat.

The Japanese attack caught the U.S. military in Hawaii completely by surprise, and Hickam was hit especially hard. Only two of the group's P-40s managed to get off the ground, and both were promptly shot down. Wheeler Field fell under Japanese attack, but four P-40s and two P-36s managed to become airborne. Japanese planes failed to strike the small field at Haleiwa, where the 47th Pursuit Squadron was based. Six squadron pilots, Lieutenants Harry M. Brown, Robert J. Rogers, Kenneth A. Taylor, John J. Webster, and George S. Welch drove to the airfield, took off in P-40s and P-36s, and headed out to meet the Japanese. The small group of fighter pilots managed to inflict appreciable damage on the attacking force. Welch

alone claimed four Japanese planes shot down.

Although many historians have written over the years that the Air Corps in the Philippines was caught on the ground and wiped out on the first day of the war, this assertion is more myth than reality. In fact, the American and Filipino fighter squadrons had been on alert for weeks, and fighters were in the air over the Philippines long before the first Japanese aircraft appeared overhead. The pilots stood by their airplanes, even sleeping on the wings.

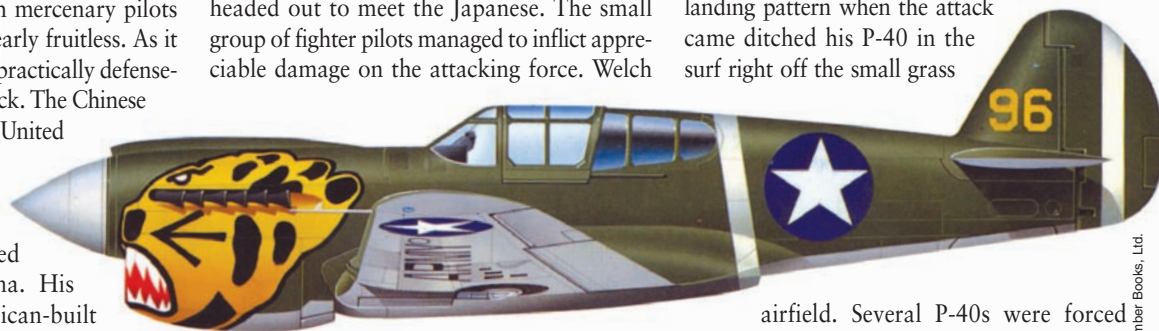
As soon as word of the attack on Pearl Harbor reached Manila, fighters were ordered aloft on combat air patrols. The 3rd Fighter Squadron at Iba went out during the early morning hours in an attempted intercept of a large Japanese formation that had been detected by the Iba radar site. Even though radar showed the P-40s intercepting the formation, they were apparently beneath them

and were unable to see the Japanese bombers in the darkness. There is some confusion over the identity of these unidentified aircraft.

Later in the day, the Japanese 11th Air Fleet bombers and fighters that struck Clark Field, and apparently Iba as well, were kept on the ground by fog on Formosa, but Japanese Army bombers were in the air. At least two attacks were made on cities on Northern Luzon, and P-40s from Nichols Field were sent up to intercept them. In the late morning, the Iba radar site picked up another large Japanese formation over the China Sea, and the 3rd Pursuit was launched to defend the base. By the time the Japanese actually reached the Philippines, the P-40s were running low on fuel. One flight was preparing to land at Iba when Japanese fighters came in to strafe the field.

The P-40 pilots pulled up their wheels and turned into the Japanese, breaking up the strafing attack. Unfortunately, bombs dropped by high-level bombers did tremendous damage to the base, including the destruction of the radar site, but the airplanes were all aloft and were not hit by the bombs. None of the P-40s were destroyed in the attack.

One pilot who had been in the landing pattern when the attack came ditched his P-40 in the surf right off the small grass



airfield. Several P-40s were forced down when their new engines seized. The airplanes had just arrived in the Philippines, and there had been no time to break the engines in before they were engaged in combat. The inability to slow-time engines on newly assembled P-40s would be a major factor in the defeat of the Army Air Corps in the Philippines.

The Japanese got really lucky at Clark Field. The 20th Pursuit Squadron had been sent north to search for the Japanese bombers that appeared over Northern Luzon in the morning, and when their fuel ran low they diverted to Clark. As the P-40s were refueled, they taxied out in flights to return to the air, but only one flight of four, led by squadron commander Lieutenant Joe Moore, was airborne before the attack came.

The Japanese bomb pattern ran right across the ramp where the P-40s were being serviced, and the remaining 14 fighters were wiped out. Moore and his wingmen took on the Japanese

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ABOVE: Providing aircover for troops landing at Rendova, a P-40 Tomahawk fighter sweeps low over the invasion beach. **OPPOSITE:** More than 2,300 of the P-40E were built before and during World War II. This particular aircraft is painted with the nose art of an Aleutian Tiger.

attackers. Lieutenant Randall Keator was the first to score, thus becoming the first American fighter pilot in the Pacific Theater to shoot down a Japanese plane. Moore shot down two fighters, and other P-40 pilots, including a flight from the 3rd Pursuit at Iba that was in the vicinity of Clark, also managed to get in their licks. P-36 pilots also claimed several hits on Japanese aircraft.

The near destruction of the U.S. Army Air Corps in the Philippines on December 8 led to the myth of Japanese aircraft superiority in the early days of the war, a myth that prevails today. The Japanese fighters were very light in weight compared to the American P-40s and were thus more effective at higher altitudes. At lower altitudes, the P-40s were able to hold their own, and if a P-40 pilot managed to hit a Japanese fighter, it would probably go down. The reverse was not true. The rugged P-40s could absorb tremendous amounts of fire and still keep flying.

While the Japanese fighters were extremely agile, they were not invincible. Had the U.S. air units in the Philippines been properly trained and equipped, the Japanese would have had a very difficult time gaining control of the air.

Engine failure accounted for more P-40s lost in the Philippines than enemy fire. Limited fuel capacity was another problem. Many pilots were forced to bail out or crash-land due to fuel exhaustion, particularly on December 10 when the Japanese raided Manila and a huge dog-fight ensued.

Quite a few P-40s were also lost in takeoff and landing accidents that were a direct result of inexperience. Most of the young pilots in the Philippines were fresh aviation cadets and had

little practical flying experience in the high-performance fighters to which they had been assigned. Several of the experienced fighter pilots achieved spectacular results against the Japanese, usually fighting against vastly superior forces.

There were bright spots in those opening weeks of the war as P-40 pilots performed spectacular feats of heroism. After the huge battle on December 10, the Far East Air Forces fighter force had been so reduced that fighter commander General Harold George decided to hold the P-40s for ground attack missions instead of sending them out on interceptions.

Pilots such as Boyd Wagner, Grant Mahony, and William Dyess were especially aggressive. Mahony carried out a particularly daring attack on a Japanese radio station and airfield at Legaspi. A few days later he was evacuated to Australia, where he was put in charge of training recently arrived pilots. Mahony would eventually go to India and then to China, returning to the Philippines in the final year of the war. Ironically, he died in combat in the Philippines while flying a P-38.

Wagner was a highly skilled pilot and aeronautical engineer who quickly grasped the deficiencies of the Japanese fighters. He became the first American ace of the war and was also evacuated to the Philippines. He took command of a P-39 squadron and moved north to Port Moresby in Papua, New Guinea, in mid-1942. Dyess remained on Bataan and became a POW. He led the last significant American air attack before the surrender of Bataan when he and three other P-40 pilots bombed Japanese ships in Subic Bay.

Dyess fell into Japanese hands when the

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forces on Bataan surrendered and remained a POW for several months until he managed to escape and make his way to Australia. Other pilots performed particularly heroic acts, including Lieutenant Russell Church, who stayed in his burning P-40 and strafed a row of Japanese fighters parked at the airfield at Vigan, instead of pulling up after his airplane was hit to gain enough altitude to bail out.

It is almost unbelievable, but P-40s continued the fight in the Philippines right up to the final Japanese victory at Mindanao. Several P-40s were flown out of Bataan to Mindanao, while three were safely delivered by ship to Cebu in the southern Philippines. They were reassembled and flown to Mindanao before the Japanese occupied Cebu. One of their last actions was escorting American bombers that had flown up from Darwin, Australia, in April for offensive actions against Japanese installations at Davao and Cebu.

When it became apparent that the Japanese would capture Del Monte Field, as many of the pursuit pilots as possible were evacuated to Australia to join their comrades. They were to serve as a nucleus for the Fifth Air Force fighter squadrons that would gain air superiority in the Southwest Pacific.

On December 20, 1941, President Roosevelt

decided to leave the Philippines to its own fate, and the War Department ordered the headquarters of the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) to Australia. Personnel arriving in Australia discovered a force in disarray, with no organization and little military discipline at all. In late December, Captain Paul I. Gunn, a former U.S. Navy enlisted aviator who was living in the Philippines when the war broke out, was ordered to fly a load of FEAF staff members to Australia and to remain there. Gunn, whose family was still in the Philippines, was appalled by what he saw and immediately took it upon himself to get things going. Gunn knew that a contingent of fighter pilots had just arrived in Australia from the Philippines, and he proceeded to organize a fighter squadron. Men and airplanes were organized into a new 17th Pursuit Squadron (Provisional), an appropriate designation since a dozen of the pilots had been in the original 17th Pursuit in the Philippines.

When the 17 fighters had been assembled, Gunn led them north to Darwin in his personal Beechcraft transport. Two P-40s were lost to accidents during the trip north. The pilots—most of whom had come out of the Philippines—thought they were on their way back to help their buddies at Bataan, but when they

reached Darwin they learned that they were going to Java instead.

A total of 39 P-40s reached Java, but only six were still flying when the 17th Pursuit was told to turn its remaining airplanes over to the Dutch and prepare for evacuation to Australia. The Dutch never got the P-40s into operation. They were destroyed by a Japanese strafing attack shortly after the Americans left. A large number of P-40s were lost when the ships they were on were sunk before they reached Java.

The one bright spot for the Allies during the early months of the war was the spectacular number of Japanese aircraft shot down by Chennault's American Volunteer Group in China, which became the stuff of legend and earned the nickname of the Flying Tigers.

Before sending the AVG pilots up against the Japanese, Chennault, who was one of the most skilled fighter pilots in the world, put them through an extensive training program. He taught them tactics that he had developed based on his knowledge of the capabilities and methods used by the Japanese. The AVG went into action on December 20, 1941, intercepting a formation of Japanese bombers on the way to Kunming and breaking up the enemy formation. Three days later, other AVG P-40s



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inflicted heavy losses on Japanese aircraft attacking Rangoon.

Chennault knew the limitations of the P-40s, and he taught his pilots to take advantage of the airplane's superior diving and level-flight speeds. The two-ship element was the key to the AVG's success, and the American pilots operated their Warhawks using hit-and-run tactics, knowing that if they tried to fight the Japanese on the enemy's terms, they would come out on the losing side.

In some ways, the AVG pilots were fighting a losing battle since the Japanese were gaining the upper hand in Burma and were advancing in China. Since the United States was now officially in the war, the War Department made plans to bring the AVG into the Army Air Corps, with the idea that they would form the a nucleus for an air force in China.

Most of the AVG pilots had other plans, however, and only a handful agreed to remain in China with the U.S. Army. Some preferred to retain their civilian status as pilots for China National Airways, a civilian airline connected to Pan American. Many of the AVG pilots had come from the Navy or Marine Corps, and they



A P-40 of the legendary Flying Tigers prepares for takeoff from an airfield in a remote part of China.

National Archives

wanted to return to their former services, while some of the former Army pilots were just plain mad at the new Tenth Air Force apparatus in India and wanted no part of it. The AVG contracts were due to expire on July 4, 1942, and in the interim the pilots continued to fly and fight as civilian contractors.

War Department plans called for the creation of a full pursuit group in China. The new group was the 23rd Fighter Group (the pursuit designation was changed to fighter in mid-1942), with Colonel Robert L. Scott as the commander. A few former AVG pilots and more mechanics and other support personnel elected

to accept induction into the 23rd, and they and their P-40s would serve the main Allied air effort in China. The P-40 would be the principal fighter in the CBI until 1944.

After the defeat in Java, the Far East Air Forces in Australia began building up a force to oppose the Japanese. Although more than 300 P-40s had arrived in Australia by the end of March, heavy losses, particularly when the carrier *Langley* was sunk with a load of P-40s being ferried

to Java aboard, followed by the subsequent abandonment of a shipment carried aboard the freighter *Sea Witch*, had reduced their numbers to less than 100. The 49th Fighter Group arrived in early February, but its pilots were not considered ready for combat.

With the defeat of the Allies in Java, Japanese air forces in the Netherlands East Indies were within range of Australia's northern coastal cities. Darwin fell under frequent air attack, and the P-40-equipped 49th Fighter Group was sent there to defend the city while the 8th and 35th Groups, both of which were equipped with Bell P-39s and P-400s, were

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charged with defending Papua, New Guinea. The P-40 was an export version of the P-39 that had been originally built for the British.

The young fighter pilots in Australia learned the P-40's limitations and advantages, and like the AVG in China, used the knowledge successfully against the Japanese. Just how effective the P-40s could be was demonstrated on August 23, 1942, when 49th Group pilots shot down 15 Japanese bombers and fighters. Between April and August, the 49th Group shot down more than 60 Japanese planes and gained air superiority in the skies over Darwin. Captain Andrew Reynolds of the 9th Fighter Squadron was the top-scoring Far East Air Forces ace at the time, with 10 enemy airplanes to his credit. With Darwin out of danger, the 49th Fighter Group moved north to New Guinea. By the end of the year the group had begun replacing its P-40s with twin-engine Lockheed P-38s.

Due in part to a shortage of American pilots, several Royal Australian Air Force fighter squadrons were given P-40s, which they dubbed Kittyhawks. The Aussie fighter pilots were courageous and inspired by their role of defending their homeland from Japanese aggression. The P-40 was vastly superior to their locally produced Commonwealth Wirraway.

Although British Hawker Hurricanes and Supermarine Spitfires would eventually be sent to Australia, the P-40 would become the primary RAAF fighter. Australian P-40s played a significant role in the Battle of Milne Bay, a decisive battle that forced the Japanese to abandon plans to capture Port Moresby. A squadron of RAAF P-40s operated out of the airfield at Milne Bay, attacking the Japanese landing party with bombs and machine-gun fire. Australian squadrons continued flying P-40s until late in the war.

Like other prewar designs, the Warhawk was produced for export. The British designated theirs as Tomahawks or Kittyhawks, depending on which version they were. RAF Kittyhawks and Tomahawks served primarily with the Desert Air Force in North Africa. Since the RAF's Hurricanes and Spitfires were better suited for interceptor duty, their P-40s were used primarily in support of ground forces. During the late summer of 1942, U.S. Army Air Forces P-40s arrived in the Mediterranean with the 57th Fighter Group, which began training with the RAF in Palestine. The group entered combat in North Africa with the Ninth Air Force and fought in the battle of El Alamein. The 79th and 324th Fighter Groups also flew P-40s with the Ninth Air Force.



The lead plane in this formation of P-40 Tomahawks wings over to attack a formation of enemy planes. The Flying Tigers scored an impressive kill ratio against veteran Japanese pilots.

National Archives

The 33rd Fighter Group was selected for duty in North Africa with Twelfth Air Force in September 1942, less than 60 days before the planned date for Operation Torch, the invasion of French North Africa. To expedite their arrival, the group's P-40s were loaded aboard the escort carrier USS *Chenango*. As Lt. Col. William W. Momyer led his group off the carrier on November 10, word reached the vessel that the airfield at Port Lyautey was secure.

Although the launchings themselves went off with few problems, the deliveries were a disaster. One P-40 crashed into the sea, another flew off into a fog bank and disappeared, and 17 were damaged in landing accidents. Even though nearly a year had passed since the disaster in the Philippines, inexperienced American fighter pilots still found the P-40 difficult to land. None of the 33rd Group's P-40s got into action during the invasion. The landing problems put a halt to the launchings, and the remainder of the 77 Warhawks did not leave the carrier until two days later.

An additional 35 airplanes arrived off Morocco on the British carrier *Archer* to reinforce the 33rd Group. Four of those airplanes were also lost when their inexperienced pilots cracked them up on landing. The 33rd saw intense action in the North African Campaign and suffered so many losses that by February 1943 the group had so few airplanes and pilots that it had to be relieved. The 325th Fighter Group, which was supposed to go to Ninth Air Force in the Middle East, was diverted to Twelfth Air Force and arrived in North Africa in February.

One of the most spectacular events of the North African Campaign occurred on April 18, 1943, when four squadrons of P-40s from the 57th and 324th Fighter Groups escorted by Spitfires intercepted a large formation of German transports as they were returning from an aerial resupply mission for the Afrika Korps in Tunisia. Although the transports were hugging the sea, the P-40s spotted them and went in for the kill. The battle became famous as the Palm Sunday Massacre. The P-40s put in claims for

100 tri-motored Junkers Ju-52 transport planes as well as 16 of their escorts. Allied losses amounted to six P-40s and a single Spitfire from the top cover.

The action continued the following day when 12 more transports were shot down. The successful interception effectively ended German efforts to resupply and reinforce the Afrika Korps in North Africa and hastened its eventual surrender to the superior Allied forces.

After the successful defense of Darwin, Fifth Air Force P-40s moved north to New Guinea and assumed the ground attack role, supplementing the converted Douglas A-20 Havoc gunships and P-39s which had borne the brunt of the low-altitude attack role in New Guinea in mid-1942. Similarly, attacks on ground targets were a major mission for the P-40s of the China Air Task Force, the forward element of the Tenth Air Force commanded by Chennault in China. The CATF became the Fourteenth Air Force in the spring of 1943.

In the spring of 1944, the Allies went on the offensive in the CBI as British Brigadier Orde Wingate's Chindit force prepared to penetrate Japanese defenses in Burma. Almost simultaneously, the Japanese launched an offensive into India's Arakam Valley, in which many of the Allied air bases were located. The emergency created by the Japanese offensive led to the movement of several American air units from the Mediterranean to India, including the 33rd and 81st Fighter Groups. The 33rd was already equipped with P-40s, and the 81st equipped with them when it arrived in the CBI. Both groups eventually moved to China and joined Fourteenth Air Force.

By 1944, more capable fighters, such as the P-38 Lightning, P-47 Thunderbolt, and the North American P-51 Mustang, were becoming available. As they did, they replaced the older P-39s and P-40s in the veteran American squadrons. As the American squadrons converted, their P-40s often went to Allied squadrons serving in the same theaters. Several squadrons of the Royal Australian and Royal New Zealand Air Forces equipped with P-40s as the American squadrons were converting to P-38s in the Southwest Pacific.

By 1945, the role of the P-40 had diminished, but veterans of the Pacific War knew that without them, it was unlikely that the Allies would have been able to hold back the Japanese during the dark early days of the war. □

Sam McGowan is the author of The Cave, a novel of the Vietnam War. He has also written extensively on the subjects of aircraft and air transport during World War II.



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The espionage activities of the Cambridge spies resulted in a wealth of intelligence for the Soviets.

BY PETER KROSS

IN THE MODERN ERA, THE MAJORITY OF THOSE ACCUSED OF SPYING HAVE DONE SO FOR MONETARY purposes—the quick acquisition of wealth as opposed to ideological or philosophical reasons. However, that was not the case with what is credited as being the most important espionage ring to operate before, during, and after World War II.

The so-called Cambridge Spy Ring, composed of a group of highly educated and idealistic British students at Cambridge University in England, wreaked havoc right under the noses of British intelligence from the early 1930s to the 1960s. The principals involved in the ring were Guy Burgess, Anthony Blunt, Donald Maclean, Harold Adrian “Kim” Philby, and John Cairncross. While they did not work in a cohesive group, the Cambridge Five collectively were responsible for subverting British intelligence, causing the deaths of countless men and women, and disrupting British and American

covert operations in a systematic fashion.

The genesis of the Cambridge Five originated in the Depression era when the fate of democratically elected governments in the West was in jeopardy. Mass unemployment in both Europe and the United States brought into doubt the very fabric of democracy and led like-minded people to view fascism and other political ideologies as a new alternative.

During this time, the Soviet intelligence agency, the NKVD (predecessor to the KGB), decided to recruit bright, vulnerable young men at Cambridge University into its covert ranks. The primary objective of the NKVD was to infiltrate MI-5, the domestic branch of British intelligence, and MI-6, the counterintelligence office, which is roughly the equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States.

The NKVD targeted talented men who would be pushed to enter Britain’s foreign and intelligence services. The Russian recruiters looked for particular men who were not members of the Communist Party but who were sufficiently influenced by Marxist philosophy.

The members of the Cambridge Spy Ring, Burgess, Blunt, Maclean, Philby, and Cairncross, were nothing like a monolithic group. Their main link was that they all believed in Marxist dogma and were amenable to Soviet recruitment. Of the four, Burgess and Maclean were known homosexuals. Philby was heterosexual, married a number of times, an accomplished writer, and a world traveler. Blunt was a well-known art historian and an art adviser to Queen Elizabeth II. Cairncross was the last of the group to be identified and was known as the “Fifth Man” in the Cambridge pecking order.

Into the Cambridge mix, the Soviet Union sent two of its most trusted agents, Arnold Deutsch, an Austrian, and Theodore Maly, a Hungarian, to find suitable recruits. In their recruiting pitch, the pair never mentioned that the potential agents were going to work for the NKVD. Rather, the recruits were asked to devote their energies to working for the Comintern, the international communist organization.

Maly chose Donald Maclean as his prime candidate and persuaded him to try out for the British Foreign Service rather than pursuing the teaching career he once considered. In later years, when Maclean was posted to London, he would report to a new controller, Anatoli Gromov, who was the KGB resident at the Soviet embassy in London. During his career, Maclean served in the government of British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and was later



German soldiers decode messages using their Enigma machine. Soviet secret agent Kim Philby, one of the Cambridge Spies, notified the Kremlin that Allied cryptanalysis in the West had compromised the encoding cipher system used by the Germans.

posted to the British embassy in Washington from 1944 to 1948.

During this time, Maclean was able to pass on to the Soviets information concerning the private communications between Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt and, later on, Churchill and President Harry Truman. He also provided the Soviets with information on the top-secret Manhattan Project, which led to the development of the atomic bomb by the United States. As the British representative on the American-British-Canadian council on the sharing of atomic secrets, Maclean gave the Russians information that paved the way for the development of the Soviet Union's first atomic bomb.

Maclean and Burgess had an ongoing homosexual affair while at Cambridge. Maclean was also an alcoholic. Combined, the two traits could have left both men liable to blackmail and to being coerced into becoming double agents by the British if their treachery was ever discovered. Why the Russians chose men like Burgess and Maclean is hard to fathom.

Believing that Washington, D.C., was an unsafe environment in which to operate due to increased FBI surveillance, Maclean moved to New York where he made numerous trips to pass along the information he collected. Maclean

was given the code name "Homer" and eventually proved to be the weak link in the chain.

In 1951, U.S. intelligence broke certain Russian diplomatic codes and deciphered messages, which revealed a top-ranking Soviet mole inside British intelligence. Upon narrowing down a long list of candidates, it was deduced that Maclean was indeed Homer. Philby, who was the liaison between British intelligence and the CIA, warned Maclean about this potentially disastrous news. In May 1951, both Maclean and Burgess defected to the Soviet Union.

Anthony Blunt's name is not as recognizable as those of the other members of the Cambridge Five, but he played just as destructive a role as his peers. He was an intellectual, schooled at both Marlborough College and Trinity College, Cambridge, a master of modern languages, a firm believer in communist doctrine, and the son of an Anglican vicar. At Cambridge, Blunt joined a secret intellectual group called the Society of the Apostles, which had been founded in 1820 by an evangelical Christian group. Burgess was also a member of the Apostles. At Cambridge, his left-leaning, pro-communist philosophy made him an eager recruit for the Soviet Union, to whom he soon pledged his allegiance.

In 1932, Blunt began working actively for the Soviet Union and was instrumental in

recruiting an American named Michael Straight into the Russian secret service. How Blunt became involved with the Soviet Union is ripe for controversy, but in later years he said that the members of his Cambridge society were recruited independently of the others. He said that his recruitment by Burgess was supervised by a Russian controller known only as "Otto."

When Britain entered World War II, Blunt was able to join the Army despite the fact that the military knew about his communist dealings while at Cambridge. They decided to look the other way, and in time he joined MI-5. At one point during the war, Blunt served as a captain in the 18th Section of the Field Security Police. In 1940, he got his first taste of intelligence work when he was appointed to the D Division, headed by Brigadier I.H. Allen. The D Division worked on information pertaining to what were nebulously termed "general security problems." What little secret information Blunt had access to, he delivered to his Soviet controllers without being caught. In 1944, Blunt was transferred to a new and highly important posting at SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) from which he provided the Russians with top-secret information pertaining to the pending d-Day invasion of Europe slated for the summer of 1944.

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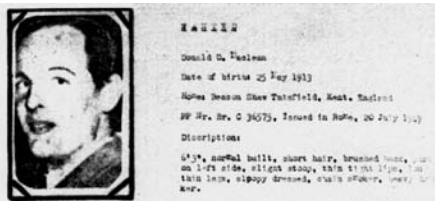
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and handling

After the war, Blunt began a prestigious career in the world of art, becoming curator of the Courtauld Institute of Art. Later, he was the art adviser to Queen Elizabeth. During the postwar years, Blunt was dropped from active service by the KGB, his true identity as a double agent hidden from the world.

Blunt's true role as a member of the Cambridge Spy Ring was finally unearthed in 1964 when he privately admitted to British authorities the extent of his wartime activities. To avoid a national scandal, the British government granted him immunity from prosecution in return for his testimony regarding his role as a Russian spy. In 1979, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told a startled public about Anthony Blunt's secret life. In the lore of the Cambridge Five, Blunt is now known as the "Fourth Man." He died in 1983.

Guy Burgess came from a naval family, attended Eaton, and then, after a hushed-up homosexual scandal, arrived at Cambridge to continue his studies. He studied history and met the other members of the ring that would prove so disastrous to the English cause. Like his secret colleagues, he was first recruited by Russian agents while at Cambridge. At the beginning of his service to Moscow, he made a trip to the Soviet Union where he drank excessively



TOP: Kim Philby (left) and Guy Burgess.
ABOVE: A "Wanted" poster issued by the F.B.I. in 1951 for Donald Maclean.

Air National Archives

and was even arrested by the local police.

After graduation, Burgess got a job as a broadcaster with the British Broadcasting Corporation. It was during his work for the BBC that he was first approached by British intelligence to work undercover for Her Majesty's government.

In 1939, the year that England entered World War II, Burgess actively went to work for MI-

6 in an office that handled propaganda and subversion. Part of his job was to keep watch on the White Russian community in England. He also passed on to his Soviet bosses the private correspondence of then Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. He also began to work for the super-secret British spy agency SOE (Special Operations Executive). He scored his most successful coup when he recruited Kim Philby, his pal from Cambridge days, into British intelligence.

In 1944, Burgess joined the Foreign Office with responsibility for handling news broadcasts. For six years he sent a treasure trove of information to Moscow, while deciding what news to pass along to the British people. Burgess was in a unique position inside the British government and played the game of espionage for all it was worth. He had secret access to intelligence officials in the German Embassy in London and was in a position to tell his Soviet handlers that Prime Minister Chamberlain's government "was directed more against the Soviet Union than the Third Reich," and "the broad intention is to work with Germany wherever possible and ultimately against the USSR."

When the British government transferred Philby to Washington after the war, Burgess

Continued on page 78

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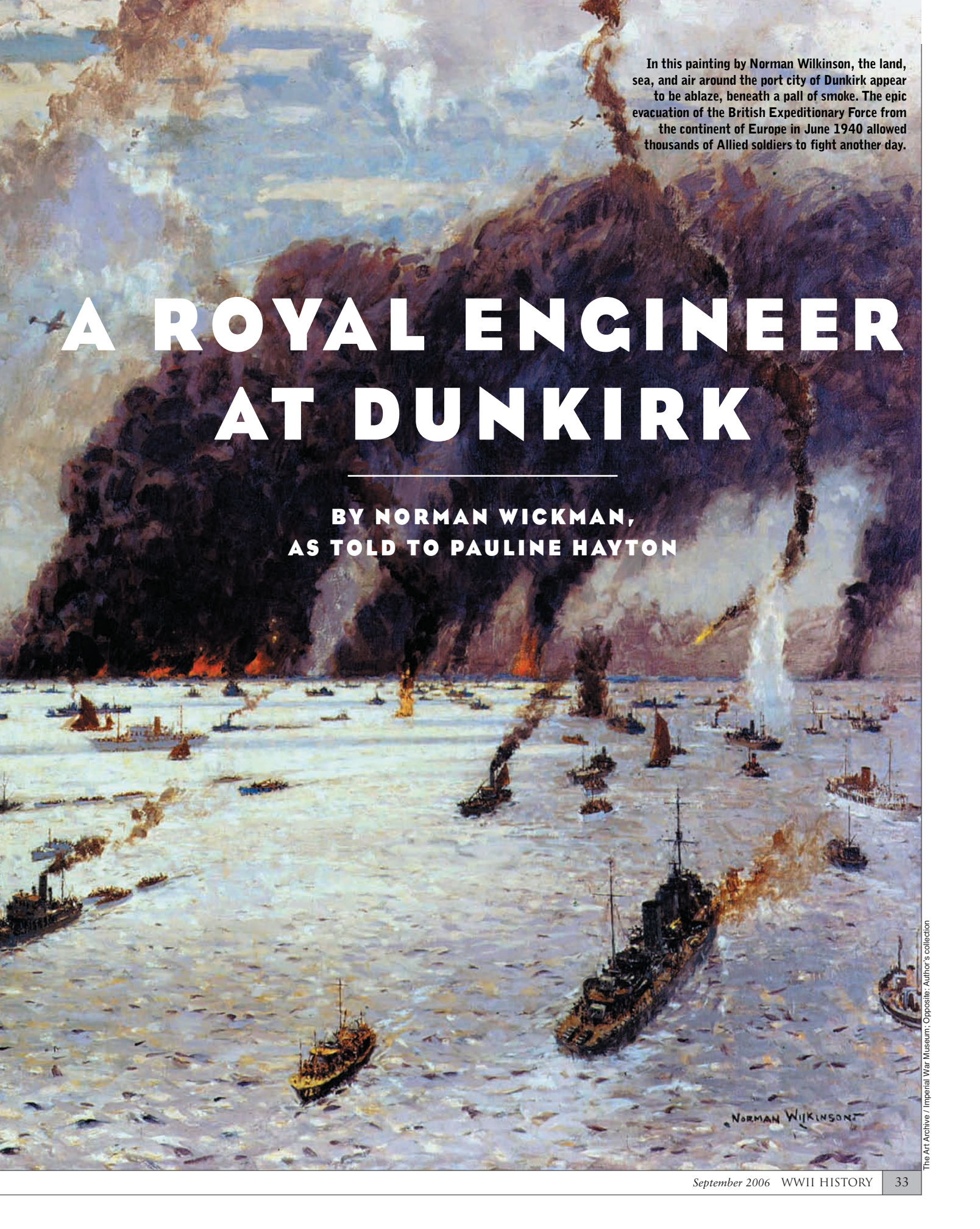
**TRAPPED ON A BEACH ALONG THE
FRENCH COAST, TROOPS OF THE
BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
FOUGHT THE ATTACKING GER-
MANS AND LOOKED TOWARD HOME
FOR RESCUE.**

PAULINE HAYTON WAS 52 YEARS OLD BEFORE her father, Norman Wickman, talked about his life in the British Army. It was 1999. Wanting to write a family memoir, Pauline pumped Norman for information on his childhood; his wartime stories spilled out instead. She found them so fascinating that she put the memoir to one side and concentrated on capturing his every word. This is his experience at Dunkirk as told to Pauline, supported by her research.

In 1939, I was 20 years old, married, father of a young child, and struggling to make ends meet. To improve the family's finances, I enlisted in the Army, figuring that when my six months of national service ended I would be 21 and entitled to earn adult wages instead of the youth's wages I was then earning—a good plan, I thought, until foiled by Britain's declaration of war against Germany. The bad news was that my six months of army life stretched to seven years in 62 Chemical Warfare Company. The good news was that in those seven years I was involved in only seven weeks of combat. Three of those weeks were during the devastating defeat of the British Army at Dunkirk.

On April 26, 1940, truckload after truckload of Royal Engineers filed out of the camp gates, heading for the Southampton docks, where we embarked to cross the English Channel to Le Havre, France. Our job was to clear airfields of equipment left behind after British planes had been returned to England. No one was the least bit concerned that we might end up fighting Germans. After all, the British Expe-





In this painting by Norman Wilkinson, the land, sea, and air around the port city of Dunkirk appear to be ablaze, beneath a pall of smoke. The epic evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the continent of Europe in June 1940 allowed thousands of Allied soldiers to fight another day.

A ROYAL ENGINEER AT DUNKIRK

BY NORMAN WICKMAN,
AS TOLD TO PAULINE HAYTON

ditionary Force had been in France since September 1939, with not one shot fired against the enemy. We moved across France from airfield to airfield, heading toward the Maginot Line. But we never got that far.

On May 10, Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, which triggered a rush into Belgium by the British Expeditionary Force and the French Army, unwittingly playing straight into the enemy's hands. With the best British and French fighting troops diverted to the north, the way was open for the German Army to flank the Maginot Line. Achieving what was considered impossible, German Army units, with almost 2,000 tanks, made their way through the hilly, densely forested Ardennes region. Using terrifying blitzkrieg tactics, the German Army swarmed into France at Sedan on May 13, then turned northwest, heading toward Boulogne, the channel ports, and the sea.

Our 62 Chemical Warfare Company was ordered to Arras to join regiments assembling to oppose the advancing German forces. Enemy planes dropped leaflets on British troops, warning that any soldier found with poison gas would immediately be shot, as would all Royal Engineers. Despite the ominous warnings in the leaflets carried, we burst into laughter, and owing to the shortage of bathroom tissue the leaflets were put to good use.

Concerned about German threats and the deadly outcome for the men should the poisonous gases we carried be hit, our officers ordered the disposal of the lethal concoctions. At the deserted village of Lattre St. Quentin, we found deep cellars under the houses. Sappers (Royal Engineer privates) toiled for three days, burying the chemical weapons in the cellars and then imploding the buildings, safely sealing in the gases.

General Heinz Guderian's panzers rapidly rolled west. On May 20, his army traveled 40 miles in 14 hours, taking Amiens and reaching Abbeville, cutting the Allied forces in two. Almost one million soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force, French, and Belgian armies were trapped in Belgium and northern France. Pulverized by the aggressive German advance in Belgium, our battered forces retreated toward the French border. Days were spent fighting, and under the cover of darkness we fell back behind some river or canal to prepare to fight again when daylight arrived.

My company had not yet come into contact with the enemy, nor been involved in any fighting, but this did not stop me from finding a pot of paint and decorating my water truck. "Berlin or Bust," I advertised to the world with

all the bravado and confidence of an invincible young soldier not yet baptized in battle. Before reaching Arras, 62 Chemical Warfare Company was ordered to Béthune. It was a slow, difficult drive along roads congested with thousands of fleeing civilians.

On May 21, Allied forces made a counterattack against General Erwin Rommel's panzers south of Arras. The battle continued for two and a half days, but on the night of May 23 the British were forced to withdraw. However, the counterattack had not been in vain. By delaying the German advance, four British divisions and a large part of the French First Army were able to withdraw toward the channel coast. We were in Béthune. The counterattack gave us extra time to prepare for the demolition of the many bridges spanning the La Bassée Canal in order to further delay the Germans.

While the sappers laid explosives on the bridges, I was given the job of dispatch rider,



Author's Collection



National Archives

carrying messages between the various army units as commanders attempted to organize a collective withdrawal before the bridges were blown. Sergeant Wellington warned us that dispatch riders were a favorite target for German snipers who were operating in the area. He ended his briefing by wishing us, "Good luck." But good luck had not been with me that morning. Unsuccessful in delivering my dis-

patches thanks to a sniper's bullet creasing my forehead and ripping my epaulet to shreds, I lay in the dirt of a country lane, playing dead.

After 30 minutes and hoping I would be safe, I jumped onto my motorcycle and tried desperately to kick start the machine. Finally, the motorcycle roared to life, and I raced back to my unit. Having reported the sniper, my thoughts turned to Ivy, my young wife, who had almost become a widow that morning.

By May 24, the enemy had taken Boulogne. Calais was cut off. German advance units had reached the Aa Canal, a mere 12 miles west of Dunkirk, the sole port remaining in Allied hands. The Allied northern forces—comprised of the British Expeditionary Force, French, and Belgian troops—had managed to withdraw from Belgium to the French frontier. To the east, west, and south, there were German divisions. Only one way was open for withdrawal, north to Dunkirk. In a situation that was rapidly becoming desperate, we were placed on half rations.

By holding back the enemy at Arras, the British Army had given us time to prepare 22 bridges for demolition around Béthune. The hordes of refugees trying to cross the bridges made the work difficult. Seeing the problems they caused and fearing fifth columnists could be in their midst, officers ordered that refugees be stopped from crossing the bridges. Turned away from one bridge, the civilians hurried north to another and another until they found one they could use to cross to safety to the east bank of the canal—a forlorn hope. The corridor of safety between the German front lines in the west and the front line in the east was a mere 15 miles. Squeezing this small pocket of safety, the German forces surrounded the trapped Allied divisions, who by now were fighting with their backs to the sea.

Orders were not to blow the bridges until the enemy was in sight or the growl of tanks moving up could be heard. It was a race to stop them storming across the rivers and canals. Once the way forward was blocked to the enemy, we would fall back to the next bridge. Was it only two weeks ago when we had been pottering about on the airfields? It all seemed totally chaotic. At one bridge we barely had time to prepare the detonator and hide around a corner before German panzers started to cross. The bridge was blown. I closed my ears and mind to the horrific screams of dying and wounded men by focusing on the tens of thousands of British soldiers whose lives depended on us doing our job.

At another bridge, an advance unit of German soldiers had arrived minutes before us.

On the beach at Dunkirk, a British soldier takes a pot shot at a low-flying German plane. The Luftwaffe attacked the British at Dunkirk incessantly, but failed to ever deliver a knockout blow. OPPOSITE TOP: Sgt. French and Royal Engineers Gus, Mac, and Jim pose jauntily for a photograph taken during the campaign in France, summer 1940. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Fleeing the oncoming Germans, French refugees seek safety near the village of Louvain. Thousands of displaced civilians clogged roads and impeded the movement of Allied troops vainly attempting to stem the Nazi tide.



Imperial War Museum

Hurting from our trucks, we hid in doorways and behind corners. All we had were rifles, machine guns, and a desperate determination to drive back the enemy. A fierce exchange of rifle fire ensued. I was at the back of the convoy and ordered to protect the rear. As I was beginning to wonder if we would be lucky enough to make it to the far bank, the bridge was captured just long enough for charges to be set while we raced across in our trucks. Then it was blown to smithereens.

The enemy was hot on the heels of our retreating Army. At one bridge, trucks raced across while under fire from enemy rifles and machine guns. Last in line with my water tanker. I had barely left the bridge before a brave soldier, driving a truck full of explosives onto the bridge, tore past me, scraping the front of the tanker. Looking in my mirror, I saw the truck screech to a halt on the bridge. The driver leaped out and ran back toward me.

By now I was reversing toward him with the passenger door swinging open. "Get in! Get in!" I yelled. The soldier needed no encouragement. Under a hail of enemy bullets, the heroic man hung onto the front passenger seat, his legs dangling outside the cab as I whisked him away to safety while 62 Company provided cover. Enemy armored cars rushed the bridge before it was destroyed. But they were too late. With a tremendous roar, the truck exploded, demolishing the bridge and the

armored cars on it.

The Royal Engineer companies were to withdraw to Dunkirk, blowing bridges at Merville, Merris, and Méteren on the way. The roads were awash with the flotsam and jetsam of war in full swing. Leaderless, defeated French soldiers trudged north away from terrifying German attacks. French villagers, panicked by the sight of the defeated soldiers, abandoned their homes to join the heaving crowds blocking the roads. British troops were held up for hours as they struggled to reach the east bank of the Aa Canal to form a front line on the western edge of the escape corridor.

At Lille, the French First Army blocked the enemy advance, holding them at bay for three days, tying down seven German divisions while 150,000 trapped Allied soldiers swarmed to Dunkirk, where the evacuation was making a slow start. As I pushed north along the crowded roads, my heart went out to mothers slogging along with their children. Bodies—men, women, children and horses—lay by the roadside, among abandoned vehicles, testimony to some Stuka dive bomber pilot's foray along the road.

The Royal Engineers, along with other specialist units, were formed into special detachments. My unit was "Pol" Force. The others were "Mac" Force and "Petre" Force (a total of 360 men). We were sent to Mont des Cats, a 500-foot hill on the Belgian border, with orders

to protect the flank of the retreating army. I felt we were scrambling around like lunatics; everything seemed complete confusion.

Fighting their way north had been a bloodbath for the Royal West Kent Regiment caught in a valley by mortar fire. Suffering heavy casualties, they needed our trucks to transport the wounded to Dunkirk. Grimly, we looked on as mutilated soldiers, eyes glazed in shock, uniforms saturated in blood, were helped into the trucks. Aware that when the time came for our withdrawal we would have to cover the 22 miles to Dunkirk on foot, a thought struck me like a bolt of lightning.

"Do they think we're not going to need those trucks because we're not going to make it through whatever Gerry's got for us?" I asked my best friend, Darky.

"Nah," said Darky, with a show of bravado. "They reckon we'll still be fit enough to run all the way to Dunkirk after we've sorted Gerry out."

Crossing the fields to Mont des Cats, we walked straight into a mortar attack. Dead and wounded men fell all around. I gagged at seeing Major Thomas's knee blown off. Captains and lieutenants urged us forward. Soldiers and medics scrambled to drag and carry the wounded toward the hill, where they were taken to the Trappist monastery on the summit. I was still shaking as we climbed the hill and settled ourselves into hollows by the road-

side. Darky and I stayed close together. We both agreed it was a bad do.

So far, we had seen little fighting. Puffing on his pipe, a young lieutenant walked among us. In a calming voice, he reassured us. "Don't worry about the Germans when they come along. We'll just have to take them on. That's what we're here for. We have to hold this position for 48 hours to allow as many of our men as possible to withdraw to Dunkirk. They're depending on you. I know you won't let them down. In the meantime, just settle down and have a rest and a smoke."

Darky and I felt we were up the creek without a paddle. To cheer Darky, I rashly promised to buy him a pint of beer when we returned home. There were 80 men in my area of the hill. Transfixed, we watched the German Army's arrival on the plain below. There before us was the enemy, flagrantly displaying its superior fighting power. It was soon brought to bear on Pol Force. That first afternoon, artillery fire pinned us in our hiding places but caused little damage. With the coming of night, the guns fell silent, and we snatched what little sleep we could.

May 28 began with a dawn attack by the Luftwaffe. Roaring planes emerged from the early morning mist, dropping bombs and strafing Pol Force's positions. Time and again they left only to return for more menacing sorties. Earth and gravel splattered us, but the planes' inaccuracies resulted in few casualties. Morale remained high. Derisive laughter spread contagiously from hollow to hollow. "Get your eyes tested, Gerry! Can't you get your sights sorted out?"

Throughout the rest of the morning, a tremendous concentration of firepower was brought to bear on our positions. The lieutenant bolstered us, telling us the German commanders had no idea how many brigades were entrenched on Mont des Cats, blocking their advance into the escape corridor. "They're trying to flush us out to assess our strength. Stay calm men. So far, you've come through it all without them inflicting any real damage on us."

Then came the rumble of approaching tanks. As the tanks neared, we became jittery. We hastily prepared petrol bombs and threw them when the tanks closed in. One man, leaving his hiding place to dash out and hurl the bombs, slipped and fell to be crushed beneath the squeaking tracks of a panzer. We lobbed burning bomb after burning bomb at the massive bulk of these monsters until voracious flames licked at tracks and turrets, forcing the tanks to turn and bolt down the hill.

Late in the afternoon, the German infantry appeared. We watched as they crept up the hill then opened fire, resulting in a rapid exchange. In the confusion, the lieutenant's pipe was shattered by a German bullet. The pipe fell from the shocked officer's mouth followed by a bel-low of rage. "They've shot the pipe out of my mouth! Bugger that! Fix bayonets! Up and at them men! Scatter them!"

And so I was introduced to my first experience of hand-to-hand combat. We charged down the hill, yelling like Ancient Celts. We must have looked like we meant business because the Germans fell back. I ran toward one reckless soldier still charging up the hill in a bayonet attack and shot him in the head. Running past him, I was relieved to find the German had fallen face down in the dirt. I would not have to see the face of the first man I had personally killed. After only a few minutes, the German soldiers turned and ran. Triumphantly, we congratulated ourselves then returned to our hiding places.

When German troops withdrew from that part of the hill during the night, our officers seized the opportunity to order a withdrawal. "Men, you are now relieved. It's every man for himself. Make for Dunkirk as fast as you can. Good luck." Crossing the dew damp fields, we ran straight into a German reception committee using box formation mortar fire. I saw the pay corporal's head blown off. Captain Chamier went down minus a leg. And I ran. I ran for six miles before stopping, one of only 87 survivors of the 360 defenders of Monts des Cats. As I struggled to regain self control, seven more survivors arrived. No one knew if Darky or any of my other close friends had escaped.

Unsure of the way to Dunkirk, we followed refugees heading north. Later that morning, Stuka pilots flew up and down the road in an orgy of death and destruction as people dived into ditches for cover. Three hours later, we rested, ate bully beef and hard tack, then dozed on blankets spread in the shadows of a farmhouse wall. A Stuka screamed down from the clouds, spraying bullets as it passed only feet above our heads. The bullets tore a row of holes in the blanket alongside my body. Two of my companions were killed where they slept.

Covering the dead with blankets, we moved on, coming across three heavily bandaged British soldiers, who had decided they were not going to sit around and be taken prisoner. Too weak to continue on foot, they were leaning against a broken down ambulance. We took turns working on the engine and handing out chocolate to tired, bewildered children passing by in the crowds. Suddenly, the engine erupted

into a shaky roar. Everyone piled into the ambulance. A feeling of optimism filled the vehicle.

Then, after we had driven for a couple of miles, Stukas appeared. The attack killed five of the group, including the wounded, and damaged the ambulance beyond repair. Those of us still alive continued the march, rendering any abandoned rifles we found useless to the enemy by removing the bolts and dumping them in the rivers. We came across fields full of vehicles, weapons and equipment, burned and destroyed by our own Army so they would not fall into enemy hands. Finally, we arrived at the bridgehead at the Burgues-Furnes Canal, from where we were directed to the beaches at Bray-Dunes rather than Dunkirk, which was a burning shambles thanks to German bombing.

With twilight approaching, our small group of four stepped onto the beach at Bray-Dunes. Tens of thousands of exhausted troops congregated on the golden sands with not a spark of fight left in them. Other soldiers formed long lines out to sea. Only their determination to reach home, a mere 22 miles across the English Channel, kept them waiting patiently for rescue boats. They stood chest deep in water, oily and slick from the shipwrecks offshore. Here and there, a body floated, a remnant of the human cargo lost to German bombs. An occasional victim of strafing and shelling littered the sand. The sickly sweet stench of death lingered in the still air.

I surveyed the beach, trying to make sense of the scenario before me. Slowly, understanding dawned. Disbelief, horror, then anger welled up, followed by intense shame. Until that moment, I had believed we were an Army in retreat. Now, I realized, I belonged to a defeated army. My pride fought against accepting this fact. I still had plenty of fight left, but looking again at the thousands of dejected men, I could see these soldiers had had it. I was filled with confusion and despair.

We settled in the sand dunes, ate some hard tack and smoked cigarettes. And we waited. We had reached the coast. Now what? We soon found out. German spotter planes flew overhead dropping illuminated parachutes to light up the area for German gunners. The muffled explosions of shells hitting the beach and all areas around us disturbed the night. Mercifully, with the sand absorbing the shock of the explosions, the shelling caused little damage apart from men losing sleep. I nestled low in the dunes wondering how we had gotten into this mess.

As I tried to sleep, the day was ending with 10 German divisions pressing on the Dunkirk perimeter, now a mere 20 miles long and six

miles wide. I was right. We certainly were in a predicament. It was just as well that I did not know how bad a predicament it was.

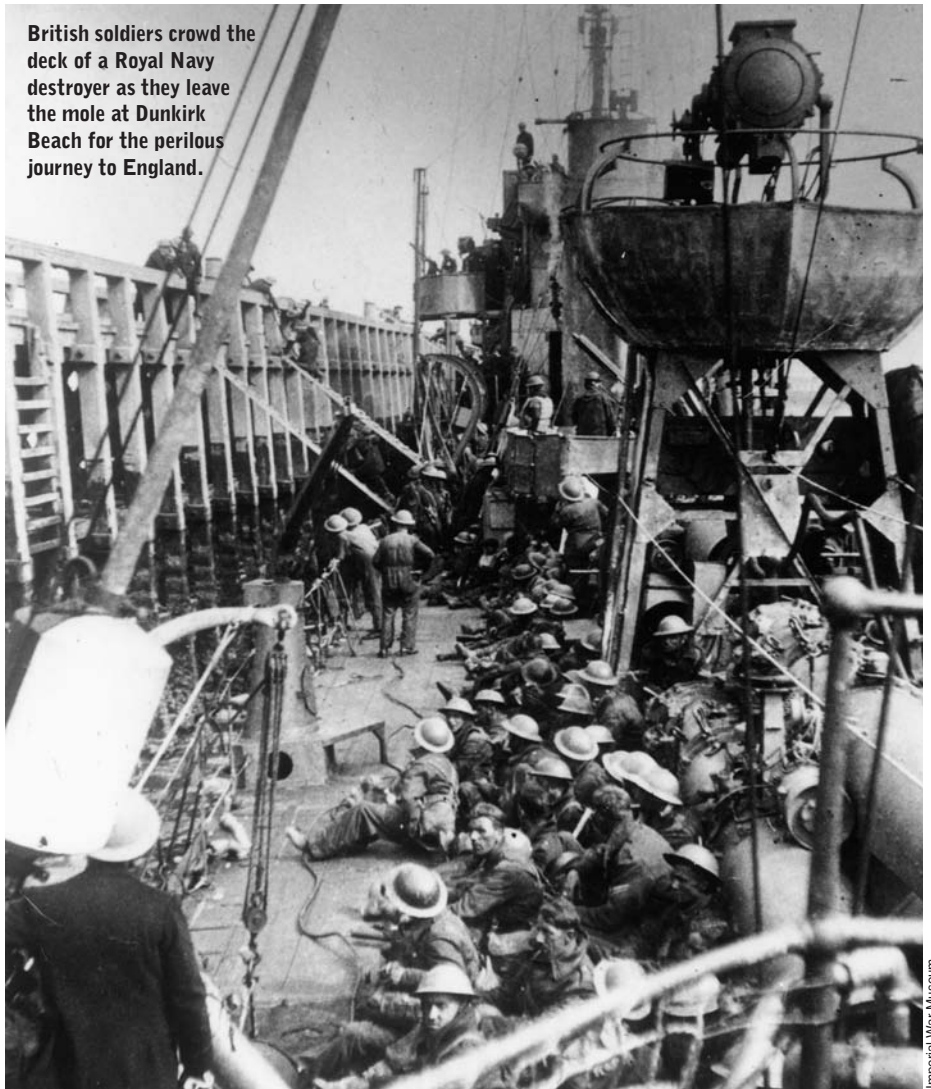
On May 17, Winston Churchill, the new prime minister since Neville Chamberlain's resignation on May 10, had begun to consider the possibility of evacuating the British Expeditionary Force from France. He did not believe it would come to this, but every contingency had to be faced. Although nobody realized it, some groundwork had already begun. A May 14 radio broadcast called on all small boat owners to send their particulars to the Admiralty. Boat yards were building wooden minesweepers because of the magnetic mine threat. Consequently, the Small Vessels Pool, unable to obtain the boats it needed, intended to requisition private yachts and motorboats. The War Office originally felt no sense of urgency regarding plans for the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force and assured there was ample time to organize for such an unlikely event. The Admiralty put Vice Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsey in charge of the evacuation plans, codenamed Operation Dynamo.

The speed of the German advance through France to the channel ports of Boulogne and Calais took everyone by surprise. The evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force quickly became top priority. The original 36 vessels allocated to the Admiralty would not be enough. What Ramsey needed was every seaworthy craft in the nation. The Ministry of Shipping searched for vessels capable of bringing the men home — passenger ferries, barges, drifters, trawlers, coasters, dredgers, fishing boats, lifeboats, tugs, anything. Not knowing what to expect, many crews readily volunteered to go across the channel to Dunkirk.

On the morning of May 26, up to 4,000 German bombs rained on Dunkirk and the thousands of troops pouring into the area. The British government, realizing that the troops were on the brink of a catastrophe, ordered Admiral Ramsey to commence Operation Dynamo. He had 129 vessels with which to evacuate hundreds of thousands of troops. The Admiralty expected to save only 45,000 of them during the next two days. Even this modest calculation fell short as rescue vessels encountered the enemy. Damaged ships turned back or sank, sometimes with their loads of evacuated troops. By midnight on May 27, only 37,965 men had been saved.

Receiving reports about the increasing numbers of men waiting on the beaches, Ramsey desperately called for destroyers, minesweepers, everything he could get his hands on. Captain William G. Tennant was ordered to

British soldiers crowd the deck of a Royal Navy destroyer as they leave the mole at Dunkirk Beach for the perilous journey to England.



Imperial War Museum

Dunkirk to organize the loading of the rescue fleet. With him went a naval shore party of eight officers and 160 men. Arriving in Dunkirk at 5:30 PM on May 27, he explored evacuation possibilities. Evacuation from Dunkirk harbor was not feasible; continual bombing had left it a blazing ruin. He decided the beaches east of Dunkirk were the best bet. He conferred with army officers, who estimated the Royal Navy had 24-36 hours before Dunkirk was overrun.

Tennant signaled Dover to send every available craft east of Dunkirk. Naval parties rounded up soldiers and sent them to the beaches. Learning that leaderless soldiers were becoming unruly, Tennant went to speak to the men and appealed for calm and discipline, reassuring them that plenty of ships were coming to take them back to England. Responding to his authority and leadership, the men calmed down.

Concerned that far too few men were being lifted from the beaches, Tennant requested information from his commanders. They told

him the entire stretch of beach from Dunkirk to La Panne shelved so gradually that destroyers and large vessels had to anchor a mile off shore, even at high tide. They also did not have enough small craft on the scene. Destroyers were having to use their own boats to pick up the men from the beaches and ferry them to the destroyers. When the launches arrived, the scared troops rushed to scramble in from where they stood in deep water and more often than not capsized the boats. It was taking hours to lift only a few hundred men off the beaches. Back in Dover, the operations room was awash with messages from the destroyers urging them to send more small boats.

Returning to the harbor, Tennant again studied the area. He knew he could evacuate men faster if he could use the docks, but that was out of the question. Then, he noticed that the Luftwaffe was concentrating on the docks and completely ignoring the moles, two long breakwaters that formed the entrance to the harbor. One from the western side and one from the east

reached out toward one another, leaving a narrow gap with only enough room for the passage of one ship. The eastern mole, 1,400 yards long, was constructed of rock with thick concrete pilings alongside it. On top, a wooden walkway with wooden railings along the edges ran the full length. It was just wide enough for four men to walk abreast.

Tennant estimated that the tides rose and fell 15 feet around the mole, which could make transferring troops at low or high tide hazardous, and berthing could be dangerous if the swift tidal currents slammed the vessels against the wooden planking. The mole was not built to take such a battering. Would it prove sturdy enough to act as a pier? There was only one way to find out.

Tennant ordered a ship to come alongside. In no time at all, this first vessel crammed 950 men on board. At 4:15 AM on May 28, it set sail for England. Sadly, a German plane sank the ship less than halfway across the channel, but Tennant had made an important discovery. The

erating into drunken mobs on the beach at Bray-Dunes, Tennant sent Commanders Kerr and Richardson with 40 men to Bray-Dunes. Commander Clouston, a tall Canadian, was put in charge of the mole.

Arriving at Bray-Dunes that evening, Richardson alerted Dover that he had found not 5,000, but 25,000 men on the beach and that small boats were urgently needed. In the early hours of May 29, with a storm drawing near, the seas became too rough for evacuation from the beaches. Richardson sent the troops to the mole at Dunkirk, only seven miles away, but a marathon for men at the end of their endurance and scarcely able to walk.

After being put into use, the eastern mole proved to be a great success. Destroyers picked up between 500 and 900 men in minutes and quickly took them to Dover before returning to the mole. Towering head and shoulders above the crowds, Commander Clouston shouted instructions through his megaphone, skillfully controlling the flow of troops to the

Parminter, working alongside Commander Clouston, used a hat-check system. He divided the waiting men into groups of 50, gave each group a number, and as the number was called, the group stepped out onto the mole. At times, the embarkations were going so smoothly that the men trotted along the mole at the double. It was a heartening improvement.

Around 1:30 PM, a change in wind direction sent the heavy pall of smoke inland, allowing perfect conditions for the 400 German aircraft heading for Dunkirk. As the 12 vessels at the mole lost their protective cover, German pilots saw them from overhead. Bombs poured from the skies. The mole was hit. Chunks of concrete hurtled into the air. Swooping down, Stukas machine-gunned troops caught on the crowded walkway. Defenseless and with nowhere to hide, they were easy targets.

Hundreds of lives were lost and numerous ships damaged or destroyed as they frantically tried to leave the mole. Two ships sank at their berths. At dusk, after 90 minutes of continu-

Awaiting rescue by sea, Allied soldiers form long lines on the beach at Dunkirk. The great effort mounted by military and civilian seamen resulted in nothing short of a miracle.



mole worked. It not only worked, it could accommodate several ships at a time.

Tennant ordered all vessels to the eastern mole, a decision that would prove to be the turning point at Dunkirk and the salvation of the British Expeditionary Force. Clouds of oily black smoke, belching from the burning oil refinery, hung low over the harbor, hiding the mole from view. That day, there should be no interference from the Luftwaffe.

Informed there were 5,000 soldiers, mostly without officers or any leadership and degen-

streams of arriving ships. Two thousand men an hour were leaving from the mole. On May 28, a total of 18,527 men safely left France, more than double the previous day's number.

As news of the evacuations at the mole spread, thousands of soldiers converged on the area. On the morning of the 29th, a steady stream of ships pulled in, quickly loaded, and pulled out. No matter how many men boarded, the lines of waiting soldiers continued to grow. The line stretched the length of the mole and snaked back along the beach. Brigadier

ous bombing, the raid ended. In places, the mole was left with more holes than a rabbit warren, but only the outer side of the mole was obstructed by wreckage. The inner wall was still clear. Shipping losses on this day were three destroyers and 21 other vessels, with many others damaged. Despite everything, 47,310 men returned home safely.

Responding to a public appeal, small craft were brought to Ramsgate from all over the south and east coasts and the River Thames. They came from yachting centers, boatyards,

The bodies of two British soldiers, who were not as fortunate as many of their comrades, lie unburied amid abandoned equipment on the beach at Dunkirk.



Imperial War Museum

and private moorings to join the naval vessels. Owners, many only weekend sailors, insisted on going with their boats. Members of yacht clubs volunteered. Leaving their desks and places of work, civilians came from all over the south of England. Facing grave danger, these unassuming heroes risked their lives to save men caught in a desperate plight. Some used their day off work to save hundreds of lives and then returned to their desks as usual the following day.

Most small boats were towed across the English Channel. Few of these little vessels were built for use at sea, but the channel was kind to them, remaining still and calm while they plied back and forth between the beaches and the larger vessels. The small boats provided the only means by which soldiers on the beaches could reach the rescue ships moored far off shore. Some volunteers worked continuously for 48 hours at a stretch before returning to Ramsgate when fuel ran out or they had become too exhausted to carry on.

Only eight small boats were in the first convoy that set out across the channel at 10 PM on May 29. Gradually, the numbers increased until it was impossible to tell where one convoy ended and another began. Nearly 400 small craft were involved in the rescue operation. By the time Operation Dynamo ended, they had been instrumental in saving almost 100,000 men from the beaches around Dunkirk. Newspapers and broadcasters rushed to tell the story of these heroic volunteers bringing a surge of pride in the British population. Morale soared.

The “Dunkirk Spirit” developed. People were energized, hopeful, and eager to be actively involved in the war against Hitler.

As the residents of Dover listened to the thunder of guns at Dunkirk and the evacuation was making headlines in Britain, I woke to a dull, cloudy day. I was amazed to see the lines of men still standing in the sea. My friends and I wondered if any were getting away. A soldier reassured us the Navy was going to rescue everyone. Although I desperately wanted to believe him, the soldiers milling around the area seemed fearful and uncertain.

Skulking in the dunes, we could see little evacuation activity. In fact, the only activity was from German Stukas flying along the beach, dropping bombs and strafing our besieged troops. “The enemy’s pounding at the door, and we’re just sitting on our arses in the sand dunes,” growled one of my companions. With glum expressions, we watched and waited.

At mid-morning an officer from the Royal Engineers stumbled across our group. Telling us we were needed to repair bomb damage to the eastern mole at Dunkirk harbor, he put me, a corporal, in charge with orders to find more sappers and report to the commander at the eastern mole. I was relieved to have something positive to do and that someone seemed to know what needed doing. We found 16 sappers to swell our ranks, and then off we marched to Dunkirk.

Coming to the outskirts of town, we looked on in disbelief as we witnessed the scene unfolding before us. Four French officers were

standing with their troops when a black Citroen screeched to a stop beside them. The officers jumped in, and the car sped off down the road. We were disgusted by this abandonment of the French soldiers who were in a sorry state. Their uniforms were ragged; some men were without boots. Gaunt faces and despairing eyes testified to the horrors they had been through. With their officers gone, they became distressed and fearful, asking each other, “What do we do?” “Where do we go?” I approached the men. One or two spoke a little English. With few words and much gesticulating, they understood my message. “Go to Bray-Dunes. Find a British unit that will take you in. They’ll look after you.”

Moving into Dunkirk, we found the harbor and the eastern mole. The day’s heavy mist offered protection from the predatory Luftwaffe. There would be no air attacks in these conditions. On the mole, the atmosphere was cheerfully relaxed. Evacuations were proceeding safely and efficiently. Reporting to Commander Clouston, we were told to find whatever we could to repair the mole’s walkway, severely damaged after the previous day’s savage air attacks.

We foraged for materials in Dunkirk. This was highly dangerous. The Luftwaffe was still delivering bombs, and German batteries in Calais were firing salvos into the town. Miraculously, the mole lay just out of reach of the guns. Choking, black smoke filled the air as we moved off through streets filled with debris, burned trucks, and downed trolley wires. With-

out tools or transport, we salvaged repair materials, making trip after trip, carrying beams, floorboards and doors taken from damaged buildings. It was a good day's work, not only for the Engineers, but also the Royal Navy. A total of 53,823 men were rescued on May 30.

We worked until dark before proceeding to the beach at Malo-les-Bains, a mile to the east. Munching on hard tack, we discussed our situation. I was pleased to be busy, which kept my mind off the dilemma we were in. Others were hopeful of getting away after seeing how many men had been evacuated. I was more realistic, believing we were doing such a useful job for the evacuation we would be there until Dunkirk was taken.

We spent another sleepless night disturbed by exploding shells as we hid in the dunes. In the morning, we found a canal to wash our faces. Seeing some men were not shaving, I told them to shave to keep up standards and morale. "What's the point?" they argued. "We're all

We watched as British destroyers sailed westward past Dunkirk. They fired salvo after salvo at the German batteries at Gravelines, pounding the enemy guns until they fell silent. Then we returned to the work of repairing the mole. We were more fortunate than most of the weary men around us. We still carried our rifles and rucksacks containing a few more days' supply of hard rations. Some of the men waiting to evacuate had not eaten for days. Before the day ended, 68,014 men arrived in England.

The sun was burning off the early morning mist, promising a clear, sunny day.

June 1 also promised to be a day made in hell as German bombers took advantage of this break in the weather. At 5:30 AM, German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters swept in from the east. I nudged the men awake to wash and have more hardtack for breakfast before going to the mole. Protesting and grumbling, the men were lying flat on their stomachs, stretched over the edge of the canal, about to splash water into

further losses, so the protection was spasmodic. British fighters flew only four short patrols a day. By the time British planes crossed the channel, they had only enough fuel to engage the enemy for 40 minutes before returning home. Pilots often made four sorties each day, but to the men on the beaches who were experiencing unrelenting Luftwaffe attacks, it felt as if the Royal Air Force had abandoned them. Few soldiers saw anything of the pilots' heroic battles taking place high above them.

The 5 AM patrol brought down 10 German planes before returning to England. It would be 9 AM before another patrol was sent to the French coast. During this period between patrols, the Luftwaffe ruled the skies. As destroyers and minesweepers sailed with their troops from the beaches and the mole, they were bombed by Heinkels and Stukas. When 40 Stukas appeared in the sky, every gun in the British fleet opened fire, but by 8 AM, the destroyer *Keith* was hit. The Stukas returned for second, third, fourth, and fifth attack on the *Keith* before she finally sank at 9:15 AM. From the mole, we saw the French destroyer *Foudroyant*, full of rescued troops, turn over and sink in seconds, victim of another swarm of Stukas.

German air attacks faded away when the Spitfire patrols were in the vicinity, but there were four more periods during the day when the Royal Air Force could not provide fighter cover. The Luftwaffe made the most of them, destroying or damaging 17 ships on June 1. Hundreds of men perished in the Luftwaffe frenzy. Through it all, we went about our work repairing the mole.

Commanders in London, Dover, and Dunkirk felt increasing trepidation at the escalating destroyer losses. The decision was made to stop using Royal Navy vessels during daylight hours. At 1:45 PM, all destroyers received orders to return to England immediately.

Commander Allison of the destroyer *Worcester* was entering Dunkirk harbor when the message arrived. Deciding it did not make sense to return to Dover empty, he berthed at the mole. I watched as lines of soldiers disappeared onto the destroyer. Brigadier Parminter, aware this would be the last vessel until nightfall, told me to get myself and my men onto the destroyer. "We're going to need men like you back in England to continue the fight," he said.

Urging the men along the mole, I took a last look around, making sure everyone had gone, and then raced down the walkway. The destroyer was pulling away from its berth. I hesitated. The gap was too wide. "Jump, you

German soldiers inspect a British vessel destroyed by the Luftwaffe at Dunkirk. A direct hit by a bomb has blown the ship in half.



going to be prisoners of war soon enough." I thought they might well be right.

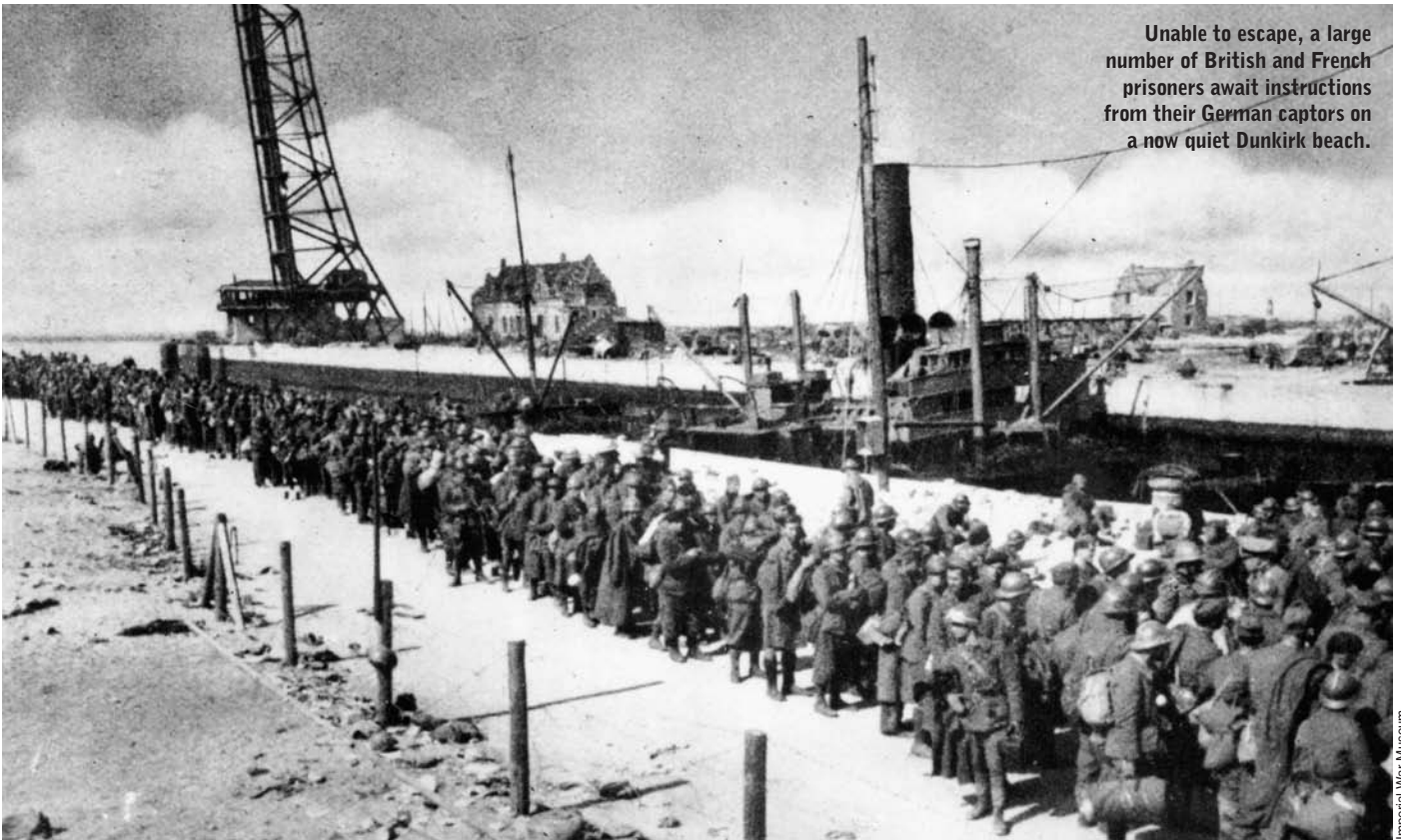
May 31 was again misty and overcast, perfect for keeping the Luftwaffe on the ground. But these weather conditions did not stop the shelling of Dunkirk. Having found their range, batteries planted east of Gravelines began damaging ships berthed at the mole. For the soldiers, the dash to the waiting vessels was unnerving. During the worst of the attacks, frightened men tried to move back off the mole, but discipline was strictly enforced by the officers. The men were made to run the gauntlet, sometimes at gunpoint, sometimes without making it to the ships.

their faces when the planes appeared. Before they could rinse the sleep from their eyes, the beaches were awash with the slaughter of troops mowed down by machine-gun fire. We looked at the bodies strewn along the beach, sickened by the carnage, the men relieved I had forced them to move.

Arriving at the harbor, we looked on in horror. Gun flashes and columns of smoke rose over Dunkirk as planes attacked the destroyer *Windsor*, which was berthed at the mole.

By 5 AM, the Royal Air Force had 48 Supermarine Spitfire fighters heading toward Dunkirk. Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding was trying to spare British planes from

Unable to escape, a large number of British and French prisoners await instructions from their German captors on a now quiet Dunkirk beach.



Imperial War Museum

silly bugger, jump!” yelled a burly sailor at the ship’s rail.

So, I jumped. Immediately, I realized I had made a big mistake. In mid-air, I glanced down. The foaming water churned wildly where the destroyer’s sharp propeller blades were waiting to chop me to pieces. Leaning far out, the muscular sailor grabbed my shredded epaulette, flapping loosely from my uniform. With a crash, I slammed against the ship’s rail. Using brute strength, the sailor hauled me over, where I fell in a crumpled heap on the deck. Unbridled joy and relief overwhelmed me. I was on the destroyer, safe and on my way home. Then, all hell let loose.

“Get up against the bulkhead,” shouted the sailor. Stunned and winded, I stumbled across the deck. As I pressed against the gray metal, I heard the planes. Stukas, 30-40 of them, dived on the *Worcester* time and time again. Bombs rained down like confetti all around the ship. The destroyer, so filled with troops it was top heavy, heeled over wildly at heart-stopping, stomach-lurching angles to evade the falling bombs. Bombs to the rear lifted the stern clear of the water. The massive propellers screamed until the ship crashed down again. Colossal columns of water washed over the ship. I closed my eyes and tried to make my body disappear into the bulkhead.

By some miracle, none of the 100 bombs

made a direct hit on the ship. Shrapnel killed 46 and wounded another 180 before the attacks tapered off. As sanity returned, I opened my eyes and looked round. The planes had disappeared. The *Worcester*, with its crowded decks, was steaming across the channel to the British coast. I may have been exhausted by the day’s events, but I felt exhilarated. I was one of 64,429 men who returned home on this horrific day.

Having failed in battle, we poured off the ships, expecting a cold reception. It may have been a defeated Army coming home, but a jubilant welcome awaited us. The local populace offered friendly smiles and joyous greetings. Better still, the Red Cross and women volunteers were ready with hot cups of tea, cocoa, sticky buns, and sandwiches. Exhausted, bleary eyed and hungry if not starving, we soaked up the warm reception. We smoked the proffered cigarettes and gulped down the hot, sweet tea and sandwiches before dragging ourselves onto the waiting trains.

I pushed forward to give my name and number to the clerks, wanting Ivy to know I had made it back. Then I pushed onto the train, collapsed into a corner seat, and closed my eyes. Darcy, squeezing through the crowds into the carriage, noticed me in the corner of the compartment. He stepped inside and nudged me awake. I jumped up, and we pounded the living daylight out of each other’s backs.

“Had to make it back,” said Darcy. “You owe me a pint.”

As we rested after our ordeal, Winston Churchill’s rousing June 4 “We shall fight them on the beaches” speech united and galvanized the people into action. The deliverance at Dunkirk had brought the troops home, but we were not in good shape to defend the country against the expected seaborne invasion. The British Expeditionary Force had lost almost all of its heavy equipment, transport and personal weapons in France. In 62 Chemical Warfare Company Company all we had was one rifle between seven men and one machine gun per section.

Of the 850 vessels, large and small, that took part in Operation Dynamo, 243 were lost and 45 damaged. The Royal Air Force lost 106 fighter planes, and the British Expeditionary Force lost almost all of its equipment, including 682 tanks, 120,000 vehicles, 2,700 artillery pieces, and 90,000 rifles. Over 68,000 men were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Nevertheless, in the nine desperate days of Operation Dynamo, 338,226 men were rescued. □

Naples, Florida, resident Pauline Hayton, is a first-time contributor to WWII History. This story is an excerpt from her book A Corporal’s War.

THE 18-YEAR-OLD SEAMEN BOBBED IN THE OILY WATERS OFF the Philippine coast with other survivors of the October 25, 1944, battle. His ship, the destroyer escort *Samuel B. Roberts*, had been sunk following an heroic charge straight into the huge guns of Japanese battleships and cruisers. The enemy ships had suddenly appeared over the horizon, and the *Samuel B. Roberts* had been one of several small U.S. Navy warships, that had engaged them in the apparently impossible hope of turning aside the vastly superior enemy force.

The *Samuel B. Roberts* and other Navy destroyers and destroyer escorts were serving as the screening force for Taffy 3, a task force that consisted of these vessels and several escort aircraft carriers. Taffy 3 was stationed off the American landing beaches on the Philippine island of Leyte, its aircraft providing support to the troops ashore and cover for the supply ships anchored off the island and unloading supplies. Had the Japanese succeeded in reaching the invasion force, they could have wreaked havoc on the defenseless transports and supply ships. On that fateful afternoon, all that stood between the big Japanese guns and the defenseless transports was Taffy 3.

In what became known as the Battle off Samar, one of several naval engagements that are collectively referred to as the Battle of Leyte Gulf, Japanese shells reduced the sleek American ship to a battered mass of twisted steel during 90 minutes of fighting. Officers and crew who had not been immobilized by wounds or killed in the frantic fighting had to abandon what had been their home for six months and enter the warm waters. For the

first time since the battle's opening moments two young seamen, drenched and exhausted, pondered their fate and the fates of their compatriots.

One of these, Seaman 2nd Class Jack Yusen, had avoided injury in the clash that just ended, but his ordeal was far from over. He was about to experience a three-day nightmare before his role in the naval struggle off Samar blissfully ended.

He discussed his experiences with historian John F. Wukovits, the biographer of Yusen's task group commander, Admiral Clifton A. F. Sprague.

WWII: When and why did you enlist?

JACK YUSEN: I was 17 when I enlisted. I was born and raised in Elmhurst, Long Island, in 1926. I enlisted because my father had a good friend on the draft board. It was getting close to my draft number, so he went down to speak to his friend. He told my dad that anybody who could breathe would be drafted into the Marine Corps in the next two months. My dad told me if I waited for the draft, that's what I would get. I didn't want that. I wanted the Navy, so I went down a few days later and joined the Navy.

WWII: What was more appealing about the Navy?

JY: My father's brother served on the battleship USS *Tennessee* in World War I. He was not only a good uncle but a good friend of mine.

He told me a lot about the Navy and said if I go into the military I should go in the Navy.

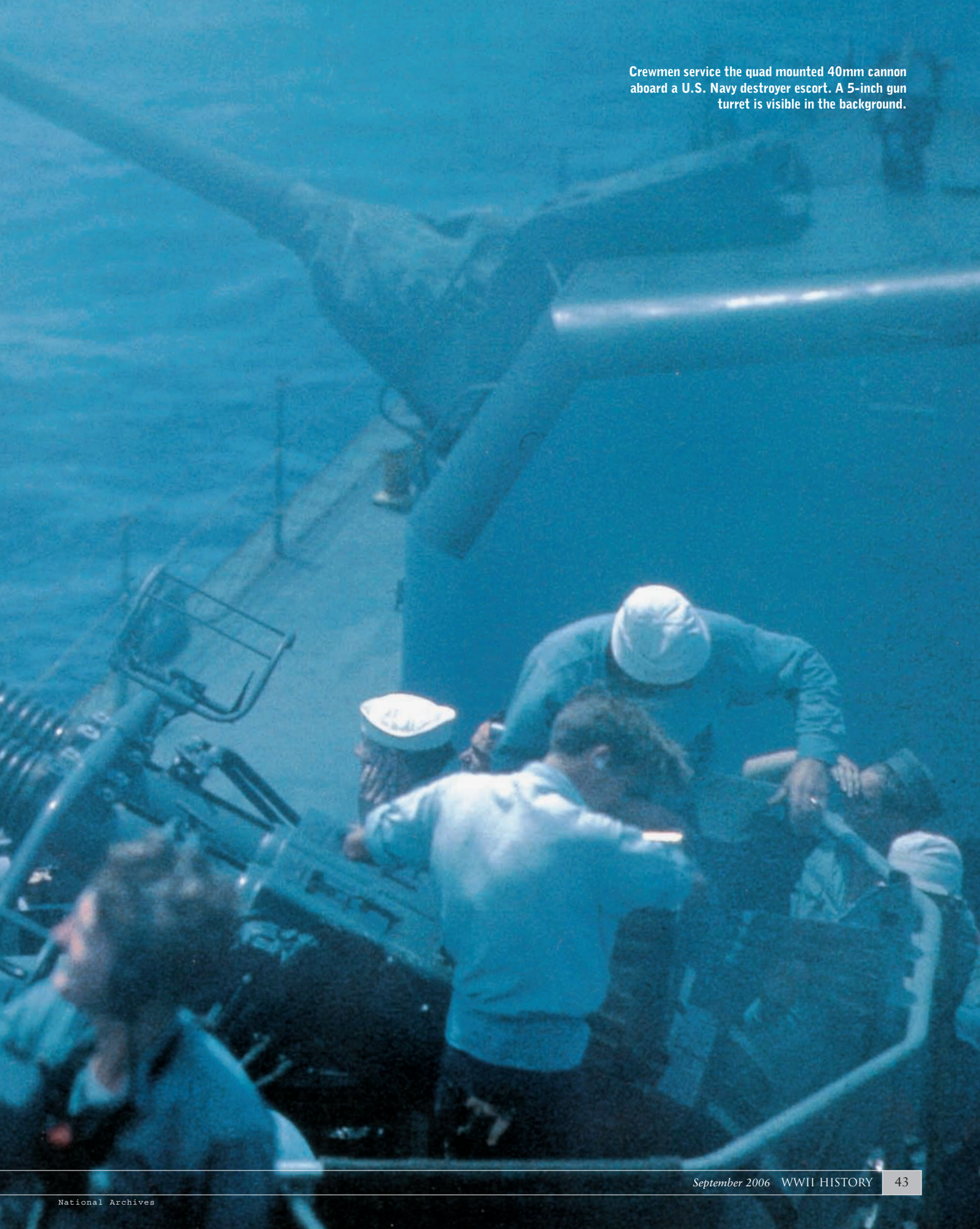
WWII: Was there any sense of patriotism sweeping through you when you joined?

JY: Oh, yes. With all your friends going, your neighbors, your family. We were very patriotic then.

SAVAGERY OFF SAMAR

THE HEROISM OF THE SAILORS ABOARD THE SMALL ESCORTS OF TAFFY 3
TURNED DEFEAT INTO VICTORY DURING THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF.
INTERVIEW BY JOHN WUKOVITS

Crewmen service the quad mounted 40mm cannon aboard a U.S. Navy destroyer escort. A 5-inch gun turret is visible in the background.



WWII: Going away from home, then, what would it be that you most missed?

JY: I would miss my family. I had a younger brother, 5 years younger, and the neighborhood and the kids. But most of us knew we had to go in one way or another, and that was the right way to do. It was not looked upon as a great inconvenience. We had a job to do and let's do it. You heard that all over. Let's get the job over with and free the world and make the world safe again.

WWII: Did you have any opposition from your parents?

JY: No. They understood your number was coming up. Like all the families in America, they knew their sons and husbands were going in.

WWII: At age 17, did you have any plans for the future that the military interrupted?

JY: No, I really didn't. All we heard was the war, and between my 14th birthday and 17th that is all we heard — war. You went to school, but everything was war, war, war. When we got in it in 1941 we knew guys like me would go in. I was hoping to graduate from high school and further my education, but I didn't really know what I wanted to do. That came after the war.

I was a 2nd class seaman. My job was sonar, although it was called a sound man back then.



Photo: National Archives

WWII: You joined the *Samuel B. Roberts* in Boston. What do you recall of your first sight of the ship?

JY: I was stationed at a holding barracks, waiting to be assigned to ships. They were building so many ships in 1944 that they needed firemen for the DE's. They called my

name and about 13 others, and I was told, "You are assigned to the *Samuel B. Roberts*, a destroyer escort. Get your gear and get down to the dock."

A truck took us to the Boston Navy Yard, and as we approached there was a huge, huge ship in drydock. It was a British cruiser, but we did not know it. We saw the big guns and thought it was our ship. "My God look at that," we thought.

The guy that drove us over, a petty officer, said "What are you guys looking at? Your

JY: Yes. As soon as we started out to sea, that's when the crew came together. The crew was a great bunch of guys. Copeland was big on drills so that we'd be ready for anything.

WWII: How many drills a day might you have?

JY: Copeland would have them at any time. You could be on watch—mine was Sky-1, which was the 20mm on starboard side forward—and the officer of the deck would suddenly shout out, "Sky-1, stand by for a drill. Sky-1 load. Pick up dive bomber coming in on



TOP: The destroyer escort *USS Samuel B. Roberts* took part in the epic struggle that came to be known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf. This photograph was taken in October 1944, a week before she was sunk in the Battle off Samar. **LEFT:** Lt. Commander Robert W. Copeland commanded the *USS Samuel B. Roberts* at Leyte Gulf. In December 1944, Copeland was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism during the Battle off Samar.

ship's over here!" We looked at the other drydock to the right, and all you could see was the radar. It was such a small ship. We kept looking at the *Samuel B. Roberts*, back to the cruiser, back to the *Samuel B. Roberts*, etc.

WWII: Did you go right aboard ship?

JY: We carried our seabags onto the gangway and got on. We saluted the flag, then the officer of the deck, and walked down the gangway. They took us down to the galley to get us squared away. Then we were taken to the wardroom to meet Commander R.W. Copeland. He said, "Have these fellows been paid?" When he heard no, he said, "Let them each draw \$10, and give them liberty tonight." We weren't even on the ship a couple hours, we didn't even have our bunkers assigned, and here we had liberty.

WWII: Did that endear you to Copeland?

JY: We thought he was great. He told us to work hard, do our job. He was a good skipper.

WWII: Your time in Boston, you must have begun to form an opinion of the officers and crew.

starboard quarter." General Quarters would be for the whole ship—all man your stations. We would shoot at sleeves.

We hit a whale shortly after Boston. We thought we were torpedoed. I was making my bunk, and it shook the whole ship like being hit by a torpedo. The whale hit into us—boom! I ran up on deck with the rest of the guys with our life jackets. You saw blood, pieces of meat on the fantail.

We went into drydock to fix the shaft and propeller. The ship had been painted and prepared for Atlantic duty, but because of the whale we had to return to Boston for repairs. While there they needed more ships in the Pacific, so the ship was repainted camouflage and we were assigned to Pacific. Fate! Then we headed to the Panama Canal.

WWII: What specific steps did Copeland take to create good morale?

JY: He was a good skipper who demanded excellence from officers and crew. I thought we had an excellent bunch of officers. I thought every one of them was great. They were stern,

and you had to respect them, but that's part of it. They treated us right.

WWII: Was the ship representative of all portions of the nation?

JY: Yes. Most were from the Eastern Seaboard, a few from out West. When you come on your ship — I don't care what kind it is or how large or small — that's your ship and you're proud of it. You go downtown and tell everyone else what ship you're on. You're proud to be on it.

WWII: Was going through the Panama Canal a unique experience for you?

JY: That was really exciting. I recall two things. One, how the armed forces guarded that place. It was so important. Can you imagine if we had to go around South America or India? The locks are unbelievable. Going through them, everywhere you looked you saw anti-aircraft guns and planes flying.

WWII: What do you remember about the trip from Boston to Pearl Harbor?

JY: When we reached the Pacific from the Panama Canal, something happened. We kept looking at the water, looking for Japanese. We were really in the war now. Coming down the coast from Boston, nothing happened. I was standing on the deck on my watch looking out over the Pacific Ocean and I'm telling you, I was looking harder than when we were in the Atlantic. That's where our war began. Now we're really in it.

Some of us talked about that feeling. It just made you feel different. The minute you left Balboa, boy I had a whole new respect for the service.

WWII: Were you anxious to get into the fighting?

JY: Well, I don't know about that. We knew we had a job to do. Another thing I noticed once we entered the Pacific: our training started harder. More training. We had little time to relax. You were four on, eight off, four on, eight off. Off did not mean off, I had a job to do on the motor whaleboat.

WWII: Would you see Copeland every day?

JY: He was up in the bridge and CIC most of the time. However, every once in a while he'd walk the deck. I remember one time we were on deck off watch talking and he walked up. "Hello boys. Take it easy. At ease. How're you boys doing tonight?" He did not stand on formality when he was doing that.

WWII: What are your recollections of Pearl Harbor?

JY: We arrived in the latter part of June. When we first arrived there, of course, all of us were in awe of what took place on December 7, 1941. To just be there on the scene where the

war started, everybody on deck was quiet. All you could hear was the water going by as you approached. There wasn't too much to see at that time as far as the havoc wrought on December 7. I just remember a lot of ships, all kinds of ships there—aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers. Must have been 50 or 60 destroyers. [This] was my first indication of the kind of might we had building up.

WWII: Did anyone mention that there was no way the Japanese could defeat us?

JY: We were feeling very good about the war, at least I did. I didn't think there'd be too many more battles.

WWII: Were you eager to get into action?

JY: I don't think I was eager, but I was ready. The guys on my gun, the 41 gun, were serious about their jobs. We were ready to do whatever we had to do. One month before our ship sank I was transferred to sonar room.

WWII: Was the crew anxious to get into the fight?

JY: I think a lot of guys were—some of the fellows who lost family members. I wasn't anxious for it, but then in my mind I was always wondering what it was going to be like to go through an air attack or a submarine attack. You never even thought of a big surface engagement! That was the farthest

WWII: Was there a strange fascination about what battle would be like?

JY: Oh yeah. I had a bunk on the starboard side up forward of the bow, and I lay there and by putting my ear to the bulkhead I could hear the water going by. I would sometimes wonder what would happen if a torpedo hit us. But most of the time you would be too busy to think like this.

WWII: What did you most like about Hawaii?

JY: The water is so beautiful. Also, I was impressed with the amount of firepower. I went on liberty on Waikiki Beach, and that was impressive. It used to be only the rich would be walking that beach.

We weren't in Pearl Harbor that much. We'd have target practice at a plane pulling a sleeve. We were also operating with an American submarine and going through exercises. We'd go out in the morning and come back late afternoon. The guys on liberty would be heading back to the ship by the time we returned from exercises.

We were ordered to take a convoy with other DE's, maybe 15-20 ships, to the Marshall Islands, Eniwetok. That was our first convoy. It was about a week trip. That is the time we had a submarine contact. One evening, before



A 20mm Oerlikon cannon is shown in action aboard the destroyer escort USS *Jacob Jones*.

thing from everyone's mind. DE's [destroyer escorts] were built to protect other ships from submarines and air. We never thought we'd go up against a heavy concentration of Japanese fire.

you knew it, they were rolling the cans off the end of the ship, and the explosions came. We dropped about 10-12 depth charges, and that ship rocked when they exploded. We never got a confirm on it.

WWII: Did you have a feeling of more seriousness, like when you entered the Pacific?

JY: Oh yes. Then we knew we were in the war zone. That contact gave us that feeling. My reaction wasn't that, uh, oh, we could get hit any moment. It was more that we were going after the enemy and here was our chance and this is great, we're going to get a shot at them. We've got to protect these other ships out here.

WWII: Did Copeland conduct drills while in convoy?

JY: Yes. He drilled all the time. We didn't mind it because we knew how important it was.

We got back to Pearl Harbor for about 5 days. Then we went on other convoys. Finally we were told we were a part of the Seventh Fleet [in the Southwest Pacific]. That took us 10 or 11 days to get there. This was the trip where we had the crossing the line ceremony.

WWII: Can you describe the ceremony?

JY: All the guys who were pollywogs became shellbacks. If you're a mariner, you're called a pollywog. A piece of nothing. A shellback is a mariner who went across the equator. A lot of initiation, and it's tough, I mean it is tough! Oh man, they worked us over! We had about 20 guys who were shellbacks, and here we are sailing with the convoy, through enemy waters, having this big program. All the ships were doing the same thing. You always kept a crew on duty, manning some guns, and the guys going through it, once they were through they would relieve them. And oh boy!

We had to endure, all day long, getting orders. They made me and another guy get down on our stomachs and push a potato up to the bow. You would have to get your heavy pea jacket on, go to the bow and blow the horn. You had to meet the royal barber and the royal baby. The royal barber would cut your hair, and while he was doing it someone else would shock you. They paddled you and were always wetting you down with water hoses.

The last thing was a canvas, maybe 50-60 feet long, sewn together. They put the garbage in from the last 4 or 5 days, and you had to get down on your hands and knees and go through the canvas. While you doing it, they were paddling you. Once you made it through, you were a shellback.

WWII: Was that the standard procedure on all the ships?

JY: Yeah.

WWII: Would there be some instances of where one person had a grudge on another and took it out on him?

JY: Yes. As a matter of fact a couple of guys went to blows, but it was quickly over. It was a lot of fun. The crew paddled Copeland, but they did not bear down hard on him.

We had our division commander aboard ship at the time. One of the shellbacks knocked his hat off and into the water. One guy refused to go through it. He was isolated from then on. He was afraid, I guess. He was sort of a guy who got into trouble a lot.

WWII: Did you ever regret not being aboard a larger ship?

JY: No. Once I was on the *Samuel B. Roberts* I became a tin-can man, a tin-can sailor. We were the greyhounds of the fleet. If the fleet wanted a job done, call on the destroyers. That's how I feel about it to this day. You know what, John, every guy feels this way.

WWII: Do you remember entering Seeadler Harbor?

JY: What a huge harbor! As far as you could see, were ships, not only warships but supply ships, hundreds and hundreds.

WWII: What was your reaction when Copeland told everyone to get their personal affairs in order?

JY: I remember him saying something over the loudspeaker about this, to write letters home, etc. We knew we were going somewhere. The word got around that it was the Philippines. Hearing his announcement did not affect me too much. I wrote a letter, but you couldn't say much.

WWII: What about the typhoon on the way to the Philippines?

JY: That was something! I couldn't believe that thing. I was on watch at noon that second day, and when I got to Sky-1, when the ship was in the trough, it was like looking on both sides a wall of water as high as our radar's mast. Copeland gave the word for everyone to go inside. We were rolling and pitching and hanging on for dear life trying to get inside. Waves were coming over the bow. I must have had two inches of salt water crusted on my face.

We got inside and latched the doors. By late afternoon and evening we were taking rolls so that no one could stay in the bunks, the galley shut down because they couldn't cook. If you were standing on the deck, let's say, and she rolled to the starboard, you would stand on the bulkhead. Then it would come back the other way. All the boys will tell you, we felt the ship was going to turn over. We were all screaming, and it was terrible! That went on for two days, and guys were getting seasick. We were getting banged around. But our little ship came back.

The front 5-inch gun had been turned to the port to protect it, and the mount covering on the starboard side was caved in from the tons of water coming in. We heard some of the airplanes were ripped right off the escort carriers. Up until that time, that was the scariest experience of my life. It amazed me in the group that we were in, spread out over miles, that not one ship collided. How the hell did we avoid that?

The escort carrier *USS Gambier Bay* is bombarded by heavy shells from Japanese cruisers. Already spewing smoke, the vessel was lost during the the fight off Samar.





In his painting titled *Battle off Samar*, artist John Hamilton depicts American warships running a gauntlet of Japanese shellfire during the heroic effort to defend the beaches on the Philippine island of Leyte.

ENCOUNTER OFF SAMAR

Yusen and his shipmates headed toward history's largest naval encounter. As part of the escort carrier task group, Yusen's small ship was designed to provide protection for the escort carriers. No one had a clue that they would soon be involved in a titanic struggle for survival against some of the enemy's most potent warships. Their ship was neither designed for, nor expected to become involved in, a major surface action.

The Japanese had other ideas. In an intricate three-pronged assault, they intended to draw away Admiral William Halsey's fast carriers to the north while other Japanese forces steamed in and attacked the American landings to the south at Leyte Gulf. Admiral Clifton A.F. Sprague's 13 ships of Taffy 3 stood between the most powerful Japanese force and Leyte Gulf. If the Japanese were to succeed, they had to get past Taffy 3, steaming off the island of Samar. Yusen faced quite a surprise in the early morning hours of October 25, 1944.

WWII: What was the first inkling you had that something was about to happen off Samar?

JY: We knew the night before that something was going on, although we had no idea it would end up coming our way. We could see flashes and hear the sounds from Surigao Strait. We thought at first it was an electrical storm.

I was just being relieved when general quarters sounded. My battle station was at the forward 40mm gun, in front of the bridge. Captain Copeland came on the speaker and said, "Men, a large Japanese force is approaching 18

miles away. We are outnumbered but we will do our duty."

I was on the 0400 to 0800 watch, and when we went to GQ I thought, "My God, that's the Japanese fleet approaching." Boy were we surprised! We couldn't believe it. We were so young that when we heard they were 18 miles away, we thought we could easily outrun them. Then the salvos straddled us and we realized the seriousness of the situation.

He (Copeland) signed off, and just then we heard the Japanese guns 18 miles away boom. The shells passing overhead sounded like freight trains. Man, did they drench us with water from near misses! I think they were aiming at the [escort carrier] *Gambier Bay*. Ten minutes later we saw the first masts coming hard at us.

Admiral Sprague gave the signal for us to lay smoke. We went around the *Gambier Bay* twice to cover her with smoke. We then formed for a torpedo attack. We were right behind [destroyers] *Hoel*, *Heermann*, and the *Johnston*. Shells hit real close and burst in Technicolor. One shell hit our bow, went right through both sides, and exploded in the water. We closed to within 4,500 yards of a cruiser and let three fish go. I was right behind the bow in an exposed position, so I could see everything. One of the torpedoes blew off the cruiser's stern, and we cheered like we were at a baseball game, although we were scared.

We dueled cruisers with our 5-inch guns. Copeland did everything he could to evade being hit. He chased salvos, ran into rain-

squalls. Our 5-inch gun hit the superstructure of the cruiser, although the guns could do little damage. We then took two big hits. A total of about 26 hits got us altogether. In two and one-half hours we shot about 600 rounds of 5-inch shells. We ran out of regular shells, so we began shooting star shells. A cordite smell was all over and smoke covered everything. The Japanese ships were so close you could see their turrets turning.

WWII: Did you expect to survive?

JY: This was our first major action, and I thought I would survive at first. A few minutes later I changed my mind. They got so close to us in the next 45 minutes. When Sprague ordered us to attack straight at those Japanese ships, I knew we were in big trouble. You could hear shipmates saying things like, "We're out-gunned! Those are cruisers, and we're only destroyer escorts, and we are in bad shape."

But you push those thoughts out of your mind and get into the combat. You become too busy with the fighting to consciously think of getting hit and killed. Toward the middle of the battle, when those Japanese ships were so close and we took hits toward the back end, we realized this was for real. A Japanese cruiser was lying off about 8,000 yards, and we could see the enemy staring at us and firing. We could see the crew leveling the guns and the turrets turning toward us. They had been shooting over us at the carriers, but when they saw us shooting at them with our 5-inch guns, they slowly turned the turrets toward us! We were a bull's-eye and felt so vulnerable. I had a grandstand

seat in the forward 40mm right in front of the bridge and right behind a 5-inch gun, and I felt very exposed. We took many hits around us.

I recall one hit going through our bow and really shaking the ship. The bow came out of the water and knocked me over. We could feel major hits rocking and rolling the ship, but we could not leave our posts and take a look, of course.

We were getting hit, and we knew guys were getting hammered back there, but we were thinking of our own area and had our jobs to

is where we had that main hit back there that opened us up, and we were listing to port.

While I was standing there, the ship took more hits and things exploded. One guy, the ship's cook 3rd class, came up and said we got to get out of here. I told him to hang on for a minute because I was waiting for the raft to be cut down by Comet. Then we saw a guy coming from back aft up to the port side toward us. This sailor came by me, and there was nothing where his right shoulder and arm should be—there was a big hole there. Nothing was there.



An LCI (landing craft, infantry) lays a smokescreen to provide cover for Allied vessels heading toward the shore at Leyte.

do. You can't think of other things. It was very noisy. It's amazing that none of us on the forward gun got hit.

I feel Sprague did a hell of a job in protecting his carriers and sending us against the Japanese. That was our job and what he was supposed to do. We were the expendables, and that's what it was all about.

WWII: Tell about going into the water.

JY: Someone from the bridge yelled, "Abandon ship! Abandon ship! All hands abandon ship! Every man for himself!" I never worried about survival or thought about it until I got the order to abandon ship. Then I knew this was for real.

When the order came, Bud Comet, who was on my 41 gun, told me to go down to the port side and get near the raft. I came down on the main deck port side, but there was nobody there. Almost 99 percent of the crew went off the starboard side, the high side. The port side

He just walked past the cook and me. To this day I don't know who that man was.

Finally I looked up and the raft was there. The cook and I jumped in the water, but water that was being sucked in through a big hole in the ship's side started dragging us in. We were close to fire, and the cook and I mustered all the strength we could and we got around the pool of oil and fire to the back end of the ship. We were the only guys there. The water was covering the ship's name on the stern. We headed toward the starboard side. I didn't remove my shoes when I went into the water. They told us to keep them on because sharks can see white feet.

I looked up at the ship and saw guns back there all blown apart, torpedo tubes all gone, nothing but a big hole back there. "My God, half the ship is gone," I said. We had only our life jackets on, and a few minutes later Bud came by with the raft.

About 20 minutes later Bud came by with the raft and picked us up. The only guys who went off the port side that I know of were the cook, Comet, me, and the two or three men Comet picked up with the raft.

WWII: Did you see men go down with the ship?

JY: Yes. As we abandoned ship I looked to my left and saw two men sitting with their backs against a bulkhead with their knees up. I don't think they were wounded. They were just sitting there. I don't know if they were stunned from explosions or hurt, but they just sat there and went down with the ship. Other guys who were wounded and couldn't move also went down.

WWII: What was your reaction to seeing the ship disappear?

JY: We watched the ship lying over to the port side, then lift her bow straight up and sink. This is not happening, I thought.

WWII: What happened then?

JY: We swam to a raft about 100 yards from the ship. About 10 minutes later, Bud Comet, on another raft, joined us. Comet had gone into the huge hole to get some guys out. We had Bud tie his raft onto ours, and we tried to get some discipline. We were on the raft just shy of 60 hours. There were 50-60 men in and around the two rafts. The wounded were put in the rafts. We all thought we'd be picked up in minutes because of all of the other ships, but that didn't happen.

Our ship sank about 15-20 minutes after I got to the raft. It went straight down—nothing but bubbles left. Guys were either very quiet or sobbing. That ship was our home. There's something between sailors and their ship. When the *Roberts* sank I lost some money, about \$60-\$70, a watch, all my clothes, my seabag filled with winter stuff. All I had left was my identification bracelet. I still have it on my desk, still with some oil on it.

A Japanese cruiser started bearing directly down on us, but swerved about 60 yards away. One Japanese officer, the captain, saluted us as the ship passed by, and another guy was taking movie pictures.

WWII: What about during the night?

JY: Each guy in the water would help the guy next to him to stay awake by talking. With the sun down, it got terribly cold, and the wind made it worse. During the day it was just the opposite—very hot. The oil that covered us helped prevent heads from getting too sunburned.

We were getting tired because we had not eaten all day, had been through a battle, and now were in the water. One time I dozed off

near dusk and floated away with my life jacket propping up my head. I was about 100 yards out when Comet wondered where I was. He saw me and swam out and woke me up. It was now dark, so the other guys kept shouting, "Over here! Over here!" to get us back to the raft.

WWII: What was the second day in the water like?

JY: The second day was terrible. The sharks came along, and we could see their fins. The sharks dove, and when you couldn't see their fins you knew they were coming at you. It was such a helpless, useless feeling! At least during the battle we could do something. We men in the water would turn around so we faced the sharks, while the men in the raft grabbed onto us, and we would kick our legs to make splashes. The sharks didn't like it, and it worked a bit. My legs got so tired I almost couldn't lift them. The sharks would go out a ways then slowly start back in again. They got two guys. One guy's leg was bitten off, and he was bleeding so much we had to cut him loose because his blood attracted even more sharks. He floated away, and the sharks went after him. He ended up giving his life. He was just about dead when we cut him loose, so we got a much-needed rest from the sharks while they occupied their attention with him.

The sharks were also following our rafts because they could smell the blood of the wounded. Guys would say, "Here comes another one!" when a shark was moving toward us. One shark came right by me. It was at least 12 feet long. I kept still because I did not want to annoy it. Talk about being scared! I thought, "This is it. I'll never see my family."

WWII: Conditions must have been horrible on the raft. What about food?

JY: All we had was some malted tablets. No food or water. We had to tell guys not to drink the saltwater. You'd hallucinate, and then you can die. Guys didn't drink much on purpose, but the waves splashed us, or when we'd fall asleep we'd get mouthfuls. Some started to stab people because they were going crazy from drinking saltwater, so one man said let's throw all the knives away. We did. We took them from the guys who were doing the stabbing. Only one guy who was wounded in our raft died, a guy who was burned very bad. He suffered the whole time.

While we were in the water, we tried to make our way to land. The second day we saw some mountains way off and thought we could get there. We never got there,

which was good because Samar was filled with Japanese.

WWII: Did you ever lose hope?

JY: I thought after the second night that I would not survive another twelve hours. It was freezing cold, we had no water, food, or medicine. We were beat and trying to pull the raft. Guys were drinking saltwater and hallucinating. Guys said they were going below to get beans. It was really getting out of hand. Men were getting angrier because we were not being



U.S. Navy

American sailors, who survived the sinking of their ship during the Battle off Samar, are shown here being rescued by another vessel after the Japanese force has withdrawn in the face of stiff resistance.

rescued. Some cried, prayed, sang hymns. I prayed that I would be able to see my family again. The last night we were so weak and could feel the strength going. We were all young kids and in good shape, but we weren't prepared for this. We figured the rescue efforts focused on the carriers, and we were off the beaten track, away from the action, and harder to locate. The other guys, from the *Gambier Bay* and *St. Lo*, were more together, but we were on a tangent.

WWII: How were you rescued?

JY: I started to lose hope after that horrible second day. On the third morning, I thought that I could not go through another day and night. Someone that morning yelled, "There's a ship!" Chambless stood on the raft, other guys held him, and signaled the ship with some civvies. The ship

approached, and we saw the American flag. What a feeling! The ship came closer, and through a megaphone we hear, "Who won the World Series?" With all the oil we could have been Japs. We all shouted, "St. Louis, goddamn it!"

We got all the wounded guys up to the ship first, then us. We had to go up a long ladder to the hospital ship, and we were so weak I barely made it to the top of the ladder. A nurse and two orderlies grabbed me. Then I passed out. What a feeling of relief to finally get out of the water! They put a blanket around me, gave me some booze, and then I lay down on the deck and I was out.

I opened my eyes six or seven hours later, and we were in Leyte Harbor. While I slept, two Japanese planes attacked. Our fire drove them away, but I slept through all the noise. transferred to an army hospital ship in Leyte Harbor. I got most of the oil off me by showers, but oil came out of my ears for a month afterward.

When we were picked up and realized what had happened, that the Japanese turned back, we were angry. Where in hell were the rescue ships? Where were our own Taffy 3 ships? There were some hard feelings toward Sprague, but not a lot.

WWII: When did you know for sure that you had made it?

JY: I guess it was when we saw that ship coming toward us and we saw the flag. That night, when I was put on the hospital ship, I was sure I made it. The boys of the ship that picked us up removed our clothes to remove the oil, then wrapped us in blankets. We got clothes the next day on the hospital ship.

I had salt water poisoning in my legs, and my ears were blocked by the oil. I don't know how I didn't get hit by shrapnel, but those were the only things I had.

WWII: What happened after you were rescued?

JY: I spent two days on the hospital ship, then I was sent to Hollandia, New Guinea. I was in an army camp there for two days. The former luxury ocean liner, *Lurline*, took us to Australia. From there, in 14 nonstop days, we got to San Francisco without any escort. By the time I got back to San Francisco on December 1, 1944, I got my weight back to about 152 from the 101 it was. Dehydration and all the activity in the water made us lose so much weight.

Two days before the *Lurline* arrived in San Francisco, we all met with Copeland. He said he wanted another ship and we all said

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WITH THE GERMAN SIXTH ARMY DESTROYED AT STALINGRAD, the Soviet juggernaut lunged west and southwest across the River Donets. The Soviets seemed unstoppable, recapturing the major city of Kharkov from the Germans on February 14, 1943. However, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein was only waiting for the Soviets to overextend themselves.

Once the Soviet armor ran dry of fuel and low on ammunition, Manstein unleashed Army Group South's riposte. Fresh panzer formations sliced into the startled Soviet flanks, ripping apart two Soviet Fronts (Army Groups). Manstein's brilliant counteroffensive restored the southern front and culminated in an SS frontal assault and a triumphant recapture of Kharkov.

Meanwhile, to the north of the Donets campaign, the Soviet winter offensive was held at bay before Orel by Field Marshal Günther von Kluge's Army Group Center. Operations everywhere then bogged down to a standstill as the Russian spring thawed the frozen earth and turned it to mud. The thick "*rasputitsa*" clung to steel tank tracks, to truck tires, to the hoofs of tired horses, and to the boots of exhausted soldiers.

The front was left with a gargantuan Soviet salient, 150 miles long and 100 miles wide, bulging around the town of Kursk between the two German army groups. The Kursk salient was consequently the target of the last, great German summer offensive, ending with the legendary tank battles in the environs of Oboian and Prokhorovka.

With the third summer of the German-Soviet war approaching, the Red Army war machine had grown more powerful while that of the Germans proportionally declined. Despite VonManstein's recent victory at Kharkov, only the most fanatical senior German commanders, along with Hitler, believed that the Soviet Union could be decisively defeated. A stalemate, however, was still in the cards, but only if the Germans managed to retain the initiative. To do so, Col. Gen. Kurt Zeitzler, chief of Army general staff, proposed eliminating the Kursk salient.

In what came to be known as Operation Citadel, the Ninth Army of von Kluge's Army Group Center would strike for Kursk from the north while his Second Army defended the western face of the salient. At the same time, von Manstein's Army Group South would attack toward Kursk from the south with Colonel General Herman Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army and General Werner Kempf's Army Detachment. Once the two German army groups met, the Soviet armies in the salient would be encircled and consequently destroyed. The Eastern Front would be straightened out, allowing German troops to be transferred to the West along with thousands of Soviet prisoners to toil in the Reich's factories and on its farms. Such were the rewards of victory, and to achieve it Zeitzler counted on the new, vaunted Panther tanks and the Ferdinand or "Elephant" tank destroyer.

Hitler presented Zeitzler's plan to his senior Army commander on May 3-4. VonManstein argued that Citadel might have worked in April, when Hitler first signed the operational order, but now its "success was doubtful." Field Marshal Walter Model, commander of the Ninth Army, cautioned that the plan was painfully obvious and that the Soviets were already preparing deep and strong defensive positions.

VonKluge, who liked to curry favor with Hitler but was known as a fence sitter, supported Citadel but argued against any further delay, so if it failed he could not be blamed. Col. Gen. Heinz Guderian, the inspector general of armored troops, called the idea "pointless," certain to result in heavy tank casualties. Furthermore, he made it clear that the Panthers and the Elephants were in no way ready for combat.


When Wilhem Keitel, Hitler's chief of the armed forces high command, later argued for the attack on political reasons, Guderian spat back, "How many people do you think even know where Kursk is?" Hitler admitted the idea made his "stomach turn over," but eventually not only decided in favor of Citadel but delayed it for two months until the new tanks were ready.

Historian Charles Winchester has aptly noted, "The idea that an offensive involving millions of men fighting across a battlefield half the size of England could be determined by a few hundred new tanks shows touching faith in technology."

Hitler's delays played right into Soviet hands. Stalin heeded the advice of Marshal Georgi K. Zhukov, deputy commander of the Red Army, and Marshal Aleksandr



The climactic tank battle at Kursk spelled the beginning of the end for the Wehrmacht in Russia.
By Ludwig Heinrich Dyck



This captured painting by a German combat artist appears like a fiery image from Dante's *Inferno*. German tanks advance past the blazing hulks of Soviet armored vehicles toward their next engagement.

SHOWDOWN AT PROKHOROVKA AND OBOIAN

M. Vasilevsky, chief of the Army general staff, to postpone a Soviet offensive until the Germans bled themselves dry on the Kursk defenses. And those defenses were awe inspiring. Half a million railcars rolled into the Kursk salient, pouring in division after division. Whole towns in the forward areas were evacuated. Three hundred thousand civilians, mostly women and old men, helped dig trenches and build fortifications. The southern shoulder of the salient alone boasted 2,600 miles of trenches and mine densities of 5,000 per mile of

strongest fortress in the world.” If this was not adversity enough, the Soviets had twice as many men, two and a half times as many guns and mortars, 900 more planes, and 750 more tanks than the Germans.

Just before the battle, an SS trooper in the coal black darkness outside of a command bunker thought to himself, “The mud might slow us down but it cannot stop us. Nothing will.” Alfred Novotny, a fusilier of the elite Grossdeutschland Panzergrenadier Division, was of the same mind: “We were totally con-

regimes, each bent on the utter annihilation of its foe. The German attack in the south opened at 3 PM on July 4, 1943, followed 12 hours later by the attack in the north. Forewarned of the exact time of Model’s attack by intelligence operatives, Soviet commanders ordered their artillery to bombard Model’s front lines before his own artillery had a chance to open up. The Germans answered back with air strikes and with a short but intense bombardment.

Tiger tanks, Elephant tank destroyers, and Brummbar self-propelled artillery battalions of the Ninth Army smashed gaps into the Soviet defenses and chewed up counterattacks by the Soviet Central Front. Through the gaps poured the panzer and infantry divisions, only to find another of eight skillfully defended defensive belts.

Not only were the Soviet defenses far thicker than anticipated, but Hitler’s beloved 89 Elephants, all fighting with Army Group Center, did not live up to expectations. Although their powerful, long L/71 88mm guns proved deadly to Soviet armor, the 67-ton Elephants were underpowered and lacked a machine gun for protection against enemy infantry. When attacked by Soviet close-combat infantry anti-tank units, some Elephant crews tried to fend off the Soviets by firing their MG-42 machine guns through the main barrel.

Another nasty surprise was the Central Front’s 12 new SU-152s. The front’s 152mm assault gun unit knocked out seven Elephants and 12 Tigers of Model’s attacking units, earning it the nickname *Zveroboi* (animal hunter). After a week of round-the-clock fighting, Model’s exhausted Ninth Army was nowhere near breaking into the open, having only penetrated nine miles.

Soviet casualties were heavy, but they did not prevent Zhukov from launching an offensive in the Orel sector on Model’s northern flank on July 11. From then on, Model was hard pressed just to contain a Soviet breakthrough. Zhukov, who had failed to destroy Army Group Center in two previous winter offensives, remained fixated on its destruction. He should have paid more attention to the southern flank of the salient, where VonManstein’s thrust made dangerous gains.

Alfred Novotny has never forgotten the 4th Panzer Army’s opening artillery barrage and the foul weather that accompanied it: “The first hours of the Kursk offensive still cause flashbacks 50-odd years later. Sometimes I think I can still hear the incredible loud noise of the German weapons ... flak, artillery, mortars, Stukas, and Nebelwerfers. I cannot forget the endless, terrible rain, rain, and more rain. We



TOP: In an attempt to beat back a Red Army breakthrough near Belgorod, German artillery fires at the Soviet spearhead. In the foreground, a Waffen SS grenadier keeps watch over Soviet prisoners.

RIGHT: The Mark V Panther medium tank was the German response to the outstanding performance of the Red Army’s T-34. The Panther sported sloped hull armor and a 75mm high velocity cannon.



front, laid out to channel the panzers into the crossfire of antitank strongholds.

The 48th Panzer Corps Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Friedrich W. von Mellenthin, poignantly summoned up the German predicament: “The Russians were aware of what was coming and had converted the Kursk front into another Verdun. The German Army threw away all its advantages of mobile tactics, and met the Russians on a ground of their own choosing. Instead of seeking to create conditions in which maneuver would be possible ... the German Supreme Command could think of nothing better than to fling our magnificent panzer divisions against Kursk, which had become the

vinced as soldiers that Kursk would turn the war around again, in favor of Germany. We, the Fusiliers and Grenadiers, would do it!” The high morale was due in part to the fact that the soldiers were unaware of what they were facing. The troops were “prepared to endure any losses and carry out every task given to them,” but “the Russians are masters at the art of camouflage. Inevitably their strength was considerably underestimated,” reflected Mellenthin.

Over 2 million men, 35,000 guns, 6,250 tanks and assault guns, and 4,900 aircraft were flung at each other by two merciless totalitarian

were totally drenched, heavily laden down with equipment, knee deep in mud all around us.”

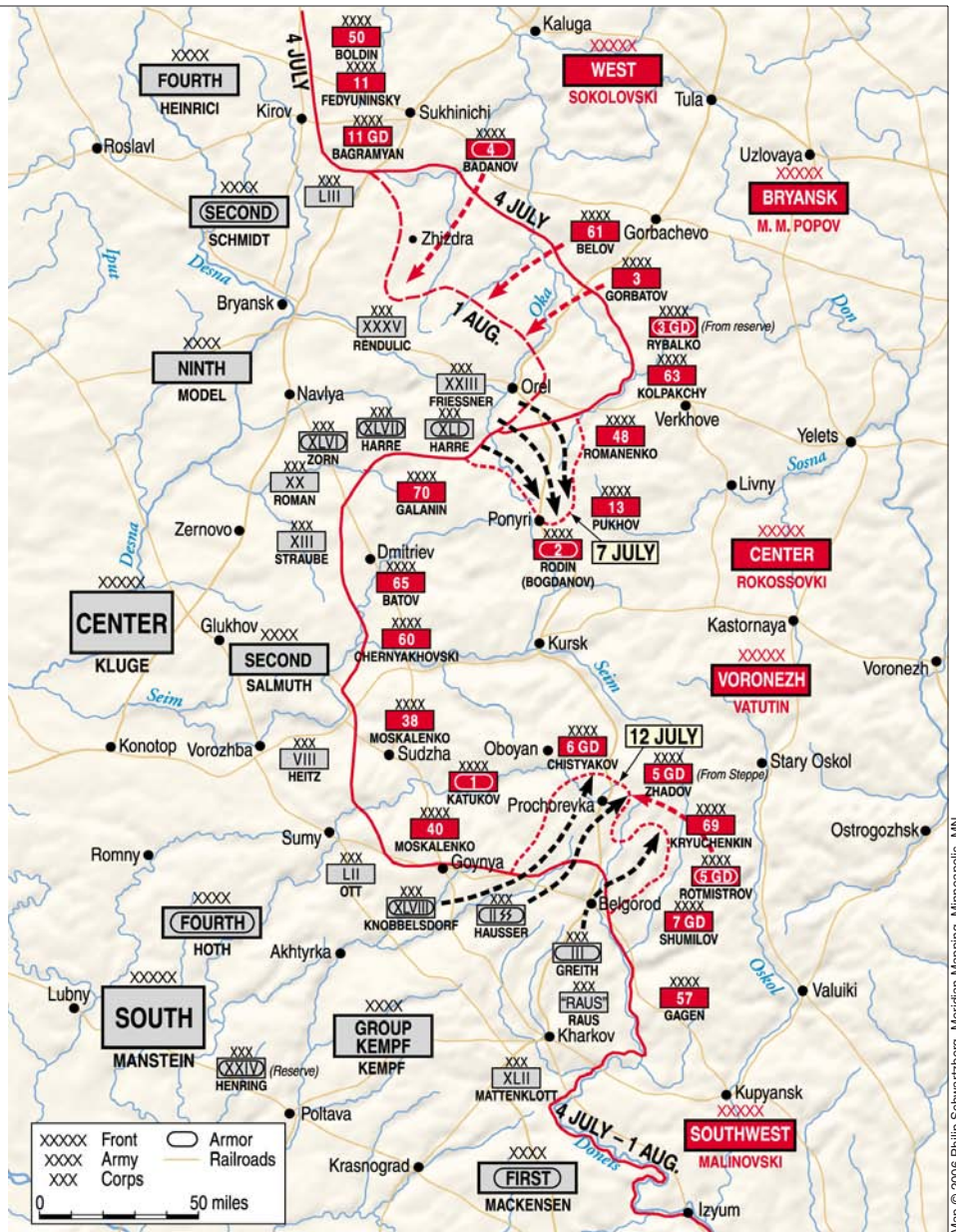
The Soviet defenses facing Novotny and his comrades were as formidable as they were in the north, but the defending Soviet armies had more front line to cover and, unlike Model, VonManstein used massed armor formations from the onset. A bombardment that used more shells than the French and Polish campaigns combined opened the way for Hoth's 4th Panzer Army, the most powerful concentration of German armor under a single command during World War II.

The 4th Panzer Army blasted its way through the defenses of the Soviet 1st Tank Army and 6th Guards Army. The latter's Guards distinction and the superior equipment that came along with it were indicative of its elite, veteran status. There were many Guards divisions at Kursk, and most of them had earned their distinction at Stalingrad.

Fighting with the 48th Panzer Corps on 4th Panzer Army's left wing, the 200 Panthers at Kursk turned out to be a disappointment just like the Elephants to the north. Although the Panther eventually turned out to be arguably the best tank design of the war, at Kursk it suffered from mechanical problems and inadequately trained crews. By the second day of the battle, the Panthers, armed with high-velocity 75mm guns, were reduced to 50 in number. After five days, there were only 10 left.

The bulk of the fighting was left to the old workhorses of the German Army, the Panzer Mark IIIs and Mark IVs with their new anti-tank rifle side skirts, the assault guns, and a relative few of the feared heavy Tigers, with their 88mm guns, to the defeat the Soviet armor. With their help, the battle-hardened veterans of General Otto von Knobelsdorff's 48th Panzer Corps fought their way through swamps and streams and overcame mine-infested belts of trenches. Strongholds of camouflaged antitank rifle infantry, sappers with explosives, dug in heavy antitank guns, Soviet T-34 medium tanks, and tank destroyers awaited the German armor.

Not only that, but the land sloped upward toward Kursk, giving the Soviets a clear view. Even so, Grossdeutschland managed to reach the outskirts of the villages of Kruglik and Nowoselowka by July 9. On the left wing of the 48th Panzer Corps, however, General Mikhail E. Katukov's 1st Tank Army held up the 3rd Panzer Division in the woods north of Beresowka. To capitalize on this limited success, General Nikolay F. Vatutin, commander of the Voronezh Front, transferred two tank corps and a rifle division from his reserve to Katukov.



With its left flank dangerously exposed, Grossdeutschland abandoned its northward drive and swung to the southwest on July 10, to trap and destroy the enemy between Grossdeutschland and the 3rd Panzer Division. The diary of a Grossdeutschland soldier reads, “Squadron after squadron of Stukas come over to drop their deadly eggs on the Russian armor. Dazzling white flames indicate that another enemy tank has brewed up.”

A Major Franz of the Grossdeutschland assault gun battalion sped toward the village of Kruglik when “at 300 meters from the village ... I suddenly saw fiery red arrows coming toward us from the outskirts. There were explosions directly in front of the mass of advancing assault guns ... we were under fire from a Stalin gun.”

Germans attempt to reduce the Soviet salient around the village of Kursk, resulting in the greatest tank battle in the history of modern warfare. The Germans attacked from north and south, but were kept at bay after fierce fighting.

General Andrei L. Getman remembered, “Many of our soldiers and commanders fell heroically in the five days of ferocious battle. Nevertheless, the corps continued to resist the enemy. Meeting organized fire resistance he ceased his attacks by nightfall.”

That evening, the 3rd Panzer Division had joined the chaotic fighting among the groves and ravines that nearly eliminated the 6th Tank Corps. On July 11, the remnants of the 6th Tank Corps and the mauled 90th Guards Rifle Division pulled back to the west. The 3rd Panzer Division filled Grossdeutschland's for-

ward positions, allowing the latter to prepare for a renewed push to the north. It was not to be. During the night of the 11th, reinforced Soviet counterattacks flung the 3rd Panzer Division out of its new positions.

While Grossdeutschland dealt with the problems on its left flank, Knobelsdorff ordered the 11th Panzer Division to strike north along the road to Oboian and to the River Ps'ol. Its vanguard stood on the highest point on the way to Oboian. A soldier remembered, "One could see far into the valley of the Ps'ol River, the last natural barrier before Kursk. With field glasses the towers of Oboian could be made out in the fine haze. Oboian

On his left flank, the 3rd SS Panzer Grenadier Division Totenkopf (Death's Head) crossed the Ps'ol on pontoon bridges on the 10th and immediately engaged the Soviet 52nd Guards Rifle Division and the 11th Motorized Rifle Brigade. To avoid further bridging operations for his heavy tanks, Hausser's two other panzer-grenadier divisions advanced south of the river.

The 1st Leibstandarte (Bodyguard) SS Adolf Hitler and the 2nd SS Das Reich (The State) panzergrenadier divisions pushed eastward through Soviet artillery barrages and dug-in tanks of the Soviet 2nd Tank Corps and elements of the 5th Guards Army. Leibstandarte spearheads were already at the outskirts of the

schnapps. Submachine gunners opened fire on the run and concealed themselves behind the tanks. A squall of 3rd Battalion fire met the Fascists. The long bursts of [Soviet] heavy machine guns struck the infantry in the flanks."

Meanwhile, General Herman Breith's 3rd Panzer Corps' northward thrust east of the Donets was constantly thwarted by the 7th Guards Army and the 69th Army. Von Manstein urged Kempf to have Breith catch up to the 2nd SS Corps and cover its right flank. On July 11, the Tigers of the 503rd Heavy Panzer Detachment ripped through the Soviet 305th Rifle Division and tore into the 107th Rifle Division to its rear. The 6th Panzer Divi-



National Archives

The Mark VI Tiger tank, with its 88mm cannon, was perhaps the most feared weapon in the Wehrmacht arsenal; however, the mammoth tank was plagued by mechanical failures and an insatiable appetite for fuel.

was the objective. It seemed within an arm's reach. Barely 12 miles away."

Although bloodily slashed by the 11th Panzer Division, the Soviet defenders refused to give way. Not only that, but Vatutin gathered his forces for a massive counterstroke to "encircle and destroy the main German grouping penetrating to Oboian and Prokhorovka." Victory for either side still hung in the balance, for, on the right wing of the 4th Panzer Army, the 2nd SS Panzer Corps was simultaneously on the verge of a decisive breakthrough.

SS General Paul "Papa" Hausser's cream of the Waffen SS armor reached the River Ps'ol.

Prokhorovka on July 9. The SS formations were aided by initial German air superiority and by Vatutin's massive, chaotic redeployments, which caused Soviet units to pull back in some areas.

By July 11, paratroopers had dug in and stiffened Soviet resistance. A trooper of the 9th Guards Airborne Division recalled, "The village of Lutovo shuddered from exploding bombs, shells and mines. The soldiers observed the enemy from foxholes. Infantry poured out of the armored transporters. The distorted faces of the Fascists bore witness ... that their warlike ardor was roused by a large dose of

sion lunged forward nearly eight miles, and the 19th Panzer Division also made good progress. Although Breith's armored spearheads were still 15 miles from Prokhorovka, the remaining Soviet defenses were too weak to absorb another German assault. Unless Vatutin immediately rushed in reinforcements, Breith and Hausser would break through to Prokhorovka.

Seven Soviet armies now surrounded the 20-mile deep bulge that the armor formations and the following infantry divisions of 4th Panzer Army and the Kempf Army had bitten into the Kursk salient. To blunt the German advance and at the same time launch his massive coun-

teroffensive, Vatutin rushed in Lt. Gen. Pavel A. Rotmistrov's crack 5th Guards Tank Army. The 5th Guards Tank Army, along with the already committed 5th Guards Army, was transferred from Col. Gen. Ivan S. Konev's Steppe Front. Konev's Front was to lead the planned post-Kursk counteroffensive.

The early commitment of two of the Steppe Front's armies shows how critical the situation had become at Prokhorovka. Stalin even ordered Zhukov to fly to the Prokhorovka area and personally oversee the two Fronts. Reinforced by two tank corps and self-propelled artillery units, Rotmistrov fielded a total of 850 tanks, including 500 T-34s. Vatutin ordered Rotmistrov, "On the morning of 12 July, together with the 1st Tank and 5th Guards Army, launch a decisive offensive to destroy the enemy southwest of Prokhorovka."

At dawn on July 12, the 121 tanks and assault guns of the Totenkopf Division prepared to shatter the Soviet defenses and advance northeastward on the ridgeline north of the Ps'ol. The day promised to be humid, and clouds hung over the horizon. Brutal, indecisive fighting against three Guards rifle divisions raged throughout the day.

South of Prokhorovka, Hoth was on the battlefield watching the ensuing carnage in Das Reich's sector through a trench telescope. Das Reich was forced on the defensive because the delay of 3rd Panzer Corps exposed its right flank to Soviet attacks.

During the day, 50 Soviet armored vehicles drove along one of the *balkas*, or valley bottoms, past a group of T-34s lined up on the ridge. There were white crosses on the turrets of the T-34s on the ridge. These were captured T-34s of Das Reich, and they suddenly opened fire on the vehicles below.

The first Soviet vehicle in line was also the only one equipped with a radio, and it was hit immediately. One after another, the Soviet vehicles exploded in flames. In another area of Das Reich, a T-34 rammed into a field kitchen before being destroyed in close combat. On the 12th, SS 2nd Lt. Hans Mennel, in command of a Mark IV, knocked out his 24th Soviet tank during the fighting.

Between Totenkopf and Das Reich, the Leibstandarte launched its attack at 6:50 that morning. Soviet artillery and Katyusha rockets howled upon the German formations. The Leibstandarte's panzergrenadiers struck eastward, north, and south of the railway line that led northeast toward Prokhorovka. Crewmen in black uniforms and camouflage jackets took last puffs on their cigarettes and climbed into their sand yellow and red-brown

Mark IVGs. The 1st SS Panzer Regiment's 67 tanks revved up their engines. Steel tracks clanged toward purple walls of smoke, flares from German reconnaissance planes, rising above the undulating ridgelines ahead. The smoke signaled a warning that enemy tanks were approaching.

The engine noise of the Red Army's 18th and 29th Tank Corps roared from the direction of Prokhorovka. Hundreds of Soviet tanks in waves of 40 or 50, with Guards Airborne riflemen piled on top of them, rolled out of the town and surrounding area.

The Soviet tanks charged at great speed, colliding head-on with the SS grenadiers and SS Major Martin Gross's 2nd Panzer Battalion. An SS 2nd lieutenant related, "They were around us, on top of us, and between us. We fought man to man, jumping out of our foxholes to lob our magnetic hollow charge grenades at the



order or operate in formation. The shells fired at close range pierced not only the side armor but also the frontal armor," witnessed Rotmistrov from his observation post on a hill.

"A T-34 began to burn," reported Ribbentrop. "It was only 50 to 70 meters from us. At the same instant the tank next to me took a direct hit and went up in flames. His neighbor to the right was also hit and soon it was also in flames. The avalanche of tanks rolled straight toward us ... from this range every round was a hit."

Ribbentrop knocked out four more Soviet tanks. On the last one, he scored a direct hit at 10 meters. He recalled, "The T-34 exploded, and its turret flew about three meters through the air, almost striking my tank's gun."

Ribbentrop had turned with the waves of Soviet tanks that swept by him. Soon they were under withering fire from German assault guns



TOP: Soviet soldiers labored to dig 6,000 miles of defensive trenches prior to the commencement of Operation Citadel. More than 300,000 Russian civilians contributed to the effort. **LEFT:** Soviet Marshal Georgi Zhukov, a commander of the Red Army units engaged at Kursk, strides to a meeting with subordinates. To his right is Aleksandr Vasilevsky, chief of the Soviet general staff.

enemy tanks. It was hell! Our company alone destroyed 15 Russian tanks."

SS 1st Lt. Rudolf von Ribbentrop, son of the Nazi foreign minister, commanded a company of six Mark IVs, which drove down a slope to aid the hard-pressed panzergrenadiers. Ribbentrop's company knocked out a handful of T-34s at 800 meters. The Mark IV, the most common German tank at Kursk, was not as fast as the T-34 or as heavily armored, but it had a superior gun and fire control. In the end, tactics and training proved decisive.

Soviet infantry, dead or alive, were hurled off the burning tanks. With its infantry seeking cover, the Soviet armor bravely sped on until the tanks of both sides sliced through each other. "There was neither time nor room to disengage from the enemy and reform in battle

and two more panzer companies lurking down the slope behind an antitank ditch. Amid the thick smoke and dust, the jumble of Soviet tanks and wrecked vehicles, Ribbentrop's Mark IV remained unnoticed by the Soviet tanks around him. "Machine guns firing, we rolled through a mass of [Soviet] troops from behind," he said.

Ribbentrop pulled his Mark IV into cover behind a destroyed T-34 and joined the slaughter of the Soviets tanks trying desperately to cross a bridge over the antitank ditch. "Burning T-34s ran into and over one another. It was a total inferno of fire and smoke, and impacting shells and explosions," he remembered. A shell hit Ribbentrop's turret, driving the gunner's sight into his eye and inflicting a serious head injury. He was able to reach the safety of

Bohr: National Archives

the German lines after he and his crew had knocked out 14 Soviet tanks.

Meanwhile, north of Oktiabr'skii, the Tigers of SS Captain Heinrich Kling's 13th Heavy Panzer Company crushed through hedgerows and thickets. Suddenly, a wave of 60 Soviet tanks swept out of a wood less than a mile away. Second Lieutenant Michael Wittmann's Tiger rocked from the recoil as his 88mm gun knocked out the first T-34. The Soviet tanks fired on the go, rapidly closing the distance. Four Tigers were hit and temporarily crippled.

Wittmann's Tiger shuddered from two hits but remained unfazed although his radio operator received a wound in the upper arm. "Three o'clock, three hundred!" cried Wittmann. A T-34 appeared out of some bushes. It swung its 76.2mm gun toward Wittmann's Tiger, but Wittmann's gunner, Balthasar Woll, was faster. The 88mm muzzle flashed and blew the turret off the T-34.

flames and smoke of burning grass. He had passed Prokhorovka when Kling's voice rang through the radio, "Achtung! Strong force of enemy tanks approaching from ahead! Many tanks!" Soviet tanks of the 181st Tank Brigade closed in from about a mile away, disappearing into a valley and then reappearing over a rise. The stationary Tigers' guns opened and maintained a rapid rate of fire. Numerous Soviet tanks were blown to pieces, but the remaining machines kept coming. They had to close to within 800 meters to be able to penetrate the Tigers' frontal armor.

Leading a group of 15 tanks, Captain P.A. Skripkin's T-34 closed in on Wittmann's platoon. "Forward, follow me!" he shouted. Skripkin fired a round into a Tiger's side, disabling it. Wittmann's Tiger responded by pumping two rounds into Skripkin's tank. Skripkin was wounded, and his crew pulled him out of the burning T-34. The driver jumped back in, and

south of Storozhevo, the battle seesawed back and forth. The Leibstandarte's efforts to advance were thwarted by packs of Soviet tanks and infantry. The 1st Panzer Regiment was forced back to Oktiabr'skii. By 6 PM, the 181st Tank Brigade, assisted by the 170th Tank Brigade, threatened to sever the link between the Leibstandarte and Totenkopf at the village of Vasil'evka. Meanwhile, at Storozhevo, Leibstandarte grenadiers reeled under an avalanche of Soviet tanks and mounted infantry.

A tank destroyer crewman recounted, "Salvo after salvo of Stalin's Organs rained down upon our positions, with artillery and mortar shells in between. T-34 after T-34 rolled over the hill ... three ... five ... ten ... but what was the use of counting?" At one point Soviet tanks penetrated to Komsomolets, threatening Leibstandarte's command post and engaging its artillery regiment at point-blank range.



Silhouetted against a battle-scarred landscape, a German Tiger tank is seen in action at Kursk on July 13, 1943.

Captain Hans Ulrich Rudel's Stukas appeared above the dueling tanks. Oily black smoke spiraled into the sky. Like birds of prey, the Stukas howled down upon the Soviet tanks. Armed with 37mm cannon, the Stukas blasted at the vulnerable Soviet rear armor. Swarms of Soviet Yak fighters appeared, shooting up the slow Stukas. Then, Messerschmitt Me-109 fighters tore into the Yaks until the chaos and destruction on the ground was mirrored in the sky.

Wittmann's platoon of three Tigers pushed on through the storm of steel, through the

like a flaming ball of fire his T-34 tore down onto SS Staff Sergeant Georg Löttsch's Tiger. Löttsch steered straight toward the oncoming Soviet tank, slammed on the brakes and fired. The 88mm round hit the edge of the turret and ricocheted into the sky. The 30-ton T-34 rammed into Löttsch's Tiger, shaking the ground with its impact. Flames engulfed both tanks. Löttsch kept his nerves and backed out just before the T-34's ammunition exploded.

Despite horrendous losses, the Soviets kept up the pressure. From north of Oktiabr'skii to

By midafternoon the sky broke into heavy showers. Rain sizzled on swaths of smoldering tank carcasses, and roads turned into mud pits. Combat in the 29th and 18th Tank Corps sector ground to a halt. Both sides were too drained by the terrible ordeal to go on.

All along Vatutin's front, the 4th Panzer Army advances on July 12th had been arrested or slowed down, but so had Vatutin's own offensive. The cost had been extremely heavy. The 5th Guards Tank Army lost about 650 tanks, although only 250 or so of them were

total write-offs. Gross's battalion alone accounted for 90 Soviet tanks, earning him the Knight's Cross. The 2nd SS Corps lost just over 60 tanks and assault guns completely destroyed. The SS owed part of its success to the one-eyed "Papa" Hausser who "untiringly led all day from the front," inspiring his troops with "his presence, his bravery and his humor, even in the most difficult situations," noted Hoth, whose recommendation earned Hausser the oakleaves to his Knight's Cross.

During the night, troopers dug in and prepared for renewed offensives on the 13th. Soviet and German soldiers alike felt that victory could be achieved if, somehow, the last bits of energy could be called forth. The following day, the weight of the battle in the 2nd SS Corps sector switched from the Leibstandarte to Totenkopf and Das Reich. With its remaining 54 tanks and 20 assault guns, Totenkopf continued to advance north of the Ps'ol, engaging two Guards rifle divisions and the 51st Guards Tank Regiment. Totenkopf reached its objective, the Prokhorovka-Kartashevka road, but was forced to relinquish its gains due to serious attacks on its left flank and the Leibstandarte's failure to keep abreast south of the river.

Northeast of Oktiabri'skii, the Leibstandarte was flung back by airborne troops and riflemen supported by Soviet tanks, antitank guns, artillery, and mines. Rotmistrov related, "The fire of our Katyushas always instilled terror in the Fascists. Suffering great losses, the enemy was forced to fall back, abandoning the burning tanks and the bodies of his dead soldiers and officers." The Soviets went on the offensive, but just north of Komsomolets State Farm they were given a dose of the German's own nebelwerfer rocket launchers.

South of the Leibstandarte, Das Reich captured Storozhevoe and reached the outskirts of Vingaradovka, giving the Soviets cause for concern. It looked like Das Reich might link up with the 3rd Panzer Corps, which was rapidly gaining ground due to a daring night coup by Major Franz Bäke of the 6th Panzer Division.

A T-34 had led a column of vehicles into the darkness behind Soviet lines. The guards at the trenches must not have looked closely because the T-34s' markings were painted over and replaced with a small cross. It was one of the score or so of T-34s in German service, and Bäke used it to lead his battalions past the Russian sentries. After six miles or so, the T-34 broke down, "no doubt moved by national sentiments," Bäke opined.

On crept Bäke's battalions, past stationary T-34s, their crews sleeping in the grass. A column of Soviet tanks appeared heading in the oppo-



TOP: Soviet T-34 tanks, supported by thousands of Red Army soldiers, advance rapidly during a counter-attack at Kursk. The resurgent Soviet military managed to contain the German offensive and later undertake its drive on Berlin.

LEFT: Russian infantry service field artillery and fire small arms at attacking Germans in defense of the Kursk salient.

site direction. In the darkness, all tanks looked the same, or did they? He recalled, "They obviously believed [Bäke's tanks] to be their own tanks returning from the front. Twenty-two tanks passed my unit, almost track to track. But then six or seven pulled out of the column, turned, rolled back and pulled in behind us." Bäke turned his Panzer to block the T-34s. Although his own command panzer had only a dummy gun for protection, Bäke ordered the rest of his unit to continue and to secure the objective bridge.

The T-34s ominously drew up in a semicircle while Bäke and his operations officer slipped out of their panzer. They crept up to the T-34s and attached hollow charges. A handful of infantry was hitching a ride on one of the T-34s. One of them noticed Bäke and raised his rifle. Bäke snatched the rifle from the Russian's hand and jumped into a ditch. One after the other, three explosions lit up the night. One of Bäke's tanks knocked out a fourth T-34. German and Soviet machine-gun and tank fire erupted. The startled Soviets withdrew across

the nearby Donets Bridge at Rzhavets and blew it up behind them but could not prevent German grenadiers from wading across the river.

The bridge was captured and repaired, leaving the 3rd Panzer Corps free to thrust northward. To stop them, General Kuzma Trufanov, deputy commander of the 5th Guards Tank Army, hurled one rifle division, two reinforced Guards tank, Dugades and two mechanized brigades at the 3rd Panzer Corps. On July 13, while the 19th Panzer Division, and behind it the 7th Panzer Division, were trying to move out of the bridgehead, the 6th Panzer Division was busy fending off Trufanov's divisions around Aleksandrovka to the east. That day, the 6th Panzer Division suffered a heavy blow from friendly fire. A German Heinkel He-111 bomber accidentally bombed 6th Panzer Division headquarters, killing 15 and wounding Bäke and his division commander, Maj. Gen. Walther von Hünersdorf, and 47 other officers.

To the west, Grossdeutschland's northward advance on July 13 was cancelled due to

Continued on page 76

Both: National Archives

IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF

May 11, 1943, the silhouettes of two submarines silently rose to the surface in the icy cold waters off the coast of Attu, an island in the Aleutian chain. The vessels were the *USS Narwhal* and the *USS Nautilus*, and they were carrying nearly 250 men from the Provisional Scout Battalion of the 7th Infantry Division.

Captain William H. Willoughby, leader of the group, gathered his soldiers at the rear of the sub, and they quietly inflated their rubber boats for the ride to the shore. As the subs descended, the water rose, freeing the rafts. When the pair of vessels slipped away, the infantrymen started paddling toward their objective. The Battle for Attu was about to commence.

becomes progressively worse in the western part of the chain, but all the islands are marked by craggy mountains and scant vegetation.”

This all changed when Japan sent bombers to raid Dutch Harbor, located on Unalaska Island, in June 1942. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander of the Japanese fleet, decided to attack Dutch Harbor to convince the United States that the Japanese main thrust would be against America’s West Coast. He wanted to lure U.S. ships from Pearl Harbor. Then, the wily leader would strike at Midway in the Central Pacific, his real objective. Yamamoto figured the Americans would rush to defend the Aleutians. Realizing it was a feint, the U.S. Fleet would steam back to defend Pearl Harbor. Then Yamamoto would spring his trap and

Adak, and seize the island. Additional troops would then assault Attu, almost 200 miles away, the westernmost island in the Aleutian chain.

Opting to face both Yamamoto and Hoshogaya, Nimitz split his force, dispatching Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald to command Task Force 8. With his five cruisers, he was told to defend Dutch Harbor “at all costs” and stop the Japanese from moving on Alaska itself.

Yamamoto, however, had no intentions of striking at Alaska. His plan was to maintain a military presence on Attu and Kiska and keep the Americans from invading the Japanese homeland.

Likewise, the U.S. planners decided against the Aleutians as an invasion route as well.

BITTER COLD, U.S. FORCES WERE HAMPERED BY INCLEMENT WEATHER, AS WELL AS JAPANESE SOLDIERS, IN THE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS CAMPAIGN. BY AL HEMINGWAY BITTER WAR

“The Aleutians theater of the Pacific war might well be called the Theater of Military Frustration,” wrote noted military historian Samuel Eliot Morison in his now classic work *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume 7*. “Sailors, soldiers and aviators alike regarded the assignment to this region of almost perpetual mist and snow as little better than penal servitude.”

No truer words were spoken. The Aleutians, protruding from the tip of the Alaskan Peninsula for more than 1,000 miles, were a steppingstone to the western United States. Considered by most to be nothing more than barren, desolate countryside, their strategic value was nonexistent.

“While spared the arctic climate of the Alaskan mainland to the north, the Aleutians are constantly swept by cold winds and often engulfed in dense fog,” wrote George L. MacGarrigle in *Aleutian Islands: The U.S. Army Campaign of World War II*. “The weather

intercept the U.S. armada at Midway and annihilate it.

All of this elaborate planning might have succeeded if it were not for one major flaw. U.S. Naval Intelligence had broken the Japanese naval code, and the American defenders were ready to defend Midway.

U.S. Admiral Chester A. Nimitz, commander-in-chief in the Pacific, had received word of Yamamoto’s ruse in late May. Nimitz knew that Yamamoto had ordered Vice Admiral Boshiro Hosogaya’s task force, consisting of two small aircraft carriers, five cruisers, 12 destroyers, six submarines, four troop transports, and numerous support vessels, to the Aleutians.

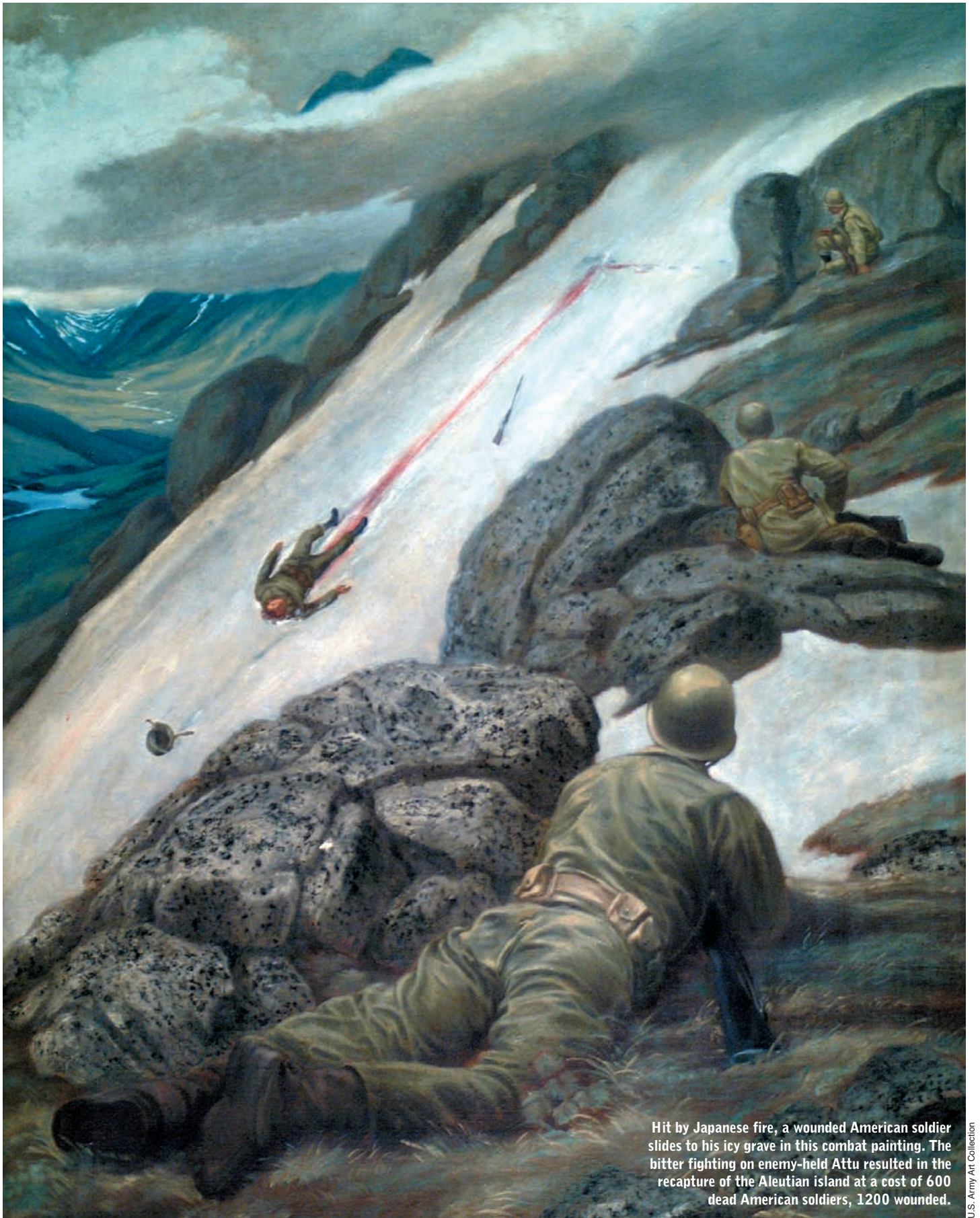
After the air raid on Dutch Harbor, Hosogaya was to put a force ashore on Adak Island, about 500 miles to the west. After razing the U.S. base there (the Japanese would later discover there was no military installation located there), his soldiers would come ashore on Kiska, 240 miles west of

Nimitz wanted to oust the enemy from the islands and prevent any additional reinforcements from reaching Hosogaya.

Both sides, unfortunately, were saddled with the same problem: Most of the manpower and materiel was being diverted to the ongoing New Guinea and Solomon Islands campaigns.

Hosogaya’s dilemma was even worse. His supply base at Paramushiro in the Kuriles was situated 1,200 miles north of Tokyo and another 650 miles west of Attu. In addition, supplies reaching Kiska had to go nearly 400 miles farther and navigate through pea soup fog and treacherous reef-infested waters. Nevertheless, the Japanese had occupied Attu and Kiska and were in the Aleutians to stay. And it was Theobald’s job to get rid of them.

Major General Simon B. Buckner, Jr., headed the Alaskan Defense Command. He had 45,000 men at his disposal, with approximately 13,000 at Fort Randall, located at Cold Bay on the Alaskan Peninsula itself. The



Hit by Japanese fire, a wounded American soldier slides to his icy grave in this combat painting. The bitter fighting on enemy-held Attu resulted in the recapture of the Aleutian island at a cost of 600 dead American soldiers, 1200 wounded.

U.S. Army Art Collection

remainder of his troops were dispersed at Dutch Harbor and also at a newly constructed U.S. Army installation, dubbed Fort Glenn, 70 miles west of Umnak Island. Despite the seemingly large contingent of soldiers, Buckner's command, in reality, only numbered slightly over 2,000, and some of these were engineer units sent to the Aleutians to build the new bases.

Also under Theobald's charge was the 11th Air Force. Led by Brig. Gen. William C. Butler, it was a divided command as well. The force of

By mid-September of 1942, Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers were launched from the newly constructed airfield at Adak to attack Kiska. These repeated air assaults persuaded the Japanese that the Americans were planning to retake the islands. Troop transports began landing reinforcements at the two bases. They knew that with winter setting in the Americans would not be able to initiate a full-scale invasion until the following spring. The intolerable Aleutian weather had, once again, played a role in the strategy. And before the battle was over,

comfortable with the unit because both Corlett and Landrum had previous service in the Aleutians, a huge plus DeWitt felt.

The War Department, however, ignored DeWitt's advice and tapped the 7th Infantry Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. I. Albert E. Brown, for the job. Although highly trained and motivated, the unit had been practicing maneuvers in the California desert and was being sent to North Africa to fight against Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps. Although, DeWitt and Buckner argued, their pleas fell on deaf ears. The decision of the War Department was final.

To prepare for the amphibious assault, Buckner, Nimitz, and Kinkaid sent for individuals knowledgeable in that field—people like U.S. Marine Maj. Gen. I. Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith and Army Colonel William O. Eareckson. Vice Admiral Francis W. "Skinny" Rockwell would have over all command of the Kiska operation.

By the end of February, however, Kinkaid had second thoughts about invading Kiska and, instead, eyed Attu. He had intelligence that said the Japanese had only 500 defenders on the island. By hitting Attu, Kinkaid "hoped to leave Kiska high and dry surrounded by American forces." The War Department quickly gave thumbs up to Kinkaid's revised plan to strike at Attu instead of Kiska with the 7th Infantry



Both: National Archives

TOP: Bogged down on a muddy trail in the Aleutians, a tractor meant to move earth has become its prisoner. The sound of approaching aircraft has grabbed the attention of the soldiers attempting to reclaim the equipment. **RIGHT:** Lt. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner Jr., head of Alaska Defense Command, talks with subordinate commanders during operations on Attu in June 1943



Division still slated to be the assault force. The operation was dubbed Landcrab, and the invasion date was set for May 7.

What Kinkaid did not realize was that his sources had the enemy troop strength all wrong. The Japanese had approximately 2,650 men on the island equipped with mortars, automatic weapons, and some artillery. The force was commanded by Colonel Yasuyo Yamasaki, who had only arrived a month earlier to take command of the garrison. The officer had no

44 heavy and medium bombers and nearly 100 fighter aircraft was split between Elmendorf Airfield in Anchorage, Alaska, and other airstrips at Cold Bay and Umnak.

Although Buckner and Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt, in charge of the Western Defense Command, did make a case for invading Japan utilizing the Aleutians, their real purpose was purely psychological: driving out the Japanese occupying American soil, even if that soil was as desolate as Kiska and Attu.

After Yamamoto's disastrous defeat at Midway in early June 1942, attention shifted to the Aleutians. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were disturbed about reports of Japanese warships operating between the Pribilof and St. Lawrence Islands. Their main concern was an invasion of Alaska itself. As a result, the Joint Chiefs recommended that Theobald and DeWitt begin planning for an amphibious assault against Kiska and Attu.

it would be a decisive factor for all of those involved in the operation.

On January 11, 1943, U.S. troops slipped ashore on Amchitka Island, just 50 miles from Kiska. Although no enemy troops were stationed on Amchitka, the soldiers did do battle with the harsh elements. A *willowaw*, an Aleutian word for violent squall, struck the very first night. The swirling winds destroyed numerous landing craft and caused a transport vessel to run aground. If that were not enough, a blizzard started the next day and lasted for two weeks. Its howling winds, massive snowdrifts, and biting sleet lashed out at the invading force.

At the end of January, Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid presented a plan to invade Kiska, and the scheme was quickly approved by Admiral Nimitz and General DeWitt. DeWitt wanted to use the 35th Infantry Division as the assault troops commanded by Maj. Gen. Charles H. Corlett and Brig. Gen. Eugene M. Landrum, the assistant division commander. DeWitt felt

illusions. The Japanese had been badly beaten on Guadalcanal, and he was informed to expect no reinforcements, at least until the end of May. But deep inside, he knew these troops would probably never arrive either. It would be a fight to the death.

The top American planners and commanders met in San Diego to finalize the upcoming operation, and the meetings soon erupted into shouting matches between the various individuals there. DeWitt insisted that a regiment could seize Attu. Brown, meanwhile, asserted that the unforgiving environment would impede his men from moving across the island. The relationship between Brown and DeWitt was severely strained because of this disagreement. This dispute would have repercussions during the upcoming campaign.

Brown had no prior Alaska experience. He even refused Colonel Lawrence V. Castner's recommendation to view the western Aleutians himself by air to see the layout of the islands. Another mistake was in the choice of clothing for the soldiers. The wrong boots and equipment were ordered, and these would not withstand Attu's bone-chilling cold and wet ground.

Because of the shortage of shipping, Buckner's soldiers of the 4th Infantry Regiment had to remain on Adak. In the event Brown needed them, they would set sail for Attu within 24 hours.

By the beginning of May, the three regiments of infantry, four battalions of artillery, plus combat engineers, medical companies, and other supporting units were put aboard ships for Attu. In addition to the complement of cruisers and destroyers and the light aircraft carrier *Nassau*, the battleships *Nevada*, *Idaho*, and *Pennsylvania* were called upon to give the naval bombardment additional punch.

After much wrangling, it was decided that the Northern Attack Force, the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, with a battery of field artillery, would land on Red Beach a few miles north of Holtz Bay. The unit's assignment was to drive the enemy from the western portion of Holtz Bay, take the high ground, later named Moore Ridge, and link up with the Southern Attack Force.

The larger Southern Attack Force was to go ashore on Blue and Yellow Beaches. It comprised the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 17th Infantry; the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Infantry; three batteries of 105mm howitzers; and attached support troops. The troops were to disembark at Massacre Bay and move on Jarmin Pass and Clevesy Pass (Massacre-Sarana Pass). After joining forces with the Northern Attack Force, the combined units were to drive



The rugged terrain and inhospitable arctic climate on Attu presented even more formidable obstacles in the face of a stubborn enemy. In spite of these conditions, U.S. forces prevailed after landing at multiple points along the island's coast.



the Japanese out of the Chichagof Harbor region, completing the seizure of Attu.

While the main landing parties were making their way inland, Captain William Willoughby's Provisional Scout Battalion, made up of members of the 7th Scout Company and 7th Reconnaissance Troop, would land at Scarlett Beach in the Austin Cove area. Their task was to attack eastward as the main group struck at the enemy in a westward movement.

As with all things in the Aleutians, however, weather was to play a deciding factor. The morning of D-day saw a thick fog develop. Visibility was near zero. Tired of his men being cramped aboard the small transports, Colonel Frank L. Culin, commanding officer of the 32nd Infantry Regiment, commandeered several landing craft with the Aleut scouts to reconnoiter the approach to the beach. Led to shore with the assistance of the USS *Phelps*, a radar-equipped destroyer, the group jumped aboard several plastic dories they had towed behind them and managed to make it safely to the landing beach.

Red Beach turned out to be not much of a beach at all. It was a mere 100 yards long and encompassed by sheer 250-foot cliffs. Realizing the Japanese could ambush his soldiers with a small force, Culin told the scouts to patrol the

cliffs for any signs of the enemy. Despite the concern over the possibility of a Japanese ambush, Culin ordered the assault troops to disembark. By 3 PM, he had 1,500 infantrymen ashore with no enemy activity.

The Southern Attack Force, under General Brown himself, was also hampered by the dense fog. Finally, by early afternoon, Brown decided to go ahead with the landing. At 4:20 PM, the first soldiers stepped on Massacre Beach and headed inland. The infantry quickly seized Artillery Hill where they discovered two Japanese 20mm guns. For some strange reason, the enemy troops manning the cannon had fled.

Willoughby, meanwhile, had gotten his initial group ashore, and the remainder soon followed. By late that afternoon, moving through blowing snow, the battalion had successfully made it to a crest where the soldiers could see Holtz Bay below them. Movement was kept to a snail's pace because of the muskeg, a layer of thick, decayed vegetable matter that covered much of Attu. The slimy substance made walking slippery and treacherous at times. Setting

Both maps: © 2006 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

up camp at dusk, the men ate cold rations and waited for daylight.

As with the scout battalion, muskeg was making movement miserable for the rest of the units. Brig. Gen. Archibald V. Arnold, the assistant landing force commander and the chief of artillery, soon found out that the heavy-duty sleds he had constructed for his 105mm field pieces were of no use. The guns of Battery C, 48th Field Artillery Battalion were soon mired in the unforgiving slime. Despite this, the artillerymen let loose rounds against suspected enemy mortar positions.

The infantrymen of the southern attack group were also damning the terrible terrain

attempt at a frontal assault, Earle pulled his forces back and established a perimeter.

This inaction would prove costly. “During the next five grueling days, these men would batter the high ground with constant frontal attacks—and gain no ground,” wrote military historian Brian Garfield in his book *The Thousand Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians*. “Japanese entrenchments dominated all approaches; the Americans had to cross open slopes with no cover at all. The Japanese guns were linked along the summits, at the military crest a few feet below the skyline. Fog hid the Japanese, while it revealed the American lines; and even

reconnaissance of his lines. Some time later, Earle’s lifeless body was discovered, the apparent target of a Japanese sniper. Next to him was the wounded Alaskan scout who had gone with him. Colonel Wayne C. Zimmerman took charge of the 17th Infantry.

Willoughby’s men continued their advance in the morning toward the Japanese rear. Movement was not easy as the soldiers were forced to slide down the sheer, icy slopes “like human toboggans.” Soon, they were embroiled in a hot firefight, but the battalion’s 81mm mortar crews halted the enemy attack. Willoughby’s troops kept up the pressure on the Japanese while the Northern Force attacked the Holtz Bay area.

BELOW: U.S. soldiers hustle hot food to troops manning the perimeter on Attu in May 1943. Hot food was considered a luxury in most combat areas. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Huddled in a trench at Massacre Bay on Attu, American soldiers return fire from a Japanese sniper who is well-concealed along a ridgeline to their front.



of Attu. To make matters worse, Japanese riflemen had sprung to life and begun harassing the soldiers as they attempted to move ahead and capture the all-important Massacre-Holtz and Jarmin Passes. By evening, however, the men of the 17th Infantry had moved only a mile and a half from the beachhead. Japanese snipers situated on the high ground on the unit’s right flank forced the soldiers to scurry for cover. Colonel Edward P. Earle, leading the 17th Infantry, ordered his troops to attack straight ahead to seize the pass. Unfortunately, the enemy laid down a heavy volume of mortar and automatic weapons fire, and Earle’s inexperienced soldiers withdrew. After another unsuccessful

when the fog thinned, the Japanese used smokeless powder which couldn’t be seen.”

In spite of the delay and confusion in the landing, Massacre Bay was in American hands with 1,500 soldiers ashore near Holtz Bay and another 400 of Willoughby’s scout battalion encamped in the snow-covered mountains. The impossible and erratic weather of the Aleutians would play a huge part in the upcoming battle, not only in compounding the difficulty for the Americans in securing their objectives on the island but also in making it extremely difficult to get supplies to the advancing infantry.

The following day, D+1, saw Earle’s Southern Force still bogged down. When his radio malfunctioned, he decided to do a personal

By early evening, the 17th Infantry had pushed the enemy back, only to be hit with a savage counterassault. Grenades were tossed at close range, and Japanese soldiers rushed the American positions. Men were bayoneted and shot before they could signal for help. One soldier was thrown in the air from the concussion of a grenade blast, losing his boots in the process.

Sergeant Frank J. Gonzales of Company B, 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry became engaged in a bayonet duel with a charging enemy soldier. Gonzales killed him with a thrust to his mid-section. As he tried to retrieve his bayonet, however, he could not remove the blade from the body. Gonzales twisted and turned and even

discharged his weapon into the motionless Japanese soldier but was still unsuccessful in getting it out. Disgusted, he finally unsnapped the bayonet and left it in the body as he ran to rejoin his unit.

The infantrymen managed to hold their ground and moved over the crest of a ridge. “We counted between forty to fifty dead Japs, two of them officers, and captured seven machine guns,” Gonzales later recounted in *The Capture of Attu: As Told by the Men Who Fought There* by Lieutenant. Robert J. Mitchell, a wounded veteran of the battle. “One Jap gunner was slumped over his gun and his blood was running down and dripping off the end of the barrel. It made me feel good to see him.”

The next day, Colonel Eareckson bravely flew into Attu’s soupy fog to try and reconnoiter Japanese positions so his bombers could assist the infantry. The unforgiving weather of the Aleutians, unfortunately, did not help, and Eareckson could not see anything below.

Colonel Zimmerman, meanwhile, sent his men into Jarmin Pass to seize it. A murderous crossfire prevented them from accomplishing their mission. The enemy troops had cleverly concealed themselves on Black Mountain, a hill that divided Jarmin Pass from Zwinge Pass. The wily Japanese had fighting holes dotted throughout the area on Robinson Ridge and Cold Mountain on the right flank and Henderson Ridge on the left flank.

For the next five days, Zimmerman’s men clawed their way forward. Elements of the 32nd Infantry and the 4th Infantry arrived to bolster Zimmerman’s forces. The fighting was close and bloody as the soldiers slowly inched their way into Jarmin Pass to cries of “You Die American Dog!” as their Japanese counterparts harassed them every step of the way.

The Northern Force, trying to link up with Zimmerman’s southern troops, was moving rapidly through Holtz Bay. The infantrymen soon captured the Japanese positions in the valley above Holtz Bay. It appeared that the enemy had retreated to another ridge across from the bay and abandoned ammunition, food, and weapons to the advancing Americans. Colonel Frank Culin, commanding officer of the force, opted to push ahead to oust the Japanese from the ridge and move toward Chichagof Bay. This “wedge” would take the pressure off the enemy units above Jarmin Pass and perhaps they would pull back toward Chichagof Harbor where they would be surrounded as the Americans wanted from the start.

Willoughby’s beleaguered force, meanwhile, had battled the Japanese in continuous fire-fights. The bitter weather had taken its toll;



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nearly half of the unit had succumbed to frozen feet and frostbite. The Scout Battalion had to keep moving forward, Willoughby realized, because there was no retreat. Attack was his only recourse. Even the enemy grudgingly respected the American fortitude, as evidenced by one Japanese officer’s diary entry: “Enemy strength must be a division.”

Miraculously, the Scout Battalion held and performed magnificently. Later, Captain Willoughby would write, “Since we couldn’t sleep at night, we weren’t about to let the enemy sleep. We kept up a din around the clock so that they wouldn’t divert any forces away from us against Culin. Finally, when the time looked right, I told Colonel Culin by radio that we were moving down, and we headed down toward Holtz Bay. The enemy was pulling out fast.”

General DeWitt, meanwhile, was extremely dissatisfied with General Brown’s conduct ashore. He continuously requested additional supplies and reinforcements, which irritated DeWitt who had not liked Brown since their initial meetings at the planning stage of the operation. In all fairness to Brown, DeWitt had gone out on a limb and promised the Joint Chiefs that Attu’s defenses would crumble in just three days. The lack of communication also was a disadvantage to Brown. DeWitt, Buckner, and Kinkaid were all on Adak, hundreds of miles away, and did not possess firsthand knowledge of what was transpiring on Attu.

Despite this, DeWitt requested that Brown be relieved of command. DeWitt and Buckner met with Kinkaid, the overall commander of the operation. After listening to both of them, he acquiesced. He sent a telegram to Brown informing him that recently promoted Maj. Gen. Eugene Landrum was taking over. Shocked, Brown nonetheless followed orders

and turned his unit over to Landrum. For years, he felt he had been made the scapegoat because of DeWitt’s assurance of a quick victory.

On May 17, Culin’s men readied themselves for an all-out assault on the ridge overlooking Holtz Bay. Just past noon, the infantrymen charged up the slope. Preceding their advance was the artillery. As the rounds impacted to their front, the soldiers made their way to the summit. They soon discovered the enemy had fled, and they seized the position without a fight. The following day, Lieutenant Morris C. Wiberg and three soldiers of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 17th Infantry met up with a patrol from the 7th Reconnaissance Troop. The two forces were finally joined together.

With the seizure of Jarmin Pass and the Holtz Bay area, all attention now turned to Chichagof Bay. On May 21, the 3rd Battalion, 17th Infantry moved on Sarana Nose. Although badly dazed and shaken, the Japanese put up a fight but were quickly overrun, and the objective was secured.

The attack resumed as a light snow fell on Sunday, May 23. Several companies from the 4th Infantry soon became trapped by enemy machine guns as they tried to push forward. Disgusted by the delay, Private Fred M. Barnett grabbed some grenades and his M-1 Garand and proceeded uphill toward the Japanese positions. Soon, the distinct sound of explosions, machine-gun bursts, and rifle fire permeated the air. Then, as quickly as it started, it suddenly ended and there was an eerie silence. Then through the thick fog, Barnett emerged and motioned everyone to move forward. As they approached the enemy machine-gun emplacements, they saw that Barnett had successfully eliminated all nine of them without being wounded.

At 10 the following morning, American troops attacked Fish Hook Ridge to isolate the remainder of Yamasaki's force. The going was arduous as the men had to endure terrible terrain and a fanatical enemy. Every crevice and cave had to be searched. Soldiers lobbed in grenades before entering any opening. The orders were simple and direct: "If they don't stink, stick 'em."

Soldiers on the front lines had to withstand bitter cold temperatures without the benefit of any shelter. The sick and missing soon began to multiply. To support the infantry, Landrum had every available howitzer manhandled from the beach to a crest overlooking the Fish Hook; even the artillery rounds had to be carried up the ridge by the artillerymen.

Once again, the weary troopers of the 4th Infantry struck at the Fish Hook on May 25. Hidden behind snowdrifts and boulders, the enemy opened fire, trapping the soldiers in a vicious crossfire. By nightfall, the exhausted men had managed to clear the Japanese from

hardened soldiers struck at the Fish Hook again. When K Company, 3rd Battalion, 32nd Infantry was delayed by Japanese machine gunners, Pfc. Joe P. Martinez began advancing at the enemy positions firing his Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), killing five Japanese defenders.

"He stood there it seemed like an hour," recalled one eyewitness, "exposed wide open and loaded and fired until the magazine was empty. He loaded two or three times and then we heard it, a kind of crack and thoomp! Martinez fell backwards towards us." The New Mexico native had sustained a serious head wound that would prove fatal. For his extraordinary bravery, Martinez would be Attu's sole Medal of Honor recipient.

By May 27 most of the Fish Hook was in U.S. hands. The infantry now could see Buffalo Ridge—the last remaining Japanese stronghold on Attu. It was a matter of several hundred yards, and the enemy resistance on the island would be broken and the battle over. Yamasaki

and turn the enemy's own 105mm cannon on them as well.

In the predawn hours of May 29, Yamasaki gathered his men and quietly marched up the valley floor. After killing several American guards, he moved through the perimeter without being detected.

At 3:30 AM, the terrifying cry of "Banzai!" filled the cold night air as Yamasaki's band surged ahead, running into Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry, which was coming off the front lines for a much deserved hot breakfast. The soldiers ran as the enemy pushed ahead to their objective. Yamasaki's men slashed and bayoneted their way through the thinly held line. Wounded men were killed where they lay. Others faked death and survived the onslaught.

The noise soon alerted the units defending Engineer Hill. Calmly, Brig. Gen. Archibald V. Arnold organized a provisional force from the 13th and 50th Engineers, the 7th Medical Battalion, the 20th Field Headquarters, and a few frostbitten soldiers from the 4th Infantry being treated there.

Creating a defensive perimeter, Arnold had his men toss hand grenades at the charging mass of Japanese moving up the hill. A 37mm gun was swung



LEFT: About 200 yards inland from a stormy beach on Attu, U.S. soldiers fire a 105mm howitzer against Japanese positions at Massacre Bay in May 1943.

ABOVE: Pfc. Joe Martinez received posthumously the only Medal of Honor given for heroism on Attu.

their trenches and even secured the base of the ridge.

A miracle occurred the next day—the sun appeared through the fog that had enveloped Attu for the past two weeks. With the weather improving, dozens of Army Air Corps planes bombed and strafed the main enemy installation at Chichagof Harbor. One Japanese officer penned in his diary, "Am suffering from diarrhea and feel dizzy ... It felt like the barracks blew up, things shook up and rocks and mud flew all around and fell down; strafing planes hit the next room; my room looks like an awful mess from the sand and pebbles that come down from the roof. Consciousness becomes insane. There is no hope of reinforcement. Will die for the cause of the Imperial Edict."

With a break in the weather, the battle-

had only 800 troops left from his original contingent of 2,650. He knew no additional troops were coming. Surrender was out of the question; the Bushido Code of the Japanese soldier forbade such an action. He had two options, as he saw it: wait for the inevitable assault and kill as many Americans as possible—or attack. He chose the latter.

Yamasaki prepared his men for the final Banzai. He would strike the Americans at the weakest part of their perimeter—the point between the Buffalo and the Fish Hook. He would hit them at night when they would be most vulnerable. His men would charge up Engineer Hill, where the Americans stored their artillery, ammunition, and food, and capture it. He would then take as much of the captured supplies with him as possible, destroying the rest,

into action. The combination of the small arms fire, hand grenades, and 37mm shells tore into the enemy's ranks. When the Japanese survivors managed to climb to the crest, they encountered bayonets and rifles. Bloody fighting ensued, and the assault petered out as the enemy left the hill and melted into the night.

Several additional attempts were made to seize Engineer Hill by Yamasaki's men, but they resulted in failure. Hundreds of enemy troops committed suicide after the attack was beaten back. Later that morning, Colonel Yamasaki was also killed leading a futile charge against the American perimeter.

With the exception of mopping-up action, the fight for Attu was finished. The Americans sustained 3,829 casualties: 549 killed, 1,148 wounded, 1,200 frostbite victims, 614 from

THE EFFORT TO RETAKE KISKA INVOLVED A TRAGIC MISTAKE.

On the foggy morning of August 15, 1943, nearly 35,000 American and Canadian troops sat on ships off the coast of Kiska, an island in the Aleutian chain, ready to do battle with an estimated 5,200 soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army.

For the past several weeks, over 350 aircraft from the Eleventh Air Force had pounded the island with tons of explosives. Other planes dropped thousands of surrender leaflets to the defenders below. In addition, battleships, cruisers, and destroyers had shelled Kiska a total of 10 times prior to the invasion.

Although some pilots reported enemy flak, American planners became suspicious when aerial photographs depicted no enemy activity. Was the enemy there, or had the Japanese fled? In spite of this, Admiral Kinkaid gave the go-ahead for the operation, saying it “would be a good training exercise, a super dress rehearsal, excellent for training purposes.”

As elements of the U.S. 7th Division, Alaskan 4th Regiment, 87th Mountain Combat Team, the 13th Royal Canadian Infantry Brigade, and 2,500 men of the First Special Service Force stormed ashore, it became apparent that the enemy was not on the beach. The soldiers found deserted gun emplacements and empty caves and buildings. The only opposition the landing force encountered came from a few stray dogs that had somehow survived the endless bombardment.

For the next three days, the Americans and Canadians combed Kiska for signs of the illusive Japanese. Despite a few booby traps and accidental shootings, there was no enemy to be found.

On August 15, General Charles Corlett announced that the island was secured. His men, however, kept looking for the invisible enemy until the 18th, when Corlett finally called off the search. Unknown to the Allied forces, the Japanese Navy had evacuated the Kiska defenders at the end of July. Admiral Shiro Kawase had executed a dazzling maneuver without firing a single shot, completely fooling the Americans.

Meanwhile, the Allies had bombed and invaded a deserted island and, tragically, incurred over 300 casualties, most of which were caused by friendly fire. “To attract maximum attention, it’s hard to find anything more effective than a great big, juicy, expensive mistake,” said General Simon B. Buckner.

Sadly, when the Aleutian Campaign was discussed in the future by the American public, it would be the embarrassing slip-up at Kiska that most would recall, not the hard-fought battle of Attu where so many were killed and wounded.

The seizure of Kiska did produce a positive outcome. After nearly two years, the war in the North Pacific was essentially over. □



TOP: The body of a Japanese soldier who fought to the death lies sprawled on the floor of his bunker at Holtz Bay on the island of Attu. The soldier had been previously wounded as evidenced by old bandages.

LEFT: Lying dead in the snow, the body of a Japanese soldier killed in action at Holtz Bay on Attu awaits a burial detail.

was taken with ease in June. Clearly, the capture of Attu reaped huge benefits for the United States.

Despite these rewards, the Attu campaign received scant attention in the U.S. newspapers. One veteran remarked sarcastically, “No Marines—otherwise it would have been world history.”

The Army and Navy were humiliated by the costly mistakes committed during the campaign and did not want to face public scrutiny. The sacrifices made by the brave soldiers were “played down by the ministries of war propaganda.”

The combat on Attu was unforgiving and brutal. As historian Brian Garfield wrote: “The price of weatherbeaten Attu had been high. In proportion to the number of troops engaged, it would rank as the second most costly American battle in the Pacific Theater—second only to Iwo Jima.” □

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Both: National Archives

“FRENCHY TO BLUE JAY—I HAVE A POSSIBLE SOUND CONTACT,” SQUAWKED from USS *Guadalcanal*’s bridge intercom at 1110 hours. It meant that “Frenchy,” codename for the Destroyer Escort USS *Chatelain*, had located something during a sonar sweep.

But Captain Daniel V. Gallery, commander of the escort carrier *Guadalcanal* (BlueJay) was not going to get excited, at least not yet. The sound contact could be a whale, a layer of cold water, or any number of other things. On the other hand, a “possible” was always treated like the real thing until found out to be otherwise.

“Left full rudder,” Captain Gallery ordered. “Engines ahead full speed.” He also sent two other destroyer escorts (DE) in to assist *Chatelain*, put two of *Guadalcanal*’s Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters over the sound contact, and “got the hell out of there at top speed.” Gallery knew that an aircraft carrier, even a small escort carrier, would only be in the way if the contact turned out to be a U-boat. “A carrier smack on the scene of a sound contact is like an old lady in the middle of a bar room brawl!” he once remarked. “She’d better move fast and leave room for the boys who have work to do.”

Islands, but could not find a thing. The results were “unproductive,” Gallery wrote with disgust in his report. Naval Intelligence sent word that a submarine was within 300 miles of the group, and *Guadalcanal* picked up radio transmissions on the U-boat frequency, but there had been no contacts. By May 30, the ships were all nearing the safe limit of their fuel. Gallery had no choice but to leave the area and head for Casablanca to refuel.

The task group started for Casablanca but kept a lookout for submarines along with way. On the night of June 2, radar contacts were reported about 50 miles east of the group’s

THE CAPTURE OF U-505

THE GERMAN SUBMARINE *U-505* WAS THE FIRST ENEMY WARSHIP CAPTURED ON THE HIGH SEAS BY THE U.S. NAVY SINCE THE WAR OF 1812.

BY DAVID ALAN JOHNSON

Captain Gallery knew about these things from experience. On his last cruise, Gallery and his hunter-killer group had sunk two U-boats, *U-68* and *U-515*, within the space of 12 hours. He was well versed on how German submarine commanders behaved. This trip had begun on May 15, 1944, when Gallery departed Norfolk, Virginia, aboard *Guadalcanal* with five destroyer escorts: *Chatelain*, *Pillsbury*, *Pope*, *Flaherty*, and *Jenks*. His orders were to take his U-boat hunting group, officially known as Task Group 22.3, out into the Atlantic to look for more enemy submarines.

This time, though, Captain Gallery had something different in mind. During the last cruise, *U-515* surfaced right in the middle of the task group. The escorting destroyer escorts hit the U-boat with every caliber gun they had, from five-inch to .50-caliber machine guns, before the boat sank. This gave Gallery an idea. “Suppose we hadn’t been so bloody minded about sinking her,” he thought. Before leaving Norfolk, Gallery assembled the captains of all the escort ships in his group and told them that they would try to capture a submarine, if possible, on this cruise.

If a U-boat came to the surface, as *U-515* had done, everyone was to assume that the captain had come up to save the lives of the crew. Instead of sinking it, the destroyer escorts would open up with .50-caliber machine guns. This would keep the crew away from the U-boat’s deck guns and would also “encourage them to get the hell off that U-boat.” After the crew had abandoned the submarine, a boarding party would be sent over to disarm any booby traps, close all scuttling valves, do everything possible to keep the boat afloat, and rig it for towing back to the United States.

From the expression on their faces, Captain Gallery could see that some of the destroyer escort captains thought he must be crazy. Everyone present kept their mouths shut. They all organized boarding parties as ordered and waited to see what might happen.

Throughout the month of May, the possibility of capturing a U-boat remained a moot point. Captain Gallery’s hunter-killer group looked for submarines in the vicinity of the Cape Verde

position. Encouraged by these reports, Captain Gallery decided to spend another day on the search, even though it meant stretching his fuel.

When the *Chatelain* reported a possible sound contact at 1110 hours on June 4, Gallery gave the order to investigate the contact. As *Guadalcanal* left the area, *Pillsbury* and *Jenks* rushed over to help *Chatelain*. *Chatelain*’s captain fired a salvo of 20 hedgehogs, small, forward-firing depth bombs, and missed the target—if there was a target. At 1116 hours, all doubts ended abruptly. The pilots of the two Wildcat fighters positively identified a submarine running below the surface and advised *Chatelain* to reverse course toward it. The fighter pilots also fired bursts of machine-gun fire to indicate the submarine’s position.

The captain of the *Chatelain* followed the pilot’s advice and, aided by the machine-gun fire of the two planes, fired a full pattern of shallow-set depth charges. From the bridge of his flagship, Captain Gallery felt the deck underneath him rock as the depth charges exploded and a dozen geysers sprouted into the air. A minute later, after the explosions subsided, one of the fighter pilots shouted, “You’ve struck oil, Frenchy, sub is surfacing!” As personnel from every ship in the group looked on,

Capt Daniel V. Gallery, commander of the escort carrier *USS Guadalcanal*, stands in the conning tower of the captured German submarine *U-505*.



the U-boat broke the surface 700 yards from *Chatelain*. Captain Gallery could see white water pouring from the submarine's deck and conning tower. He had his quarry.

The reaction of the destroyer escorts was to start shooting as soon as the boat came up. No one knew for certain whether the U-boat captain had come up to surrender or to fire a spread of torpedoes. Gunners aboard *Chatelain*, *Pillsbury*, and *Jenks* opened fire with a murderous barrage of .50-caliber machine-gun fire along with 20mm and 40mm shells. Larger caliber guns also began shooting but missed their target. The circling Wildcats came down to strafe.

Shortly after coming to the surface, the U-boat began to circle to the right, making it look as though she was maneuvering to bring her torpedo tubes to bear. After about two minutes of machine-gun and cannon fire, men began popping out of hatches and jumping into the sea. It was obvious that the submarine had no intention of fighting it out with the group and was getting ready to surrender. Captain Gallery did not want the gunners to sink his prize. He broadcast to the escort ships, "I want to capture that bastard if possible."

The submarine that Captain Gallery's task group brought to the surface was *U-505*, commanded by 40-year-old Oberleutnant Harald Lange. *U-505* was a Type IX-C submarine, commissioned at Hamburg on August 26, 1941. It was also the unluckiest boat in the Atlantic force. In fact, *U-505* was the Typhoid Mary of Admiral Karl Dönitz's entire U-boat fleet. Since its commissioning day, the submarine seemed to have developed the knack for having things go wrong.



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Taking on water, the *U-505* is perilously close to sinking. A towline is delivered from a whaleboat to a boarding party so that the submarine may be taken to safety.

Actually, *U-505*'s career had begun on a bright note. In November 1942, just after setting out on her first war patrol, she sank a 7,200-ton British freighter, and she eventually sank a total of eight Allied ships during her operational lifetime. Just two days after sinking her first freighter, however, she attacked another ship with four torpedoes—all four missed and her target got away. This was only the beginning of her bad luck. On the afternoon of November 10, she was depth-bombed by twin-engined aircraft and badly damaged. The captain managed to bring her back to France, but *U-505* spent the next seven months in the repair dock.

Her luck did not improve during her second cruise. Under the command of 24-year-old Peter Zschech, *U-505* left Lorient on June 30, 1943, but had come out of the repair dock too soon and was not yet ready for the open sea, forcing a return to Lorient.

Captain Zschech set sail once again on July 3, but three days later the submarine was attacked by three British destroyers off Cape Finisterre. *U-505* survived the attack but once again returned to Lorient for major repairs. Her next attempt at a war patrol came in September 1943, when *U-505*

departed Lorient for the Atlantic shipping lanes. Two days out, one of her diesels locked up. The crew managed to repair the engine, but the main trim pump broke down three days later. Because no spare parts were on board for the pump, Captain Zschech had no choice but to return to Lorient on September 30.

The next cruise was probably the worst of all. With Captain Zschech on board, *U-505* sailed for the Caribbean in October 1943. On October 9, the submarine was detected by unidentified Allied warships and attacked with depth charges. During the depth charge barrage, Zschech committed suicide with a handgun. The strain of the attack and the frustration of his failure as captain of *U-505* had finally taken their toll. The executive officer assumed command and, as his first duty, buried Zschech at sea. *U-505* returned to Lorient on November 7, damaged and without a commanding officer.

Oberleutnant Lange was assigned as *U-505*'s captain in December. U-boat command hoped that an older and steadier commander might help settle the crew after Captain Zschech's suicide. Shortly after leaving port, the submarine picked up survivors from a German torpedo boat, *T-25*, and returned to France. Although this patrol was not nearly the fiasco of the previous cruise, it was still another aborted start. The crew was becoming highly frustrated with aborted war patrols, depth charges, and repair docks.

Captain Lange did not take *U-505* to sea again until March 16, 1944. He patrolled the western coast of Africa for Allied shipping but never even spotted a single ship. "The hex is still with us," a crewman complained. Actually, *U-505*'s failure to find Allied shipping had nothing to do with luck, bad or otherwise. Allied naval intelligence had been tracking the submarine through her radio transmissions and had diverted all shipping away from her.

At the end of May, Lange decided to return to Lorient—yet another unsuccessful patrol. The boat was low on fuel, the crew was frustrated and in low spirits, and nothing at all had been accomplished in nearly two and a half months. Lange did not know it, but Allied codebreakers were fully aware that he was returning to France and also had a good idea of the course he was taking. Intelligence passed this information along to Captain Gallery and his hunter-killer group. It was *U-505* that *Guadalcanal* was picking up on the U-boat radio frequency.

Captain Lange had no idea that his boat was in danger until the morning of June 4, when the noise bearings of Gallery's approaching destroyer escorts were picked up. He brought the submarine up to periscope

depth and saw what he identified as three “destroyers,” along with another ship that might be an aircraft carrier. Although he ordered an immediate crash dive, the U-boat was convulsed by five explosions before it had the chance to reach a safe depth.

“Water broke in,” Lange reported. “Light and all electrical machinery went off and the rudders jammed.” The *Chatelain*’s depth charge salvo had found its target. “Not knowing the whole damage or why they continued bombing me,” Lange curiously noted in his report, as though he thought that shooting at his U-boat was bad sportsmanship, “I gave the order to bring the boat to the surface by [com]pressed air.”

As soon as the boat surfaced, Captain Lange was up on the bridge. He saw four U.S. Navy vessels around him, “shooting at my boat with calibre and anti-aircraft [.50-caliber machine gun and 40mm cannon.]” The nearest destroyer escort hit the conning tower, wounding Lange in his legs and also killing his chief officer. Lange ordered a turn to starboard, swinging away from the enemy and giving the American gunners less of a target to shoot at. He also ordered the boat scuttled.

At 1126 hours, 16 minutes after the first possible sound contact, Captain Gallery ordered the task group to cease fire. Immediately afterward, he sent an order over his flagship’s intercom that had not been heard on an American warship since the War of 1812: “Away all boarding parties!”

The first ship to react was the *Pillsbury*. Her boarding party, led by Lieutenant (j.g.) Albert David, climbed into the ship’s whaleboat and started off for the German submarine, which was still circling to starboard at five or six knots. The event reminded Captain Gallery of

a scene from *Moby Dick*, with a boarding party chasing a U-boat instead of harpooners chasing a whale. It did not take very long for the crew to cut inside the submarine’s circle, overtake the boat, and jump on deck.

Now that they were actually on board the submarine, Lieutenant David and two other men had to take control of it. The only German they saw was dead, lying face down alongside the conning tower hatch. With David in the lead, the three men climbed through the hatch, went down the ladder, and jumped into the control room. No one was absolutely certain if any Germans were still on board or not. Luckily for the small boarding party, the compartment was deserted and silent. The only sounds came from the machinery that kept the U-boat moving in its slow circle.

It seemed as though the boat was about to sink. The submarine was about 10 degrees down by the stern and seemed to be settling deeper with each passing minute. So, the three men concentrated on saving the secret code books and the boat’s Enigma enciphering machines. They grabbed every secret document they could get their hands on and passed them up through the hatch and



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ABOVE: Crewmen of the destroyer escort *Pillsbury* are shown celebrating the capture of the submarine *U-505*. These men were members of the first boarding party to reach the German vessel. **LEFT:** Oberleutnant Harald Lange commanded the German sub *U-505* during the voyage, which resulted in its capture on the high seas in November 1943.



Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago

onto the bridge. Even if the boat sank, just saving the Enigma machines and the code books would have made everything the group had done so far well worth the effort.

Captain Gallery, however, was not satisfied with just the secret books and code machines. He wanted to save the submarine as well. Because *Guadalcanal* was no longer in danger from a torpedo attack, Gallery brought the carrier close enough to the U-boat to send a whaleboat with a 10-man boarding party to help David and his men. A wave sent *Guadalcanal*’s whaleboat crashing onto *U-505*’s forward deck, which thoroughly frightened the three men aboard the submarine. They had no idea that another boarding party had been sent.

The leader of the 10-man party was Commander Earl Trosino, an engineering officer and an expert on ships’ pipes and fittings. Before the war, Commander Trosino had been a chief engineer aboard Sun Oil (Sunoco) tankers. Although he had never been aboard a submarine, Trosino managed to solve a major problem within the first few minutes. An open seacock was allowing tons of water to pour into the U-boat, adding to the difficulty of keeping her afloat. Its cover was found nearby and was simply screwed back into place.

When Lieutenant David and his men began looking for booby traps, they found 13 demolition charges and disarmed them. Trosino made certain that all the valves were closed and did his best to keep the boat from sinking. He sent word to Captain Gallery that the U-boat would sink unless it was towed.

The captain of the *Pillsbury* attempted to come alongside the still-circling German submarine, pass a salvage pump over, and take the boat in tow. During the maneuver, one of the submarine’s

diving planes punched a hole in the *Pillsbury's* hull, flooding her engine room and forcing the ship to retire and repair the damage. After *Pillsbury* left the scene, *Guadalcanal* took over. Commander Trosino and his men attached their end of *Guadalcanal's* cable to *U-505's* bow, and the carrier began to pull.

On the evening of June 4, Captain Gallery set out for Dakar, the nearest friendly port, with *U-505* in tow. He had to leave the damaged *Pillsbury* behind, with the *Pope* standing by. Captain Gallery had two problems to worry about. He was informed that the fuel situation was now critical. The task group could not have reached Casablanca even if Gallery wanted to. There was not enough fuel to make the trip.

The second problem was that *U-505's* rudders were still turned to starboard. Commander Trosino reported that he had put the rudder amidships, but he had only succeeded in moving the boat's electric rudder indicator. The indicator showed that the rudders were amidships, but they were actually still hard right. The only possible way of moving them was to use the boat's manual steering mechanism, which was situated in the after torpedo room. Since the boat was already well down by the stern, adding the weight of a couple of men in that compartment would only make a bad situation worse. Also, Trosino reported that the aft torpedo room was flooded and that its hatch was booby-trapped.

Gallery said that he had been itching to get aboard the U-boat. The booby-trapped hatch gave him the excuse he needed. He was an ordnance school graduate and "knew as much about fuses and circuitry as anyone on board." So, he designated himself officer in charge of booby traps and, along with Commander Trosino and four helpers, took a boat over to *U-505* to investigate.

As he made his way into the submarine through the conning tower hatch, which was almost awash, Gallery began to have second thoughts about leaving *Guadalcanal*. The air stunk, the boat seemed on the verge of sinking by the stern, and the trip "through the control room, diesel engine room and after motor room seemed endless," he recalled.

Finally, the party arrived at the hatch leading to the aft torpedo room. Trosino shone his light on an open fuse box and said, "There she is, Cap'n." This was the booby trap. By the look of the box and all the wires coming out of it, it seemed to be a very cleverly devised demolition charge. To open the hatch to the torpedo room, the fuse box first had to be closed. Closing the lid might possibly close a circuit to an explosive device, which would destroy the U-boat and everyone in it.

Gallery did not believe such a connection would be made. He took a close look at the wiring and could not find anything suspicious. It seemed to him that the crew had abandoned the submarine too quickly—before they had the chance to set any charges. He thought the fuse box was harmless. As everyone held their breath, he slowly closed the cover. Nothing happened.



As soon as they opened the hatch to the torpedo room, the four men discovered that the compartment was dry. Commander Trosino had been wrong about that as well. The men entered the compartment, manhandled the steering gear to put the rudders amidships, and left as quickly as possible. The trip back to the control room was an uphill walk. As he climbed back to the bridge, Captain Gallery thought, "The fresh salt air sure smelt [sic] mighty sweet."

Now that the U-boat was no longer turning to starboard, the next step was to pump the boat dry and bring her up to an even keel. "Junior," as *Guadalcanal's* crew now called *U-505*, was still half submerged, which made the boat a lot more difficult to tow. In fact, the sea was actually breaking over the conning tower hatch. When Gallery climbed through the hatch into the control room, he had to close the hatch behind him to keep from flooding the compartment.

Trosino had an idea for re-charging the U-boat's storage batteries, even though Gallery would not let him run the diesel engines. Gallery was afraid that someone would turn the wrong valve and sink the boat. Trosino disconnected the clutch on the diesels and requested that Gallery tow the U-boat at 10 knots—quite a high speed for a tow. The forward speed turned the submarine's propellers, which also turned the armatures of the electric motors, which, in turn, charged the batteries. With the batteries fully charged, there was enough electric current to run the boat's pumps. The boat was pumped dry and brought up to full surface trim. *U-505* was finally out of danger.

During the night, CINCLANT (Commander-in-Chief Atlantic Fleet) sent orders to Captain Gallery. He was not to attempt taking *U-505* to Dakar. Although Dakar was the nearest port, it was also full of German spies who would report the U-boat capture to Berlin. Instead, he was to take his prize to Bermuda. To assist with the long trip, the fleet tug *Abnaki* and the oiler *Kennebeck* were diverted from an Africa-bound convoy to join Gallery's task group.

Gallery rendezvoused with the two ships in the mid-Atlantic. Ships of the group refueled

Continued on page 77



ABOVE: German prisoners, survivors of the capture of the *U-505* are shown aboard an American warship en route to Bermuda and a POW camp. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Crewman of the torpedoed liberty ship *SS Thomas McKean* request supplies from the *U-505* as they pull alongside the surfaced submarine in their lifeboat.

U-505 SURVIVES AS AN EXHIBIT AT CHICAGO'S MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY.

After its capture, *U-505* became *USS Nemo* and was manned by a U.S. Navy crew. The submarine's main duty was to sell war bonds, and the former enemy vessel visited seaports up and down the Atlantic coast during her bond tour. When the war ended in September 1945, the submarine was tied up at the Portsmouth, N.H., Navy Yard. She was to have been taken out into the Atlantic and sunk as part of the agreement between Britain, France, the United States, and Soviet Russia to destroy all U-boats. However, because *U-505* had been captured at sea as opposed to having surrendered at the end of the war, she was exempt from this agreement. Instead, the submarine rusted at Portsmouth.

Captain Gallery's brother, John Ireland Gallery, a Catholic priest, Naval Reserve officer,



Crew bunks in the aft torpedo room. LEFT: The *U-505* on display before it was moved inside Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.



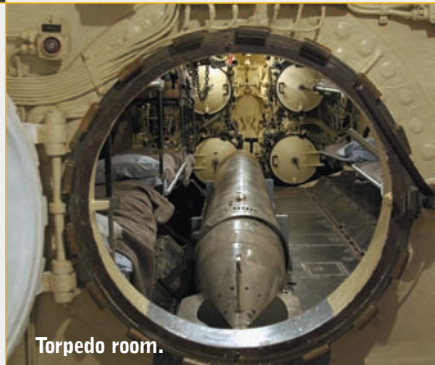
museum, restoring it to presentable condition, and installing it as a permanent addition to the museum's main building."

Every one of these things was accomplished, although not without difficulty. Gallery thought it was more trouble moving the U-boat from Portsmouth to Chicago than from the Cape Verde Islands to Bermuda. The last part of the trip, from Lake Michigan to the museum, was made overland, crossing Lake Shore Drive, and it was probably the most difficult. Someone even posted a sign: "Drive Carefully—Submarine Crossing."

On September 25, 1954, *U-505* became part of the Museum of Science and Industry. The submarine rested on its base outside the museum, a permanent memorial to the 55,000 Americans who lost their lives at sea during World War II.

and a native of Chicago, came up with the idea of moving *U-505* to Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry. The museum's director was all for the idea and approached the Navy Department about acquiring the submarine. The Navy was glad to be rid of the rusting white elephant, but it took Congress two years of resolutions, waiting periods, and approvals before it got around to taking action.

Gallery, who had been promoted to rear admiral by this time, summed up the situation very nicely. Getting *U-505* to the Museum of Science and Industry "involved acquiring title to the U-boat, making it seaworthy, towing it to Chicago, dragging it out of the water and hauling it across the busiest thoroughfare in the city to the



Torpedo room.



Officers quarters.

For over 40 years, the boat was a museum fixture. At least 24 million people visited the submarine, and *U-505* became a National Historic Landmark in 1989. By the 1990s, nearly a half-century of wind, weather and pollution had taken its toll. In 1997, the decision was made to restore the U-boat and move it indoors where weather, and pollution could not get at it.

The boat was moved 1,000 feet to a 75-by-300-foot pen. The procedure took several days and required 18 sets of dollies, hydraulic equipment, several jacks, and the services of several structural engineers. A crew of six men spent five months cleaning and repairing the hull and several more months going through the boat to strengthen and reinforce places that had eroded since 1954. About 3,200 pounds of rusted steel were removed from the boat, and it was repainted inside and out. Special attention was given to the paint scheme. The German Navy had put considerable thought into determining which shades of gray should be used on the exterior, and German manuals were consulted to ensure authenticity.

The centerpiece of the new exhibit is the submarine itself, but other items are displayed as well. Among them are an Enigma machine from the boat, taped narratives from veterans of the operation, a T-5 acoustic torpedo, and exhibits that illustrate the history of the Battle of the Atlantic. □



U-505 conning tower.

Eichmann's powerful biography explores the life of the mastermind behind the 'Final Solution.'

BY MASON B. WEBB

AS THE MAN IN CHARGE OF THE THIRD REICH'S LOGISTICAL APPARATUS OF MASS DEPORTATION and extermination of two million European Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau and other death camps, Adolf Eichmann was the acknowledged center of Hitler's "Final Solution."

Drawing on recently discovered documents, British author David Cesarani has created a stunning new biography of Eichmann—the first in over 40 years. In *Becoming Eichmann: Rethinking the Life, Crimes and Trial of a "Desk Murderer"* (Da Capo Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2006, 458 pp., photographs, maps, index, bibliography, \$27.50, hardcover), he rejects and rethinks many of the common myths and traditional beliefs surrounding how an ordinary German-Austrian, with a cordial working relationship with Zionist Jews in Germany and who supported the peaceful emigration of Jews to Palestine, became a fanatic anti-Semite and the architect of genocide.

Cesarani explores Eichmann's early life and career within the Nazi state and shows how Eichmann, Hitler's "expert" on Jewish matters, was not necessarily "hard-wired" or predisposed to orchestrate mass murder.

Grasping the complexity behind the man who many are content to dismiss simply as a "monster," Cesarani deepens our understanding of the nature of evil. The author argues that Eichmann was not a mindless, banal bureaucrat who never realized what he was doing.

On the contrary, writes Cesarani, "As much as we may want Eichmann to be a psychotic individual and thus unlike us, he was not.... Eichmann was neither insane, nor was he a robotic receiver of orders. He was educated to genocide and chose to put what he learned into operation.... What makes his crimes so chilling is that they were not preordained by any evident pathology or built-in racism. Eichmann learned to hate, and to hate in a controlled and impersonal way. He applied business methods to the handling of human beings who, once they had been dehumanized, could be treated no different from cargoes of kerosene. In his mind, there was little difference between setting up a petrol station or a death camp."

The book follows Eichmann from his normal childhood and upbringing in an upper middle class family, to his career in the petroleum industry, to his indoctrination and politicization after joining the Austrian Nazi party and SS in 1932, to his rise among the elite in Germany, his wartime activities (not merely a desk-bound bureaucrat, Eichmann also commanded an extermination unit in the field detailed to murder Hungarian Jews), his escape from Germany to Argentina, and his capture, trial, and execution. Cesarani melds one phase of Eichmann's life deftly into the next with the skill of a novelist.

Cesarani also issues a cautionary note: no society—whether totalitarian, democratic, or anything in between, which fosters racist or fanatical thought—is immune from genocidal tendencies. As the author concludes, "Eichmann appears more and more like a man of our times. Everyman as *génocidaire*."

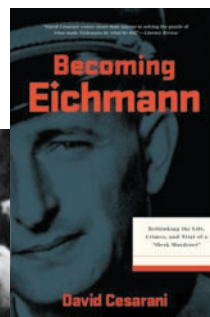
Becoming Eichmann is a profound, riveting, and deeply troubling book that deserves to be read and studied by the world.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

The Flying Tiger: The True Story of General Claire Chennault and the U.S. 14th Air Force in China, by Jack Samson, Lyons Press, Guilford,



Jews from Hungary were sent to Auschwitz where they are processed by a camp officer. It was this officer's responsibility to decide their fate. About 10 percent of the men were sent to work camps; Crippled, the elderly, women, and young children met a much worse fate.



Conn., 2005 (reprint), 365 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, \$16.95, softcover.

Probably no theater of World War II has been more ignored by post-war historians than the China-Burma-India theater. This lack of interest is curious given the fact that the CBI—in which the U.S. helped the Chinese fight back against Japanese domination—was one of the most brutal and far-ranging of all the theaters.

World War II also had more than its fair share of crusty, colorful, and controversial leaders, and few were more crusty, colorful, and controversial than Claire Lee Chennault.

In this softcover re-release of his 1987 book, Jack Samson, who served under the general, paints a detailed portrait not only of Claire Chennault, but also of the difficult fighting and logistical headaches in this most remote of battle fronts.

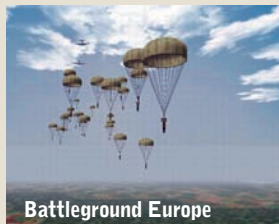
The author, a longtime CBS editor and foreign correspondent, knows of what he writes. He served as a navigator with Chennault's 14th Army Air Force in China and was the official historian of the 14th USAAF Association.

The American Volunteer Group, better known as the Flying Tigers, made up of former pilots from the Army, Navy, and Marines, had been battling the Japanese in China five months before Pearl Harbor. Long composed almost entirely of fighter aircraft (mostly Curtiss P-40s), the 14th Air Force, after its formal establishment on March 10, 1943, began adding medium and heavy bombers in support of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army.

On the surface, Chennault seemed like an unlikely choice to command this outfit. Born in Commerce, Texas, in 1890, Chennault joined the Air Corps in 1917 but saw no action overseas. He did see the future of military aviation, however, and fought hard to discard the outmoded air-war tactics of the Great War and bring the U.S. Army Air Corps into the modern era (for example, he early but unsuccessfully advocated the use of paratroops); his superiors resisted. In 1937, the 47-year-old U.S. Army Air Corps captain was forced to retire from the service, ostensibly from hearing problems but really from years of antagonizing those above him.

With the Japanese having invaded Manchuria in 1931 and making deep inroads into China, Chiang knew he was fighting a losing battle. Learning of the ex-officer's availability, he hired hard-drinking, chain-smoking, womanizing Chennault as a civilian advisor to the Chinese Air Force. The blunt-spoken American soon saw the great deficiencies of Chiang's fliers and established programs to whip them into fighting shape.

There are a variety of multi-player games that are re-fighting World War II twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, but none of them are quite like **Battleground Europe: World War II Online** from Cornered Rat Software and newly distributed by Matrix games for the PC and the Mac. [Yes, thanks to OS X, even Macintosh owners can get in on this version of the



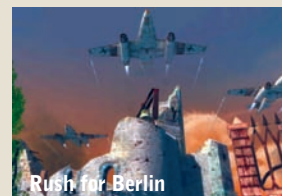
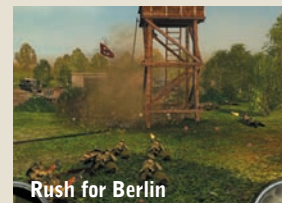
war.] What makes *BE:WWII* different from other online multi-player WWII games is its size. Each server has only one map and it covers all the ground between Ramsgate in England and Cologne in Germany, a 12,000 by 12,000 kilometer space where up to 10,000 players can be online at once. While the weapons, vehicles, and terrain are authentic, the game is not historical in that it doesn't attempt to recreate any single battle. Instead it fights the whole Western Europe Campaign all at once.

Just as in the war it models, single players acting alone in *BE:WWII* cannot effectively advance the strategic objectives of their army. This leads



to large learning curve in the game. It isn't hard learn the controls, but players need time to find a squad to serve with and to fit themselves into the command structure. There is no AI. All the decisions on troop movements are made by ranking players in the game, and all the arms and material are wielded and moved by players. There is no leveling, so players who are on more can advance more rapidly in the command structure, if they care to, but an occasional player is at no disadvantage in combat. If *BE:WWII* is not the most realistic recreation of the war, it is certainly the most realistic experience of serving in an army.

A more traditional simulation with much better graphics is **Rush for Berlin** by Storm Region (makers of the Codename Pansers series) and from Paradox Interactive for the PC. This is a real time strategy game where the player commands units of infantry, armor, and air to recreate the end of the war in the European theater as the Allies raced one another for Berlin. The player can choose to command the Western Allies, the Russians, or the Germans, so essentially the game can be replayed three times. In a nice departure from other games that have dealt with this campaign, when players choose to lead

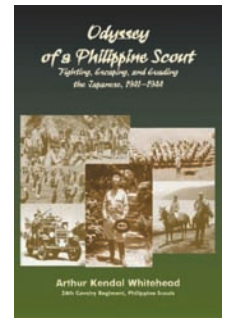
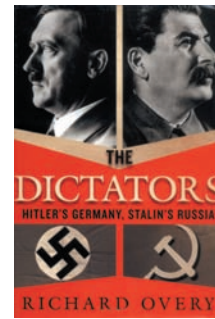
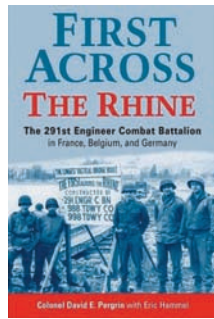
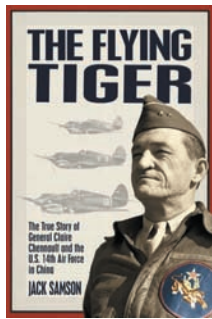


the Germans against the computer controlled Allies, they are given an array of weapons that historically were only prototypes. This alternate history deployment gives the Germans the fire power they need to make a true struggle of it.

Still in Europe, and on an even greater scale but with even simpler graphics, **Strategic Command 2: Blitzkrieg** by Fury Software and available at Battlefront.com for the PC is a 2D, turn based, strategic simulation of the entire European Theater with big chunks of Russia and North America included so the Battle of the Atlantic can be recreated along with Stalingrad and D-Day. Players can take on the



whole war, including a diplomacy mechanic for bringing in neutral powers for one side or the other, or they can play one of the five mini-campaigns for a more contained experience. The game supports hot seat and play by e-mail modes as well as play over the net for when head to head instead of head to computer competition is wanted. □



Not only did Chennault institute revolutionary (for China) pilot training, but he also obtained permission from the U.S. government to allow Army and Navy pilots to resign from their branches and join a combat unit he had established in the summer of 1941—the AVG. With this small but audacious unit, Chennault was able to shock the Japanese and buy time for Chiang.

During seven months of combat in 1942, the AVG, fighting a rear-guard action over Burma, China, Thailand, and French Indonesia, destroyed 199 enemy planes, with another 153 listed as probable kills. The AVG lost only four pilots and 12 P-40s in aerial combat.

The leather-faced Chennault was returned to active duty, promoted to brigadier general, and had his AVG disbanded in favor of a new command designated the 14th U.S. Army Air Force.

Samson also covers Chennault's intriguing, less-heralded postwar career in China and Formosa, where his supposed civilian airline, Civilian Air Transport (CAT), a front for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, became the scourge of the Russian-backed Mao Tse-tung's Communists.

Chennault was a legendary, tough, single-minded warrior who was never confused about who the enemy in Asia was, no matter what the State Department thought. A better biography of Chennault, the AVG, and the 14th Air Force will be hard to find.

First Across the Rhine: The 291st Engineer Combat Battalion in France, Germany, and Belgium, by Col. David E. Pergrin with Eric Hammel, Zenith Press, St. Paul, Minn., 2006 (reprint), 338 pp., photographs, maps, index, bibliography, \$17.95, softcover.

It is a sure bet that most infantrymen would say that the only bunch tougher than the foot soldiers themselves were the combat engineers.

If you have a hard time believing that, then you have not read *First Across the Rhine*, the 1989 classic recently reprinted in paperback. Pergrin was the storied 291st's commanding officer, and he and Hammel write with pride and precision about the battalion's exploits.

Engineer combat battalions were the unsung heroes of the American Army in World War II. In the attack, they were always in the van—detecting and removing mines, repairing or installing temporary bridges and roadways, destroying enemy barriers, roadblocks, and fortifications. In the defense, they did the opposite—sowing minefields, destroying bridges and roadways, building barriers, roadblocks, and fortifications. They were also trained and ready to fight as infantrymen, as much of their work was often performed while under heavy enemy fire.

The 291st seemingly was wherever the action was hot in Europe and engaged in some of the most famous episodes of the war. It was the 291st that used bulldozers to break through the hedgerows of Normandy's bocage country, the 291st that helped to spearhead Operation Cobra, the 291st that took part in the Battle of the Bulge, the 291st that discovered the bodies of murdered American POWs near Malmedy, and the 291st that built the 1,100-foot-long pontoon treadway bridge across the Rhine near Remagen.

Formed in March 1943, at Camp Swift, Texas, as a component of the 52nd Engineer Regiment, the battalion sailed for England in October of that year, where it trained until June 1944 for the cross-channel invasion. Arriving in Normandy on D+18, Pergrin's men were almost immediately put to the test, clearing German mines along a vital roadway between Carentan and Ste.-Mère-Eglise. As Pergrin says, "The stretch of road that was to come under our care was the only hard-surfaced highway connecting the two American invasion beaches, Omaha and Utah."

Once the road was secured, the 291st was called upon to perform more heroics. Bulldozer operators braved German fire and crashed through hedgerows that were nearly as impenetrable as stone fortress walls, enabling the infantry to pass through and battle the entrenched enemy.

Operation Cobra, the breakout from the beachhead, took the 291st to Mortain, then raced eastward, past the awful slaughter of the Germans at Falaise, past Paris, and into Belgium for the winter of 1944-45. There the 291st found itself on the front lines fighting off the German counter offensive during the Battle of the Bulge, facing columns of panzers at key roadblocks.

There were still six months of war left. After the Allies had broken into Germany, the last natural barrier, the Rhine River, had to be crossed. With the Ludendorff railroad bridge at Remagen still standing but heavily damaged and in danger of collapse at any moment, the

291st threw a pontoon treadway bridge across the wide expanse of water.

The majority of the book concentrates on this operation. The night before construction began, a worried Pergrin addressed his staff officers and company commanders: "You're about to face an awesome-looking scene for several days at Remagen. We've got to get an M-2 treadway across, fast. The Ludendorff Bridge will collapse soon and the Germans will bring up reinforcements to wipe out our guys already on the east side of the river. The brass is sure that Hitler's going to go nuts and do everything possible to break up this situation, so you can expect all hell to break loose. I hope—no, pray—that we come out of this in good shape. We're in a tough position."

In spite of heavy and accurate enemy fire that matched Pergrin's prediction of hell breaking loose, his men succeeded in completing the span—an effort that enabled the American First Army to cross the Rhine and pour into Germany, sealing its doom.

First Across the Rhine is a thrilling, page-turning account of a small number of brave individuals who, through sheer guts and determination, did as much as any other American unit to win the war. A definite must read.

The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, by Richard Overy, W.W. Norton, New York, 2006 (reprint), 358 pp., photographs, index, bibliography, \$24.95, softcover.

Delving even more deeply into the lives of Hitler and Stalin and the demonic, totalitarian regimes over which they ruled is *The Dictators*, by acclaimed British historian Richard Overy, author of *The Battle of Britain* and *Why the Allies Won*.

This superb book, a softcover reprint of the 2004 hardcover version, is illustrated with many rarely published photos and is stunning with its numerous insightful observations and trenchant commentary. Overy, for example, points out that after both dictators came to power, one of their first acts was to dismantle their respective legal systems and replace them with laws—and a secret-police structure—that

served the evil intentions of the state rather than as a protection for the people.

Overy also compares and contrasts Hitler's and Stalin's efforts to strengthen their nations' economies (Stalin's infamous Five-Year Plans and Hitler's vast public works projects that mirrored Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps).

The author also shows how the two men shaped the arts in their respective countries, capriciously banning certain works and their creators, who were imprisoned if they did not toe the party line, while simultaneously promoting the hacks and lackies who saw capitulation to their leaders as the key to their personal survival.

With total control over every aspect of civilian life, both dictators could go about building up their weakened armed forces and preparing for war. Overy notes, "Hitler and Stalin both anticipated a major war between Germany and the Soviet Union. Hitler, like many other Europeans, regarded Bolshevism as the main threat to the survival of western civilization; Stalin believed ... that Germany under Hitler was the most dangerous and predatory imperialist of all. Both dictators wanted to avoid defeat at all costs. Bolshevik victory, Hitler thought, would be worse for Europe than the fall of the Roman Empire. Imperialist war for Stalin was counter-revolution, the loss of everything achieved since 1917. Since both regarded war as an unavoidable historical necessity, each armed against the other."

As Overy points out in his conclusion, "The barbarously destructive war waged between the two populations between 1941 and 1945 derived its savage character from the depths of social support and psychological identification with the two dictatorships that fought it....This war could not have been fought by democratic states."

The Dictators is an important book, one of the very best ever written about the duel between Hitler and Stalin, Germany and Russia.

Odyssey of a Philippine Scout: Fighting, Escaping, and Evading the Japanese, 1941-1944, by Arthur Kendal Whitehead, Aberjona Press, Bedford, Penn., 2006, 286 pp., photographs, maps, \$24.95, softcover.

At the beginning of World War II, the Philippines were America's farthest outpost, and they were savagely attacked by the Japanese on December 8, 1941 (still December 7 in Hawaii). One of the American units that fought a brave but ultimately futile battle against the invaders was the horse-mounted 26th Cavalry Regiment, known as the Philippine Scouts.

As an officer with the Philippine Scouts, Arthur Whitehead, armed only with a .45-caliber pistol, tried to beat back the overwhelm-



ing Japanese tsunami, but to no avail. In this memoir he writes of the defenders' retreat to the shrinking perimeter of the Bataan Peninsula, of being separated from the 26th during its first combat action, of being captured and then escaping from imprisonment to fight as a guerrilla. After two years of heart pounding, narrow encounters while evading the Japanese and hostile Filipinos, Whitehead managed to escape in a tiny sailboat for the 3,000-mile journey to Australia.

Odyssey of a Philippine Scout is not only an interesting account of survival but, more importantly, an inspiring story of the legendary resourcefulness, resilience, and resolution of the American soldier in World War II.

Grasshopper Pilot: A Memoir, by Julian William Cummings with Gwendolyn Kay Cummings, Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio, 2005, 92 pp., photographs, maps, \$19.95, hardcover.

Few groups of men in World War II have been as overlooked by history as the "grasshopper pilots," brave fliers in slow-moving (65-75 mph) L-4 Piper Cubs who served as the eyes of the artillery and spied on the enemy from above. Besides its all-important reconnaissance role, the versatile L-4 was used to evacuate the wounded, transport generals, ferry supplies, serve as a messenger, drop leaflets, and even bomb enemy positions! At last there is a book that gives this group its due.

Julian Cummings was one of the first Grasshopper pilots to be trained and one of the first to see combat. He flew 485 aerial reconnaissance missions for the 3rd Infantry Division in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and during the battle to reclaim the Philippines and the occupation of Japan. His slim, well-written book is full of fascinating vignettes (such as the time a Grasshopper pilot downed a Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter by forcing it into a narrow canyon in Italy from which it could not escape).

Put this one on your bookshelf.

No One Ever Asked Me: The World War II Memoirs of an Omaha Indian Soldier, by Hol-

lis D. Stabler, edited by Victoria Smith, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2005, 185 pp., photographs, maps, index, bibliography, \$24.95, hardcover.

Native Americans were among the United States' toughest and bravest soldiers. One need only look at the contributions of Indians as code-talkers and warriors within the Marine Corps and 45th Infantry Division to confirm this fact.

Now comes a rare autobiography by a member of the Omaha tribe who served with the 2nd Armored Division, 67th Armored Infantry Regiment.

In *No One Ever Asked Me*, Hollis Stabler recalls his pre-war life in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Oklahoma during the Great Depression, his wartime experiences in North Africa, Italy, and France, and his new battles with old prejudices upon his return home. Native Americans have a long tradition of oral history, and Victoria Smith spent months interviewing Stabler and editing this volume.

She has masterfully interwoven historical insights into the veteran's vivid reminiscences, thus providing the reader with a rich context in which to view the life and times of one American Indian soldier.

Semper Fi in the Sky: The Marine Air Battles of World War II, by Gerald Astor, Presidio Press, New York, 2005, 366 pp., photographs, maps, index, bibliography, \$15.95, softcover.

Following up on his *Wings of Gold*, the story of U.S. Navy aviators in World War II, Gerald Astor brings us the compelling narrative of the Marine Corps' air war against the Japanese.

Operating both from carriers and island bases, the Marine pilots and crews took the war to the enemy, first with obsolete aircraft that were no match for the advanced Zeros, and later with the superior Vought F4U Corsairs for which the Japanese had no answer.

Using unpublished memoirs and oral histories gathered from dozens of Marine pilots, Astor covers the entire span of the Pacific war—from the debacle at Pearl Harbor to the final fighter sweeps over Japan—and puts the reader right into the cockpit with the pilots.

In describing a wild plane versus ship duel over Guadalcanal, for example, Lieutenant Henry Hise, piloting a dive bomber, says, "A Japanese ship opened up on me with a tracer. Fraley (his rear gunner) opened up back on ship with his twin 30s. The tracers looked like they were barely crawling up at you and then as they got near, they went zip, by you in a flash."

This account of air combat is as real as it gets. □

renewed Soviet onslaughts against the 3rd Panzer Division. For a while all contact with the 3rd Panzer Division was lost as the Soviets recaptured Beresowka. On Grossdeutschland's right flank, the 11th Panzer Division was also unable to press forward due to intense Soviet counterattacks. Rain and muddy roads also hampered the supply of the troops.

Despite the setbacks, Hoth and Kempf continued to have full confidence in victory. Hitler had other ideas. The Führer summoned his army commanders to his Wolf's Lair headquarters in East Prussia. Hitler told them that the Allies had landed in Sicily on July 10 and that Citadel must be called off immediately to enable the transfer of troops to Italy. Kluge agreed because he was already embroiled in Zhukov's Orel counteroffensive.

VonManstein, who had originally argued against the whole Kursk operation, pressed for the attack to continue, saying, "To break off the battle now would probably mean throwing away victory." VonManstein still had the fresh 24th Panzer Corps with 112 tanks in reserve. He wanted to wear the Soviets down through attrition and thereby forestall major Soviet offensives elsewhere.

"We were now in the position of a man who has seized the wolf by the ears and dare not let him go," was VonMellenthin's impression. Hitler, however, had made up his mind. Four days later he ordered the withdrawal of the 2nd SS Panzer Corps followed by the transfer of Grossdeutschland to Army Group Center. Until then, VonManstein did his best to destroy as many of the enemy as he could.

On July 14 and 15, Grossdeutschland and the 3rd Panzer Division beat back two tank corps, a Guards corps, and Soviet rifle divisions to recapture the territory lost on the 12th. Throngs of Soviet infantry were sent fleeing to the west to be caught in a barrage of murderous German artillery fire. For the Soviets, however, the most dangerous situation was a linkup between the 2nd SS Panzer Corps and the 3rd Panzer Corps. If this happened, the Soviet salient between the two German corps would be closed and the five Soviet divisions therein trapped.

Despite their recent wounds, both Bäke and Hünersdorf were back leading the 6th Panzer Division on another attack on Alexandrowaka. Bäke himself knocked out two Soviet tanks and an antitank gun while his battle group destroyed another 29 tanks and 25 antitank guns. Hünersdorf's luck, however, ran out. A sniper shot him in the head on July 14, killing him.

That same day in the Das Reich sector, grenadiers fought house to house in the village of Belenichino, destroying 12 Soviet tanks in close combat. SS Lance Corporal Simon Grascher remained glued to the ground in a storm of small caliber, grenade, and antitank fire. The flanking fire of two T-34s was decimating his company. Spurning the dangers, Grascher fought his way forward. He overcame two bunkers and a number of machine gun nests to destroy one of the T-34s with his last hollow charge. Grascher knocked out the second T-34 by throwing a grenade in the temporarily opened hatch. Grascher was killed in the fierce battles that followed, receiving his Knight's Cross posthumously.

Men like Grascher kept a heavily reinforced Trufanov from being able to do more than slow down the contact between Das Reich and the 7th Panzer Division on July 15. Trufanov did, however, buy the time for most of the Soviet divisions to slip out of the closing German pincers.

By July 16, Hoth and Kempf were finally in a position to resume the push for Kursk. Although their divisions were largely intact, they were battered and their men were worn down, and 60 miles still lay between them and Model's northern pincer. Von Mellenthin stated, "Gross Deutschland was dangerously weak after heavy fighting lasting for 10 days, while the Russian striking power had not appreciably diminished. In fact, it seemed to have increased."

Indeed, the remaining 27th and 53rd Armies of Konev's Steppe Front alongside the fresh 4th Guards Tank Corps and 1st Mechanized Corps, with nearly 400 tanks, were closing in on Oboian and northwest of Prokhorovka. How they would have fared against VonManstein's reserves is a matter of speculation, for on July 17, VonManstein began his withdrawal. Zhukov noted, "Because of the exhaustion of our own First Tank Army and the Sixth and Seventh Guards field armies, the enemy was able to pull his main forces back to the Belgorod defense line by July 23." Inevitably, most of the German divisions were soon drawn into new battles against Soviet offensives elsewhere.

As exemplified by the élan of the German panzer formations at Oboian and Prokhorovka, the Germans inflicted deep wounds on the Soviets at Kursk while remaining themselves relatively unscathed. Together, Army Group Center and Army Group South lost 323 tanks and assault guns irreparably destroyed during the Kursk battles. Personnel losses amounted to 50,000 men killed, wounded, or missing. Red Army personnel losses amounted to at least

177,000, with combat losses between 20 and 70 percent of the units committed. Soviet tank and self-propelled assault gun losses amounted to 1,614 vehicles irreparably destroyed.

Losses to both the Germans and the Soviets in damaged armored vehicles were much higher than destroyed vehicles. By the time Wittmann's Tigers disengaged on the 17th, Wittmann himself had accounted for 30 Soviet tanks and 28 antitank guns. From July 5-16, Das Reich alone knocked out 448 Soviet tanks and assault guns against a loss of 46 of its own. The 2nd SS Panzer Corps chalked up 1,149 Soviet tanks and other armored vehicles destroyed. The trend of high Soviet losses against those of the Germans would continue for a long time to come, and often at times be exceeded, as in future battles the Germans were usually on the defensive.

Nevertheless, the strategic consequences at Kursk were not lost on the German commanders. "With the failure of our supreme effort, the strategic initiative passed to the Russians. Kursk had been a complete and most regrettable failure," reflected VonMellenthin.

VonManstein commented, "When Citadel was called off, the initiative in the Eastern theatre of war finally passed to the Russians."

Guderian agreed, "By the failure of Citadel we suffered a decisive defeat."

Soviet propaganda naturally made the most of the Red Army victory by completely inflating the German losses. Zhukov wrote, "The picked and most powerful grouping of the Germans destroyed here [Kursk] ... the faith of the German Army and the German people in the Nazi leadership ... was irrevocably shattered."

Marshal Aleksandr M. Vasilevsky boasted of 500,000 German casualties. The massacre of Rotmistrov's 5th Guards Tank Army at Prokhorovka on July 12 was turned into the "Death Ride of the Fourth Panzer Army." The Soviets claimed 400 German tanks destroyed that day and 3,100 German tanks destroyed during the whole Kursk battle. The reality was rather the reverse, and German morale remained high, both among civilians at home and among the soldiers at the front.

Only the relatively recent declassification of Waffen SS combat records and the public accessibility of Russian archival material has revealed the true nature of Kursk: a brilliant tactical victory for the Germans, but a decisive strategic victory for the Soviets.□

Ludwig Dyck has written on numerous occasions for Sovereign Media publications. He has done extensive research on World War II on the Eastern Front and resides in Richmond, British, Columbia, Canada.

from *Kennebec*, while *Abnaki* took over towing duties from *Guadalcanal*. On June 9, the group formed a screen around *Abnaki* and *U-505* and headed for Bermuda, still 2,500 miles away.

All prisoners from *U-505* were safely aboard *Guadalcanal*; 59 German sailors out of a complement of 60, including officers and Captain Lange. Gallery decided to visit Lange in the carrier's sick bay. He described the German captain as "a big, angular man of about 35," who looked more like a preacher than a U-boat skipper. Lange's leg wounds had been treated, and he was sitting up in his bunk.

Gallery introduced himself as the captain of the ship and told Lange, "We have your U-boat in tow."

Lange blinked at Gallery and shouted, "No!" Because of his wounds, he had spent all of his time below decks after being rescued, and refused to believe that his orders to scuttle the submarine had not been carried out. He would not accept the fact that *U-505* was still afloat and had been captured until Gallery sent a crew member over to the U-boat to retrieve family pictures from Lange's cabin.

Seeing his personal photographs convinced him. He told Gallery in perfect English, "I will be punished for this." After the war, Lange wrote Gallery a letter informing him that he had landed a good job on the Hamburg docks. Apparently, his gloomy prediction did not come true.

While the remaining ships of *Guadalcanal*'s group escorted the *Abnaki* and *U-505* to Bermuda, the *Jenks* had been sent ahead at maximum speed with the U-boat's Enigma machines and 10 sacks of code books and secret documents, which weighed about 1,100 pounds. When news of the U-boat's capture reached Washington, it was greeted with anything but elation. The main fear was that German intelligence would find out that one of their submarines had fallen into Allied hands and that they would immediately change all the Enigma codes. If that happened, all Allied codebreakers would be plunged into darkness for many weeks. Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, the bad-tempered chief of naval operations, was furious with Captain Gallery for jeopardizing Allied naval intelligence and their control of Enigma. He threatened to have Gallery court-martialed for bringing *U-505* in as a prize.

Fortunately, no word ever reached German intelligence. Gallery told all hands attached to the task group that nothing must be said about what happened during the cruise, and amazingly the men did as they were told. The pub-

lic did not find out about *U-505* until after the war. Also, the Allied landings at Normandy on June 6, 1944, two days after the submarine was captured, pushed most other thoughts out of the minds of German intelligence. Berlin officially listed *U-505* as sunk and made only routine changes in the naval codes.

The intelligence materials taken from *U-505* allowed Allied Naval Intelligence to read U-boat signals as fast as the Germans themselves, which helped them in their already successful war against Admiral Dönitz and his submarine fleet. All the elaborate grids and tables the Kriegsmarine had been using to track Allied shipping were now used against the U-boats. Far from being the disaster feared by Admiral King, Gallery's decision to take *U-505* intact turned out to be an enormous advantage for Allied codebreakers.

On June 19, 1944, just over two weeks after Lieutenant David and his crew made their way into *U-505*'s control room, Gallery's task group arrived in Bermuda. A huge U.S. flag flew above a much smaller German naval ensign on the U-boat's flagstaff. The 59 prisoners were turned over to the commandant of the naval base. They were, in turn, kept in an isolated camp until the war ended. Absolutely no chances were being taken that might jeopardize the secrecy of *U-505*'s capture, including mixing the submarine's crew with other German prisoners.

The U-boat was also turned over to the base commander, who issued a receipt: "One Nazi U-boat, *U-505*, complete with spare parts." When the boat was inspected, a 14th demolition charge was found—in place and still very much alive.

For his part in the operation, Lieutenant Albert David was awarded the Medal of Honor. The two men who went down the U-boat's conning tower hatch with him, Radioman Stanley E. Wdowiak and Torpedoman Arthur W. Kinspel, were given the Navy Cross. Captain Gallery did not receive a decoration, although he did get the Distinguished Service Medal for his work in antisubmarine warfare.

Gallery took very little credit for the success of the operation. He attributed it to thorough planning, helped along by a lot of good luck. As an afterthought, he added, "Maybe our daily morning prayers had something to do with it." □

David Alan Johnson has written extensively on World War II for more than 20 years. His book The Battle of Britain: The American Factor was well received in both the United Kingdom and the United States. He is currently working on a book about Anglo-American relations since Colonial times.

we wanted to be with him. We got shore duty instead.

Joe Lecci, from Brooklyn, was killed in the battle. He told me if anything happened to him to go see his wife. When I got home on my leave, I saw them—his brothers and wife. She was pregnant but could not come down from the bedroom to see me because she was so distraught. Lecci was sort of my older brother. He was a cook. I was home about a week when I went over and visited. They couldn't do enough for me with the wine, etc. He had three brothers, and aunts and uncles and cousins came over when I visited. They were all there to see me. His battle station was the port side. He took a shell blast right into his area and did not know what hit him. I told the family that he died instantly. Lecci must have been about 27 years old.

Around 1994, I got a call from Joe's son, Joe Lecci, Jr. He came to Seattle, and I met him. When I walked into the lobby I thought that Joe came back to life.

WWII: What has being part of that battle meant to you?

JY: For 38 years I never said much. My family, friends, etc. knew, but I let it slip my mind. It was over, until I learned that Copeland was having a ship named after him. That started it. All of us survivors found out what Copeland and the ship had done in the battle, and I felt so proud that we didn't lose the battle and what we had done in it. We decided to get together for the commissioning of the *Copeland* and that we would honor the guys who didn't make it. In 1980 we started the *Samuel B. Roberts* Survivors' Association. There were 41 guys at the first reunion. We had a story to tell, and we wanted to do it the right way.

The crew was a bunch of great guys. The officers were exceptional, and the captain was very stern but fair, and exceptional. When this action came every man did his job. In meeting these survivors 38 years later, they all had had a wonderful life, nice children, great wives. That's one of the things we always talk about—we survived, and now we're going to live right, raise our families, and do it the right way. □

Author John Wukovits is an expert on the war in the Pacific. He is a frequent contributor to WWII History and has written numerous books on the subject. He resides in Trenton, Michigan.

managed to get reassigned also. Both men now worked in the British Embassy in Washington and had access to all of the most important secrets coming out of the newly formed CIA. Burgess even lived with Philby and flagrantly continued his drinking and homosexual binges. At a party of high-level U.S. and British government officials in Washington, Burgess went so far as to insult the wife of William Harvey, a top man in U.S. intelligence.

Philby took a huge gamble in letting Burgess stay with him, but used the unusual circumstances to his own advantage. About that time, Philby wrote, "But on reflection, I think that my decision to accommodate Burgess speeded by a few weeks at most the focusing of the spotlight on me."

In June 1951, Burgess learned that the British were aware of Maclean's espionage. Maclean was then living in London, and Burgess managed to return home and warn Maclean of the danger that lay before them. Burgess knew that once Maclean was exposed, he was next. Both men quickly packed their bags and hurriedly fled to Moscow.

For the remainder of his life, Burgess suffered many ailments. He died in Moscow in 1963 of arteriosclerosis.

Adrian "Kim" Philby was one of the most important spies of the 20th century. His exploits were chronicled by numerous writers—his life a virtual open book. He was named Kim by his father, the famous Arabist St. John Philby, who worked for the British government in the Middle East, after the character in Kipling's jungle story of the same name. It has been written that Kim took on his father's hatred of the British and did not have to be pulled into joining the Cambridge Five.

Philby was a journalist, spy, a man who could be anything he wanted and not let the rest of the world get too close. The popular story is that Philby was recruited into the spy ring in 1934 by Arnold Deutsch of the NKVD and also by Edith Tudor-Hart, a British communist. Philby said that he was responsible for bringing both Burgess and Maclean into the ring. Philby was married four times, the last to a Russian woman after his defection to the Soviet Union.

Philby was a stutterer, but that did not stop him from becoming one of the most influential members of British intelligence. Unknown to his colleagues, Philby told his Russian handlers that the British had broken the German Enigma codes, the method whereby British intelligence was able to read German military communica-

tions. As a trusted member of MI-6, Philby knew the identities of all British agents operating inside the Soviet Union and promptly betrayed them. Along with his spying, he was also an instructor of espionage craft to new recruits in the British secret service.

Like the other members of the spy ring, Philby's communist leanings were well known to British intelligence. Yet, they decided to ignore the facts and allowed Philby into their inner sanctum. For example, Philby married a woman named Alice Friedman, a known communist. He had well-known associations with a German intelligence officer named Colonel Von der Osten and also had clandestine meetings with various Nazis in both London and Berlin.

In 1945, Philby was almost unmasked in what became known as the Volkov Affair. Konstantin Volkov was the vice consul at the Russian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, when he decided to defect to the British. He wanted to be sent to Cyprus with his wife, and expected certain funds to be delivered to him. He told British authorities that he had information that the Russians had infiltrated two men into the Foreign Office (Burgess and Maclean), as well as an operative inside British counterintelligence (Philby), although he did not know their names.

Philby was sent to Istanbul to bring Volkov out, but before he left London he sent secret reports to Moscow telling them about Volkov's bombshell. When Philby arrived in Istanbul, Volkov had mysteriously gone missing. British intelligence learned that a man was seen being smuggled into a Soviet airplane, swathed in bandages and unconscious. Volkov took with him the secret that three top-level Russian spies were burrowing inside British intelligence. Philby later admitted that he took part in Volkov's disappearance.

Despite Philby's years of dedication to the Russians, it seems that by 1947 he, Burgess, and Maclean were being secretly investigated by senior Soviet intelligence officials in Moscow. A probe was ordered by Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet deputy foreign minister, to see if they were working for the British as disinformation agents. Records from the old Soviet Union state that Madame Modrjrkaska, who was overseeing the trio, had deep suspicions about them. The reports said, "In an obstinate and tendentious way Madame Modrjrkaska analyzed the work of Philby, Maclean, and Burgess. And she came to the conclusion that Kim was a plant of the MI-6 working very actively and in a very subtle British way."

Another damaging report on Philby was written by General Leonid Reichman, the one-time deputy head of SMERSH, a division of an

agency that handled Russian assassins, who said, "I am sure that Philby, Burgess, and Maclean were British spies."

After the war ended, Philby was posted to Washington, D.C., where he served as the liaison between MI-6 and the CIA. He was privy to numerous intelligence files provided to him by the FBI and mixed socially with the top members of the CIA, most importantly the agency's counterintelligence staff, then headed by James Angleton. It was even rumored that Philby was being groomed to one day head the Secret Intelligence Service.

In the 1950s, Philby got a job as a reporter covering the Middle East for the British newspapers *The Observer* and *The Economist*.

After the defections of Burgess and Maclean, MI-5 became suspicious about Philby because of his close association with Burgess. After the United States began decoding Russian wartime intelligence reports, it became obvious that Philby was working in league with Burgess and Maclean. After being confronted by the British, Philby admitted he was a Russian spy and managed to escape to Beirut, Lebanon. On July 3, 1963, the Soviet regime announced that Philby had been given political asylum. He died in May 1988, a mostly forgotten figure.

John Cairncross worked in the Foreign Office during the war and delivered secret information on British strategy for Nazi Germany. He worked at the super-secret Government Code and Cipher School located at Bletchley Park, where Allied codebreakers cracked German codes that were intercepted by listening stations worldwide. He stole countless secret cables and handed them to the Russians.

Cairncross's undoing came at the hands of Burgess and Maclean after their escape to Moscow. Police searched his apartment and found government documents in his possession.

In 1947, Cairncross worked for the United Nations, and it was not until 1967 that he agreed to give details of his longtime spying activities to the British government. The public did not learn of his double life until 1981, but a forgiving British government did not prosecute him. He died in 1995.

The lasting effect of the Cambridge Spies was a deep distrust between the intelligence services of the United States and Great Britain. The fallout from the affair also caused a rift between the CIA and FBI that would last for years. As far as the British were concerned, they never dreamed that Blunt, Burgess, Philby, Maclean, and Cairncross would ever betray their own country. □

New Jersey resident Peter Kross is the author of The Encyclopedia of World War 2 Spies.

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